

The Parchment

Monthly Newsletter of the
First Congregational Church UCC



July 2016

FACEBOOK: FCCSt.Joseph

WEBSITE: www.fccstjoseph.org

Mark Your Calendar

7.3

Worship with Communion

7.4

Office Closed

7.5

Special Council Meeting

7.12

Trustees Meeting

7.19

Serve at the Soup Kitchen

7.26

Council Meeting

7.31

Vacation Bible School
Kicks-off

Greetings from Rev. Dr. David Wheeler

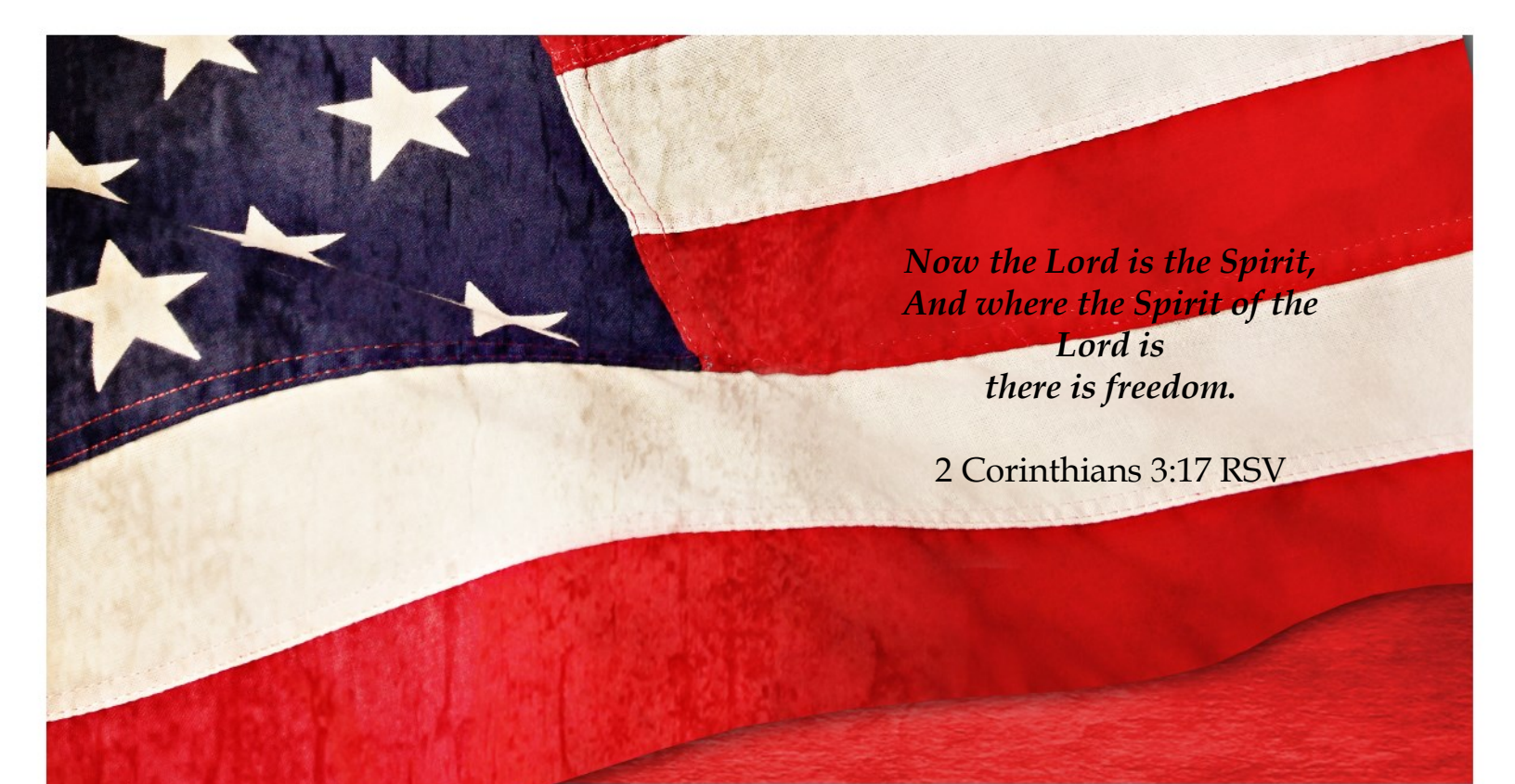
The first time I came to St. Joseph in 1975, as I drove up Niles Ave. from I-94, there was a billboard strategically placed beside the road so it couldn't be missed. It boldly proclaimed, "Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.'" The sign was located right by the little marina on the river. Jesus's words were there throughout the 1970's, 1980's and beyond. But sometime before the turn of the century, the sign was gone.

