

THE MESSENGER

Believing, Behaving, Becoming Like Christ

December 11th, 2025

PASTORS CORNER Part 1 – A Look Back

As we near the end of 2025, I've been reflecting with a heart full of gratitude for all that God has done in and through our church this year. I know life, especially this time of year, is busy. But when you pause long enough to look back, you realize just how much life, ministry, and kingdom impact has taken place.

This year, we worshiped together, grew together, served together, and stepped boldly into our community with the love of Christ. Our worship and teaching life carried us through a rich and meaningful journey—beginning the year with an overview of the Gospels, moving into a powerful Lenten series on faithfulness through the book of Daniel, walking together through deeply moving Holy Week and Easter services, celebrating all summer long with our Summer Playlist sermon series, exploring the Parables of Jesus this fall, leaning into our Time, Talent, and Treasure stewardship series, and now celebrating Advent together. Week after week, God has been faithful, and it has been a joy to grow together in understanding, commitment, and discipleship.

Inside our own church family, we saw God at work in countless quiet and meaningful ways. We cared for one another through meal trains, cards, prayers, visits, and fellowship, and supported those walking through grief and hardship through ministries like GriefShare. Our Pastor's Bible Study and Sunday School classes helped deepen relationships and spiritual formation. We shared Valentine care packages with our seniors and shut-ins, reminding them how deeply they are loved. All throughout the year, the church continued to be the church—bearing one another's burdens, showing compassion, and strengthening the bonds that hold our congregation together.

Beyond our walls, we served our broader community with joy. We marched in the Shrine Parade and the Honeybee Festival Parade, participated in Scare on the Square, and helped in the Hospitality Tent at the fair. We supported local families through the Soup Kitchen, Food Pantry, and Clothing Closet, and we extended compassion through benevolence and acts of kindness that most people will never even hear about. Our annual Christmas in July offering helped support families in Texas recovering from devastating floods, showing once again that FCC's love stretches far beyond city limits.

We also continued our strong commitment to our local schools—providing socks for preschoolers, books for 1st graders, math flash cards for 3rd graders, and shoes for families in need during Holy Week. We loved being part of Homecoming week at the high school while hosting Lunch on the Lawn, encouraging students and staff and reminding them that their community and our church is cheering them on.

Our investments in the next generation continued to flourish. Through God's Gang, Sunday School, and our growing Club 3–5 youth group, we watched our children and young people learn, serve, and grow. We celebrated a wonderful class of graduating seniors and awarded thousands of dollars in scholarships to support their futures. And of course, we hosted another incredible Vacation Bible School, filled with music, laughter, crafts, lessons, and the good news of Jesus shared in joyful and memorable ways.

Woven through all of this was the gift of fellowship—life-giving moments that knit us together as a family. We enjoyed a summer of fun with our pool party, church picnic, family bowling night, Tailgate Sunday, trivia night, and all the smaller moments of joy shared before and after worship each week. These gatherings reminded us that Christian community is not only about serving and learning, but also about celebrating, laughing, and simply enjoying the gift of being together.

The list could go on and on—but it is so important to pause and honor the incredible, faithful, Christ-filled ministry that took place this past year. Thank you, church, for being the church!!!



THE MESSENGER

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Disciples of Christ)

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Web page: www.fccparis.org • Facebook: FCC Paris

Office Hours: Mon.-Fri, 8 AM-1 PM

Pastor Isaac Mahler, Senior Minister

COME WORSHIP WITH US

COFFEE BAR AT 8:00 AM • WORSHIP AT 9:00 AM • SUNDAY SCHOOL AT 10:15 AM

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

First Christian Church's mission is to grow disciples who are:

**"Believing in Christ,
Behaving as Christ,
Becoming like Christ"**

SPLINTER FROM THE BOARD

Date: November 11, 2025

Attendance: 19 members present (16 voting)

Senior Minister's Report: Fall Bible Study and Grief Share have been going well and will take a break for the holidays. Our fall sermon series on the Parables was well received, and Advent planning is well underway. Pastor Isaac continues to care for the congregation through counseling, visitation, and participation in both church and community events.

