

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

THE East Church

HERALD

DECEMBER 2019

"Empowering God's community to grow in faith through worship, service, and learning at every age."

***Vision Statement,
adopted May, 2015***

For someone like me who grew up having trouble waiting for Christmas, being a pastor during the Advent season has always been challenging. You see, in some churches that have traditional liturgical practices there is no talk of Christmas until December 25th. No decorations, no Christmas carols, no pageants at all. Christmas is observed from Christmas day until Epiphany. The rationale is that anticipation needs time to grow.

I do get it. When I ask congregations on the first Sunday of Advent, "Are you ready for Christmas?" The answer is a resounding, "No!" There's too much to be done. Thanksgiving leftovers aren't even gone. Winter hasn't yet forced the issue. Black Friday shopping has made more Scrooges than Santas. As Longfellow's carol lyrics go, "There is no peace on earth," I said. "For hate is strong, and mocks the song. Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

So practical theology has taught me that decorating our sanctuary, singing carols, watching the wide eyes of children in Christmas plays, gifting others in need with presents under the angel tree –all during Advent do help us come closer closer to the promise of Christ. They can make the wait more, not less, sacred: more intentional, more spiritual, more truthful, more loving, faithful and hopeful.

As the Advent season begins, remember the lyric from the Christmas Carol, "Joy To The World," 'let our hearts prepare Christ room.' Our worship themes lend themselves to that great invitation.

Blessings,
Rev. David



YOUTH MINISTRIES

Bren Elliott, M.A.

Youth Ministries Director

So I caved this year. Every year we get our tree and put it up the day after Thanksgiving. This year we did it a week ahead of time. I ponder this when I hear “can we please at least acknowledge Thanksgiving first before all the chaos starts?” Part of me agrees with this, yet another part wants to start all the festivities as soon as we can. Why do you think this is? Mulling this over, looking at the posts, comments, and interactions of others wanting to start the holidays makes me wonder a couple things. Are we so busy we think if we have an extra minute we should use that minute to get a head start on decorating, baking, putting it all together. Or are we so waiting for the feelings that come with this time of year that we want to get in the mood and make it happen? Not sure either way is “wrong.” One thing I know in our home is even though we’ve started the decorating process we certainly are celebrating Thanksgiving. I love it when family and friends show up. I am super thankful for them, for you, for my youthies, and for God for blessing me

with all this. Most years the youthies do a Thanksgiving lunch celebrating a different culture of food. I have struggled this year finding time to do this as they have been SO busy. Your youthies are so aware of what is happening around them. We have been working around East, working outside of East and doing LOTS of community work. This is in addition to concerts, plays, sports, etc. They ARE a busy bunch! December finds us once again out in the community visiting our homebound members, singing for them, dropping off little gifts, and reminding them they are loved! ECCYG would like to thank EVERYONE who supports us! You guys are amazing and it makes our youthies amazing as well! God bless, happy holidays, and remember to reach out to others who may not be as connected as some of us are. Bring them into YOUR family if you are able, show them the love of Christ!

MUSIC & ARTS MINISTRIES

Jameson Thompson

Music & Arts Ministries Director

"Still, still, still One can hear the falling snow. For all is hushed, The world is sleeping

Holy Star its vigil keeping

Still, still, still One can hear the falling snow"

Originating in Austria during the mid-19th century, this Christmas lullaby (which happens to be one of my favorite Christmas songs) describes the peace that Mary and Jesus experienced that Christmas night. In our haste to buy the newest piece of technology, give as many gifts as we can, survive three connecting flights to make it to Grandma June's house by Christmas day, and being sure that we're never caught without a smile on our face, it is all too easy to forget not only "the reason for the season" but also what happened

that night. The Prince of Peace and our Everlasting Comfort entered this world in a simple and humble manner. It is my hope and prayer that we all will have a chance to relax, take a breath, reset, and truly focus on what happened that night and its significance to Christian traditions that generations have been practicing for 2,000 years.

