



THE PARCHMENT

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

JANUARY 2012

You're Invited

I'm not going to write about resolutions. I'm not even going to mention the word. For too many people it does nothing but stir up memories of failure, regret, and guilt. Broken promises litter our minds with words like diet, exercise, floss, taking out the trash, not kicking the dog, forgiving, not cussing (or at least cutting back). The broken pieces of Dos and Don'ts threaten to cut us, or open up old wounds. Who needs that?

But we can still think about new beginnings. Just because experience has taught us not to make brash promises, that doesn't mean we should avoid hopes and dreams of something fresh and new. That's the positive side of January 1st, an annual reminder not to give up. The negative side is that around January 10th we realize the sun rises and sets just like it did last year, it's still cold, and everything looks about the same.

We need that January calendar. It's indispensable. But we also need the Christian calendar, which began with getting ready for Jesus, which is really about God getting ready for us. God got ready for us by providing a way back to God, a way not littered with broken promises but marked with notes of invitation to come Home, where we belong. Come Home to forgiveness, to inner cleansing, to a release from, not an increase of, guilt. Come Home by believing that Jesus truly makes a difference, not just personal and private and in principle, but in all our relationships and in a way that we can know and share with others.

There's an old song.... No. I'm going to avoid references to things that only those over 50 can remember. Forget it. There's a new song that God places in our hearts when we tell Him that we're ready to sing again. It's GOD singing, laughing, arms open wide, and if we're determined to follow through, it does not end like a resolution that has fallen to the floor and broken into sharp pieces. In fact, even if we fall, the promises stay intact, and God simply waits for us to decide we're going to stand again.

I know all of that because I know Jesus. I know about Jesus from the Scriptures, which have once again revealed to us the circumstances of his birth, and which are ready for us to once again discover everything else about him, including his desire to take up residence in our hearts.

Here's what I suggest for a fresh start in 2012: Let's talk more about knowing Jesus, in the many, varied ways that happens with people, with us. Let's not be shy or timid or afraid of broken promises that might cut us. Let's be bold enough to embrace Him and know that he will mend us and renew us. Here's how Peter said it:

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.

Jr. & Sr. High Classes

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

What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have him, this Father of our Master Jesus! Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven—and the future starts now!
1 Peter 1:3-4

Happy New You!

Dr. Bob

Epiphany – The Feast of Epiphany is always on January 6, because it immediately follows the 12 days of Christmas. Epiphany means “appearing.” Sometimes we use it to refer to Jesus “appearing” to the non-Jews when the magi came to see him. Those magi represent all “foreigners” and this event declares that Jesus came for everyone, not just the Jews. At other times we use it to refer to Jesus “appearing” to his own people as the Messiah, as he emerged from the Jordan River having been baptized by John the Baptist. Jesus is still appearing!

Laity Sunday

Each year on Laity Sunday the worship service is designed and led by people other than our ministers. This service is coordinated by our Diaconate Board. The Preacher alternates from male to female each year, with others participating in various roles. This year Laity Sunday will be on January 22, and our Preacher will be Jeff Terry. Jeff works in the realm of “corporate citizenship” and “social responsibility.” He is employed by Amway of Ada, MI, putting into the hands of undernourished people a nutrition supplement developed by Amway. He does this by working with many NGOs (Non-Government Organizations) in several countries. Jeff’s spirit is fueled by God’s Spirit. He is kept enriched by his wife Jen, and he is kept hopping by Leah, Ethan, and A. J. You can see an interview with Jeff and his work at: <http://blip.tv/rainmakerstv/amway-s-global-social-responsibility-5689880>

Pastor Katie

A new year approaches, and wonderful new possibilities are happening here within our faith family! I know that Eric and I are excited about the newest member of our family (currently nicknamed Peanut) making an appearance sometime in late summer. As I begin to prepare for the joys and surprises of being a parent, I am so happy to announce some of the great resources and equipping opportunities that the Christian Education Board will be offering to parents and families in 2012.

