

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

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
ST. JOHNS, MI
48879
PERMIT #83

January

This Month's Highlights:
Cover, *Get Involved!*
Pg. 3 *Why I became a Youth Leader*
Pg. 4 *Final 150th Celebration, Music Team Report*
Pg. 5 *Rev. Olson's Article*
Pg. 6 *Children and Youth News*
Pg. 7 *January Schedules, Church Records and Dedication*
Pg. 9 *Member Profile*

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

JANUARY 2011



The Congregational Connection...

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

LOOKING FOR A WAY TO GET INVOLVED IN CHURCH?

All men from our church and community are invited to attend the **TUESDAY MORNING MEN'S BIBLE STUDY**. They open with a prayer at 7:00 a.m. sharp and always try to close the study time by 7:50 a.m. with time for prayer until 8:00 a.m.

THE WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY GROUP is meeting weekly on Tuesdays from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. in the Parlor. The focus of this study is the Old Testament beginning with Genesis. Please feel free to join the group at any time. For more information contact Kathy Farnum, Intern Minister, at 517-669-5864 or farnumk@comcast.net.

A **SMALL GROUP** is being held on Wednesdays, at 7:00 p.m. in the Parlor. They are working with the Upper Room Daily Devotional, available on the Literature Rack. You are invited to join them.

The **HANDS OF HARMONY HANDBELL CHOIR** meets on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. The members of the Bell choir always seem to be having a good time! They enjoy the fellowship and learning how to play the bells.

CHANCEL CHOIR meets on Thursday evenings from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. If you like to sing this may be the church involvement you have been looking for.

The **SILO SINGERS** meet on Thursday evenings at 9:00 p.m. This men's group sing acappella and are a joy to listen to. Gentlemen this may be your calling!

Rev. Olson is leading a **BIBLE STUDY/DISCUSSION CLASS** on Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. in Wilcox Hall. You can join the group at any time. This is a good chance to meet new people and grow in your Christian faith.

MORE WAYS TO BE INVOLVED IN CHURCH!

“CHILDREN IN WORSHIP” AND “FOLLOW ME”

A training and reviewing session will be held on Sunday, January 10th, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., in Mildred Countryman Hall, for all “Children in Worship” and “Follow Me” leaders. This will also be a training session for anyone interested in taking part in the leadership of this children’s program in our church.

The group is encouraging parents of children that attend these programs to come to the meeting and see if they are ready to take an active part in this religious education class. If you decide that this is something you would like to try, a schedule will be posted and you will know exactly when you would be leading the children. The lessons are all laid out and easy to follow. For more information contact Molly Minnick at 224-6999 or Beth Olson at 224-4110.



Have you thought of giving a **CHILDREN’S STORY** on a Sunday? We can supply you with the scripture for that particular service. It does not have to be a long and complicated story! The children are open to anything you would like to share. The sign up schedule is posted in the Wilcox Hall corridor.

The **USHERS MINISTRY TEAM** is looking for one more usher for the fourth Sunday of each month. Would you be interested in helping? Contact the church office or Bill or Kathy Kushmaul at 224- 8482 for more information.

How about hosting a **FOURTH SUNDAY SUPPER**? You would need to be here to turn on the ovens. Coffee, condiments, salt and pepper are all provided in the kitchen. You would be responsible for providing milk, cleaning off the tables and cleaning and unplugging the coffee makers after the supper. You can sign up on the sheet posted in the Wilcox Hall corridor or call the church office.

Maybe making coffee is your thing! You can sign up to host a **FELLOWSHIP HOUR** on the schedule in the Wilcox Hall corridor. Coffee, creamer and sugar are all in the kitchen for you to use. You do not need to supply cookies or treats. Hosting should not cost you anything. You simply make the coffee, serve the members that attend the Fellowship Hour and clean up the coffee pots and wipe off the tables when you are done. This can be your way to become involved in the life of our church.

We are looking for a leader to organize and run **VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL** in 2011. Denise Palmer did a great job at organizing and running VBS the last two years. However, she has had to step down as she is now in Lay Minister training. This is a very worthwhile project for someone to be involved with, and you have plenty of time to prepare. Please contact the church office if you are interested.

