

First Congregational Church  
100 Maple Street  
St. Johns, Michigan 48879

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**This Month's Highlights:**

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



## AUGUST 2012

### The Congregational Connection...

*Our connection to the family and friends of  
First Congregational Church, St. Johns, MI*

# Mint Festival 2012

The Mint Festival will be here soon. Our goal is to make a \$2,000.00 profit this year. We were very close last year. In order to do this we need your help. How can you help? You can donate cash that we will use to purchase pop, water and other food items and supplies. You can sign up to help set up the booth or help with the tear down and clean up. Please see me to add your donation to the "Donation Jug". The sign up board is at the church and has lots of available spots.

Please contact me, Barb Sherman at 989-292-4029 or on my cell 517-242-1234 if you have any questions.



# COME TO OUR FOOD BOOTH!

***Come and have fun and fellowship while you work with Barb Sherman at the F.C.C. Mint Festival Food Booth!***

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON VOLUNTEERING AND SERVICE REPORT**

Thanks to a donation from the Missions Team, I had an opportunity to attend the National Conference on Volunteering and Service in Chicago this past June. I went with the hopes of being able to network with fellow volunteers in hopes of gathering ideas or suggestions from others for what our Church could do to expand our missions. I came away with so much more.

Day one started with helping to landscape an elementary school on Chicago’s south side. I had the privilege to work alongside Neil Bush (son of the 41<sup>st</sup> president) for several hours. He asked me all about my Church, what the Church is doing in the community now, and what plans we have for the future. He pushed me to think about how we could partner with others, such as the City of St. Johns, or the Public Schools, to come up with new and innovative ways to help others in our community.

Partnering with others was a major theme of the conference. A seminar on emergency response for disasters such as Katrina or Joplin asked attendees to think about how their institution could partner with other agencies to help out. For example, members of FCC could train with Red Cross Disaster Services in Lansing and be able to leave at a moment’s notice to help in response efforts to a natural disaster. Another seminar presented ways how the United Methodist Church is building bridges between the Church and businesses as well as the un-churched to have a positive impact on communities here and around the world.

Representatives of the United Nations presented a seminar on the State of the World’s Volunteerism. They reported that some Third World countries that used to receive volunteers, are now sending volunteers to other more needy countries. They indicated that international volunteerism is growing, and changing, rapidly. The National Park Service & U.S. Forest Service presented opportunities on how volunteers can be involved in the stewardship of public lands in national parks across the country.

I came home with countless new contacts, ideas, websites and much more. I had the opportunity to meet many people, and was fortunate to hear many inspiring stories from people across the country. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to attend such a powerful conference, and am excited for the future of missions in this Church. Please let me know if you would like more information. I can be reached at beaglejim@gmail.com or at 989.274.9607.

Thank you,  
Jim Beagle

**“Be the change you want to see in the world”**  
- Mahatma Gandhi

**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 revealth them to us,  
renewing, comforting, and inspiring the  
souls of men.*

**MISSION STATEMENT**

We are a church open to all.  
As modern day pilgrims we consider  
it our privilege and committed  
responsibility to:

**CELEBRATE** the glory of God through  
worship, service and stewardship  
**NURTURE** our relationships with  
Christian love and truth; and  
**SERVE** others in our daily lives,  
individually and collectively  
as Christ’s people.

**THE BOARD OF MINISTRY**  
**Sr. Minister: Rev. Matthew Olson**

**Moderator:** Molly Minnick  
**Vice Moderator:** Lois Graham  
**Treasurer:** Ruth Nihart  
**Board of Ministry Members:**  
David Elms, Tom French, Rod Fuller, Bill  
Kushmaul, Gary Larsen, Eugene Livingston,  
Melanie Lounds, Dr. Keith Mino, Jr., Charlotte  
Shoup

**CHURCH STAFF**

**Church Administrator:** Susan Larsen  
**Financial Secretary:** Paul Martis  
**Chancel Choir Director:** Dr. Charles Graham  
**Hands of Harmony Director:** Susan Kilmer  
**Director of Music Ministry:** Rachael Short

**COMMUNITY NEWS**

This is a reminder that the congregation is invited to **THE WHEEL INN**, St. Johns on Saturdays and Sundays. Be sure to bring along a copy of our current weekly bulletin. The Wheel will collect those bulletins, attach your bill to it and every quarter they will total those numbers (pre-tax) and make a 5% donation back to our church.

