

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

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November



This Month's Highlights:
Cover: *Thanksgiving Community Dinner*
Pg. 2 *Rev. Olson*
Pg. 3 *An article from Sarah Gladstone*
Pg. 5 *Junior High Youth Group*
Pg. 7 *Member Profile*
Pg. 8 *Children & Youth News*
Pg. 9 *Schedules, Church Records and Dedication*
Pg.10 *Church News*
Pg.11 *Community News*

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



NOVEMBER 2012

The Congregational Connection...



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

Please plan to join with others in
our community for a
Community Thanksgiving Dinner

*This dinner is offered, free of charge, to members of our
community who anticipate being alone on Thanksgiving, who
are unable to prepare a meal or who are unable to travel to
spend the day with relatives. We also invite those who have
family members in the military.*

Thursday, November 22, 2012

Serving between
12:00 p.m. (noon) & 2:00 p.m.



First Congregational Church
100 Maple Street
St. Johns, Michigan
Please call (989) 224-2636
to register

Sponsored by

First Congregational Church, First United Methodist
Church, St. Joseph Catholic Church, Kiwanis Club of St.
Johns, the physicians and staff of Sparrow Clinton Hospi-
tal, S.J. H.S. National Honor Society, S.J.H.S. Good
Wins Club, St. Johns Rotary and others.

Mark wrote of Jesus, "And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place and there he prayed." (1:35).

Does Jesus' example encourage or dismay you? Does prayer seem beyond you? For many of us it does.

That is why, in our worship services and in study groups, we are making prayer our emphasis during these weeks. We approach the topic of prayer with the understanding that God desires us to pray and will meet us where we are and move us toward what we can be. You can start wherever you are. The county fair man selling charcoal caricatures is an artist. You don't need to be Claude Monet to be an artist any more than we need to pray like Jesus to be a person of prayer. Prayer can be difficult because:

Our goals for prayer reflect a desire, especially in public prayer, to be well spoken. No one, opening a gathering with prayer, or praying conversationally (that is, speaking prayers aloud in turn with others), wants to be tongue tied or awkward. I enjoy reading, and praying, well written prayers. At the same time, I find meaning in the spontaneous prayers that are less carefully constructed, but no less elegant; the prayers that people offer when they are praying to God and are conscious of little else. Prayer puts us on the frontier of the spiritual life. It has by nature a rustic quality. Good prayer is not necessarily beautiful. It is necessarily true. Paul writes, "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." (Romans 8:26). Sighs, groans, words, phrases; all these are part of the language of prayer and welcome.

It is easy to utter words that do not reflect the intent of the heart toward discipleship. Such words because they are not true to us, seem to vanish into the air with no echo in God. As Richard Foster puts it, "To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling to change, we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives." If we pray without any real intention to follow God, we are merely mouthing meaningless words. If that be the case with you, I offer you this advice; tell God the truth.

We fear. The prayers in the Book of Psalms often reflect mixed emotions about coming before the God who is always truthful. The truth can be frightening. This is especially so when that truth is about ourselves. Most of us are not completely who were wishing we were or who we seem to be. In the words and silences of prayer we feel vulnerable and, perhaps, unlovable. In those moments we remember Jesus when he said that he did not come to judge the world, but to save it. (John 12:47)

We resist being obedient to God. One of the most astonishing aspects of Jesus prayers is that he never concluded by saying, "If it be your will". Nor did the prophets or apostles when praying. They believed that they knew the will of God, and were praying that the will of God might be done. We echo that prayer on Sunday when we pray "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." These prayers are prayers of obedience, not discernment.

We can only pray them with integrity when we are willing to be obedient. Prayer is a learning process. Monet started out selling charcoal caricatures. Then he went to art school. Before he produced "Water Lilies" he painted a lot of poor canvases. Each one of those failures is worth a fortune today because they are "a Monet", and expression of his art, an early experiment. Prayer is like that. It is experimental and expressive. Any prayer is a good prayer, as long as it is truly yours.

