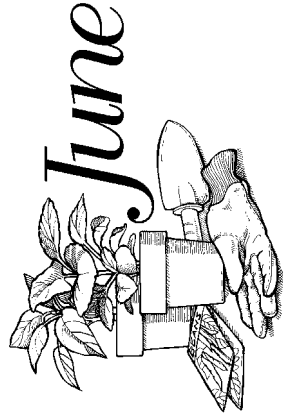


First Congregational Church  
100 Maple Street  
St. Johns, Michigan 48879

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**This Month's Highlights:**

- Cover: Graduates*
- Pg. 2 & 3 Graduates cont.*
- Pg. 4 Article from Melanie Lounds*
- Pg. 5 Letter from Sarah*
- Pg. 6 Music Ministry Team*
- Pg. 8 Member Profile*
- Pg. 9 Schedules, Church Records and Dedication*
- Pg. 10 Community News*

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



## June 2012

# The Congregational Connection...

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



**Bradley Raymond Tooker** will be graduating from St. Johns High School on Friday, June 8th. Brad is the son of Raymond and Karen Tooker and brother to Sierra Tooker. He is the grandson of Richard (and the late Virginia) Weber and Janice (and the late Earnest) Tooker.

During his high school years Brad was involved in Cross Country and also in the Good Wins Volunteer Organization before he took time off to complete his life-long goal of obtaining Eagle Scout from the Boy Scouts of American.

He has been active in the First Congregational Church through the Senior High PF Youth Group. Bradley attended the NAPF Conference for fellow Congregational youth in Alaska during the summer of 2010. He has also served the Missions Team in assisting for two years in Kentucky for the Appalachian Service Project. During the past two years he has been employed at McDonalds in St. Johns. Brad will be attending Central Michigan University studying Consumer Psychology. In Brads' honor there will be an open house on Sunday, June 3rd, from 1:00—5:00 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall in St. Johns. All participants of the church are welcome to come and congratulate him for his honors and wish him good luck in his endeavors.



**Becca Stevens** our beautiful daughter Becca will be attending Oakland University this fall. She has been involved with cheerleading and competitive cheer all four years of high school at Ovid Elsie. She also has been dancing with Soni's School of Dance since the age of three.

Becca has been attending First Congregational church her whole life. She has gone on two, soon to be three, missions trips with her youth group. Because of her love for children, this has been a great influence in her wanting to help children with special needs. Jerry and I would like to thank our church family for being such a wonderful role model for our daughter. What a wonderful church this has been to raise our daughter in. Many thanks to all of you, Jerry and Stacie Stevens.



Ana Witteveen arrived in this world while her family was living in rural Japan. Since that time she has continued to explore other languages, places and subjects. Together with her interest in travel, cultural differences and smart uses of the environment, this fall Ana begins German and business methods at the Residential College in the University of Michigan.

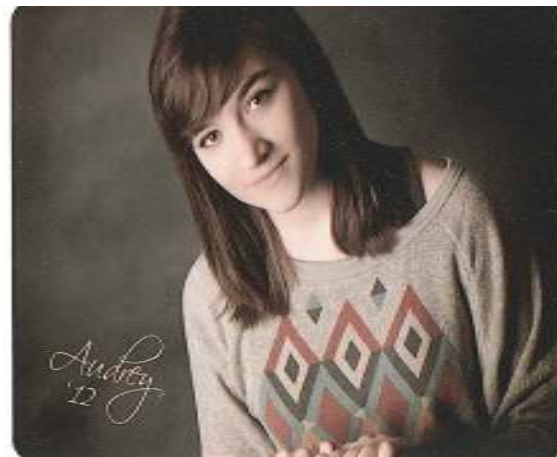
At St. Johns High School these four years Ana has balanced several extracurriculars each season: National Honor Society, soccer, varsity dance team, marching band, orchestra and school theatrical productions. She has been active in the local chapter of B.P.A. since 2010 and is one of the SJHS Top Ten this year. And since elementary school she has danced at Bohaty's School of Dance.

At FCCSJ Ana has been part of the church life through music, pageants, the full range of Pilgrim Fellowship activities, including youth weekend retreats, VBS, and the summer week of the National Association for Pilgrim Fellowship. Exploring the word of God and its place in one's heart and one's relationship to others is important to Ana. Ana is the daughter of Guven Witteveen and Lesley Philip.



