

Welcome to First Christian Reformed Church!
Pastor John Knoester
December 14, 2025 ♦ Third Sunday in Advent

* Please stand in body or in spirit

"Son of Adam, Son of heaven, given as a ransom"

Prelude

Ministry of Music: *"Behold Our God"* – Choir

Welcome/Announcements

* Sung Call to Worship: LUYH #599 v. 1-3

"Come, Christians Join to Sing"

1. Come, Christians, join to sing,
alleluia, amen!
Loud praise to Christ our King;
alleluia, amen!
Let all with heart and voice
before his throne rejoice;
praise is his gracious choice:
alleluia, amen!
2. Come, lift your hearts on high;
alleluia, amen!
Let praises fill the sky;
alleluia, amen!
Christ is our guide and friend;
to us he'll condescend;
his love shall never end;
alleluia, amen!
3. Praise yet our Christ again;
alleluia, amen!
Life shall not end the strain;
alleluia, amen!
On heaven's blissful shore
his goodness we'll adore,
singing forevermore,
alleluia, amen!

Words: Christian Henry Bateman, 1843, P.D. Music: Spanish Folk Melody; arr. Benjamin Carr, 1824; harm. David Evans (1874-1948); from *Revised Church Hymnary*, 1927, reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press; CCLI #678905

* Opening Prayer

* Call to Worship: (Based on Romans 13:11-12)

You know what time it is,
how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep.
For salvation is nearer to us now
than when we became believers;
the night is far gone, the day is near.
Let us then lay aside the works of darkness
and put on the armor of light.
Come, let us worship God.

—based on Romans 13:11-12, NRSV

* Opening Hymn of Praise: LUYH #574 v. 1-2

“How Great is Our God”

1. The splendor of the King, clothed in majesty;
let all the earth rejoice, let all the earth rejoice.
He wraps himself in light, and darkness tries to hide,
and trembles at his voice, and trembles at his voice.

Refrain

How great is our God!

Sing with me: how great is our God!

And all will see how great,

how great is our God!

2. From age to age he stands, and time is in his hands;
beginning and the end, beginning and the end.
The godhead, three in one, Father, Spirit, Son,
the lion and the lamb, the lion and the lamb.

Refrain

Bridge

Name above all names, worthy of all praise;
my heart will sing, how great is our God!

Refrain

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee:
How great thou art, how great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee:
How great thou art, how great thou art!

Refrain (Acapella)

How great is our God!

Sing with me: how great is our God!

And all will see how great,

how great is our God!

Words and Music: Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves and Ed Cash © 2004
worshiptogether.com songs/SixSteps Music (ASCAP), admin. EMI CMG Publishing/
Alletrop Music (BMI); CCLI# 678905

* God's Greeting

* We Greet Each Other

*(During the mutual greeting those lighting the Advent candle
are invited to make their way forward)*

*"Reconciling God and man,
Christ, our mighty champion"*

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Reader #1: We light these candles as a sign
of the coming light of Christ

**People: Advent means coming; We are preparing for
the full coming of God's kingdom.**

Reader #2: The nations shall beat their swords
into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nations,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

— Isaiah 2:4, NRSV

Reader #1: The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

— Isaiah 11:6, NRSV

Reader #2: The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.

—Isaiah 35:1-2, NRSV

Reader #1: Prepare the way of the Lord.
We light this candle in joy,
the joy that we have in Jesus, our Savior.

People: Prepare, then, the way of the Lord.

(The 3rd Advent candle is lit)

Hymn of Response: LUYH #101 v. 1,3

“How Bright Appears the Morning Star”

1. How bright appears the Morning Star,
with mercy beaming from afar;
the host of heaven rejoices.
O Righteous Branch, O Jesse’s Rod,
the Son of Man and Son of God!
We too will lift our voices:
Jesus, Jesus, holy, holy, yet most lowly,
come, draw near us;
great Emmanuel, come and hear us.
3. Rejoice, O heavens, and earth, reply;
with praise, O sinners, fill the sky
for this, his incarnation.
Incarnate God, put forth your power;
ride on, ride on, great Conqueror,
till all know your salvation.
Amen, amen! Alleluia, alleluia!
Praise be given
evermore by earth and heaven.

Words: William Mercer, 1859, after Philipp Nicolai, 1599, alt., P.D.; Music: Philipp Nicolai, 1599 P.D.; CCLI #678905

Offering: General Fund

Offertory: *“In the Bleak Midwinter”* – Terry and Joni B.