Even if the exclusivity projected by the sign was a bit over the top, I smiled when I passed it. Yet today such sentiments seem quaint, like the guy with rainbow colored hair who used to wave a sign at sporting events saying John 3:16. To most it would be politically incorrect.

But there is also a metaphor here to contemplate. There used to be a cultural bond between church and society. At its best, spiritual values and community stewardship complemented each other. There was basic trust in public and religious institutions and their messages.

Today the connections have been broken. We do live in a religiously diverse nation, of which we can be proud. But churches, synagogues, and mosques have by-in-large been cast adrift by society. Plus, the market economy has worked hard to chip away at anything religious that reduces profitability. Of course, religion itself has contributed to its problems with everything from misconduct to extremism. Yet how will people find their way, the truth and live with purpose. Those are spiritual ideals at their height and depth.

So what happens now? Where are the signs we need? I believe they will still come as an old old lesson suggested. Jeremiah 31:33 promises that God will write that new promise, putting it in a place where it shall be permanent. "I will write my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts." Hebrews 9:15 plainly states that Christ is the mediator of that new covenant.



*Now the Lord is the Spirit,
And where the Spirit of the
Lord is
there is freedom.*

2 Corinthians 3:17 RSV



In August, the First Congregational youth will participate in the 30 Hour Famine. Mr. Michael and Miss Shannon are excited

to raise money and awareness for world hunger! We'll be serving others, raising money and having fun at the same time.

Our students will grow closer to Christ and each other as they fast together for 30 hours and raise funds to fight hunger. What's more, when we do the Famine we are challenging our students to be part of something bigger than themselves. To take action for God's kingdom. To help save the lives of hungry kids. To permanently change the way our students see the world!

The Famine will take place August 5 - 7. Please watch the bulletin for more information on how your student can participate and how you can help.

(continued)

Then how are we today to experience or express the heartfelt presence of God in Christ? How about these suggestions: With the faith practices this church has affirmed; with an inclusive welcome for all; believing that our individual destinies and our church's vitality are intertwined; and being servant leaders who care for the least and speak truth to power – all as our own signs of Christ.

Blessings,
Rev. Dr. David Wheeler

Declare Your Dependence

The Declaration of Independence happened long before 1776. In fact, humankind declared its independence from God in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve believed the lie that they could live independent of God. Since then, we humans have been constantly struggling to do it our way.

God knows that true independence is impossible. There's no way we can function effectively if we are cut off from His help. We are like branches in a vineyard. Once cut off, we die. Jesus is the true vine (John 15:1), and unless we are connected to Him, we will never truly be productive. And our so-called independence won't lead to freedom but to our own destruction.

(From *Keeping God in the Small Stuff.*)



Music Ministry from Paul Flyger

I am grateful for the generous support given to the **50's Sock Hop 4 Chimes Fundraiser**. This event proved more successful than I anticipated. Nearly 100 people attended this summer evening of dancing, food, and fellowship. I was happy to see so many members and community guests on the dance floor having a grand time. I'm also very grateful to the ringer volunteers who gave of their time and talent to decorate and serve at the Sock Hop. Without them, it would not have been the same.

We raised \$3,558 dollars from the Sock Hop. To my surprise, \$1683 were special donations given toward our goal of purchasing 5 octaves of new Malmark Handchimes. These new Handchimes will match our 5th octave of Malmark handbells and allow us to double parts with multiple ringers as we seek new ways to expand our bell choirs musically and in our reach both in our church and in our community. With some music funds that we already have, Church Council has approved the purchase of these chimes. We will have these by the time school starts in the fall. It is my dream to develop a community handbell program for youth and these Handchimes will allow us enough equipment to enable two or three choirs to ring together. Our next issue will be having the table space and a room large enough to accommodate this program.

