

Big Rock Congregational Church Atlanta Michigan

A Community of Grace

CHIPS

Off the Big Rock



December 2024



Pastor of BRCC:

Dr. Keith Jones

Moderator:

Nancy Mantz

Deacons:

David Bradley
Gail Fehr

Trustees:

Judy Hoffman
Lynn Scharer

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

Every good gift, every perfect gift, comes from above. These gifts come down from the Father, the creator of the heavenly lights, in whose character there is no change at all.

The Extra Electric Train

A Christmas Memory
By Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

Though money didn't flow as freely as the rain that winter, my parents worked with joyful anticipation to give my brother and me a Christmas present we would never forget. They scrimped for months and then spent more than they could probably afford for a Marx electric train.

Then the day before Christmas, a cousin stationed at a nearby military base pulled into the driveway. Opening the trunk of his car he lifted out a large heavy box. My brother and I could hardly wait to see what it was. On Christmas morning we opened it first. Eagerly we unwrapped an expensive new electric train set. Wow! You had to pull us down off the ceiling. A Lionel train, too! Then we opened the presents from our parents--another electric train. Ho hum. And not nearly as extravagant as the one from our cousin. Guess whose we played with most?



Mom and Dad were hurt. The outlay for an unmarried Air Force lieutenant was nothing compared to the sacrifice my parents had made. But all we saw was the glamour of an expensive train. We counted our parents' gift as merely a nice accessory.

Our heavenly Father spends many a disappointing Christmas. Amidst the glittering ornaments and flashing Christmas lights, the hurry and hustle of shopping and wrapping and family get-togethers, parties and presents, trees and turkeys--who really cares about His gift? What gets more attention from us: our Father's gift of life in Jesus Christ or the quickly-wrapped department store gifts from our cousins?

Thank you, Father, for Jesus. Thank you for the abundant life that we, His disciples, can enjoy now. Thank you for sending us a most expensive gift--your own life. Thank you!

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James 1:17

Missions News



Over the past year, I have been working with several teachers and other school leaders at Black Forest Academy in the area of providing a holistic Christian education to our students. This includes working with our high school teachers as they develop lessons to help students with social and emotional learning. These lessons include things like- how to have a difficult conversation with a friend, showing kindness to others, and developing good listening skills.

The mission of the school is to provide an education to students that equips them to influence their world through Biblical thought, character, and action. Over the past year the school's leadership has been asking some important questions related to the mission such as: What does this look like at our school?

How do we know if we are accomplishing our mission?

What are the key attributes we want to develop in our students?

In this process, the school leadership has developed a list of expected student outcomes. These outcomes help bring more definition to our school's mission. We are currently working on the best ways to measure these outcomes to help with school improvement. Here is the basic outline of our expected student outcomes:

At Black Forest Academy students are equipped for a life-long process of growth and influence through..

Heads that pursue truth in a God-honoring way...

Hearts that pursue flourishing relationships with God, others, and self..

Hands that apply knowledge and skills in service to God and others...

Each of these statements is followed by more specific bullet points for further clarification. Pray for continued wisdom as we seek the best ways to help our students grow in these areas.

The work on the self-study for accreditation is almost complete. The committees have submitted their work, which will need to be edited before submission next month. Please pray for the accreditation readiness visit that will take place on November 14-15. This is when we will receive feedback on our work and prepare for the full team visit in February. The self-study process has helped the school stay accountable to our goals of providing a Christian education to the children of Christian field workers. While it has had its challenges, I am grateful for the opportunity to lead the self-study process for Black Forest Academy.

Join me in thanking the Father for:

good communication with school leaders in the self-study process

fruitful ministry that is happening around the world through the parents of BFA students

the opportunity to spend a few days away during Fall Break

Join me in asking the Father for:

grace, wisdom, and strength to complete the self-study by mid-December

good communication with the visiting accreditation team as they prepare to come in February

encouragement and health as we enter the season of darker and cooler days

As the United States prepares to celebrate Thanksgiving in a few weeks, I am reminded of how grateful I am for the many people who pray for me in my work. I am grateful to be a part of what God is doing through international Christian education and I am so thankful for your prayers and financial partnership. May you continue to see God at work in your lives each day.