COMMUNITY NEWS

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
401 East Grand River Avenue
LAINGSBURG, MI
ANNUAL ELECTION DAY
TURKEY DINNER.

Tuesday, November 6th,
 5:00 p.m. to ? Adults
 \$9.00 with a family rate
 available.



This is a reminder that the congregation is invited to **THE WHEEL INN**, St. Johns, on Saturdays and Sundays. Be sure to 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.

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
Sr. Minister: Rev. Matthew Olson

Moderator: Molly Minnick
Vice Moderator: Lois Graham
Treasurer: Ruth Nihart
Board of Ministry Members:
 David Elms, Tom French, Rod Fuller, Bill
 Kushmaul, Gary Larsen, Eugene Livingston,
 Melanie Lounds, Dr. Keith Mino, Jr., Charlotte
 Shoup

CHURCH STAFF

Church Administrator: Susan Larsen
Financial Secretary: Paul Martis
Chancel Choir Director: Dr. Charles Graham
Hands of Harmony Director: Susan Kilmer
Director of Music Ministry: Rachael Short

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.

First Congregational Church

100 Maple Street
 St. Johns, MI 48879
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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.

**2013
“CONGREGATIONAL
CONNECTION”**

Well 2013 is just around the corner and we are looking for sponsors for the church newsletter. It's time to reserve your special month of the “**CONGREGATIONAL CONNECTION**” for the upcoming church year. The cost is \$50.00 and is used to help cover the cost of postage. We have ten months available for your special anniversary, birthday, graduation, or “just because”. Please contact the church office at 224-2636 to reserve your month.

CHRISTMAS DECORATING

Is your group, Ministry Team or family interested in **DECORATING THE SANCTUARY** for the Advent Season? We have all the trees, lights and other decorations you will need. Please contact the church office at 224-2636 if you are interested. We would like the church decorated by the first Sunday of Advent, December 2nd.



JERRY, STACIE, BECCA AND BUDDY STEVENS would like to thank the congregation for the outpouring of love and support they received during Buddy's recent hospitalization. They felt truly blessed with all of the prayers, e-mails, meals and visits. Buddy is making a remarkable recovery.

**LINDA SCOTT
WOMENS GROUP**

Ladies, you are invited to attend the monthly meeting of “Linda Scott” on Tuesday, November 20th. You will meet at 12:30 p.m. at Big Boy. Please rsvp to Joann Martis at 224-4165.



EXTREME COUPONING

Jeramie Goetschy, who attends our church, is interested in collecting coupons for the Basic Needs Center. If everyone would bring in their unwanted coupons he could help the center stock their shelves. “If we work together we can help people in St. Johns with out recognition from the people but through God.” You can drop your coupons off in the front office. For more information contact Jeramie at 989-640-0010.



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, **November 18th.** Contact John Fitch at 224-3565, or any Missions Team member for more information.



A Simple Truth

Hallelujah!

*I give thanks to GOD with everything I've got—
Wherever good people gather, and in the congregation.*

*GOD'S works are so great, worth
A lifetime of study—endless enjoyment!*

*Splendor and beauty mark his craft;
His generosity never gives out.*

*His miracles are his memorial—
This GOD of Grace, this GOD of Love.*

*He gave food to those who fear him,
He remembered to keep his ancient promise.*

*He proved to his people that he could do what he said:
Hand them the nations on a platter—a gift!*

*He manufactures truth and justice;
All his products are guaranteed to last—*

*Never out-of-date, never obsolete, rust-proof.
All that he makes and does is honest and true:*

*He paid the ransom for his people,
He ordered his Covenant kept forever.*

*He's so personal and holy, worthy of our respect.
The good life begins in the fear of GOD—*

*Do that and you'll know the blessing of GOD.
His Hallelujah lasts forever!*

~Psalm 111 (Message)

There is something intriguing about this text when you look at it in its Hebrew form. It's an acrostic. Meaning that the first letter of each line of this Psalm follows the last in alphabetical order. Besides signifying that this Psalm is a hymn, it tells us that this particular Psalm had a practical purpose. It was a learning tool! Songs like this were used to teach young scribes their alphabet and good composition. And this particular hymn, utter praise to God from A-Z. When teaching children the alphabet, we sing to them their “ABC's”. When teaching them how to count we sing, “Two little monkeys jumping on a bed...”. Although the training of ancient scribes is not quite the same as teaching our children to count... we are all still familiar with the use of song as a teaching tool.