THE CHURCH STAFF

Senior Minister, Matthew Olson
Church Administrator, Susan Larsen
Treasurer, Jim Beagle
Financial Secretary, Paul Martis
Chancel Choir Director, Dr. Charles Graham
Director of Music Ministry, Rachael Short
Hands of Harmony Director, Susan Kilmer

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

Hours: Monday - Tuesday

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Wednesday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Thursday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

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.*

THE BOARD OF MINISTRY

Moderator: Marianne Harris

Vice Moderator:

Shirleyan Lake

Board of Ministry Members:

David Elms

Tom Flynn

Gary Larsen

Eugene Livingston

Melanie Lounds

Keith Mino

Denise Palmer

Randy Root

Cali Sackrider

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.

SPRING MISSION TRIP

BRING YOU RETURNABLE CANS AND BOTTLES FROM YOUR HOLIDAY EVENTS and donate them to the next International Missions Trip. This is an easy way to GET INVOLVED! This ministry team is conducting several fund-raising efforts for the trip to Peru next Spring. A red box is on the landing for your convenience.

MISSIONS UPDATE

Once, again, the FCC congregation came through with lots of presents for the Giving Tree for those in need! Items were not counted, but a whole truck load was delivered to RAVE on Tuesday which gave RAVE time to deliver the gifts to the RAVE shelter before Christmas. Thanks to all those that contributed during this time of need and joy as well as for your prayers.

DOUBLETS, ETC.

DOUBLETS, ETC, a singles and couples Ministry Team, will be meeting Sunday, Jan 9th at 7:00 p.m. here at church. Philip Witteveen will be the speaker informing the group about his year as an exchange student.

SPECIAL OCCASION

Did you reserve your special month of the “**CONGREGATIONAL CONNECTION**”? The cost is \$50.00 and is used to help cover the cost of postage. We have six months available, June, July, September, October, November and December.

Please contact the church office at 224-2636 to reserve your month.

THANK YOU!

To **Arlene Wood, Teresa Zuker, Zachary Zuker and Jan Myers** for decorating the Sanctuary for the Christmas season. It was a big job!

Thanks to **Dr. Charles Graham, Rachael Short and Susan Kilmer** and the **Choirs** for all of the special music this Christmas season.

To **Denise Palmer and Keith Mino** for starting their Lay Minister training. This is a two to three year program, so it is quite a commitment to make.

To everyone involved with the **Christmas Pageant** BRAVO! It was a great success.

To **Nathan Lounds** for all his work on the church Web Site (www.fccsj.com).

To **Paul Martis and Gary Larsen**. You will never know how much work is done here by these two men. They save us a tremendous amount of money (service calls) and they are always on call.



To **Mr. Bob Redman**, our lawn caretaker. We are blessed that he takes such wonderful care of our grounds Spring through Fall. He is a gem!

To the **Sunday School teachers and Youth Advisors** for doing an outstanding job of leading the children and youth in our church.

Why did I become a youth leader?

Let me start by sharing a little background information. I started teaching eighth graders in 1996. I loved their energy and enthusiasm. I was young (only twenty-six) and I was old enough to be my students' sibling! After five years on Lake Michigan, I moved back to St. Johns to marry and eventually start a family. I was hired by Owosso to teach AP Language and Composition to 11th graders and American Literature to 10th graders. Though challenging at first, I soon learned to love it.

I attribute the shock I felt to all the changes that seemed to occur at the same time: moving, marriage, “new” house, mortgage, new job, four months later- pregnancy! I was a little overwhelmed, to say the least. So why did I do it? Well, the moving back home, marriage and house and even teaching were all out of love... that part is easy. I was called to teach. I listened to God. That part is easy too; what was difficult was teaching, even though I felt like it was too hard. I cried almost every morning for four months trying to get acclimated to students that fought in class, had horrible home lives, one parent in prison, an alcoholic parent that needed to be raised by their own child, students with addictions, students that attempted suicide, students that just simply NEEDED. Certainly these were not the majority of my students, just of course the ones in the last hour of the school day. You know, the last hour of the day when everyone is tapped out, hyper, talkative, and just wants to be at home eating Honeycomb cereal and watching television or texting their beau... Many times I just wanted to run back to my honors students in first hour Advanced Placement and hide in the academics. I soon learned, however, that God had greater plans for me.

