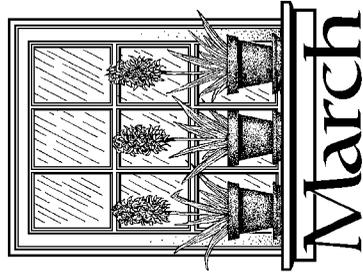


First Congregational Church  
100 Maple Street  
St. Johns, Michigan 48879

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48879  
PERMIT #83



**This Month's Highlights:**  
*Cover, Caring for Aging Adults*  
*Pg. 2 Gods' Message for Us, Part 2*  
*Pg. 3 Junior High Youth Group*  
*Pg. 5 Spring Tea and Attic Treasure*  
*Pg. 6 Children and Youth News*  
*Pg. 7 March Schedules, Church Records and Dedication*  
*Pg. 9 Member Profile*

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**MARCH 2011**



## The Congregational Connection...

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

### CARING FOR AGING ADULTS

Marilyn Newman and Kathy Farnum have been working on developing a series of workshops on caring for aging adults. These workshops will take place bi-weekly on Sunday evenings from 7:00-8:30 in the church parlor. The first workshop is scheduled for March 13. This will be an introductory workshop covering basic caregiving issues and will include time for the group to discuss issues and concerns that they have an interest in learning more about. The second workshop is scheduled for March 27. This workshop will feature a speaker from the Alzheimer's Association speaking on the basics of dementia and alzheimers.

These are the only two workshops scheduled at this point. Marilyn and Kathy will plan more workshops based on the input received from the group at the March 13 workshop. A schedule of workshops will then be developed and distributed.

These workshops are open to both members from the church and the community as well, so if you know someone who may benefit from the information, please invite them. The audience for these workshops is not only for adults who find themselves caring for aging adults but for adults interested in information and resources available in the community as they age. For more information, please contact Marilyn at 517-331-3457 or Kathy at 517-669-5864.

### BENEFIT CONCERT WITH A MISSION

The Music Ministry Team of The First Congregational Church, 100 Maple Street, St. Johns, MI, invites everyone to a benefit concert on Saturday, March 5th, 2011. It will begin at 7:00 p.m. in the FCC sanctuary. The concert will feature the Hands of Harmony Handbell Choir, Chancel Choir, Silo Singers, Holy Mamas, young pianists, the Hallelujah Choir, and other singers and instrumentals. A free will offering will be taken to help support the International Missions Team and their medical trip to Cusco, Peru later this month. For more information contact the church at 989-224-2636.



### SUNDAY, MARCH 6TH, IS BRING A FRIEND TO CHURCH DAY

Invite your neighbors, friends, co-workers and relatives to share the worship service on March 6th. The Fellowship Hour will be hosted by the Board of Ministry.



**BRING A FRIEND  
TO CHURCH!**

Linda Fitch and I were talking the other day, in light of the recent suicide of a sophomore at my high school in Owosso. I was expressing my sadness as she and I became teary-eyed. I would hate to think that any one of my students doesn't feel the love I have for them. I would hate to have them leave my classroom not knowing that they are thought of so many times every day as I worry about their home lives, consider their personal grief, and make daily lesson plans that will hold their attention and get the message across. And I would hate for them to think that English is more important than love.

I took the time (the day after the suicide) to reflect and get the facts, but the following day, I needed to talk to my students. I set the English lesson aside to talk to all six classes about the love I have for them as we grieved together, cried together, and shared what this event meant to us personally. God gave me the heart and the words that day. Linda and I were thinking, I wish every teacher discussed this with their classes. Some teachers feel like they've had no training in counseling and don't know how to discuss an event of this magnitude; however, Linda and I agreed that it takes no training to show love to one another. Or does it?

Jesus is our example of what it means to love. Can I measure up? Can I forgive that person for not running that ministry team the way I would have it run? Can I love them as my brother or sister? Can I forgive the man that cut me off this morning then immediately slowed down to make a left hand turn? Instead of hanging onto the rage at someone who has harmed me physically, emotionally, mentally, or personally.... can I find forgiveness and love in my heart? Can I discipline my kids lovingly instead of in irritation as my two year old puts the cat in the toilet? Can I argue in a loving manner with my spouse when he drives me crazy at times? It's not that easy after all.

Jesus got angry at people and events in his house of worship, and he expressed disapproval at the elders in the church, attempting to correct their ways. It's not that we must squelch our emotions... it's just that love must be the reason for our decisions. All the time, every day, every where we are, I think we must always act out of love. I discipline my children because I love them, but I must discipline in a loving manner. I inform a neighbor how a comment hurt my feelings because I love her and want to have a loving relationship with her still. I argue (lovingly) for a topic at a board meeting because I am called to love those in my church and their well-being, their programs, their spiritual journey to God, the Father.