Youth Director's Report: Faith continued to finish her time here well, ensuring a smooth transition as she steps down from the role of Youth Director. The celebration of her ministry has been moved to January due to Stevie's earlier-than-expected arrival. Faith preached her final sermon on October 5th.

Treasurer's Report: The General Fund remains healthy with a balance of **\$287,854.91**. While giving still trails expenses overall, the gap has narrowed significantly over the past two months.

Christian Education: A motion passed to use the payout from the Hasler Children's Fund to support God's Gang.

Community Outreach: Mary K. Bradford and Donna Moody will once again chair the committee in 2026, continuing their excellent work in the community.

Evangelism: The team was active this fall—walking in the Honeybee Parade, participating in the first Potterfest, and joining Scare on the Square.

Membership: The committee hosted the Pastor Appreciation Breakfast on October 12th and Trivia Night on November 7th. They will also host Faith's reception (now scheduled for January) and the annual "Birthday Cake for Jesus" on December 21st.

Staff Relations: A task force was approved to revise the Youth Director job description and explore the possibility of dividing the position into two roles—Kids Director and Youth Director—to best serve the church in the coming years. Sammy's hourly pay was increased from \$17.00 to \$18.50 following successful completion of her onboarding period. A staff Love Offering will once again be collected and distributed on December 21st.

SPLINTERS CONTINUED

Stewardship & Finance: The proposed 2026 budget was presented and approved with a minor adjustment. It will now move to the congregation for final approval.

Worship: Plans are in place to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas.

Investment Fund: As of October 1st, the church has **\$1,480,647.61** invested. Funds continue to perform well, and efforts are underway to improve clarity around distributions and disbursement guidelines.

Trustees: A change in our phone carrier will result in significant annual savings. A new service provider will also oversee the dedicated elevator phone to ensure state compliance.

New Building Fund: Updated cost estimates were received for potential new construction: **\$2 million** to build and attach to the back of the church. **\$750,000** to build on the property across the street. A motion passed to use New Building Funds to purchase full architectural blueprints for the building across the street.

CWF: The Giving Tree is once again on display, inviting members to purchase gifts or give their time to bless residents in assisted living facilities and FCC members at Brookstone.

Additional Business: A Committee Charter Task Force was approved to update all committee charters based on current needs and feedback. The 2026 leadership slate was presented and approved and now moves to the congregation for a vote on December 14th. Bill Moss requested increased transparency in the monthly Treasurer's Report; this is now reflected in the Messenger.

PERMIT #147
Paris, Illinois
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NEWS FROM THE PEWS

Paris Healthcare: Martha Stephen, Ron Odle, Chuck McClarey & Chuck Dean

Pleasant Meadows: Linda Driver

Twin Lakes: Irma Julian, Brandon Bell

Continued Prayers: Paula Shepherd, Carol Winemiller, Linda Chittick, Rev. Mike Dixon, Brad Farnham, Marge Houghland, Roy Rogers, Sue Bennett, Russ Adams, Theresa Emerson, Nancy Weger, Betty Swanson, Pete Templeton, Karen Jobst & Unspoken.

BECOMING LIKE CHRIST

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, who is Christ the lord.
Luke 2:11

DECEMBER PRAYER

Lord,
Help us remember the true meaning of Christmas is the celebration of your son's birth. Don't let us get distracted by gifts and traditions; help us keep our focus on Jesus.

In Christ's name,
Amen.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The Congregational Meeting will be held on **December 14th** after the service to vote on the proposed officers/leaders & approve the budget for 2026. All members encouraged to stay for the meeting to vote.

PARENT MEETING

After the Congregational Meeting, we invite parents to stay for a short meeting to provide feedback about their hopes for Christian Education in 2026.

ATTENDANCE

We count because YOU count!

