

Big Rock Congregational Church Atlanta Michigan

A Community of Grace

**CHIPS**

Off the Big Rock



**December 2025**

## **Jesus Is The Reason**

By Michelle (Shelly) Grant

Christmas time is usually the busiest time of year for many. We prepare our Christmas dinner, and get gifts for our loved ones. In all the busyness, we sometimes forget the most important One. The best gift we received was over 2,000 years ago with that baby in a manger, "While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them" (Luke 2:6-7, New International Version). I do recommend reading the book of Luke during the month of December because it is a wonderful reminder of WHY we celebrate Christmas. Without Christ, we would have no reason to celebrate.

Advent is one of my favorite seasons of the year. This is a time we not only celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, but it is also a time we prepare for His future 2nd coming. During advent, we are reminded of the Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love we have in Jesus.

"But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isaiah 40:31). I want to encourage you by saying Jesus truly is our Hope. We cannot find any hope outside of Him. We would be hopeless if we didn't have the Lord.

### **Pastor of BRCC:**

Dr. Keith Jones

### **Moderator:**

David Bradley

### **Deacons:**

David Bradley  
Gail Fehr

### **Trustees:**

Judy Hoffman  
Lynn Scharer

### **Our Vision:**

We exist to worship God, to share His love that all might be saved and to become more like Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Our Guiding Values:**

- Being a house of prayer
- Spirit-led congregational governance
- Loving Fellowship
- Reaching out
- Developing spiritual maturity in all members
- Being faithful stewards of God's blessings

Big Rock Congregational Church 8258 M-32, PO Box 683, Atlanta, MI 49709

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"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful (Colossians 3:15). Christ gives us the kind of peace this world cannot. He gives us peace that makes no sense to the world. Jesus gives us that peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7). Sometimes people in the world say they are looking for or want peace, but they ignore the Prince of Peace. Because of Christ, we can have that peace we desire. But without Him, we won't know Peace.

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4)! We have many reasons to rejoice in Jesus Christ. Our circumstances do not determine our joy. Happiness is temporary and based on the current situation. If you don't know, Paul wrote the book of Philippians from prison. This is why our circumstances do not determine our joy. The joy of the Lord is truly the source of our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Without Christ, we wouldn't know what real joy is like. Because of Him, we can have that joy.

"The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: ' I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with an unfailing kindness" (Jeremiah 31:3). The love of Jesus is the greatest love of all. He is the One who loves each of us the most, more than anyone in this world will ever love us. It is a beautiful thing that absolutely nothing can separate us from His love (Romans 8: 38-39). We can have the comfort that love of Christ will never fail us. Even when the love of other people may, His love never will.



# Missions News

*Declare His glory among the nations,  
His marvelous deeds among all people.*

*Psalm 96:3 (NIV)*

*We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all  
wisdom,*

*So that we might present everyone perfect in Christ.*

*Colossians 1:28 (NIV)*



Over the past few months, I have had the opportunity to share my work at Black Forest Academy (BFA) at three different churches in Michigan. Preparing for these presentations has given me time to reflect on the why and the what of my work in international Christian education. The why involves supporting global field workers who are declaring the marvelous deeds of the Lord in over 50 countries. Providing education for these students allows several ministries to flourish. It has been a joy to share this aspect of my ministry with people in person here in the US.

The "what" involves helping students and teachers grow in wisdom and understanding. Last year, in my newsletter I shared about the school's new Expected Student Outcomes (ESOs). These are the statements that help the school connect its mission with what takes place in classrooms, dorms, and other activities. These statements summarize a lot of what I do in working with the school's curriculum. You will find a short video explaining the main ideas of the ESOs below.

In addition to speaking at churches, I also had the opportunity to spend a week in Orlando, Florida at the headquarters for Wycliffe USA. This was a good time of interacting with others who are currently in the US, but normally serve in a variety of locations around the world. I was also able to learn more about practical things like health insurance and retirement planning.

