

May 2014

The Congregational Connection...
*Our connection to the family and friends of the
First Congregational Church*

May Highlights

Spiritual Gift's recognition: May 4th
Mother's Day: May 11th
Memorial Day: May 26th
Annual Meeting: May 18th
Awards Sunday: May 18th
3rd Sunday Throw Down: May 18th
4th Sunday Supper: May 25th

Landscape Ministry

Members are needed to maintain the church grounds during the summer months. If interested, please contact the church office.



View our Article

Read about our cross at:

<http://www.lansingstatejournal.com/article/20140413/CLINTON01/304130040/St-Johns-church-marks-Lent-cross-pictorial>



**Service of Prayer and Praise on
Mother's Day,
Sunday May
11th.**



**Vacation Bible
School**

June 23-27

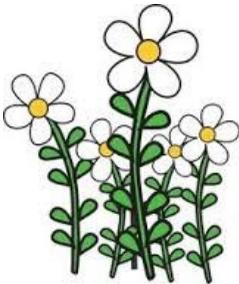


One of our church members was describing the pain he felt, and how it effected his perspective. “It reminds me”, he said, “that I’m getting older”. “It is always there to do that. Pain it like that, it reminds you of things. That’s with spiritual pain as well.”

Most of us who have lived some life have found suffering to be among our greatest teachers. The lessons are the sort that humble and refine us. Often, they expand our souls.

It is possible for people to be overwhelmed by suffering and still emerge as compassionate, gentle human beings. This is a testimony to the image of the divine that is in each of us. We need that image reflected among us as believers to strengthen our faith that in the midst of the terrible God’s grace abounds. David Ford puts it well in his book, *The Shape of Living*; “Diamonds of wisdom-through-suffering have been produced under the most intense pressures, and if we find one it is to be treasured. It is very rarely that anything we suffer is without parallel in the experience of others. Those who go through their sufferings and produce (or even, in a sense, become) a diamond that can reflect the light of hope, are offering other people the most precious gift imaginable. So, in the face of the terrible blows that knock out of shape our lives and those of others, a basic resource is the wisdom that knows what it is like. If we treasure it we find that it multiplies: Not only does it speak to us in our own sufferings, but it can be passed on with extraordinary effects.”

“That’s with spiritual pain as well.” The more we share our spiritual suffering, the more we have multiplied among us the wisdom of perspective and endurance. The compassion we find in being really seen, heard, and attended to moves us from suffering alone to suffering in the context of hope and healing.



As you see others in our congregation suffering, won’t you extend your compassion? This caring cannot be fabricated, or produced by any formula. It can only come from one’s own suffering. And it needs to be offered freely and responsibly, over and over again. This is what matters in the grand scheme of God’s holy economy (see Matthew 25).



Board News



In discerning that we needed to take steps toward healing, it is our sincere hope that you had a chance to start this process with Reverend vanderBent's visit last month. The full copy of his recommendations report is available in the church office.

As FCC's Board of Ministry, we believe God was faithfully guiding us and led us to him as healing continues in our hearts and minds. We pray for your continued faith in Christ as He continues to work in all of us. Expectations are that the Board will discuss Rev. vanderBent's recommendations over the next few months (focusing on the most pressing recommendations first) and decide if all, some, or none of the recommendations will be adopted.

Since Reverend vanderBent's time with us last month, the Board of Ministry has discussed the membership process and the implications the process may have sent to members and friends of First Congregational Church. This process was in no way designed to threaten and intimidate those who may be considering FCC their home, those who may be at another church already, or those who are still undecided in their membership.

The board will be discussing the May 1st deadline to determine eligibility for the election on May 18th but will be forgoing/pausing the deadline until after the election. However, this is an ongoing process, and the 2001 By-Laws are what we need to be following until their update is complete.

In the fall the Board of Ministry recommended that membership be reviewed yearly, similar to staff evaluations, stewardship, and goal creation. A team was selected of lay members, volunteers who were interested in helping on this project. It is our hope that we will update outdated files and create a centralized or master list which will be updated yearly. It is our additional hope that all people will know year after year if they are eligible to vote on the new Board mission statement, Board elections, and any policies/by-law recommendations.

The committee has mailed out membership forms to those who have not turned theirs in yet and expect to be receiving those back. If you are currently inactive in the church and are still debating your membership, consider staying a member, praying for discernment, and the healing process. If you have any questions, please let the Board know or contact the church and leave a message for the membership committee.

