



THE PARCHMENT

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC
2001 NILES AVENUE, ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

FEBRUARY 2012

A Love Story

February 14 is Valentine's Day, and there's no better time to read a love story. I've got one for you. It begins with a baby, unplanned, before the wedding. Big deal, you say. That happens all the time. Sometimes the story goes downhill from there, with love never blossoming and one disappointment following another. In some of those stories the wedding follows; in others it doesn't.

In this love story the man and woman stay together, convinced God is behind it all. Shortly into the second chapter we discover that there isn't much in this story about the couple's love for one another. It's about the baby now grown up and God's love for everyone. The story is full of surprises, of twists and turns, of a love tougher than any tough love you've ever heard about, and yet powerfully tender enough to disarm mean spirits and heal broken hearts.

The story began at Christmas, with THAT baby. It continues as we read how he engages those around him—closest friends and total strangers—with challenges to clean up their act and promises to pull them out of the ditch of despair, into a life worth living. There's a synopsis in John 3:16-17 (The Message):

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again.

Even without a Valentine, each of us has a God who loves us in deepest ways. So, I have two recommendations for you:

1. Send someone a spiritual Valentine. Romantic Valentines are sweet and revealing if you have someone appropriate to give one to. Spiritual Valentines are expressions of love you can send to anyone, regardless of romance. Romantic ones are heart-shaped. Spiritual ones are care-shaped. Romantic ones comes with kisses and maybe chocolates. Spiritual ones come with thanks and encouragement.
2. Beginning February 22, Ash Wednesday, let's read the gospel according to John together. As we read through the following six weeks of Lent, keep your eyes open for the ways God so loved the world, God so loves you, and how you can so love the world of God.

Have a heart. Heal a heart.
Happy Valentine's Day.
Dr. Bob

MINISTERIAL STAFF

**Senior Minister
Rev. Dr. Bob Braman**

**Associate Minister
Rev. Kathryn Nix**

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

**September to May
9:15 a.m.
Adult Classes**

**9:15 a.m.
Confirmation Class**

**Held During Worship
Ages 4 to 2nd grade**

**DIVE Class
For 3rd—5th graders**

**Worship
10:25 a.m.**

**OFFICE HOURS
Monday - Thursday
8 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

**Phone:
(269) 983-5519**

**WEBSITE
fccstjoseph.org**

**EMAIL
office@fccstjoseph.org**

Ash Wednesday Service

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent. Lent (from a word that simply means *Spring*) is the season of focusing on Jesus Christ, from his temptation in the desert, his call to be disciples, and his extreme love that was misunderstood by those who tried to kill it by killing him. His story almost has a sad ending, but instead there is a surprise ending. We prepare for the story and the season at the Table of Communion and the mark of ashes from last year's palms.

**We'll gather on February 22 at 6:30 p.m. Bring a friend.
Bring your heart.**

What Our Church is About

The Invitation to Discipleship from Jesus Christ - Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me;

for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

We grow as disciples through these 6 practices:

- ✠ Daily Prayer
- ✠ Bible Reading
- ✠ Weekly Worship
- ✠ Generous Giving
- ✠ Selfless Serving
- ✠ Spiritual Friendships

Our Vision

As believers in Jesus Christ, we will be a church of vibrant Christians.

Our Mission

We welcome people to faith in Jesus Christ to

- ✠ Discover God
- ✠ Equip one another for life
- ✠ Reach inward and outward to serve

Pastor Katie

The month of February is more than just the Super bowl of the NFL, it's also a "Super Big" month for our Christian Education Board! Did you know that there is an event happening every weekend in February?

- February 5 is Souper Bowl Sunday. That's right, Soup-er Bowl Sunday. The idea began over 20 years ago with a youth group saying a simple prayer "*Lord, as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us to be mindful of those without even a bowl of soup to eat.*" Since then over \$81 million dollars has been raised on Super Bowl Sunday to support local food pantries across the nation. Our youth will be continuing the tradition Sunday, February 5. Please bring a can or two of soup to worship, all proceeds will benefit the Benton Harbor Street Ministries Food Pantry.
- Saturday, February 11 is our first Marriage Retreat. Hosted by Dr. Bob, this workshop will be a combination of a relaxing escape from daily routines as well as a chance to spend time with your spouse and strengthen your marriage relationship. There will be an opportunity for a couple's massage, a romantic lunch together, childcare, and lots of great goodies and resources to take home. RSVP by Monday, February 6.
- February 19 is our second parent seminar for our Milestones celebrations. A Milestone is a major faith event in a child's life, such as baptism, first Bibles, or high school graduation. As the church begins to prepare for these important celebrations, we want to encourage parents to attend this seminar as part of their preparation. The class is 2 hours long and held immediately after the worship service. The purpose of this seminar is to help equip and empower parents to be the main faith teacher's in their child's life. It's a great time to connect with other parents as well as discuss creative ways of integrating faith into family life.
- Finally, February 24-26 is our Youth Group Winter Retreat! Over 22 middle and senior high youth will be taking over the Five Pines Camp in Berrien Spring. In addition to lots of games in the snow, we will be learning about one of the practices of a disciple – worship! Please keep the youth, and especially the parent volunteers, in your prayers as we prepare for the weekend. And make sure to ask the youth about it when we return!

