



November 2013

The Congregational Connection...

Our connection to the family and friends of the First Congregational Church

What we've been up to...

This has been an exciting new year for our Jr. High Youth Group. The leaders Patti Mayes, Stacie Stevens and Barb Sherman attended the Ladies Retreat at Camp Barakel. Everyone enjoyed getting to know one another better and praying together. Our group held a short prayer gathering and then went to see a movie.

Last month the Jr. High P.F. hosted the fourth Sunday Supper with a Halloween theme. And some of our group members will be going to a teen retreat the first weekend in November.

We have been making pumpkins that will be used throughout the Church for decorations. They will be used for the Community Thanksgiving Dinner and then given away to those who attend the dinner.

With Blessings
Patti, Stacie, Barb



Hands of Harmony

– On the move!

The Hands of Harmony bell choir attended a bell festival in Eaton Rapids on October 26th. We played two pieces of music with several other choirs and attended classes in ringing techniques. The bell choir has also been invited to participate in the annual "Holiday Music Spectacular" at the Wilson Center on Friday December 6th. This annual holiday concert raises money for the restoration of the Wilson Center for future concerts and events. In March, the choir is also planning to attend a festival in Lansing known as "Spring Ring." This all day event is attended by bell choirs from around the state and involves playing 6 pieces of music, attending classes, and performing a final concert at the end of the day. More details on Spring Ring will be shared in upcoming newsletters.



What are you
Thankful for?

HOW TO BE PART OF A CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The second in a Series on the identity of the church, church membership in scripture, our church membership practices, and how we can more completely be God's church.

INTRODUCTION

As discussed in last month's article; (1) the church is a people called by God to be an outpost of his heavenly kingdom on earth. (2) Church membership is evident in the New Testament, and (3) early Christians, as well as later Congregationalists, considered membership in the church very important in walking with Christ. This month we consider our church membership practices as we strive to live out the ideas of "A Vision for First Congregational Church of St. Johns," the document we adopted as a congregation at the congregational meeting of June 30th, 2013.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IN OUR BY-LAWS

The church is united in its covenant.¹ Speaking of our forbearers one authority writes, *"In order for Christians to walk together in the freedom of this higher kind of discipline the Savoy divines knew that they must live under some common agreement among themselves, and between themselves and Christ. Thus they appropriated for Congregationalism the great Christian doctrine of the Covenant relationship—the relationship of men bound together not by law, but freely in the mutual agreement of love—and enthroned it at the very heart of their Congregational Way."*²

Our Church Covenant captures the relational nature of being Christ's church. It reads as follows.

*We are united in striving to know the Will of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures, and in our purpose to walk in the ways of the Lord, known or to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the Church of Christ to proclaim the Gospel to all humankind, exalting the worship of the one true God and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, the reign of peace and the realization of human brotherhood. Depending, as did our forbearers, upon the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, we work and pray for the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God and look with faith for the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting.*³

Our By-Laws also describe some of the ways in which members are to live out their relationships in the body of Christ, thereby giving shape to community life in the covenant.

¹ Nature of A Covenant: God made a covenant with Abraham, Moses, and through Jesus, with the church. The word means "pact" or "agreement." It is not an agreement between equals, but between a Lord, God, and God's subject people. It is binding on both parties. Christians can be confident in God's faithfulness. Through Jesus, the seed of Abraham, we have become members of a covenant people (Galatians 3:6-9). The marriage vow is another example of covenant. It is clear that God's plan for his people is that they belong to a local covenant community of faith. This is for our own protection and maturation, and for the good of others.

² Arthur Rouner, "The Congregational Way of Life", p. 30.

³ By-Laws, Article IV. B.



“Members are expected to be faithful in all spiritual duties essential to the Christian life; to attend services of worship and celebrations of the Lord’s Supper, tithing systematically in support of church ministries and pray for the church and its ministers. Each member is expected to participate in church ministries according to the skills, talents, and spiritual gifts God has bestowed upon them, and to strive diligently to win others to Christ and to our church.”

Next time: We have high aspirations for church membership. How well do our membership practices match up with these aspirations?

Sunday School Renamed... Faith Adventure

The Sunday School leaders reached this decision for a number of reasons. Mainly, Sunday School is not school and school has a negative connotation for kids. Matt Olson described the origins of Sunday School in a recent meeting with the Youth Leaders. “Sunday School began with D.L. Moody (Congregationalist) and other folks involved in urban ministry. At the time it had a clear people-group in mind: children from the “wrong side of the tracks.” Marginalized children were the heart of the first Sunday School movement. The initial focus was not to meet the consumer needs of the primly dressed children of the town luminaries, but for kids who had little hope for a future outside of poverty or prison.” These were children whose immigrant parents worked long hours, who wandered the streets, and did not go to school because they did not speak English. So on Sundays, the church offered English classes and taught the students Bible stories.

