The Witness

Circleville First Church

DECEMBER 2026

Issue 325

436 East Ohio Street, Circleville, Ohio 43113 (740) 474-2250 circlevillefirstchurch.com

THE SEASON OF ADVENT

Prepare Him room.

Four Sundays of hope, peace, joy and love lead us to the manger. Join us for carols, fellowship and Christmas Eve by candlelight.



Inside this issue

2 Advent & Christmas at CFC

3 From fear to joy

4 261 shoeboxes & 108,864 meals

5 Keeping everyone safe

6 Pumpkin Show thank-yous

7 Around the church

8 Women's Ministry

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10 Two Christmas fudges

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Mark your calendar

Full list on page 12

DEC 6 — **Kid Power Offering**
JOY: Guardian concert, 2 pm

DEC 10 — **Ladies Night**
6:30 pm, FC Hall · ornament exchange

DEC 13 — **Campfire Carols · Fellowship**
Program 10:45 am · Fellowship 6 pm

DEC 19 — **Men's Prayer Breakfast**
8 am, FC Hall

DEC 24 — **Christmas Eve Candlelight**
Service at 8 pm

DEC 27 — **Ladies ECL Lunch**
Lunch fundraiser · $5 a person

THE SEASON OF ADVENT

Four candles, one story

Each Sunday we light another candle as we wait for Christmas.

WEEK 1 · NOV 29

Hope

Preparing to celebrate Christ's birth and His return at the Second Coming.

WEEK 2 · DEC 6

Peace

John the Baptist's call to repent and prepare for Jesus' coming.

WEEK 3 · DEC 13

Joy

The Shepherd's Candle: our joy and excitement for Jesus' birth.

WEEK 4 · DEC 20

Love

The fourth candle signifies the love of God.



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13

One big Sunday

Campfire Carols

10:45 am

The Children's Christmas Program, directed by Megan Byerly & Kim Buchanan.

Sacrifice Offering

50% goes to denominational missions and 50% to church missions.

Christmas Fellowship

6 pm

Bring snacks or finger foods to share with your church family.



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Join us at 8 pm

Holiday schedule

No evening service: Dec 20 & 27

Bible study: Wednesdays, 1 pm, Ferguson/Clark Hall. No study Dec 23 & 30.

Advent descriptions adapted from the CFC bulletin, Nov 30, 2025

STORIES FROM ELIZABETH'S HOPE

From fear to joy

A journey of hope and reassurance

> "Sometimes, what someone needs most is a safe place to share their fears."



Shared with her permission

Several months ago, I met with a newly pregnant client who wanted to talk through her options. Nine months earlier, she'd had gastric surgery to help her lose weight. She hadn't planned on becoming pregnant so soon, and she was terrified her growing baby might reopen her incision, putting her health, and possibly her life, at risk. I could see the fear on her face.

I reminded her that her surgery had been nine months ago. She'd already had nine months to heal, with nine more before her baby would arrive. She took a deep breath. For the first time, she realized she had time to gather information, ask questions and make an informed decision.

I encouraged her to talk with her OB. A week later, she told me her OB had reassured her that many patients have healthy pregnancies after abdominal surgeries, including C-sections. Her fears eased, and she decided to continue her pregnancy. Today, she has given us permission to share her picture. Just look at her face, her smile, and the way her hand rests so protectively on her baby.

What began as a conversation filled with fear became a moment of hope, reassurance and joy. Sometimes, what someone needs most is a safe place to share their fears, someone willing to listen and the encouragement to take things one step at a time. And sometimes, the most beautiful part of the story is seeing how it unfolds.

Blessings,
Kristie Steck, BSN, RN
Mobile Nurse Manager · 740.656.3396
nurse@ehprc.org

THANK YOU, CHURCH FAMILY

Your generosity, by the numbers

261
shoeboxes packed



108,864
meals packed



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Forty volunteers packed boxes at the Shoebox Packing Party on November 11 in the Ferguson/Clark Hall.

Thank you to everyone who set up, cleaned up, sorted, packed, donated and prayed. You are all appreciated. Thank you for showing Jesus' love to children all over the world.

Shoeboxes are available year-round. It's not too early to start on next year's!

Submitted by Brittany Graul

FEED MY STARVING CHILDREN

Circleville First Church was represented at the MobilePack in Nelsonville on November 20 & 21. Together we packed meals that **will feed 298 kids every day for an entire year.**

Thank you, Joy Atwood, Carson Blackford, Madison Blackford, Brenna Clifton, Ryan & Sarah Delozier, Jeannie Dollison, Alexis Dyke, Alivia Dyke, Ashton, Jack and Josie George, Kelly Hendricks, Cathy Marck, Martha Moore, and Trent & Christie Morrison!

