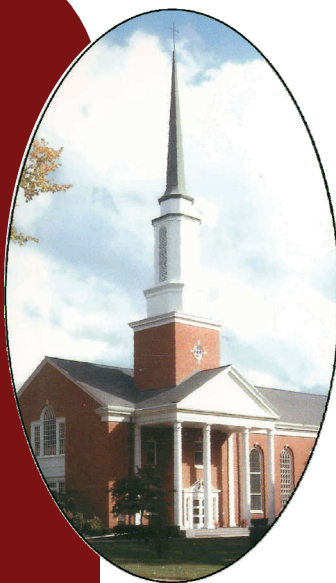


# THE PARCHMENT

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January 2010



## Two for Two Thousand Ten

There was this well-respected 80-year-old rabbi and this came-from-the-other-side-of-the-tracks Baptist preacher. One day a sports writer received a letter from the rabbi, who had a very healthy congregation, meeting in paid-for facilities, and who asked him to speak at his funeral, whenever that might be. On another day he went to see the preacher in a big old church without heat and with a big hole in the roof, a church into which poured not only unwanted rain but also the poorest of the poor, who were wanted. And you thought because I began with a rabbi and a preacher this was going to be a joke! For that I would have needed a priest, too.

It's not a joke. It's a small bit of the puzzle that makes up the true stories written by Mitch Albom in his latest book, "Have a Little Faith." Well before the end of the stories, he provides some very good reasons why you should have much more than a little faith. I think he puts the "little" in the title because he doesn't want to scare anyone away like he might if the title were "Have A Lot of Faith" or "Have Faith" or "Believe!"

Reading "Have a Little Faith" is a good way to begin a new year. It's a gentle but nonetheless powerful persuasion about the genuine need to embrace God in very big and seemingly insignificant ways. As you might have guessed by now, I'm not Jewish, but I resonated with much that the rabbi said. Nor am I a Baptist preacher, but I grasp his story, his pain, and his hope as well.

The rabbi had been raised in a faithful family, had once failed an entrance requirement to attend a Jewish seminary, then later succeeded. His first synagogue was to be his last. He served there for over sixty years. Some of you will immediately think I'm building a case for me to stay here at First Congregational at least until I'm 80. As angels have said many times, "Fear not." So the story is about him but it goes beyond him, involving the lives of countless people trying to stay the course in life.

(Continued on the inside cover.)

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UCC**  
**2001 Niles Ave • Saint Joseph, MI • 49085**

**SUNDAY**  
**SCHEDULE**

**September**  
**to May**

**9:15 a.m.**

**Adult Classes**

**9:30 a.m.**

**Children's Choir  
&  
Middle High  
Youth Class**

**10:25 a.m.**

**Worship**

**June**  
**to August**

**9:55 a.m.**

**Worship**

**OFFICE**  
**HOURS**

**Monday ~**

**Thursday**

**8 a.m. ~**

**3:45 p.m.**

Before the Baptist preacher became a preacher he had a terrible life, characterized by everything degrading, disgusting and destructive. Yet in the midst of it he found the grace of Jesus Christ, and he has been spending his later years extending that grace to some of the lowest you'll ever meet and not meet, in one of the most trouble-beset cities of our nation: Detroit.

You can check out the "I Am My Brother's Keeper" ministry at <http://iammybrotherskeeper-pc.org>. There you will also find a link to Mitch Albom's website with more about the stories. You can order the book here in town through Parable Christian or Forever Books.

A rabbi and a priest get into a car accident. Both cars are demolished but neither is hurt. The rabbi sees the priest's collar and says, "That we are unhurt must be a sign from God that we should be friends forever!" The priest agrees. The rabbi continues, "And here is a bottle of kosher wine I bought for a Passover Seder, and it is unbroken! Another sign! We should drink it to celebrate!" Agreement again. The priest takes a "healthy" drink and hands it back to the rabbi, who puts the cap back on. "Aren't you going to have any?" asks the priest? "No," replies the rabbi, "I think I'll just wait for the police."

That's a joke. Albom's book isn't. Have a Happy New Year and have more than a little faith. And drink more life than wine.

Dr. Bob

**Annual Meeting**

The Annual Meeting of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ of St. Joseph, Michigan will be held immediately following the worship service on Sunday, January 24, 2010. All members are encouraged to attend, to discuss all business at hand, and to discern the will of God for our congregation.