It's a wonderful busy month in February with lots of opportunities for all ages to grow and strengthen your faith. And don't forget some of the great events that are already occurring, such as our Sunday morning Bible classes or our Wednesday night activities. It's a "Super" time to get connected!

Women's Book Study – God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible by Adam Nicolson on Tuesday, February 28, 9:30 – 11:00 in the Greeting Room

“If a child is ever the apple of her parents' eye or an idea seems as old as the hills, if we are at death's door or at our wits' end, if we have gone through a baptism of fire or are about to bite the dust, if it seems at times that the blind are leading the blind or we are casting pearls before swine, if you are either buttering someone up or casting the first stone, the King James Bible, whether we know it or not, is speaking through us. from “The King James Bible: Making a Masterpiece” National Geographic, December 2011

Join us for a discussion of Nicolson's informative and engaging account of how the greatest work of English prose was created. The author explores the diverse personalities involved as well as the political and religious struggles of 17th century England that shaped this majestic translation.

As a follow up to our discussion we'll travel to Hope College on Thursday, March 8 to see the exhibit **Manifold Greatness: The Creation and Afterlife of the King James Bible** and attend a lecture, “The First Edition of the King James Bible: Misprints and Misfortunes”. We'll meet in the church parking lot at 8:30 a.m. and carpool to Holland. Following the lecture we'll have lunch and will return home around 4:00 p.m. If you are interested in joining the group, please contact Beth Kenagy, 428-3347.

**Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency
needs your help!**

Who: Anyone who can lift a can of food or push a cart, ages 12 and older.

What: Distributing food to seniors and those in need.

When: Wednesday, February 15, from 9:00-12:00 p.m. and 1:00-3:00 p.m. You can work an hour or a shift.

Where: SMCAA warehouse, 311 Miller St, Benton Harbor. You can meet us there or meet in church parking lot and car pool or caravan to location.

Please sign up on the church bulletin board or contact JoAnn Sprayberry at 921-1659 or email j_sprayberry@hotmail.com.

Christian Education for Adults

Sunday Mornings at 9:15 a.m.

“Counterfeit Gods” by Tim Keller – led by Dennis Thompson

Who can deny that some of our greatest hopes have been disappointing. Could it be that we have made some of them into gods? Could our heart in fact be an “*idol-factory?*” There is deeper hope, lasting hope. Discover it. Order the book from *Parable Books* and join in.

Genesis – led by Tom Fowler

Find essential truths in this first book of the Bible, the stage-setter for everything that follows, right up to Jesus Christ, who himself came “in the beginning,” promising to make us into new creatures in a new creation.

Wednesday Nights at 6:30, following dinner at 5:45 – It’s free!

FaithWeavers – in the Library

Designed for parents with children in Sunday School, we work through the lessons our children will be delving into the following Sunday, learning how to make them real in family life.

Missions: At the Heart of Being Christian – led by Dr. Bob

Missions is an essential part of the Christian faith, the Christian life, the Christian church. Explore what, when where, why and how.

What’s New in the Library?

New books (donated and purchased) are viewed and have been added to the shelves. You might enjoy:



The Shack by William P. Young

Making Toast by Roger Rosenblat

What Good is God? by Phillip Yancey

Boundaries with Kids by Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend

Can’t Wait to get to Heaven by Fannie Flagg

Is there a book you would like to see in the Library? Please contact Patty Nordberg (429-7297) or Niki Schreiber (429-5961).

YOUTH ACTIVITIES February 2012

Wednesday Evenings ~ Midweek Break

Need a pause from homework and sports practice? Come to church for fun, games, activities, and a opportunity to hang out with some of your favorite friends! Meet at 6:30 p.m. in the Youth Room. (Middle & Senior High Youth)

Sunday Evenings ~ LOL (Lessons on Life)

Want to go a little deeper? Than this is for you. It is a chance to get together and talk about real issues of faith and life.

February Dates

1st ~ Midweek Break

5th ~ Super Bowl Party at the Paul's home

8th ~ Midweek Break

12th ~ LOL

"Do we need God if evolution explains life?"

15th ~ Midweek Break

19th ~ Confirmation

LOL

"Is God worthy of worship if he kills innocent children?"

22nd ~ Midweek Break

24th - 26th ~ WINTER RETREAT

29th ~ Midweek Break

Fourth Quarter Remembrance Fund Update

The balance for the fund as of December 31, 2011, was \$13,742.29. Memorial Bible donations are still being accepted to sponsor a new pew Bible. Call the church office if you are interested.

