

February 2016

The Parchment

Monthly Newsletter of the
First Congregational Church UCC

Greetings from Dr. Bob

Lent Is Coming, and So Is Jesus

There are three GREAT seasons of the Christian year. ADVENT leads us to the birth of Jesus Christ. LENT leads us to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. PENTECOST is the Spirit-filled birth of the Christian Church. These are the three pivotal acts of God for Christians.

We are entering LENT. In early Christianity, Christians took commitment to Jesus so seriously that new “converts” went through a period of preparation/instruction during the six weeks of Lent and were baptized on Easter Sunday. Now that’s a sunrise service!

For centuries it was also common to do without or “give up” something during Lent, and to use the time and energy saved for something that would draw you closer to God. That is still a powerful practice.

It’s also common for a church to focus on a particular theme, something that can draw us closer not only to God but also to one another. There are two ways we will do that this year.

FIRST, you are invited to immerse yourself in our worship theme of getting to know Jesus better by what he meant for himself, and for us, when he said, “I am the light of the world,” and then called you and me the light of the world. When he said, “I am the vine,” and named us as his branches. When he said “I am the bread of life,” and then commissioned us to feed the hungry. Everything Jesus said he then handed off to us, making us partners in his purposes.

We will read “The God We Can Know: Discovering the ‘I Am’ Sayings of Jesus,” by Rob Fuquay. It’s \$10. You can order it through the Church Office until February 4th, just a few days from now, so call the Church or put a note with your name on it in the offering plate. You can pay when they arrive. It’s also available on Kindle.

We will also use this book and a series of video clips to go deeper into these sayings on Wednesday nights following supper, beginning February 17. This will be a rich time together. No reservations needed. Just come to the Gathering Room at 6:30.

EVENTS

Open Communion is held the first Sunday of each month.

Men’s Ministry meets the 2nd & 4th Saturday.

Wednesdays are Family Dinner, Dr. Bob’s class, Kids Connection, Jubilate & Joyful Praise Ringers, Middle High Youth Group.

Every Thursday is Women’s Bible Class and Alleluia Ringers and Chancel Choir.

Check out our website fccstjoseph.org & Facebook for more information on these church events and more.

SECOND, on Sunday mornings in the Greeting Room (aka the Parlor), we will discuss Christianity/Christians and Islam/Muslims. We will use the book "Journeys of the Muslim Nation and Christian Church" by David Shenk. You can also order that book through the office through February 4th. It's \$15.00. Shenk is a Mennonite missionary/speaker/professor who has lived in Muslim nations and communities for many years, being sensitive to their beliefs and traditions while engaging in caring discussions about the Koran (Qur'an) and the Messiah. His comparisons of the two will help answer our questions and look at the Muslim community through informed, educated eyes rather than with reactionary, stereotyping eyes. We'll meet from 9:15 to 10:10 am, Sundays beginning February 14th.

Grow. It is the only option for a thriving Christian. Grow closer to God, grow closer to your family, grow closer to your church family, and in the process you will help the world we live in grow up, into the image of God in which each of us is made.

Growing with you,
Dr. Bob

Ash Wednesday Service – February 10

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 10, with our Ash Wednesday service of ashes and Communion at 6:30 p.m., for about 30 minutes, following a simple supper. Toward the end of the service, we come forward for Communion and for the sign of ashes, in the form of a cross, made on the forehead or the back of the hand.

Lent continues through six weeks, culminating in Holy Week: Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. This year Easter falls on March 27.

An Ash Wednesday Prayer

Dear Righteous Lord,
We enter the holy season of Lent confessing our many sins that separate us from you. We're sincerely sorry for offending you repeatedly through our thoughts, our words and our actions, and often through our inactions, too.

Forgive us, Lord, and show us your tender mercy. Restore and strengthen us to become your faithful and faith-filled servants. During our Lenten journey, remind us to show mercy to other people, just as you've shown mercy to us.

In Jesus name, Amen.

First Congregational UCC of Benton Harbor

The Benton Harbor church will open its doors once again in the spring, under the direction of the Rev. Oscar Varnadoe. We have the privilege of having Rev. Varnadoe in our pulpit on Sunday, February 28. The preliminary plan is for the church to have its inauguration worship service on a Sunday afternoon, giving all of us an opportunity to join that new congregation as God launches them into new ministry. Stay tuned!

Women's Book Group – Tuesday, February 23 at 9:30 a.m.

