

APRIL 2014

The Congregational Connection...

Our connection to the family and friends of the First Congregational Church

APRIL HIGHLIGHTS

Palm Sunday: April 13th

Maundy Thursday: April 17th

Good Friday: April 18th

Easter: April 20th

3rd Sunday Throw Down: April 20th

4th Sunday Spaghetti: April 27th, after the worship service. (SPF fundraiser)

Community Fun Night: April 25th, 6:30-9 p.m.

Easter Cantata

Sunday
April 20th
during our
worship
service

IT'S SPRING CLEAN UP TIME!

You are going through your closets, cleaning out the shed, garage and basement and not sure where to put all the items you have accumulated and no longer use? I have a

solution for you! Bring them to First Congregational Church for our annual Rummage sale **August 8th & 9th** during Mint Festival weekend. If you would like to help out during the week before with set up or the Friday and Saturday of the sale please contact Barb Sherman at 517-242-1234 (cell), or 989-292-4029 (home).



From Death to Life!

Jesus, the Son of and Messiah of God, has been crucified on the cross. He is defeated, dead and buried. Any hope or comfort you might have taken in his words and life has been snuffed out. Not only has Christ died, he has died with the sins of the world upon him. He has died with your sins upon him. As sin is death, he is truly dead!

But the death of the God-man is not the end. Jesus was resurrected from death and lives forever. In righteous triumph he overcomes death, making it possible for us to be free from sin and death. Is this story a myth or a real event?

Both. In Christianity myth became fact. As C.S. Lewis puts it, *“The dying god really appears—as a historical Person, living in a definite place and time.”* Like a myth, the gospel is a colorful story that helps you wrestle with your deepest fears and needs, and inspires your imagination. The first disciples found this resurrection so compelling that, faced with torture and death, they refused to renounce him. What was once a defeated band who are already returning to their fishing nets and boats would never have been transformed into bold preachers of the gospel had they not seen the resurrected Christ.

The resurrection is a present day event. At Pentecost the risen Christ sends forth the Holy Spirit into the lives of believers, to work out his purposes for their lives. Today this same Spirit is at work, giving those who receive it the power to become children of God, recreated in the image of God. In this way the Easter story continues in you as you die to sin and are resurrected to new life.

Praise be to God for the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, you, and me.

Building Closure Policy:

The First Congregational Church places a high priority on gathering together as a church family for worship each week and rarely closes due to bad weather or other cause. In case of inclement weather (heavy snow fall, ice, or other major storm), or loss of power, or other situation in which it is deemed ill-advised for the congregation to gather, the decision to close the church will be made on a case by case decision by the Senior Minister in consultation with the Moderator. If services are going to be canceled or delayed, the church answering machine message will indicate the closure, as well the church website. The Senior Minister, with the assistance of those available, will make an effort to notify congregation members. Members are encouraged to call the church office if they are uncertain whether a closure has occurred. Members are also asked to consider their personal safety when choosing to attend services or weekly event in inclement weather.

Those who have any concern about arriving safely are encouraged to stay at home.

Cancellations of Sunday morning Services

A decision will be made by 8:00 a.m. Sunday morning whether to cancel services. A recorded message will be left on the church answering machine. However, if the power is out, our phone and computer systems shut down - if the phone rings and rings and the system never picks up, the church is without power.

Closing of the Church Office

In those instances where severe weather or other conditions hinders normal operation of the church office, the decision to close the office will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Senior Minister in consultation with the Moderator and Church Administrator. Any decision on closing the office or delay of the office's opening will be made as soon as is practical, and that information will be placed on the church voicemail system.

Cancellation of Scheduled Weekly Activities

When inclement weather or loss of power occurs during the week, meetings or choir practices may be cancelled. The person in charge of the meeting or gathering makes the decision and notifies the members of the group. For evening meetings or gatherings, the decision will be made and communicated by 5:00 PM. The decision to cancel choir practice is made by the choir director or leader of the musical group. The leader canceling the meeting or choir practice will also notify the church office.

Notifications

In the event that an unexpected closure of the church has occurred during a weekday, the Senior Minister or Church Administrator will contact the Moderator and others that are scheduled to use the building that day. Examples include but are not limited to; Financial Secretary, custodian, Director of Music Ministry, small group leaders, choir directors, ministry team leaders, lock up crew, and other community groups who are scheduled to use the church.

DEADLINE REMINDER

All articles for the newsletter should be submitted by the 21st of each month. Bulletin announcements are due by Thursday.

CHURCH OFFICE

Let's communicate as effectively as we can. Questions and concerns can be submitted with your contact information by email, phone, or by leaving a message in the drop box outside the office door.

SAVE THE DATE

National Conferences in
Omaha, NE
June 28-July 1, 2014.

CHECK IT OUT!

Check out *The Upper Room* located on the literature rack in the back of the sanctuary. Great source for daily reflection and prayer. Check out, "Beautiful Feet" (p. 59). Also, take a look at, "You Know My Name" (p. 70).