Shoebox items of the month

Hats · Gloves · Mittens · Socks

Community cupboard needs

Cereal · Cereal bars · Powdered milk

A donation tote is in the overflow.

SAFETY & SECURITY MINISTRY

Keeping everyone safe

The team at the doors, and how you can join it.



“We are responsible for the overall safety of our congregation and church property. This includes first aid services, CPR and security of the building,” explains Jeff Burroughs, who oversees the ministry.

First aid has been needed in the past, so four teams now rotate weekly; every four weeks, your team is “up.” They stand at the doors, provide safety and medical help, check that fire extinguishers and AEDs are up to date, and cover church events and services. All are CPR trained.

“Folks are needed to help with this ministry,” Jeff added. “Just two qualifications: you must be a church member and have the desire to help.” Military, law enforcement or medical experience helps but isn’t required; training is provided.

Thank you to our team: Shauna Adams, Mark Agin, Tyler Bowens, Jeff Burroughs, Ryan Delozier, Sarah Delozier, Greg Myers, Tyler Myers, Bradley Neff, Jason Seat, Mason Spencer and Tim Tener.

JAN 16

Free First Aid & CPR Class

Saturday, January 16, 2027 · Ferguson/Clark Hall. Free for the first 10 people to sign up. To sign up, or to join the ministry, contact **Jeff Burroughs** or **Tim Tener**.

MEN · WE WANT YOU!

Men’s Prayer Breakfast

Saturday, Dec 19 · 8 am · FC Hall

Speaker: Andrew Byerly

Men’s Prayer Meeting every Saturday at 8 am. **Do not give up!**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!



Isaac Bennett
Ryan Dean
Cameron Kilbarger
Tanner Wilson

are serving our country. Please pray for them and their families.

PUMPKIN SHOW RECAP

Parking cars, shining a light

$9,800+

raised for the McGuire Home, Nipgen Youth Church Camp and CFC ministries

To everyone who helped park cars at the Pumpkin Show: thank you for your time and hard work! Fitting your schedule around serving the church and the Lord is no easy feat, but you kept everything orderly and welcoming. Now those funds can help shine the light of Jesus in our community.

Submitted by Rob & Amy Roesch



A NEW RECORD

The 2,544-pound champion

Troy Van Arsdalen won Champion Pumpkin and broke the Pumpkin Show record (the world record is over 3,000 lbs.). Troy is the father of Ryan Van Arsdalen, who spoke at the CFC Summit in March.

Our congregation at the show

RIBBON WINNERS

Megan Byerly: 1st place for a handmade quilt, her first finished project after years of sewing.

Sydnee Steck: 1st for a mini Lego set, green peppers, apples (two categories) and beaded art; 2nd for peanuts and a relish; two 3rds for relishes.

Debbie Thompson: 16 ribbons, including 1st for Welcome to My Garden, black walnuts, chestnuts and peanut butter bars, and 3rd for a terrarium and diamond art.

Martha Moore: a pumpkin pie, in her 24th year of entering baked goods.

IN THE PARADES

Little Miss Pumpkin Show candidates: Jemma George, Penelope Johnson and Cynlee Leeth.

Baby Parade: Vallee Isaac and Lucy Spencer.

Allie Byerly (Circleville Cheerleaders), **Carson Blackford** (Teays Valley Band), **Eliza Howard** (Logan Elm soccer), **Caroline Hottinger** (YMCA dance).

Waylon Myers rode a float and entered the Arts & Crafts Show.

Bradley Neff drove a truck; **Greg** and **Tyler Myers** rode on or pulled a float for Box 65.

SERVING AT THE SHOW

Carly & Joy Atwood: Official Souvenir booth.

Kristie Steck: Elizabeth's Hope booth.

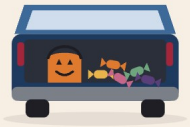
Mark & Lois Taylor: Ohio Christian University booth.

Penny Hixenbaugh decorated her golf cart for the fourth year.

Did we miss you? It was unintentional, and we apologize. Please let us know so a correction can be made.

NEWS & CELEBRATIONS

Treats, cheers and carols



OCTOBER 31

Trunk 'n Treat: about 200 kids!

15 decorated trunks and plenty of volunteers showed kids the love of Jesus (and candy!). Parents enjoyed hot dogs, chips, drinks and cupcakes while we told them about our church. Thank you to all who donated, decorated, passed out candy, served, set up, cleaned up and prayed.

Submitted by Crystal Evans

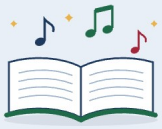
Congratulations!

