

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

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This Month's Highlights:  
Cover, October Events  
Pg. 2 Rev. Olson  
Pg. 3 Note from Sarah Gladstone  
Pg. 5 Chancel & Hands of Harmony Directors  
Pg. 7 Member Profile  
Pg. 8 Children and Youth News  
Pg. 9 Schedules, Church Records and Dedication

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



# October 2011

## The Congregational Connection...

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

### SPECIAL OCTOBER EVENTS



#### FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

BRING A FRIEND TO THE  
ANNUAL HAY RIDE

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME!**

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9th**

FIRST RIDE LEAVES PROMPTLY  
AT 5:00 P.M.

LIVINGSTON FARM  
2204 LIVINGSTON ROAD

**COME AND  
ENJOY THE FIRE, FOOD  
AND FELLOWSHIP**

*Rain Cancels*

**LET'S GO ON  
A HAYRIDE**



#### FALL RETREAT

*"The Dynamic for Living Close to God"*  
*Studies of several Biblical passages  
in Ephesians and Colossians*

*Focusing on God's true purpose in our life.*

**Date: Saturday, October 22, 2011**

**First Session 10:00 a.m.—11:30 a.m.**  
**Lunch Provided**  
**Second Session 12:00—2:00 p.m.**

Everyone is welcome!

**Please Call 989-224-2636 or e mail  
fccsj@4wbi.net to reserve your spot.**

This retreat will be lead by Rev. Eric C. Britcher, Interim Senior Pastor of First Congregational Church in Mansfield, Ohio. Rev Britcher served forty years as an officer (ordained clergy) in various capacities, finally in the National Office as a consultant to all Salvation Army programs nationwide. He then served for sixteen years at Mayflower Congregational Church in Grand Rapids, MI, the last nine as Associate Pastor for Congregational Life.

**“SEEING OUR GOD AND OURSELVES IN A NEW WAY”**

I'm on my second pair of bifocals, and having bifocals still drives me crazy. Squinting and tilting, I struggle to interpret a visual world in two focal planes. The effect is even worse with this recent, stronger pair of glasses. The small change in my prescription has made a big difference in my perception.

Over the years my brain had adjusted to the old way of seeing things. I had learned to translate curved beams and lumpy floors as straight lines, and to look at objects straight on. This new pair, just slightly different, has upset the equilibrium. Stairs rise at unaccustomed angles, and light switches move from familiar positions. When reading the text seems always overly close or too far away.

Thought they annoy me I'm very dependent on my glasses. Without them I am nearly helpless. I can't read or drive. The world is just a blur; at least the world as it exists more than 12 inches from my face, and that is pretty much all of it. What I cannot see and perceive I can't comprehend or interact with. So I always keep a pair of my old glasses in the car, just in case.

For me this is a reminder of my need to try and perceive God. At a workshop on spiritual maturity, a group of people likened spiritual insight to getting new glasses. "Suddenly", one woman said, "I see God in a totally different way!" Paul described Jesus as "*the image of the invisible God*" (Colossians 1:15). My understanding of this passage is that Jesus came so that we would have an image of God we could examine and follow; not God as an unfocused abstract notion, but God as a perceivable, comprehensible human being. It is wonderful thing to see well, and that includes seeing the truth. Yet it is also awkward to see in a different way, through a different set of lenses. It takes an effort to adjust. Sometimes it is easier to see things the old way; a way that does not challenge us or make us struggle. To see with new eyes is unsettling, and yet unsettling is the first step in moving forward toward being the people God longs for us to be.

During our October worship services we will be taking a long look at a familiar figure, Jesus. We will easily recognize him. We will also see him a bit differently, and somewhat more clearly; in so doing we will move toward a more complete picture of our God. It is difficult to adjust to a new pair of glasses. It is even more difficult to adjust to seeing our God and ourselves in a new way!

*Rev. Matthew Olson*

**SERMON SERIES FOR OCTOBER cont.**

**October 23, 2011, 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**

*"I Need A Miracle!" Series (2<sup>nd</sup> of 5 in a series)*

**Sermon: "The Miracle of a Changed Life"**

**Texts:** Isaiah 6:1-8 (*Isaiah is called to be a prophet*); Luke 5:1-11 (*Miraculous catch of fish*)  
Jesus used miracles as teaching tools. With this miracle Jesus illustrated the vast scope and breath of the kingdom of heaven. He also shows us, as his followers, how to partner with him in doing God's work in the world.

