

OCTOBER 2014

The Congregational Connection...

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



OCTOBER HIGHLIGHTS



COMMUNITY EVENTS

St. Peter Lutheran School invites all to attend "Hidden Treasure" a silent/live auction Saturday, October 11, 2014, located at 8990 Church Road, St. Johns, MI. Doors open at 6:00pm to an exciting array of items for your bidding pleasure. Numerous food, hotel lodging, conference center, and services certificates; awesome golf packages; merchandise including jewelry, sports items, guitar & case, compound bow & case, auto lift recliner, hayride and bonfire for up to 12 people, an airplane ride, and several antiques/collectibles, are just a few of the many diverse treasures. MSU cheerleaders and "Big Lug" will make an appearance, and Lisa Sillman, a popular songwriter and vocalist will provide music. Tickets are only \$7 in advance and \$10 at the door unless sold out. Contact: Sandy (517-669-8813; Shirley (989) 224-7376; or St. Peter Lutheran School (989) 224-3178.

Winter Coat Drive and Give-A-Way October 7th & 8th

The Basic Needs Center needs your good like new winter coats and clothing to make sure they have enough to serve those in need. Please make sure that all button holes have buttons and zippers work well.

What: All winter items, coats, sweaters, sweat shirts, hats, boots, gloves/mittens

Items may be left at the church (please label boxes or bags accordingly) to be picked up by the Basic Needs Center. For more information, please contact them directly:

The Basic Needs Center
213 N Clinton Ave. St. Johns MI
517-2230-4618 or 989-640-3723

ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT

The study groups are meeting each week:

Sunday 7 p.m.

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

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

SPIRITUAL GIFTS CLASS

Sign-up continues, classes are postponed until November. See page 5 for more information,



CHURCH OFFICE

Questions and concerns can be submitted with your contact information by email, phone, or by leaving a message in the drop box outside the office door.

“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord” (Zachariah 4:6)

It is no secret. The influence of the church in American culture is dimming. Most churches are shrinking, ours included. What can we do? Choose from the following options: (A) Keep smiling, hunker down, and hope for the best, (B) Lament, wail, and flap your arms, and run around in circles shouting, “the sky is falling!”. (C) Tighten controls, revamp systems, and organize financially for a long, orderly decline in an effort to keep the building open around the motto, “In Endowments We Trust”, (D) Seek the Lord.

I chose (D). Choosing (D) means being willing to consider, with fearless rigor, the circumstance of the church in the light of God’s Spirit.

That Spirit, which hovered over the formlessness that was to be earth and brought about the definition of being that we see all around us, including ourselves, is still hovering, still creating. Darkness is being separated from the light, and firm ground separating from the seas of water. Creatures are being formed. Creatures are returning to the earth. Everywhere God is at work, moving, shaping recombining, creating the world anew.

From the beginning the church has come from God’s creating Spirit (*read Acts 2 and following for the story*). We didn’t invent the church. God called it into being. Ever since God spoke congregations have come and congregations have gone. All the while the Spirit has been hovering, creating. Just as in nature nothing is permanent in God’s holy ecology except his loving purpose and the work of his Spirit.

We in the church have been tempted to believe in the church as an organization (We can see a building!) more than we have believed in God and the power of his Holy Spirit (We see only with the eyes of faith). But we can’t stay with it. The hovering Spirit keeps submerging old ways and bringing new into the light, churning, upending, reforming. The grandest edifice built by human hands comes tumbling down, and something new, true to the root, rises. Praise be to God for that!

I chose (D) because I am confident in the work of God’s Spirit, for I know God, and God intends love. In choosing (D) I am seeking the Lord and aligning myself with the Spirit’s work; recreation, motion, life. Exactly what that work looks like, here and now, is beyond my knowing, But I do know this. God is at work, and he is creating the word anew, here, now.

