

October 2016

# *The Parchment*

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church United Church of Christ

## *Greetings from Dr. Bob*

### **A Fair Warning**

If you think your Minister should never talk or write about politics, I'm giving you fair warning that politics is my subject. You can quit reading if you'd like, but I hope you won't.

For those still reading, I have found it disconcerting that there are people who don't like to talk about politics in relationship to their faith. Maybe it's because they witness a few Christian preachers/personalities endorse and fawn over their chosen candidate "in the name of Jesus," while others favor the opposition candidate in the same name of apparently the same Jesus, and even others insist the opposing candidate is a henchman or henchwoman of the devil itself. Why get tangled up in that mess?

On the other hand, almost every Christian church insists that the Bible is God's primary source of revelation about who God is, what God prescribes and proscribes, and how much God loves us. Now hear this: The Bible is chock full of people and their governmental rulers! The prophets from Isaiah to Zechariah are about good rule, bad rule, and lack of rule. (Malachi, the last prophet in the list, takes the clergy to task. Uh oh.) Both Ezekiel 34 and Zechariah 11 have colorful allegories of rulers as shepherds, a startling "foretelling" that Jesus Christ himself would

come as Shepherd King and Prince of Peace, leading a kingdom which has no end.

God is eminently concerned about politics, power and peace, and the rulers of the people.

We in these United States will elect a President a month from now. I don't need to repeat what each candidate has said and done, but I hope you don't forget any of it. We are going to live with our choices—not just of President but all others we vote for—and I pray to God, I truly pray to God every day about this, that we as a nation do not return to a bygone era of prejudice and bigotry in an attempt to make America "great" again. Certainly life was somewhat simpler, more clearly defined, and maybe even enjoyable, but only for those of certain ancestry and color. Letting Jim Crow back out of the race bag, and enlarging the theme to include everyone who is "not like me," would create an embarrassing nation of supreme clods. Embarrassing and undoubtedly more dangerous.

On the other hand, so-called "progressive" thought and reason sometimes turns its back on common sense in favor of political ideology and expediency. And there is no excuse for claiming technological ignorance when discussing government-classified information, nor in shouting in exasperation after

intense questioning about loss of life of US ambassadors of peace in death traps, "What difference does it make now?" Such unapologetic hubris makes you wonder what other "best practices" only apply to others.

Recently in a Sunday morning adult conversation prior to worship (each week in the Greeting Room. You are invited!), we discussed how we can talk about politics with open minds and calm demeanors. Here's the challenge I made, extended to you. Read a gospel account before election day. You have a month, and you have four to choose from: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. Read carefully what Jesus has to say about all sorts of people: rulers, ruled, rich, poor, citizens, foreigners, married, widows, very religious, not so religious, men, women, children, meek, grieving, those in the right, those in the wrong, legalists, libertarians. Throw in some adulterers, lusts, virgins and prostitutes for good measure. Don't forget tax collectors.

Look for relevance to our current political climate and choices. Pretend Jesus lived and taught these things this past year. In a sense he did, because they are timeless.

*(continued on next page)*

Allow his words to seep into your soul and help you make best decisions in the voting booth, because Jesus is there, too. Even in the voting booth. Concerning which, if you didn't know before, I have now given you fair warning. Much more important than that, I have given you good advice.

God, help us.

## **Christmas Eve – Any Preference?**

We're discussing changing the time of the second Christmas Eve service. For the past few years the **Christmas Prelude began at 8:00 pm, followed by the 8:30 service.**

This year we are considering beginning the **Christmas Prelude at 10:30 pm, followed by an 11:00 pm service,** ushering in Christmas Day at midnight. In fact our church used to do that, just not with a long Prelude. Then we changed and had a single service at 8:00. A few years ago we added a service at 5:00 and the Prelude to the second service. We will keep the 5:00 service, which seems particularly good for people with small children. But what about the second service? Let us know if you have a preference. Tell Dr. Bob or Paul Flyger. Tell Judy in the office. If you have an opinion, we want to hear it.