Walking in the Dust of Rabbi Jesus by Lois Tverberg brings the Bible to life as she explores the cultural context of Jesus' teachings. With well-researched information and a highly readable style, Tverberg explains:

- How understanding Jewish idioms and expressions can help us better grasp what Jesus was saying.
- How viewing Jesus within the context of Middle Eastern culture can enliven his parables in surprising new ways.
- How the Jewish world of Jesus can teach us many wise insights, like how to pray with *chutzpah* or think with both hands.

By understanding the religious and cultural atmosphere in which Jesus lived and taught, you will begin to understand why his first disciples abandoned everything to follow him. You'll also learn the meaning behind key Hebrew words that make Bible reading a richer, more powerful experience. And you'll see how Jewish customs, culture, and beliefs can enrich your life as a Christian whose faith first emerged from Jewish roots.

Please join us in the Greeting Room and learn how hearing Rabbi Jesus with the ears of a first-century disciple can bring new depth to your spiritual life.





Health News from Parish Nurse Jan

Prevention of Frostbite

I was hoping that winter would pass us by this year but it looks like we might have some frigid temperatures ahead. Here are a couple of tips to remember before you venture out into the cold weather.

Limit time you're outdoors in cold, wet or windy weather. Pay attention to weather forecasts and wind chill readings. In very cold windy weather, exposed skin can develop frostbite in a matter of minutes.

Dress in several layers of loose, warm clothing. Air trapped between the layers of clothing acts as insulation against the cold. Wear windproof and waterproof outer garments to protect against wind, snow and rain. Choose undergarments that wick moisture away from your skin. Change out of wet clothing — particularly gloves, hats and socks — as soon as possible.

Wear a hat or headband that fully covers your ears. Heavy woolen or windproof materials make the best headwear for cold protection.

Wear mittens rather than gloves. Mittens provide better protection. Or try a thin pair of glove liners made of a wicking material (like polypropylene) under a pair of heavier gloves or mittens.

Wear socks and sock liners that fit well, wick moisture and provide insulation. You might also try hand and foot warmers. Be sure the foot warmers don't make your boots too tight, restricting blood flow.

Watch for signs of frostbite. Early signs of frostbite include red or pale skin, prickling, and numbness.

Plan to protect yourself. When traveling in cold weather, carry emergency supplies and warm clothing in case you become stranded. If you'll be in remote territory, tell others your route and expected return date.

Don't drink alcohol if you plan to be outdoors in cold weather. Alcoholic beverages cause your body to lose heat faster.

Eat well-balanced meals and stay hydrated. Doing this even before you go out in the cold will help you stay warm. And if you do become cold, drinking warm, sweet beverages, such as hot chocolate, will help you warm up.

Keep moving. Exercise can get the blood flowing and help you stay warm, but don't do it to the point of exhaustion.



Lent and Easter Music

Winter/Spring music rehearsals began on January 6. We welcome church members AND friends into our music ensembles. Music rehearsals are as follows:

Jubilate Ringers	Wednesdays, 4:00 – 5:00 pm, Bell Room
Joyful Praise Ringers	Wednesdays, 5:15 – 6:10 PM, Bell Room
Kids Connection Choir	Wednesdays, 6:30 – 7:00 PM, Choir Room
Alleluia Ringers	Thursdays, 5:00 – 6:30 PM, Bell Room (childcare)
Chancel Choir	Thursdays, 6:30 – 8:00 PM, Choir Room (childcare)

Easter is Sunday, March 27 – one week before Spring Break. For several years, Easter has fallen during Spring Break and many have been on vacation, but this year we anticipate a larger attendance for both Palm Sunday and Easter. Joyful Praise Ringers and the Kids Connection Choir will perform on Palm Sunday and Alleluia Ringers with the Chancel Choir for Easter Sunday.

The **Kids Connection Choir** has grown from 4 to 12 singers and we are excited about their potential! The Kids Connection Choir meets for the first 30 minutes of the Elementary Kids Connection program. We welcome kids ages young 5s thru 5th grade. They will always perform the same Sunday as the Joyful Praise Ringers.

Joyful Praise Ringers is a handbell ensemble for ages 3rd thru 8th grade and we are in need of a few more ringers. Current handbell members are encouraged to invite their friends to come help us fill out this group. No musical experience is required.

Jubilate Ringers is made up of both youth and adults. We need a few more ringers to complete this group. We will be missing a few ringers who go south for the winter. This group is growing with the addition of several HS ringers and will ring regularly during worship.

Alleluia Ringers is made up of 13 adults who enjoy the challenge of ringing intermediate handbell pieces. This group is taking a trip to Dayton, Ohio mid-April for the Area 5 Handbell Musicians of American Conference 2016 with clinician Kevin McChesney. This 2-day trip will give ringers advanced training and an exhilarating experience of ringing with other regional bell choirs.