**October 30, 2011, 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**

*"I Need A Miracle!" Series (3<sup>rd</sup> of 5 in a series)*

**Sermon: "More Than Expected"**

**Texts:** Leviticus 13:38-46 (*Regulations concerning skin diseases*); Luke 17:11-19 (*Healing of the ten lepers*)

There are two miracles in this story. One is the cure of leprosy, that most dreaded disease of the first century. The other miracle is the changed, thankful heart of one of the lepers. Which is more important and miraculous?

**GETTING READY FOR ADVENT!**

*Looking for a fun group or family project to do for the church?*

How about you, your family, or your Ministry Team **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, November 27th.



**First Congregational Church**

100 Maple Street

St. Johns, MI 48879

**Telephone:** 989-224-2636

**Fax:** 989-224-8306

**E-Mail:** [fccsj@4wbi.net](mailto:fccsj@4wbi.net)

**Web Site:** [www.fccsj.com](http://www.fccsj.com)

**Facebook:** [firstcongregationalchurchofst.johns](https://www.facebook.com/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.

**THE BOARD OF MINISTRY**

**Sr. Minister: Rev. Matthew Olson**

**Moderator:** Molly Minnick

**Vice Moderator:** Shirleyan Lake

**Board of Ministry Members:**

David Elms, Tom Flynn, Tom French,

Bill Kushmaul, Gary Larsen, Eugene

Livingston, Melanie Lounds, Keith Mino, Cali

Sackrider

**Church Administrator:** Susan Larsen

**Financial Secretary:** Paul Martis

**Treasurer:** Jim Beagle

**Chancel Choir:** Dr. Charles Graham

**Hands of Harmony Director:** Susan Kilmer

**Director of Music Ministry:** Rachael Short

**SERMON SERIES FOR OCTOBER**

**October 2, 2011, World Communion Sunday**

**Sermon: “At the Table of Jesus”**

**Texts:** Deuteronomy 16:1-7 (*Passover ordinance*); Luke 22:7-38 (*Luke’s less familiar version of the Last Supper*)

In this sermon we will gather with the disciples—not the cleaned up in the “Last Supper” disciples of Leonardo da Vinci’s painting, but as the disciples really were—and find our own place at the table. With us will be Christian people from all around the world.

**October 9, 2011, 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**

**Sermon: “What Are You Hungry For?”**

**Texts:** Exodus 32:1-14 (*the making of the golden calf*); Matthew 22:1-14 (*Parable of the great banquet in which the invitation is refused by some and gratefully accepted by others*)

We are participants in the kingdom of God on the basis of God’s gracious invitation to come and join the feast. Even while inside the kingdom (“kingdom” defined as “God’s way of doing business”) we are still fallible sinners in need of forgiveness. We are here not on the basis of our own merits, but on the basis of God’s gracious love for us.

**“I Need A Miracle!”**

***Sermon Series, October 16<sup>th</sup> through November 13<sup>th</sup>***

**The gospel accounts of the miracles of Jesus are some of the most faith-stretching passages of scripture. Some love the miracle stories, finding great comfort in them. Others bristle at the very idea that miracles might be real and expected.**

**The sermons in this series will focus on: 1. The meaning of the miracles. 2. The place of miracles in modern Christianity. 3. How the miracles relate to the needs, problems, and prayer life of a Christian. 4. What the miracles say about our mission as a church.**

**October 16, 2011, 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**

*“I Need A Miracle!” Series (1<sup>st</sup> of 5 in a series)*

**Sermon: “Turning Wine Into Water”**

**Texts:** Psalm 36:5-10 (*Lord provides a “drink from the river of delights”*); John 2:1-11 (*Water into wine at a wedding reception*)

Miracles, those unexpected signs of God’s work and presence among us, seem unavailable to us. As modern people we have been trained not to expect to see them. With the eyes of faith, miracles become faith-confirming moments in which the creativity of God is made manifest to us.