Let’s trust him.—Matt





Notes from the Music Ministry Team:

Discerning Our Way Toward God's Vision

I write this article after a momentous week. During our team discernment process to propose a budget for 2015, Chuck Graham felt called to step aside from directing the Chancel Choir. Those who work closely with him have sensed this impending change, but somehow I was unprepared. The man who directed the Choir for 13 years, whose hand welcomed me in, who encouraged me in my spiritual growth, skill development and ministry at FCC was ready to move on, but I wasn't ready for that change. Disheartened, I wrestled with a lot of questions, prayed a lot, and listened for God's voice.

After several days we met to continue our discernment work. Matt spoke to us about engaging from a deep place with a ministry and he asked us to answer the question, "What do we need in order to do our ministry?" Our language immediately shifted from limits to possibilities as we considered what God would have us do: support people's spiritual growth through study, special events, leadership development, and community outreach... as we continue to work and relate together in preparation for weekly worship services.

Immediately after this meeting, the Chancel Choir met to rehearse for worship. They ministered to me by showing up with enthusiasm and a spirit of collaboration. Jan Myers conducted, but as a group we shaped the expression of our working pieces, learned a song that our youth brought back from camp (*Light the Fire* which they sang with us on Sept. 28), and then we circled our chairs to discern our way forward. Everyone spoke, and again I felt ministered to by wise people of faith. They spoke of honoring a call, even if it's not what we would choose. They spoke of adapting our ways to suit God's purposes. They spoke of opportunity. Together we explored what we need in order to do our ministry.

With gratitude I write that the musicians of FCC know who we serve and we understand the gifts that God gave use to minister with: "faith, hope love, strength, compassion, patience, joy. Music is the medium, but these are the gifts. We understand about faithful service even when we can't see the whole vista of God's vision. When we consider our ministry potential through our own gifts and resources, the list looks more like this: busy schedules, fixed incomes, fatigue, varying levels of musical training, aging bodies. God is good. He as done marvelous things for us and through us.

Our process of discernment is ongoing. So is God's work in and through 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: Susan Kilmer (Chair); Chuck Graham; Nathan Sherman; Rachael Short; Beth Webb; 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



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.

Hello First Congregational Church!

I'm Sandy Kemp, your new office administrator. I live in Elsie with husband David, my dog and kitty and 2 horses. My mother (93) has always been active in church as a lay speaker and associate pastor (and she *still* preaches when an open ear is available) so I grew up in church. I retired in May from MSU after working there for 28 years, but just couldn't sit at home for too long. At the exact time when I decided to look for part time work, this church posted the administrator position—and here I am! I totally believe that this is a “God Thing,” nothing really happens by coincidence.

If you see me running around town, most likely TSC where I'll be picking up horse feed or maybe WalMart, please stop me and say hello. I look forward to meeting you all!

Sandy (Grubaugh) Kemp
Mail2sandy.fccsj@gmail.com
Hours: M-W-F 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.



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 November. 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.

The 2nd Annual Mint Festival Rummage was a huge success. Our goal was to earn \$3,500.00 but we exceeded that and to date have raised \$4,340.38. A huge thank you to everyone who donated items, organized, set up, tore down, worked or prayed for our success. A lot of new friendships were made, new memories created and God's work was seen in several instances. We look forward to next year!

— Barb Sherman



LOST BUT NOW IS FOUND

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

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
Chancel Choir Director: Dr. Charles Graham
Hands of Harmony Director: Susan Kilmer
Custodians: Faith Hazard & Shirleyan 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
Lou Neuder.....517-204-1593
Marilyn Newman.....517-331-3457
Jan Myers.....989-682-4194
Larry Salters.....989-834-5166

First Congregational Church

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Fax: 989-224-8306

E-Mail: fccsj@4wbi.net

Web Site: www.fccsj.com

Facebook:

firstcongregationalchurchofst.johns

Hours:

Mon-Wed-Fri 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Sunday Service 11:00 a.m.

BOARD OF MINISTRY JOYS AND CONCERNS

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

