

## DECEMBER 2025 PEW ECHO

FIRST REFORMED CHURCH  
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### Holiday Homecoming

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.*

- John 1:14a

*I pray that... Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*

- Ephesians 3:16-17

I am normally not one to make plans to want to watch a "Hallmark" style Christmas movie. But when I found out that a Christmas movie was made about Door County and filmed in Door County, I have to admit that I was interested. There is something about a story that is set in a place where we've been, with scenes at places where we've been, that draws us in.

The title of the movie is *A Cherry Pie Christmas*, an appropriate name for a movie set in Door County. But beyond the familiarity with the place where the movie was filmed, the part that has the potential to draw us in is the familiarity with the theme: in many ways, the movie is a story about a holiday homecoming. And that speaks to our hearts, because so much of the warm and fuzzy nostalgia of the Christmas season involves a holiday homecoming. Think about the songs that invoke these scenes and these memories. We can all relate to the journey—our own travel, or the trips that others take to visit us—in order to share in the love and joy and traditions and celebration of Christmas.

During this Advent season, our sermon series will focus on the theme of Holiday Homecoming. We will take a look at four journeys that are part of the Christmas season. The magi are first, since they likely left first in this sequence of journeys.

Filled with hope upon seeing the star, their trip takes them from watching to worship. Next, Mary and Joseph make the trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and amid all the struggles and challenges involved in their journey, they will show us how to find peace in the midst of holiday hecticness. Then the shepherds, who didn't have far to go in their journey from the fields into Bethlehem, are filled with joy as they travel from their flocks to becoming faithful followers. Finally, the One who made the longest and most important journey of all is Jesus, who came from heaven to live in our hearts. For God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son, to become flesh and live among us, and to come and make His home in our hearts.

And that is what a holiday homecoming is truly all about. And that is why we, like those who traveled as part of the first Christmas long ago, make the journey. It is in the hopeful anticipation of the season, the peace of being back in what is familiar, the joy of sharing in the traditions, and the love we celebrate as we receive the gift of the One who came to make a way for us to have a home in heaven with Him.

Grace and Peace in Christ,  
*Pastor Brad*





## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1	Dave Wingert
4	Karen Rooker
5	Ron Meinnert
12	Paul Houwers
13	Margie Lammers
14	Lucas Cleveland
15	Johnette Van Haveren
17	Sue Bimmel
25	Mike Rammer
26	Micah Cleveland
31	Steve Crivello



### Dare to Hope

If you've ever given up on a dream, then you have something in common with Zechariah. When an angel brought news that Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, would soon have a son, Zechariah had trouble believing it (Luke 1:13-18).



How long had it been since Zechariah first prayed for a son? More to the point, how long had it been since he'd given up praying for a son? With the couple's childbearing years long past, Zechariah likely felt compelled to emphasize the impossibility of the angel's proclamation.

Perhaps you know what it's like to lose hope. Zechariah's story reminds us that God's plans cannot be hampered, even when the laws of nature stand in the way. Hold on to your hope because God works miracles.



## DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES:

10	Ron and Carol Meinnert	(43)
13	Kevin & Margie Lammers	(6)
14	Doug & Roxanne Church	(51)
27	Wayne and Phyllis LeMahieu	(64)

Lighting its candles each Sunday is a treasured tradition during the four weeks of Advent.

Many light purple candles on the first two Sundays, pink on the third, purple again on the fourth, and then a large white candle on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.



Each part of the wreath carries symbolic meaning:

- **The wreath:** Its circular shape represents the everlasting love of God, having no beginning or end. The green symbolizes eternal life.
- **The four candles:** Mark the four weeks of Advent. One tradition says that each candle also represents 1,000 years, totaling 4,000 years from Adam and Eve to Christ's birth.
- **Purple candles:** in ancient times, was expensive and was considered the color of royalty and kings. On Christmas, Christ is proclaimed King of Kings. Purple also symbolizes humility and penitence. The first purple candle represents Hope; the second, Peace; and the final purple candle, Love.
- **The pink candle:** Lit on the third Sunday, it represents Joy and marks the halfway point of Advent.
- **The white candle:** The large white candle in the center is the Christ candle. Its light symbolizes Christ the Savior — "the light of the world."

The beauty and brightness from the glow of all five candles, is a reminder that Christ's life was the light for all earth's people — "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5; NRSV).

The Advent wreath is more than just greenery and candles—it's a symbol of watchfulness and growing joy as Christmas draws near.



## BRINGING CHRISTMAS OUTDOORS



The first colored electric Christmas lights on outdoor evergreen trees appeared in Denver in 1914. The tradition began thanks to a sick boy bedridden in the top floor of his home. Ten-year-old David Sturgeon couldn't see his family's Christmas tree downstairs, so his grandfather, a pioneering electrician, painted some light bulbs red and green and strung them on a tree outside David's window.

