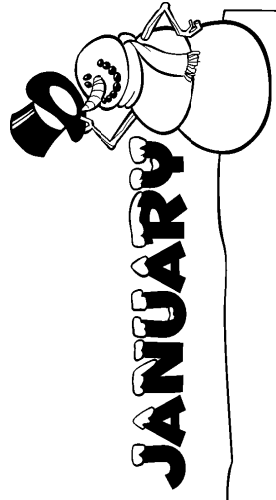


First Congregational Church
100 Maple Street
St. Johns, Michigan 48879

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48879



This Month's Highlights:
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Pg. 3 Missions Ministry Team
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Pg. 5 150th Anniversary
Pg. 6 Children and Youth News
Pg. 7 January Schedules, Church Records and Dedication
Pg. 9 Member Profile

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

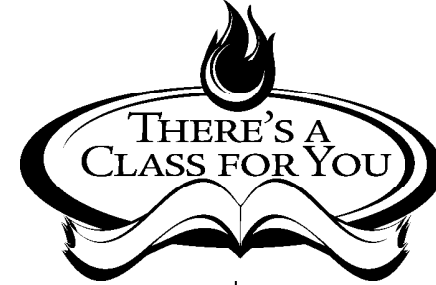


January 2010 The Congregational Connection...

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

A "BIBLE IN 90 DAYS"

class is being held at 6:30 p.m., Sunday evenings at church. Chris Harris and Keith Mino are leading this class and are looking for participants. Chris can be reached at 227-7327 for information.



A SMALL GROUP STUDY

is being held on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. in the Parlor. They meet, read and discuss the "Upper Room" Daily Devotional. Call Jerry Harte at 224-6655 for more information.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN A NEW CLASS STARTING

on Sunday mornings? The class is titled "Read the Chronological Bible in a Year". It is being held at 10:00 a.m. in Countryman Hall. You can contact Marianne Harris at 227-7327 or Denise Palmer at 227-7397 for more information

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 with time for prayer until 8:00 a.m. They are now discussing the Holy Spirit.

Come and join them!

Interested in an ADULT BIBLE STUDY?

You are invited to join Rev. Olson on Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. in Wilcox Hall. You can join at any time. This is also a good chance to meet new people and grow in your Christian faith. They are now studying Romans.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH are invited to attend Sunday School, Junior High Youth and Senior High Youth Groups on Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. These classes and groups are a great way for our children to learn about Christian love and fellowship.

The days are getting longer, the light stronger, the dawn earlier. Has it dawned on you how glorious is our God?

Many things take a while to sink in. We hear something and think, “Yeah, that’s right, I guess.” Then we see its truth again and we think, “Oh, yes, that is really true.” Then, after some further insight, or most likely an experience, we finally say, with full conviction, “Oh, now I understand. I get it!”

When my children were small it was hard to keep them out of the street. I could tell them again and again about the danger of being hit by a car; they would nod their heads, but the message did not seem to sink in. They just didn’t get it.

One day we took a walk along 27, just north of town. Along the side of the road was a dead cat, and a little farther along a raccoon who had robbed his last trash can. We took a long, good look. After that my kids stayed out of the street.

Think about it for a moment. Have you recognized, appreciated, understood the glory of God? And has it dawned on you the significance of Jesus revelation of who God is and what our relationship to God and one another is meant to be?

It could be the most important dawning in your whole life; it could be a dawning that never occurred to you, to recognize the incredibly wonderful life-changing power unleashed by God, through the gift of Jesus. The fact that many in the church have domesticated the gift, ceased to wonder at it, used it for their own purposes, and turned the Lord’s Christ into just another ornament adorning their well ordered life does not diminish the presence of the Lord or the power of the gift. It merely ignores it.

To see the dawn you have to shake yourself awake, pay attention, and experience. What breaking light will flood your soul in 2010?

Rev. Matthew Olson

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
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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
Jerry Harte
Gary Larsen
Eugene Livingston
Melanie Lounds
Keith Mino
Denise Palmer
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.

**THIRD SUNDAY
THROW DOWN
FOOD BANK DONATIONS**

HELPING FAMILIES IN NEED!

