

September 2014



The Congregational Connection...

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

September Highlights

September 3rd: Hands of Harmony Begins

September 7th: Homecoming Sunday

September 11th: Chancel Choir Begins

September 12th: Jr. & Sr. High Bonfire

September 13th: Simply Scrappin'

September 14th: Youth Worship Begins

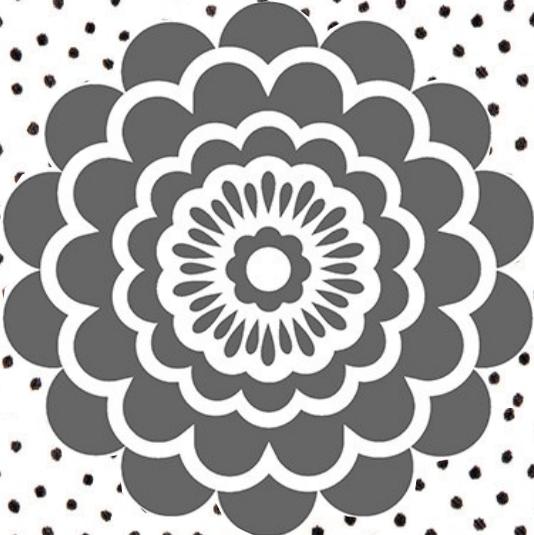
September 14th: Faith Adventure Begins

September 21st: 3rd Sunday Throw Down

Homecoming Sunday

Please join us for
Homecoming Sunday at
the Thurston Farm on
September 7th
at 11:00 a.m.

Bring a dish to pass and
your own table service.



**Faith Adventure
begins
September 14 at
10 a.m.
Ages preschool-
high school**



FROM THE SENIOR MINISTER

Two observations:

1. The first few weeks of the fall is when you, if you are like most people, will set your habits for the next nine months.
2. If you, in addition to attending worship, are part of a prayer group, Bible study, or fellowship group you grow in your faith. If you are not, you won't.

You see where this is going, don't you?

This month I want you to make a commitment to be seriously involved in the worship and study life of this church, and start acting on that commitment.

I want you to attend worship on a regular basis. Jesus did. *"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read."* (Luke 4:16). Jesus attended worship, in response to the command of God, as an expression of his love for his Heavenly Father. So should you. *"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments..."* (1 John 5:2-3).

Some Christians, it seems, are under the assumption that "I am a good person, and God knows that. I am close to God even if I don't attend church. It is ok with God. Not a big deal." That sentiment is not found in the Bible. To the contrary, the scriptures assume that every believer will attend worship, in the church community, on a regular basis.

I also want you to attend some form of Christian fellowship group or Bible study. Every Christian can. I think that our congregation should have about the same number of people attending a fellowship group or study as attend the worship service. Why? Because God's Word is valuable to us. In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul mentions four ways in which the scriptures are so important to us (1) learning about God, (2) identifying sin in our lives, (3) understanding the right ways to live, (4) equipping us for service in God's name. You don't get these things from listening to a sermon once a week, or reading the Bible on your own. You get them in discussion with other people (see Hebrews 3:12-13). And this is not just for you. You have a responsibility, from God, for other Christians. Your goal is to become, someday, a teacher for other people (see Hebrews 5:12).

For attending the worship there is the Sunday morning service. If you cannot attend our service you are encouraged to attend worship wherever you are and whenever you can.

For fellowship there are several options. See the church calendar for details. One I am especially enthusiastic about is the ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT study group that is described in another article. It is my hope that many people will become involved in one of the several available discussion groups as a way to gain the value of scripture, draw closer together as Christians, and move forward as God's church.





Notes from the Director of the Music Ministry: FCC Music Ministry Groups



We are a musical faith family! Do you feel drawn to join one of these active ministry groups? We would love to *musik* & minister with you! Contact Rachael Short (517) 862-0750, rshortmmus@yahoo.com.

Youth Worship: Calling all participants in Faith Adventure, PF, and leaders! We will meet in Countryman Hall on Sunday mornings 9:30-10:00 to worship through fellowship, songs, & games. We need help leading, and we want your enthusiastic presence beginning on September 14! Come join us & bring friends!

Silo Singers: Have silo? Will sing! Originating in the 1960's, this men's vocal group continues to sing together from time-to-time in worship services – no silo required. Rehearsal schedules are developed based on the needs of the members and the song of the moment. If you are interested in some male camaraderie (and sometimes female) with your vocal music, please join us!