The big announcement is the launch of our new “Milestones” program. I first heard about this idea at a Children’s Ministry Conference in Chicago and fell in love with this practical and supportive way of helping parents become the main faith teachers in their child’s life. The research, and I’m sure your own experience, goes to show that the greatest factor on a child’s faith development is their parents (not their pastor, though we do play a big part). A Milestone is a major celebration in a child’s faith journey. By offering a parent seminar before each Milestone graduation, the Christian Education Board is partnering with parents to offer support and practical suggestions on how to help children grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. You can check out a more detailed explanation on our church’s website. The first two parent seminars will be January 22 and February 19 immediately following our worship service, and I hope to see you at either one!

Another great opportunity that the Christian Education Board is sponsoring is a one-day marriage retreat on February 11. What better way to celebrate the Valentine’s Day holiday than to spend some intentional time with your spouse rekindling your romance and strengthening your marriage commitment! Marriage is a wonderful blessing and a strong commitment, and this retreat is a time to strengthen those bonds and continue to grow as a couple. And to sweeten the deal, childcare, lunch, and massages are included in the all-day event.

Finally, our family mission trip this year will be to St. Louis, MO, on June 24-30. We will be working with several great organizations in St. Louis, from Habitat for Humanity to a Christian-based after-school program. There are serving opportunities for all skill and age levels. If you are interested, please see me to get a copy of the team covenant. Our first fundraiser will be a chili lunch during the Annual Meeting on January 29.

What a wonderful year awaits us in 2012. I pray that the Holy Spirit guides and strengthens our faith family here at First Congregational Church as we continue to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ!

Our Annual Meeting

Our Annual Meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, January 29**, following the worship service. The format is new. After worship we'll descend to Fellowship Hall for:

- **A chili lunch.** Donations will go toward the Family Mission Trip this summer.
- **The Annual Meeting**, including our 2012 Budget for Mission and Ministry.
- **A Family Matters presentation**, updating you on our Church's health and vitality.

We'll keep it yummy, noteworthy, and to the point.

We hope to see you there!

Annual Meeting - Motions to Vote Upon

We've had several months to consider a new Mission Statement and Vision Statement, packaged in a bundle with an invitation from Jesus to rest and learn from him. We will vote on making these official at our Annual Meeting. These are important because they will be central in our decisions and deliberations as a church. Here is how they read:

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

Wednesday Night Adult Class

***Jesus, Missions, and Us* – led by Dr. Bob – begins January 25**

(Note date difference for Dr. Bob only.)

Supper 5:45, Class 6:30

What does Jesus have to say about Missions? What is the relationship between the **Soup Kitchen**, people getting a GED through **Benton Harbor Street Ministries**, going on a **Mission trip**, supporting **orphaned children in Russia**, contributing to **Berrien County Cancer Services**, pounding nails for **Harbor Habitat for Humanity**, mucking out stalls at **TEC**, and everything else we do as a Church? Why do we take up various offerings? That will be the subject for a discussion—beginning with the basics. Bring your Bible, heart, brain, questions, and a friend. Don't bring your appetite. Bring that to supper.

Parents Wednesday Night Class ~ January 18

Diana Seaman will lead a class for parents with children in the Sunday School program that correlates with the FaithWeaver curriculum that the children use on Sunday mornings. This class is designed to help parents integrate the ideas taught during our Sunday morning children's classes into the weekly family routine. The Bible stories for the spring follow the beginning of Jesus' life as told in the four Gospels.

Sunday School

Children's Sunday School classes will resume on January 8. All classes will be participating in the Faith Weaver curriculum. Our preschool/pre-K/young 5's class will meet upstairs across from the Gathering Room. Our K-2nd grade class and 3rd-5th grade class both meet downstairs.

Sunday Morning Adult Classes

“Counterfeit Gods” by Tim Keller – led by Dennis Thompson – begins January 22

From Keller's website http://timothykeller.com/books/counterfeit_gods

Success, true love, and the life you've always wanted. Many of us placed our faith in these things, believing they held the key to happiness.... The recent economic meltdown has cast a harsh new light on these pursuits. fortunes, marriages, careers, and a secure retirement have disappeared for millions of people. many of us feel lost, alone, disenchanted, and resentful.