## **Stewardship in October, including Pledge Sunday**

October is the month we focus on Christians stewardship, serving God through the church with the best use of our time, our abilities, and our financial gifts.

On October 30 we will offer our pledges for the 2017 Church

Budget. Please consider with prayer how you will support the work we do together.

## **Congregational Meetings**

- October 2 – a brief meeting after worship for church members to vote on the selection of members of the new Senior Minister Search Committee.
- November 20 – a brief meeting after worship for church members to vote on the Nominating Committee's selection of people to fill positions on boards and committees for 2017.

## **Michigan Conference UCC Annual Meeting Oct 14 - 15**

Dr. Bob, Moderator Roger Bertsch, and Moderator Elect Susan Dietrich-Reed will attend this annual meeting at Woodside Church in Flint, home of the lead-in-the-water debacle. They will share with the rest of us what they learn.

## **October 29 Church Leaders' Retreat**

We invite members of all Boards, Committees, Women's Fellowship leaders, Men's Ministry leaders, and other groups to gather on this Saturday morning in Fellowship Hall to consider the health of our congregation and do some visioning, brainstorming and planning for our future.

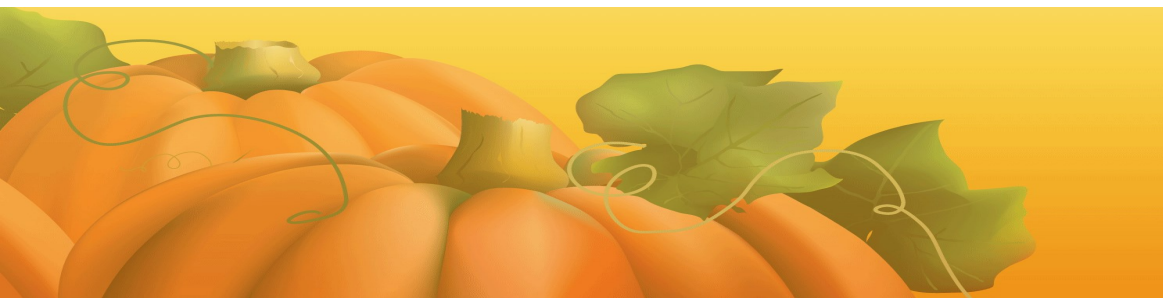
Some of the results of this gathering will be shared at the Family Matters luncheon on November 20.

## **November 20 Family Matters All Church Lunch**

Once or twice a year we gather to share with all in our church family the hopes and plans that exist throughout our church body. We do this to keep everyone in the loop and to get feedback. One highlight will be the plans we have developed for possible changes to the Sanctuary. We think you will want to preview these plans. In addition, this will be Dr. Bob's final meeting with us, so please plan to attend: Sunday, November 20, following worship, lunch provided.

## **October Birthdays**

01 - Dan Burkhard  
01 - Scott Collum  
01 - Karol Paul  
01 - Leah Terry  
02 - Bill Burrows  
03 - Hailey Rich  
05 - Eileen Resch  
05 - Mary Jane Waldenmaier  
06 - Dave Brockway  
06 - Ann Palenske  
08 - Nancy Fowler  
11 - Midge Carr  
14 - John Thomas  
15 - Abigail Brotzki  
15 - George Jaeger (100th)!!  
15 - Autumn Zick  
16 - Jim Brinkman  
16 - Naia Dibkey  
16 - Curt Plummer  
20 - Caryl Meister  
20 - Bill Schalk  
21 - Paul Flyger  
24 - Teylor Collum  
26 - Helen Sinn  
28 - Ed Eisele  
28 - Jane Maddock  
28 - Jane Marohn  
29 - Steve Reed  
30 - Susan Dietrich-Reed  
30 - Russ Zick  
31 - Jinny Bock



## *Music Ministry News from Paul Flyger*

This evening as I write, I'm sitting in the O'Hare Oasis (Jim Dansfield's recommendation) waiting for the right time to go to O'Hare's short-term parking to meet my friend, Christian Bischof. He is coming as the International Guest Organist for the University of Michigan's 2016 Organ Conference held this year from October 2-5. Many of you know that I attended his wedding in Munich, Germany in May. You may recall, he was the International Guest Organist for the Regional American Guild of Organists Convention in Kalamazoo in 2013 and he played a concert here at our church on July 7. He will play another local concert this Friday, September 30 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Augustines Catholic Cathedral in Kalamazoo. I hope many of you will try to hear him play as I've never heard another organist with his abilities! It would definitely be worth the drive to Kalamazoo to hear an organist of his caliber.