Allie Byerly · Cheer

The Circleville freshman (daughter of Andrew and Megan, granddaughter of Tom and Joellen) competed at the Best of State Competition at Dublin-Scioto High School against 200+ schools. Her squad placed third in their division, less than a point from grand champion!

Cynlee Leeth · Gymnastics

Cynlee (daughter of Tyler and Kelsey, granddaughter of Kim Buchanan, great-granddaughter of Betty Sayre) medaled in all five events and took second overall at her second meet, Nov 21 in Ross County. At her first meet on Oct 31, she won first overall!



OHIO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY PRESENTS

Festival of Carols: Home for Christmas

Thu, Dec 3 · 6 pm Messiah & Carols Sing-Along, Detty Chapel

Sat, Dec 5 · 6 pm Home for Christmas: A Family Celebration, Ministry and Performing Arts building

Free tickets (general admission) and reservations: **purplepass.com/ocufestivalofcarols2026**



IT'S ALMOST TIME…

Chili Cook-Off

Sunday, Feb 7
5:30 pm

LADIES, THIS IS FOR YOU

Gather, grow & get away

A holiday Ladies Night, a lunch fundraiser and your spring retreat.



DEC 10

Holiday Ladies Night

Thursday · 6:30 pm · FC Hall

Bring your favorite holiday appetizer to share and an ornament to exchange (wrapped or in a bag, please). Friends are welcome!

ECL Lunch Fundraiser

Sunday, Dec 27 · menu TBD

Make your lunch plans with us! **$5 per person, $20 per family.** Proceeds support several ministries and ease retreat costs.

Ladies calendar

Ladies Nights: bring a friend & a snack or dish to share

Dec 1	Lunch, 11 am, OCU Dining Hall
Dec 10	Ladies Night, 6:30 pm, FC Hall
Jan 5	Lunch, place & time TBA
Jan 21	Ladies Night, 6:30 pm, FC Hall
Feb 2	Lunch, 11 am, OCU Dining Hall
Feb 18	Ladies Night, 6:30 pm, FC Hall
Mar 2	Lunch, 11 am, OCU Dining Hall
Mar 12–13	Spring Retreat, see below
Mar 18	Ladies Night, 6:30 pm, FC Hall
Apr 27	Ladies Conference, Crossroads
May 4	Lunch, place & time TBA

OCU = Ohio Christian University

LADIES SPRING RETREAT · MARCH 12–13, 2027

Made for More Ephesians 2:10

Registration and first payment are due by January 10, 2027.

At Deer Creek Lodge; dinner, room and breakfast are covered. We leave church around 3 pm, or drive yourself or carpool. Dinner is promptly at 6 pm (seats are saved). Bring extra money for the auction and silent auction!

A monthly fundraiser gives everyone $75 toward registration (details at the Welcome Center). Questions? Joellen Byerly, 513.680.6012.

SAVE THE DATE

Ladies Conference

April 27

Crossroads

Speaker & worship by Amber Sparks.

BEYOND OUR WALLS

Reports of victories

From the director

We have much to be thankful for in our Great Commission Movement. In October, I led a revival at Hedges Chapel in Ashville, Ohio, a wonderful time of spiritual renewal. Dr. Holbrook, Rev. Gary Heimbach and I joined Pastor Jorge Pacheco's Harrisburg, Virginia Hispanic Church for its 18th anniversary, marked by an emphasis on holiness. At our Church Planting Conference at OCU, four couples were evaluated, and an overflow crowd attended the Round Table.

"In the Power of One,"
David Dean, Director of Evangelism & Extension

CHURCH OF THE MONTH



Sharptown CCCU Church

Sharptown, New Jersey

Pastor Doug Smith's congregation left the Methodist Church over Biblical authority, losing their building, furnishings and longtime relationships. In 2024 they joined the Churches of Christ in Christian Union and are grateful for the home they found with us. On September 20, 2026, they baptized 20 people outdoors! Please pray for them as they grow and seek God's next steps.

Praise God for

- The Church Planting Assessment Center at OCU and its time with potential planters
- The Church Extension Round Table
- New Great Commission District Evangelism Teams
- Churches reporting new community outreach events
- Dr. Mike Holbrook and Dr. Jonah Mitchell's EQUIP Leadership Training in Trinidad for West Indies District leaders

Free digital resources: *The Great Commission Action Plan* and *The Church Extension President's Handbook*. To order, contact the Church Extension Department.