Nov 23rd: 106/ Nursery: 1 Online: 22/33* SS: 0

TOTAL: 140*

Nov 30th: 64/ Nursery: 1 Online: 53/80* SS: 0

TOTAL: 145*

Dec 7th: 131/ Nursery: 1 Online: 44/66* SS: 19

TOTAL: 198*

Per CCIW Regional Office: to allow for additional people watching electronically, the formula is - view count x 1.5

RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE



The monthly blood drive will be held Monday, December 15 from 11:30AM -- 5:30PM at the VFW Hall.

CIRCLE OF LIGHT GIVING TREE

Reminder that gifts with the name tag attached need to be turned in no later than **Wednesday, December 17th**. Thank you!

THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who helped with the Compassionate Clothing Closet Blanket Drive. Your generosity will be bringing comfort and warmth to those in need.

GOD'S GANG

We want to express our sincere gratitude to all volunteers for their help throughout the year. Your support really made a difference in making God's Gang a success. December has been packed with activities for the kids, including a recent caroling trip. Now, we invite you to come to our Christmas program on **December 17th** at 6 PM to hear the story of the birth of Jesus with music and scripture.

CIRCLE NEWS

Circle of Light will meet Tuesday, January 6th at 5:00 PM. The meeting will be held at Marge Houghland home as she is the hostess and Cathy Melendez will giving the lesson.

Circle of Prayer will meet at 6:00 PM on Thursday, December 11th in the Church Parlor.

Koinonia will meet on Thursday, December 18th at 9:00AM at Paris Family Restaurant for their Christmas Breakfast.

DISCIPLE'S MEN'S OUTING

The men will not be meeting in December. They will continue on January 10th in the Fellowship Hall.

JESUS BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

A birthday cake for Jesus will be served in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, **December 21st** after the Worship Service in Fellowship Hall. All of the congregation is invited to attend.

2024 OFFERING ENVELOPES

Please pick up your 2026 Offering Envelope box on the hall table. If you do not receive offering envelopes and would like to, sign the paper on the table or see Patty Waters.

COFFEE BAR

Our Membership Committee continues to sponsor the coffee bar each Sunday morning after 8am. Snacks are provided the first Sunday of each month. Donations for supplies are always appreciated, so we can continue to offer the coffee bar. Thank you!

THANK YOU!

We would like to give a special thank you to the Salvation Army Bell Ringers for raising \$1,420.90! Your dedication and kindness truly blesses our community.

Pastors Corner Part 2

Advent and a Look Ahead!

First, a special congratulations to everyone who participated in the Community Advent Service this past Sunday. It was a truly beautiful event, and our church family represented FCC with grace and excellence. Thank you for your participation in this event!

Next up on December 14th, we will hold our Annual Congregational Meeting immediately after worship to vote on our 2026 leadership team and budget.

Afterwards, we'll have a brief parent meeting to gather your feedback for the future of Christian Education. **Then**,

on December 17th, our kids will wrap up the year with the God's Gang Christmas Program. December 21st is **Christmas Swag Sunday!** Wear your favorite Christmas sweater, vest, tie, socks, or anything festive as we celebrate together. **On December 24th** at 6 PM, we will gather for our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service—one of the most meaningful and beautiful worship services of the year. **On December 28th**, we are blessed to have Greg Terry preaching as we prepare to turn the page into a new year.

Finally, as we enter the new year, we have some exciting things planned! **On January 25th**, we will

host FCC 101, a great opportunity for anyone wanting to learn more about who we are, how to get connected, or what it means to become a member. We'll meet right after worship with a light breakfast and plenty of time to talk and ask questions. We are also launching a brand-new sermon series called **"From the Cradle to the Cross."** This series will continue the story of Christmas and follow Jesus as He grows, begins His ministry, teaches, heals, calls disciples, challenges the proud, welcomes the broken, and ultimately leads us toward Holy Week and Easter. I am genuinely excited for the journey this series will take us on together.