**“NOTES FROM SARAH”**

Today, even though I’m approximately two-thirds the way through my degree at Fuller Theological Seminary, I attended the 2011 New Student Orientation at Fuller’s Pasadena campus. At this orientation the students are offered time to mix and mingle, ask financial aid questions, shake hands with our charming president Dr. Richard Mouw, and learn how to navigate the cafeteria (By the way, you can order the ‘Martin Luther’ sandwich that consists of ham and Swiss. Surely this is the great theologian’s favorite between class snack). But the feature of today’s schedule was the commissioning of students. We gathered together to praise our glorious Creator and to dedicate ourselves to another year of studying His Word. Fuller’s dream is to equip a generation of ministers to sink into the world and join our Lord in His redeeming work. So, as the new school year begins, the students are called on to welcome the Lord into their lives and engage with this ever-shrinking world. This is a big task, and I am humbled by the enormity of it.

All this mingling and energy, has reminded me of the importance of calling home to share my excitement for the next new beginning. So, church, I would like to call home to you, and tell you that this year (my final year) at Fuller Theological Seminary is going to be the greatest! The Lord has brought me out to California to finish my Masters of Divinity, and over the past couple of weeks I have been looking around in confusion of how I got from small-town Michigan to Los Angeles, California. Although, I miss swimming in the Thurston’s pond and singing in the Livingston’s silo, I have work to do here: the greatest kind of work. As I sit in rush hour traffic on my way to class, and walk alongside some of my 18 million neighbors, I pray that the Lord will instill within me with His love and offer me the strength I need to pursue Him.

This past summer, the Board of Ministry agreed to bring me into ‘in-care’ status at the church. What this means for you all, is that over the next year I am committing myself to sharing some of this seminary adventure with you. I hope to do this through writing to you all through the newsletter, and (although I may regret putting this in writing...) sharing with you all from the pulpit. Over the next ten weeks I will be taking courses in Spiritual Formation, Exegesis, and History. This is just the beginning to another challenging year of study. And as always these classes help me to realize that when studying theology... “The more you know, the more you don’t know”.

Over these past two years of my seminary journey, many people from the church have reached out to me through letters, phone calls, and inquiries through my family, to wish me well in my education. I would like to thank you for your support, and ask that you continue to pray for me as my studies press on.

With love,

**Sarah Gladstone**

*FYI Sarah, the daughter of Bob and Sue Gladstone, grew up attending First Congregational Church and was very active in the Senior High Pilgrim Fellowship and the National Association of Pilgrim Fellowship.*

**ALL MEN ARE INVITED**

All men from our church and community are invited to attend the **TUESDAY MORNING MEN'S BIBLE STUDY**. They open with a prayer at 7:00 a.m. sharp and always try to close the study time by 7:50 with time for prayer until 8:00 a.m. Come and join them!

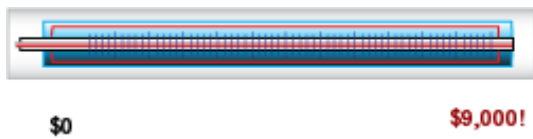
**A SECOND MEN'S BIBLE STUDY GROUP** began meeting on Sunday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, at 6p.m. in the church parlor. Guven Witteveen and Sid Lounds will lead this group. James was most likely the oldest brother of Jesus and the leader of the Jerusalem Council. "He was one of the select individuals Christ appeared to after his resurrection" (NIV Study Bible, pg. 1918). James is the author of the Book of James, which is the first reading this new study group will explore. All men are invited to join the conversation and camaraderie.

**TAIL GATE PARTY**

Another Doublets year begins on October 2, at 5:00 p.m. As had been planned at our last meeting we will have a TAILGATE event in our Parking lot-WEATHER permitting. We will do that for about an hour, shivering and shaking and reacquainting ourselves with each other. Then Doublets will disassemble from the parking lot and meet in Wilcox Hall. At that time we will engage in an attempt to plan what we will do the rest of the meetings this year: movies, candy making, lectures, treasure hunts and oh yeah, EATING and ENJOYING each other's company. **Contact Gary McCampbell at 224-6134 for more information. Please Note: We welcome anyone who would like to join us!**

**Board of Ministry is sending  
a Thank You to the congregation!**

We have reached, and passed, phase one on the way to air conditioning the sanctuary. Our goal to match the first \$9,000.00 has been achieved. The total gifted to this fund as of today is \$9,820.00. The total estimated cost of this project is \$50,000.00. With the matching funds we now have \$18,820.00. We are well on our way to a cooler sanctuary for next summer! We will continually keep you updated on our fund raising progress for this church improvement.