The **Chancel Choir** meets Thursdays at 6:30 pm to prepare for the Message in Music each Sunday throughout the school year. These musicians are very dedicated to their weekly contribution to the worship service. I would love to see this group grow to 40+ members. We welcome anyone who would like to join. Childcare is provided for those with children.

Here is our music schedule thru Lent and Easter:

Feb 7	Communion Sunday: Chancel Choir and guest violinist Kathy Zhang
Feb 10	Ash Wednesday Service , 6:30 PM
Feb 14	Lent 1: Praise Band, Joyful Praise Ringers, Kids Connection & Chancel Choirs
Feb 21	Lent 2: Scout Sunday - Holden Alee, organist and Chancel Choir
Feb 28	Lent 3: Pulpit guest Oscar Varnadoe, Alleluia Ringers and Chancel Choir

February Birthdays

02 – Sallie Coldren
02 – Caryl Eller
04 – Kimberly Giandiletti
05 – Carol Geldhof
05 – Betty Westmaas
07 – Georgina Haight
11 – Adam Parin
12 – Bob Cultice
12 – Shirley Garey
12 – Karen Mitchell
14 – Perry Ballard
15 – Debbie Wood
19 – Drew Christy
20 – Jim Meister
21 – Deb Burkhard
22 – Bill Chickering
22 – Nancy Gaynor
22 – Daniel Michaels
23 – Brady Iddings
24 – Mae Achramowicz
24 – Greer Armstrong
25 – Jacob Dibkey
25 – Ron Gaynor
26 – Karen Molineaux
27 – Carol Johnson
28 – Kim Capes
28 – Walt Waldenmaier

Library Update

Our Library is more than:

- ...moving outdated books from the shelves
- ...arranging books in topics to make it easier to locate a book
- ...placing books by authors with current appeal together
- ...purchasing new books

It is about the ministries of our church.

It is about talking with those people involved with those ministries and seeing how we can bring into the Library materials that will enhance our lives. If you have a suggestion, please leave a note for Caryl, Nancy or Patty in the Library.

Women's Group Meeting

Dates

Mary Martha Circle - Tuesday, February 9 in the Greeting Room at 1:00 p.m.

Mary Preston Guild - Wednesday, February 10 in the Greeting Room at 1:00 p.m.

Women's Fellowship Council -

Wednesday, February 17 at 9:30 a.m. in the Greeting Room. All women of the church are welcome to attend.

Men's Ministry

They will meet on February 13 & 27.
Breakfast is served at 8:00 a.m. and a discussion begins at 8:20 and the group ends by 9:30. The topic will be Paul.

Who was Paul?

Was he a tent maker?

Was he a lawyer?

Was he a Pharisee?

Was he a religious terrorist?

Was he blind?

Was he an evangelist?

Was he a martyr?

Was he from a village, a town, a city, or a cultural and intellectual center?

What was the purpose of his letters?

Come and share your thoughts.



WHAT OUR CHURCH IS ABOUT

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

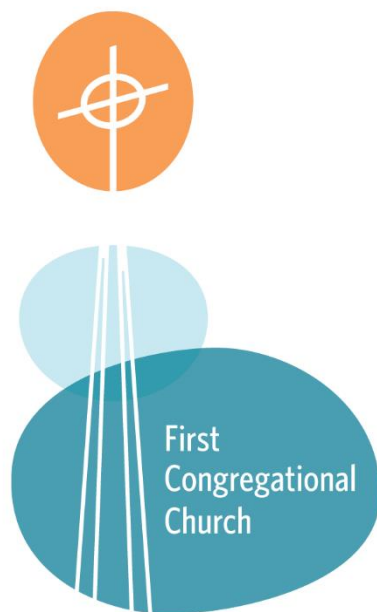
The Invitation to Discipleship from Jesus Christ

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.

Matthew 11:28-30

We grow as disciples through these 6 practices:

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



SENIOR MINISTER

Rev. Dr. Robert Braman

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

September thru May

9:15 a.m. Christian Discipleship

9:30 a.m. Chancel Choir

10:25 a.m. Worship

10:45 a.m. Christian Education classes

June, July, and August

9:55 a.m. Worship

Childcare available during worship.

WEDNESDAY FAMILY NIGHT

September thru April

4:00 p.m. Jubilate Ringers

5:15 p.m. Joyful Praise Ringers

5:45 p.m. Church Family Dinner

6:30 p.m. Kids Connection
Middle High Youth Group

6:30 p.m. Dr. Bob's Class

THURSDAY NIGHT

5:00 p.m. Alleluia Ringers

6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir

OFFICE HOURS

Open: Monday - Thursday
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

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