With joy and gratitude,

Susan Steele



14 Years of Sponsorship with Compassion Child

Thank you, Friends.

Today we're celebrating the day 14 years ago when you partnered with Compassion to sponsor Megha (*this was our first child*) God is using you to make a difference, and we know time flies when you're changing lives!

Since joining the Compassion family, your words and prayers have given hope to Sarai and Megha. You have come alongside the local church to show them they are known, loved and protected. You have demonstrated that God values every child.

Through 14 Years of Sponsorship..

44

letters have traveled between you and your children - words of hope that have spanned the globe

1

Extra gift has been given, a reminder of your love

And thousands of smiles have come to the faces of the children who think of you and pray for you.

What does that mean for Sarai?

- She is known by staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to meet her unique needs.
- She is in the care of a local church that shares the gospel of Jesus.
- She is loved by pastors, tutors, friends - and YOU!

The impact you've made so far is amazing, Friends, and we're so excited to see how God will use you next! So happy sponsorversary!

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." *Mark 16:15, (NIV)*

God bless you,
Your friends at Compassion

"Sweet Symbol

Author Unknown

A significant symbol of Christmas
Is the simple candy cane.
It's shape is the crook of the shepherd
One of the first who came.
The lively peppermint flavor is
The regal gift of spice.
The white is Jesus' purity.
The red is sacrifice.

The narrow stripes are
friendship.
And the nearness of his love.
Eternal, sweet compassion
A gift from God above.
The candy cane reminds us all
of how much God cared.
And like His Christmas gift to use
It's meant to be broken and shared."



Car Care Corner

By Gabriel



How about those MPGs?

Does anyone here want better gas mileage? Some easy math will help you track your MPGs, the best place to start driving with fuel efficiency in mind if you don't already. A lot of newer cars have an MPG indicator built in and this simple trick will show you how accurate it is (I've found them to be a bit optimistic!).

When you pull up to the gas pump, reset the trip odometer on your car to zero and fill your tank until the pump shuts off. Don't "top off" the tank! On top of throwing off the accuracy of your mileage calculation, doing so can damage your emissions system and lead to costly repairs. If you're curious, "topping off" can spill liquid gas into an emissions control device designed exclusively for managing fuel vapors, thus fouling an expensive component that will need to be replaced to turn off the Check Engine Light (CEL).

Anyway, after your trip-tracked refill, just drive like normal until it's time to fill up again. When you stop at the pump this time, check that trip odometer. Let's say it says 304.6 miles. Write that down and reset the trip odometer for next time. When the fuel pump shuts itself off, write down how many gallons you just bought. If the pump says you put in 8.129 gallons, then you have all the data you need for an MPG check.

Divide the trip-meter mileage by gallons of gas you put in to see your average mileage from your last refill. In my example, that would be 304.6 miles / 8.129 gallons which would give you 37.47 MPG! Then you can divide the cost per gallon by your miles per gallon to see your per mile fuel cost. At \$3 per gallon with an average of 37 MPG, your average cost was 8 cents per mile.

Of course your mileage will vary, but in upcoming articles I'll share techniques to optimize your fuel efficiency that apply to all common passenger vehicles. While your pickup truck will never sip gas like my compact car (and under "towing" in my owners manual, it simply says "not recommended!"), the same techniques can provide a financially impactful benefit if you travel far or often.

Making a habit of checking your fuel consumption can also provide early warning of potential problems. A sudden dip in your fuel consumption without much change to your driving habits can indicate issues that need to be addressed before they become bigger expenses. You can expect a few MPGs lower on average during the winter, but vacuum leaks, failing sensors, clogged components, and other issues could increase your fuel consumption considerably before tripping the worry symbol. Your fuel economy can function like a coal mine canary!