**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:**

firstcongregationalchurchofst.johns

**Hours:**

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

Wednesday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Thursday—9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Closed Friday

Don’t forget to bring your food items and gently used, clean clothing for the **THIRD SUNDAY THROW**

**DOWN!** All donations go to the “Basic Needs Center” here in St. Johns. They need our support! Our next collection is Sunday, **AUGUST 19th.** Contact John Fitch at 224

-3565, or any Missions Team member for more information.



## “Gathering Grounds” Great Coffee-Faithfully Served

Delicious coffee-sweet treats-  
cold drinks

Every Saturday  
during the  
Farmer’s Market  
8:00 a.m.—Noon  
On the church patio



For more information contact Jennifer  
Beagle at 224-0667  
or Molly Minnick at 989-307-9936

## “Fleet Feet”

Running and Walking Club  
All ages and abilities welcome!

When:  
Saturday mornings, 7:30 a.m.—?  
Join the fun when ever you are available!

Where:  
Both routes (short/long  
course) will begin and end in  
the church parking lot.



Questions?: Jim Beagle (989-  
207-9607) or Rachael Short (517-862-  
0750)

## NEW ARRIVAL!

Congratulations to Peter  
and Alice Murphy on the  
birth of a new grandson,  
Kellen James Bushong.  
Kellen was born on June  
5th, to Colin and Jeanie  
Bushong in Lake Ann, MI.  
Congratulation to everyone!



## DRUM CIRCLE WORSHIP SERVICE

Wednesday, August 8th,  
7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., in  
Wilcox Hall. Come as  
you are! You do not have  
to know how to read mu-  
sic.



For more information  
contact Chuck Graham at 224-8596.

## INVITATION TO PRAISE THE LORD

### Coming Before the Lord Sunday Morning Devotions 9:00 a.m.—9:30 a.m.

On Sunday mornings during the sum-  
mer months you are invited to gather for  
an informal service of devotion. While  
each service will be minimally struc-  
tured and different, there will be com-  
mon elements; singing, the reading of  
God’s word, prayer and meditation.  
Come join us as we seek the Lord to-  
gether.

## “Nothing is impossible. Nothing is impossible with God” –VBS Theme Song

My daughter Gretchen was rather depressed. Vacation Bible School had ended too soon!

But why wouldn't she be sad to see it done? Leading VBS was an adventure in risking her faith, and God had honored that faith. During the week Holy Spirit was obviously present; children gladly heard the story of Jesus' love for them, young leaders were nurtured, faces were filled with joy and laughter, and Gretchen felt the Spirit in her as she used her gifts. God was visible in all this; in the language used in VBS the week was a “God sighting”.

I confess that, when Gretchen first mentioned organizing and leading VBS, I felt pained. A part of me did not want my 11 year old, with all her enthusiasm and tenderness, to taste the bitterness of disappointment that comes with the really difficult work of being a leader. As she pulled things together she would meet with criticism and apathy. My instinct was to shelter her.

We talked over her motivations. Gretchen wanted to organize a VBS for three reasons:

1. “The kids would be disappointed if there was no VBS; they are counting on us” (no adults had offered to lead VBS)
2. “This is what God wants us to do as a church”
3. “This is what God wants me to do”

While I couldn't argue with any of these motives down deep I still hoped that she would change her mind. Gretchen's faith would be put to the test. "Not yet, Lord, not yet, please?" I prayed in my heart. But I decided that I needed to honor her faith with faith of my own and support her in her decision. I was preparing to reap what I had sown. I was going to try and let her find her own sense call and service.

Still, I found myself down playing expectations. “There will be a lot of trouble getting lead-ers”, I sagely predicted. “Not many kids will come.”

On the middle day of our well-staffed and well-attended VBS, Gretchen called me out. What a faint-faithed wimp I had been. “See dad! See!”

Reflecting on this I think I understand more completely what Jesus meant when he told us that in order to experience the kingdom of heaven we must become like children. Gretchen knew what she was supposed to do, and was prepared to do it. It was as simple as that.

So much of the time we adults finely calculate the costs and benefits, the investment and return, and end up doing the careful thing, or doing NOTHING. Instead of looking for opportunities to stretch our faith, we try and find ways to do God's work in which we need no faith whatsoever. This is not Lord pleasing. God, who has already given us everything, is unwilling to work with us when we offer nothing. No wonder we are so seldom blessed.

“And a little child shall lead them” Isaiah 11:6

**Rev. Matthew Olson**

Thank you to everyone who helped make VBS possible, especially Sam Beagle, who co-lead with Gretchen.