Not only did the lights brighten what would be David's last holiday, but residents throughout the city came by to admire the display.

Just as David's innovative grandfather brought light into the boy's dark times and joy to the whole community, God revealed the true light by sending Jesus into our dark world. For "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5, NRSV).



When *A Charlie Brown Christmas* debuted in 1965, religious references were unheard of on television. Yet the show's climax features the Christmas story verbatim. As Linus begins reciting Luke 2, he's clutching his ever-present blue blanket. Yet, as pastor Jason Soroski points out, Linus drops it right as he utters the words "fear not" (Luke 2:10).

Soroski believes the timing is intentional and that "Peanuts" creator Charles M. Schulz sends a simple, brilliant message. "The birth of Jesus separates us from our fears," Soroski writes. It "frees us from the habits we are unable (or unwilling) to break ourselves. The birth of Jesus allows us to simply drop the false security we have been grasping so tightly, and learn to trust and cling to him instead."

## BORN IN A BARN



While growing up, if my sisters and I behaved rudely at the table, my mom would ask, "Were you born in a barn?"

Too often, rude behavior isn't restricted to meals. Even adults behave badly toward others, intentionally or unintentionally. Our lack of consideration, good manners and kindness might be likened to the behavior of animals, not guided by concepts of right and wrong.

Jesus was *literally* born in a barn because we sometimes act like we were born in a barn, failing to put others ahead of ourselves. Through Jesus, God willingly entered the mess and stink of human existence. We know that Jesus can relate to the lowest of human experience because he was laid into a feed trough for animals, surrounded by their sounds and smells, Born alongside us in the "barn" of earthly life, Jesus taught us not only politeness but love.

One day, when I dine with Jesus at the heavenly banquet, I trust Mom will be pleased with my table manners.

## USHERS FOR DECEMBER

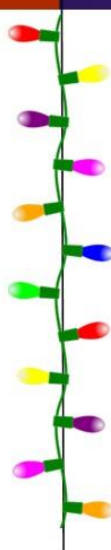


Paul Graumann  
John Boge



**USHER  
SCHEDULE**

## GREETERS FOR DECEMBER



**Dec 7**  
Dale & Joan Hoffmann

**Dec 14**  
Dave & Jackie Stoffregen

**Dec 21**  
Brad & Shannon Veenendaal

**Dec 28**  
Doug & Roxann Church



Present: Pastor Brad Veenendaal, Dennis Beach, Dick Huibregtse, Dave Stoffregen, Steve Wilterdink, Aaron Lund, Doug Church, Kevin Lammers, Ron Mueller, Corey Kappers, Travis Steffen, Ben Cleveland, Doug Fabian

Absent: None

## **First Reformed Church Consistory Meeting Minutes November 11, 2025**

1. **Devotions:** Pastor Brad led by reading from John 16:33 . He had talked about Armistice Day and how it had evolved into Veterans Day. The signing for peace on the 11<sup>th</sup> hour on the 11<sup>th</sup> day in the 11<sup>th</sup> month of 1918. Jesus offers unending peace in times of unending trouble.
2. **Opening Prayer:** The consistory spent time in prayer, Pastor Brad closed.
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting:** There was a motion and support to approve the minutes of the previous meeting (September 9, 2025). That motion carried.
4. **Agenda additions:** None
5. **Deacons Update/Financial Report:** Corey gave an update through the end of October with the balance sheet and going over various expenses vs income. The subject of the boiler was brought up and the costs potentially associated with the repair. Motion and support to approve the report. That motion carried.
6. **Elders update:** Dave provided update on the Oct. 7th and Nov. 4th Elder's meetings.
7. **Executive Committee Update:** Dave provided update on the Oct. 14<sup>th</sup> meeting which included staff reviews for both Sue Dempster and Pastor Brad Veenendaal.
8. **Old Business:** None
9. **New Business:** A. Nominees for 2026 Consistory: Deacons – Marty Halverson and Curt Teunissen have agreed to serve. Elders – Dave Mulder and Dick Huibregtse have agreed to serve. Dick being a one year term. Motion to approve and support for the nominations granted. That motion carried. B. Proposed 2026 Budget: Finance Chairman Corey Kappers presented the proposed 2026 Budget. Motion to approve and support for the budget granted. That motion carried.
10. **Ministry Team Updates:** Aaron shared report on the latest Wednesday night youth meeting. He had expressed his gratitude to the congregation for the support shown to the youth group and the fun they had in shopping for items for the local Food Pantry.
11. **Adjourn and closing prayer:** There was a motion and support to adjourn. That motion carried. Pastor Brad closed the meeting with prayer.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, December 9th, 2025 7:00 PM

Annual Congregational meeting: Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 10:45am

Pastor Brad Veenendaal  
Dave Stoffregen (Clerk)



Dear Friends,

Our church family is enjoying a few new faces. **Rukiye** (pictured far right) came to faith in Christ at the end of her senior year in high school. She now lives in Ankara as a college freshman and attends our church. Rukiye is intelligent and an eager follower of Christ. Please pray for Rukiye.