On December 15th at 3pm the choir will be joined by the Embellish Handbell Ensemble to perform a Christmas Collage Concert. It's sure to be a fun-filled during the service with music to be enjoyed by all ages.

Soli Deo Gloria

Jameson

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Becca Johnson

Christian Education Director

The first theme of the year is all done, and it was a huge success! The Sunday Schoolers explored for ten weeks how playing joyfully in our daily lives connects us to God and creates a new pathway for faith. Not to mention, we were architects, artists, authors, illustrators, and more during this theme. Keep an eye out for more information regarding our next theme - *Encountering Scripture* - which will begin in January.

In October, Bren and I put together East Church's Second Annual Trunk or Treat! Despite the cold and rainy weather, we had lots of families come through for candy and fun pictures. Thank you to all of the

volunteers that helped to decorate and pass out candy, we could not do these things without your help! Trunk or Treat 2020 is going to be lots of fun, start to think about how you could decorate...

As we have done for a couple years now, Advent is a time to take a break from our curriculums and join with Penny Notter to practice a Christmas Play for worship. The play this year is going to be a lot of fun! If your child would like to participate, we rehearse during the normal Sunday School time on Sundays. There will be one Saturday morning rehearsal on December 21st, the Sunday before we perform. The final performance will be on December 22nd during the worship service, so make sure to join us on that day! Have a happy Advent!

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

December 1: Bearing Witness to Hope Luke 3:1-18

December 8: Keeping Faith in Peace: Isaiah 40:1-11

December 15: Remembering Well With Joy: Luke 1:46-55

December 22: Children's Play: "Christmas: It's All About Me"

Our children will lead our worship with this light-hearted drama. It's an enlightening play that focuses on the promise that God gave to us the Son that we might have life. Many thanks to all the children who will bring us the good news. Special thanks to Penny Notter who is the director.

BLUE CHRISTMAS VESPER SERVICE 4:30PM Sunday, December 22 Klise Chapel
These December days are not always joyous. Realities of pain, suffering, and grief have real impacts, that will not simply be set aside. However, we can bring those real parts of life into God's keeping. That is the purpose of our annual Blue Christmas Vesper service. With prayer, scripture, community, and sacred melodies we acknowledge the struggles we face. Please come. Light a candle to punch a hole in the darkness. Our special thanks to the Threshold Choir that will once again bring comfort to heart and soul with their special healing songs.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP 5PM and 10PM

5 PM Worship in Klise Chapel for all ages

At the service all are welcome! Traditional lessons and carols will be lifted up along with the ABC's of Christmas. There will be candles and glow sticks, and the singing of "Silent Night."

10 PM Worship in the Sanctuary

Our sacred tradition of Lessons and Carols with choral anthems and special music will highlight this beautiful candle light service. We will usher in Christmas passing the Christ light to one another while singing "Silent Night and "Joy to the World."

BREAKFAST CHURCH December 29

Our worship will be held in Fellowship Hall and breakfast will be served! Worship honors the year passed and the promises of tomorrow.

ANGEL TREE GIVING TO OTHERS

COUNCIL NEWS

East Council Meeting Highlights — November, 2019

East Church Council met on Wednesday, October 9th and Wednesday, November 13th. Minutes from both meetings were approved and can be obtained from the church office. Here are highlights from those meetings (please note—minutes are not approved until our next meeting, which will be Wednesday, December 11th at 7 pm. All are welcome to attend!)

Our Search Committee has begun meeting and is in the beginning stages of creating a church profile to introduce East to potential applicants. Check the minutes from Council meeting or the herald for updates!

As the end of the year approaches, the 2020 budget is being prepared. Prayerfully consider what you can give and remember that East contributes a lot to both the people in this building and in this community and we need money to continue the good work we do! Turn in your pledge as soon as you can so we can account for all anticipated income. Keep an ear for more information from the Social Justice Team about an event focusing on immigration reform that will be happening in January.