EASTER OFFERINGS

During the Easter season, it is encouraging to see both new and familiar faces at our worship services. Throughout the year, many of you already support the congregation with your time, talent and financial contributions but greater participation is always welcome. We encourage you to look into our electronic giving program. It takes just a few minutes to setup a recurring giving plan. Contact the church office for more details or pick up an authorization form today.

ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF MINISTRY
3/10/2014



NURSERY POLICY

The First Congregational Church places a high value on the hospitality we extend to families with children, an expression of which is our well-appointed Nursery. This room is located on the lower level of the education wing. It includes a bathroom with changing table. There is a speaker through which the service can be heard. There is no nursery staff. However, the room is made available to parents who may wish to use it as a place to care for their own children.

STAYING CONNECTED

Helen Johnson/Maxine Kushmaul
 Grace Haven Assisted Living
 1507 Glastonbury Drive
 St. Johns, MI 48879

Bruce MacRae/Colleen Naru
 Hazel Findlay Country Manor
 1101 South Scott Road
 St. Johns, MI 48879

IT'S TIME TO RESERVE

Your special month for the 2014
 "Congregational Connection." The
 cost is \$50.00 and used to help
 cover the cost of postage. Please
 contact the church office to reserve
 your month. Your dedication and
 donation is appreciated!

**Community Fun
 Night**

Friday April 25th

6:30-9 p.m.

**First Congregational Church
 100 Maple St
 St. Johns, MI 48879**

989-224-2636

LOST BUT NOW IS FOUND

Lost something? We might have found it! Items
 found are in the church office.

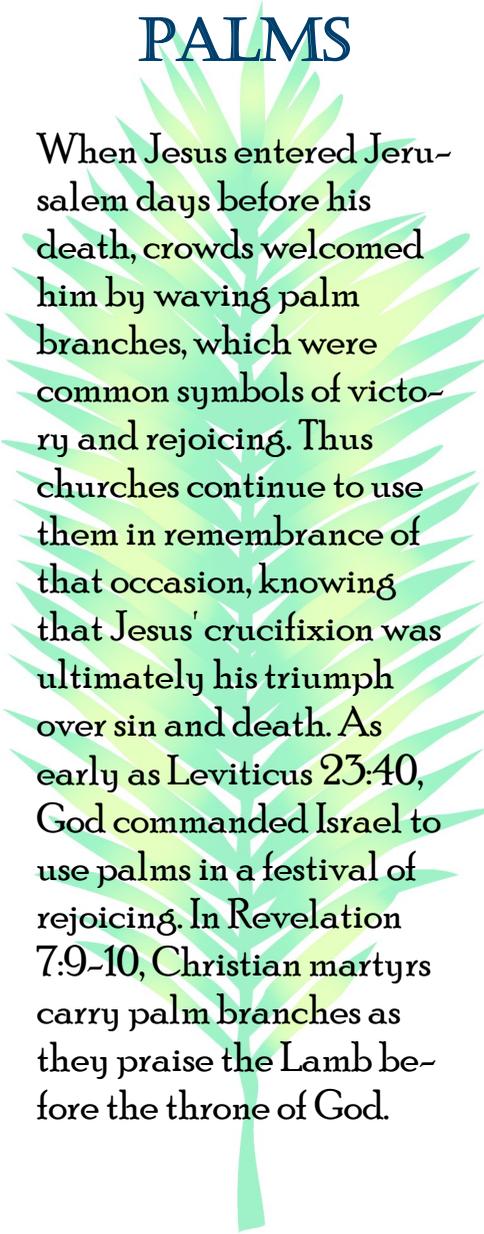
**EASTER SUNDAY
 FLOWERS &
 DEDICATIONS**

As in past years there is an
 opportunity to purchase spring
 flowers in honor of, in memory of,
 family and friends. They will dec-
 orate our sanctuary on Easter Sun-
 day along with acknowledgment.



"What could I say? They are
 her most Easter shoes."

PALMS



When Jesus entered Jerusalem days before his death, crowds welcomed him by waving palm branches, which were common symbols of victory and rejoicing. Thus churches continue to use them in remembrance of that occasion, knowing that Jesus' crucifixion was ultimately his triumph over sin and death. As early as Leviticus 23:40, God commanded Israel to use palms in a festival of rejoicing. In Revelation 7:9-10, Christian martyrs carry palm branches as they praise the Lamb before the throne of God.

BRAIN BUSTER

Who told the woman at the tomb that Jesus had risen?

- A) Two men in shining garments
- B) A young man in a white robe
- C) An angel
- D) All of the above, depending on which gospel you read.

(D) (See Matthew 28:5-6; Luke 24:4-6)

BOARD OF MINISTRY ELECTIONS

When we serve others, we serve God. Biblical and true, God will not give us more than we can handle. God also equips the called, not calls the equipped. We must take to heart his promises. Be in constant prayer and earnestly seek God's face.

