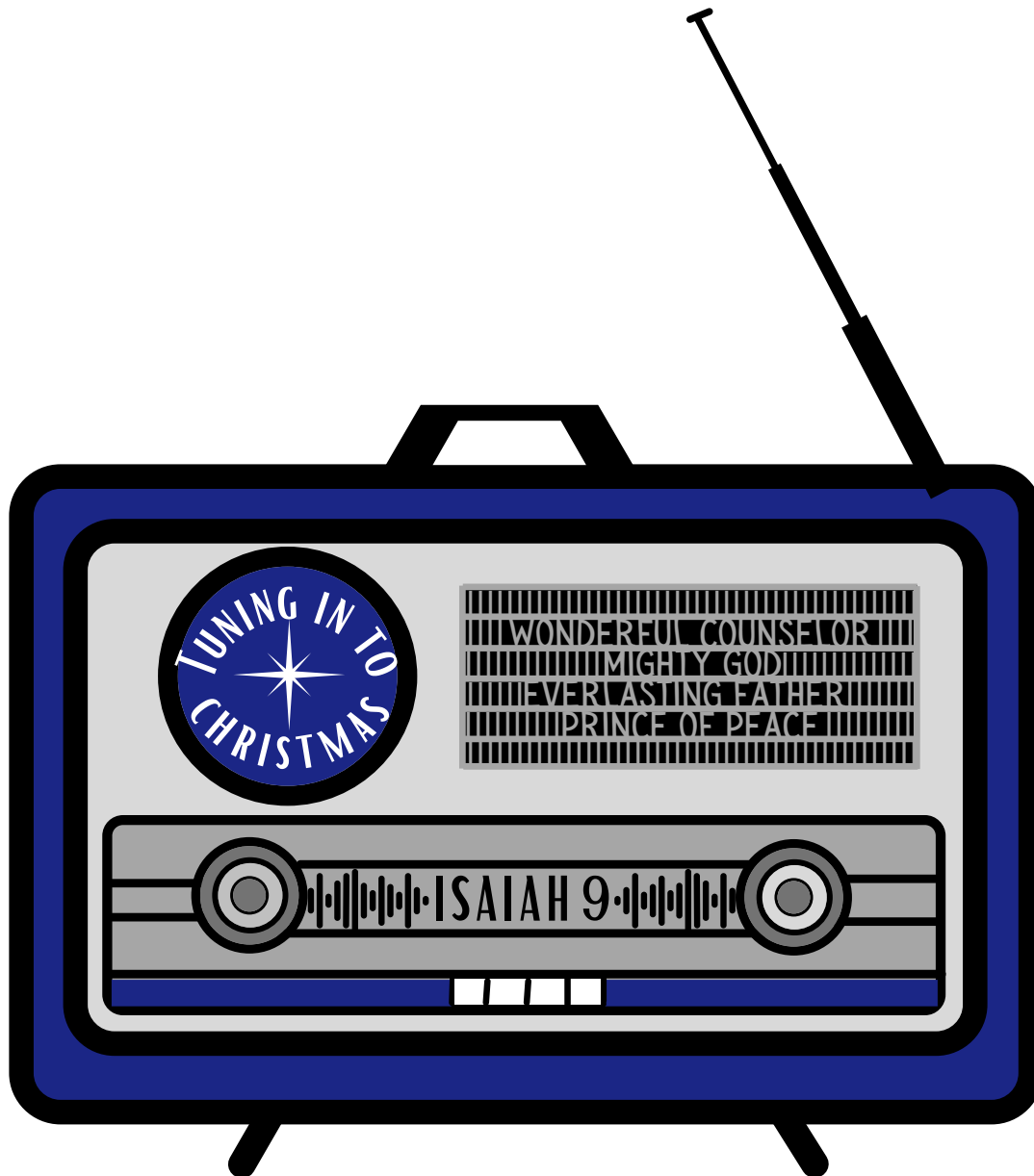


THE BELL

news from fellowship church



ADVENT 2021

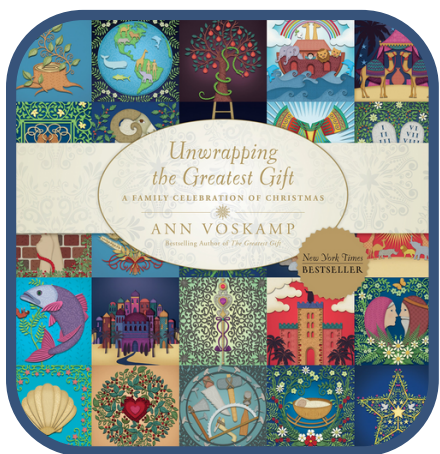
VOL. 29 | WINTER 2021 | NO. 4

Advent: Tuning in to Christmas

We all know what it means to “tune in” and to “tune out.” Perhaps you picture an old school radio for which being “tuned in” means you’re on a clear channel and being “tuned out” means you’re lost among the fuzz. Or perhaps you imagine yourself sitting in a classroom where you are either paying close attention (“tuned in”), or you’re out in left field, lost in a daydream (“tuned out”). Or maybe for you it’s a musical thing, where being “in tune” means being in sync with other instruments and voices, while being “out of tune” is to miss the mark, creating audible dissonance.

In the rhythms of church life, Advent is traditionally a season of waiting, designed to make us more “in-tune” with God’s great redemption story. By our Scriptures, songs, and prayers, we await the celebration of God’s promised Son, Jesus, who took on flesh for us and for our salvation.

At about the time you read this article (near Thanksgiving), there will be a tsunami of things demanding your attention: sales in the stores, work parties, school concerts, family gatherings, and more. Much of it is well-intended, and yet it sometimes makes us all the more likely to be “out of tune” with the true reason for the season.



As a counter balance, we invite the Fellowship family to join “Tuning in to Christmas” on three simple fronts:

- 1 By joining our worship services where we’ll “tune in” to Jesus as the one who is for us as our “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9).
- 2 By “tuning in” to the lyrics and backstories of some of the classic Christmas carols displayed in our gallery.
