

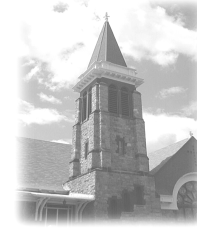
First Congregational Church
100 Maple Street
St. Johns, Michigan 48879

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This Month's Highlights:
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



September 2011 The Congregational Connection...

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

WELCOME TO THE NEW CHURCH YEAR!



Homecoming Sunday,

September 11, 2011,

at the Thurston Farm
5512 West M-21

(look for the FCC sign)

Worship service at 11:00 a.m. Hog Roast and Pot Luck Dinner at 12:00 p.m. Bring a dish to pass and your own table service. Everyone is welcome to attend, so ask a friend or neighbor to come and enjoy this special morning with us.

The HANDS OF HARMONY Handbell Choir practice each week on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. The first rehearsal will be on Wednesday, August 31st. The bell choir is looking forward to being a part of the worship service on the 3rd Sunday of each month beginning in September. We have a great repertoire of music to present for the 2011-2012 church year. If you are interested in being involved with this ministry team, please contact Susan Kilmer, Director, at 224-2950.



I'm looking forward to another great season in choir this year. My plans for the upcoming season are to have a mix of familiar music with some fun



new selections. Also, we are in need of more singers, both men and women, but especially women. Our choir is very unique as most church choirs have very few men, and the number of men in our choir outnumber the women! If you like to sing and have fun, and can carry a tune we can use you. Reading music is **not** a requirement, and you don't have to have a "solo" voice. Young singers are welcome! We meet most Thursday evenings from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. Rehearsals start on September 8th. So, if you have sung with us in the past, or would just like to give choir a try, I welcome you to sing with us on Thursday, September 8th at 7:30. See you then.

Chuck Graham, Director

REMINDER that we return to our Fall Sunday School schedule on Sunday, September 18th, Children's Choir at 9:30 a.m., Sunday School and Youth Groups beginning at 10:00 a.m. with the worship service at 11:00 a.m. This is followed by the Fellowship Hour at 12:00 p.m.



Say It!

We congregational Christians tend to be a little hazy in our thinking, and therefore not very good at telling others about our church. We don't always know what we are trying to say.

Jesus was a master communicator. Through preaching, chastisement, teaching, healing, arguing, humor, his touch—through many signs and symbols—he conveyed the message of his Heavenly Father to his Heavenly Father's people. Even his manner of death and resurrection send a powerful message about the nature of God's character and what it means to be faithful to Him. Jesus knew what he was trying to say.

How well do you communicate? Life is largely taken up with information processing, transmission, and your reaction to the information you have received. In a church, especially a congregational church, communication needs to be massive and in multiple directions. Like the cells of our bodies, which communicate, at least indirectly, with all the other cells, we who are in the body of Christ need to communicate if we are to function and be healthy.

What do we communicate? Clarity is important. If we don't know what we are trying to say, then how can we know how to say it? Are we "on message" about the gospel message, or is our communication as a church muddled? Could you, in two sentences, describe to a stranger the essence of this church?

***"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"
-Romans 10:14***

I bring this up because in ministry—we are all in ministry in this church-- it is communication that makes us a team. Let's be united in our ministry, working together for the same purpose. Are you talking with other church members about how your role in our church is going, your hopes and dreams for the congregation, and how you are growing (or not) spiritually? There is nothing more important to talk about!

How about people who are not part of our congregation? Do you make an effort to tell others about our church, its ministry, and the Lord Jesus Christ that the church serves? People won't know unless you tell them.

The fact is, you can't communicate too much. One of the mistakes we often make is the assumption that 'everybody knows'. It is so easy to get lazy and hazy in what we are saying! In actuality, not everybody does know. Discipline yourself to communicate with clarity. Try to gear your message to outsiders, to people who know nothing about our ministry. Be prepared, and eager, to describe our church. Chances are you will benefit as your own thinking and communicating about your role in our church becomes more focused. Further more you will be like Jesus, proclaiming the message of our Heavenly Father.

Rev. Matthew Olson

THE CHURCH STAFF

Senior Minister, Matthew Olson
Church Administrator, Susan Larsen
Treasurer, Jim Beagle
Financial Secretary, Paul Martis
Chancel Choir Director, Dr. Charles Graham
Director of Music Ministry, Rachael Short
Hands of Harmony Director, Susan Kilmer

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: 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.

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

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

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.

Igniting FCC

FIGHTING HUNGER!