## Health News from Janel

As we begin this new journey into the New Year, I want to visit with you about another type of trek... one to good health. One of the best ways to protect and promote health is by staying active, and one of the best ways is to do so by Staying in Step with the Lord. Indeed, Proverbs reminds us that, "... a prudent man gives thoughts to his steps." (Proverbs 14:15).

### 10,000 Steps to Health

There is ample scientific evidence to support that for most people, walking can be an excellent form of exercise. It is simple, can be done alone or with other people, requires little equipment, and national health experts now recommend that we get a 30-minute brisk walk everyday. A healthy diet and physical activity such as brisk walking can reduce the likelihood of experiencing some chronic diseases by 50-70%. To begin enjoying the health benefits, the average person needs to walk approximately 10,000 steps per day (about 5 miles). Without an intentional exercise program, most of us only take 4,000-6,000 steps per day. Additional steps are needed to improve our health and lose weight.

### Your Parish Nurse's Prescription for Beginning your Walking Program

- Check with your health care provider first to make sure you can start a brisk walking program
- Use a pedometer to keep track of your daily steps (they provide instant feedback and can help to maintain your motivation)
- Check your equipment: Do you have good shoes ... Reflective clothing for nighttime or early morning walking?
- Start small and gradually increase your goals by 200-500 more steps per week
- Consider multi-tasking: Walk your dog with a family member and catch up on each other's activities, or take a meditative walk
- Accountability: Tell someone about your plan and ask them to help hold you accountable
- Keep At It! It takes several months to turn a behavior into a new habit
- Consider working a prayer walk into your wholistic health program

### Staying in Step with the Lord

It has been said, that the best health advice is to take all of our steps, no matter how large or small, hand in hand with the Lord. Galatians 5:2 encourages us with these words, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." We can improve our health by walking more, and in addition by being aware of our "walk with the Lord". Why not challenge yourself to intentionally recognize the power of the Lord along side you with all of your steps. If I can be of any help to you in walking, or in your walk, please contact me. I would love to share in your physical and spiritual walk. Your Parish Nurse, Janel.

## Hypertension

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 29 percent of men over the age of twenty have hypertension which is defined by the CDC as a persistent systolic pressure of 140 mmHg or higher or a diastolic pressure of 90 mmHg or higher. The percentage of men with hypertension is even higher among African-Americans at 40.6 percent.

Clearly, many people living with hypertension are undiagnosed, in fact, about one-third of people with high blood pressure don't know it. Beginning on Tuesday, February 2 at 6:30 p.m., our congregation will be offered an eight week program entitled, "Jacob's Journey" for all the members of the congregation, as well as friends you may want to invite.

The purpose of this program is to help you detect hypertension and treat it appropriately as early as possible and to support those of you who may already been diagnosed with high blood pressure, as you follow your doctor's orders. We will learn more about Jacob from the book of Genesis, and follow his journey to wholeness. Along the way we will have fellowship, healthy food, and fun.

Sign-up at the counter outside the Parish Nurse's office. Please contact Janel, Parish Nurse with any questions. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) can be accessed on-line at [www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/facts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/facts.htm)

## Boy Scout Troop 623 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Our church-sponsored Boy Scout Troop 623 (formerly Troop 23) will celebrate its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary on **Saturday, January 30, 2010**. A celebration reception will be held in Fellowship Hall from 3:00-5:00 p.m., with a program at 4:00 p.m. Refreshments will be served. A special DVD of early Mackinac Island trips will be shown. Former Scouts, leaders, families and the public are invited. The troop was started in 1920 and remains one of the oldest troops in the nation. We are also celebrating Scouting's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year.

The scout Sunday charter presentations will be held the next day on **Sunday, January 31** during worship. Scouts will serve as greeters, ushers, and carry the flags into the sanctuary. The Fellowship Hour will be held downstairs in Fellowship Hall so that the congregation can view all the Scout displays. We are seeking former troop members, leaders, and any old photos, records or memorabilia for donation or on loan for our displays. Contact Gordon Schreiber, 429-5961, or e-mail at [gschreib3@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gschreib3@sbcglobal.net).

## **Sixth Annual Youth Super Bowl Sunday Sub Sale!**

The youth will once again be making delicious subs for you and your family to enjoy on Super Bowl Sunday. Fill out the enclosed form and return it to the church office. Orders will be taken until January 31 and will be ready for pick up after worship on February 7.



**Come join us for fun and fellowship  
from 6:30-8:00 Wednesday nights:  
January 6, 13, 20, & 27**

## **Youth Group Winter Retreat**

We're headin' north! (Well, just about an hour north). Seventeen members of our youth group are signed up for our winter retreat at Camp Geneva in Holland. We're leaving on Friday, January 29 and return on the 31st. Please pray for safe roads but enough snow for sledding and snowballs.