Psalm 111, is a Psalm of Orientation. This means that these psalms are statements that describe a happy and blessed state. They speak in confidence about the Lord's presence in our

A Simple Truth” from Sarah Gladstone cont.

life and they speak of having faith in the enduring nature of our God. The author of this Psalm did not just praise God for the life that he blessed His people with, but rather the author wrote a psalm that called upon thousands of years of God’s enduring faithfulness. Verse four praises God for sparing their children in the Passover. Verse five, gives thanks for God nourishing His people in the desert. Verse nine, mentions the Sinai Covenant. Verses two, seven, and nine recalls the conquests of Joshua. And Verse nine again, praises God for the Exodus deliverance. This Psalm, from beginning to end is a call to remember what God has provided, and to embrace confidence that He will remain faithful.

The only problem within this Psalm, is that, perhaps... there is no problem. Many of us attribute the Psalms to David’s authorship. Even though Psalm 111 unlikely to have been written by David’s hand, we find it among his other writings. There is a reason why we call David, “a man after God’s own heart”. That is because of his humanness. He was a man of great and profound faith, but he was a broken man as well. And perhaps it is in here that we find the problem within Psalm 111. In the opening line, it states that this Hymn is written for a community and to be used among a community. And when we live in community, when we minister to community, when are we praising God from A to Z? We find ourselves in some really crap situations. What do we do then? We take our anger and frustrations out on community. We raise our voice to God. In those moments when we do not feel happy and blessed, where does our faith go? Do we remember the God of the covenant? The God that fed His people in the desert?

In those moments of faithlessness, God still shows up! That is what this Psalm truly addresses. When we live and serve in community, we find ourselves in trying situations. But we must know that God is already at work redeeming them, as he has been throughout history. Psalm 111 is a hymn used to teach scribes the alphabet... but its lyrics, its poetry, reveals a simple and enduring truth: “He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever- holy and awesome is his name.” (Psalm 111:9)

Submitted by Sarah Gladstone

Lay Minister

Sarah is the daughter of Bob and Sue Gladstone, long time members of our congregation. Sarah graduated in June with a Master’s Degree in Theological Studies from Fuller Theological University in California.

NOVEMBER SIGN UP SCHEDULES

<u>Altar Flowers</u>	<u>Nursery Care</u>	<u>Fellowship Hour</u>	<u>4th Sunday Supper Host/Hostess</u>
4 Wilbur & Leola Thurston	4 Hannah VanValkenburg	4 *	Nov. 25 *
11 Flynn Family	11 Hannah VanValkenburg	11 *	Dec. 23 *
18 Paul Martis Family	18 Stacie Stevens	18 Sr. High Youth	Jan. 27*
25 *	25 Stacie Stevens	25 Fourth Sunday Supper	Feb. 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

Weddings:

Ryan Walsh & Jennifer Burneister, October 20, 2012
 Robert Kushmaul and Colleen Connolly , October 27, 2012



Deaths:

Jeanne Vail Rand, October 5, 2012



THE NOVEMBER DEDICATION



The Congregational Connection for this month is dedicated in honor of all Veterans of our Military Branches

It is donated by Neil Barnhart

Children and Youth News

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Damion Gehres
- 6 Spencer Howell
- 7 Grace Palmer
- 14 Abigail Schuelke
- 23 Garrett Smith



In our Sunday School program this month we will be asking "What is God's loving plan for the world?" We will learn that you can Thank God, learn Bible passages in Genesis and learn more about Creation, Noah, Abraham and Isaac. Come and join our Sunday school program at any time. Classes meet at 10:00 a.m. for age 4 through 5th grade. Junior and Senior High Youth groups also meet at 10:00 a.m.