Just as D.L. Moody was a visionary meeting the needs of immigrant children, we see ourselves as leaders following God’s call to minister to the spiritual needs of children and families in St. Johns. A large percent of families in our community do not attend church, are materially focused and spiritually impoverished. To reach these children we have started building relationships with them through our monthly Community Fun Nights. Next we would like to invite them to join us on a Faith Adventure on Sundays. In this adventure our goal is to have them learn about Jesus, love Jesus and follow Jesus. We also plan on having quarterly parent meetings to introduce them to what their children are learning in Faith Adventure.

We asked that you pray for this outreach ministry of our church. Join in building loving relationships with the children by attending Community Fun Night and learn the names of two or three children, enjoy their company, show them love, and get acquainted so they feel known. Children need to feel enjoyed, loved, and understood. During the week send them a card, email or text them. Pray for them by name. Make them feel part of a larger family.



Need Something to Read?

Check out *The Congregationalist* located on the literature rack in the back of the sanctuary. "Mission Mazahua Transforms Lives" (p. 26: we've sent volunteers here!) Also, take a look at, "A Congregationalist's Journey" (p. 36).

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.

We want to know when you were here...

New Attendance Registration Forms are at the end of each pew. Please sign in every Sunday morning, and pass down the row. This will help keep our records of attendance up to date.

Have you picked one up yet?

Membership surveys are now available to be picked up at the church. Please fill one out soon! Information is used to update church records.

Community Fun Night

**Friday November 22nd
6:30-9 p.m.**

**First Congregational Church
More information to come later.**

**Web Site: www.fccsj.com
Facebook: [firstcongregationalchurchofst.johns](https://www.facebook.com/firstcongregationalchurchofst.johns)**

Air Conditioning Update

The total estimated cost of this project is \$50,000.00. With the matching funds we now have approximately \$25,719.00, as of November, 2013. We will continually keep you updated on our fund raising progress for this church improvement.

Cares and Concerns

Volunteer needed to continue Cares and Concerns. Duties include mailing get well and sympathy cards. For more information, please call Bonnie Wickerham at 989-227-5635.

Third Sunday Throw Down

Third Sunday Throw Down is Sunday November 17th. Clean clothing and food items are donated to the "Basic Needs Center" in St. Johns. Empty baskets are located in the rear of the sanctuary. Contact John Fitch for more information at 989-224-3565.

Devotion with Motion

Every Sunday 12:30-1:00 p.m.
Meets in the sanctuary.



Want to Lead?

We are looking for leaders & greeters for our Children in Worship and Follow Me programs. Both programs meet after the Children's Story each Sunday. Interested in helping with Children in Worship? Please contact Ellen Doppke at 810-287-3682. Contact Patti Mayes at 989-307-9026 for Follow Me.

Staying Connected

Jane Knight
Grace Haven Assisted Living
1507 Glastonbury Drive
St. Johns, MI 48879

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

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

Save the Date

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

Linda Scott Luncheon

This month's Linda Scott Luncheon will be held at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday November 19th, at the Road House. Those interested should contact Joann Martis at 989-224-4165.

Deadline Reminder

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

Calling All Music Lovers!

The Chancel Choir and Hands of Harmony Bell Choir are both back in full swing. Participating in choir is a fun way to worship God through music. The Chancel Choir is looking for a few more singers and the Bell Choir needs one more ringer. Please contact Chuck Graham (989-224-8596) for the Chancel Choir, and Susan Kilmer (989-224-2950) for the Bell Choir.

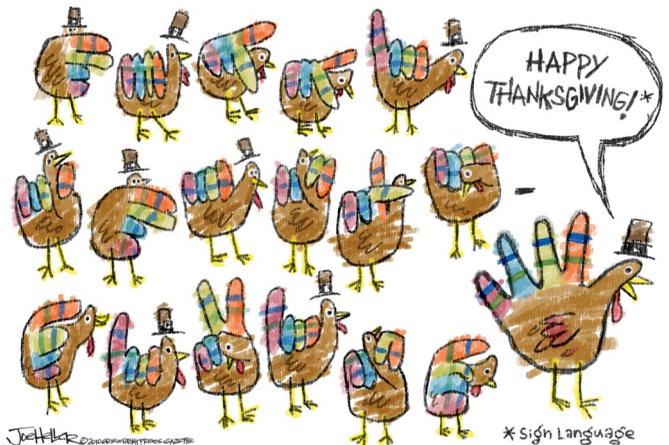
Plan on Joining us..

Projections of God will resume January 2014 with the short series, "Who is This Jesus: Is He Risen?" Sunday evening date and time to be determined.

~Rod Fuller & Howard Sousley

Hungry?

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.



Brain Buster

What was the main course at the first Thanksgiving dinner in 1621?

- A) Turkey
- B) Mammoth
- C) Fish
- D) Venison

(D) Venison

Fun Fact

The first Thanksgiving dinner was celebrated for three days!