Our East Church Council has endorsed the request to include the children of the church in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In order to do so the following preparations are being made:

- Parents and families need to make the decision about whether their children will receive Communion.
- Sunday School on January 5th will be dedicated to helping the children understand the meanings of Communion.
- Christian Education Director, Becca Johnson and Rev. David will develop a guide for families to use to discuss Communion with their children, to be handed out on 1/5.
- On January 12th, Communion will be served with the children invited. They will go to class at the beginning of worship and come back to the sanctuary near the conclusion of the service to partake with their families.

Financial Report for October 2019

	Budget	Actual
Income	\$ 27,102.50	\$ 19,878.00
Expense	\$ 27,093.94	\$ 24,580.78
Income - Expense	\$ 8.56	\$ (4,702.78)
Year to Date Inc-Exp	\$ 85.45	\$ (27,106.46)

Stewardship Update

Thanks to all of you who turned in your Pledge Cards on (or before) Stewardship Sunday. So far, we've received 31 pledges totaling \$110,048.00 toward our 2020 goal of \$25,000.00. As you can see, we have a way to go! Be sure to return your pledge card as soon as you can. If you have any questions, please contact me by phone: 616/915-6905, or by email: treasurer.eastchurchgr@gmail.com.

Jane Farnsworth, Treasurer

*****Special Stewardship Letter*****

Part of my stewardship for East Congregational Church is giving my time at Thrifty Treasures, the church thrift store. Working there is a great way to connect with the neighborhood. We have a group—the Monday morning ladies—who stay for over an hour just to talk. At the store, we love to hear their joys, and we listen closely as we support them in their troubles.

One of my most memorable experiences at Thrifty Treasures was on a cold day last winter. An old man walked in, asking for help buying a suit. Someone had donated a beautiful wool suit, and the jacket fit him perfectly. I helped him find a matching shirt, and asked him if he wanted to try the trousers. He said, “no, I don’t need them because this suit is for my funeral. I have pancreatic cancer.” He was thrilled to find the suit, and he also purchased a gorgeous red coat to surprise his wife. As he was leaving the store that day, he said, “God bless you, sister Karen.” And I never saw him again.

Some of the people I meet at Thrifty Treasures are in my life for just moments, and I have developed longer-term relationships with others. I believe the store is one of the ways East Congregational serves the local community, and my most important service to the church—my stewardship of time and talent—is working in this ministry.

Karen Johnson

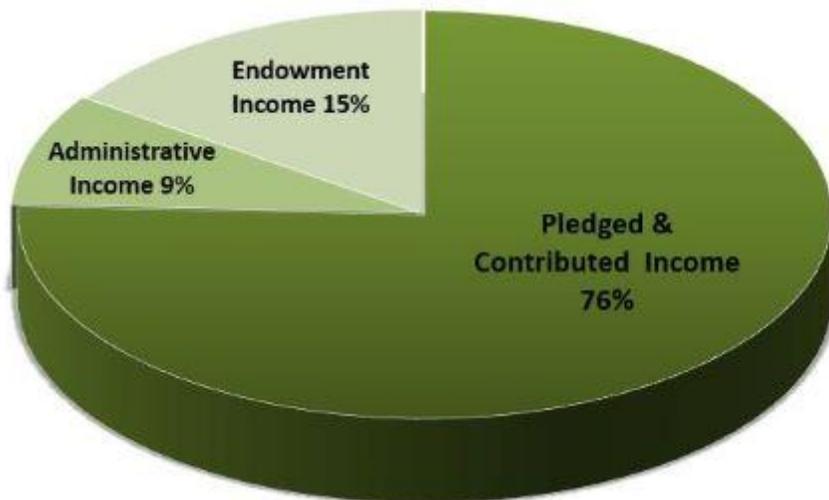
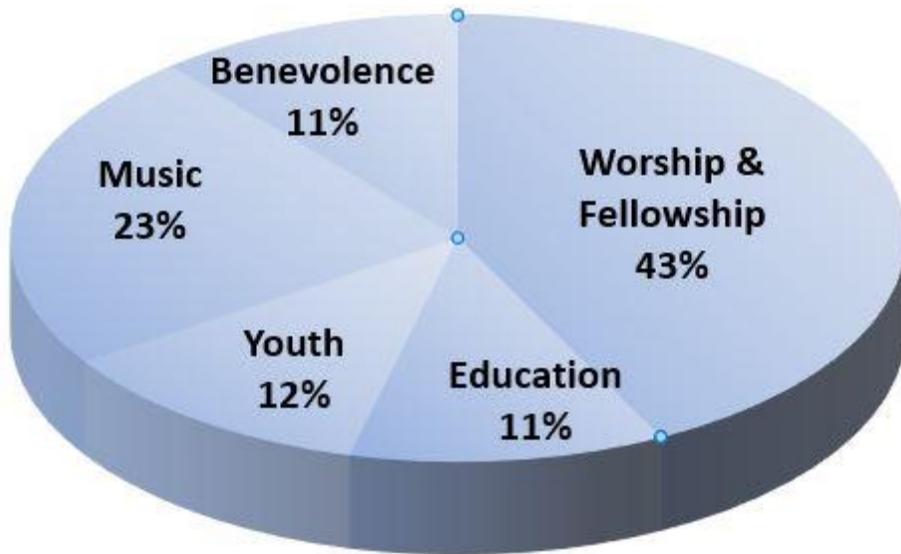
East Church 2020 Proposed Budget