1. Next Throw Down is January 17, 2010.
2. Continuing on the third Sunday of each month.
3. Bring your donation of any canned or boxed food, or cash to be donated to area food banks. Personal products are also needed.

More information? Contact John Fitch at 224-3565.

It's time to reserve your special month of the "CONGREGATIONAL CONNECTION" for the 2010 church year. The cost is \$50.00 and is used to help cover the cost of postage. The months available for your special anniversary, birthday, graduation, or "just because" are **July, August and September**. Please contact the church office at 224-2636 to reserve your month.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
ST. JOHNS, MI



150TH ANNIVERSARY
1860-2010

COMMUNITY NEWS

GRACE HAVEN ASSISTED LIVING is looking for volunteers that have talents they would like to share with the elderly population or that are willing to give of their time. This is a new facility located at 1507 Glastonbury Drive, just off Townsend Road. They are growing daily and would love to have you be a part of their new home. If you or someone you know may be interested please contact 224-1650 and ask for Christine.

Alzheimer's Association Caregiver Support Group, 3rd Wednesday of every month, 3:00-4:30 p.m. at Grace Haven Assisted Living, 1507 Glastonbury Drive, St. Johns. Respite Care available on site. Please call ahead at 224-1650.



Transition St. Johns is a non-profit organization serving developmentally disabled adults in our area. This group meets in Wilcox Hall every Monday morning at 10:00 a.m. to practice fine motor skills such as writing.



GIVING TREE GIFTS FOR RAVE!



Members of the Missions Ministry Team: Barb Sherman, Karen Pontius, Jennifer Beagle, John Fitch

The Missions Ministry Team would like to thank everyone for their generosity with the RAVE Giving Tree this year. We delivered a very large number of gifts to RAVE and they were very appreciative of your generosity. We placed one hundred tags on the tree and there were only a couple left for the larger items. These gifts will be used locally at the RAVE shelter to help women and children all year long escape from abusive situations. Several families went together to provide a dishwasher and install it in the shelter. Several gift cards and gas cards were also donated. We feel this has been a huge success and want to thank you for your support. The Missions Ministry Team welcomes your feedback or ways to improve the giving tree for next year. Please contact any of our members. Have a blessed holiday season.

- John Fitch
- Karen Pontius
- Sue Neuder
- Sue Gladstone
- Jan Myers
- Jennifer Beagle
- Barb Sherman

My Stephen Ministry Experience Thus Far, By Jerry Harte

As I first heard Ruth Nihart, Stephen Ministry Supervisor, speak about the program and then read the informational materials, I was intrigued about the possibilities. I felt I might have an aptitude for listening to and trying to help others, but wasn't certain I could represent the church properly and conduct myself in an appropriate Christian manner.

Then there was the issue of time. Approximately 100 hours of initial training (including reading), then four to five hours a month of continuing education and mentoring, and of course the eventual time spent with a care receiver. It all seemed rather daunting. Ruth was perfect in her help. Her only advice, which was consistently delivered was, "Listen to the Spirit."

The decision to sign up has been a great one for me. The entire training experience has been terrific so far. Ruth obviously takes great pains to be very well prepared. The training materials are nothing short of outstanding – very well designed. The completion of the chapters, including the in-class exercises is an enlightening, soul-searching expedition. I can't imagine anyone completing the initial part of the program without experiencing a substantial dose of personal growth. Matt also participated in a couple of training sessions and lent a number of very helpful tips and insights.



Not the least of the benefits I have received has been the acquisition of three new "sisters" in my life. I have come to truly know and love Ruth and my fellow students, Cali Sackrider and Rachael Short. We have bared our souls, shared in spiritual and personal growth, and learned to support each other in a number of ways. Our special connections will surely last a life time.

As I look back on the last six months, I would testify that the hours I have spent dedicated to the SMP were very possibly the most valuable time I have expended during this part of my life. This definitely has been a life changing experience. I strongly and highly recommend to anyone who is considering this program to investigate it thoroughly. I'm confident that you won't regret it.

4th SUNDAY SUPPER UPDATE

We would like to thank Jim and Jennifer Beagle for the idea and start up of the 4th Sunday Supper over a year and a half ago. This has been well received and a time to share good food and fellowship.

We are starting a new system of a volunteer a month being in charge of the dinner.