Finally, the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus loved us so much in all our iniquity that he died for our sins. Can I love another so much that I can put aside my humanity? I would like to think I would shield a student from harm, but I hope I never see the day when I have to make that choice. Like Jesus in the wilderness praying to his Father... please *Father, if it can be any other way...* none of us want to have that burden. Patricia Maisch, a 61-year-old woman, grabbed the magazine (bullet clip) away from the shooter that attempted to assassinate Rep. Gabrielle Giffords. Taking great courage and trust, she showed her love for all those present. I am not sure I am that courageous. However, I do know that with God's armor, I can love. I am called to love.

Know today that you are loved. Spread this love around until you love even when it is not Valentine's day - every day of every week of every year of your life. And forgive. Lead by example. Let God shine through you. God will give you the strength.

Lovingly submitted,  
Melanie Lounds, SPF youth leader

## 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.

**F.C.C. MEDICAL MISSION TRIP**

This year a team of 22 people will be traveling to Cusco, Peru, to organize medical clinics at Elim Orphanage and in the neighboring community. The team, leaving on March 23rd, and returning on April 1st., includes members of First Congregational Church of Laingsburg as they undertake their first international mission trip. Please keep the entire team in your thoughts and prayers as they prepare to leave, as well as while they are in Peru. The team would appreciate donations of the following items for the children: Toothbrushes/toothpaste, Children's socks, small cans of Playdoh, colored pipe cleaners, bags of beads to make bracelets, stickers, small Spanish language Bibles, hand lotions, pens/pencils/crayons, harmonicas, silly beads, deflated soccer balls, deflated basketballs, small air pumps. Please help fill the twenty suitcases we are taking down!



On behalf of the children we will be serving, thank you!

Your 2011 International Missions Team: Jim & Andy Beagle, Chris & Marianne Harris, Gary Larsen, Erin Larsen Theis, Kathy Kushmaul, Dave, Molly & Molly Carol Minnick, Keith & Nancy Mino, Matt Olson and Rachael Short.

**HANDS OF HARMONY**

The American Guild of English Hand bell Ringers - Area V festival is being held on March 25-26th in downtown Lansing at the Lansing Center. Several members of the Hands of Harmony, Laingsburg Congregational Church and Asbury United Methodist will join together to attend this festival. This festival brings together hand bell choirs from 5 surrounding states to conduct mass ringing and offers many instructional classes for the ringers to fine-tune their skills. Our choir has been working on the festival music since last fall and will be presenting the various pieces during the worship service in March, April, and May. You are invited to attend the Area V festival's final concert at 5:30 PM on Saturday, March 26th, in the Lansing Center. The concert is open to the public and is free.



**OTHER CHURCH'S NEWS**

You are cordially invited to join the First United Methodist Church Women, 200 East State Street, St. Johns for a Lenten Tea. It will be held Saturday, March 19th, at 1:00 p.m. Please RSVP to 989-224-6859 by March 14th.

Saturday, March 19th, 4 p.m. United Church of Ovid, 131 West Front Street, is having a Chili Cook Off for the Ovid Habitat for Humanity build. All kinds of chili, veggie soup for the non-chili eaters, hot dogs for the kids, a silent auction and a bunch of fun! For more information call 989-834-5958

**Lock-In  
Thank You!**



The Jr. High P.F. enjoyed a lock-in at the church on February 12-13th. There were 13 PFers and 4 of their friends who joined the fun. A great time was had by all!

Many thanks to the **Flynn family** for organizing the terrific "Minute to Win It" games, the **Simon family** for coordinating a delicious breakfast and to **Matt Olson**, our surprise midnight visitor. Also, thanks too **Sue and Gary Larsen** for their help in getting the church ready and to **Jim Beagle** for spending the night at the Lock-In and for all his assistance. Most especially we want to thank the **P.F. parents** for sharing their kids with us. We are very fortunate to work with such a great group.

Barb Sherman & Jennifer Beagle,  
Jr. High P.F. Co-Leaders

**Jr. High P.F. "March is Reading Month"  
Book Sale & Bake Sale  
Fundraiser!**



**Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup>**  
During Coffee Hour

Would you like to help the Jr. High P.F. by **donating your unwanted books**? We are looking for all types of books for all ages. This will be our first fundraiser of the church year and we hope to have a great turnout! Donations can be left in the Narthex between now and March 13th. We'd also be happy to pick them up for you ~ just let us know or call the church office.

Thank you !



All unsold books will be donated to the Attic Treasure Sale.