- 3 By journeying daily with us in the Advent Devotional *Unwrapping the Greatest Gift*, which is an immersive art book, fitting to all ages and usable on your own or at the family dinner table. Get your book at the Welcome Center! The conversational and colorful daily readings run December 1 - December 25.

In each of these ways, we hope that you’ll join us in “Tuning in to Christmas!”



Special Services

THANKSGIVING EVE
NOVEMBER 24
6:30PM

Psalms 100 says, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name." Our annual Thanksgiving Eve service is an interactive and intergenerational time of worship as we give thanks to God for all that we have been given over the past year. Join us in person or via livestream.

GOD WITH US
DECEMBER 5
3PM

This is an experience designed for all who are carrying extra sadness this holiday season. Sometimes it feels we carry these burdens alone in the midst of a season when everybody else seems to be joyous. In our honest lament, we will ground ourselves in the truth that God sees us, knows us, and grieves with us. Join us for this close-knit service in the East Room.

**CAROL SING &
 CHILDREN'S PAGEANT**
DECEMBER 15 6:30PM

Join us for an evening of singing familiar Christmas carols together and enjoying a pageant from our Fellowship children! Email Jess with your favorite carols to suggest: jmix@fellowshipreformed.org. Join us for dinner @ 5:45pm.

CHRISTMAS EVE
DECEMBER 24
5PM & 7PM | 11PM

The 5pm and 7pm Christmas Eve services will be identical and family-friendly (with nursery available), whereas the 11pm service will be a reflective service. All three will be candlelight services. Join us for one of these three services on Christmas Eve as we celebrate the birth of our Savior!

CHRISTMAS SUNDAY
DECEMBER 26
9:30AM | ONE SERVICE ONLY

We'll worship together at one service as we continue to celebrate Christ's birth, and we'll sing favorite Christmas carols of our Fellowship family. Please email Jess with your favorite carols (and why!): jmix@fellowshipreformed.org.



