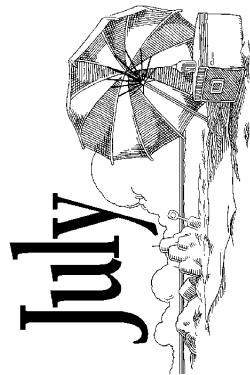


First Congregational Church
100 Maple Street
St. Johns, Michigan 48879

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This Month's Highlights:
Cover, Crop Walk & Mint Festival
Pg. 2 New Members
Pg. 4 Rev. Olson
Pg. 6 Children and Youth News
Pg. 7 July Schedules, Church Records and Dedication

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



July 2011 The Congregational Connection...

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

WHAT IS THE CROP WALK?

The CROP Walk is an annual event sponsored through Church World Service, an interdenominational Christian organization, to fight hunger and poverty locally and globally. Hungry people in developing countries typically walk as much as six times a day to get food, water, and fuel. We walk to be in solidarity with their struggle for existence. We walk because we want to end hunger one step at a time. When we participate in the CROP Walk, we collect donations to fight hunger in our own community by sending 25% to local agencies such as the food bank, Meals on Wheels, and the St. Johns Ministerial Association's food relief fund. Many churches and service groups in St. Johns will join together this fall to walk to raise money for the 26th annual CROP Walk. The walk is scheduled for the 1st Sunday in October and is a 5 K (3.2 miles) walk in St. Johns. More information will be shared about the walk in the coming months, but I hope to have many from our church participate.

Susan Kilmer,

St Johns CROP Walk Coordinator

2011 Mint Festival

It's that time of year to begin thinking of the Mint Festival Food Booth. If you are interested in helping to organize this exciting event I would love to hear from you.

I am looking for a few good people to assist with the organizing of the set up and take down of the food booth. I will also be needing help by your

volunteering to work a shift or two during the Mint Festival! A schedule will be displayed on the landing outside the sanctuary.

If you are interested in helping I can be reached at 517-242-1234 (cell), 989-292-4029 (home) or via email at bsherman265@yahoo.com. We also need donations of Pepsi, Coke, bottled water and Capri Sun products. I would also appreciate your bringing empty gallon and half gallon clean milk containers to church so that we can make our own ice.



Thanks! **Barb Sherman**

Participants who joined our congregation on June 12, 2011 were:

Tom and Beth Webb

2193 West Secretariat Lane, St. Johns, 224-8982

Andrew Livingston

2204 Livingston Road, St. Johns, 989-640-2992

Carole Livingston

2204 Livingston Road, St. Johns, 224-6685

Kathleen Livingston

2204 Livingston Road, St. Johns, 224-6685

Dennis and Janet Scott

911 North Oakland Street, St. Johns, 224-2601

Jim and Kim Cole

1600 West Mead Road, St. Johns, 224-8653

Rachael Short

4330 Keller Road, Apt. 115, Holt 48842, 517-862-0750

**Congratulations
to our
newest members!**

**“CONNECTIONS”
to family and friends**

Hazel Findlay Country Manor Nursing Home, St. Johns:

Phyllis Rice, long time member
Evelyn Buck, sister of Vianna Bond, Doris Swatman & Fritz Thurston
Vianna Bond, sister of Evelyn Buck, Doris Swatman & Fritz Thurston, mother of Rod Bond

Michigan Masonic Home, Alma:

Geraldine Workman, long time member

Grace Haven Assisted Living, St. Johns:

Helen Johnson, long time member
Donna Magsig, mother of Linda Kentfield



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
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 Fridays

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: Molly Minnick
Vice Moderator:
Shirleyan Lake

Board of Ministry Members:

David Elms
Tom Flynn
Tom French
Bill Kushmaul
Gary Larsen
Eugene Livingston
Melanie Lounds
Keith Mino
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.

FOOD BANK DONATIONS

Please mark your calendars for the next “Throw Down” Sunday on **July 19th**, when we donate non-perishable items to the local food bank.

If you have any questions about this ongoing project or anything else regarding the Missions Ministry Team, please contact: John Fitch, Sue Gladstone, Barb Sherman, Sue Neuder, Karen Pontius, Jan Myers, or Jennifer Beagle. They would be happy to talk with you. More information? Contact John Fitch at 224-3565.

“CONGREGATIONAL CONNECTION” NEWSLETTER

We are now taking reservations for the 2012 monthly newsletter dedications. You are invited to call the church office at 224-2636 to book that special month in 2012. Thank you.

THANK YOU!

The Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan, Service Area 322 would like to thank the 1st Congregational Church for allowing the leadership team to meet in Wilcox Hall each month. These meetings are important in the planning and growth of the Girl Scout program in the greater St. Johns area. Having a nice place to meet each month has been wonderful and the leadership group extends a heartfelt thank you. Thank you for supporting Girl Scouts. **Susan Kilmer**, Registrar for Service Area 322

COMMUNITY NEWS

2011 SERIES

- June 29: The Capital City Brass Band
- July 6: The Kanivers
- July 13: Broadway Review
- July 20: Mid-Michigan Festival Orchestra
- July 27: Bullwhip
- August 3: Cats and the Fiddler
- August 10: The Capital City Chordsmen
- August 17: Shepard’s Folly
- August 24: Metro Jazz Voices
- August 31: Elvis Impersonator, Matt King



All shows begin at 7:00 p.m. rain or shine. Bring your own seating.

FYI: First Congregational Church is one of the sponsors for this series and our week is July 20th, with The Mid-Michigan Festival Orchestra performing. Wear your church shirt and come and represent our church at this city wide event!

John and Pam Foster, owners of **The Wheel Inn**, would like to invite our congregation to visit their restaurant on Saturdays and Sundays and bring along your current weekly bulletin. They will keep the bulletin, attach your paid bill to it and once every month they will total those numbers (pre-tax) and make a 5% donation back to the church. They hope that these monies will assist in supporting our favorite mission in these economic hard times. This program will go on indefinitely.

Your Will Be Done on Earth, O Lord

Perhaps, as you read the title, a tune popped into your head. We have been singing these words intermittently throughout the Pastoral Prayer during Sunday morning worship for about two months. Feedback regarding this new addition has been mixed, so I will share the reasoning behind corporate singing during corporate prayer.

Remember that the mission of the Music Ministry Team is (1) to support and sustain a *creative atmosphere that supports worship* for each member; (2) to encourage *active participation* for the purpose of worship; and (3) to *proactively develop musical worship experiences* that are varied, meaningful, and personal.

The text, from the Lord’s Prayer, reminds us that we pray out of our earthly experience, desires, and vision. We must acknowledge who God is, express our praise, and present our needs or desires. **HOWEVER**, we must also release our expectations, and accept that our prayers may be answered in surprising ways, and in the Lord’s time. Praying “Your will be done on Earth” is easy to say, but it is **NOT** easy to mean with one’s whole heart. At least not for me. I appreciate that we have several opportunities to raise our voices, to release our prayers, and to relinquish our ideas about how the prayers should be answered. When we alternately listen and sing, we add our collective voice to that of our pastor. This way, we magnify the voice that reaches Heaven, and engage person more fully in the action of prayer.

The responses to date have been overwhelmingly positive regarding extemporaneous piano music during the prayer, but that singing interrupts the flow of the prayer. That **IS** the point; it’s a speed bump. We all hate them, but they sure are effective. We are accustomed to make things happen in our daily lives, but our purpose in prayer is **NOT** to tell the Lord what to do, it **IS** to lob the ball into His court. By interrupting the flow of the prayer, we practice engaging our total concentration on the activity of prayer. Yes, that is work. **THAT** is prayer.

Our prayer time is immeasurably important. If the addition of music enhances our efforts (see our mission statement), then we as a Music Team can be grateful that we are effectively doing our job. If, after practicing this new model of collective, active, creative prayer, the body finds that music hinders our efforts, we can adjust appropriately and be thankful for your willingness to explore with us. Please pray about this with us, examine your responses, and stay in touch.

Blessings
~ Rachael Short

Worship strengthens the body of Christ, changes lives, and reveals the Lord Jesus. When we worship we ask the Holy Spirit to be with us, to show us how, because worship is God's work, Spirit calling to Spirit, deep calling to deep.

Worship is not a passive experience. One does not observe worship as one observes a soccer game. Just as you play soccer or you aren't a soccer player, one participates in worship or one is not a worshipper. Worship calls for full attention, eyes wide, ears attuned, mind awake engagement. If you come "to worship" in order to check that task off the list you are missing the whole point, and may be better off not coming. (Yes, I am concerned about you, who sit at the back or in the balcony, as removed as you can be from the action. Do you want to observe and not participate? Why don't people want to sit down front?)

Aside from the Spirit of God, music is the most potent element in a worship service. It has a matchless capacity to open the worshiper's heart to God, accessing the soul more quickly, deeply, and permanently than any other art form (yes, that includes the sermon, says this preacher). Further thoughts:

