Advent comes during the darkest time of the year. That's not on accident. This season is meant to focus our attention on our expectation that the Light of the World which will come again to us, even as Israel waited for their messiah in the time before Jesus. We cannot rush through the waiting; the darkness will lift, but only in its own time. After Advent, the celebration of Christmas in the church calendar lasts for twelve days culminating in the feast of Epiphany on January 6. During the season that follows, we remember that Christ our Light brings hope to our lives and we remember Christ's ministry on earth. But as we turn toward Lent in mid-February, we are reminded that the Light of Christ penetrates and illuminates even the darkness of our lives. And so Lent becomes an opportunity to reexamine our lives and to set aside that which hinders our walk with Christ in preparation for Easter. May God bless us and sanctify us as we pass through these holy days.
Dear Sisters and Brothers,

There’s a story about a man who found himself trapped on the roof of his house by a rapidly rising flood. Fearing for his life, he prayed to God to save him. A few minutes later, he saw a life preserver floating down through the waters. But he let it pass, telling himself “God will save me!” As the waters kept rising, he prayed again. A few minutes later, a boat came down the river carrying several people. They called to him and invited him to climb into the boat, but he called back to them “No thanks! God will save me!” The waters kept rising and he prayed again. A moment later, a helicopter thundered overhead and a rope dropped down to haul him up. But the man called up to the rescuers “No thanks! God will save me!” Pretty soon the waters rose and the man was swept away by the flood and died. When he got to heaven, he stood before God with his hands on his hips and said, “God, where were you?! I was praying for you to rescue me!” And God responded, “Well, I sent you the life preserver and the boat and the helicopter…what more do you want from me?”

While it’s a silly story, it contains an important point: relying on God does not mean passively waiting for a “miracle” (as we might perceive it); rather, God expects us to faithfully act with God where God is leading us. We certainly must rely on God and trust in God

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and we should always, always pray for God to lead us where God would have us go. But it is simultaneously up to us to faithfully follow when God leads!

First Covenant is passing through a challenging season in our life together. Our attendance and participation are low, our finances are in tough shape, the ministry programs we have traditionally done are struggling to find the necessary volunteers and support to continue. These are very real challenges that we cannot ignore; our current trajectory could lead us to a point where we would be unable to continue in our ministry. This is our reality; we cannot ignore it.

Yet despite these challenges, I firmly believe that with God’s help and God’s leading and with our faithful response, there are new seasons of life and of fruitful ministry for God’s Kingdom still ahead of us! That is my firm conviction!

As we seek to step into this future, we must start with prayer. But prayer is not an excuse to sit back like that man in the rooftop, waiting for God to act for us to change our circumstances. Rather, it means listening to God, being changed by God, and aligning ourselves with where God is already at work in our community in order to join God in that work as our gifts and talents and circumstances allow. Prayer is not a passive task; we must act with God, in response to God to follow where God is leading.

This Advent, will you join me in a month of deliberate, dedicated, and focused prayer for our church and the future that God has in store for us? Would you pray with me, not that God would do something for us, but that God would instead strengthen and empower us and lead us into new season of fruitful ministry, not for our sake or our good, but for the sake of God’s Kingdom and for the good of our neighbors? And as we listen for God’s leading, will you commit yourself with me to respond to that leading?

I can’t promise that this will be a quick or painless process. Change is often difficult and takes time. But unless we are open and willing to enter the new frontiers that God lays in front of us, leaving our places of comfort behind, our trajectory will remain the same. Let’s pray. And let’s respond.

Grace and peace,

Advent Month of Prayer

During this Advent season, let’s join together to seek God’s leading for our congregation. Let’s pray – as individuals and as groups – that God would lead us into a new season of vibrant and fruitful ministry right here in our community of Superior.

Framing Question: What is God’s preferred future for our church congregation and how do we step into that future?

Week 1 (Nov 26-Dec 3): Pray for a spiritual awakening in our community of Superior.
- Pray for hope and light in the midst of darkness and despair.
- Pray for ministry opportunities within our neighborhood and city.
- Pray that God would show us the needs that God is leading us to meet.
- Pray for our brothers and sisters in other congregations and organizations who are our partners in building God’s Kingdom in Superior.

Week 2 (Dec 3-Dec 10): Pray for a spiritual awakening within our church.
- Pray for clear and fresh vision of what God would have us become.
- Pray for openness in our hearts to embrace necessary changes and new opportunities.
- Pray for willingness in our hearts to let go of things that need to be set aside.
- Pray for new companions to join us in God’s work.
Cook’s Corner

Original Cracker Snacks

1 pkg dry original Ranch house dressing
1 tsp grated parmesan cheese
1 tsp dill weed
Scant cup vegetable oil

MIX ingredients in a large bowl. Add 1 bag oyster crackers and mix well. Bake 5 minutes on a sprayed cookie sheet @ 350.

This is a great snack for holiday get togethers!

Hot Chocolate Mix

1- 8 qt box instant milk, dry
1-16oz Quick drink mix
1-6 oz non dairy creamer
1 cup powdered sugar

MIX well then store in a covered container. Use 1/3 cup of the mix in a cup and fill with boiling water.

This is a nice drink for a cold winter day!