I'm pleased with the fine group of kids in the Kids Connection Choir on Wednesday evenings. We had a great first rehearsal on Wednesday, September 14 and have been maintaining good attendance since. It's wonderful to see so many families out for Wednesday activities. On the other hand, Joyful Praise Ringers has only two members at the moment due to conflicts with school activities for the other regular members. We've been working on solo ringing techniques and I'm contemplating the purchase of trio music so the three of us can practice our solo ringing technique and perhaps play a trio during worship or the Early Christmas Eve service. We would each be managing 4 or more bells. Solo ringing develops advanced techniques and makes for a really good handbell ringer later in life!

I'm excited to announce that we have a couple new ringers in the Jubilate Ringers Handbell Choir which bring us up to 10 and they are busy working on their next performance as well as new music for the Early Christmas Eve Service. I'm very excited about the potential of this music ensemble. We still have room for one or two more. Special thanks go to Patty Nordberg who is ring in two bell choirs.

The Alleluia Ringers are busy working on new pieces as well as music for the Candlelight Prelude for the Late Christmas Eve Service. Please let me know your preference and desires for the start time of that service. As you have read in Dr. Bob's article, this will be either 8 p.m. or 10:30 p.m. (How many remember the year it was snowing huge flakes when we walked out of Christmas Eve Service at midnight? I found that to be simply magical and I still haven't forgotten it!)

Our next Kids in Worship Sunday will be October 9 which is also Stewardship 1. We will hear from our Kids Connection Choir that day as well. We are also planning another Worship Set of Praise Songs which I have been incorporating into our singing on Wednesday evenings so the kids will be familiar with the songs we sing that day. This was suggested to the Worship Planning Team by one of our devoted parents and we've taken it to heart and will endeavor to do this all year long as another way to make worship more relevant to all - even the youngest worshippers!

Our main event for the month of October will be the Choral Festival at 4 p.m. on Sunday, October 23. Details are being worked out as we are going to press but I can assure you it will be a lovely event with several local choirs joining our Chancel Choir. We have the Sanctuary Choir from the Pioneer Memorial Church choir as well as the Andrews University Singers joining us. A couple more choirs may be joining as well which will bring the total numbers of singers to 100+. Each choir will present on their own and we will open with a grand hymn arrangement and close with a mass choir piece that will utilize the talents of other local musicians. Mark you calendars and watch for more details!





# Health News from Your Parish Nurse Jan

## An Autumn Greeting

"Come," said the Wind to the  
Leaves one day.

"Come over the meadow  
and we will play.

Put on your dresses  
of red and gold.

For summer is gone  
and the days grow cold."

I will be on vacation (I call it my mini sabbatical) from October 3 to October 23 for a much needed pause to connect with family and friends. On October 4, my husband Vince and I will celebrate 30 years of marriage! Then, we'll be hosting out of town friends that we seldom see for a couple of days.

On October 8 I fly to Southern California to spend some time with my 93 y/o Italian Auntie (*Zia*) who is my father's last sibling on earth. I will also be reconnecting with friends that were in our circle when we lived in California during the 1980's & 90's.

If you require a need for a Parish Nurse, please contact Judy in the church office and she'll notify Terri Rushlow, my immediate supervisor at Lakeland, to assist you.

I'll be back at First Congregational the week of October 23. See you then.