Your Remembrance Committee welcomes questions concerning the fund and hopes that you will consider the fund an appropriate way to remember a friend or loved one.

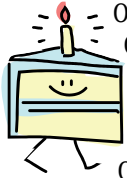
Remembrance Committee,

Evelyn Edmunds, Midge Carr & Carol Syles

December Statistical Information

Income for Dec.	\$ 73,532.85	Year-to-Date Income	\$ 493,597.07
Expenses for Dec.	<u>48,061.52</u>	Year-to-Date Expense	<u>450,198.00</u>
Gain/Loss for Dec.	\$ 25,471.33	Year-to-Date Gain/Loss	\$ 43,399.07

February Birthdays



- 02 ~ Sallie Coldren
- 02 ~ Caryl Eller
- 05 ~ Carol Geldhof
- 05 ~ Betty Westmaas
- 06 ~ Ken Zimmerman
- 07 ~ Georgina Haight
- 11 ~ Nina Dominy
- 11 ~ Adam Parin
- 12 ~ Bob Cultice
- 12 ~ Shirley Garey
- 12 ~ Karen Mitchell
- 14 ~ Perry Ballard
- 15 ~ Debbie Wood
- 20 ~ Jim Meister
- 21 ~ Deb Burkhard
- 22 ~ Bill Chickering
- 22 ~ Nancy Gaynor
- 22 ~ Daniel Michaels
- 23 ~ Brady Iddings
- 25 ~ Ron Gaynor
- 26 ~ Karen Molineaux
- 27 ~ Carol Johnson
- 27 ~ Bill Sinclair
- 28 ~ Kim Capes
- 28 ~ Walt Waldenmaier

The Search Continues

Our search for a Parish Nurse continues. Our former Parish Nurses, Janel and Carolyn established a strong and vibrant ministry that is vital to the healing mission of our church. The Search Committee is committed to finding just the right person to carry on their fine service to our church family. The position is posted at www.lakelandhealth.org with a click on "careers".

"Young at Hearts" ~ Come and dine with us!

We have some great programs for the 2012 Season that we hope you will enjoy.

March 15

Faye & Tim Chamberlain will dress in period costumes and transport us to the Civil War period.

May 17

Director Katie Rohwer and the Lakeshore Choir will entertain us once again in song.

July 19

Ed & AJ Jaeger-Heiden will tell us of their adventure this past summer as keepers of the Tawas Point Lighthouse in East Tawas, MI for a week.

September 13

Chuck Nelson from the Sarett Center will share his trip to Bahia, Mexico to observe the whales.

November 15

Our organist Paul Flyger will present a Thanksgiving concert.

December 13

Dan Hendricks from Lake MI College will be presenting a Christmas concert with one of the college's ensemble.

These programs **are open to everyone (friends included)** in the church. Lunch is served at noon so if you work you are welcome to join us just for lunch.

We hope that you will give us a try. We promise a delicious meal, great entertainment and wonderful Christian fellowship!

Women's News

Women's Fellowship will meet on Wednesday, February 15 at 10:30 a.m. in the Parlor. All women of the church are invited to attend. Following the meeting we all go out to lunch. Please join us!

Mary Martha Circle will not meet in February.

Mary Preston Guild will meet Wednesday, February 8. Time and place to be announced.



February 11
"Water—part 2"

February 25
"Predicament and Promises"

We meet in the Gathering Room for breakfast at 8:00 a.m.
Questions? Call Bill Bock at 983-7576.

Altar Flowers

If you would like to provide flowers for our altar, the Altar Guild has the following dates open: March 18, May 6, July 22, and September 2 Please call the church office (983-5519) if you are interested.

Women's Bible Study

You are invited to join this vibrant group of women in *Experiencing the Psalms*. This study, led by Diana Seaman and Ruthann Miller, includes materials from the online study by Ralph Wilson and the *Serendipity Bible*. The group meets in the Gathering Room on Thursdays from 1:30-3:00 p.m.

If you would like to join the group but don't have internet access, we will provide lessons for you. Please contact Ruthann Miller at 465-6097 for more information.

Worship Bags

You will find worship bags for the children located in the Narthex. Books to look at and pages to color have been added to each bag. We try to keep the Noah's Ark bags for the younger children and the ones with animal pairs for the older children. If your child colors a page, please feel free to tear the page out and take home with you.

Nursery Schedule for February

5th ~ Kelly Yeager & Mary Griffin

12th ~ Kelly Yeager & Karol Paul

19th ~ Jen Ort & Kelly Vukorpa

26th ~ Jen Ort & Ruthann Miller

Questions regarding the nursery schedule,
please call Patty Nordberg at 429-7297
or email her at pnordberg@comcast.net.