Audrey Elizabeth Lockwood has enjoyed her years of learning at St. Johns High School. She is excited for new learning experiences at Central Michigan University in Teacher Education. Audrey has grown into a delightful, intelligent woman. Her parents, Kathryn and Eric, are extremely proud of her.

Please come to Audrey's Open House on June 17th., 2—5 p.m. at the pavilion (on the hill) at the city park.



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: Dr. Keith Mino, Jr.
Board of Ministry Members: David Elms, Tom Flynn, Tom French, Rod Fuller, Bill Kushmaul, Gary Larsen, Eugene Livingston, Melanie Lounds, Cali Sackrider,
CHURCH STAFF
Church Administrator: Susan Larsen
Financial Secretary: Paul Martis
Treasurer: Jim Beagle
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 and 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

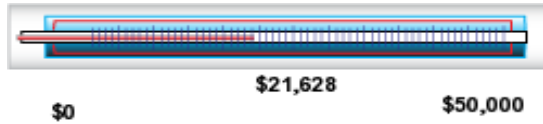
100 Maple Street
St. Johns, MI 48879
Telephone: 989-224-2636
Fax: 989-224-8306
E-Mail: fccsj@4wbi.net
Web Site: www.fccsj.com
Facebook:
firstcongregationalchurchofst.johns
Hours:
Monday - Tuesday 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Wednesday 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Thursday-Friday 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

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, JUNE 17th. Contact John Fitch at 224 -3565, or any Missions Team member for more information.



**INVITATION TO PRAISE THE LORD:** A small group of musicians meets on Monday nights from 7-8 pm in the Sanctuary to praise the Lord by singing/playing familiar songs and learning new ones to share on an occasional Sunday with the congregation. If you would like to join your voice, or musical instruments with ours, please contact Rachael Short (517-862-0750).

**AIR CONDITIONING UPDATE!** The total estimated cost of this project is \$50,000.00. With the matching funds and several donations this month we now have \$21,628.30! We will continually keep you updated on our fund raising progress for this church improvement-



**CONCERT**

**BARBARA LEHNEN JACQUES**, the daughter of Dave and Peg Lehn, will be performing on June 16th in the bandshell in Midland with the Chemical City Band. The concert begins at 7:30 p.m. She will be singing numbers from “South Pacific” for fifteen minutes.

**NEW ARRIVAL!**

Welcome to **CHLOE LYNN DEROSIA** who was born on May 23rd, at 6:08 a.m. Chloe is the daughter of Ben and Kelly and little sister to Abigail. Her grandparents are Gary and Sue Larsen. Welcome Chloe!



**COMMUNITY NEWS**

Due to a power outage at the First United Methodist Church, 200 East State Street, on May 11th, their Swap 'Til You Drop Women's Spring/Summer Fashion Swap fundraiser for Habitat for Humanity has been rescheduled for Friday, **June 1<sup>st</sup>**, from 5-8 pm. See the flyer on the bulletin board in the Wilcox Hall corridor.



**Thank You!**

The Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan wishes to thank the 1<sup>st</sup> Congregational Church of St. Johns for allowing the Area 322 leadership team to meet each month in Wilcox Hall during 2011-2012 school year. Each month all of the troop leaders from St Johns met with the council representative to plan events and activities as well as receive training and updates related to the Girl Scout program. The council staff and local leaders appreciate having a nice place to gather for these meetings and we wanted to express our gratitude.



Submitted by Susan Kilmer,  
Registrar for Area 322

*Sarah “ HAPS” Gladstone* grew up in the St. Johns community, attending FCCSJ, serving the Lord through the Appalachia service Project and other missions, along with first taking Jesus in to her heart at Eureka Christian preschool, Sarah Gladstone seems to have been on a path designed for her in preparation for her adult mission and career. After graduating with a Bachelor degree in Social Work from Michigan State University in 2004, Sarah felt a calling to do something even greater to serve the Lord and His people. Once again, she served in the Appalachian region through AmeriCorps and ASP leading the volunteer groups year round in the service of making homes “safer, warmer, and drier”. Sarah continued her educational journey by heading west to attend Fuller Theological Seminary, in Colorado Springs, Colorado. For two years she worked for the US Olympics while working on earning her Masters in Divinity. This past year, took Sarah, “Haps”, to Fuller’s main campus located in Pasadena, California. Her parents, Bob and Sue Gladstone, along with the rest of the family are so very proud of her accomplishments and will be honored to visit Fuller’s campus and see Sarah graduate on June 9<sup>th</sup> from Fuller Theological Seminary with a Masters of Divinity. Upon completion of her internship at Oneonta Congregational Church in August, Sarah hopes to return to serve the Lord in the “Mitten”.