Fellowship Stories

Fellowship Group



Our home group was created during a dinner conversation with friends we'd met through FRC in the spring of 2019. My husband Paul and I had recently moved to Holland and had no connection to anyone here. We'd realized how difficult it was to meet others when you have just a few minutes before or after the service to chat.

During the planning dinner, we decided to invite two other couples who we didn't know as well but were eager to meet on a more personal level. We had no idea the amazing connection and dear friendships that would develop and grow throughout the pandemic. From the very beginning, we were vulnerable and honest with each other. We have a loose agenda, typically with catch up time as well as tending to our spiritual growth. We reflect on the passage from the prior week and review the discussion questions. It's a great way to hear everyone's thoughts on the Word and learn more about how God is working in and through us. We have so much fun too! We've collectively volunteered to pack boxes at Community Action House, donated boxes to Holland Rescue Mission, and even spent a long weekend together in South Haven to celebrate reuniting again in person after being vaccinated. It was an amazing retreat for all of us.

I believe home groups are an important part of the church body; developing relationships beyond just Sunday services. I'm not sure how we got so lucky with this incredible group of friends, but I know God had his hand in it from the start. We are beyond blessed to be part of our Fellowship Group.

- Mary Christensen

Home Communion

When elders are asked what's the most spiritually connecting/fulfilling part of service as an elder, the answer is invariably "serving communion." That same spiritual connection is experienced as elders share the love of Christ through communion with our homebound members and those living in care facilities. Every three or four months, two in-home communion elders visit their designated member to have conversation, to share Scripture, to offer communion and prayer. Interesting stories of historic Fellowship or family life make for engaging times. Worshiping Christ through the sharing of the bread and cup leads to a spiritual unity that each of us savors. Elders serving in this role are Barb Eriks, Jayne Phillips, Joan Stuttman, Linda Taylor, Sharon VanGeldern, Ruth Visser, Marcia Westrate, and myself.

If you are an ordained elder and would like to join the Home Communion Team, please email me: jan.dalman.38@gmail.com.

*- Jan Dalman
Home Communion Team Coordinator*



Community Night Meal Team



When we first joined this team, we saw it as an opportunity to be servants of Christ. Fellowship's Community Night has become a wonderful way of sharing Christ's love through our faith, food, and fellowship. We have truly enjoyed getting to know team members and have developed several friendships. This year, we have been fortunate to have several new individuals join our team, and they have been a real blessing. **That said, there's always room for more helpers!** The people we serve always seem to be thankful for the smiling faces and great food that has been prepared for them.

A heartfelt "thank you" to Tim Cooke (the *Dude with the Food*, as it's written on his apron). Tim, our head chef, makes our Community Night meals possible by planning, shopping, and preparing menus each week to provide something for everyone to enjoy. Also, thank you to Janice Bodenbender who steps-in for Tim in his absence. Please join us on Wednesday evenings for shared friendships, food, fellowship, and faith!

- Bob + Patty Van Den Brand
Community Night Meal Team Coordinators

Transition Update

We have been receiving résumés for the pastoral posting and started initial phone interviews with the candidates in the beginning of November. Interviews will continue throughout this month. We hope to move on to our second stage of interviewing after Thanksgiving, which is a face-to-face/Zoom interview with our full team. Our team is encouraged and feels that God will use this process to lead us to the right person for Fellowship. We will continue to accept résumés into December and will continue follow-up with personal interviews with successful candidates. **We thank the congregation for their prayers and encouragement in this process.** If you have questions, feel free to seek out any of our amazing team members: Linda Milanowski-Westdorp, Dina Price, Deb Van Schepen, Bill Dobberteen, Mark Recoulley, Scott Patchin, or myself (Heather Postma).

I'm excited and honored for this new experience and to be a part of this great team of people. Our team has a wide range of skills, which have melded together really well allowing us to learn from each other and accomplish our goals. It's fun talking with the candidates and seeing how God is working through their current ministries.