As we close out 2025, I want to express my deep gratitude for this church. Your generosity, your resilience, your servant-hearted spirit, and your love for one another and for our community continue to inspire me. This church lives out what it means to follow Christ—not just in words, but in action. Thank you for letting me be a part of your lives and your walk with God. It is a privilege to serve as your pastor, and I look forward with hope and anticipation to all that the Lord has in store for FCC in 2026.

With Hope, Peace, Joy and Love!
Pastor Isaac

| Date | Worship Elder | Bread Elder | Deacons | Deaconess | Jr. Deacons | Ushers |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------|---------|--------------|-------------|---------|
| December 14, 2025 | Nels Kasey | Cindy Mathis | Team #1 | Jill Coombes | Team #2 | Team #3 |
| December 21, 2025 | Daniel Smittkamp | Tammy Terry | Team #2 | Connie R | Team #1 | Team #3 |
| December 24, 2025 | Barb Free | Pete Templeton | Team #3 | Margo Y | Team #2 | Team #3 |
| December 28, 2025 | Tammy Terry | Nels Kasey | Team #1 | Evie Gill | Team #1 | Team #3 |

FCC GIVING

| <u>December</u> | <u>11/2</u> | <u>11/9</u> | <u>11/16</u> | <u>11/23</u> | <u>11/30</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| ❖ General Fund | \$ 6,215.25 | \$ 2,269.50 | \$ 2,163.25 | \$ 5,470.00 | \$ 3,156.00 |
| ➤ Sunday School | | \$ 25.00 | | | |
| ➤ God's Gang | | | | | |
| ➤ MICE | | | | | |
| ➤ Food Pantry | \$ 100.00 | \$ 50.00 | | | |
| ➤ Choices Pregnancy | | | | | |
| ➤ Emergency | | | | | |
| ➤ Clothing Closet | | | | | |
| ➤ Love Offering | | \$ 1,750.00 | \$ 100.00 | \$ 570.00 | \$ 170.00 |
| ➤ Youth Fund | | \$ 25.00 | | | |
| ➤ Designated | | | \$ 11.00 | | |
| ➤ Pay Pal | | | | \$ 150.00 | |
| ❖ Mission Fund | | | | | |
| ➤ Undesignated | \$ 350.00 | \$ 0.00 | \$ 125.00 | \$ 125.00 | \$ 387.00 |
| ➤ Week of Compassion | | | | | \$ 50.00 |
| ➤ Blanket Sunday | | | \$ 50.00 | \$ 25.00 | |
| ➤ Thanksgiving Offering | | | | \$ 220.30 | \$ 5.00 |
| ❖ Building Fund | | | | | |
| ➤ Undesignated | \$ 240.00 | \$ 1,585.00 | \$ 300.00 | \$ 6,226.29 | \$ 828.00 |
| ➤ Life Center | \$ 210.00 | \$ 125.00 | \$ 100.00 | \$ 200.00 | |
| ❖ Memorial Fund | \$ 0.00 | \$ 0.00 | \$ 0.00 | \$ 0.00 | \$ 0.00 |
| ❖ Scholarship Fund | \$ 0.00 | \$ 0.00 | \$ 0.00 | \$ 0.00 | |
| ➤ Owens Music | | | | | \$ 100.00 |
| ❖ Permanent Fund | \$ 0.00 | \$ 0.00 | \$ 0.00 | \$ 0.00 | \$ \$ 0.00 |
| TOTAL | \$ 7,115. 25 | \$ 5,829.50 | \$ 2,849.25 | \$ 12,984.59 | \$ 4,696.00 |

LOVE OFFERING

The congregation at FCC is quite blessed to have such talented and dedicated staff. The congregation has an opportunity, through our Love Offering, to show our appreciation to the staff. Your Love Offering may be given any time until Monday, December 15th. Please use the Love Offering envelope in your envelope packet or use one of the pew envelopes. If you use a pew envelope, make sure you designate your giving to the Love Offering.