Sincerely,
The Board of Ministry

Deadline Reminder

All articles for the newsletter should be submitted by the 21st of each month. Bulletin announcements are due by Thursday.

Church Office

Let's communicate as effectively as we can. Questions and concerns can be submitted with your contact information by email, phone, or by leaving a message in the drop box outside the office door.

Save the Date

National Conferences in
Omaha, NE
June 28-July 1, 2014.

Check it out!

Check out *The Upper Room* located on the literature rack in the back of the sanctuary. Great source for daily reflection and prayer. Check out, "Faith of a Child" (p. 8). Also, take a look at, "The Mother Heart of Gold" (p. 17).

Brain Buster

Complete the following Bible verse: "A gentle answer turns away _____, but a harsh word stirs up _____."

- A) an argument; obedience
- B) wrath; anger
- C) jealousy; resentment
- D) falsehood; truth



(B) (See Proverbs 15:1, 1, 4.)

Lost but now is Found

Lost something? We might have found it! Items found are in the church office.



Staying Connected

Helen Johnson/Maxine Kushmaul
 Grace Haven Assisted Living
 1507 Glastonbury Drive
 St. Johns, MI 48879

Bruce MacRae/Colleen Naru
 Hazel Findlay Country Manor
 1101 South Scott Road
 St. Johns, MI 48879

**ADOPTED BY THE BOARD
 OF MINISTRY 3/10/2014
 NURSERY POLICY**



The First Congregational Church places a high value on the hospitality we extend to families with children, an expression of which is our well-appointed Nursery. This room is located on the lower level of the education wing. It includes a bathroom with changing table. There is a speaker through which the service can be heard. There is no nursery staff. However, the room is made available to parents who may wish to use it as a place to care for their own children.

Maundy Thursday Reflection

The story of the Last Supper included Peter rebuffing his Lord from washing the disciples' feet. We, too, tend toward self-sufficiency and avoiding dependence on others. Reenacting this passage made these things come to life. I think we all were humbled. Serving others is good, but so is letting others express their own service through you.

-GIVEN Witteveen

It's Time to Reserve

Your special month for the 2014 "Congregational Connection." The cost is \$50.00 and used to help cover the cost of postage. Please contact the church office to reserve your month. Your dedication and donation is appreciated!

IT'S SPRING CLEAN UP TIME!

You are going through your closets, cleaning out the shed, garage and basement and not sure where to put all the items you have accumulated and no longer use? I have a solution for you! Bring them to First Congregational Church for our annual Rummage sale **August 8th & 9th** during Mint Festival weekend. If you would like to help out during the week before with set up or the Friday and Saturday of the sale please contact Barb Sherman at 517-242-1234 (cell), or 989-292-4029 (home).

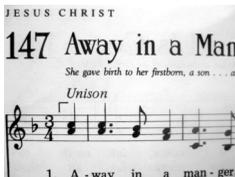


God Bless You!
 Barb Sherman

The Old Hymnal - digging deeper

Recently we were singing a familiar hymn and I began thinking of everything going on during our singing. There really is an awful lot to know, but not everyone studies the pages up close, so I want to share some of the parts that I have learned. I have put the full story with lots of photos online at <http://tinyurl.com/1990hymnal> to share.

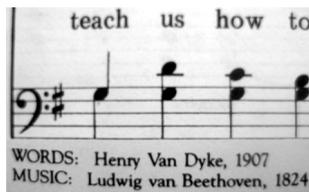
This book is a kind of family tree that has roots going way back and branches into many languages, cultures and the many seasons of life. That is why it has so many indexes to organize the collected songs and groups them into themes; for example, Christ's birth (#144-179) section. You may find yourself with a *deja vu* feeling because a few of the most popular tunes are re-used with new words; for example the tune known as *Bunessan*, #362, 543, 758. You might find the same tune at a worship service overseas in a language other than English. The name of the tune usually appears at bottom right, while opposite to it appears the maker of the tune (or hymnal it was taken from) and the writer of the lyrics.



Then up at the top of the hymnal in one corner is the theme it is grouped into. Frequently you'll see a Bible verse under the title, too. That ties into the message of the hymn. Other times the words for the hymn actually contain

phrases taken from the Bible. So by humming or singing you are literally praising God's name and proclaiming the word of God.

Take the time to glance down and read the year of the tune or the date of the words. It will give you a new appreciation for a familiar hymn, or it will help you to put an unfamiliar hymn into world history and events. It could lead you to the indexes to seek more of the same kind. The back stories to many favorites are in Robert Morgan's books like, *Then Sings My Soul*. Looking up close at the hymnal adds joy!