Sunday, Dec. 9th, 11:00am

Need Volunteers: Acting, Music, Costumes and Props, Publicity

Practices Sunday evenings 6:30-7:30pm
 starting Nov. 4th
 (continuing every Sunday evening through Dec. 2nd).

Thank you for your consideration.
 Gretchen Olson & Sam Beagle,
 Directors



JR. HIGH P.F.

The year is off to a great start ~ this is a fantastic group of youth and their enthusiasm is contagious! Here are a few highlights:

PRAYER SERIES

In mid-October, our group started a series of discussions on prayer. These will last until Thanksgiving and they coincide with the sermon series that Matt is conducting. In the coming weeks, our group will be talking about such things as:

- How do I pray? - The Lord's Prayer (*and what the heck does it all mean, anyway?*)
- What are the different ways that Christians pray?
- Why does God sometimes answer our prayers with "no"?

In addition, each week the youth are given an "assignment" in which they are asked to offer a daily prayer on specific topic. The purpose of this is to help them get in the habit of praying and to become more comfortable in talking—and listening—to God. The first week focused on gratitude. As the weeks progress, the topics will become increasingly challenging. We are very excited about this series and look forward to sharing some interesting discussions together. Ask a Jr. High P.Fer about it!

SERVICE PROJECT

The Jr. High PF were greeters and served refreshments at the recent *Music for a Mission* concert at FCC. Money raised benefitted CROP Walk. Thanks to the Music Ministry Team for including us in this great event!

CHRISTIAN CONCERT

A terrific time was had by the 9 students and 5 adults who attended the Francesca Battistelli concert at Great Lakes Christian College on October 18th. This was a new experience for many of us and the music and messages were very inspiring! We hope to attend similar events in the future.

COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING DINNER

Our group will be assisting with this dinner as our November service project. If you don't have plans for Thanksgiving, consider enjoying a great meal with all the fixings at FCC. Everyone is welcome!

T-SHIRTS

If you see young people in church or the community wearing bright orange t-shirts, that's the Jr. High PF! The front says, "Love God, Make Peace, Work Hard" and on the back is our theme for the year, "We are One." We'll be wearing them for our service projects and other events.

All youth in grades 6 - 8 are welcome to join us at 10:00 on Sunday mornings, downstairs in the room across from the Nursery. Thank you to the congregation for its continued support of the Jr. High PF!
 Barb Sherman & Jennifer Beagle, Co-Leaders

CROP WALK A SUCCESS!

Thank you to everyone for once again coming to the aid of those in need. We collected 60 coats that the **BASIC NEEDS CENTER** picked up and will deliver in their annual coat drive. We also had several new hats and mittens donated. We are sure this will help many people who would not otherwise have a coat to wear to keep them warm.

Your Mission Ministry Team: John Fitch, Sue Neuder, Sue Gladstone, Karen Pontius and Barb Sherman

DOUBLETS, ETC., a group of singles and couples, will meet on Sunday, November 4th, at 4 p.m. at the church. An evening of candy-making is planned, with the sale proceeds to be used for donations or Christmas gifting. A soup supper will be furnished. Please come and join in the fun and fellowship. Questions? Call Dick and Charlotte Shoup at 224-6986 or Dennis and Janet Scott at 224-2601.

ANNUAL SHOTGUN, pistol, and rifle shoot at Sleepy Hollow Conservation Club on Mead Road, Sunday, November 4th, at 2:00 p.m. Try your luck at those flying clay pigeons, sight in your deer rifle, see how fast and accurate you are on a pistol course of fire. Any questions call John Fitch at 989-224-3565 or ford_racer@hotmail.com.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE LIVINGSTON FAMILY; Eugene, Carole, Andrew and Kate, for hosting our annual hay ride on Sunday, October 7th. It was a perfect night for the fifty-one of us who gathered for fun, fellowship and great food. Thanks also to **John, Amy and Trisha Cheeney** for out doing themselves with the refreshments, fire pit pizzas and desserts! Thanks to everyone!