Income

Pledged Contribution	\$ 250,000.00
Non-Pledged Contributions	\$ 2,200.00
Loose Offering	\$ 2,000.00
Prior Year Pledges	\$ 500.00
Rental Of Church	\$ 30,000.00
Tachanuwnah Rental	
Initial Offering	\$ 50.00
Endowment Contribution	\$ 52,000.00
Income Total	\$ 336,750.00

Expenses

Adult Education	\$ 200.00
Christian Education	\$ 1,600.00
Youth Accounts	\$ 2,950.00
Music	\$ 8,000.00
Benevolence	\$ 25,470.00
Maintenance	\$ 80,000.00
Administration	\$ 15,050.00
Fellowship Totals:	\$ 1,050.00
Senior Minister	\$ 76,437.64
Professional Staff	\$ 118,204.73
Special Ministries	\$ 3,300.00
Finance and Stewardship	\$ 4,410.00
Expense Total	\$ 336,672.37
Income minus Expense:	\$ 77.63





ECC COUNCIL
For program year
2018-19

OFFICERS

Moderator—Jim Notter
Vice Moderator—Mark Johnson
Treasurer—Jane Farnsworth
Clerk—Stephanie Rodriguez

MEMBERS

Laura Johnson
Kim Slupe
Jeff Cornetet
Kathy Siegenthaler
Arnie Smith-Alexander
Jerry Ambrose
Penny Notter
Stephanie Gingerich
Kristen Haas

Want to receive an email version of
The East Church Herald every month?
Please email the office at
eastchurchgr@gmail.com and ask to
be added to the Herald e-list.

Worship with us!
Sundays at 10:30am

East Congregational
United Church of Christ
1005 Giddings Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
(616) 245-0578
eastchurchgr@gmail.com
www.eastchurchgr.org

PRAYER CONCERNS

*These members and friends need our
prayers.....*

Peggy Bender
The Flink Family
Curtis Prussner
Frank Vietze
Mary Carolyn Matteson
The Johnson Family

*Please don't assume that the office is
aware of those who are in need of a
pastoral call or recognition in the
bulletin or Herald, even if the
information is shared during the
Sunday service. Also, information will
not be shared unless family members
approve. Thank you!*

PRAYERS ASCENDING

*Each month the congregations of the
Grand West Association, United Church
of Christ will hold each other in prayer.
In December, we will pray for and on
behalf of Lakeview, UCC. May God
bless these congregations and their
leadership in ministry.

HELPING HANDS

Need a ride to the doctor? Need a ride to
church on Sunday? Need meals while
recovering from surgery or illness?
"Helping Hands" may be able to help
you!
Call Joy or Pat Murray at 455-0353.