## CALLED TO CARE

*Let me give you a new command. Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples – when they see the love you have for each other.*

John 13:34-35

As disciples we are called to care by a God who cares for us. The Called to Care ministry answers that call. Our goals are to:

- Be a compassionate presence for those in our congregation who are in need of care and encouragement.
- Offer spiritual support to those who are unable to be present at church to feel fully embraced by our church family.
- Enhance our minister's and our parish nurse's pastoral care ministries.

We offer support and encouragement through:

- Personal visits
- Phone calls
- Home Communion
- Notes
- Meals
- Prayer

We serve:

- The homebound
- Those who are hospitalized
- Those in care facilities
- Those who are experiencing long/short term physical illness
- Caregivers
- New parents
- Those in life-changing situations

Will you write a note, make a call, prepare a meal, pay a visit? Called to Care needs you! If you can make an ongoing commitment or are only able to help occasionally, there is a place for you. To learn where you may best serve, contact Beth Kenagy (985-8782) or Parish Nurse Jan Trapani (983-5519).

*Take Care of  
someone else. Be there  
for someone else. Bless  
someone else. A happy  
life is about giving  
more than you take.*

-Mandy Hale

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# Menu for Wednesday Night Dinners

PLEASE NOTE: MENU IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.  
WATCH THE CHURCH'S FACEBOOK PAGE  
FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION

DATE	Main Dish	Sides	Kids' Meal	Special Diets	Dessert
October 5	2 crockpot dishes	Salad, bread			Fruit
October 12	Loaded Baked Potato Casserole with Chicken	Tossed Salad, Jello Salad, Home Baked Bread	Chicken Tenders	Lentil Burgers with Guacomole	Salted Caramel Cupcakes
October 19	Lasagna	Caesar Salad, Bread Sticks	Lasagna	Vegetable Gluten Free Lasagna	Brownies
October 26	Tilapia	Dilled Carrots, Salad, Rolls	Fish Sticks	Three Cheese Spinach Quiche, gluten free crust	Banana Cream Pie
November 2	Chicken Divan	Vegetable, Salad, Rolls	Chicken Tenders	Stuffed Acorn Squash	Chef's Choice
November 9	Ribs	Cheesy Potatoes, Cole Slaw, Corn-bread	Ribs	Macaroni & Cheese	Pumpkin Roll
November 16	Turkey (Thanksgiving dinner)	Cranberry jello salad, dressing, mashed potatoes	Turkey	Bean Cakes	Pumpkin Pie
November 30	Pasta Bar	Italian salad, Herb & Oil Bread	Pasta	Gluten free pasta bar	Variety of Cookies
December 7	Deep dish pizza	Salad	Pizza	Vegetarian pizza	Pudding parfaits
December 14	Christmas Dinner				





## DRUGS 101: What Parents Want to Know

An informative and educational program for adults to learn about the signs, symptoms and current trends of teen drug use.

A highlight of this program is a mock teenager's bedroom set-up for adults to observe and attempt to identify the obvious and not-so-obvious drug related paraphernalia. You will learn to identify trends in teen drug use, provide tools to identify teen drug use and acquire skills to engage kids in conversations.

The program will take place at Lakeshore High School (5771 Cleveland Ave., Stevensville) on Saturday, October 15 from 9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m. The doors will open at 8:00 a.m. to visit vendors.

The program is **free** and sponsored by "Voice. Change. Hope. Alliance." You can register by calling MI State Police Lt., Melinda Logan at: (269) 921-5741 or email: [LoganM4@michigan.gov](mailto:LoganM4@michigan.gov). Walk-Ins are welcome and childcare for 2 years of age and up is available.

## Nominating Committee Report

Your Nominating Committee (Roger Bertsch, Dr. Bob and myself) are putting together a slate of nominees for your approval at our November 20 Annual Congregational Meeting. If you are asked to serve on one of our boards, please consider giving of your time and talent. This is a very busy and important time in the life of our church. New voices, input and leadership are always appreciated. Thank you in advance for your consideration,  
Susan Dietrich-Reed, Chair

## Women's Book Study - Tuesday, October 25, 9:30 a.m. *Benediction* by Kent Haruf

Haruf, author of *Plainsong* and *Eventide*, writes with grace and insight about "the precious ordinary". Like his other novels, this meditation on life and death is set on the High Plain, in Holt, Colorado. As "Dad" Wells struggles to find peace at the end of his life, a host of other characters including an elderly widow, a new minister, and a young girl who has just lost her mother also confront the challenges that are a part of the human experience. The book poignantly explores the importance of friends, family, faith, and love. Sue Plummer will lead the discussion. **Please note location change:** We'll meet at Sue's home at 3134 Lincoln Avenue, St. Joseph.

