The Parchment

Monthly Newsletter of the First Congregational Church United Church of Christ

February 2017

Case Statement - First Congregational Church

Our centerpiece: the Sanctuary Our Sanctuary was designed and built in the mid 1950's and has served our church congregation very well for nearly 60 years. As we all know, several important projects have been completed during those years to keep it looking beautiful and functional. The most recent examples are the rebuilding of our magnificent pipe organ, the addition of the entrance way ramp, and the cleaning and back-lighting of the rose window, among others. The one thing that has remained unchanged is the layout of the Chancel area with permanent choir pews facing one another on fixed risers, fixed pulpit, lectern, baptismal, and the extremely narrow space between the organ console and the opposite choir pews. The original electrical panels, dimmers, and light fixtures are still being used and in some cases are not working at all anymore. Updates to the electrical system and lighting have been on the Trustees "to do" list for many years.

One of Dr. Braman's last visions for the future was to update the Chancel area to make our sacred worship space more accessible to worshipers, create a more flexible setup for our music and children's programs, and to update the audio, video, and lighting systems for efficiency, visibility, and versatility. The Renovation Committee considers the Sanctuary Renovation Project as most important for the future of the First Congregational Church.

A second priority sits right below the Sanctuary. Women's Fellowship has spearheaded a comprehensive updating of Fellowship Hall which, although well maintained, is showing the wear and tear of weekly meetings, dinners, and the bi-annual rummage sales, with dated, inefficient doors, windows, and light fixtures. There is also a moisture problem which is destroying the 60-year old floor tile which contain asbestos and need to be removed professionally.

Third on our renovations list is the Chapel. Christian Education is extremely important to our staff, young families, and the future of the church community. Every Sunday the Chapel is used for youth lessons and activities as well as various times during the summer months. The current space with fixed pews, hard surfaces, no air conditioning, and often times insufficient heat in winter, makes this space less than desirable for Christian education. Fixing the HVAC system will also allow for increased use during small weddings or funerals, and church related functions. Several simple and reasonably inexpensive changes are being planned for the Chapel update.

(Continued on next page.)

Sanctuary updates and improvements include:

- New LED lighting significant increase in efficiency, dimmable, programmable, colors
- Enlarged and extended Chancel floor improved versatility for worship and other performances, handbell setups, piano closer to choir, choir facing congregation, more space for children's programs
- Updated audio and video capabilities for worshipers in the Sanctuary, workers in the Nursery, Greeting Room, Gathering Room, and Fellowship Hall and for live streaming to the web and/or website
- Equipment for projection of hymns, pictures, mission trip presentations, youth group activities, and liturgical readings with <u>no screen</u>
- Replacement of outdated sound board and equipment including mics, speakers
- Electrically operated blinds to shade the sun on both sides of the Sanctuary
- Moveable pulpit, lectern and baptismal font increased Chancel flexibility
- Handicap Accessibility in the Chancel area allowing everyone to be involved in worship leadership

Fellowship Hall:

- New LED light fixtures energy efficient with wider dispersion and modern look
- New windows, shades and patio doors energy efficient and updated look
- Updated sound system
- Removal of asbestos tile, water-proofing, updated flooring
- Paint and plaster work updated look at minimal expense

Chapel:

- HVAC improvements add air conditioning and independent heat operation (currently the Chapel operates whenever the Sanctuary is set to run - very inefficient) – increased use capabilities for Christian Education, small weddings or funerals, and other church related uses
- Replace pews with moveable and stackable chairs flexibility for Christian Education use
- Carpet the main floor inviting look and feel for young people

The outcomes of these projects:

- Significantly improved areas that will provide staff, worshipers, and performers with outstanding experiences while also accommodating a broad range of activities including worship services, Christian Education programs, weddings, concerts and special performances
- A "greener" more energy and fiscally efficient operation
- Improved work spaces which enable ministers, musicians, directors, and staff to be more creative and productive, while maximizing resources and producing the highest quality worship experiences

How will the project be funded?