**GREETINGS FROM SARAH GLADSTONE!**

I was recently writing a sermon on the story of Jarius' Daughter and the Bleeding Woman (Mark 5: 21-43), when my attention was drawn to the lyrics of an old Emmylou Harris song which speaks to the desire of kinship.

***Orphan Girl***

*I am a orphan on God's highway  
but I'll share my troubles  
if you go my way  
I have no mother, no father, no sister, no brother  
I am an orphan girl  
I have had friendships pure and golden  
but the ties of kinship  
I have not known them  
I know no mother no father, no sister, no brother  
I am an orphan girl  
but when he calls me I will be able  
to meet my family at God's table  
I'll meet my mother, my father, my sister, my brother  
no more an orphan girl  
so blessed savior make me willing  
and walk beside me until I'm with them  
be my mother, my father, my sister, my brother  
I am an orphan girl  
be my mother, my father, my sister, my brother  
I am an orphan girl, I am an orphan girl*

In the story of the bleeding woman, do to an illness this woman has been subjected to the ostracism and ridicule of her family, friends, and neighbors. Not wanting to make people 'unclean' by her touch, she is forced to withdraw herself from the social and everyday functions of society. It is through 12 years of illness, that she becomes an orphan. But one day as Jesus passes, she sees her opportunity for healing and takes it! She makes a bold move back into society and takes the healing touch of Jesus! And in this action she not only find physical healing but also a God that turns to her and calls her "Daughter..."

Are there times in our life when we feel alone, pushed aside, or orphaned? Are there times when we can identify with the hurt of the bleeding woman?

Being one of the family of God is a bold claim. For in times when we are on our own, we are given the name of "son" or "daughter" of God, thereby never truly being alone. We are

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**AUGUST SIGN UP SCHEDULES**

<u>Altar Flowers</u>	<u>Nursery Care</u>	<u>Fellowship Hour</u>	<u>4th Sunday Supper Host/Hostess</u>
5 *	5 Stacie Stevens	5 *	<b>The 4th Sunday Supper will resume in September</b>
12 *	12 Stacie Stevens	12 *	
19 Minnick Family	19 Chelsey Rossow	19 *	
26 *	26 Hannah VanValkenburg	26 *	

**\*Openings that need to be filled.**

This page is published to keep you informed of participation in our church on Sundays and of changes in our church records. This also includes the dedication of our monthly newsletter.

**Friend Death:**

Roxy J. Cramer, June 26, 2012, Aunt of Richard Cramer



**THE AUGUST DEDICATION**



*The "Congregational Connection"*

*for this month is in honor of*

*our*

***"St. Johns family"***

*Given by*

*Wayne and Elinore Olson*

Children and Youth News

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

- 5 Allyse Johnson
- 7 Troy Cramer
- 15 Logan Johnson
- 16 Keegan Elms
- 16 Danielle Flynn



RALLY DAY 2012

Sunday, September 16th

Children's Choir at 9:30 a.m.

Sunday School age 4 through 5th grade,

Junior High and Senior High Youth

Groups all meet at 10:00 a.m.



More Jesus!

Classes filled with creative Bible story presentations.

Engaging music and videos.

We are getting excited to see you all again!

SENIOR HIGH YOUTH GROUP For grades 9th —12th

When: Sunday, August 26th. Swimming starts at 4:30 p.m. and dinner at 6:00 p.m. followed by discussion about this year's activities!

Where: 1363 North St. Claire Road Take M-21 toward Ovid and turn left after Daisy

Yell onto St. Claire Road. The Stevens' home is just past the old railroad line on the left. Bring a beverage and we will provide dinner. Bring your bathing suit and towel too! Call Melanie Lounds if you need a ride out to the Stevens' home or if you need a ride home: cell (517) 388-1936.



MCSC CHURCH CAMP

Youth from our congregation who are attending Michigan Conference Summer Camp, July 29th, to August 3rd, are Andy Beagle, Sam Beagle, Gretchen Olson, Peter Olson, Grace Palmer, Skylar Mayes, Mackenzie Mayes and Lauren Doppke.



Notes from the Music Ministry Team: **Worship Music**

*Favorite Worship Songs*

“Sing to the LORD, bless His name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.” (Psalm 96:2-3)

After you shared examples of meaningful worship songs via survey, we asked you tell us how those songs express your worship. We feel that our worship can be enriched and our relationships strengthened as we understand more about how we relate to God when we sing. Here are some of your comments:

He Lives, Hymn #248 ~ Arlene Hoag “Somehow, this song brings me to renewed Christian heights. It truly makes my heart sing.”