**Mehmet and Ozge** (pictured above, center) are dating. They found our church address on the Internet. Sinan (pictured above, far left) did a series of evangelistic Bible studies with Mehmet and Ozge, and they placed their faith in Christ shortly afterwards. Please pray for this couple. They bubble with happiness.



This is **Ankara** from the sky. Please pray for Ankara's 6 million people. 99.9% of the population has never met a Christian and has never seen a Bible.

Love,

Brian and Dana

*Avant*

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[Kansas City, MO 64155](http://KansasCityMO64155)

[www.avantministries.org](http://www.avantministries.org)



On Sunday we **baptized five** new followers of Christ!



Please continue to pray for  
our **growing flock** in Turkey!



Love,

Brian and Dana

*Avant*

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[Kansas City, MO 64155](http://Kansas%20City%2C%20MO%2064155)

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Dear Friends,

On Friday night, Brian gave an evangelistic message at a **Thanksgiving outreach** (pictured below). More than half of the participants were unsaved. Please pray.



Our church **Instagram posts** continue to generate new visitors. For example, the fake, tongue-in-cheek picture below shows a traffic sign for our church in the bottom space. Our humor translated into 80.000 views on Instagram and new guests to the fellowship.



Speaking of funny, did you know that we have a dog that comes with its owner every Sunday and Wednesday? The dog's name is Chocolate. This past Sunday we celebrated **Chocolate and Aybala's birthdays**.

Love,

Brian and Dana



[10000 N Oak Trafficway](#)

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# KID'S PAGE



Christmas  
Begins with Christ

"Baby Jesus Song" (Tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")  
Baby Jesus, born today,  
In a manger filled with hay.  
Mary, Joseph by His side,  
Angels sang and stars did shine.  
Baby Jesus, born today,  
In our hearts You'll always stay.



What do elves post on social media?

Elf-ies

What did one snowman say to the other?

Do you smell carrots?

## THE EMOJI CHRISTMAS STORY



God sent an angel to tell Mary that she was going to be Jesus' mother. She was the first person to hear the good news of God's Christmas gift to the world. Luke 1:26-38



Caesar Augustus decided he needed to have a census to see how many people he ruled over that should be paying taxes. That meant Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem to register for the census. Luke 2:1-5



The inn in Bethlehem was so full that they didn't have a single room left for Mary and Joseph to stay in. Even though she was about to have a baby. Luke 2:6-7



The shepherds were so surprised when the night sky over their herd of sheep was filled with angels praising God and letting them know that Jesus, the Savior had been born in Bethlehem. They were so excited they ran to see Jesus right away. Luke 2:8-18



The wise men saw the new star in the sky and they knew that meant the King had been born. They decided to go and see Him and bring Him gifts. Matthew 2:1-2 and Matthew 2:9-11



When Herod found out there was a new King he was so mad he missed the fact that Jesus had come to save him too. God had to make sure that the wise men didn't talk to Herod again. Matthew 2:3 and Matthew 2:12



The Christmas story is about the greatest Christmas present ever given - Jesus. Jesus came to earth to be our Savior and let everyone know that He loves them very much and wants to save them from sin. John 3:16



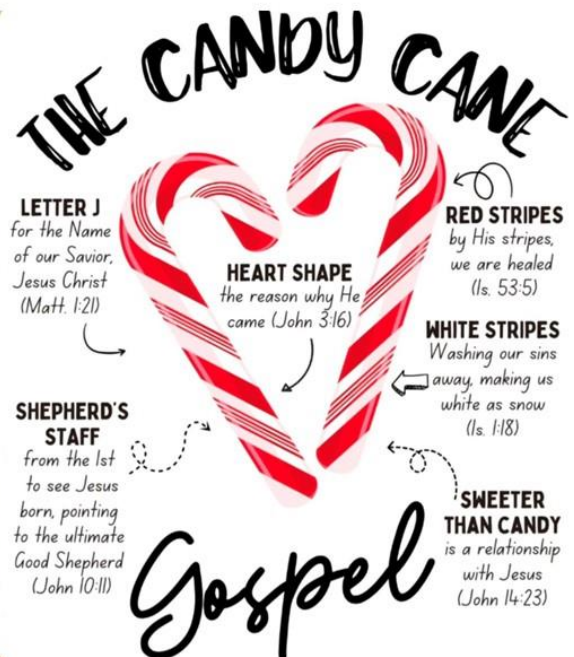
If you want to receive the greatest Christmas present ever, you can! Simply pray to God and ask Him to forgive you for your sins, and to be your Savior. Acts 2:37-38 and Romans 10:9-10