Sarah would like to thank her church family for all of the love, guidance, and support they have shown her throughout her years. Cards for Sarah can be sent to her at 852 West Walnut Avenue, Monrovia, CA 91016. Congratulations, Sarah!

**COME BEFORE THE LORD**

*Coming Before the Lord  
Morning Devotions  
Sunday 9 to 9:30 AM*

In Psalm 63 David wrote, “O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you.... I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and glory.” How essential it is to worship God, to remember that he is the creator and we his creatures. God means us to worship in the whole assembly of the saints. Some also find the company of a smaller group opens our hearts to the Lord in vital ways. On Sunday mornings during the summer months, beginning June 10<sup>th</sup>, you are invited to gather for an informal service of devotion. While each service will be minimally structured and different there will be common elements; singing, the reading of God’s word, prayer and meditation. Come join us as we seek the Lord together.

### MESSAGE FROM MELANIE!

I have just woken up. The kids are all asleep (so is the husband). I decide to run 3.1 miles to prepare for the Hawk Island Triathlon about two or three months ago. My sister-in-law talked me into it. I feel like lead. I try many tactics to keep my mind off my aching knee, my wind-swept lungs, and my cough in my throat which needs an expectorant. This morning I did not even know where I was running. My mind drifted...

I can run down Steel, the right on Scott to Walker, then turn around and come back... but no... that's only 3 miles. I can just run around the block... no, I hate Walker Road – the scenery on that road is so ugly. Well, I can just take my original path through Searles Estate... or I can run left on Scott and take the old railroad track path back home, but that might be too buggy. I can always just turn around when I get to Scott Road and head home. I really want to head home. I have managed to not think about my body for the last minute as I contemplate my path. Turning around seems so pleasant, but then I will only get 2 miles in, and I am not dying... my body is not quitting. I can do this, and I better train or else my body will totally poop out June 3. So which way did I run? I took Searles Estate, the path that is beautiful, the path I have been training on for months, the path that is exactly 3.1 miles.

We all know the path we should take in life, for the most part. The path consists of sticking with God. The path consists of following what is true, upright, loving, disciplined, and it is beautiful, of course.

Sticking to the path involves church family. This past year I have connected with several members. Waking at 5:20 a.m., I learned Molly is in training too. We swam and caught up on all things triathlon at the pool (during a time when I wanted to be sleeping). She kept me motivated. The SPF bible study on Sunday evenings deepened the youth's spirituality and mine too. Hannah, Trisha, Ana, and Becca are so dedicated to knowing God and learning. I also was blessed with Stacie and Jerry's hospitality and love. They joined me later in the book study at my home, and I can say they are two of my closest friends now. Having Jim's help with the spiritual gifts class kept me connected to my church family. I learned so much more about Lois, Ellen, John, Beth, Marie, Linda, Nancy, Barb, Keith, and Barb. I also learned about Charlie, a visiting member from another church. I am more connected to these individuals and know my gifts coincide with many of them. I remember Linda's kind words which shocked me on the first evening; she is a loving and merciful soul. These loving members of our church (and community) keep me on God's path.

Consider joining in a small group or starting one of your own if you have not found our church family. Browse the Gift and Bible stores, grab a book, start a small group, and get connected. You will find that your family will grow and God's love will rain down upon you tenfold. Speaking of rain, I really hope it rains on Triathlon day. I do better even in a thunder storm, particularly biking 22 miles (just ask Molly). Just remember, I'll be on God's path. This faithful path involves love and church family. I invite you to join me and get running for God!