*(Following the offertory the children are invited forward
for the Children’s Message)*

Children's Message – Mrs. Marjo Rouw
(Following the children's message children ages 3-3rd grade are invited
to make their way to Children in Worship in the Fellowship Hall)

* Hymn of Preparation: LUYH #87 v. 1-2, 4-5
"Once in Royal David's City"

1. Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby
in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ, her little child.
2. He came down to earth from heaven
who is God and Lord of all;
and his shelter was a stable,
and his cradle was a stall:
with the poor, and meek, and lowly
lived on earth our Savior holy.
4. And our eyes at last shall see him,
through his own redeeming love,
for that child, so dear and gentle,
is our Lord in heaven above:
and he leads his children on
to the place where he has gone.
- 5 Not in that poor lowly stable
with the oxen standing by
we shall see him, but in heaven,
set at God's right hand on high;
there his children gather round,
bright like stars, with glory crowned.

Words: Cecil F. Alexander, 1848, P.D.

*"What a Savior, what a Friend,
what a glorious mystery"*

Scripture Readings: Matthew 1:18-25, Revelation 1:7-8

Prayer of Illumination

Message: ***"Advent Then and Now – How is He Coming?"***

Time of Prayer

"Once a babe in Bethlehem, now the Lord of history"

* Hymn of Application: *"Joy Has Dawned"* v. 1-4 (Gettys)

1. Joy has dawned upon the world, promised from creation;
God's salvation now unfurled—hope for ev'ry nation.
Not with fanfares from above, not with scenes of glory,
but a humble gift of love: Jesus born of Mary.
2. Sounds of wonder fill the sky with the songs of angels,
as the mighty Prince of Life shelters in a stable.
Hands that set each star in place shaped the earth in darkness,
cling now to a mother's breast—vulnerable and helpless.
3. Shepherds bow before the Lamb gazing at the glory.
Gifts of men from distant lands prophesy the story—
gold a King is born today; incense, God is with us;
myrrh, His death will make a way, by His blood He'll win us.
4. Son of Adam, Son of Man, given as a ransom.
Reconciling God and man—Christ our mighty Champion!
What a Savior, what a Friend, what a glorious mystery!
Once a babe in Bethlehem—now the Lord of history.

Words & Music by Stuart Townend & Keith Getty,
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* Advent Acclamation: Our Hope in the Age to Come

Leader: God saves the world through Jesus.

Those who call on that name will have life.

**People: Christ's hand reaches out beyond those
who say "Lord" to the infants who live
in the atmosphere of faith,
even to the farthest stars and planets of all creation.**

Leader: The boundaries of God's love are not known;
the Spirit works at the ends of the world
before the church has there spoken a word.
God will renew the world through Jesus,
who will put all unrighteousness out,
purify the works of human hands,
and perfect their fellowship in divine love.

**People: Christ will wipe away every tear;
death shall be no more.
There will be a new heaven and a new earth,
and all creation will be filled with God's glory.**

* God's Blessing

* Parting Praise: LUYH #604 v. 1-3 *"To God Be the Glory"*

1. To God be the glory, great things he has done;
so loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Refrain

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord;
let the earth hear his voice!*

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord;
let the people rejoice!*

*O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory; great things he has done.*

2. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God;
the vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Refrain

3. Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer and higher and greater will be
our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.

Refrain

Words: Fanny J. Crosby, 1875, alt., P.D.; Music: William H. Doane, 1875, PD.;
CCLI #678905

Postlude

Welcome! As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present. May we together experience the presence of God. After joining us in worship, join us in the fellowship hall next to the sanctuary for a cup of coffee or juice and continued fellowship.

Tech Team	Today: December 14	Next Week: December 21am	Next Week: Candlelight Svc
Sound:	Mardy S.	Henry VZ	Tim H.
Projection:	Maddie D.	Emily VH	Beth B.
Video:	Brandon S.	Isaac D.	Brandon S.
Offering:	General Fund	General Fund	Love, Inc.

First CRC Bulletin Announcements

December 14, 2025

The deadline for announcements this next week is Thursday, 9:00 A.M.

Deep Thoughts with PB & J:

Which person from the Gospels do you most relate to, and why?

OUR CHURCH FAMILY:

There is an extended meal train available for Greg and Tish Ackermann while Tish is recuperating from blood clots in her leg. Please sign up! <https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.mealtrain.com%2Ftrains%2Fgz659m%2Fupdates%2F9lw40v&data=05%7C02%7Csecretary%40firstcrcmv.com%7Caf1660284ab843b13a8d08de2dbd1e03%7Ca1434b7807a4459d8013a569e2488c52%7C0%7C0%7C638998487438701392%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWU5IlYiOilwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbClslldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=YQZq6tCiBvPlRhiqSIdSbrD0bMQ2R8rOOJ5sB6dph3U%3D&reserved=0>

There is Choir practice this morning after church.