Thank you to everyone who gave me donations in person and at the coffee hour for the CROP Walk. I raised \$150 for the St Johns CROP Hunger Walk. The walk was on Sunday October 7th. There were 57 people representing 8 churches, Clinton Co. Meals on Wheels, and the Kiwanis Club. About \$3,000 was collected on walk day, and additional funds are being collected. Thank you to everyone who supported the walk to raise money to fight hunger around the world and in St Johns. Together we make a difference!

Submitted by Susan Kilmer,

MUSIC WITH A MISSION CONCERT

The Music Ministry Team hosted a concert on Sunday, October 14th, to benefit the St. Johns CROP Hunger Walk. About 50 people attended the afternoon concert featuring the wonderful talents of The Sheppardsville Team, Pat and Bill Trommater, and Beth and Tom Webb. In addition to performing some great music, some of which they wrote themselves, The Sheppardsville Team also lead some hymn singing. All of the music was very uplifting and a great opportunity to celebrate God's love through music. A free will offering was collected, raising over \$300 for the CROP Hunger Walks. Thank you to everyone who attended the concert and a special thank you to all the talented musicians.

Submitted by the Music Ministry

18TH ATTIC TREASURE SALE FOR 2013

Dates reserved: April 16-17

Set up: April 13-14-15

Please consider helping at the sale next year!

The Attic Treasure Ministry Team continues. Joann Martis will coordinate (with help). Paul Martis will guide the storage of items in our annex building. Several boxes of older items have already been donated.

We ask that items be packed in closed boxes for storage and stacking with contents labeled on the outside of the box. All unsold items from the 2012 sale were sold by the youth group, so we are starting out fresh for 2013. Please begin setting aside your unneeded items now for this popular all church fund raiser. Proceeds go to the General Fund. For more information call Paul or Joann Martis at 224-4165.

SPREAD THE LIGHT

In lieu of poinsettias for Christmas this year and in the spirit of the season of giving, we will be offering an opportunity to honor deceased or living family and friends with monetary donations. This donation will be recognized by putting a lighted votive candle in the front of the sanctuary. Also on Christmas Eve a dedication will be placed in the bulletin as it has been in the past. With the continuing economic struggles in the community, we feel this is a way to bless others as we have been blessed. Any monetary amount is welcome and each may have up to three dedications on Christmas Eve. This year donations will benefit The Basic Needs Center to assist them in paying their operating expenses. The Altar Ministry Team will still be placing some poinsettias on the altar for Christmas Eve.

Thank you, The Altar Ministry Team



Robert and Marsha Dedyne are the "Member Profile" for this month. Robert was born in Grand Ledge, MI, lived in Williamston until the age of 15, then moved to St. Johns, where his parents owned Dedyne Grocery for 20 years. Marsha was born in Detroit, MI, moved to Cadillac at age 5, then moved to St. Johns at the age of 7. They have three children Wayne (Rhonda), Jim (Heather) and Chris. They have seven grandchildren and 1 great grandson. Robert has been in the insurance business for 54 years. He started selling life insurance at the age of 19 and is still working. Marsha worked for Teresa Merrill High School until 1976 and then went to work for Dedyne Insurance, working there until 2002 when she retired. One of their best loves is a cottage they built on Lake Mitchell in Cadillac, MI. It is there they have had 30 years of fishing, boating, swimming and enjoying life with family and friends. They both enjoy skiing, going to basketball games, baseball games and watching the Tigers and Spartans. Marsha is a grandmother for the Oakview Elementary 3rd grade class. Their daughter, Chris, was married in this church in 1990. They have been members here for 22 years. Wow! What a great and very busy couple.