They would need to be here to turn on the ovens and make sure that we have milk for the children. Coffee, condiments, salt and pepper are all provided in the kitchen. You would be responsible for cleaning off the tables, cleaning and unplugging the coffee makers after the supper, and locking the kitchen door to the parking lot when leaving.

A sign up sheet is posted in the Wilcox Hall corridor. This program will run just like the Fellowship Hour; if no one signs up, no Supper will be held. You can sign up on the schedule or call the church office..

THE NEXT "FOURTH SUNDAY SUPPER" will be held Sunday, January 24th, immediately after church in Wilcox Hall. Bring a dish to pass and your own table service. Coffee will be provided.

The sign up schedules for **Greeters and Fellowship Hour Hosts** are posted in the Wilcox Hall corridor. This is the way we are filling spots for Greeters and Coffee Hours. Please be aware that **you do not need to spend money on cookies or snacks**. The coffee and necessary condiments are always available in the kitchen. If you have any questions, or can not make it downstairs to sign up, please call the church office at 224-2636.

MEET THE RICHARDS!

Bill came to St. Johns from Mason, MI in 1947 and Jenny came from Yale, MI, via MSU after they were married in 1948. They have three sons and three daughters.

Jennie retired from teaching in 1996 while Bill retired from operating the Blue Bus Service in 2002. He continues to operator Community Resource Volunteers (CRV), and all volunteer organization at 304 Brush Street in St. Johns. The Web site is crvonline.org.

Jennie has been involved in arts and crafts, teaching Sunday School, active in gardening, volunteering at the Baby Pantry, Attic Treasure Sale, and on funeral luncheons.

She is also an avid reader. Bill is a former Sunday School Teacher,



High School Youth Group leader, has served a number of terms on the Board of Trustees and a term as Moderator. He is active in working with and for persons with disabilities that through, CRV provide Saturday science and robotics activities for late elementary and middle school age youth. Bill and Jenny were both active members of Pres-



byterian churches in their home towns. In coming to St. Johns, First Congregational Church seemed like a logical church to join as Bill's parents were members. The couples group Doublets, here at F.C.C. was an attractive social group to young married couples, so they joined in 1949.

LINDA SCOTT DIVISION

All ladies are invited to join the **LINDA SCOTT MINISTRY TEAM** for their next meeting on January 12th, 12:30 p.m. at The Mint. Please RSVP to Joann Martis at 224-4165.

DOUBLETS, ETC.

A singles and couples group, Doublets Etc., will be meeting on Sunday, January 3rd, at church, to de-trim the church. The group will be meeting at 5:00 p.m. and this project will be followed by a pot luck dinner. Bring a dish to pass and your own table service. Doublets Etc. is always looking for new members to join them for this time of fun and fellowship. For more information contact Shirleyan Lake at 224-1870 or Barb Sherman at 517-242-1234.



ALTAR FLOWERS

The 2010 Flower Schedule is posted on the bulletin board in the Wilcox Hall corridor. Now is the time to sign up for that special date you want this year. If you can not make it in to church to check on a date please call the office at 224-2636.



DID YOU KNOW!

We have free 2010 calendars available in Wilcox Hall. Help yourself! We have three styles to choose from.

Board of Ministry Minutes are available in the church office.

Our thanks to Chris, Marianne and Greg Harris, Mark, Denise Palmer and Marquis, Tom Flynn, Gary Larsen and Paul Martis for decorating the sanctuary for Christmas!

Special thanks to the Chancel Choir and the Hands of Harmony for all the beautiful music they presented this holiday season.

Please visit the "Lost and Found" table in Wilcox Hall. We have a lot of "LOST" items from winter coats and hats to sunglasses.

Did you know that Bill Rockwell and Jerry Harte are still very involved with Prison Ministry and reaching out and bringing the Word of God and Communion to this part of our society?

ST. JOHNS MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION Service of Christian Community, Wednesday January 20th. Time to be announced. It will be held at St. Joseph Catholic Church.

THANKS to Bonnie Wickerham for making a donation to purchase more pew Bibles.