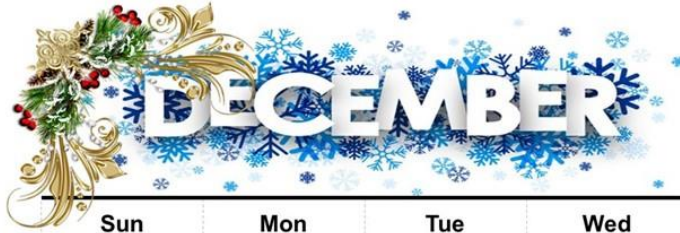
## Nativity TONGUE TWISTERS

GET ONE POINT FOR EACH TONGUE TWISTER YOU SAY WITHOUT ANY MISTAKES!

- \_\_\_\_ "SHEPHERDS SAW SHINING STARS SOFTLY SHINING."
- \_\_\_\_ "WISEMEN WANDERED WEST TO WATCH A WONDROUS STAR."
- \_\_\_\_ "MARY'S MIRACULOUS MANGER MAKES MANY MARVEL."
- \_\_\_\_ "JOSEPH JOYFULLY JOURNEYED TO JUDEA FOR JOYOUS JESUS"
- \_\_\_\_ "ANGELS ANNOUNCED AMAZING ACTS ABOUT A BABY IN A MANGER."
- \_\_\_\_ "FRANKINCENSE, MYRRH, AND GOLDEN GIFTS GLITTERED GREATLY."
- \_\_\_\_ "BETHLEHEM'S BIG, BRIGHT STAR BRILLIANTLY BEAMED."
- \_\_\_\_ "BABY JESUS BORN BENEATH BETHLEHEM'S BLAZING STAR."
- \_\_\_\_ "GENTLE SHEPHERDS GATHERED, GAZING AT GOD'S GREAT GLORY."
- \_\_\_\_ "MIGHTY MAGI MADE MANY MILES TO MEET THE MESSIAH."
- \_\_\_\_ "MARY MADE MARVELOUS MUSIC IN THE MANGER'S MIDST."
- \_\_\_\_ "TINY TOES TAPPED TENDERLY IN THE TINY TOWN OF BETHLEHEM."
- \_\_\_\_ "JOSEPH JUGGLED JARS OF JOY FOR JESUS' JUBILEE."
- \_\_\_\_ "ANGELIC ANTHEMS ANNOUNCED ASTONISHING ACTS ALOUD."
- \_\_\_\_ "MANGER HAY HELD HUMBLE HOPES OF HOLY HARMONY."







Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 1:30pm Living Bible Study	2 1pm Dorcas Society 7pm Elders	3 6:30pm The Chosen Sm. Group Study 6:30pm CrossCenter	4	5	6 Cookie Walk
7 9:30am Worship 10:45am SS / POW45 10:45am Annual Congregational Mtg	8 6:30pm Women's Bible Study	9 7pm Consistory	10 6:30pm CrossCenter	11	12	13
14 9:30am Worship 10:45am SS / POW45	15	16	17 6:30pm The Chosen Sm. Group Study 6:30pm Youth Christmas Party	18	19	20
21 9:30am Worship 10:45am SS / POW45	22 6:30pm Women's Bible Study	23	24 Worship Service	25 	26	27
28 9:30am Worship No SS/POW45	29	30	31 No Youth Group			

### WHERE'S MARY?



The ninety-five year old woman at the nursing home received a visit from one of her fellow church members.

'How are you feeling Mary?' the visitor asked.  
'Oh,' said the lady, 'I'm just worried sick!'

'What are you worried about, dear?' her friend asked. 'You look like you're in good health. They are taking care of you, aren't they?' 'Yes, they are taking very good care of me.' 'Are you in any pain?' she asked. 'No, I have never had a pain in my life.' 'Well, what are you worried about?' her friend asked again.

The lady leaned back in her rocking chair and slowly explained her major worry. 'Every close friend I ever had has already died and gone on to heaven. I'm afraid they're all wondering where I went.'

### KNOCK KNOCK!

The new pastor was visiting the homes of his parishioners. At one house it seemed obvious that someone was at home, but no answer came to his repeated knocks at the door. He took out a card, wrote 'Revelation 3 verse 20' on the back and stuck it in the door.



When the offering was processed the following Sunday, he found that his card had been returned. Added to it was this cryptic message, 'Genesis 3 verse 10.'

Reaching for his Bible to check out the citation, he broke up in gales of laughter. Revelation 3 verse 20 begins 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.'

Genesis 3 verse 10 reads, 'I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid for I was naked.'