- Heather Postma
Search Committee Co-Chair



Tuning in to Missions



Fellowship Church is excited to adopt two monthly shifts with the new Food Club at CAH on the first Monday of every month from 8:45am-12pm, and the second Tuesday of every month from 5pm-7:30pm. **Please contact Shayne Wuerfel** (swuerfel@charter.net) or the church office if you are interested in serving!



Would you be up for meeting a new friend in the Holland community? The CIRCLES program through our mission partner, Good Samaritan Ministries, helps facilitate a relationship between community members and low-income individuals seeking to achieve their financial and personal goals. This is a GREAT opportunity to step outside our comfort zone and engage in relationship. There are many ways in which to invest your time including volunteering in the youth program. Trainings will be on December 4 and 7. **Contact Diana in the church office for more information:** dfonseca_pena@fellowshipreformed.org.

No Scrooge November



THANK YOU!!!



CEPAD, our mission partner in Nicaragua, is celebrating its 50th anniversary by hosting a celebration with supporters from across the globe. Pray for a small group from Fellowship who will attend and also visit our partners in the state of Pantazma in February 2022.



Tuning in to Hope

I have volunteered with the Hope Christmas Store at Fellowship for close to 10 years. This serving experience is something I look forward to each year. Honestly, the week of the Hope Christmas Store is one of my absolute favorite weeks of the whole year! For me, this has less to do with the holiday and more to do with sharing the mission and love of the Fellowship Church congregation with others in our local community. The week is filled with lots of hard work, wonderful memories, smiles, and full hearts.

The Hope Christmas Store is a one-day shopping event for families experiencing excessive financial burden. Rather than a hand-out to the families, the store provides an opportunity for the families to buy gifts for one another at a very discounted rate. The families that participate in the Hope Christmas Store are from Lakewood Elementary, Pine Creek Elementary, and Fellowship Church. Interacting with the families while they are shopping is such a unique and fun way to serve at Fellowship!



The first year I volunteered for the Hope Christmas Store I was a gift wrapper in the area where the children shop for their parents' gifts. It was such a fun and memorable experience that I was hooked with volunteering for the Hope Christmas Store! In the following years, I have served at the Hope Christmas Store in so many different ways: set-up, clean-up, greeter, and shopper, and now I help support Karen Donker with the organization of this special event.

I encourage you to take part in this opportunity to serve by donating and/or volunteering for the Hope Christmas Store. Email kldonker@fellowshipreformed.org to learn more.

- Stacie Hoey



Sign up at the Welcome Center to help!



Baptisms



Blaine Matthew
Rebekah & Brandon Folkert
 Happening November 21!

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

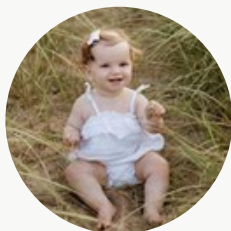
Ephesians 3:16-19 (NIV)



Isla Lynne
Evan & Sarah Kobes

"Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth. So God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.'"

Genesis 9:16-17 (NIV)



Hazel Mae
Nate & Jeanne Poel

"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God."

Philippians 1:9-11 (NIV)

+ New Members



Jerry + Diane Bos

Jerry and Diane have two grown children and two grandkids. These Holland natives have many hobbies, such as gardening, fishing, biking, and woodworking. They are enjoying the retired life, and their favorite place in the world is their home. They love that Fellowship is made up of friendly, caring people.



Stephen + Susan Buck

Steve and Susan have a shared love of biking. Susan also enjoys quilting, while Steve, a retired history professor, loves to read and camp. They moved to Holland to be closer to their son's family. Their favorite place in the world is the Medicine Bowl Mountain Range in Wyoming because of the beauty of God's creation and sweet family memories.



Kris + Barb DePree

Kris and Barb enjoy hiking, biking, and while Barb especially loves to travel, you can catch Kris on the golf course. They have three grown daughters, three sons-in-law, and two grandsons. Barb is a women's health physician and Kris is in the real estate game. They love the friendly and welcoming Fellowship community.



Rebekah + Brandon Folkert

Beka and Brandon have a 7-month-old son, Blaine. The Hope grads share a love for reading, as well as watching Hope College basketball! Beka also enjoys crafting and baking. Brandon loves the Harry Potter series and if he could have any super power, it would be to fly so he can see the world. Fellowship already feels like home to them.