## **Let's go sledding!**

We are planning a family sledding day at Five Pines in Berrien Springs on Sunday, January 24 from 2:00–4:30 p.m. There is a lodge for food and hot chocolate to warm you up and lots of tubes to fly down the hills. What a great way to spend time with your family and your church family. If we have a group of 15 or more under 5 are free (if they sit on an adult's lap), \$6/6-11 year-olds and \$7/12 and up.

Questions? Contact Cindi Collum at 422-6149 or call the church office at 983-5519 and make your reservations. See you on the hill!!

## Men's Ministry

Join us at 8:00 a.m. for a hot breakfast in the Gathering Room. Our video series is entitled, "That the World May Know." Please mark your calendar for our upcoming meetings:

**January 9** - Lesson 4: *Confronting Evil*

**January 23** - *Iron of Culture*

If you have any questions, please call Bill Bock at 983-7576.

## Confirmation Class Begins January 10

What: ..... Confirmation Class

Who: ..... 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students (or older if you haven't been Confirmed)

Why: ..... To learn the importance and basics of being a Christian believer

When: ..... January 10 through March 28 - Every Sunday morning (with one exception) from 9:15 to 10:15 a.m.

By Whom: ..... Dr. Bob and Nancy Fowler

With What: .... Materials will be provided

Where: ..... The Youth Room downstairs

AND ..... All families—parents and siblings—are asked to come to lunch in Fellowship Hall on the first Sunday, January 10, after the Worship Service. We'll give a brief overview of the Confirmation Plan and explain why your involvement is indispensable.

Questions:..... Don Margoni 983-1370 Nancy Fowler 429-3206 Dr. Bob 983-5519

## Associate Minister Search Committee

The Search Committee has been hard at work, meeting almost weekly, holding over a dozen 30-minute telephone interviews, following up with 90-minute phone interviews, and processing many résumés. We have spoken to some very capable people and are making sure we find the very best person to continue our Christian Education and Youth Ministry. Please continue to pray for us.

## Laity Sunday

January 24 is the date for our annual Laity Sunday, the service planned and led by our church members. The word *laity* comes from the Greek word *laos*, which means *people*. The *laity* or *lay people* are those who are not clergy. That's the language lesson for today. In the pulpit this Laity Sunday will be Bill Benner.



The Altar Guild has the following dates open for flowers for the church altar: January 24, March 21, April 18, and May 16. If you are interested in providing flowers for a Sunday,



## January Birthdays

- 01—Tammy Thomas  
02—David Resch  
05—Micki Schmidt  
08—Beth Kenagy  
09—John Havenaar  
09—Jean Spelman  
09—Pat Sprunger  
11—Arlene Emery  
12—Rowan Conybeare  
12—Kristin Posey  
13—Vicki Cook  
13—Janet Zielke  
14—Avery Conybeare  
14—Jeff Fetters  
14—Don Oderkirk  
15—Claire Fetters  
17—Cathy Borre  
17—Les Elwell  
19—Evelyn Edmunds  
19—Judy Hoffman  
20—Bryce Jones  
20—Janet Ordiway  
21—Katherine Yircott  
22—Sharon Linden  
22—Anita Shadler  
23—Shirley Moeckel  
24—Judy Lord  
24—John Miller  
26—Gareth Dominy  
27—Mara Case  
28—Norm Smith  
29—Daryl Godke  
30—Katie Teifke  
31—Casey Collum  
31—Don Eppelheimer  
31—Sue Warren



## “Young at Hearts”

We will be taking our winter break to give all our volunteers a rest during January and February. We will meet again on March 18.

## Circle News

**Women’s Fellowship**—All women of the church are welcome to participate in Women’s Fellowship. We will meet at 10:00 a.m. on January 20 in the Parlor.

**Mary Martha Circle**—Will meet on Tuesday, January 12 at 1:00 p.m. in the Parlor.

**Mary Preston Guild**—Will meet Wednesday, January 13 at 4:00 p.m. in the Parlor. The program will be presented by Parish Nurse, Janel Groth.

## Bridge Club

We will meet Wednesday, January 13 at 1:00 p.m. in the Gathering Room.

## An opportunity awaits you!

Women’s Fellowship is looking for people to assist with church funeral luncheons. This is a rewarding activity as well as an opportunity to help fellow members during a difficult time in their lives.

If you’re interested in learning more about this service, please call Judy Whittier (429-8839) or the church office (983-5519).