## COME AND JOIN THE FUN!

Calling All Campers!!! Save the dates for the 4<sup>th</sup> annual church camping weekend June 9 – 12, 2011. It is always the weekend after St. Johns graduation. River Ridge Campground near Breckenridge is the place (same as last year). There are two cabins for you folks who are non-campers, but want to join us. **Don't call for your reservation until late April or May as they are gone until then.**



## DOUBLETS, ETC.

**March 6**, Charlotte Shoup, an attorney from our group, will give a presentation about wills and trusts. Everyone is invited. If you haven't had your will done, this would be great information for you. It will be at 7:00 in Wilcox Hall. Refreshments will be served.

**April 3rd**, in the afternoon, Lou Neuder, a veterinarian, will be our host to tour the Green Meadows Dairy Farm in Elsie.

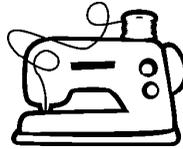
## THANK YOU!

Thank you to Gary Larsen, Paul Martis, Gary McCampbell, Jim Ellickson, Guven Witteveen, Bonnie Wickerham, Trish Schuelke, Barbara Bullard, Shirley Warstler, Jamie Cheeny, Philip Witteveen and students from SJHS for helping our church with its second blood drive sponsored by the American Red Cross. The drive was held on February 18th, and they collected 11 pints of blood.

## INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS PROJECTS

**BRING YOUR RETURNABLE CANS AND BOTTLES** 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 this month. A red box is on the landing for your convenience.

Would you like to help the **INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS TEAM?** The group is asking for help from people who sew, in making very easily sewn backpacks to take to the orphanages and medical clinics in Peru. Molly Minnick has provided easy patterns for anyone interested in helping. Contact Molly or the church office for more information.



**THANK YOU** to everyone who supported the International Missions Team by coming to Applebee's on Feb. 26th. for the pancake breakfast.

**THE TEAM** would like to thank everyone who helped with the fund raising for this Mission Trip. Thank you for supporting us by purchasing Tupperware products, Pampered Chef, Rwanda Baskets and Premier Jewelry. Your support has made a huge difference in this outreach program.

## MUSIC WITH A MISSION

With deep gratitude, I write this month to thank all of the First Congregational Church musicians, for contributing to our benefit concert on Saturday, March 5th, at 7:00 pm. I write in anticipation of a concert to include the talents of the Hallelujah Choir, Hands of Harmony, Chancel Choir, Silo Singers, and Holy Mamas. Many of my piano students will play, college students will return (Katie Root, Zach Zuker, Katie and Greg Harris), and friend and bassist Perry DeGood will return to collaborate with the Chancel Choir. Because of your generous support, I feel like you'll all be going to Peru!

On Sunday, March 6th, Philip Rodriguez will return to offer special music during our worship service. He will lead a song accompanied by the Holy Mamas, and he will also share (in English and Spanish) a song summarizing the collective intent of the mission team, and the call which our entire church family has responded to. The lyrics follow:

### Vs. 1

Lord, you have come to the lakeshore looking neither for wealthy nor wise ones.

You only asked me to follow humbly.

### Chorus

O Lord, with your eyes you have searched me, kindly smiling, have spoken my name.

Now my boat's left on the shoreline behind me; by your side I will seek other seas.

### Vs. 2

You know so well my possessions; my boat carries no gold and no weapons;

But nets and fishes -- my daily labor.

### Vs. 3

You need my hands, full of caring, through my labors to give others rest, and constant love that keeps on loving.

### Vs. 4

You, who have fished other oceans ever longed-for by souls who are waiting, my loving friend, as thus you call me.

*Rachael Short*

## MEMBER PROFILE



Our family for this month is the Sackriders: Bob, Cali, Samuel, and Lily. Bob is from Lansing and graduated from Michigan State University. Cali is from Bremen, Indiana and graduated from Hillsdale. Both Bob and Cali did their graduate work at the University of Southern Mississippi.

They are both very active teachers at St. Johns High School. Bob is the Cross County Coach and Cali, who teaches Spanish, takes her students to Spain every other year. They are both well respected teachers here in St. Johns.

Bob's extra curricular activities are running, reading, watching movies and family time. Cali enjoys scrapbooking, traveling and swimming. She is also on the Board of Ministry and a Liturgist for the Sunday services.

They have two great children; Sam, who is seven and attends East Olive Elementary School and Lily who is five years old and in pre-school. Sam enjoys Harry Potter books and building Legos. Lily really loves to dance and play basketball.

When Bob and Cali moved to St. Johns they were looking for a new church. After they visited F.C.C. they just knew it felt like the place for them. We are fortunate to have such a great family here in our church.

**MURIEL GILSON SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

Much of the congregation at St. Johns First Congregational Church was aware of how much I loved, admired and appreciated Muriel Gilson. The time I spent with her was often the highlight of my week. Most simply put, Muriel was the person I want to be when I grow up. The most powerful leadership is that which happens by example and few were ever better leaders in St. Johns than Muriel – for DECADES. She was a real-life ray of sunshine for everyone with whom she came in contact and provided as much support and encouragement to the young people in this community as was humanly possible.