If you have a 1996 or newer vehicle, then you have an On-Board Diagnostic (OBD) port under your dash. If you have a 1995 or older, I'd like to see it! But there are devices available that can plug into this port to provide you with an MPG indicator among other useful functions such as helping you figure out why that CEL is on. A popular device of this kind that I have enjoyed in the past is called the Scan Gauge II, or search "OBD scan tools" for a wide variety of alternatives.

Next time we will take a look at some driving habits that can boost those MPGs and save you money!

CE&D Update



Adult Sunday School: Come join us on **Sunday mornings at 9:15**. This month we will be using the study *The Marvel and Miracle of Advent* by Christine Caine & Lisa Harper

Small Groups: Small Group will be continuing their study with a book by Carol Ruvolo. "God With Us". This month we are only meeting on December 11th.

Library: We are in need of people to help us unbox books and get them on the shelves.

Children's Sunday School: Michelle will continue with Youth Sunday School at 9:15. Michelle and Gail will lead Children's Church during the month of December. Both groups will be studying for the series "Color of Christmas" by Trueway Kids.

SonShine Kid's Club: Club will be taking a break from their regular curriculum in December and talking about the season of Advent and Christmas. We can always use snacks for the children. The club meets on Tuesday from 2:50 to 4:30. Club will not be in session on December 24th and 31st and will resume their regular meetings on January 7th. If you know of any children that would like to join us please see Marilyn or Gail.

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.

Family Movie Night will be replaced in January with games after the Pork and Sauerkraut dinner.

Next Meeting of CE&D will be on **January 16th** at 4:30.

Choir News



Sing for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel.

Isaiah 44:23

Thank you choir for sharing your joy of singing at the November Thanksgiving Service. We are preparing for the Christmas Cantata *Lamb of Bethlehem* on December 15th. It is never too late to join in this praise of God, we welcome all voices at 5:30 on Thursdays.

December Events

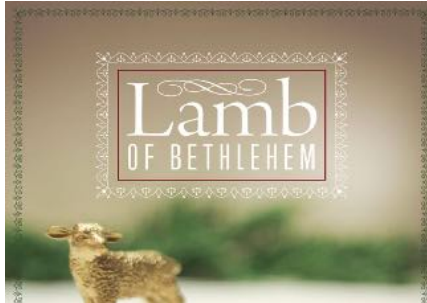


Join us as we celebrate the birth of our savior, Christ Jesus, throughout December. There will be something for everyone to enjoy.

There is decorating and pizza,

Advent readings and lighting of candles,

Listening to the Christmas story as the choir presents the cantata,



Lots of fine food



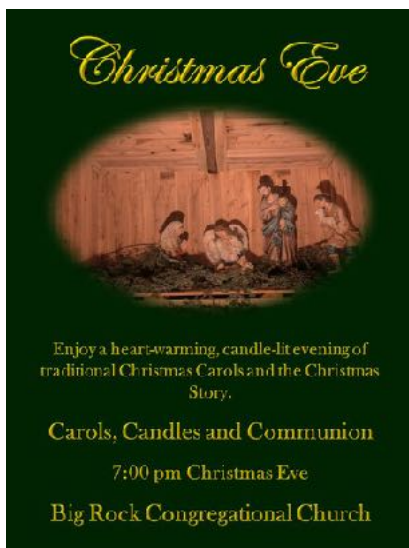
and fellowship at the Christmas dinner,

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.





Women's Fellowship News



Women's Fellowship will be baking and putting together cookie trays at the **December 4th** meeting. These cookies will be delivered to the First Responders of our community as a thank-you for all they do for us throughout the year. You can bring your supplies to bake your cookies that day or bring them baked and help make up the trays. You can also make candy or savory snacks to go on the trays.

Tree Lighting, Parade and Live Nativity

There are many Christmas festivities for everyone to experience on December 7th. Community Connection will have a live nativity scene with the Christmas story told by narrators in the park beginning at 4:00 and continuing until 7:00. They will break for the parade at 5:30. They will have a hot chocolate and cider stand and caroling in the park along with a bonfire to keep you warm.



The Atlanta Chamber of Commerce will hold its Parade of Lights at 5:30 pm and will start at the courthouse. Following the parade there will be the tree lighting at the White Elk.