Over the past 4 years we have developed 3 different handbell choirs from what had been a dormant program. Each one has grown to almost full capacity and the members of each choir have been serious about perfecting their technique. Their participation in concerts, worship services, area workshops and conventions has been wonderful and I feel that the program is growing stronger. In July, I'm planning to attend the Handbell Musicians of America National Seminar in Rochester, NY. Attendance at such events, and being a member of the Kalamazoo Ringers challenges me to become a better ringer, director and instructor.

Maddie Burkhard, our summer intern, was a big help in the preparations for the Sock Hop. In the next weeks, she will be assisting me in cataloging and making a complete and updated inventory of the Choral Library. This involves removing some older pieces, boxing new pieces, organizing the shelves and printing new labels for the 500 boxes of choral music. Mr. Zork has made recommendations on which scores we should keep and we're making quick progress toward finishing this summer project.

During July, we will be planning for both the summer VBS program (July 31- Aug 4), and for the Lake Effect Jazz Big Band Concert on the front lawn (August 14). This event was a great success last year and I'm quite sure it will be even better this year. The front steps of the church, the tents on the lawn, the superb jazz big band as well as the donated refreshments made for a fantastic evening. I hope you invite your friends to this concert which will again support Operation Good Cheer, a program that provides Christmas gifts for foster children in Berrien County. If you would like to sponsor a child, you may do so for \$35 dollars. Your admission to the concert (\$10) will also be used for the same purpose. I hope we can fill the front lawn with concert guests and exceed last year's contribution to Operation Good Cheer.



My message will be short and succinct this month, good news I'm sure for some who read this, but I must share an occurrence that was brought to my attention earlier this week. On Tuesday, I received a call from Cheryl Bari, RN, BSN, Nurse Family Partnership Supervisor, from the Berrien County Health Department, inquiring about a check they received from First Congregational Church. I was stumped! I didn't know what she was talking about! I must have sounded like a dunce, stammering away incoherently. I had to inform her that I would need to call her back, as I needed to research this.

As it turns out, our Mission Board donated a sizable amount to the Health's Department's Infant Safe Sleep Program as was highlighted in my June Parchment article. Cheryl informed me that this donation will go to the Babies Own Bed Program that covers the cost of 11 safe sleep environments for families who have no safe place to sleep their infant. Way to Go First Congo!

Mark Your Calendar

The church picnic will take place on Sunday, August 7 immediately following worship. Watch the Sunday bulletin for more information.

Women's Book Group

God Will Use This for God...Surviving the Mess of Life by Max Lucado. This book is short but filled with encouragement and relevant scripture for difficult time. Through the story of Old Testament Joseph, Lucado reminds us of God's promise of his presence in all circumstances. Join us for a great discussion on trust and prayer. Patty Nordberg will lead the discussion on Tuesday, July 26 at 9:30 a.m. in the Greeting Room. Copies of the book are available to borrow.

Parents, if you are not already aware, I'm hosting Sunday School after children's time for students 6th grade and up. We meet in the Youth Room. Our next session called "Over Time" is a series on self-discipline. Below is a blurb about the series:

Fast. It's how our culture likes to do things. Because we lead such busy lives, we have become masters at finding the quickest way to accomplish nearly everything. This need for speed has led us to some of the best inventions ever-things like the drive-thru, the microwave, and movies on-demand. Unfortunately, it's that same desire for instant results that gave us some not-so-awesome inventions. Have you ever tried instant coffee or instant mashed potatoes? Not nearly as good as the real thing. The truth is, while fast is awesome, there are some things in life that just take time. Maybe that's why the Bible keeps mentioning this idea of sowing and reaping, or planting and waiting for something to grow. Because while our temptation will always be to look for a shortcut or to focus our attention somewhere that will give us faster results, we run the risk of missing out on some of the best things in life when we don't work on them over time.