Daniel & Petra Gonzalez-Gomez

Danny and Petra love to spend time with their family and go on walks. Danny also enjoys drumming. These newlyweds are both finishing their final year of college. Danny is a police cadet studying criminal justice, and Petra is a student teacher studying special education. They love the people and worship at Fellowship, as well as helping lead the middle school youth group!



Cheryl & David Hulst

Cheryl and David have been married for 41 years! They have two adult children and four grandchildren. These retirees love to travel, boat, and spend time with their family. Cheryl also loves to bake, while David enjoys outdoor activities. Although they lived in various places their first 12 years of marriage, Holland has always felt like home to them.



Abigail & Nathan Price

Abbey and Nathan got married in 2020 and love spending time with their puppy. Nathan enjoys camping and card games. Abbey wishes she had the super power of speed reading so she could read even more books! Her favorite series is *Mark of the Lion* by Francine Rivers. The Prices love the community at Fellowship, and Abbey is enjoying being a part of the worship team!



Ed & Jennie Schmidt

Ed and Jennie have two grown children and two granddaughters. Jennie loves music, Ed enjoys college sports, and they both love to golf. Ed's favorite place in the world is anywhere with his wife (how sweet!). The Schmidts love the thought-provoking sermons and that people at Fellowship are truly interested in growing in their faith.



Craig & Wendy Spoelhof

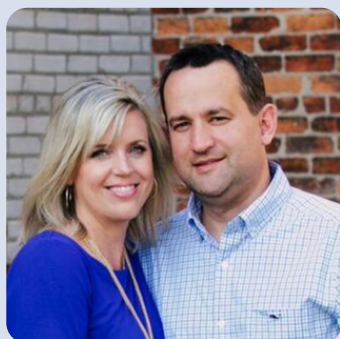
Craig and Wendy love to exercise, read, and travel. Wendy's favorite place is Bora Bora because of the snorkeling, and Craig loves the mountains in Colorado. Their three sons - Joe, Matt, and Thomas - are all in their 20s. These Holland natives love the casual, yet meaningful, mission and worship of a friendly, neighborhood church.



Jim & Nancy VanHeest

Jim and Nancy have two grown daughters and two sons-in-law. Nancy loves to volunteer and read, while Jim enjoys gardening and golfing. The VanHeests loved their vacations to Key West, FL (Jim's favorite) and San Juan, Puerto Rico (Nancy's favorite). They are excited to be back at Fellowship after many years away as urban missionaries.

Welcome to Fellowship!



Hope & Marcel VandenTop

Hope and Marcel have two children in college: Elyssa and Gavin. They love to travel! Marcel's favorite place in the world is Wailea, Maui, Hawaii because it's a paradise. Hope's favorite is their cottage up north because of the continued and cherished memories there. The VandenTops love the Bible-based teaching, as well as the friendly congregation at Fellowship.



Faithful Stewardship

Throughout this newsletter, you have read and seen the ways our congregation embraced new ministry frontiers in the reality we find ourselves living (post?) pandemic. What a gift it has been to see staff and lay leaders implement innovative new ministry initiatives AND reignite famous traditions from years past that we missed last year. It has truly been evidence of God's good work being carried out by Fellowship Church.

God has sustained these ministries through our shared financial generosity to (the general fund of) Fellowship Church. You will notice in the charts that our finances are not in as strong a position as the past. Thankfully, we have fewer expenditures due to a smaller payroll, but our gifts also remain lower than last year at this time. Our finance team is paying close attention to the numbers and remains hopeful for the coming year, but would also like to ask you to remember to financially support the ministry God is doing through Fellowship Church as you make your end-of-year giving decisions.

