
JUNE 2015

The Congregational Connection...

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

3RD ANNUAL ST JOHNS MINT FESTIVAL RUMMAGE SALE

Calling all volunteers! We have a lot to raise this year to meet our fundraising goal of \$7,500.00. The rummage sale will be on Friday and Saturday, August 14th and 15th from 9 -5. We will be sorting items and setting up on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons the 12th and 13th of August beginning at 1 pm.

We are in search of items that are clean, in good shape and good working order to sell. Please no Televisions or VCRs as they didn't sell last year and they are not easy for us to get rid of. Children's clothing, adult clothing, household items, yard items, DVRs, radios, antiques and furniture are all items that go fast. Please contact Barb Sherman or Betsy Fuller if you have any questions, would like to help with sorting, working the sale, helping with clean up or to schedule a time to drop off your items.

Thank you for your support.

God Bless You!

Barb Sherman

517-242-1234 cell

989-292-4029 home

Betsy Fuller

517-331-2956 cell



SENIOR MINISTER SABBATICAL (Part Two)

“Better is one hand full of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.” –Ecclesiastes 4:6

When we envision Jesus we usually see him teaching and healing, surrounded by a large clamoring crowd. But Jesus would often send people away, or disappear without warning, and retreat to a place of rest. He didn't do this after all the needs of others had been met, for his work was never done. He did it when the pulse of his spirit called for him step away from the motion and noise of his ministry in order to feel the deepest rhythms of God. He would simply stop, go to a quiet place, and pray.

Certainly I will be praying during my sabbatical, I am still discerning how else to best to spend my time. Some of what I do will simply emerge as I go. Among my considerations is the question, “what can I do during the sabbatical that I can never do otherwise?” The most obvious answer is worship with another congregation on Sunday morning. So during the sabbatical period my family will not be attending worship here. Instead we will be attending worship at several different churches, probably a different church each week.

The other ways in which I use the time will more closely follow my usual pattern of life, but with a somewhat different focus and emphasis. Without my duties at the church to shape my living, I will turn more completely to the following:

Exploring the classic spiritual disciplines. These include, in addition to prayer, the inward disciplines of meditation, fasting, study, and the outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service.

Spending time in nature. Many of the Psalms celebrate God's majesty as expressed in the created world. Nature has been a favorite meeting house in which to visit God; I'm looking forward to more time there.

Reading. I have a long and well sorted list of works of history, psychology, and theology that are calling my name.

Conferences and seminars that stimulate the mind and heart. The first of these is a conference called “Between Two Worlds: Contemporary Art and The Church”.

Vacationing with family. Recognizing that the years in which the Olsons can vacation as a family are limited—two years from now Peter will be in college—we are planning another road trip, this time to the mid-atlantic states.

Writing. One of the themes I explored in my preaching this spring was the internal, spiritual life of Jesus; my advisors have encouraged me to pursue this further.

Resting. The last few years have been very demanding emotionally, spiritually, and in terms of physical stamina. I am looking forward to some time to just be.

This church is, of course, my spiritual community. The congregation has blessed me with this sabbatical time, and I will need its continued blessing through prayer. To that end I will be communicating to the church my prayer needs and asking your continued support.

- Matt



Notes from the Director of the Music Ministry: **The Music of Rest**

Great musicians agree that the space between musical notes (a.k.a. “rests”) is important; honoring rests is an art form unto itself. W.A. Mozart and Claude Debussy are both credited with claiming that “*the music is not in the notes, but in the silence between them.*” My college piano professor posted a similar quote on his office door, stating that anyone can play the notes, but an artist conveys something special in the space *between* the notes.

How do we treat the summer – the “space between the notes” of our regular life – in special ways? Our Sunday morning rituals change, as Youth Worship and Faith Adventure programs hibernate until the return to school, and the rhythm of worship services will change under new guidance from interim minister Bill Tate and with the absence of Handbell and Chancel choirs. The Music Ministry Team will break for the summer. Holy Mamas will shift gears, meeting on Thursday nights to host an *Bible in 90 Days* fellowship group.

Do you see the riches that God has for us?

New Relationships – Having met Bill and Betty Tate, and hearing briefly about Bill’s call to ministry, I am excited to learn to know them, to learn from and along with them. God has provided a special couple for these months of strange, new music. Let’s all honor this gift by welcoming & learning to know Bill and Betty.

Faith Development –

Bible in 90 Days. If you feel called, and a little daunted, join the Holy Mamas! Thursday evenings 7-8:15pm at FCC, beginning June 4.

*If you can’t join us, please commit to pray during our meeting time: for Olsons, for Tates, for the readers, for our church.

Book Discussions beginning on June 18 with Mitch Albom’s “The Five People You Meet in Heaven”, graciously hosted by Tom & Beth Webb.

Vacation Bible School - Everyone has gifts to share and may receive blessings by participating in this annual outreach ministry.

New Voices – Who will God send to help us lift our hearts in worship as they bring a musical offering? My heart is drawn to an “All in the Family” theme. If you would like to partner musically with family members in worship, or know of families who make music together, please tell me who is on your heart.

In what other areas of life are we presented with these gifts? How will we approach these gifts in artistic ways? What blessings await? Let’s discover together.

Blessings!