He was the shield I needed to break up fights between boys, and the rock I needed to withstand difficult students that refused to read in class; He was the power of glory that saved two suicidal students later in my career through my hands; He was the listening ear for a struggling depressed student who saw his mother die; He was my voice when I could not find the words after the deaths of several students in fatal car accidents involving alcohol and fast driving; He was the strength that guided and counseled students after a shooting in front of our high school.

Now, I'm old enough to be my students' parent. I still love teaching in Owosso, but my church needs me too. I love my SPF students with a capital L-O-V-E! And while I do not have near as many students as I do in the classroom, I have the passion and the concern and the heart for every single one of OUR children. When we take that oath of faith during baptism, we vow to raise these children in our church as our own (in the faith), and what better way to do that than by getting involved? God will do the rest.

Teaching can be scary and daunting at first. Teaching the subject matter is the easy part, but listening to God and doing what you know is right can also be easy. Our youth need us in this world, and with God's love and strength, we cannot fail. I encourage you to be God's hands, heart, and healing in this world by getting involved. Become a leader in our church, maybe with the littlest kids, maybe with the middle kids, maybe with the older kids...and perhaps God will encourage and speak to you like He has to me.

Respectfully submitted by Melanie Lounds

FINAL 150TH CELEBRATION

The calendar year 2010 has included a monthly event featuring some aspect of FCCSJ's history since its beginning in the year 1860. It is now time to conclude the celebration of our 150 year history. The concluding event will take place on Sunday, January 16, 2011. Fellowship Hour will be hosted by the 150th Anniversary Ministry Team. During the fellowship hour, lots of pictures relative to FCCSJ will be on display. This team still needs your help to make this display a success. We are asking you to share any photos you have of groups, individuals, worship services, social groups, etc. that took place at FCCSJ. We want the history display to be an encompassing and diversified as the members and friends of our church. Put your name on the back of your pictures and identify persons and dates of the photos. We are accepting pictures through Sunday, January 9, 2011. We will be sure to return your pictures back to you. This will be a fun occasion and an opportunity to reminisce about events surrounding our church. So plan on attending the worship service, followed by the fellowship hour, Sunday, January 16th!

The 150th Anniversary Ministry Team, Gary Carpenter, Mary Ann Ellickson, Peg Lehnen, Joann Martis, Ruth Nihart, Matthew Olson and Bonnie Wickerham

A NOTE FROM THE MUSIC MINISTRY TEAM

Your Music Team has been working hard over the past four months. What better way to start a new year than to be apprised of the highlights? Music Team Members include Chris Harris (Chair), Jamie Cheeney, Mary Ann Ellickson, Chuck Graham, Rosemary Green, Marianne Harris, Susan Kilmer, Denise Palmer, Ruth Root, and Rachael Short. After careful consideration, we crafted a new Mission Statement which has clarified and energized our efforts. The mission of the Music Ministry Team is as follows:

To support and sustain a creative atmosphere that supports worship for each church member.

To encourage active participation for the purpose of worship.

To proactively develop musical worship experiences which are varied, meaningful, and personal.

Several FCC music groups have traveled to area nursing homes to share their gifts of time, talent, and music. The Hallelujah Choir and the Holy Mamas have each made two such excursions since September. December was a busy month with extra rehearsals by the Silo Singers and a Brass Quintet. The Hands of Harmony participated in the Holiday Music Concert at the Wilson Center, and also helped with the Christmas Pageant, sharing first at Clinton Commons, then on Sunday morning at FCC. After presenting the Christmas Cantata "Winter's Grace" during morning worship, the Chancel Choir joined Senior Minister Matthew Olson at Hazel Findlay where they sang part of the cantata and joined in singing requested hymns. A host of members, groups, and friends collaborated to celebrate the birth of Christ on Christmas Eve.

We are unified in our desire to serve and we welcome input from the Congregation. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord!" (Psalm 100:1)

DEAR FRIENDS,

We tend toward being very busy toward Christmas, and had not planned on doing much to celebrate our 25th Wedding Anniversary. So it was a surprise and delight to have you plan a 25th ANNIVERSARY celebration for us!



Thank you so much for all the warm good wishes. We are very grateful for your generous outpouring of love. We will always treasure the experience!