The complete Sanctuary renovation is estimated to be \$325,000. Fellowship Hall is estimated to be approximately \$150,000 or less depending on the removal of the asbestos tiles. The initial Chapel update is estimated at approximately \$25,000. Pearson Construction has given our Renovation Committee these ball park estimates but final costs are always determined by choices in flooring, furniture replacement, and unknown cost overruns. The good news is we are already half way there through available Building and Site Funds, Endowment Funds, and recent gifts to the church. Women's Fellowship has committed \$60,000 over the next three years towards Fellowship Hall. In addition, our electric company AEP is offering commercial projects such as ours, a substantial rebate program for updating electric systems to LED, and HVAC improvements up to \$50,000.

Our Capital Campaign goal for this major project is \$225,000. The Trustees have approved a Capital Campaign pledge drive over three years that will complete the fund drive necessary for all three phases of the project. Pledge cards will be available to everyone in early February and as always, gifts to the church are tax deductible.

Focus Group Sessions:

Six question and answer Renovation Focus Group Sessions are being planned for February and early March at various times and days of the week. If warranted we will also plan one in mid April for 'snow birds' that would like to attend. Anyone that would like more information or has questions about these projects is encouraged to attend any or all of these sessions. We'll start each session with a power-point presentation showing the planned improvements, followed by a chance for discussion and questions. Staff and committee members will be in attendance to help with each of these group sessions. Feel free to discuss these plans with any committee member individually as well.

Summing it up:

Our Visions Statement reads "As believers in Jesus Christ, we will be a church of vibrant Christians". We need to stay "vibrant" to attract new families, maintain our excellent service to the community, and fulfill our commitment to our present church membership. It is our belief that updating the Sanctuary for worship services, Fellowship Hall for the many activities it is used for, and the Chapel for Christian Education and other church related activities, will not only take care of long-term maintenance issues but will provide updated, state of the art capabilities for future generations of First Congregational Church members.

Russ Zick – Renovation Committee Chair russzick@aol.com 269-921-5355 cell 269-429-0671 home

Steven L. Reed – Capital Campaign Team Chair stevereed52@yahoo.com 269-277-3317

FCC Renovation Focus Group Schedule

Sunday, February 12 – 11:45 a.m., Fellowship Hall following worship Thursday, February 16 – 12:00 noon, Greeting Room before Women's Bible Study Monday, February 20 – 5:30 p.m., Gathering Room Saturday, February 25 – 9:30 a.m., Gathering Room following Men's Ministry Sunday, February 26 – 11:45 a.m., Fellowship Hall following worship Monday, March 6 – 5:30 p.m., Gathering Room April date tbd

Purpose:

To answer questions and concerns regarding the proposed Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, and Chapel renovation projects. A short powerpoint presentation will start each Focus Group session and members of the FCC Renovation Committee and Capital Campaign Team will be in attendance. Feel free to contact any committee member. They are excited, willing and ready to talk to anybody about these exciting plans.

Renovation Committee

Russ Zick – chair russzick@aol.com Rick Freridge Dick Carlson Carol Geldhof Beth Christy Steve Reed

Capital Campaign Team

Steve Reed – chair <u>stevereed52@yahoo.com</u>
Ed Eisele
Allan Westmaas
Patty Nordberg
Carol Geldhof

Ad Hoc Committee Membership

Paul Flyger Roger Bertsch Susan Dietrich-Reed Bill Marohn Kristin Armstrong

Heart-Health Valentine's Day Tips - from Nurse Jan

Your sweetheart may have the key to your heart, but eating healthy and being physically active can be the key to a healthier heart. This Valentine's Day, indulge your sweetheart with a heart-healthy gift or date. Here's some tips on how to have a healthy Valentine's Day!