But the truth is that we made lesser gods of these good things.... There is only one God who can wholly satisfy our cravings....

The Bible tells us that the human heart is an “idol-factory”.... ... a proper understanding of the Bible reveals the unvarnished truth about societal ideals and our own hearts.

Order the book—it's in paperback—from Parable Books.

Genesis—led by Tom Fowler—begins January 22nd

You might have missed the first “semester” of this, and that's unfortunate, because this is an excellent course on getting a better understanding of the “Beginnings” of the Bible and the beginning of God's relationship with people.

There are still great benefits to be had, even if you come in at this point.

Genesis meets I the Parlor an hour before worship. Tom welcomes your curiosity, input, and interaction.

From the Christian Education Board

CALLING ALL PARENTS! New seminars are being offered January 22 just for you!

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 "Write these commandments that I've given you today on your hearts. Get them inside of you and then get them inside your children..."

The way that your children develop in faith is of utmost importance to us. As parents, you are the primary faith leader in their lives. As the church, we are committed to partnering with and equipping you and your family to fill this important role with confidence. So we are starting a new program in January 2012 called "Milestones". Please see the chart below for better understanding. We will be offering a new set of parent seminars to support and empower you. By attending the seminar before each Milestone celebration, you'll have practical ideas and suggestions on how to continue to encourage faith in each stage of your children's development.

<u>MILESTONE</u>	<u>AGES</u>	<u>PARENT SEMINAR</u>
Baby Baptism	Newborn-3 years	First Steps: The parent as primary faith teacher
Bible Dedication	End of 1 st grade	The Foundations of Discipleship- the 6 marks of a disciple
Graduation from Sunday Morning School	End of 5 th grade	Prepare for Adolescence, Relationships and Identity
Confirmation	7 th & 8 th grade	Responsibility & Role, Helping to teach Christian Truths
Mission Trip	High School	Christian Living in the World
Rite of Passage	High School Graduation	Writing a blessing for my Child (to be read during worship service)
Life in Christ	Adult	Adult Discipleship

What this means for parents: If you have a child that will be celebrating one of these Milestones within the next six months, we invite you to attend a parent seminar. Currently we have seminars scheduled on the following Sundays:

SUNDAY, JANUARY 22 or FEBRUARY 19 immediately following worship.
(2 hours, includes lunch)

There will be a one hour group time taught by clergy and small break-out class specific to each milestone. We will review practical tips for encouraging faith in your children at each stage of their development. Childcare will be provided. You only need to attend one parent seminar before your child celebrates a Milestone. Upcoming Milestone celebrations include: Baby Baptism, Bible Dedication, Graduation from Sunday Morning School, Mission Trip, and Rite of Passage.

PLEASE RSVP to: pastorkatie@fcstjoseph.org by January 12.

If you're unable to attend, these seminars will be offered quarterly in the future.

For more information, please see <http://www.fcstjoseph.org/>.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES Starting January 2012

Wednesday Evenings ~ Midweek Break

Need a pause from homework and sports practice? Come to church for fun, games, activities, and a change 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. We meet at Pastor Katie's apartment (above Kilwins downtown) from 7:00—8:15 p.m.

January Dates

15th ~ LOL

18th ~ Midweek Break

22nd ~ LOL

29th ~ Confirmation starts again
LOL

November Statistical Information

Income for Nov.	\$ 44,728.73	Year-to-Date Income	\$ 420,064.89
Expenses for Nov.	<u>30,058.60</u>	Year-to-Date Expense	<u>402,136.48</u>
Gain/Loss for Nov.	\$ 14,670.13	Year-to-Date Gain/Loss	\$ 17,928.41

Souper Bowl Party

Sunday, February 5 (time to be announced) we will be hosting a Souper Bowl Party at the church. The game will be shown on the big screen and we will also provide some additional games for entertainment.

In order to make the event successful, we are asking participants for three things:

1. Please bring a can of soup that will be donated to the food pantry.
2. RSVP to let us know how many will be attending and if you would be willing to help with the drinks or food.
3. We also need people to help set up, work games, serve, and clean up.