Matt & Beth Olson

CALLING ALL HISTORY BUFFS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS:

After the conclusion of the observance of FCCSJ's 150 year history, work will begin on a history (remembrance) book. Input is needed from members who are interested in history and would be willing to offer ideas and help in putting a book together of FCCSJ's 150 years. Also needed are members who would like to work on photos to be included in this book. We want to begin work on this right away, as it takes time to develop, gather information and finalize such a project. If you are a person interested in such a task, contact any member of the 150th Anniversary Ministry Team and let me know of your willingness to be included in this project. Gary Carpenter, Mary Ann Ellickson, Peg Lehnen, Joann Martis, Ruth Nihart, Matthew Olson and Bonnie Wickerham.

MEMBER PROFILE



We are starting the new year introducing Keith and Nancy Mino. Keith was born in Detroit and Nancy was born and raised in Deckerville, MI. The Mino's have lived in quite a few cities and states where Keith served as a Superintendent of Schools. Now that he is retired and settled back in Michigan, he helps veterans and their families access Veterans Administration benefits. Nancy is a retired Personnel Administrator and office manager in automotive component supply. Keith loves to read, visit other countries to study their cultures and to photograph what he sees. They both like to camp and Nancy is a wonderful baker and cook. She also loves spoiling their three granddaughters. The Mino's have two children. Chuck is an attorney and partner at Deloitte in Detroit, married to Jennifer and the parents of the three grandchildren. Amy is a sixth grade teacher in North Carolina and married to Lou. Keith and Nancy were invited to visit our church by Jim and Mary Ann Ellickson and to sing in the choir by Chuck Graham. They were actively seeking a church family and F.C.C. has provided them with that. They began attending in 2006 but it feels so comfortable they sometimes forget they haven't been here for decades. They are both very active in community and church programs and events. We are very lucky to have them as members of our family.

SENIOR HIGH YOUTH NEWS

SUNGLASSES, SANDALS, AND A THIRST FOR JESUS CHRIST

Last year they traveled to the cold Alaska land, heard phenomenal speakers, performed several different missions, and formed fabulous friendships as they praised and worshiped God. By Faith some of our Senior High Youth will travel to Tempe, Arizona this year for the NAPF adventure. Students will stay at Arizona State University after the flight to Phoenix. The conference is June 25-30 and we will be mailing in our registration for the early bird special before January 15th. The youth group raises funds to attend this event through the various dinners, pizza, and sub sales that the congregation graciously purchase. If you are the parent of a SPFer, make sure you discuss this important trip as we need to know by the second week in January! Additional information is located on the NACCC website at NACCC.org. Also, you may contact me, Melanie Lounds, if you have further questions. I look forward to traveling with our youth this year, and as always, having our youth deliver a moving sermon when we return. If you missed our slide show or sermon last year, you missed a lot. I was so touched by the experiences our youth expressed and the spirit of God that each student felt. The NAPF trips are powerful, so a big thank you goes out to all who contribute to supporting our youth. I pray for the spirit to move in each of us to do all we can to continue supporting our youth.



WINTER SOUP JAN. 9th

The next fund raiser is a yummy SOUP & SANDWICH LUNCHEON after church on January 9th. We will be having the famous Lady's Chicken Noodle Soup, Venison Chili, and Vegetable Soup along with egg salad or chicken salad sandwiches and beverage. Sign up by calling the office or coming on down after services on January 9th to Wilcox Hall. You will smell the reminder during the sermon Sunday, January 9th! Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$5 for kids 12 and under with 3-year-olds and under free.



SUPER BOWL NEWS

Keep your belly satisfied during the 2011 Super Bowl. Submarine Sandwich orders will be taken in late January for the Sunday, February 6th, Football Event. The youth make these subs based on the number of orders taken with only a handful of extras, so be sure to get your orders in after bulletin order forms come out late January. As always, a heartfelt thank you for supporting our youth.



Submitted by Melanie Lounds, Sr. High Youth Advisor

Music as the Voice of the Soul

The First in a Series of Articles on the Worth Ship {Worship} of God

Human beings are innately musical. Our hearts each have their own rhythm. Our ears are attuned to hear variation in pattern and pitch. Every culture has music. Archeologists digging in Germany have found a 5 holed flute, made of a vulture wing, dated at 35,000 B.C. Babies respond to music, as do the elderly. When I lead worship at a nursing home the people listen politely to my words, but they are there to sing. Music is necessary for wellbeing.