Operation Christmas Child 2024



Thank you to all who purchased items for the shoeboxes and helped pack them this year. Thank you to those who donated money for the shipping and Gospel materials delivered with the boxes.

BRCC ended up with 30 boxes delivered to our drop-off at Full Gospel. There, they collected 1002 boxes from our area that were delivered to Gaylord. In Gaylord, the regional drop-off, they put 10,060 boxes into shipping containers and onto two semi-trucks. This was a record year for this region. So many children worldwide will receive gifts and the love of Christ Jesus because of these boxes.





Birthdays and Anniversaries



Eldon K. 12/06
Jamie S. 12/12
Naomi R. 12/21
Pat S. 12/26
Cecilia M. 12/26

Upcoming Event

Dec. 1st: Decorating Party at Big Rock 4:00 pm
Dec. 7th: Live Nativity, Parade of Lights and Tree lighting in Atlanta
Dec. 15th: Christmas Cantata and Dinner at Big Rock
Dec. 21st: Longest Night Service 7:00 pm
Dec. 24th: Carols, Candles & Communion Service 7:00 pm
Jan. 1st: New Year's Pulled Pork and Sauerkraut Dinner
Jan. 12th: Un-decorating Party 4:00 pm
Jan. 26th: Singspiration at Big Rock 6:00 pm

Prayers, Praises & Blessings - December 2024

Daily:

Pastor Keith, Marilyn, and family
Big Rock Leaders will serve humbly as godly
examples to all.

Big Rock Congregation
The Ministries of Big Rock
SonShine Kid's Club
Missions of Big Rock
Our School District, staff & students
Local, State, Country & World Leaders
CCCC Conference (National & Local)
Persecuted Church
First Responders in the community
Maupo H. & Aleina B. (World Relief Y-
Malawi women)
Sari (Compassion Child)

During this season of Advent we pray that
hearts and minds will turn to Jesus
Christ.

Military:

Curtis B.
Michael C.
Cabria C.
Rachael L.
Beto V.
Megan R.

Missionaries:

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

Homebound:

Theila H.
Jean S.
Bruce A.
Gaye K.

Prayers for Healing:

David G.	David B.
Jan F.	Michelle G.
Jim G.	Joshua K.
Paul K.	Pat & Joanna S.
Asher	Naomi & Dick R.
Ricky J.	Allen P
Jerry K.	Donna T.
Robin R.	Jerry Z
Sarah R.	Pat F.
Jessica D. Mother- in-law	Cindy
Isaiah	Rivka


Prayers

Jessica & Prabhu D. & Family
Jim Z.
Nancy M. and Family
Amy J. and family
Dixie, Tony and Cecilia
Shelly (Michelle) G
Preschool teacher for Lewiston
Safe travels for Judy H.
Lantz's faith
Beckie and family

Praises & Blessings:

For the many servants that God has provided
in this congregation
For our Prayer Warriors
The health of the congregation
Jim Z. for bringing so many people to Christ
The many blessings God has showered on
Big Rock in the past year.

DECEMBER 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30 Communion Advent Begins	2	3 SonShine Kid's Club 2:50-4:30	4 Prayer Breakfast 9:00 Women's Fellowship Cookie Bake	5 Governing Board Meeting 4:00	6	7 
8 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30	9	10 SonShine Kid's Club 2:50-4:30	11 Prayer Breakfast 9:00 Small Group 5:30	12 Choir 5:30	13	14 Choir Practice for Cantata & On time
15 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30	16	17 SonShine Kid's Club 2:50-4:30	18 Prayer Breakfast 9:00 Shepherd's Meeting 10:30	19	20	21 Longest Night Service 7:00
22 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30	23	24 Carols, Candles & Communion Service 7:00	25 Christmas	26	27	28
29 Praise Team 8:30 Sunday School 9:15 Worship Service 10:30	30	31	1 Happy New Year Pork & Saurkraut Dinner 12:00	2 Governing Board Meeting 4:00	3	4