As the time draws near, choosing three Board representatives of Christ and three seats in officer positions becomes an opportunity for you to serve God faithfully. Three members will be voted into three-year terms. We will also nominate a moderator, vice-moderator, and a treasurer. Be sure to consider if God is calling you to do more than just vote in this election. Pray, reflect, and seek the truth in love.

He is the way and the truth and the life. Consider shining God's light this election season. Your Board election committee, made up of Tom Flynn, Sue Lounds, Melanie Lounds, and Shirley Lake, would love to answer questions you may have about running for a seat this May/June.



Notes from the Music Ministry Team: **Thinking about Easter with Eyes**

Come to see the panels telling the Easter story added week by week outside the church's front entrance. The concept of building the cross composite was featured in an article by Laura Keeley (Reformed Worship Magazine) and will be on display from March 15 through Easter week thanks to the handiwork of Pastor Matthew Olson and artists Teresa Zuker, Arlene Hoag, Cameron and Art Wood.

The display panels follow six themes:

The Garden (Panel 1) reminds us of the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed before his arrest (Matt 26). Though he asked the disciples to pray, they were too tired, and fell asleep. How often are we too tired to pray?

Scattered Sheep (Panel 2) recalls the words of Zechariah 13:7, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." The rooster reminds us of Peter's denial of Christ (Matt 26:74) despite his pledge of faithfulness. Christ

knows that we will fail. Because of his great love, we can leave our failings at the cross.

Judas Hole (Panel 3) reminds us of the 30 pieces of silver that Judas received for turning Jesus over to the authorities (Matt 26:15). This represented about 4 months' wages, and was also the price of a slave. Remember, we were all slaves to sin before Jesus paid the price for us.

Small Crosses (Panel 4) represent our prayers to God, while the larger cross covers all of our sins.

Royalty (Panel 5): a cross made of dirty nails is not fit for a king, but reminds us of the effects of our sins, which scar and smudge every part of our lives, ... until we secure them in Christ.

Crucifying Words (Panel 6): we remember the times that we responded as one with a crowd shouting hurtful words. We remember the words of Jesus, "... just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matt 25:40, NRSV)

You may comment on this exhibit or track its progress, at <http://easter2014fccsj.blogspot.com/>.

Come, see, reflect. Blessings! - The Music Ministry Team

The mission of the Music Ministry Team:

- ¹ to support and sustain a creative atmosphere that supports worship for each member;
- ² to encourage active participation for the purpose of worship;
- ³ to proactively develop musical worship experiences that are varied, meaningful, and personal.

The Music Ministry Team: Susan Kilmer (Chair); Chuck Graham; Nathan Sherman;
Rachael Short; Beth Webb; Guven Witteveen; Teresa Zuker.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

*We believe in God, the Father,
infinite in wisdom, goodness and love,
and in Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord
and Savior, who, for us and our salvation, lived and died
and rose again and liveth evermore;
and in the Holy Spirit, who taketh of the things of
Christ and revealeth them to us, renewing, comforting,
and inspiring the souls of men.*

VISION:

to CELEBRATE the glory of God through worship, service and stewardship,
to NURTURE our relationship with Christian love and truth,
to SERVE others in our daily lives individually and collectively as Christ's people; and to WELCOME others to join in our journey.

First Congregational Church

100 Maple Street
St. Johns, MI 48879

Telephone: 989-224-2636

Fax: 989-224-8306

E-Mail: fccsj@4wbi.net

Web Site: www.fccsj.com

Facebook: [firstcongregationalchurchofstjohns](https://www.facebook.com/firstcongregationalchurchofstjohns)

Hours:

Monday-Wednesday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Tuesday -Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Closed Friday

Sunday Service 11:00 a.m.

Senior Minister: Matthew Olson

Director of Music Ministry: Rachael Short

Church Administrator Interim: Holly Graham

Office Staff: Guven Witteveen

Treasurer: Tom Webb

Financial Secretary: Paul Martis

Chancel Choir Director: Dr. Charles Graham

Hands of Harmony Director: Susan Kilmer

Custodians: Faith Hazard & Shirleyan Lake

THE BOARD OF MINISTRY

Moderator: Shirleyan Lake.....989-224-1870

Vice Moderator: Bill Rockwell.....517-214-4636

Board of Ministry Members:

Tom Doppke.....810-241-6794

Dave Elms.....989-227-2865

Tom Flynn.....989-992-8138

Rod Fuller.....989-224-3961

Jeramie Goetschy.....989-640-0010

Lois Graham.....989-224-8596

Melanie Lounds.....989-227-0932

Marilyn Newman.....517-331-3457

Barb Sherman.....517-242-1234

BOARD OF MINISTRY JOYS AND CONCERNS

- ~Joy in the Ash Wednesday service, the first of several healing services to come.
- ~Joy in preparation and participation for the Loaves & Fishes ministry.
- ~Concerns for healing.
- ~Concerns for finishing the membership surveys.
- ~Prayers for the family of Hila Beaufore.