There is a sign-up sheet for volunteers to bring some Christmas cookies for after the Candlelight Service.

Christmas Gift Baskets for Shut-ins: Are you interested in making a Christmas gift basket for one of our many shut-ins? If so, there is a sign-up sheet waiting for you on the table in the fellowship hall. The baskets need not be elaborate - just fill it with your love! Please bring them to church no later than Sunday, Dec. 21 as they will most likely be delivered on Monday, Dec. 22. Thank you!

2026 Family Visiting Schedule: In your church mailbox today is a communication from the elders and a 'family visiting schedule' for 2026. Please take the time to read through the communication carefully and reach out to an elder accordingly if you have any questions and/or concerns. If for some reason your name was accidentally left off the schedule - please contact the church office immediately so that we can schedule you accordingly. Thank you!

I'm looking for one pre-teen/teenager to light candles for the Candlelight Service. Please let Beth know if you are interested in doing this!

Men's Breakfast Bible Study meets every other Tuesday morning and is currently working through the books of Samuel. **They will be meeting next on Tuesday, Dec. 23.**

Thank you to all those who signed up for Angel Tree to bless a child with a gift for Christmas! Please have your gift wrapped, with the Angel tree label on it, and returned to church by this morning, December 14. An open house will be held December 15 for the families to come and pick up their gifts. Thank you again for your generosity!

Dear Friends,

The word "Advent" literally means 'coming' or 'arrival' – usually of some noble person, or king. The early church was looking ahead to Christ's return as King. However, sometime in the middle ages, the church started to use Advent as a time to look back at Christ's first coming.

During this Advent season we are going to do both. We certainly want to remember and celebrate the first coming of Christ, but we also want to anticipate his coming again. We are, after all, a people of both memory and hope.

In the weeks to come we are going to ask the *who*, *when*, *how*, *where*, and *why* questions of both the first coming of Jesus Christ and also his future second coming. The purpose is to provide biblical encouragement for the present and then also biblical hope for the

future. May God bless us in our Advent journey! In His Grace, Pastor John

1. Nov. 30 – “Who is Coming?” (Psalm 2, Matthew 25:31-34)
2. Dec. 7 – “When is He Coming?” (Daniel 9:20-27, I Thess. 4:13-5:11)
3. Dec. 14 – “How is He Coming?” (Matthew 1:18-25 and various texts)
4. Dec. 21 – “Where is He Coming?” (Micah 5:2, Revelation 21:1-5)
5. Dec. 25 – “Why is He Coming?” (Luke 2:1-20, Romans 8:18-39)

Post High School Pizza Party! This year's yearly pizza party for post-high school students has been scheduled for **Tuesday, Dec. 30 at 6pm at Coconut Kenny's in Burlington.** Please pass the word and then RSVP to Pastor John (jknoes0812@gmail.com) or to Beth at (secretary@firstcrcmv.com) sometime before Christmas!

Pre-Profession of Faith/New Members Class: In case you missed the opportunity this past summer - a new Pre-Profession of Faith and/or New Members class will be available on various Sundays and/or other days over the Christmas Break (Dec. 21-Jan. 18). If interested in participating - please reach out to Pastor John no later than December 1. The dates are flexible and so are the study materials to be used depending on what would work best for those participating.

Worship Service YouTube Links:

AM, December 7 Service: <https://youtube.com/live/wQPizgZueqI?feature=share>

First CRC's Worship Services are now being livestreamed! Go to our YouTube Channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/@1stcrcmv841>
You will see the option for the worship service Livestream there.

CALENDAR:

Greeters/Coffee Hosts: December 14: Derek & Heidi B., Erik & Theresa VK

Next Week, December 21am: Terry & Mandi D., Marjo R.

December 21pm: Cody & Amy S., Karen J.

Worship Team December 14: Greg B., Heidi B., Adriana & Tessa S.

Next Week, December 21am: Kevin & Glenda K., Emma S., Ella VH

December 21pm: Eliot B., Julie S., Adriana & Tessa S.

Nursery: December 14: Glenda K & Tessa S
Next Week, December Catherine VK & Noah VK

Children in Worship: December 14: Angela S., Riley VV
Next Week, December 21: Heidi B., Nolan B.

TODAY:

Sunday, December 14:

9:30am Sunday School

10:30am Worship Service, Choir Practice

6:30 pm Youth Group

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Sun., Dec. 21, 6:30pm: Candlelight Service

Tues, Dec. 23, 7:00am: Men's Bible Study

Thurs., Dec. 25, 10am: Christmas Day Service

Sun., Jan. 4: Potluck to send off Brad to Iowa.