1. Music is cultural. In this church we center solidly on hymns, anthems, and praise choruses whose texts reflect the collective terminology of Christian culture and whose musical style is appropriately "churchy".
2. The church's culture of music is largely irrelevant to those outside the church. Non church goers don't listen to music that sounds anything like church music. They don't understand or appreciate it. Church music is as foreign to them as the music of a Shinto shrine is to you.
3. The church's culture of music is largely irrelevant even to us (I mean you) within the church. Do you know why we sing the Gloria Patri (If you are asking "What is the Gloria Patri?" and have attended worship here more than five or six times, you may be stunned to find that we sing it every Sunday). Do you know where it is in the worship service, and why we sing it in that place? How about the Doxology? (If you are saying, "What is a Doxology?", you are making my point for me) Why do we sing the Doxology as part of worship? What is its function in worship? If you cannot answer these questions with specific clarity, then the Gloria Patri and Doxology are just markers you check off as you move through the structure of the service. As for spiritual significance you may as well do the "chicken dance".
4. Though there is a broad category of music called "sacred music", not musical form is sacred. We don't believe in sacred buildings, places, or rituals (except the sacraments). Other traditions do, we don't. We certainly don't believe that music is sacred.
5. The purpose of the worshiping church is to honor God, and bring others to his Son, Jesus the Messiah. Jesus told us to "go and make disciples of all nations...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28: 19-20). This work of spreading the faith is called "evangelism".
6. Culturally relevant music is necessary for evangelism. If we are unwilling to worship using music that is more accessible to non church goers, we are saying that we don't want non Christians to come to our church, experience Christ, confess their faith, and join the community of believers.

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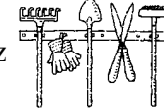
YARD WORK

The church is ready for summer now with all the flowers planted and the mulch is down.

We would like to thank; Fritz Thurston for donating toward the flowers in the gardens in memory of Otto Thurston.

Barb Bullard for donating the flowers in the two Maple Street planters.

Gary and Sue Larsen for planting the petunias in the gardens. Paul Martis, Gary Larsen and Matt Olson for additional garden work.



NEW ARRIVAL

We are happy to announce the birth of Macy Lynn Mancuso, daughter of Adam and Lisa. Macy was born on May 27th, and is the second grandchild (first granddaughter) for Rod and Betsy Fuller. Congratulations to all!



9:30 A.M. FELLOWSHIP HOUR

The sign up schedules for Fellowship Hour Hosts is posted in the Wilcox Hall corridor. This is the way we are filling spots for 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 GOFFS



We want you to meet Pat and Chery Goff who have been attending our church for the last three years.

Pat and Chery grew up in St. Johns. Pat retired from the Lansing Fire Department 2 1/2 years ago. He is now one of the owners of Keck-Coleman Funeral Home. Chery retired from the State of Michigan in January 2011.

Pat and Chery have one daughter Brianna, 23, a graduate of Grand Valley State University. She is currently seeking employment as an elementary school teacher.

Pat enjoys golfing and camping. Chery co-manages the Sparrow Clinton Hospital Gift Shop, loves to read and camp.

The Goffs were brought to church by Jim and Jayne French.

When you see the Goffs, introduce yourself to this very special couple. We are fortunate to have them worshipping with us.

Seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.

- Mark 4: 3-8 (NRSV)

I have been looking at photos of the Grand Canyon lately. As I marvel at God's work of deep browns, burnt oranges, and bright reds, I consider what I learned at the NAPF training in early June: Faith formation can start very small and can take a very long time to develop. It is God-driven, mysterious, holistic, and contextual. Similarly the Canyon's mysterious formation, brilliant colors, and timeless qualities awe me. Developing our faith is a process.

For some of us, we remember people who talked to us about God, the Spirit, and Jesus. I recall my grandmother Pearl visiting from Illinois every summer and demanding that we attend church. We hated waking up early (and somehow my father eventually got out of the requirement), but a seed was planted that first summer. Subsequent summers we traveled to her home in Stockton, Illinois and the same expectation engrained itself into my head. Church was a part of life, the given, the way Grandma Pearl believed and strengthened her faith. For me, it was a continuation of the slow process of deciding whether or not I wanted to be a Christian. I loved the singing, I loved the stories, and I loved the people.

In my teen years I continued my grandmother's tradition and dragged my younger brother to a summer bible camp on Chadwick Road in DeWitt's country farmland. My brother and I would wake up at 8 a.m. and jump on a bus to be driven to this itty bitty country church and school house to learn about God. I accepted Christ as my savior there in that little school house, and I wonder if my brother remembers that seed being planted.

In my young adult life, college rarely allowed any time for church -- at least this is what I told myself. I did journey around to different buildings and denominations in search of a style that might fit me. After I moved to the south-western corner of Michigan, I began attending a little nondenominational church filled with German descendants and thick accents. Initially I thought the theatrics of the accents and the acoustic guitar and singing drew me in, but looking back I see my faith was forming like a plant from seed to maturation.

My life's context -- a unique combination of my experiences, relationships, and circumstances -- weaved its way into how my faith developed. My faith did not form in a vacuum. My family life, student life, work life, social life, physical health, emotional state, intellectual pursuits all inter-connect and overlapped with my spiritual life. My journey to baptism in my thirties did not begin with a "flash" or a particularly dramatic experience. It began with a tiny insight, random visits to my granny's house, barely noticeable and sporadic.