The 26th annual CROP Walk for Hunger is Sunday, October 2, 2011 at 2:00 p.m. The CROP Walk is sponsored by Church World Service and raises money to fight hunger worldwide, provide disaster relief, help small villages obtain clean sources of drinking water, and assist local food relief agencies. Of the funds that are raised, 25% stays in the local community. This year, those funds will go to the new Basic Needs Center food bank (10%), Clinton County Meals on Wheels (10%), and the St. Johns Ministerial Association's emergency assistance fund (5%).

FCC will be joining 8 other churches and the Kiwanis Club in this years CROP Walk. The CROP walk will consist of a 5K (3.2mile) route



that will start and end at the City Park pavilion. There is a 1-mile route as well. Runners, adults pushing strollers or pulling wagons are welcome on both the 5K and 1-mile routes. However no bikes, rollerblades, skateboards, or scooters are allowed. If you are willing to walk with others in this community to help raise money for this important event, Sue Neuder of the Missions Team, will be signing up folks to walk during the Sundays in September.

Hunger is both a global and local issue and the need is great in this community. If you are not able to participate, please considering donating to one of the walkers.

Submitted by Susan Kilmer-
St. Johns CROP Walk Coordinator

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Would you be interested in hosting a **FOURTH SUNDAY SUPPER?** Our first "Supper" is September 25th, immediately following the worship service. You would need to be here to turn on the ovens. Coffee, condiments, salt and pepper are all provided in the kitchen. You would be responsible for providing milk, cleaning off the tables and cleaning and unplugging the coffee makers after the supper. You can sign up on the sheet posted in the Wilcox Hall corridor or call the church office.

LINDA SCOTT

Ladies, you are invited to attend the first meeting of "Linda Scott" on Tuesday, September 20th. You will meet, 5:30 p.m. at the home of Arlene Wood for a planned meal. Please rsvp to Joann Martis at 224-4165. Please mark your calendars for the next

FOOD BANK DONATIONS

"Throw Down" Sunday on **September 18th**, when we donate non-perishable items to the new RPM Food Bank in downtown St. Johns.

MINT FESTIVAL

We would like to thank **Judy Cramer, Audrey Duzek, Shirleyan Lake and Nancy Moore** for making and donating ten dozen cookies for the St. Johns Mint Festival Mint Queen Pageant Reception.



Why do you come to church? I know, it's a silly question, right? But most people initially come to church for a reason other than God. At least that is what the book I read for our Board of Ministry meetings said. The book is called *Ignite*. I spoke briefly about this book in church last month. The main idea is simple: double your church size in one day. Simple? Are you kidding me, Melanie? Double, you say? Actually it takes a lot of planning and courage, but I think we can get there with God's help. Our church has been mini-igniting (or at least revving the engines) for some time as we have invited friends to church on certain Sundays of certain months. But it takes more than the effort we have been attempting up until now and perhaps a change of focus according to this book, *Ignite*.

One staple of igniting church growth is to invite the un-churched into our midst. Perhaps you have invited neighbors who are unhappy at their present church. Perhaps you have invited family members from out of state who will only be with us for one Sunday out of the year. Perhaps you have invited someone very knowledgeable in the arena of church life. Here is where we can stretch ourselves, says this *Ignite* book.. We need to be inviting the un-churched into our midst. Those that are not going to church or those who do not know Christ should be our targeted audience.

Another helpful tip the book suggested was to intentionally invite those that share our commonalities. One factor is age. What age is our average FCC member? 40 with a family? 50 and getting ready for retirement? 60 and drawing from a pension? This topic of age is one that we discussed for a bit at our last board meeting, because eventually we will get older and need to invest in the youth to sustain our church. We lose some of our youth to out-of-state colleges or they end up moving away after graduating from college to start a family in a different area. Of course the age topic is debatable, but this book said we should aim to invite those that are around our average age at FCC (which the board decided was forty and fifty-year-olds). If you have no friends or co-workers in that age group that are un-churched, make new friends or at least invite those who share another commonality (maybe you both are teachers, have a family, and love fishing).

The tools to inviting someone need not be extravagant. An invitation card with a message of what we are asking them to do (come to our service on Miracles), the date, and the location are sufficient as long as they are clear, very clear. If we invested in a gift (like bottles of water one church gave out at the Mint Festival, along with this pertinent information on a sticker) we would draw more people into FCC. The message is important though; we need to give them a reason to come.