- 1. Rather than tempting your beloved with sweets, consider a gift that has more permanence. Search for a poem that describes your feelings and write it on beautiful paper for a handmade Valentine.
- 2. Quality time is one of the most meaningful gifts. Bundle up and plan an active outing such as sledding, ice skating, gathering wood for a fire, or if you're feeling adventurous, visit an indoor rock wall.
- 3. If your kids are having a **Valentine's Day party at their school or day care**, instead of sending candies, consider raisins, grapes, whole-grain pretzels, colored pencils or stickers as tokens of their friendly affection.
- 4. Cooking at home is an excellent way to control what and how much you eat. Take a date to a local cooking class to practice your skills or learn a new technique.
- 5. Prepare a romantic candlelit dinner at home using one of our heart-healthy recipes.
- 6. Give to one another by giving back. Ask a date to volunteer with you at a local organization. Giving back
 - is a healthy habit that can boost your mood and help beat stress.
- 7. Use this day as an opportunity to tell your loved one how important they are to you, and share ways that you can support each other's health and wellness.
- 8. Craving something sweet? Gift a beautiful fresh fruit basket to your loved one instead of giving sweets with added sugars.
- 9. Sharing is caring if you go out for a romantic dinner date, order one entrée to share. Many restaurant servings are enough for two splitting will keep you from overdoing it.
- 10. Don't forget to love Fido, too! Give your pet a Valentine and remember to walk or exercise them daily getting active with your pet will benefit your health and your bond with your pets.
- 11. Take it slow if you receive a luxurious box of chocolates from your sweetie, stick it in the freezer and enjoy in moderation over the next several weeks.
- 12. Take a long, romantic walk with your beloved and try to make it a regular habit. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderately intense physical activity each week to help keep your heart healthy. You can reach this goal by walking briskly for at least 30 minutes five days each week.

Interim Ministers and the Worship Planning Team - from Paul Flyger

During February we will thank our guest minister, Rev. David Wheeler for his ministerial leadership and welcome our Interim Minister, Rev. Dr. Charles Guerreno. We have been quite fortunate to have Rev. Wheeler here for all 5 weeks before Dr. Guerreno arrives. It has been wonderful working with someone with whom we have a relationship. The Jubilate Ringers will ring on Dr. Guerreno's first Sunday and the Alleluia Ringers will ring on his second Sunday and then we will share Communion on the 3rd week and then its Kids in Worship for his 4th week. The Chancel Choir will remain a consistent part of our weekly worship, but the other parts will offer him quite a variety for his first 4 weeks. I look forward to getting to know our interim pastor and working with him on a daily basis. Please remember to wear your name tags each Sunday to help him get to know us. Call the office if you don't have a name tag and we'll provide you with one.

Dr. Guerreno has indicated that he would like to continue our tradition of having a liturgist assist him during the worship services. In the past, Dr. Bob recruited and trained liturgists, so this task has been assumed by the Worship Planning Team. If you would be interested in learning to serve the congregation in this way, please contact one of the Worship Planning Team members and we will be happy to help train and figure out when you can begin this important ministry. Any parent/child team would also be welcome because we want to see our youth involved in worship. We have liturgists scheduled thru the end of March and are now scheduling the months of April and May.

Worship Planning Team

The WPT has had a few changes in its team members. We recently lost two members due to life changes so this past month we have expanded this team by three members. Our current team is made up of the following seven individuals who represent a cross-section of the congregation and its ministries. I extend a big welcome to our newest members!

Paul Flyger
Stephen Zork
Melissa Lutz
Jan Polmanteer
Dr. Charles Guerreno (new - Interim Minister)
Alison Achramowicz (new - CE Director)
Don Margoni (new- Diaconate)

Monday Music Organ Recital

You may want to know about an Organ Recital I'm preparing for the Monday Musical program that will be held in our Sanctuary on Monday, February 6 at 1:00 p.m. I am performing a recital titled, **Old Gems and New Nuggets**, for one half of the afternoon program. The public is welcomed to all Monday Musical programs. You are invited to be my guest.

Kids Connection Choir

The Kids Connection Choir meets every Wednesday evening from 7:00 - 7:30 p.m. in the choir room and we have a lot of fun singing together. Any student thru the 4th grade is welcome to sing in the Kids Connection Choir! We are preparing a few short pieces and worship choruses so the elementary kids can participate in worship on the following Kids in Worship dates: February 12

March 5 (Pine Ridge Outreach Program, 3:30 p.m.) March 12 and May 14 (Mother's Day)

Handbell Choirs

The Jubilate Ringers will ring for worship on Sunday, February 19 and the Alleluia Ringers will ring the following week on Sunday, February 26. They are also busy preparing pieces for the Pine Ridge Outreach Program on Sunday, March 5. Jubilate Ringers rehearse on Wednesdays from 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. and the Alleluia Ringers rehearse on Thursdays from 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. Each choir has a warmup rehearsal at 8:30 a.m. on the day they ring in worship.