Submitted by Melanie Lounds

### JUNE SIGN UP SCHEDULES

<u>Altar Flowers</u>	<u>Nursery Care</u>	<u>Fellowship Hour</u>	<u>4th Sunday Supper Host/Hostess</u>
3 *	3 Hannah VanValkenburg	3 *	<b>The 4th Sunday Supper will resume in September</b>
10 *	10 Stacie Stevens	10 *	
17 *	17 Stacie Stevens	17 John DeLavern	
24 *	24 Stacie Stevens	24 *	

#### \*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

#### Deaths:

Jack Bertoldi, April 22, 2012, Former member

#### Marriage:

J. C. Fitch and Amanda Bradley, May 19, 2012,  
J. C. is the son of John and Linda Fitch



### THE JUNE DEDICATION

*The Congregational Connection  
for this month is dedicated to God,  
with gratitude, for his blessings to us of...  
life, love, family, friends and his promise,  
as we soon celebrate our 80th birthdays.*

*Joann and Paul Martis*

*(June 16th) (July 14th)*



## Children and Youth News

### JUNE BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Cody Hyde
- 8 Madrid Nihart
- 11 Ian LaBar
- 16 Kendall Gunther
- 17 Emma Simon
- 23 Alexis Carpenter



### VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

We are looking for a volunteer, or two, to organize and lead Vacation Bible School this summer. You pick the dates, times and curriculum.

Vacation Bible School is a fun time for the children and you will enjoy it too.

Please call the church office at 224-2636 for more information.



### Finance Focus: The Christian Program Endowment Fund

Established in 1997 with \$15,000 this fund is designed to finance Christian education and spiritual development in our church and community. It is best understood as our 'invest in people' fund. With the addition of a bequest from the Wieland estate the fund has grown significantly; the current principle balance is \$247,000. At present there are no earnings from this fund to spend. In the past monies from this fund have been used to support the Bethel Series classes, Stephen Ministry training, and to purchase materials for The Bible in 90 Days course.



Jim and Audrey Duzek were born and raised in Houghton, MI. True "Yoopers" through and through!

They married and moved to Lansing where Jim worked for General Motors. Audrey was a telephone operator for the years before they had children. Later they moved to DeWitt living there for 38 years, raising their three daughters, Lori, Lynne and LuAnn. They now have been blessed with four grandsons and one great grandson. Jim plays golf and is an avid deer hunter. They go to Florida every winter — after the deer is in the freezer.

Audrey is very much into silk flower arrangements. You

have seen some of her works of art on the altar on Sundays. Together they love music and dancing.

The Duzek's joined our church in 2008. We are very lucky to have these two great people in our congregation!



## LETTER FROM SARAH GLADSTONE

On June 9<sup>th</sup>, I will be graduating from Fuller Theological Seminary with my Masters in Divinity. And as I approach the end of my time at Fuller, I've been reminded of the many reasons that I got on this long path to begin with, and one particular memory has surfaced over and over that I would like to share with you.

During my undergraduate years at Michigan State University, I have an opportunity to study abroad in Ireland. When I arrived in County Mayo, Sister Maureen, who I would be working with for the next couple of months, greeted me. Sister Maureen took it upon herself to see to the economic diversification of the rural parish that she serves. In a county that was mostly farms and grazing fields for sheep, the residents in the area were being stricken by a failing agricultural market. It was this project that several students from Michigan State were asked to assist with.

After several weeks working and living with rural Irish people, I was invited to spend some time at Ballintubber Abbey alongside Sister Maureen. This abbey was built some time around the year 1200, and is a fascinating mix of ruin and preserved church. After service one day, I remember sitting in the sanctuary taking in the history around me, and also noting the extraordinary acoustics inside the stone building. So, I got up and went to the heart of the room, and sang for a while (For those of you who have had to endure my 'special music' contributions growing up... I assure you that my vocal skills had improved greatly...). But the only song that would come to mind was this:

*I, the Lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard My people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin,  
My hand will save.*

*I who made the stars at night  
I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear My light to them?  
Who shall I Send?*

*Here I am Lord, Is it Lord?  
I have heard You calling in the night.  
I will go Lord, if you lead me.  
I will hold Your people in my heart.*

I remember standing there with the words echoing around me, finally feeling a calming in my soul. For the longest time, I had been hearing God calling to me, but yet unwilling to answer. I was afraid of what following God would look like in my life. I knew that this God wasn't just trying to get my attention, but that He had planned a specific vocation for me. One that scared me to death! What would I have to give up? How would people react? What about my grand plans? And at that moment, standing in an empty stone abbey in the middle of nowhere Ireland, I finally felt like I was ready and willing to say: "Here I am Lord."

cont. on page 6

I wasn't like Samuel, that heard his name whispered and jumped out of bed declaring, "Here I am" (1 Samuel 3:1-21). Nor was I like Moses that upon hearing his name from a burning bush said, "Here I am" (Exodus 3:4). Nor was I like Isaiah that eagerly said, "Here I am, send me!" (Isaiah 6:8). I ignored my unsettled heart for as long as I could, and thankfully, our patient and gracious Lord, was still calling for me when I was ready to hear Him.