Please pray for

- A permanent home for Pastors Doug Smith and Josh Hughes' growing N.J. church
- Oaks Church, launched Nov 8 on the OCU campus
- The Great Commission Service and Conference in Rush Run and Plum Run, Ohio
- Wisdom for the General Church Extension Board
- God's blessing on churches' outreach events
- More young men and women called to ministry
- Church planter couples seeking direction: William & Abriel Artrip, Dillon & Amy Guilkey, Mike & Bev Elliott, Tyler & Lace Bowen

Submitted by Cathy Marck, Church Extension President

KITCHEN DELIGHTS

Christmas fudge, two ways

Super easy holiday treats in Christmas colors.



Chocolate Fudge

YOU'LL NEED

2 cups (12 oz.) semi-sweet chocolate chips (not milk chocolate)

1 can (14 oz., 1¼ cups) sweetened condensed milk

1 tsp. vanilla extract

LET'S MAKE IT

1. Line a 9×9 square pan with parchment paper that covers the sides.
2. Microwave the chips and condensed milk in a large bowl for 1 minute. Stir well and let the heat melt the chips. If needed, microwave 30 seconds more, until completely smooth.
3. Stir in the vanilla, then quickly spread it evenly in the pan. Refrigerate until firm, 2–3 hours.
4. Cut while still cold, right out of the fridge. Store airtight at room temperature (softer) or in the fridge.

White Chocolate Cranberry Fudge

YOU'LL NEED

3¾ cups (24 oz.) white chocolate chips

1 can (14 oz.) sweetened condensed milk

1 tsp. vanilla extract

1¼ cups (6 oz.) dried cranberries

1 pinch salt

Sparkling sugar sprinkles (optional)

LET'S MAKE IT

1. Line a 9×9 square pan with parchment paper that covers the sides.
2. Microwave the chips and condensed milk for 1 minute; stir until melted, adding 30 seconds if needed.
3. Stir in the vanilla, cranberries and salt; quickly spread in the pan. Press sprinkles into the top, if you like.
4. Cool completely at room temperature, 2–3 hours (or refrigerate), then cut into squares.
5. Store airtight, with parchment or wax paper between layers, up to 2 weeks at room temperature, 5 weeks in the fridge or 3 months frozen.

Covenant. *"Now if you will listen to Me and carefully keep My covenant, you will be My own possession out of all the peoples, although all the earth is Mine, and you will be My kingdom of priests and My holy nation. These are the words that you are to say to the Israelites."* **Exodus 19:5–6**

Recipes submitted by Nancy Johnson

GRIN AND SHARE IT

Jokes of the month

Submitted by Bobby Dollison

"I do all my own stunts… but never intentionally."

"If you're trying to impress me with your vehicle, it had better be a food truck."





KIDS' CORNER

Color me in!

Grab your crayons and give this snowman some color.



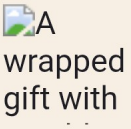
December at a glance

KEEP THIS PAGE HANDY

TUE **Dec 1**	**Ladies Lunch,** 11 am, OCU
THU **Dec 3**	**OCU Messiah & Carols Sing-Along,** 6 pm
SAT **Dec 5**	**OCU Home for Christmas,** 6 pm
SUN **Dec 6**	**Kid Power Offering** · JOY Guardian concert, 2 pm
THU **Dec 10**	**Ladies Night,** 6:30 pm
SUN **Dec 13**	**Campfire Carols,** 10:45 am · Sacrifice Offering · **Fellowship,** 6 pm
FRI **Dec 18**	**CCA** last day before break
SAT **Dec 19**	**Men's Prayer Breakfast,** 8 am
SUN **Dec 20**	**No evening service**
WED **Dec 23**	**No Bible study**
THU **Dec 24**	**Christmas Eve Service,** 8 pm
FRI **Dec 25**	**Happy birthday, Jesus!**
SUN **Dec 27**	**ECL Lunch** · No evening service
WED **Dec 30**	**No Bible study**
THU **Dec 31**	**New Year's Eve**

COMING IN 2027

TUE **Jan 5**	**Ladies Lunch,** TBA
SAT **Jan 16**	**First Aid & CPR Class**
THU **Jan 21**	**Ladies Night,** 6:30 pm
SUN **Feb 7**	**Chili Cook-Off,** 5:30 pm



VERSE OF THE MONTH

"Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!"

2 Corinthians 9:15 NLT · Submitted by John Adams

SABBATH

"Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."

Isaiah 56:2

Circleville First Church
436 East Ohio Street
Circleville, Ohio 43113
(740) 474-2250
circlevillefirstchurch.com

Jay Neff
Senior Pastor
(740) 804-1482

Andrew Hottinger
Associate Pastor
(740) 403-3166

Andrew Byerly
Music/Worship Ministry
(740) 601-7405

Kim Buchanan
Director of Growth Groups
(740) 701-6105

Lisa Burroughs
Director of Youth Ministry
(740) 412-4149