To Curt Plummer on the death of his brother, Donald who died November 30 and his mother, Jeanette who died December 24.

To Dorothy Ticknor on the death of her husband, George. He died December 2.

To Bill Schalk on the death of his mother, Mildred who died on December 9.

## Church Bylaw Amendments

Over the past several months, your new Moderator, Paula Thompson; Past Moderator, Beth Kenagy; Dr. Braman; and I conducted a review of the Official Church bylaws, which last had a major revision in 2001. What we discovered is that our bylaws have stood the test of time and, for the most part, were good to go for the future as well. However, in the process we discovered a few typographical errors to correct; found that some language was dated and needed revision; and identified other provisions that warranted change to reflect our current practices. The suggested changes were presented to Church Council, reviewed by boards, and discussed at the All Board Planning Meeting in October. In December, Church Council voted to present the amendments to the congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting on January 24, 2010.

Copies of a draft of the amendments, showing the proposed changes, are available in the church library for your review. To save money, we printed a limited number of copies, and would prefer that you review the document in the Library, and then leave it for others to read. If you need to take a copy with you, there will be a sign-out sheet so that we keep track of the copies we've prepared.

On Sunday, January 17, I will lead a meeting following the worship service to discuss and answer questions about the proposed amendments. Then, on January 24 at the Annual Meeting, we will present the bylaws for a vote. A two-thirds majority of the members in attendance is required to amend the bylaws.

Bob Ehrenberg



Our church is starting a new project—FCC Family Bell Choir, open to anyone between the ages of 7 and 107. You do not need to have prior music reading skills or experience to be a part of this group. What is essential is your commitment and enthusiasm. Playing bells as a team is fun and develops coordination between hands, eyes and ears. Our rehearsals will last only one hour a week in the evening during the school year.

If you are interested in learning more about the bells, please call Vlado at 473-2826 or email him at [vladoslavujevic@yahoo.com](mailto:vladoslavujevic@yahoo.com).

## Adult Sunday School Class

Dennis Thompson will be starting the winter adult class on Sunday, January 10 at 9:15 a.m. in the Gathering Room. The class will use a study guide from InterVarsity Press: *Psalms: Prayers of the Heart* by Eugene Peterson. Class members can purchase their own study guide at Parable Books in St. Joe.

## **Women's Book Study**

*Casting Off* by Nicole Dickson is our January selection. This engaging novel is set on a small island near the western coast of Ireland. The images of "casting off" stitches on a sweater, a boat from the shore, and painful memories are reflected in this story of healing and redemption. We will meet on Tuesday, January 26 at 9:30 a.m. in the Parlor. Elizabeth Upton will lead the discussion.

## **Sincere Appreciation**

We would like to thank the church boards and members of the church for the use of the building, your monetary donation and your gifts to the children in Foster Care. The children's Christmas party on December 4 was a great success! We deeply appreciate the support that you have given us!

The Children's Services Staff.

## **Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!**

Dear Congregational Friends, Again, thank you for the beautiful red poinsettia. My wish is for a blessed new year for all. Alice Collins

I want to thank Mary Martha Circle for the delicious cookies and the church for the lovely poinsettia plant that was delivered to me. Dorothy Pawlacyk

To our church friends, We are the happy recipients of a beautiful poinsettia plant from the church. The cookies are delicious and we thank our friends for your thoughtfulness. May the blessings of Christmas be with you all year. Arlene & Bill Emery

Dear Church Friends, I want to say how much I appreciate the Christmas gift of a beautiful poinsettia and a box of wonderful cookies. It was very thoughtful. It's so nice to be remembered. May I wish you all a most blessed Christmas. Carl Viehe

Dear Church Friends, There are not enough words to express the thanks that I feel for your thoughtfulness and your kindness at my birthday and the Christmas plant. I can share my goodies and they make me doubly happy. I do thank you most sincerely. With my friendship and love for you all. Dixie Edmunds

## A New Year's Blessing

May God make your year a happy one!  
Not by shielding you from all sorrows and pain,  
But by strengthening you to bear it as it comes;  
Not by making your path easy,  
But by making you sturdy to travel any path;  
Not by taking hardships from you,  
But by taking fear from your heart;  
Not by granting you unbroken sunshine,  
But by keeping your face bright, even in the shadows;  
Not by making your life always pleasant,  
But by showing you when people and their causes need you most,  
And by making you anxious to be there to help.  
God's love, peace, hope and joy to you for the year ahead.



God is  
still speaking,



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