Holy Mamas: We are a tightly knit group of women who pray together, encourage and support spiritual growth, and sing all kinds of music. We occasionally sing during the Worship service and for others in the community. We will meet directly after worship in the choir room for fellowship, prayer, & singing. Meeting times vary seasonally: 12:30-2:00 pm (September-May), 11:30 am -1:00 pm (June-August). If this calls to your heart, please join us!

Praise Team:

The Praise Team meets on Monday nights in the Sanctuary from 7:00-8:15 pm to sing and play a variety of contemporary Christian music. We love this music: we love creating and dwelling in the music together, and expressing the worship in our hearts. From time to time we will offer our music to God in Sunday morning worship. If your heart also awakens to these sounds, please join us!

Chancel Choir

From the Director: Singers Wanted!!

Reading music is not a requirement. You don't need a solo voice. If you can carry a tune you can sing with us. We meet on Thursday evenings from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m., starting on Thursday, September 11.

Some of the things you can look forward to when singing for our church:

Improving your voice and vocalization for singing

Learn to read music better

Getting the opportunity to praise God in a different, but very meaningful way

Leading the congregation in singing hymns

I'm looking forward to another great year with the choir. I hope you will consider joining us.

Contact Chuck Graham: 989 224-8596 (home); grahamcp@frontier.com

Hands of Harmony Bell Choir:

The Hands of Harmony Bell Choir worship God through music with a beautiful 4-octave set of English Handbells and chimes. We practice on Wednesday nights from 7:00-8:00 PM, and participate in the worship services once a month. We also participate in the Christmas Eve and Easter services as well as other special music events. New ringers are welcome, it's helpful if you can read music. This is a fun group of people that enjoy praising God through music, contact the director, Susan Kilmer or the church office if you are interested in joining.

Contact Susan Kilmer: 989-224-2950 (home); SdKilmer@aol.com



Dear Members and Friends of FCC,

The letter below from and response to Reverend Casey vanderBent are being shared with you to make sure that everyone knows of the current status of our efforts to move forward from the most recent challenges faced by our congregation. Both are a follow-up on the materials shared with you in April (which are available in the Church Office if you have misplaced your copy), representing a commitment to stay our course of improvement.

I am confident that our congregation is on a very healthy path and, with continued prayer and action, we will be refining and fulfilling our call to be an active part of the global body of Christ.

If you have any interest in finding out more, please feel free to contact me or any member of the Board of Ministry or even to come to a Board meeting on the second Monday of each Month at 7:00 PM in Countryman Hall.

Your prayers for the Church and Board would be appreciated.

With respect & agape,

Bill Rockwell, Moderator
for the Board of the
First Congregational Church
St Johns, Michigan

Dear Reverend vanderBent:

Thank you for your clarified concerns in your letter of June 6, 2014, regarding our responses to your recommendations.

We have reviewed your suggestions and with thoughtful consideration are continuing the dialogue of ways to heal our church.

We truly appreciate all that you have done and are comforted to know that we have a place to turn to should we need your assistance in the future.

With constant prayer, we seek the Lord's guidance in continued reconciliation.

Bill Rockwell, Moderator
First Congregational Church
St Johns, Michigan

Spiritual Gifts Class

To whom are spiritual gifts given? What is the purpose of spiritual gifts? How can I be sure which particular spiritual gifts I have? Are spiritual gifts permanent or temporary? What does the Bible say about each of the spiritual gifts? How can you understand your gifts and how do those gifts fit in the body of Christ?

The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the church of Corinth, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed" (1 Corinthians 12:1). Metaphorically, this course is like a fire hydrant gushing with information which will enable you to deepen your relationship with God, learn about yourself, and enjoy community and fellowship with other participants.

Melanie Lounds will be leading this eight week course one evening per week starting in late September/early October. The three days under consideration for the class are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday after 7 p.m. After seeing which day works best, one will be selected and you will receive a personal phone call from Melanie Lounds registering you for the class. There is a small registration fee to cover the cost of materials, refreshments, and other supplies. Each of the eight modules has devotionals, prayers, and follow-up activities to increase your understanding of the ministry God has called you to. Each session will build on the previous session; therefore, faithful attendance is necessary. Come and enrich your life, and accept the blessings as you embark on a journey of spiritual and personal growth.

Call the church office at 989-224-2636 to sign up for the evening that works best for your schedule. Sign up will also be available at the back of the sanctuary after church services every Sunday.