As I mentioned in my last newsletter, a part of my time in the US is devoted to rebuilding my prayer and financial partnership team. I have seen some small increases in my financial partnership team. I currently have 80% of the ministry budget that Wycliffe has set for me. I will need to be at 100% by July 2026 in order to return to Germany. Would you prayerfully consider being a part of my Wycliffe financial ministry team? You may use the information at the bottom of the message or contact me directly for ways to give.

As we enter the holiday season, I am reminded of how thankful I am to the Lord for his goodness that has been shown to me. I have seen this through your prayers, encouragement, and financial gifts. I am truly thankful for your partnership with me.

With joy & gratitude,  
Susan Steele

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Hi Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

David begins his song of thanks in 1 Chronicles 16:8-9 as follows “Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon His name; make known his deeds among the peoples! Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works!”

Way before Thanksgiving was a national holiday in America, we have so many examples of giving thanks to the Lord, as David did in his song quoted above. And there is SO much for which we can give thanks - things small and big and everything in-between.

#### **Thank you Lord...**

- For the air we breathe
- For a roof over our heads
- For friends and family near and far
- For Tanmayee, my housemate from India and all I'm learning from her
- For another year of Your great faithfulness to us in providing for all our needs
- For a growing national prayer team of four now (Fletcher, Naomi and Irina and me)
- For 40+ Bridges teams across the nation, plus teams in London, Paris and Sydney
- For 2x/week prayer calls over Zoom in preparation for Vision 2025, our year-end conference
- For weekly prayer Zoom calls that I facilitate with my Spanish church
- And most of all for Jesus who forgives our sins, gives us purpose and meaning in life, and makes it possible to share His love with all those around us.

Best wishes for a very Happy Thanksgiving!

*Harriet S*



## CE&D Update



**Adult Sunday School:** Join us on **Sunday mornings at 9:15**. We will continue our study of the book of Isaiah with reading and discussion. We were on chapter 58 in our reading as of our last meeting.

**Bible Study** with Pastor Keith is meeting at 5:30 on the second and fourth Wednesday of the month. We begin with a light supper and fellowship, followed by a bible study. The studies will be "Encounters With Jesus". Come join us on December 10th as we dig deeper into the woman's encounter with Jesus at the well. There will be no study on December 24th.

**Library:** At this time there is not a day planned to work in the library, but we could use some help cleaning up the rooms down in the fellowship hall any Wednesday after Prayer Breakfast.

**Children's Sunday School and Children's Church:** Michelle and Juli will continue with Children's Sunday School at 9:15 using the study *The ABC's of the Bible*. Gail and Shelly will lead the Children's Church during December. Children's Church will be using the TrueWay Kids study of Advent.

**Prayer Breakfast** will continue to meet at 9:00 in the fellowship hall on Wednesdays. Join us after for prayer. If you could make breakfast on Wednesday, please sign up on the sheet in the kitchen.

**Bible Adventures Kid's Club** has ended for the year. Their adventure took them from God's promise to Abraham up to Joseph and his brothers in Egypt. Thank you to Marilyn, Shelly and Gail for their work in making the club fun and educational for the children.

**Family Movie Night** There will be no movie night in December with all the other evening activities that are planned.

**Next Meeting of CE&D** will meet on **January 15th** at 4:30.

## Women's Fellowship News



Women's Fellowship packed twenty boxes for Operation Christmas Child in November and supplied the money for shipping and educational materials. We thank everyone who purchased items for the boxes and helped pack them.

On December 10th after prayer time, they will be putting cookie packages together for the first responders of the area. If you like to bake, we would welcome your bake goods for these packages as a thank you to the first responders of the area.

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# Dementia; Prolonging Independence

Independence is a wonderful asset and freedom is a delicate balance. It is a rewarding effort to maintain these gifts in our lives. Even more so when we can do the same for others when necessary. Having a few years experience with this sort of struggle, we've developed a few strategies for mitigating the risks and trials of diminished awareness as a progressive disease.

