



August 2016

# *The Parchment*

## *Greetings from Rev. Dr. David Wheeler*

The craze may have peaked by the time you read this, but on July 19<sup>th</sup> as I write, Pokemon Go is virtually everywhere. The Olympics will soon be world-wide, but Pokemon Go has already surpassed their previous popularity. For those who don't know, Pokemon Go is a smart-phone generated game, but not like one most of us have ever seen. The game is technologically inventive, yet its instant popularity is almost beyond imagination. Think of this: Pokemon Go was released on July 6<sup>th</sup> and today, as I write, over 10 million people are playing it. The value of Nintendo, the company that owns the game, has literally doubled.

In fact the new game fad has grown so big so fast that in two weeks it has made it off the streets and into the churches. It has already been theologized about in the sermons of any "with-it" preacher. That's what I want to get into too. But first: What in the world is Pokemon Go anyway?

It seems like a Century ago that Pokemon trading cards were all the rage - but it was back in 1999. Then, they were pretty much like the baseball cards I had when I was a kid. It turns out now they were kind of like what a dinosaur is to a bird. In the 17 evolutionary years since, Pokemon Go has gone viral so-to-speak.

Somehow, in some technological way, the game creators have blanketed a GPS map of the whole country with digital Pokemon. Download the Pokemon Go app on your phone and then go searching for hidden Pokemon that pop up on your GPS, until you've captured all 151 of them. Oh, and by the way, in case that is too clear, first you create an Avatar to represent you and then you capture Pokemon by throwing pokeballs at them that serve as their cages. From there you become a pokemon trainer, to tame them. And one other thing: Pokemon Go is generically known as an MMOG.\*

Why didn't we think of this in the church? Imagine 10 million millennials playing our version of the game rather than Nintendo's, if we had the technological skill to make one. Call our game, "Where in the World is God?" and use the augmented reality concept to add digital God symbols at strategic places on GPS tracking systems, such as our church. In fact, that is sort-of the case already. One of the places where digital 'pokeballs' can be found, is church parking lots. So Pokemon Go players show up for church - they just don't go inside.

We can do better than that! Wouldn't it be evangelistic to make up a plus version of the game, adding caricatures of Jesus to sites such as the food pantry, a homeless shelter, hospital, or prison. When people found him, they could volunteer to do as Jesus did. Or, to make prayer more interesting a similar thing could be done for those who claim to find God best in the woods or in a garden: the path could lead them back to church, and inside where they could find a genuine welcome, not a taming.

Perhaps my thoughts are a little bit out there or tongue in cheek. Perhaps the Pokemon Go craze will have cooled down by the fall season. Perhaps we in the church can keep working to find ways to reach a generation that is hungry not just for entertainment but for deep spiritual inspiration. Perhaps someday even virtual church can help make peace in the real world. Perhaps one day soon the Great Commission will go viral again. (Matthew 28:18-20). Perhaps that is why Christ wasn't playing games.

OMG,  
Rev. David

\*MMOG: massive multiplayer online location-based games

# Music Ministry

## Jazz Benefit Concert for Good Cheer

Once again, we are hosting a **Jazz Benefit Concert for Good Cheer** on Sunday, August 14 at 7 PM. This is an outdoor concert on the front lawn as we did last year. We **NEED** your help in publicizing and inviting guests to this fun evening of free refreshments, great music and fellowship that provides Christmas gifts for over 300 foster kids in Berrien County. Bring your family and friends, a lawn chair or blanket and enjoy a great summer evening of music, cold drinks, popcorn and ice cream while listening to a premier big band of the Midwest. Last year we raised a little over \$2600 for **Operation Good Cheer**, a Michigan-based non-profit organization that provides three Christmas gifts at the Department of Health and Human Services Holiday Party that will be held at the First Church of God in December. This year, we are promoting child sponsorships (\$30) thru the Operation Good Cheer organization. A detailed brochure and form is available that explains how to sponsor a child (for \$30) AND how to make a larger donation.

Here are some of the benefits to Child Sponsorship:

- 3 gifts per child from their "wish list,"
- Gifts are thru Operation Good Cheer, NO shopping or wrapping gifts, AND
- You can bring 2 friends to the concert!!

The entertainment for the Jazz Benefit Concert will be the **Lake Effect Jazz Big Band**, under the direction of Steven L. Reed. They will perform both big band and contemporary jazz arrangements from the front steps of our church. Admission is \$10 OR \$30 for a child sponsor (admits 3). The Lake Effect Jazz Big Band is committed to preserving the American art form of big band jazz. Their mission is to promote the art of JAZZ through performance, education, and community outreach. Our same vendors are providing popcorn, cold drinks, and ice cream for everyone. With Jim Dansfield's help, we will put up the tents as we did last year. IF it should rain, we will move into the sanctuary and the Lake Effect Jazz Big Band will play acoustically.