150th CHURCH ANNIVERSARY

January, 2010 begins an important and memorable time for First Congregational Church of St. Johns. It is the beginning of a year of celebration for the 150th year of existence of our church. Each month of 2010 there will be an observance of an element of the life of FCCSJ. The observance for January, 2010 is the recognition of the senior ministers, interns, associate ministers and licensed ministers that have served this congregation. This observance takes place during the worship service of Sunday, January 17th, 2010. Some of these individuals will be traveling a distance to be present during this service.

FORMER MINISTERS, INTERNS, ASSOCIATE MINISTERS AND LISCENSED MINSTER

In connection with the 150th anniversary, a display case has been installed in the hallway of the Carson Center. This case will display items that coordinate with the observance of the month. With January's observance being former ministers of our church, the 150th anniversary team is in need of items that showcase any of our past senior ministers, interns, associate ministers or licensed ministers. These can be pictures of them in formal or casual settings, or items that identify these people. So bring your items to the church office as early in January as you can so that the display case will be filled with memories for those who served our congregation in the past. Mark your calendar to be present for the service on January 17, 2010. It will be meaningful to those who served this congregation in past years to see and visit with you.

Ruth Nihart, 150th Anniversary Committee

REMEMBER SOME OF THESE FOLKS?

James Kipp, Sylvester and Sarah Pennington, Henry Walbridge, Charlotte Wilson, Charlotte Patch, Elizabeth MaGoffin, Walter Norris

If you do you have a very long memory; they are the charter members who formed our church in 1860. Their names are engraved on a stone marker at the front of the sanctuary.

Over the next 12 months we are celebrating our eight charter members, you and I, and everyone else who has shared in the life and ministry of our church. The heart of the observance is remembering what God has done here over the last 150 years. Join the celebration!

Children and Youth News

JANUARY CHILDREN AND YOUTH BIRTHDAYS

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



SUNDAY SCHOOL RESUMES

All classes, Children Choir and Youth Groups resume Sunday, January 3rd, with Children's Choir at 9:30 a.m. and Sunday School and Youth Groups at 10:00 a.m.

PAGEANT THANKS!

We would like to thank Rachael Short, Denise Palmer, Trish Schuelke, Susan Kilmer, Teresa Zuker, Dawn Flynn, Beth Smith and Madrid Nihart for all the work they did preparing and presenting the Christmas Pageant "The First Christmas" on Sunday, December 13th. It was a delightful presentation! Thanks to all of the parents, grandparents or caregivers who got the children into rehearsals beginning in early November. Thanks also to Rev. Olson, Gary Larsen, Brad Tooker, Buddy Stevens, Zachary Zuker and Tom Doppke for all of their help.

COME AND JOIN THE FUN!

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

THE BIBLE PURE AND SIMPLE

The Sunday School teachers are beginning the new Winter on Sunday, January 3rd. The various groups will be studying chapters on "Adventures from Jesus' Life", His "Awesome Love" and "God's Plan" Each week the teachers, Randy and Cindy Howell, Tom and Ellen Doppke, Dave and Michele Elms and Rod Fuller, take their kids through the Bible. They will be studying Bible Passages from Isaiah, Matthew, Mark, Luke John, Genesis, Leviticus, Ruth, 2 Kings, Nehemiah, Daniel, Romans and Hebrews. Classes begin at 10:00 a.m. and children age four through Senior High Youth are invited to join our programs at any time.



JANUARY SIGN UP SCHEDULES

<u>Altar Flowers</u>	<u>Nursery Care</u>	<u>Greeters</u>	<u>Fellowship Hour</u>
3 *	3 Patty Mayes	3 Neil & Gene Barnhart	3 *
10 Otto & Fritz Thurston	10 Stacie Stevens	10 *	10 Sr. P.F. Youth
17 Neil & Gene Barnhart	17 Stacie Stevens	17 Ruth Nihart	17 Gunther, Lake, Barnhart, Root
24 *	24 *	24 Doris Swatman & Fritz Thurston	24 4th Sunday Supper
31 *	31 *	31 *	31 *

*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

No reports for this month.

Did you know that in 1933 Rev. Earl Collins of Napierville, IL became our pastor. During his ministry he organized a young married couples group call the "Congregators".

THE JANUARY DEDICATION

The Congregational Connection for this month is in celebration of the

44th Wedding Anniversary of

Neil and Gene Barnhart

Congratulations!