**"Joining together in our faith journey to support all that we value the most."**

The 2012 Stewardship Campaign "15 More!" is being held September 15th through October 15th. If everyone who currently pledges would increase their pledge by 15% we will raise an additional \$30,000 in revenue to support what we value the most. Just by giving a little, we stand to gain so much. We also want to increase the number of giving units (individuals and families) by a total of 15!



We just want "15 More!"

**OCTOBER SIGN UP SCHEDULES**

<u>Altar Flowers</u>	<u>Nursery Care</u>	<u>Fellowship Hour</u>	<u>4th Sunday Supper Host/Hostess</u>
2 Flynn Family	2 Kelly DeRosia	2 Dennis & Janet Scott	October *
9 Olson Family	9 Miriam VanValkenburg	9 *	November *
16 Kate Livingston	16 Miriam VanValkenburg	16 *	December *
23 Kudwa	23 *	23 4th Sunday Supper	January *
30 *	30 *	30 Jr. High Youth	

**\*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:**

Justin Nelson & Jessica Foley, September 10, 2011  
Adam Shack & Autumn Thayer, September 17, 2011



**THE OCTOBER DEDICATION**

*In loving memory of*

**Paul Bullard**

*Given by his family*



*Alice Bullard, Barbara Bullard, and Joe and Marilyn Armbrustmacher*

Children and Youth News

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

- 8 Peter Olson
- 15 Mackenzie Mayes
- 17 Andrew Rademacher
- 24 Quintin Lounds
- 25 Andrew Beagle



*“Give me a teacher who loves Jesus. Someone who will pray for me. Someone who will tell me the truth. Help me understand the Bible and show me that GOD IS REAL. I want to Believe. Give Me Jesus!”*  
 Gospel Light

Hey Kids! Come and join us in Sunday School as we discover Jesus throughout the entire Bible and connect children, parents, and teachers to their loving savior! You will study the Bible section by section, and discover a deep understanding of God’s Word . Every week you will begin to really know Jesus, love God and live your faith in practical, tangible ways.

**All classes begin  
 at 10:00 a.m.  
 on Sunday mornings.**



Join our teachers Jerry and Stacie Stevens, Tom and Ellen Doppke, Dave and Michele Elms and Rod Fuller in Sunday School. Barb Sherman and Jennifer Beagle lead the Junior High Youth Group and Melanie Lounds and Kate Livingston lead the Senior High Youth.

NOTES FROM THE MUSIC TEAM

*I love October when our FCC activities have resumed and our Sanctuary fills up on Sunday mornings. I really missed the Chancel Choir, the Children’s Choir, the Hands of Harmony, the Silo Singers, and the Holy Mamas when we observe a summer sabbatical. This month, we’ll hear from two committed leaders of our Music Ministry Team: Susan Kilmer (Director, Hands of Harmony) and Chuck Graham (Director, Chancel Choir). They both serve with a passion that surpasses mere musical performance goals. We are blessed by their ministry here at FCC, and I encourage you to support them with prayers for wisdom and grace, energy and inspiration, and of course more members for their ensembles!*

Blessings,  
 - Rachael Short, Director of the Music Ministry

Choir Director

I thought I would give a little history about how I became the choir director here at the First Congregational Church. It began when Steven, the choir director at the time, suddenly quit just before the 2000 Christmas season. After being without a choir for several months, several choir members got together and discussed the need for a director to get the choir up and singing again. Someone suggested that maybe I would temporarily fill in until a suitable replacement could be found since I had some experience directing the Victorian Voices, a local community singing group that sang during the Christmas season, and everyone knew me. I started directing the choir during the 2001 singing season. Well seven years later, I was still the “temporary” choir director as the church had still not found a suitable replacement for me. I would ask periodically how the search was going, and the response was always the same, “We like what you are doing,” and frankly, were satisfied with my job performance (and quit looking!) So, after much thought and discussion with the choir members I finally accepted the position as the permanent choir director. I hope that everyone is satisfied with the choir selections that I choose, and that it may generate interest in those that like to sing to join with us to sing for the glory of God in choir. We do have fun, and it’s a great way to contribute to the church service. There is a saying that those who sing in the choir are praying twice! I hope you will enjoy the musical selections that I will present this season.