In his book, *Musicophilia*, Neurologist Oliver Sacks writes of music's therapeutic value. Music helps restore speech to those who have lost language after a brain injury or stroke. It can also trigger the release of brain chemicals that revive lost memories and emotions (ask Rachael Short if you want to know more about this). All of us have had moments when, made temporary insane by life's stresses, we have been restored to wholeness by music.

Accordingly about 40% of our Sunday morning worship service is music. Music thematically unifies the service, pulling together the treads of thought and feeling that surround the Bible reading and sermon. When the sermon is flat the music carries the service.

Because it is so powerful, music is the most controversial element of worship. What we sing and the way we sing it are central to our Christian identity in worship. You can tune out a sermon, but music reaches you whether you want it to or not! It arouses intense, very personal feelings. For many of us, music is the place in which we encounter the presence of God.

In our church we have many talented musicians who use their gifts in the ministry of worship. They do not direct, sing, or play for their own gratification alone, but as an offering to God and a contribution to the worship experience of the whole congregation. These people are recognized as musical and play a formal role. They are one of our greatest blessings.

We also have in our church everybody else; we all share some of the musical gift. Your music also matters. I am frequently moved by the less than beautiful but very real and personal music of those who do not consider themselves singers. For me, tuneless, loud, and heartfelt inspire much more than on pitch, well blended, and rote. Praise God for those who sing heedlessly!

Certainly God loves music; why else would he have made it such a part of us? When we share music in worship, we are giving voice to the deepest parts of our souls. I pray every Sunday that our music will bless God and bless us.

Rev. Matt Olson

Children and Youth News

JANUARY CHILDREN AND YOUTH BIRTHDAYS

- 12 Brooke Wittchell
- 20 Philip Witteveen
- 21 Allison Clarke
- 23 Rachel Kilmer
- 25 Lillian Sackrider



CHILDREN'S (HALLELUJAH)

Under the direction of Rachael Short and Denise Palmer, this choir is meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday mornings in the Choir Room. Children of all ages are encouraged to attend.



Jr. High P.F. YOUTH GROUP

The Jr. High P.F. is a fun and active group of 6-8th graders! Each month we have a theme around which our activities, bible verses and service projects are centered. In October we focused on "Service" and in November it was "Gratitude." Here are a few of the things we have done so far this year:

- Decorated re-usable cloth bags and distributed them to the congregation for the Third Sunday Throwdown food collection
- Assist each month with the Throwdown by unloading bags and organizing items
- Saw "Secretariat" at NCG Cinemas
- Did a Rake and Run service project
- Invited Keith Mino to speak to our class in recognition of Veteran's Day
- Assisted with preparations for the Community Thanksgiving Dinner
- Cooked dinner at Sparrow Hospital's Ronald McDonald House for the residents
- Assisted the Missions Team by placing tags on the church's RAVE Giving Tree
- Pizza night & shopping for the Giving Tree
- Movie night at church during Christmas vacation

In the next few months we'll be talking about our FCC worship service and why we do the things we do each Sunday, as well as jumping into a study of the New Testament. All students in grades 6-8 are invited to join the fun! Our classroom is located in the lower level of Wilcox Hall, across from the Nursery.

Submitted by Barb Sherman and Jennifer Beagle, Jr. High P.F. co-leaders

JANUARY SIGN UP SCHEDULES

<u>Altar Flowers</u>	<u>Nursery Care</u>	<u>Fellowship Hour</u>	<u>4th Sunday Supper Host/Hostess</u>
2 *	2 Trisha Cheeney	2 *	
9 *	9 Stacie Stevens	9 Sr. P.F. Youth Group	January *
16 Otto & Fritz Thurston	16 Stacie Stevens	16 150 Anniversary Ministry Team	February *
23 *	23 Ben & Kelly DeRosia	23 4th Sunday Supper	March *
30 *	30 Stacie Stevens	30 *	April *

***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.

CHURCH RECORDS

Member Deaths:

Dorothy Carson, November 29, 2010, long time member

Friend Deaths:

Faunita Moody, November 9, 2010, mother of Rod Fuller

Marilee Mino, November 29, 2010, mother of Keith Mino

Luella Hershey, December 16, 2010, grandmother of Bob Sackrider



THE JANUARY NEWSLETTER DEDICATION



The Congregational Connection is dedicated this month in celebration of the

45th Wedding Anniversary of

Neil and Gene Barnhart