Around the house we watch for things that might catch a toe or a spark; cause fall or fire. We avoid rugs and keep floor space open. If something must be out, like a power cord or a favorite doormat, we typically secure it with adhesive and an eye for unintrusiveness.

We put handles near thresholds, steps, or anywhere they might be useful. This is particularly true in the bathroom, where grab bars and traction surfaces can prevent a really bad day. Shower chairs are simple and inexpensive plastic seats to reduce the energy costs of cleanliness. Don't be afraid to insist they try it out if it's been a while, we may have to pick up some hygienic slack as we can bear, but the hospice here is great and will help with that when it becomes vital.

The stove got left on more than once, so a timer operated toaster oven became the main way to heat food for a while. In another case, a battery powered mug and microwave were simultaneously obliterated before being chemically extinguished. We had only recently replaced our kitchen flame response based on the expiration date. We also keep a fire blanket mounted on a wall nearby as backup. Our current microwave has a simple but effective locking function.

After finding some spending directed to deceivers and other evidences of financial susceptibilities, we had to take measures to protect our loved ones from scams, spam, and misleading internet advertisements.

Money alerts were reasonably easy to set up in banking apps to make sure nothing fishy was happening behind anyone's back. While credit cards help keep an eye on spending, we used gift cards where a high limit could have been a concern. Keep a close eye on things, as we've caught funny business quickly in the past and not had issues resolving it with a phone call.

And on phones, spam protection was fairly simple, as both Android and iPhone permit restricting incoming calls to those on the contacts list. In the mailbox, it was just a matter of tossing the junk before delivering to the intended recipient. Online was a bit more of a technically involved approach to optimizing the situations we encountered, but sufficient PC security is reasonably achievable.

We are homebodies and haven't had to worry about wanderers, but we've heard from those who do that GPS tracking tags are cheap and effective. A necklace, bracelet, wallet card or purse dongle can trace a loved ones location with a smartphone. We have found basic compartmented pill holders very useful, but for those in need of more frequent dispensation, automated units are available to ensure proper timing of delivery.

We never stop learning and always enjoy new ideas for old issues as well as how old ideas can solve new issues. The degree to which we have reaped benefit from better ideas might compel us to reach ever higher, for seeing how limitless the opportunity.

The Secrists

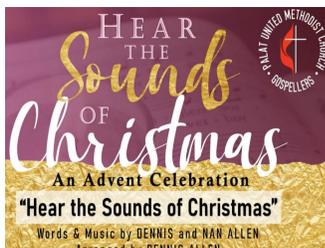
# December Events

Join us as we celebrate the birth of our savior, Christ Jesus. Throughout December there will be something for everyone to enjoy.



There will be decorating and pizza,

Advent readings and lighting of candles.



Listening to the Christmas story as the choir presents the cantata on December 14th

Plenty of fine food and fellowship at the Christmas dinner on December 14th

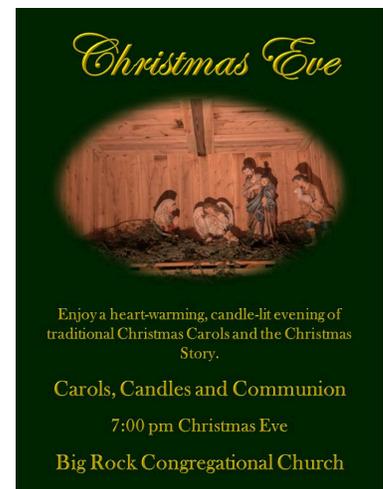


Remembering what we have loved and lost,

Singing of Carols, lighting of Candles, and sharing in Communion,



And more food and fun to start the New Year.



## Birthdays and Anniversaries



Jamie S.	12-12
Naomi R.	12-21
Pat S.	12-26
Cecilia M.	12-26

## Choir News



**S**ing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.

*Psalm 30:4*

The choir will present the Christmas Cantata "Hear The Sounds of Christmas" on December 14th at the morning worship service. Please join us in celebrating the coming of our Lord and Savior in song and narration.