We are currently seeking pre-concert support to underwrite expenses (LEJBB fee) for this event. If you are able to help underwrite the entertainment for the evening, please see Paul Flyger. By underwriting the band before the event, ALL admission, donations and sponsorships will be given directly to **Operation Good Cheer** and used to make a foster child's Christmas wish come true! We are also in need of a few volunteers to help us during the concert. If you are able to help provide for some of these needs, I would love to speak with you and help facilitate your support.

Our event last year was the biggest fundraiser of the year for the Department of Health and Human Services and assisted them in raising a large portion of their annual budget for the **Operation Good Cheer** program. This Michigan-based program organizes, shops, wraps, and ships thousands of Christmas gifts to foster children across the state. There are more than 300 kids in local foster care and they will each receive 3 gifts each with a value that far exceeds \$30. In some cases, this may be the only Christmas gifts these kids will receive. For a great video of last year's Michigan delivery process, visit their Facebook page: Operation Good Cheer. For more information about **Operation Good Cheer**, please visit their website, [www.cfsm.org/operation-good-cheer](http://www.cfsm.org/operation-good-cheer) as well as their Facebook page.

Paul Flyger  
Director of Music Ministry





# our community

## *Health News from Nurse Jan*

### Church Picnic

Join us on August 7 immediately following worship for our annual church picnic in the empty lot beside the church. If you haven't signed up yet, please call the church office and let us know if your coming. All you need to bring is your family and a dish to pass. Pulled pork, cold slaw, drinks and paper products will be provided. There will be games for all the kids!

### What are the risks of sitting too much?

Research has linked sitting for long periods of time with a number of health concerns, including obesity and metabolic syndrome – a collection of conditions that includes increased blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess body fat around the waist and abnormal cholesterol levels. Too much sitting also seems to increase the risk of death from cardiovascular disease and cancer.

One study compared adults who spent less than two hours a day in front of the TV or other screen-based entertainment with those who logged more than four hours a day of recreational screen time. Those with greater screen time had:

- A nearly 50 percent increased risk of death from any cause
- About a 125 percent increased risk of events associated with cardiovascular disease, such as chest pain (angina) or heart attack.

The increased risk was separate from other traditional risk factors for cardiovascular disease, such as smoking or high blood pressure.

Sitting in front of the TV isn't the only concern. Any extended sitting – such as behind a desk at work or behind the wheel – can be harmful. What's more, spending a few hours a week at the gym or otherwise engaged in moderate or vigorous activity doesn't seem to significantly offset the risk.

The solution seems to be less sitting and more moving overall. You might start by simply standing rather than sitting whenever you have the chance or think about ways to walk while you work. For example:

- Stand while talking on the phone or eating lunch.  
If you work at a desk for long periods of time, try a standing desk – or improvise with a high table or counter.
- Walk laps with your colleagues rather than gathering in a conference room for meetings.
- Position your work surface above a treadmill – with a computer screen and keyboard on a stand or a specialized treadmill-ready vertical desk – so that you can be in motion throughout the day.

The impact of movement – even leisurely movement – can be profound. For starters, you'll burn more calories. This might lead to weight loss and increased energy. Even better, the muscle activity needed for standing and other movement seems to trigger important processes related to the breakdown of fats and sugars within the body. When you sit, these processes stall – and your health risks increase. When you're standing or actively moving, you kick the processes back into action.





02 - Elissa Capes  
02 - Dick Ward  
06 - Carol Michaels  
07 - David Giandiletti  
09 - Sue Howe  
09 - Oliver Ort  
10 - Marion Darr  
10 - Shelby Lawrence  
10 - Pat Nordberg  
10 - Don Nupp  
11 - Barry Michaels  
12 - Lucy Eisele  
13 - Barb Freridge  
13 - Nicki Schreiber  
14 - Virginia Aydelott  
22 - Gary Sprunger  
23 - Margaret Hilbink  
24 - Drew Nisbet  
24 - Ethan Terry  
25 - Joanne Muldoon  
25 - Averie Wier  
26 - Lupe Hopp  
28 - Annette Ballard  
28 - Gavin Sternaman  
29 - Greg Edinger  
30 - Brian Eller  
30 - Barney Whittier

### Mission Outreach

Your Missions Board will conduct a school supply collection for the Benton Harbor Street Ministry on Sunday, August 14 and 21. Items needed are:

pencils  
lined 3-holed paper  
erasers  
backpacks  
3-ring binders  
computer copy paper  
plus any other school items

Thank you for helping children in our community start the school year off right.

### News from the Library

Caryl, Nancy & Patty

The library crew is still on summer vacation. If you are looking for a book and see a pile on a shelf, that probably means it will eventually get placed according to topic. We continue to hope that the new process will allow you to find a book more quickly. By fall we hope to have a more organized "check out" system. We also hope to have bookmarks designed for the library. The return box for books is on the top shelf. Books for donations is on the lowest shelf underneath the return box. If we have duplicates, they are donated to the rummage sale if another home cannot be found for them. Any suggestions or comments? Please let us know.