Another tip, invite them to something that will help them in the immediate here and now. Maybe you know of a family that seriously doubts that the Lord is at work in their lives. A sermon on miracles may be just the thing our minister is preaching on in October and November. Perhaps you have a friend at work who thinks Christianity is all about following too many laws and rules that become overwhelming and depressing. Wouldn't it be great if you could tell them that in January and February your pastor will be educating your whole church on core Christian beliefs? Wouldn't it be nice to invite them to something that would clear up misconceptions and open their eyes to possibilities of which they're missing out? A clear message and a reason, perhaps a reason other than God initially, is what it takes to grow a church. Maybe your church is

discussing how to care for aging parents and you know of a neighbor who is experiencing Parkinson's with their mother or father. Perhaps they are not church goers but are looking for answers to financial planning for the elderly. Perhaps you could be the success story of inviting them into FCC and sparking their interest in God.

Of course mass promotion like radio, billboards, newspapers, and fliers have their place in promoting a church (a slower return for your time but still a return on your investment). Consider this: your story and testimony of how you came to Christ (or FCC) or grew in faith through a tough personal trial in life can be powerful. Don't be afraid to share with the unchurched your passion and commitment to God. I encourage you to ask your minister what topics he is planning (hints given above) and I encourage you to look for opportunities to invite others (verbally for now) to a sermon that could be the spark to igniting their passion for Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-15

The gifts [Christ] gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

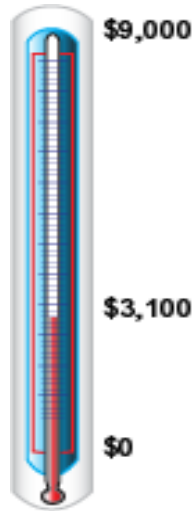
Respectfully submitted by Melanie Lounds

AIR CONDITIONING

*The Board of Ministry is sending
a challenge to the congregation!*

All donations made to the Air Conditioning Fund will be matched, dollar for dollar, up to \$9,000.00! You can double your donation by making it now!

...so that we can raise the number of people who can comfortably worship with us during the warm summer and fall months. We also hope to have our beautiful building used more frequently for weddings, recitals and other community events.



SEPTEMBER SIGN UP SCHEDULES

<u>Altar Flowers</u>	<u>Nursery Care</u>	<u>Fellowship Hour</u> <i>9:30 a.m.</i>	<u>4th Sunday Supper</u> <u>Host/Hostess</u>
4 Martis Family	4 Mirian VanValkenburg	4*	September *
11 Larsen Family	11 No Nursery	11 Hog Roast/Pot Luck	October *
18*	18 *	18*	November *
25*	25 *	25 4th Sunday Supper	December *

***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

Baptism:

Macy Lynn Mancuso, August 7, 2011, daughter of Adam and Lisa Mancuso
Macy is the granddaughter of Rod and Betsy Fuller

Friend Death:

Vianna Bond, sister of Doris Swatman & Fritz Thurston

THE SEPTEMBER DEDICATION



The Congregational Connection for this month is dedicated in loving memory of

Jack Stutting and Jack Carpenter

fathers of
Gary and Renee Carpenter

Children and Youth News

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 7 Cameron Hyde
- 13 Rachel Rademacher
- 23 Brecken Simon
- 23 Hannah Scranton
- 28 Jackson Ballard
- 28 Lindsey Palmer



Everyone is invited to attend Sunday School starting September 18th at 10:00 a.m. We are excited to welcome **Stacie Stevens** as our new preschool teacher. Our great team of returning teachers are as follows:

- Tom and Ellen Doppke**-Kindergarten & First Graders
- Dave and Michele Elms**-Second and Third Graders
- Rod Fuller**-Fourth and Fifth Grades
- OUR YOUTH LEADERS FOR THIS COMING YEAR ARE Jennifer Beagle and Barbara Sherman** with the Junior High Youth Group and **Melanie Lounds** along with **Kate Livingston** advising the Senior High Youth Group.

SUNDAES FOR SUNDAY CHALLENGE-

A challenge for families to spend 5 minutes a day with God. We are challenging each Sunday school family to spend 5 minutes daily talking about God, praying, reading the Bible, having devotions, reading Sunday school papers that are sent home weekly etc. When the whole Sunday School reaches the goal of 1000 minutes, we will celebrate with a Sundae Party. Each child will be given a sheet to record their family's time with God and bring it in each week to Sunday school. The teachers will record the minutes. How exciting! Look for more details on Sunday, September 18th.

PARENT ORIENTATION on Sunday, September 25th, at 9:30 a.m. Do you wonder what your child will be learning about this Fall? Come join the Sunday school teachers for an informal meeting.

SPECIAL RETREAT OFFERED!

First Congregational Church, St. Johns

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.