## Upcoming Events

<b>Nov. 30th:</b>	First Sunday of Advent
<b>Dec. 6th:</b>	Light Parade, Tree Lighting & Live Nativity in Atlanta begins @ 5:30
<b>Dec. 7th:</b>	Decorating Party 4:00
<b>Dec. 14th:</b>	Christmas Cantata and Dinner 10:30
<b>Dec. 21st:</b>	Longest Night Service 7:00
<b>Dec. 24th:</b>	Carols, Candles & Communion 7:00
<b>Jan. 1st:</b>	Pork & Sauerkraut Dinner 12:00



# Prayers, Praises & Blessings - December 2025

## Daily:

Pastor Keith, Marilyn, and family  
Big Rock Leaders  
Big Rock Congregation  
The Ministries of Big Rock  
Missions of Big Rock  
Bible Adventure Kid's Club  
Our School District, staff & students  
Local, State, Country & World Leaders  
CCCC Conference (*National & Local*)  
Persecuted Church  
First Responders in the community  
Maupo H & all *World Relief Y-Malawi women*  
Compassion Child & Sari  
Peace and Comfort for those experiencing  
loss during this holiday season  
Support for local families in need  
Opportunities for evangelism and sharing the  
Gospel

## Military:

Curtis B.  
Michael C.  
Cabria C.  
Rachael L.  
Beto V.  
Megan R.  
Andrew H.  
Uriah P.

## Missionaries:

Jeremy, Joy & family  
Robert, Terry & family  
Kurt, Lisa & family  
Harriet S.  
Susan S.  
Caleb & Sandy C. and family

## Homebound:

Theila H.  
Bruce A.

## Prayers for Healing:

David G.	David B.
Jan F.	Michelle G.
Jim G.	Joshua K.
Paul K.	Pat & Joanna S.
Allen P	Naomi & Dick R.
Ricky J.	Jamie S.
Jerry K.	Monica
Esther R.	Jerry Z
Sarah R.	Jessica D. Mother- in-law Rajini
Kay L.	Asher
Sonya	Martha C.
Steve T.	Ava K.
Don B.	Tanya.
Peggie O.	Terry H.
Cindy	
Darell	

## Prayers in General:

Jessica & Prabhu D. & Family  
Jim Z. (*Jail Ministry*)  
Bill H. (*Jail Ministry and health*)  
Nancy M. & Family  
Amy C. & family  
Shelly G.  
Dixie, Tony, and Cecilia  
Dorcy C.  
Becky H. & family  
Kim W.  
Tanya & Juan  
Sandy H. & David (*Trip*)  
Judy H. (*Trip*)  
Sara Q., Juan and daughter  
Monica and Tim A.

## Praises & Blessings:

A well attended Thanksgiving service  
*May the blessings of joy abide within you; May the blessing of peace rest upon you; May the blessing of love flow out through you; May all the blessings of the Lord be yours at Christmas and in the New Year.*

# December 2025

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30 First Sunday of Advent	1	2	3 Prayer Breakfast 9:00 Women's Fellowship 10:30	4 Board Meeting 4:00 Choir 5:30	5	6 Light Parade, Tree Lighting & Live Nativity 5:30 in Atlanta
7 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30 Decorating Party 4:00	8	9	10 Prayer Breakfast 9:00 Women's Fellowship Cookies for Responders	11 Choir 5:30	12	13 Choir Rehearsal for cantata 10:30
14 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30 Cantata & Dinner	15	16	17 Prayer Breakfast 9:00 Shepherd's Meeting 10:30	18	19	20
21 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30 Longest Night 7:00	22	23	24 Prayer Breakfast 9:00 Carols, Candles & Communion 7:00	25 <b>Christmas</b>	26	27
28 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30	29	30	31 Prayer Breakfast 9:00	1 Pork & Sauerkraut Dinner 12:00	2	3 