### Women's Bible Study

We will meet on Thursday, August 18 at 1:30 p.m. at Barbara Callendar's home (3536 Riverside Road, Benton Harbor.) If you would like to carpool, please meet at the church by 1:10 p.m. The Bible study will be led by Deb Teuteberg. Refreshments will be provided. If you are new to the church, please feel free to join us. Questions? Call Patty Nordberg at 429-7297 or pnordberg@comcast.net.

### Women's Book Group - *Inside the O'Briens* by Lisa Genova

Genova is a Harvard-educated neuroscientist and the author of *Still Alice* and *Love Anthony*. In her latest novel, she focuses on Huntington's disease and its effect on the patient as well as his family. She explores the decisions families face when they are confronted with genetically transmitted diseases and their determination to "define life not by fear but, instead, by love." Themes of hope, resilience, and redemption weave through this poignant story. Copies of the book will be available to borrow. We hope you will join us in the Greeting Room at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, August 30.

Dear Members of First Congregational Church,

At our last Family Matters meeting on April 24, Dr. Bob announced his retirement plans that begin in January 2017. It is not easy to think about ending a Spirit-filled fifteen year ministry but at the same time our church is healthy and strong. This fall will be a precious time, and we will inform you about our plans for special events to celebrate Bob's ministry as soon as they are finalized.

It is with great gratitude that we thank Dr. Bob for his 15 years of leadership and guidance of our church family. We support Bob and his family with our prayers and wish him Godspeed as he celebrates the culmination of his successful ministry. As Dr. Bob enters the next phase of his life, our church must also enter the next phase of our congregation's life as we search for a new minister. Our congregation's traditional practice of "calling" a minister affirms the active presence of God's Spirit in the search process. We prayerfully seek a minister with particular gifts and skills while recognizing that candidates are also engaged in a Spirit-led discernment process. Thus our church enters into a covenant with a new pastor always knowing that God may sometimes call that pastor to a new ministry setting.

The Church Council is aware that many of our members have questions. We want to assure you that we have been in touch with our Conference minister, Rev. Campbell Lovett. He suggested that we share with you this brief overview:

- 1. We will select an interim pastor to provide continuity in worship, pastoral care, and program/staff oversight. Rev. Lovett will advise us on this process; he has assured us that there are several excellent candidates available who offer the specialized skills needed during a transition time. This pastor will not be a candidate for the "permanent" position.*
- 2. In the near future we will initiate a search process for a new pastor in accordance with our bylaws. We will invite all of you to be part of a self-study that will identify our church's pastoral needs. We will then develop a church profile for potential candidates.*
- 3. Our Conference office will advertise our vacancy among UCC clergy all across the country. Our search committee will read ministerial profiles, screen candidates, conduct interviews, check references, and eventually select a candidate who will be recommended to the entire congregation.*

We send this letter so you know that we are taking the appropriate steps to plan for our church's spiritual future. We will keep you informed on a regular basis. For now, let us express our gratitude to God for Dr. Bob's ministry and enter into a time of celebration with him and his family. Please keep them in your prayers even as you know from experience that he will be praying for us.

In Christ's name,

The First Congregational Church Council

## **MANY THANKS**

Friends at First Congregational,

Thank you! You have made my time here as the Sabbatical Interim for Dr. Braman, most fulfilling. At the end of August when I conclude this ministry, I shall look back with fondness on the people, ministries, and affirming community here at First Congregational. As the hymn says, "There's a sweet, sweet spirit in this place." It is a treasure, not easily found and not often sustained. But as this spirit remains at the heart of your faith and out-reach the best is yet to be. Welcome Dr. Bob back dear friends, by continuing to trying to walk the talk.

God bless,  
Rev. Dr. David Wheeler

# 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

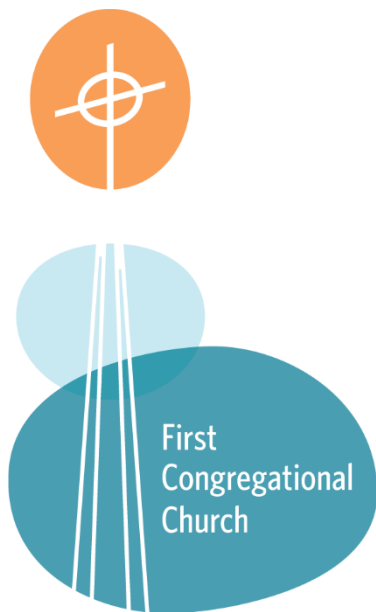
## The Invitation to Discipleship from Jesus Christ

*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

5:30 p.m. Summer Bells

## OFFICE HOURS

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

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