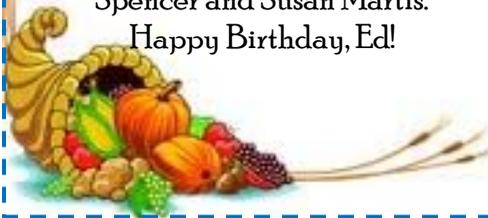
Ushers

We are looking for three volunteers to usher on the first or third Sundays of the month. Interested? Contact Paul Martis at 989-224-4165.

Altar Flowers

Sign up on the bulletin board just outside Wilcox Hall to provide flowers for a Sunday service. Feel free to contact the church office if you are unable to check the list.

This month's newsletter is dedicated in celebration of the 80th birthday of Edward Martis, on November 16th and given by his family: Suzanne Martis and Spencer and Susan Martis.
Happy Birthday, Ed!



Thanksgiving Day Dinner Bell

Starting early November we will invite people to sign up for noon or 2 p.m. dinner. Help us spread the word around town. Whether you are alone or with loved ones, come share a meal with the community on 11/28. Mention it to others you know! There's no cost.

Have questions? Talk to one of the planners from FCC: Nancy Baker, Lois Graham, Gretchen or Matt Olson, Lesley Phillip & Guven Witteveen.

Helping Hands Needed

"Friendly Service Ministry Team" needs on call help! We are seeking able-bodied women and men to help with set-up and clean-up as we continue to serve meals following funerals or memorial services.

The long time members of this team have aged and feel the need for more help so they can continue this valuable service to our members.

For more information, please call Joann Martis at 989-224-4165.

State Meeting

Congregationalism is alive and well. The annual meeting of churches was hosted in Suttons Bay on October 18-19, going back to the two day format of the past allowed more time for fellowship and educational presentations. The Jonah Powell Quartet got toes tapping after the Friday night dinner. And Saturday morning the business meeting was followed by six speakers on topics of Social Justice, online communication, knowing your church's culture, judging how to handle sensitive personal information, mission trips among strangers, and fostering spiritual friendships. One of the goals for next October is to get more church members to partake in the learning, worshiping and leadership of the association in order to support each other's bodies of believers. See the comments and questions page for presenters at: <http://tinyurl.com/mcccc2013> or talk to Guven Witteveen, who attended.



Notes from the Music Ministry Team:

The Art of Worship

I'm reading a book by Greg Scheer, called *The Art of Worship* (2006). Scheer, a music director and church music composer advocates inclusive, creative musical worship that "puts the Christian faith on the tongues of the people, letting it work its way down to the soul." (p55) Recently, I was approached immediately after worship by a woman who was very excited about the words of the Prayer Hymn (#507 *I Then Shall Live*). She asked for a copy of the music & we poured over the words:

(verse 1) *I then shall live as one who's been forgiven;
I'll walk with joy to know my debts are paid.
I know my name is clear before my Father;
I am his child, and I am not afraid.
So greatly pardoned, I'll forgive another;
The law of love I gladly will obey.*

These are not new ideas to her, but this was a sacred moment: she sang words of faith and promise and they connected powerfully with her soul. I know of at least one other occasion, when we spent weeks learning the song "*Jesus, Draw Me Ever Nearer*" and much later I learned that one person put the music on her refrigerator, where she would connect with those words of faith throughout the week. I am excited and grateful to know that our worship music awakens our souls, deepens our faith, and blends into the worship of our daily lives!

Arthur Rouner, Jr. writes in *The Congregational Way of Life* (1972) that contemporary Christians are in some ways separated from God like the Israelites of I Samuel 3: "it can be said just as truly of the Christian Church today that 'the Word of the Lord is rare' in *these* days; and among *us* 'there is no frequent vision.'" (p107) I believe that if the music of our worship puts the Christian faith on our tongues and it works its way down to our souls, this is one way that we can engage with the Word of the Lord and catch a glimpse of His vision. Please share with each other, and with me, when your soul resonates with the Word through music. I would love to celebrate that with you.

Blessings!

~ Rachael Short

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.*

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

Telephone: 989-224-2636

Fax: 989-224-8306

E-Mail: fccsj@4wbi.net

Web Site: www.fccsj.com

Facebook: 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.

*It is not Happy people who are
Thankful.
It is Thankful people who are
Happy.*

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.....989-224-9372

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 Joys and Concerns

-Pray for healing, forgiveness and love for the members
of our church.

-Continued support and prayers for our budget process.

-Joys come from our small groups, the Men's Bible
Study, Projections of God film series, and the "Not a
Fan" book study.

- "Walk by Faith and not by sight"

Jesus sacrificed his life so that we may live. To be a
follower of Christ Jesus and not a fan requires more
than an hour on Sunday morning. Jesus wants us
24/7/365. Thank you for your continued prayers and
support.