~ Rachael Short

The Music Ministry Team: Beth Webb (Chair); Ashleigh Fox; Guven Witteveen; Teresa Zuker; Rachael Short

STAYING CONNECTED

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

Colleen Naru
Hazel Findlay Country Manor
1101 South Scott Road
St. Johns, MI 48879

Check it out!

Check out *The Upper Room* located on the literature rack in the back of the sanctuary. This is a great resource for daily reflection and prayer.



Welcome Rev. Bill Tate & Betty

Special THANKS to
PAUL KILMER

For the Communion Table
Refurbishment. Great Job!!

The “**WHY NOBODY WANTS TO GO TO CHURCH ANYMORE**” book study group asks for your discerning prayers.

After reading the book and working through the “Action Plan”, the group has begun considering just how our congregation can reach out to those who need Christ. Whatever we do—service ministry, beer and Bible outreach, Lifetree Café, or something else yet to be considered-- we want it to be God’s plan for us. So we are praying for his guidance, and asking you, as a member of this congregation, to do the same.

After further discernment the group will present specific recommendations in the early fall.



**Spice up the nights of
July 13—16 with
Vacation Bible School!**

Everyone has gifts to share and blessings to receive by participating in this important annual outreach.

How do you want to get involved? Talk to Cali or Sam Sackrider, Melanie Lounds, Rachael Short, or Rod Fuller.

The Bible in 90 Days - June 4

Dive into God’s word with this overview of the 66 books of the Bible. Get acquainted with the flow of the many people, places and things you’ve known scattered through worship, sermons, and conversations. Contact the church office or see Rachael Short for details of the daily reading plan.

The Five People You Meet in Heaven

The book is available in the back of the sanctuary. Unlike traditional book groups, this one meets to talk just once: June 18 at 6 p.m. for light supper at the home of Tom and Beth Webb, bethwebb@chartermi.net (224-8982). Salad provided; please bring dish to share, 2193 Secretariat Lane.

William (Bill) R. Tate

Personal:

Born, January 21, 1938 and lived in Jackson, Michigan . . . actually local village of Vandercook Lake until leaving for ministry in United Methodist Church in 1967.

Baptized and joined the Methodist Church in 1950.

Married wife Betty in 1957 and celebrated our 58th year this May.

Three children, 10 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren.

Hobbies and pleasurable avocations include reading, gardening, carpentry and long distance cycling.

Travels include two trips to Israel, biking from Paris to Frankfurt, Germany, mission to Mexico and many trips into Canada and throughout the U.S.

Presently living in Charlotte where we have been for the last thirty years. We have constructed our own homes, two in Jackson, one in Barry County and the one where we are presently living.

Employment:

Consumers Energy from 1957 – 1964 as a computer programmer.

Tompkins-Johnson from 1964 – 1967 as manager of DP systems.

United Methodist Church from 1967 – 1972 serving the local churches of Maple Rapids, Lowe and Greenbush as a “three point charge” and Vermontville and Gresham as a “two point charge.”

Kellogg Community College from 1972 – 1978 as manager of computer operations.

Sunfield Church of the Brethren from 1972 – 1973 as interim pastor concurrently with K.C.C.

Union Church of Five Corners from 1973 – 1978 as interim pastor concurrently with K.C.C.

Eaton County Christian Community (DBA Evangel Christian Church) from 1978 – 2015 as full-time pastor.

Education:

Vandercook Lake Public School 1956

Class officer, Student Council President, Varsity Football, Basketball, Track

Michigan State University 1971

Bachelor of Arts, Communication / Speech / Education

United Methodist Church Summer School, Evanston, IL 1967 / 1971

Graduate Studies in Church History / Liturgy / New Testament

Huntington University Graduate School of Christian Ministry

Masters Degree, Theology / Church Adm / Spiritual Formation

Comment:

We (especially Betty) would like to thank everybody for the opportunity to serve as an interim pastor this summer. Our years have been very full and the immediate months ahead looked kind of foreboding with the big change in retirement. We both love being with and around people and having recently visited FCC a few times we are anticipating a very meaningful and joy-filled summer.

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 & Shirleyan Lake
Sexton: Sid Lounds

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

PURPOSE

CELEBRATE God, Jesus & the Holy Spirit in
 worship,
 NURTURE relationships in love and truth,
 SERVE others in our daily lives, and

BOARD OF MINISTRY NOTES

At the Annual Meeting on May 17, we re-elected Tom Doppke & Marilyn Newman to the Board of Ministry, and Bill Richards to a new term on the Board. Vice-Moderator Barb Sherman will become Moderator, and Sid Lounds will become Vice-Moderator. Tom Webb was re-elected to the job of Treasurer. Continuing to serve on the Board will be Dave Elms and Rod Fuller, leaving one seat vacant. We thank Lois Graham for her service – she has “maxed out” in her term on the Board.

We also re-allocated some left-over funds from the parking-lot repair to repair a leak in the roof. Thanks to Paul Martis for coordinating both. The big news is that Matt will be going on sabbatical for the summer. Reverend Bill Tate, recently retired from Evangel Christian Church in Charlotte, will serve in Matt’s place.

First Congregational Church

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Web Site: www.fccsj.com

Facebook: firstcongregationalchurchofst.johns

Hours:

Mon-Wed-Fri 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Sunday Service 10:00 a.m.