Chancel Choir

The Chancel Choir warmly welcomes three new choir members who have come to swell our ranks of dedicated singers. I also want to publicly thank our current choir members who give of their time and talent each week by attending rehearsals and singing in worship services from September thru May each year. This is an important contribution and we thank you for it!

Summer Special Music Signup

It's time to think about Summer Special Music and we always offer our church members the first opportunity to sign up for a Sunday during the summer months of June, July and August including Labor Day weekend. Please call or email me, paul@fccstjoseph.org if you are interested in serving the congregation in this way.

Round Up Sunday is scheduled for September 10 when the Chancel Choir, Christian Education and all music ensembles will begin their regular programing.



- 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
- 18 Sophie Gable
- 19 Drew Christy
- 20 Jim Meister
- 21 Deb Burkhard
- 22 Bill Chickering
- 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

Interim Minister

Rev. Chuck Guerreno and his wife, Jane, will move into the parsonage on February 10. He will begin his ministry with us on February 16. His first service will be Sunday the 19th. Following worship that day we will hold a Meet and Greet in Fellowship Hall. A light lunch will be served.

Hate Junk Mail?

Ken Schneider, who has been worshipping with us for some time, has offered to help rid you of your junk mail.

You can drop your junk mail off at the church (box located outside of the office) and he will collect it and delate your name from that particular mailing list. Ken has been doing this for the St. Joseph Senior Center for the last few years. A great way to save a few trees.

Meal Menu for February

8th - Oven fried chicken, cole slaw, potato wedges, carrots, mac & cheese dessert

15th - Barbequed pulled pork on fresh rolls, pasta salad, vegetables, chicken fingers, chocolate peanut butter cake

22nd - Baked Salisbury steak with mushroom sauce, mashed potatoes, zucchini casserole, hot dogs on a bun, Oreo dessert

(Subject to change without notice)

Keep Your Eyes On God

We have no power... nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You. 2 Chronicles 20:12

In time of tranquility and prosperity, we face the constant danger of turning away from God to pursue our own goals and desires. In those good times we must diligently guard our hearts by remembering that our peace and prosperity are always gifts from Him.

When we are in the midst of trouble and pain, however, we more easily acknowledge our helplessness and dependence on God. But we may also ask hard questions about His love and power. In those times we may be tempted to doubt God or even abandon our faith. We must remember that no crisis is beyond God's control and that nothing can separate us from His love.

In good times or bad, it is always right to keep your eyes on God and trust in His wisdom. Be assured that no situation taxes His sovereign power.

Then, when God does deliver you, be sure to tell others of His mercy. Others are watching your life. Your friends, your colleagues, your children, and even your enemies can learn about trusting God when they see you turn to Him in periods of ease and seasons of strife.

Discovering God's Daily Agenda

Women's Book Group

Do you like a good suspense fiction that grabs your attention from the beginning and holds it until the end? If you do, please join us at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, February 28 in the Greeting Room for a discussion on a book by Jonathan Cain entitled: The Harbinger: The Ancient Mystery that Holds the Secret of America's Future. The Harbinger opens with the appearance of a man burdened with a message he has received from a mysterious figure called "The Prophet." The Prophet has given him nine seals, each containing messages about America's future. Before its end as a nation, there appeared in ancient Israel nine specific warnings and omens of national destruction. Coincidence? Come and find out. All women are welcome; bring a friend. Diana Seaman will lead the discussion.

Library News

We have new signage on the shelves that will help you identify a topic that will hold the right book to give you enjoyment, guidance or strength. Needing a devotion? Many selections are available along with a new addition by Dave Ramsey. Diana Seaman has donated *Daily Guideposts 2017*. If you are not familiar with this publication, it is another resource for devotions.

Our team includes: Nancy Fette, Caryl Meister, Patty Nordberg, and Kathy MacTavish

Children's Mission Project

Did you know there are almost 100 senior citizens working in the Foster Grandparent program through the Area Agency on Aging? These foster grandparents work tirelessly in so many classrooms across the county. They provide one-on-one attention to students, and extra help as needed to the teachers. Did you know that they meet in our church once a month for their in-service luncheon? As a way of saying thank you, we would like to have the children donate little items that could be placed on the tables for their March meeting. All during the month of February, there will be a donation box outside the Chapel for little Chapstick, lotions, socks, whatever you think these wonderful foster grandparents might like! Our goal is to collect enough items for 100 grandparents. (Please no candy.)