Greeter Schedule

Dec 3  Curt and Marsha Adams
Dec 10 Curt and Ulla Gustafson-Carlson
Dec 17 Curt and Carol Edwards
Dec 24 Curt and Lynn Johnson
Dec 31 Curt and Tom Levin
Jan 7  Curt and David Elmgren
Jan 14 Curt and Sandy Petzold
Jan 21 Curt and Don Johnson
Jan 28 Curt and Kathy Skandel
Feb 4  Curt and Marge Smith
Feb 11 Curt and Carol Hursh
Feb 18 Curt and Sally Thompson
Feb 25 Curt and Nels Hursh

If you are unable to make it for your assigned date or if would prefer to not participate, please contact the church office or find your own substitute!

Birthdays and Anniversaries!

December
1 Cindy Deck
6  Bill & Dianne Greely
6 Linda Parker
11 Amos Oliver
27 Nels Hursh

January
2 Danielle Deck
4 Gert Esselstrom
18 Harold Kobernick
19 Delores Staurseth
27 Josh Young

February
5 Dave & Cheryl Anderson
6 Beth Davidson
22 George Skandel
27 Zakary Young

Are we missing your birthday or anniversary? Let us know! We’ll add you to our list!
Advent Month of Prayer
(continued from p. 3)

- Pray for wisdom and discernment for those who currently lead our congregation.
- Pray for our leaders to have a quiet trust in God and an indifference to everything but the will of God.
- Pray for the basic financial needs of our church.
- Pray for new leaders to emerge to partner with us in God’s mission and help lead us into God’s future.

- Pray that a fresh wind of the Holy Spirit would inhabit all of us together.
- Pray that we would each embrace again the abundant life that Christ offers to us.
- Pray that our singular focus as a church would be on proclaiming and embodying the Good News of abundant life in Christ in thought, word, and deed.
- Pray that those who need to receive the life of Christ might encounter God through our humble and loving service.

Opportunities for Prayer:
- Set aside time to pray each day on your own.
- Pray with others from the church throughout the week.
- Join the Monday evening prayer fellowship (6:30pm).
- Gather Wednesdays at 4:30pm for prayer and soup dinner!
- Pray with Pastor Luke on Sundays at 9:45am.

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Getting to Know You
Curt Christianson

Curt was born Nov 27, 1926. He grew up in Superior and still lives in the family home that originally belonged to his Grandfather Gilbert, then to his parents and now him. His father was a plumber and died of TB at the age of 36 when Curt was 10 and Marge was a newborn baby. His grandmother moved in with them to take care of the children so his mother could go to work to support the family. An aunt from Sioux City, Iowa, took Marge to Iowa to care for Marge for a year.

Curt had 4 siblings. Marge Smith, who also attends our church, was the youngest. His sister Joyce died at the age of 62. He also had 2 brothers. Bobby died of pneumonia at the age of 5; Jimmy was 15 when he drowned at Pattison Park. Curt was sailing the Great Lakes at the time and received a ship to shore call with the bad news. Curt's ship had gone through the Soo Locks and was just entering the Allouez area. Sheriff Ekroth picked Curt up dockside and took him right out to Pattison Park. Authorities were still looking for Jimmy's body when Curt saw his brother floating under the diving platform. Curt's mother received some monetary memorials and wanted to do something with the money that would last. She had a stained glass window made and it was placed near the peak of the old church on Belknap street, identical to the window now at the front of our sanctuary.

Curt entered the Navy at age 17 aboard the USS Dorchester. He was in the South Pacific when WWII ended. (You can see a tile on the wall at the Bong Center in Superior with his name on it). Curt made several trips on merchant ships between Seattle and Japan. But when there was a labor strike, he returned home to work as a longshoreman, at the King Midas flour mill, and at the shipyard before spending 22

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years sailing ore boats on the Great Lakes. At one point he even sailed on the Edmund Fitzgerald, which at the time was a brand new ship. Curt retired in 1975 at the age of 48 in order to care for his mother whose health was declining, which he did until her death.

Curt has been a lifelong member of First Covenant Church, is well versed in scripture, and is devoted to the Lord. He has served as an usher and greeter for many years and is attends nearly every church meeting or function. Often he can be found in the kitchen washing dishes or helping on church work days. He never says no. At September’s block party, he wandered into the kitchen to help clean up, Carol Edwards told him, "Curt, you don't need to do the dishes. Why don't you head on home." He just looked at Carol and said, "Just move over, Toots!" What a hoot!

Curt has been a member of the YMCA for many years, staying active even today. He played basketball until a couple of years ago. He still goes to the Y nearly every day to exercise, walk the track and soak in the whirlpool.

Thanks Curt, for you devotion, service, and faithfulness to First Covenant and to God’s Kingdom!

Note: What an enjoyable time I spent with Curt at his home interviewing him. He showed me around the house and I saw many of his mother’s belongings and old family photos. His love and adoration for his mother is so apparent. Curt is a very special man. When you get a chance sit down and have a chat with him. It’ll be well worth your time. —Sally

Thanks to Sally Thompson and Sandy Petzold for pulling together this newsletter. If you are interested in helping in this publication or if you have submissions please contact Sally, Sandy, or Pastor Luke. Newsletters are published quarterly in February, May, August, and November.