

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.*

Senior Minister: Matthew Olson
Director of Music Ministry: Rachael Short
Church Administrator: Sandy Kemp
Office Staff: Guven Witteveen
Treasurer: Tom Webb
Financial Secretary: Paul Martis
Hands of Harmony Director: Susan Kilmer
Custodians: Faith Hazard & Shirleyn Lake

VISION:

to CELEBRATE the glory of God through
worship, 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.

THE BOARD OF MINISTRY

Moderator: Bill Rockwell.....517-214-4636
Vice Moderator: Barb Sherman.....517-242-1234

Board of Ministry Members

Tom Doppke.....810-241-6794
 Dave Elms.....989-227-2865
 Rod Fuller.....989-224-3961
 Lois Graham.....989-224-8596
 Sid Lounds.....989-640-6981
 Marilyn Newman.....517-331-3457
 Jan Myers.....989-682-4194
 Larry Salters.....989-834-5166



First Congregational Church

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E-Mail: fccsj@4wbi.net
Web Site: www.fccsj.com
Facebook:

**BOARD OF MINISTRY
 JOYS AND CONCERNS**

Support the Board in prayer as we seek
 God's will for our congregation.

Pray for God's direction as you seek how
 you may participate in our 2015 Stewardship
 Campaign.

NOVEMBER 2014

The Congregational Connection...

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



ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT

Study groups are meeting each week:

Sunday 7 p.m.

Tuesday 12 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Each is a stand-alone study, so you will not be lost if you don't attend every week.

This month's newsletter is supported by the family of Lawrence (Larry) Heibeck in honor of his 100th birthday on November 9.

COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING DINNER

Our 5th Annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner will be held on Thursday, November 27. Seating times are noon and 2:00 p.m.

This is a community event, not limited to those who are alone or in need, but open to all who wish to celebrate in coming together, people of all ages and circumstances.

There is no cost because of many community supporters, but a free-will donation will be accepted.

The menu includes traditional turkey, mashed potatoes and stuffing, vegetables, and pie for dessert.

We suggest that you contact the church office by November 24 (989-224-2636) or email fccsj@4wbi.net so that we can register your preferred choice of dining time so that we can arrange seating for the required number attending.



Are you worth Satan's time?

In big, important places there are big, important people with praiseworthy goals. These Christians want to get God's work done. They have strong egos, and are bright and well positioned; the success of the Kingdom of Heaven depends on them. Because God's success is so important to them they are seduced, from time to time, by the temptation to be relevant, powerful, or spectacular. Able to quote scripture and acute theologian, Satan offers them this success tool kit for a price; accrue power for yourself and use that power, rather than trust in the power of God. These ambitious Christians think that they can take what the devil is selling and use it to be 'effective' without getting trapped by the devil himself. Their need to feel that they 'count' overwhelms the wisdom that says: "if you play in the mud you're going to get dirty."

In not so important small towns like this one, populated by good and not so important people like us, few have the sense that we could ever work an important good even if we wanted too. We know we don't have much influence and we keep our ambitions modest; scaled down as befits folks like us. Down deep we think of ourselves as irrelevant, powerless, and utterly mundane, as people in whom Satan would not have the slightest interest. It seems absurd that the devil should attend to us; what can we do for him? Even if he were to turn us to his work, we don't have the potential for magnificent evil any more than we have it in us to be stunningly good.

For us, then, the temptation is not to be relevant, powerful, and spectacular; far from it. Our temptation is to consider ourselves helpless, harmless, and therefore not responsible. We point to others to take the lead and move the kingdom of God in the world. Let the people in the cities do it! Let the big churches do it! Let the young people do it! Let the people with money deal with that! Let the smart ones, religious ones, thoughtful ones, healthy ones take that on. We are merely small time people in a little, struggling church. Why look at us?

Evil does look at us. "Somebody ought to..." is exactly what Satan, who opposes all action to the good, longs to hear. He is extremely pleased when we wait for someone else to make the first move, delighted when we consider God's work somebody else's. He has achieved his purpose when we look to ourselves, and our own resources, and say, "we could never do that!"

Author Parker Palmer calls this "The temptation to be inadequate." He points out that, in order to resist the devil, "right action does not require us to be relevant, powerful, or spectacular. Right action requires only that we respond faithfully..."

Can we do that? Can we do what is right, faithfully following the Scripture, without worrying about results? Can we operate on a foundation of spiritual integrity in Christ rather than on our own sense of power? Can we turn our eyes to Christ rather than looking to see if we are being a success or failure?

—Matt

Notes from the Music Ministry Team: *Discerning Note By Note*

Magic of Music Tour (Sunday, Oct. 5) – Seven ladies from FCC visited two assisted living homes in Dewitt, sharing music and conversation with approximately 25 residents and family members. We had a wonderful time and we think they did, too! We're planning another tour late in the year, so please consider joining us! Remember that music is secondary to the mission. If God's love is in your heart, and you feel called to share it with others, then we want you on the tour!

Area V Handbell Workshop (Saturday, Oct. 18) – Three members of the Hands of Harmony Bell Choir joined choir members from around the state for a day of study and camaraderie in ministry. Now we look forward to a festival in Eaton Rapids (Saturday, Nov. 15) and to our Christmas Eve service.