This is Where the Healing Begins, by True Avenue North ~ Elizabeth Olson “This song gives me strength and encouragement as I battle Lyme Disease. At times when I needed God’s encouragement, I heard this on Smile FM.”

Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow [Doxology], Hymn #809 ~ Mary Ann Ellickson “I like the words; it says it all. When I sing this, I can picture each face of God: the all-powerful.” God; gentle and yet powerful Christ; and the Holy Spirit, always present, working in and through us.”

The Old Rugged Cross, Hymn #484 ~ Mary Faloon “It just does – move me, both emotionally and spiritually.”

In the Garden, Hymn #242 ~ Bonnie Wickerham “It gives me peace. The garden is beautiful and God walks with me and talks to me. It’s a wonderful feeling; I feel like I could reach out and touch Him.”

“A wonderful place to listen to God. Away from the distractions and trials of the world, and enjoying His gifts. In my garden the weeds keep coming up, reminding me that I have to work to keep the weeds out of my life, so I can better grow in Christ.” ~ Judy Cramer

Wonderful Grace of Jesus, Hymn #497 ~ Barbara Salters “It was a song that we sang in church choir when I was young that always brought a smile to my mom’s face. It reminds us all that no matter what we are saved by the grace of our Lord.”

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*In This Very Room*, by Ron and Carol Harris

~ Paul Martis

"I was married here. I joined the church here. Three of my children were baptized here (and one in the hospital). One of my daughters was married here. The music just reaches me."

*He's Been Faithful*, by Carol Cymbala; and *To God Be the Glory*, Hymn #72 ~ Janet Scott

"This is my favorite hymn because the words so clearly state the salvation message. God loves us greater than any love we can imagine here on earth and because of that love, sent Jesus as an atonement for our sin. As imperfect as we are, we have only to believe and accept the gift of grace from our Lord to have eternal life with Him. And as wonderful as this earth is, the glories of Heaven are beyond our imagination. The praise of His name should be constantly on our lips."

Beautifully stated: the praise of His name *should* be constantly on our lips! Thank you for sharing from your hearts. We will include more comments in upcoming newsletters. It is our privilege to serve the Lord by nurturing the musical worship of our FCC family!

Blessings! ~ Rachael Short, Director of the Music Ministry

### SARAH GLADSTONE, CONT.

the family of a God that has created for us a certainty in this life and the next, when we often experience the fickleness of our world. Being the family of God grants us a community and a place in this world. And most importantly a place in the family of God is a fulfillment of our hopes.

We are never truly an orphan in this world, for we are claimed by a loving God.

*I am an orphan girl  
but when he calls me I will be able  
to meet my family at God's table  
I'll meet my mother, my father, my sister, my brother  
No more an orphan girl*

*Sarah is the daughter of Bob and Sue Gladstone, longtime participants of our church. Sarah is a Licensed Minister through our church. She graduated in June with a Master's Degree in Theological Studies from Fuller Theological University in California.*

### HOMECOMING SUNDAY

Everyone is invited to attend the annual Homecoming Worship Service and pot luck picnic on September 9th, at 11:00 a.m. We meet at the farm of Wilbur and Leola Thurston, 5512 West M-21 at Lake Denise for fellowship and fun!

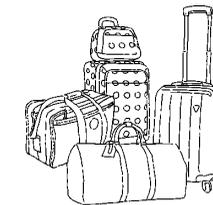
Bring a comfortable chair, a dish to pass and your own table service. We supply the beverages and pulled pork.

Please plan to attend and bring your friends and neighbors.



### CHURCH VACATION HOURS

On July 30th, 31st; August 1st, 2nd, 6th and 7th, the church office will be open only from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. The church will still be closed on Fridays. Shirleyan Lake will be manning the office on these vacation days.



Thank you, Sue Larsen



We would like everyone to meet Richard and Judy Cramer!

Richard came to St. Johns from Oak Park and Judy from Pompeii.

They have four children; Jerry, Richard II, Jillene and Crystyne. Jerry and his wife Tresa were married here in First Congregational Church.

Richard enjoys golf, hunting, and cutting wood. Judy is a gardener, loves to knit, crochet and read.



Both of the Cramers are supporters of Bay Cliff Health Camp in Big Bay, MI.

They travel up there twice a year to work at this non-profit therapy and wellness center for children and adults with physical disabilities.

Judy is also a member of the Hands of Harmony Handbell Choir.

They joined our church in May of 1993. Richard and Eugene Livingston had been long-time good friends and the warmth of this congregation kept them here.

Extend a warm hand of friendship to the Cramers the next time you see them.