A few years before her death Muriel was honored by the community for her many contributions and at that time the Muriel Gilson Scholarship Program was started. This scholarship program continues today based on the concept that it is not just about honoring Muriel, but bringing attention to the many attributes that made her such a revered member of this church and citizen of this community.

As a ministry team we feel that instilling an awareness of these attributes in our youth is a worthwhile long-term goal. The scholarship is designed to help fund the beginning of the college education of graduating seniors from the First Congregational Church. The essence of this scholarship is to recognize and celebrate Muriel, and to pass on her gifts of vitality, exuberance and love of life to the young people of our church.

Among the requirements of application for the scholarship is an essay (minimum of 500 words) on the value and importance of looking for the good in others and expressing enthusiastic support on a consistent basis.

Each year around the time of her birthday, we re-emphasize the nature of and reason for the scholarship, encourage the eligible young people to apply and make another effort to add to the funding of the scholarship, so as to perpetuate Muriel's positive influence far into the future.

Please consider making a donation to this program, to help encourage our young people to think hard about some important values and perspectives, and to give them a small gift of support and appreciation as they embark on the next phase of their lives. Thank you.

Our current team members are Shelley Gunther, Dawn Flynn, and myself. We welcome anyone who is interested to join our team!

Jerry Harte, Team Leader, Muriel Gilson Scholarship Program

**SPRING TEA**

Princesses of All Ages



Save the Date  
for a  
**Royal Princess Tea**  
Saturday, April 16, 2011  
2:00 – 3:30 PM



Tickets Available March 6th  
Child \$5.00    Adult \$8.00

Call 517-775-7186 for ticket information

Proceeds going to Youth Christian

Education at F.C.C.

**ATTIC TREASURE SALE**

**16TH ANNUAL  
ATTIC TREASURE SALE**

**MAY 3RD-4TH, 2011**

**10:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.**

**WILCOX HALL, LOWER LEVEL**

**It's time to start gathering your  
"Treasures" for this annual event.**



**Donations may be  
brought to church the  
week of April 25th.**

**Monday, Tuesday,  
Thursday and Friday**

**9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

**Wednesday 9:00 a.m. until noon.**

**Dishes, vases, small furniture, glass-  
ware, linens, Christmas items, knick-  
knacks, toys, books, older  
costume jewelry**



**No clothing.**

**For more information contact Paul  
or Joann Martis at 224-4165.**

Children and Youth News

CHILDREN AND YOUTH BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Julian Barron
- 6 Jamie Cheeney
- 9 Emily Rademacher
- 12 Alyssa Elms
- 14 Lauren Doppke
- 14 Nathan Sherman
- 20 Audrey Lockwood
- 23 Payton Simon
- 24 Grace Lounds
- 25 Meagan Leasher
- 28 Trisha Cheeney
- 29 Logan Hazel



CHILDREN'S (HALLELUJAH) CHOIR

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.



**SUNDAY SCHOOL  
FAMILY BOWLING DAY  
SATURDAY  
MARCH 26TH,  
3-5 P.M.  
REDWING LANES, ST. JOHNS**

**"Put Your Faith into Action"**



**An adult must accompany their children  
Fill out the ticket below, attach the (\$10.00) bowling fee and return to the church  
by Sunday, March 20th.**

**For more information contact Beth Olson at 224-6624**

We will be attending the Family Bowling Day on March 26th, at Redwing Lanes. Attached is the \$10.00 fee for our family.

Adult Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child Name: \_\_\_\_\_

MARCH SIGN UP SCHEDULES

<u>Altar Flowers</u>	<u>Nursery Care</u>	<u>Fellowship Hour</u>	<u>4th Sunday Supper Host/Hostess</u>
6 *	6 Stacie Stevens	6 Board of Ministry	March *
13 Barb Sherman	13 Stacie Stevens	13 Jr. High P.F.	April *
20 *	20 Suzie Fromson	20 Marilyn Newman	May *
27 Suzanne Martis	27 Stacie Stevens	27 4th Sunday Supper	

**\*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 SERVICE

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
ASH WEDNESDAY  
MARCH 9th  
7 P.M.**

**No Upper Room Small Group on the 9th.  
They will be attending the Ash Wednesday Service.**



THE MARCH NEWSLETTER DEDICATION

The Congregational Connection for this month is dedicated in loving memory of long time F.C.C. members

**Alden and Doris Livingston**  
who would have been 102 on January 21st., and 100 on March 29th.



It is given by Eugene, Carole, Kathleen and Andrew Livingston;  
Suzanne and Edward Martis; and Spencer and Susan Martis