You can RSVP by signing up in the Gathering Room or contacting Felicia Lemyre (felicialemyre@gmail.com or (614) 477-2022).

Watch for more details in the bulletins as we get closer to the event date.

We can't wait to see you all there!!

Marriage Retreat Workshop

We are hosting a Marriage Retreat Workshop on **Saturday, February 11** from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Meals, couple massages, and childcare are all included in the cost (\$50 per couple).

We will be offering a day of activities for school age kids during the marriage retreat. Parents can attend the retreat while the kids are in another part of church having a great time with us. We'll play games, work on homework, eat lunch, and watch movies.

So mark your calendar for this opportunity to strengthen and renew your marriage, and keep an eye out for more information in the Sunday bulletins.



For supporting the Department of Human Services Foster Children's Christmas party again this year. We sincerely appreciated the support from your Missions Board, members of your congregation that purchased gifts and the use of your church. The party was a huge success and a wonderful time was had by all! Thank you again for your continued support.
The Children's Services Staff of DHS

January Birthdays



- 01 ~ Tammy Thomas
- 02 ~ David Resch
- 05 ~ Meredith Schmidt
- 08 ~ Beth Kenagy
- 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 ~ Les Elwell
- 19 ~ Evelyn Edmunds
- 19 ~ Judy Hoffman
- 21 ~ Katherine Yircott
- 22 ~ Sharon Linden
- 22 ~ Henry Parin
- 22 ~ Anita Shadler
- 23 ~ Shirley Moeckel
- 24 ~ Judy Lord
- 24 ~ John Miller
- 26 ~ Gareth Dominy
- 28 ~ Norm Smith
- 29 ~ Daryl Godke
- 30 ~ Katie Teifke
- 31 ~ Casey Collum
- 31 ~ Don Eppelheimer
- 31 ~ Sue Warren

“Young at Hearts”

Remember that we do not meet during the months of January and February.

We look forward to seeing all of you in March.

Women’s News

Women’s Fellowship will meet on Wednesday, January 18 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 January.

Mary Preston Guild will meet Wednesday, January 11. Time and place to be announced.

Women’s Bible Study

You are invited to join this vibrant group of women in *Experiencing the Psalms*. This eight-week study, led by Diana Seaman and Ruthann Miller, will include materials from the online study by Ralph Wilson and the *Serendipity Bible*. The group will meet in the Gathering Room on Thursdays from 1:30-3:00 p.m., beginning January 5.

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.

New Name

Council approved the re-naming of the Parlor to the **Greeting Room**.

Women's Book Study ~ Tuesday, January 31 at 9:30 a.m.

The Sacred Acre - The Ed Thomas Story by Mark Tabb. Jean Spelman will host the discussion **at the Whitcomb (please note location change).**

Begin your new year's reading with a moving and memorable true story about the power of faith, love, and forgiveness to overcome tragedy. The response of the town of Parkersburg, Iowa, to the devastating impact of a tornado and the death of a well-loved hometown hero is encouraging and inspiring. Diana Seaman will lead the discussion. We meet in the Greeting Room.

Reading ahead - In February we'll read ***God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible*** by Adam Nicolson. In conjunction with our discussion we'll also travel to Hope College in March to view a National Endowment for the Humanities traveling exhibition ***Manifold Greatness: The Creation and Afterlife of the King James Bible*** - more details to follow.

Men's Ministry

January 14 & 28

We meet in the Gathering Room for breakfast at 8:00 a.m.

Questions? Call Bill Bock at 983-7576.

We hope you will join us.

Altar Flowers

If you would like to provide flowers for our altar, the Altar Guild as the following dates open: January 29, April 29, May 6, July 22, and September 2 Please call the church office (983-5519) if you are interested.

Nursery Schedule for January

8th ~ Jennifer Ort & Krista Parin

15th ~ Jennifer Ort & Laura Fletty

22nd ~ Cynthia Schlipp & Jody Conybeare

29th ~ Cynthia Schlipp & Tammy Thomas

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