Kid News

Since we were unable to participate in the Appalachia Service Project, the youth decided to donate \$500 to the organization. Your money will be used by the Christian organization which is designed to bring much needed relief to those in need. We hope we can participate next year.

With the new Faith Adventure title, the senior and junior high hope to unite this year into one Pilgrim Fellowship force. We hope to continue providing ASP and NAPF opportunities to those of age and an engaging year of faith development in which each child finds his or her relationship with God deep and meaningful. Our year will kick off with a bon fire and activity night at the Lounds family with more information to come. If you are interested in helping, please contact the church office. Let's make this our best year ever!

-Melanie Lounds & Stacie Stevens

Lost but now is Found

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

Bonfire!

Jr. & Sr. High Bonfire at
7 p.m. on Sept. 12th
at the home of
Melanie Lounds.
1999 East Steel Road

Faithwalking

A Journey into Personal
Transformation

November 5-7

St. Francis Retreat Center
703 E. Main Street
DeWitt, MI 48820

Cost: \$180 by Sept. 22

Faithwalking is a comprehensive ministry that guides pastors and congregational leaders through a personal and congregational transformation journey. This upcoming retreat offers you the opportunity to experience an introduction to this work.

During this retreat you will:

- Hear several presentations
- Be challenged to explore roadblocks in the personal transformation journey
- Spend time in solitude reflecting on what you are hearing
- Share your experience in a small group setting



Simply Scrappin'



Mark your calendars for Saturday, September 13, 2014!! Join us for an all-day (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) scrap booking day at First Congregational Church in St. Johns. Cost is \$35 and includes a table to work on, a delicious breakfast, lasagna & salad luncheon. Bring your projects and a snack to share. Creative Memories Consultant, Beth Webb will be available. Knitters, sewers, and other crafters welcome!

This is a fundraiser for the church. It will take place at First Congregational Church, 100 Maple Street, St. Johns, just west of the Clinton County Courthouse. Call the church office at 989-224-2636, or Lois Graham at 989-640-8603 to reserve your seat. Committee: Beth Webb, Molly Minnick, and Lois Graham.

This month's newsletter is given by Paul & Joann Martis in celebration of their 60th wedding anniversary. They were married in our sanctuary on Sept. 5th 1954 with reception held in Wilcox Hall. Joann is a life church member & Paul joined in 1956. We praise God!

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

Thank You

I would like to thank all
 who came to my 100th
 year Birthday party;
 the many birthday wishes
 and sent cards.

All appreciated!
 A Great Day!

~Marjorie Blizzard

Pick one up today!

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

Brain Buster

According to Luke, how many disciples did Jesus send out two by two ahead of him to the various towns he planned to visit?

- A) 12
- B) 70 or 72 (ancient manuscripts vary)
- C) 490 (70 times 7)
- D) 144 (12 times 12)

(See Luke 10:1) (B)

All Church Study Begins

“...that all of them may be one.”

When the eleven disciples in the upper room heard Jesus pray these words, they might have been shamefaced. Hadn't they recently been arguing about which of them was the most prominent?

They could hardly have imagined the millions who would follow Christ in coming centuries throughout the continents they'd never heard of! Was Jesus praying that all these would be “one”? Could such a prayer be more than wishful thinking?” - ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT, Introduction

Beginning the week of September 14th the church begins a new study, ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT, on what it means to be a church united in Christ. The series will continue until Advent.

Discussion groups will meet Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Tuesday during the day to explore questions like; “Can We Judge Another's Motives?”, “What If We See A Christian Sinning?”, “But Don't I Know Best?” and other topics concerning being together as a church. While centered in the theme of ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT, each week's study stands on its own. If you can only occasionally come to a discussion group you will not be lost. Sermon themes will be related to, but not duplicate, the study topic each week.

Study guides are available at the church. If you would like to donate the cost for your study guide, that amount would be \$10.

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.*

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.

First Congregational Church

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St. Johns, MI 48879

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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.

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: 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

Lou Neuder.....517-204-1593

Marilyn Newman.....517-331-3457

Jan Myers.....989-682-4194

Board of Ministry Joys and Concerns

~ Keep up with pledges

~ Prayers for the family of Wilbur Thurston.

~ Prayers for the family of Kurt Becker.

~ Support for Barb Sherman in her recovery
from knee surgery.

~ Thanks to all who helped with the Rum-
mage Sale.

~ Thanks to Tom & Beth Webb for hosting
the "Love Wins" book discussion.

~ Thanks for continued great music during
worship time.