Within this newsletter, there are pictures and stories of graduates, I would encourage you all to pray that they may hear God's call for them. Whether that be as an engineer, an artist, a teacher, a chef, a mechanic... anything! I ask you to pray that each of our graduates would seek to glorify God in all that they seek to do!

Go maire sidh bhur saol nua! (May there be joy in your new life!)

Submitted by Sarah Gladstone

*Sarah grew up in our church, was active in Sunday School and P.F. and is the daughter of long time participants Bob and Sue Gladstone,.*



Notes from the Music Ministry Team:

## ***Our Year in Review***

(Rachael's Director of Music Ministry report, presented at the May 20, 2012

Congregational meeting)

Music has always been an integral part of the life of this church. Many of you have shared with me accounts of a rich musical heritage including leadership of highly skilled musicians supporting congregational singing, maintaining a strong choral program, and developing a handbell choir. The existence of *two* endowed funds testifies to the commitment of financial stewardship to ensure the preservation of a healthy and vital music ministry.

Over the past year, the Music Ministry Team has devoted considerable time to discern the role of music in our worship life, and ways to grow as stewards of music. Guided by our mission statement, the Music Ministry Team seeks (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.

Music is a gift from God; when we develop our musical abilities and share them as an act of worship, we offer back to God a portion of what we have received. Through congregational singing, we engage our body, mind, and spirit in the act of worship. A single hymn can tell the entire Gospel story, and there is considerable power in the act of telling that story. In singing, we can praise, pray, fellowship with, and bless God.

Cont. on page 7

Some of us play musical instruments, and find our truest, deepest expression in music without words. Instrumental music can facilitate prayer and reflection, or praise and adoration, shaping our worship space and helping our hearts to realign with God. No one can argue that something very special happens when the Hands of Harmony play – the room can be charged with energy, as we heard last week (*"Ride on, King Jesus! No man can hinder him!"*), or infused with gentle waves of love.

Some of us are well practiced in the art of worship, with many years of experience and self-aware of the music that carries the expression of our individual worship. When we nurture emerging leaders, we are preserving the heritage of this church, equipping people for a life of spiritual presence with God. When we allow the Hallelujah Choir to lead us before God, as they administer the Call to Worship, we send a strong message that no matter your age, we are all here to worship; you and your gifts are valued and needed.

When we learn new songs, we increase our potential for expressive worship, and to minister within and outside our congregation. By engaging the talents of hymn leaders, we ensure that a skilled guide will lead us through the map of our songs. If you are already familiar with the geography of a song, then your act of worship will be defined by the way that you direct your spirit as you sing. If the song is new to you, you may follow your capable guide, free to receive the song as a gift from God. This song may become a tool for your expressive worship at a later time.

On a deeply personal level, I want to thank you for providing me with the first church family that I have found since leaving my home church almost 20 years ago. You have loved me when I felt lost, sheltered me when I felt homeless, comforted me when I was hurt, nurtured me when I needed to grow, challenged me to use my gifts and to grow in faith. You have helped me to hear a call - to serve God with all that I am - that I might have otherwise missed. Short of salvation, that is the greatest gift that you could give anyone, and I will be forever grateful.

When I pray for you and for this church, I pray that we will all feel God's love, find shelter & comfort, feel nurtured & free to grow into new life in Christ, no matter our age or life circumstances. I pray that God will bless you as richly as He has blessed me through you.

Thank you. Blessings!

~ **Rachael Short**, Director of the Music Ministry

**Music Ministry Team:** Chris Harris (Chair); Trisha Cheeney; Chuck Graham; Susan Kilmer; Jan Myers; Ana Witteveen; Guven Witteveen.