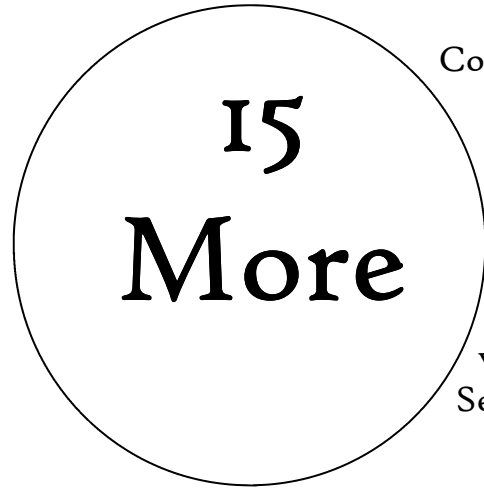
“The Dynamic for Living Close to God”

Studies of several Biblical passages in Ephesians and Colossians
Focusing on God's true purpose in our lives.

Everyone is welcome!

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

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 a 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. Rev. Britcher is married, has four grown children, seven grandchildren and one + great grandchildren.



The Board of Ministry Finance Subcommittee is pleased to announce the theme of the 2011 -2012 Stewardship Campaign.

“15 More”

The campaign will be officially kicked off on September 11th, during the worship service at the Thurston Farm. It will run from September 15, 2011 to October 15, 2011.

Wait for more details to follow!

ASP 2011- "Follow the Word; Transform the World"

Last month, a crew including Jerry Stevens, John Cheeney, Buddy Stevens, Brad Tooker, Andrew Rademacher, Trisha Cheeney, and myself, Jamie Cheeney, took off for a mission trip to Barbourville, KY in the Appalachian Mountains. We arrived Sunday afternoon and were welcomed by the staffers to Union College where we would be staying along with two other churches in classrooms for the week. We were informed that we would be working along with a crew from Illinois to apply vinyl siding to a large two story house for a seventy-three year old man, Troy, who was living by himself on a very limited income.

We woke up early for devotionals and breakfast before heading out to the work site for our first of five days of hard work. Some of us had to start by learning how to operate simple tools like hammers but we began to expand our vocabulary to include J-channeling, undersill, starter strip, cat's claw, tinsnips, and compound angles. By the end of the week, we could all measure and cut siding to the nearest sixteenth of an inch! But we learned much more than construction terms that week. One night at evening gathering we learned about the history of the area in which we were working and staying. During Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty" in 1964, he visited Barbourville as the "poster-town" for poverty in America and unfortunately not much has changed since that time. We talked about a newspaper headline that read "There is No Hope in Appalachia." We discussed the mission of ASP: to make homes warmer, safer, and drier; but many argue that we should teach the people how to make a better life for themselves rather than handing them the materials and service. What we do in those mountains each summer will never solve poverty, but what we can do is bring hope to the people of Appalachia by showing them the love of Christ through our actions.

The theme for the week came from Romans 12:2 -"Do not conform any longer to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you can test and approve God's will- his good, pleasing, and perfect will." We were challenged to "follow the word; transform the world" but as usual, greater than the changes to Troy's house were the changes inside each of us. We found a new respect for the people of Appalachia, especially our host and his seventeen year old grandson, Franklin, who worked with us every step of the way. We grew closer to each other and closer to God as we found the strength to work through the heat in His presence in those beautiful mountains.

The friends we made will always be in our prayers and the experiences we shared will always be in our hearts. We would like to thank each and every one of you for the part you had in this opportunity. Our trip was made possible by your financial support and prayers. We are all so grateful for this experience – it is something we will never forget.

Submitted by Jamie Cheeney

"CONNECTIONS" to family and friends



Hazel Findlay Country Manor Nursing Home, St. Johns:

Phyllis Rice, long time member

Michigan Masonic Home, Alma:

Geraldine Workman, long time member

Grace Haven Assisted Living, St. Johns:

Helen Johnson, long time member

Donna Magsig, mother of Linda Kentfield

MISSIONS NEWS

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.



Meet Bob and Rosemary Green! Bob was raised in Lansing and Rosemary in Muskegon, MI. They have made their home in St. Johns for 41 years and have three children and six grandchildren. Their family includes son, Jameison and his wife Kim and their children Gabi and Qwinnlyn; son, Brian and his wife Lori and their daughter Eleanor. Their daughter Suzanne is the mother of Michael, Sydni and Maddy.

Bob is the Executive Director of the Michigan Bean Commission. Rosemary retired from St. Johns Public Schools in 2003 where she was the Director of Special Education for 34 years.

Bob enjoys exercise, reading, and puttering around the house. Rosemary relaxes by

reading and playing the piano. We have all enjoyed having Rosemary play the piano during church services the last couple of years. Years ago the Green family was driving to East Lansing to attend church with young children and that was not working out too well. They found F.C.C. and it seemed to be a much better fit for their family. They have now been here for 35 years! We are very happy to have them in our congregation!