*Submitted by Chuck Graham*

How I Became the Bell Choir Director – One Woman’s Spiritual Journey

The first time I heard a handbell choir was when I was about 6 yrs old and visiting my grandmother’s United Methodist church in Elkhart, Indiana. Those shiny bells were so beautiful and the music was unlike anything I had ever experienced. When I was in my early 30’s, Paul and I joined the 1<sup>st</sup> United Methodist Church of Grand Ledge, MI. I was thrilled to learn that this church had

a bell choir and it brought back those wonderful memories of my grandmother's church. One Sunday, the choir director announced that he needed more folks to join the bell choir, and my heart skipped a beat. I was so excited to have the opportunity to learn how to play handbells. The first year or two of being in the handbell choir was mostly mechanical for me, trying to play the songs correctly and learn all the different ringing techniques. It wasn't long until playing the bells truly became a spiritual and worshipful experience. Worshiping God through music became a reality for me and it was a wonderful feeling. After moving to St Johns, I was so happy to find a church that had a bell choir. Within a few months of attending 1<sup>st</sup> Congregational Church, Lois Graham announced that more bell ringers were needed and I was so happy to have a spot in a bell choir again. It never occurred to me that I could direct a choir until Lois asked me to fill in for her a few times. This was all fine and good for practice, but when we were going to play in church, I was terrified. How could I possibly direct a bell choir for real? How am I qualified to do such a thing? That weekend, I prayed to God and asked him to guide me. When I directed for the first time, it was as though I was merely a vessel and that God was working through me. I truly experienced God's guiding hand and knew that with God's help, I could do anything. When I was asked about directing the choir full time, I simply prayed about it and felt that God was saying to me – why not you? So it was purely through prayer, trusting in God, and following this calling I became the director of the bell choir. Every Sunday that we play, I continue to pray and ask Him to guide me. It is with a glad heart that this director and bell choir worships God through music.

*Submitted by Susan Kilmer*



We know that it doesn't seem possible, but winter is right around the corner. And the Missions Team would once again like to collect coats, mittens, scarfs and winter hats for those in need within our local community. We collected over 100 coats and lots of winter paraphernalia last year thanks to your generosity. We will collect the items October 2nd, 9th, and 16th on the coat rack located in the Parlor just behind the sanctuary. Thanks for your continued support.



## THANK YOU!

**THANKS** are being extended to Wilbur and Leola Thurston for hosting the Annual Outdoor Worship Service, Hog Roast and Pot Luck Dinner on Homecoming Sunday, September 11th. Lake Denise and the weather were perfect!

We would like to thank all the gentlemen who helped haul out, set up and bring back, all of the equipment needed for this yearly event.

**The 2011 MINT FESTIVAL FOOD BOOTH** was a success this year. We made a profit of \$1,400.00 that will go to the general fund. I would like to thank everyone for their support by cash donations, donations of pop or water, working the food booth and prayers. Special thanks to Tom Doppke for taking care of ordering and picking up the food.

Tom made numerous trips back and forth between the park and the church so that I could stay at the park and help in the booth. Without Tom's help and the savings he found during his shopping trips we wouldn't have had as big a success. We have already begun planning for next year's booth and are hoping for an ever larger profit. I would like to thank Kathy Kushmaul for her donation of donuts on both Saturday and Sunday that we sold and made a nice profit. Also to Tom Flynn for taking charge of getting orders from the craft vendors. Because of Tom's efforts we had a large number of vendors who ordered from our booth because they were not able to leave their spot. Without everyone's prayers and support our food booth cannot be successful so **THANK YOU!**



*Barb Sherman*



We are pleased to introduce Tom and Beth Webb! Tom grew up in Edmore and Beth's home town is Westphalia. They have been married for nearly 34 years and have lived in St. Johns for 22 years. They have four children, Noelle and Shawn Fenske, Jeremy and Kelly Schneider, Courtney Webb and Zachary Webb. They have two grandchildren: Kaitlin (7) and Desmond (4).

Beth teaches third grade at DeWitt Public Schools. Tom is retired from Fulton Public Schools and now teaches online classes for graduate students at Walden University. Beth is a singer, and she loves spending time with friends and family, sewing, making scrapbooks, stamping, and traveling.



Tom is also a singer, and he loves to travel and play golf.

Tom and Beth were looking for a deeper connection to a church community and they believe they have found it here. They have taken part in musical activities here for close to 20 years, but formally joined the congregation in June 2011.

Everyone is very pleased that the Webb's have become members of our family.