## Missions Board Update

Your Missions Board has been the recipient of two generous estate gifts. We invite the congregation to elicit ideas how you might wish to see these funds used for furthering local and far-reaching missions. As stated in our Missions Statement, we seek to reach inward and outward to serve. Please submit your ideas to Joyce Vance or any other member of the Missions Board by November 1.

**Also...** on November 5 the Missions Board will be partnering with United Way for a "Day of Action for Seniors". United Way provides names of individuals, who need help with yard work, small repairs, and maybe some painting. United Way will provide the materials needed. If you are interested in working on this "one day" outreach project, please contact Joyce Vance. Families, students and individuals are all welcome to participate. T-shirts are compliments of United Way.

## InterCare Farm Workers Drive Roundup

This spring 2016 InterCare Farm Workers Drive was another success at FCC! Our contributions helped about 50 families that live in the farm worker camps in Berrien County. InterCare decided that the greatest impact would be at the smaller camps, which families have less resources than the larger ones. At one camp in particular they encountered

mostly children, as most of the adults were working in the fields. The children thought it was Christmas due to the great amount of contributions being delivered. InterCare and the families living in the camps were greatly appreciative of our church's effort. Thank you for your support in our 2016 drive. God is Good!

## Please Join Us

Church Women United will meet on Friday, October 7 at 11:00 a.m. at Zion UCC, 3001 Veronica Drive, St. Joseph. This is an Area 5 gathering with members from St. Joseph, Benton Harbor, Battle Creek, and Kalamazoo. The theme will be "Bridge Over Troubled Waters" with the state CWU President speaking at the 11:00 a.m. program. Registration begins at 10:00 a.m. and there will be a lunch at noon (\$12). You will find registration forms on the hall bulletin board. Questions? Contact Patty Nordberg at 429-7297.

you to Merrill Anderson for creating new bookmarks. Please feel free to take one when you sign out a book. New books will be joining the shelves soon. You do not need to wait for a tour, come explore on your own. Caryl, Nancy & Patty

## News from the Library

In September one of our women's groups, Mary Preston Guild, took a tour of the library with Nancy Fette. Bibles have been moved under the counter. Books relating to the Old and New Testament have joined them. Some of the topics (fiction and memoirs) outgrew their space and have been moved. It won't be long and the library crew will have settled all books into a permanent spot. Thank



# 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

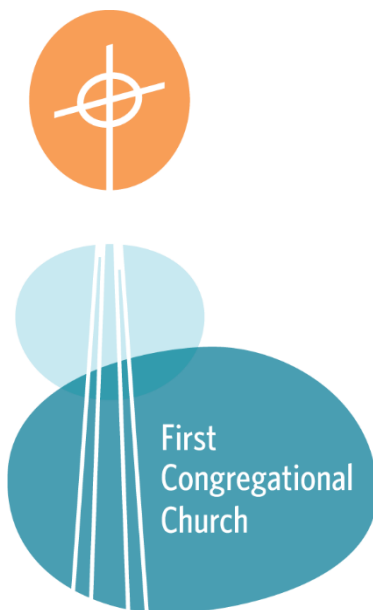
## The Invitation to Discipleship from Jesus Christ

*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.

**Phone:** (269) 983-5519

**Website:** [fccstjoseph.org](http://fccstjoseph.org)

**Facebook:** FCCStJoseph

**Email:** [office@fccstjoseph.org](mailto:office@fccstjoseph.org)

**Address:** First Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ  
2001 Niles Avenue  
St. Joseph, Michigan