Bay Cliff Health Camp

Bay Cliff Health Camp is near Marquette, MI. The 180 special needs children who spend 7 weeks at the BC summer camp, are counseled by 130 professional staff. Some participants receive one on one counseling, others may be in a larger group working together. What happens at BC is life changing for the children. The Telephone Pioneers are dedicated to this cause. Jim Ellickson is a member and retiree of AT&T. Pioneers invite friends to participate for the week of work at the camp. Since it began the Pioneers have always invited others to participate and share their time and talents. And, in one week the volunteer participants are either sewing, chopping wood, repairing buildings, painting and decorating rooms, and the list goes on. All the time given to create a cleaner and safer environment for the, soon to arrive, children.

So, when one participates at Bay Cliff, you go in expecting that you might personally make a difference. And, God makes sure that difference does happen. It happens in you from giving. Would you like to know more? Ask any one of our 2014 crew... Richard and Judy Cramer, John and Linda Fitch, Dennis and Janet Scott, Larry Brown, Fred Olmsted, Dick Shoup, and Jim and Mary Ann Ellickson.



Notes from the Music Ministry Team: *Concert of Prayer & Praise*

The Lansing Chorale, FCC Silo Singers, and Hands of Harmony will lead worship by sharing their musical gifts on Sunday, May 11th at 11:00 a.m.

The Music Ministry Team will host a coffee hour reception following the service.



The Lansing Chorale consists of talented vocalists and musicians from the Greater Lansing Area, who desire to spread the gospel through their music. The Lansing Chorale is directed by Vic Hillbert, former Delta Township fire chief & member of the Faith for Today Quartet.

The Music Ministry Team invites you to contribute to a free-will offering to benefit the ministries of the Lansing Chorale and the FCC Appalachian Service Project team. If you wish to contribute, please make checks payable to FCC, earmarked for the May 11 freewill offering. Each group will receive 50% of donations.

Join us in a worship service of beautiful music, prayer, & praise!

The mission of the Music Ministry Team:

- ¹ to support and sustain a creative atmosphere that supports worship for each member;
- ² to encourage active participation for the purpose of worship;
- ³ to proactively develop musical worship experiences that are varied, meaningful, and personal.

The Music Ministry Team: Susan Kilmer (Chair); Chuck Graham; Nathan Sherman;
Rachael Short; Beth Webb; Guven Witteveen; Teresa Zuker.

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 revealeth them to us, renewing, comforting,
and inspiring the souls of men.*

Vision:

to CELEBRATE the glory of God through wor-
ship, service and stewardship,
to NURTURE our relationship with Christian love
and truth,
to SERVE others in our daily lives individually
and collectively as Christ's people; and to
WELCOME others to join in our journey.

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: [firstcongregationalchurchofstjohns](https://www.facebook.com/firstcongregationalchurchofstjohns)

Hours:

Monday-Wednesday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Tuesday-Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Closed Friday

Sunday Service 11:00 a.m.

Senior Minister: Matthew Olson

Director of Music Ministry: Rachael Short

Church Administrator Interim: Holly Graham

Office Staff: Guven Witteveen

Treasurer: Tom Webb

Financial Secretary: Paul Martis

Chancel Choir Director: Dr. Charles Graham

Hands of Harmony Director: Susan Kilmer

Custodians: Faith Hazard & Shirleyan Lake

The Board of Ministry

Moderator: Shirleyan Lake.....989-224-1870

Vice Moderator: Bill Rockwell.....517-214-4636

Board of Ministry Members:

Tom Doppke.....810-241-6794

Dave Elms.....989-227-2865

Tom Flynn.....989-992-8138

Rod Fuller.....989-224-3961

Jeramie Goetschy.....989-640-0010

Lois Graham.....989-224-8596

Melanie Lounds.....989-227-0932

Marilyn Newman.....517-331-3457

Barb Sherman.....517-242-1234

Board of Ministry Joys and Concerns

- ~Prayers for healing: Shirley Warstler, Shirley Breen, Ruth Theule, and Amanda.
- ~Outreach: monthly ministry through Loaves & Fishes in Lansing.
- ~Healing: prayerfully reviewing the report from the consultant, Rev. vanderBent.
- ~Annual Meeting: held on May 18th, 2014.
- ~Seeking new Board of Ministry members.
- ~Bylaws: draft of revised bylaws to be reviewed in September.
- ~Landscape Ministry: members needed to maintain the church grounds during the summer months.