CRC ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Kids Corner Devotions: Advent at Home: Joy to the World - Check out this week's kids' devotion, "Advent at Home: Joy to the World" at www.kidscorner.net. This week of Advent is all about joy! Maybe light the hope, peace, and joy candles with your family, sing a favorite Christmas song, like Joy to the World, and remember that Jesus is the best reason to celebrate. Explore all the great content at kidscorner.net, including the Kids Corner Christmas Collection of devotions, Bible stories, crafts, and activities.

Groundwork: Out of Darkness and into the Light - Turning on a light changes everything. What changes can we anticipate when Jesus brings his light to our world? Join Groundwork as we study Isaiah 2:2-5, John 8:12-19, and John 12:44-50 to discover the significant effects we can expect the presence of the Light of the World to bring in our lives and our world. Listen now at GroundworkOnline.com and subscribe to Groundwork's weekly emails for future episodes.

World Renew Nicaragua Young Adults Trip - Young adults (18-30), join us in Nicaragua from February 13-22, 2026! Experience God in another culture, while you explore poverty, international development and the global church through the lens of faith. Discover the impact of World Renew's work, witnessing how Nicaraguans are transforming

their lives through faith and resilience. To learn more about this trip and to register, visit: <https://bit.ly/nicaragua2026info>

The Gift of Christmas - Next week, we celebrate the gift of Jesus, who left his heavenly home to offer us the hope of eternal life with him. By giving a gift for World Renew this season, you can help share hope in Jesus for families facing poverty, disaster, or crisis worldwide. Please give generously in the upcoming offering for World Renew or online at worldrenew.net/gifts



How can
we
PRAY
for you?

People to be remembered with prayers, cards, letters & words of encouragement. Email the office at secretary@firstcrcmv.com or call the church office at (336-2405) by 9:00 am Thursday of each week with your prayer items.

CONTINUING REQUESTS:

Amy Stiles got encouraging results from her tests on Tuesday. Her heart is stable with a bit of improvement. Please pray her heart continues to grow stronger with each day.

Please pray for the **Spencer and Janelle Donaldson** family. Pray for Spirit-filled wisdom, guidance, patience and peace for all those involved in Kyle's accident, and that God's grace and love will permeate all areas of the journey ahead.

Please keep **Tish Ackermann** in prayers. She is currently receiving physical therapy on a regular basis for her knee. Please pray for swift healing.

SHUT INS: Nell Annema and Shirley Boonstra at Birchview Memory Care in Sedro-Woolley; Marjean DeGroot at Mountain Glen in Mount Vernon; Martha Haarsma at home in Mount Vernon, Clarence Vander Griend at Home Place in Burlington; Sally Reehorn at Creekside in Burlington.

OTHER REQUESTS: (CRC Communications)

Monday December 8 - Resonate: Church plants

Please pray for our denomination's church plants across Canada and the United States in this Advent season. May God give them creativity and courage to reach their communities, share the good news of Jesus, and invite many people to experience the hope of the gospel.

Tuesday December 9 - World Renew: New season of partnership

Give thanks for the signing of a new agreement with government partners in Laos that allows us to begin another phase of community development work. Pray for ongoing patience, wisdom, and partnership as staff and communities begin new projects together to improve health, food security, and livelihoods in rural areas.

Wednesday December 10 - Thrive: Chaplains

Several of our chaplains work in care centers for people with various disabilities. This work requires creativity and compassion as chaplains care for residents with unique needs and gifts. Please pray that these chaplains may help to bring the peace and love of God to each person they work with.

Thursday December 11 - ThereforeGo Ministries: SERVE 2026

As the year 2025 nears its end, ThereforeGo Ministries looks ahead with anticipation to SERVE 2026—Surprised by God! Please join us in praying for churches preparing to host SERVE across Canada and the United States, and for youth groups that are preparing to attend! May God surprise us all!

Friday December 12 - Resonate: Worldwide

Billions of people in the world don't know the hope and grace of the good news of Jesus Christ. Please pray that in this Christmas season people will have opportunities to draw near to Jesus and learn more about the Savior of the world.

Saturday December 13 - ReFrame: Arabic ministry

Please pray for one of our ministry partners on the Council for Christian Education who is currently facing a personal crisis. Ask God to provide wisdom, comfort, and strength, and may the Lord's peace guide every decision and circumstance during this difficult time.

Sunday December 14 - Thrive: Anticipation

Lord, during this Advent season, bring healing to our hearts. Teach us to love more deeply, to forgive with open hearts, and to wait with patience for the coming of Christ. Help us to savor each day with gratitude, knowing the joy that is drawing near.