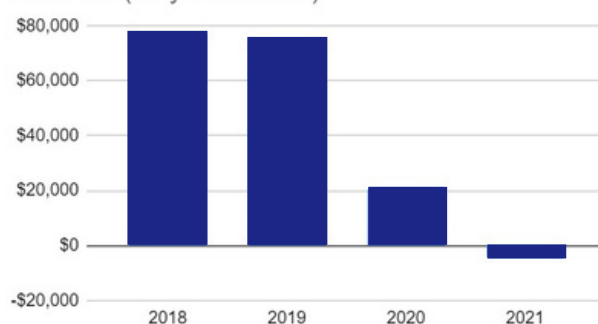
Thank you for the multiple ways you contribute to our life together. Together we live out our mission to love God and others as an accepting community, centered in Christ, focused on developing faithful followers of Jesus. No matter the challenges we face, each person's contribution to our mission matters. We are in this together!

- Nate Schipper
Pastor of Congregational Engagement

JULY - OCTOBER		2021	2020
BUDGET	Gifts Received	\$424,782	\$452,612
	Expenses	\$428,312	\$438,040
	Balance	-\$3,530	\$20,887
Building Debt		\$2,235,768	\$2,555,892

If you wish to make an ongoing giving commitment to Fellowship, visit www.fellowshipreformed.org/give

Balance (July - October)



I've been teaching Sunday School for almost 20 years. It started out as a way to spend time with my own kids, but it quickly became something I enjoyed and looked forward to on a regular basis. Getting to know these kids is so much fun. However, teaching Sunday school has become as educational an experience for me as it is for them. It's one thing to try and teach them, but it's another thing to listen to what they have to say. It doesn't matter what age they are, when given a chance to say what is on their mind, these kids can provide hope, excitement, and even wisdom with their words. It is my hope that I am able to inspire them in some way, but the inspiration they provide me is something I will always cherish.

- Darrin Duisternars
Children's Sunday School Teacher

Children's Ministry

What do you like best about BLAST (Bible Learning and Sharing Together) on Wednesday Nights?

"I like art time because I love doing art everywhere."

- Case

"I liked learning about Adam and Eve (creation) because we got to learn about how God made fruits and vegetables."

- Sawyer



Upcoming Events

Family Movie Night

November 19
6-8pm
Dinner & a movie!

Family Christmas Party

December 11
10am-12pm
Christmas treats, crafts, & a movie!

Family Advent Kits

Look for them on Sunday, November 21! Grab one per family at the Child Check-In Kiosk. Activities will include a window Advent calendar, a family devotional book, and an Advent coloring book.



Elevate

The most rewarding thing about being a middle school youth group leader is seeing the students grow and interact with each other throughout the year. One of my favorite memories from the past year is the summer retreat and getting a full weekend to spend and worship with all the students. As leaders, our biggest prayer and hope for the weekend was that each student had a feeling of belonging and acceptance. I was blown away by the compassion and inclusivity of the group. It was such a strong feeling of peace seeing the presence of God so tangibly in our students. Even in the midst of a storm (just a small tornado warning sending us to a basement with many, many spiders), the students leaned into God with prayer, worship, and laughter. It's a simple thing to say you'll trust God through a storm, but it's another to see a group of our youth do it with such reverence. I'm honored to be a small part of their journey and grow alongside each student.

- Michelle Bocks
Elevate Leader



HSM



Going into this school year I felt like there was a lot to make up for. After all of the restrictions the previous years, our schedule needed to be full of activities again. The year kicked off with a robbery mystery dinner. With the leaders as the characters, the students had to figure out who robbed the celebrity musician of her beloved chihuahua, Chichi. Next we celebrated homecoming at West Ottawa. Friday was the tailgate before the game. Saturday we invited the students to a formal dinner party. The leaders prepared and served the students who were all dressed up for the dance that night. Our annual lock-in made a comeback. The fun started with an Amazing Race-themed photo scavenger hunt. One stop consisted of crashing Pastor Nate's peaceful homestead for a picture and a penny. Next stop was laser tag at The Lost City, where we played to see who was MVP. Back at the church we played more games and watched a movie before calling it a night. So far this year has been so much fun, and there is only more on the horizon for the leaders and students involved in HSM.

- Lindsey McFarland
HSM Leader