Lift Up Your Hearts – A digital version of this new hymnal was purchased with monies given in loving memory of Wilber Thurston. Let our hearts, lifted in worship and song, honor all of God's gifts poured out, that we may receive fully and share freely.

With a Voice of Singing (Sunday, Nov. 2) – Plymouth Congregational Church celebrated their 150th anniversary with a celebratory concert focusing on the role of church choirs in congregational worship. Our FCC Chancel Choir was among several choirs invited to participate. Along with sharing gifts of choral music, a freewill offering was collected to support Heifer International.

Our process of discernment continues, as does God's work in and through us. Please pray for us.
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: Beth Webb (Chair); Chuck Graham; Peter Olson; Susan Kilmer
Rachael Short; Guven Witteveen; Teresa Zuker

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

Marjorie Blizzard
Grace Haven Assisted Living
1507 Glastonbury Drive
St. Johns, MI 48879

PICK ONE UP TODAY!

The November/December edition of the Upper Room is now available in large print. You can find copies in the literature racks.

**LOST BUT NOW IS FOUND**

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

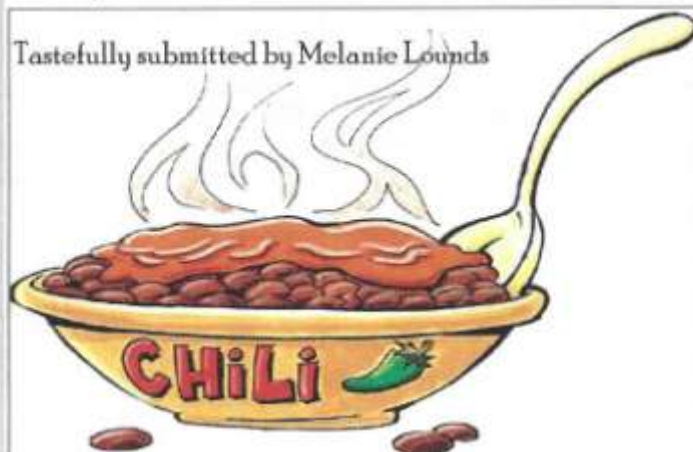
Chili-ing Out with Faith Adventure

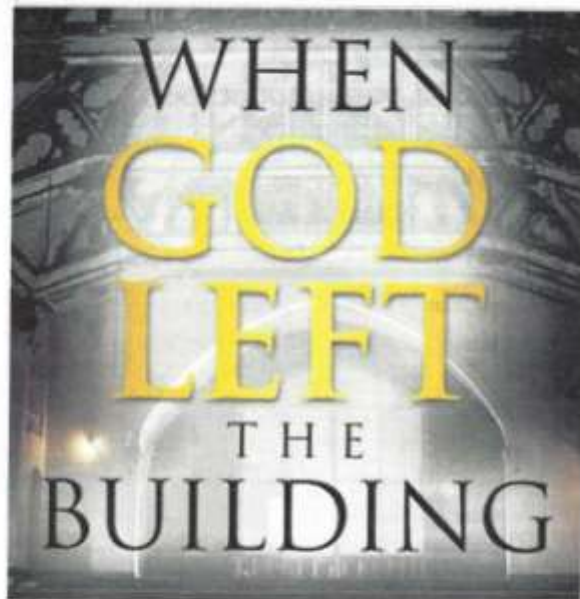
November 16th, a perfect time to create, taste, and warm up with chili! The junior and senior high Faith Adventure group needs your culinary talents. Cook up a crockpot of your favorite chili recipe and enter the 2nd Annual Chili Cook Off! Donations will provide the youth with funding for service projects, fellowship, and Christian exploration at the national conference and around mid-Michigan too.

Current chili entries: We have a vegetarian chili (which took first place last year by one vote), a meat chili, and a hot chili. We suggest you cook up your favorite bean chili, venison chili, mix-n-match chili, surprise chili, grandpa's chili, or secret recipe chili and call Melanie Lounds (517-388-1936) to enter it in the very informal and very friendly contest.

For lovers of food, we hope to fill your bellies and satisfy your taste buds with a lip-smacking adventure sure to take your pallet places you only wish you could visit in person! A donation will buy you the chance to try all chilis and vote, plus fellowship and "fine dining" with those at FCC. Remember to come join us downstairs on Sunday after the worship hour on November 16th!

Tastefully submitted by Melanie Lounds





Sunday, November 9th

Two Showings of the Film

11 AM and 7 PM

Though the majority of Americans identify themselves as Christians, they have largely stopped attending church. Less than 20% of the population not makes it to church in a typical week. Some 4000 churches are closing every year. It's a major and unprecedented social upheaval. In St. Johns three churches have closed during the last 5 years.

The film follows a church that has seen its attendance plunge from 900 to 40. In addition to external cultural factors that affect all churches, this church is disintegrating from the inside from a variety of human storms. A pastor who doesn't know who or what God is. Fights over petty things. A faction of angry ex-members that devises a plan to take over the church.

Throughout the story, cameras also visit other dying churches---as well as innovative new forms of church that are thriving. These range from a ministry in a Pennsylvania pub to an outreach in Los Angeles that brings joy to skid-row moms.

By the end of the film, viewers will experience hope and a refreshing glimpse into how faith may be