As our youth are making their way to Arizona for some seed planting, I ask that you see faith as a long-term journey -- a marathon, not a sprint. Retreats, conferences, and missions provide good soil in which seed can be planted and start to grow. The mysterious nature of faith formation can be awe-inspiring. Take a moment to pray for each of these teens in their journey: Hannah Van Valkenburg, Trisha Cheeny, Ana Witteveen, Becca Stevens, Brooke Witchell and Jamie Cheeny.

Prayerfully submitted,
Melanie Lounds

Worship...cont.

There you have it; a summary of the rationale for making changes in the musical portion of our worship service.

Changes, under the direction of the Music Ministry Team, will be made in a deliberate way. We will hold on to the best, most relevant of the older music, while introducing some new forms. In the process vocal music will be evaluated to see that it meets the following criteria:

- **Personal:** It will relate in some way to people's everyday lives and involve their whole being, including their emotions. People will find the music reflects their experience.
- **Attractive:** It will engage and hold people's attention because of its excellence lyrically and musically.
- **Singable:** It will be easy to sing, at least for most people. As a bass I appreciate songs written for the voice of a true man. I also like up tempo; it that gives me less time to go flat. But I will not be the standard. The majority will be.
- **Substantive:** It will not be fluffy, vacuous music. It will have theological quality, and speak the truth about God and our heartfelt response to God. It will have both doctrinal and devotional content.

Music that meets these criteria we will PASS on to you to facilitate your worship experience.

Rev. Matt Olson

CHURCH LIBRARY: Don't forget when you take off on that camping trip, or you are just sitting in your back yard and need something to read, why not take a book out of the church library. We have a great variety of fiction and non fiction books for you to borrow for your summer enjoyment.

FLOWER SCHEDULE: The 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 summer and fall. If you can not make it in to church to check on a date please call the church office at 224-2636.

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: Beginning Friday, June 10th, through September 2nd, the church office will be closed on Fridays.

YOU CAN NOW FIND FCCSJ on Facebook! Get our latest updates and events. Search First Congregational Church of St. Johns, click the "Like" button and you will receive the latest updates on your homepage.

Children and Youth News

JULY CHILDREN AND YOUTH BIRTHDAYS

- 7 Ana Witteveen
- 8 Hannah Nelson
- 12 Max Willis
- 12 Georgia Willis
- 14 Lillian Howell
- 19 Skylar Mayes
- 21 Samuel Beagle



SAFE TRIP!

Jamie Cheeney, Trisha Cheeney, Buddy Stevens, Brad Tooker, Andrew Rademacher along with John Cheeney and Jerry Stevens, as advisors, will be leaving on July 24th through the 30th on their trip to Appalachia Service Project. They will be working in Knox County, Kentucky making homes "Drier, Safer and Warmer".



ARIZONA NAPF TRIP

The First Congregational Church Senior High Youth Group members who attended the National Association of Pilgrim Fellowships annual meeting in Phoenix/Tempe Arizona June 25th-30th were Hannah VanValkenburg, Ana Witteveen, Becca Stevens, Jamie Cheeney, Trisha Cheeney, Nichole Leasher and advisor Melanie Lounds.

SUMMER CAMP

Summer camp is ready to start on Sunday, July 31st, to Friday evening, August 5th. It will be held at the YMCA Camp Copneconic in Fenton, MI, Genesee County. Summer camp is for all youth currently in 3rd grade through the 8th grade. This camp is an amazing experience and a great week of Christian fellowship, fun and faith. Registration packets are still available in the church office.



V.B.S. UPDATE

Denise Palmer would like to thank everyone who helped make this years Bible School "Kickin' It Old School" a great event. Both adults and youth did a tremendous job of working with the children. The jobs ranged from greeting them as they came into the church, to preparing the snacks. Everyone did their part of making this a success. We hope to see all of you back next summer for another V.B.S.



JULY SIGN UP SCHEDULES

<u>Altar Flowers</u>	<u>Nursery Care</u>	<u>Fellowship Hour</u> 9:30 a.m.	<u>4th Sunday Supper</u> <u>Host/Hostess</u>
5 Wilbur & Leola Thurston	5 Kelly DeRosia	5 *	The 4th Sunday Supper will resume on September 25th.
10 *	10 Stacie Stevens	10 *	
17 *	17 Stacie Stevens	17 *	
24 *	24 Stacie Stevens	24 *	
31 Jan Quist	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

Baptism:

Drew Allen Humphrey, June 19, 2011, son of Joshua and Melissa Humphrey



Weddings:

Stevie Mailand & Jonathon Coblentz, June 25, 2011



THE JULY NEWSLETTER DEDICATION

The Congregational Connection for this month is dedicated in honor of

Matt, Beth, Peter and Gretchen Olson

Given by
Neil and Gene Barnhart