July 3 – No Sunday School

July 10 – "Time Over Time" (session 1)

July 17 – "Choices Over Time" (session 2)

July 24 – "Kindness Over Time" (session 3)

July 31 – We'll start a new session

(more to come in an email)



We have some new ideas regarding our FCC children and want your input! We will be holding a **short discussion** in the

Greeting Room on **Sunday, July 10 at 11:00 a.m.** Please try to make this meeting, your voice matters!

Thank you. CE Staff



- 01 – Marlene Johnson
- 01 – Tom Sinn
- 02 – Kye Brinkmann
- 02 – Jeff Edmunds
- 02 – Pat Smith
- 05 – Bob Ehrenberg
- 05 – Marilyn Fetters
- 07 – Art Haight
- 07 – Maddy Paul
- 09 – Kendall Yeager
- 12 – Gary Koch
- 13 – Judy Whittier
- 14 – Carla Morrow
- 15 – Bill Johnson
- 17 – Amy Steinaman
- 18 – Jean Bloomquist
- 20 – David Fowler
- 22 – Asher Edlefson
- 23 – Allan Westmaas
- 24 – Norma Nisbet
- 26 – Tom Cook
- 27 – Mark Wortman
- 30 – Barb Bannow

Library Update

The library workers took a break in June. Now we are beginning to add books for youth. One young reader is *The Boys in the Boat* by Daniel James Brown. It is the true story of an American team's epic journey to win Gold at the 1936 Olympics. We will continue to add titles of interest for all ages. As Christian Education looks at their curriculum, books will be ordered for children and parents. Looking ahead to fall...maybe we'll have the shelves and topic labels finished! Always a work in progress. Caryl, Nancy & Patty

Women's Bible Study

On July 21, we'll be holding our Bible Study at Eileen Resch's in Holland, MI. We'll meet at the church at 12:15 and depart around 12:30. Eileen will provide refreshments. Ruthann Miller will lead a Bible study entitled, *The Rabbi's Prayer and the King's Poem*. In order to provide transportation with drivers, please contact Patty Nordberg, at 429-7297 or pnordberg@comcast.net to reserve a spot by July 15. If you have not been a part of Women's Bible Study in the past, you are welcome to join us. You do not need to be a church member. All women are welcome!

Giving Thanks!

After fourteen months and four facilities, Ron has now returned home! **ALLELUIA!** Thank you all for the unwavering support of our FCC family for the many cards, calls, emails, visits, and hugs. A special thank you to those who made the ramp possible for Ron's entry and exit from our home: Project coordinator Rick Freridge, along with Doug Wood, Russ Zick, Dr. Bob, Nurse Jan and all of the financial donors.

"Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow"
Ron & Carol Drews, Janet Drews
and the Jill McKinney Families.

Greetings from The Nursery

Please prayerfully consider being a part of our nursery/preschool ministry, we need your help! Being a part of the Nursery/Preschool ministry, you are demonstrating God's love to the littlest members of our faith community. I am looking for volunteers to help instill these three basic truths; God made me, God loves me, and Jesus wants to be my friend forever. We are a fun, active, loving group of children and we can't wait to have you join our fun!

For more information you can stop by the nursery or email me at s.milnickel@live.com

Shannon Milnickel
Nursery Director

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

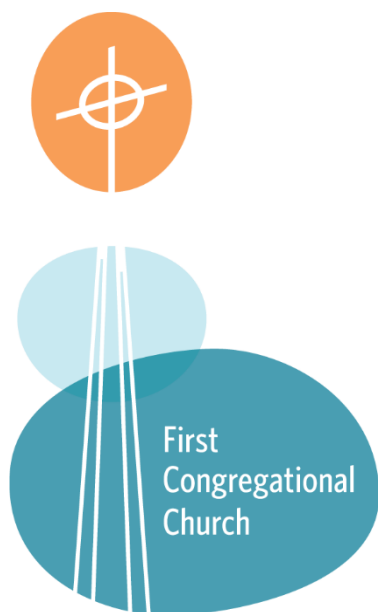
The Invitation to Discipleship from Jesus Christ

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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