Thank you from your Christian Education Board and staff.

Church Women United

The next event for all women will be World Day of Prayer, "Am I Being Unfair to You?" on Friday, March 3 at 1:00 p.m. The host church is Second Baptist Church, 600 Donald Adkins Drive, Benton Harbor. Celebration chairs for the program are Jerri Gavin and Sinie Bass. If you are interesting in attending, please contact Patty Nordberg at 429-7297 or pnordberg@comcast.net with questions.

Women's Bible Study

All women are invited to join the group on Thursdays at 1:00 p.m. in the Library. Our current study, *Enough... a study on the book of Colossians*, is underway. In this personal practical study, you will learn how a life devoted to Jesus brings true satisfaction and contentment. The authors, Crystal Colp, Jacki Kachner, Erin Lehmann, and Alice Park all attend First Church of God in St. Joseph. This past winter we studied *Eyewitness* also written by these four. Whether you have ever taken a Bible study or not, we welcome you. Books will be available for \$5.00. Women's Fellowship supports our studies with any additional costs. Bring your favorite Bible along with a friend. Questions? Please contact Patty Nordberg at 429-7297 or pnordberg@comcast.net.

Adult Sunday Morning Class

Join us at 9:15 a.m. in the Greeting Room as we engage in the DVD series called, *That the World May Know* by Ray VanderLaan. Each week we will begin with prayer, some sharing and then the DVD. Everyone is welcome to join the group.

News from Christian Education

Important Dates for CE

February 1 Wednesday night dinner and programs
Wednesday night dinner and programs

February 11 Young adult book club, 6 p.m.

February 12 Kids in Worship, Sunday school students will be dismissed to Sunday school after the

children's message during worship

February 15 Wednesday night dinner and programs for kids only, no adult class

February 22 Wednesday night dinner and programs February 24 - 26 Youth winter retreat to Spring Hill

The Book Nook!

Across from the CE office, near the Chapel, you will notice our new display of children's books. We encourage you to sign out a book or two for your reading enjoyment! Just choose a book, sign it out on the clipboard, and cross your name off after you've returned it.

February's Teaching Themes

Preschool

During the month of February children will learn that Jesus' love is *SO BIG!* And that's what we want our preschoolers to walk away knowing this year. Jesus loves them with a love that is bigger than they can imagine. The lessons we want the preschoolers to learn during this month include:

Jesus wants to be my forever friend.

Who loves you? Jesus love you!

February's memory verse:

"How wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ." Ephesians 3:18, NIV

Elementary

During the month of February students will learn about *LOVE* and that love is choosing to treat others the way you want to be treated. The lessons we want the students to learn each week include:

Love others because Jesus loves you.

Comfort others who are hurting.

Give to others who are in need.

Love others because they matter to God.

February's memory verse:

"Here is what love is. It is not that we loved God. It is that he loved us and sent his son to give his life to pay for our sins." 1 John 4:10, NIRV

Youth

During February students will complete a series called ROAD TRIP.

Road trips are awesome. Whether you're heading to the mountains with your family or driving to the beach with your friends, the idea of packing up, grabbing your favorite snacks, planning the perfect playlist, and hitting the road just sounds like an adventure. And it is! Maybe that's because new places are always exciting, or maybe it's just that, more than anywhere else, the unexpected seems to happen on the road. Flat tires. Detours. Surprisingly great lunch stops. Disappointingly awful gas stations. The unexpected is just part of the trip. Life works a lot like that, too. We start with a plan in mind, but things happen along the way that change our plans, change our minds, or even change our relationships. That's when we have to decide to stick to the plan or change course. This is especially true for the apostle Paul. Long before GPS or interstates, Paul set out on a series of road trips, and just like us, he experienced some surprising, even life-changing moments on the road.

As we take a look at some key turning points on Paul's road trips, we discover that maybe the best thing that can happen on our journey is a change of direction.

The lessons we want students to learn each week include:

As you get to know God, be ready to rethink.

God's plan for you is to do the next right thing.

Treat everyone like they're someone.

Mary Preston Guild

The group will be meeting in the Gathering Room at 1:00 p.m. on February 8 for a talk by Amanda Zaluckyj, who has a blog called, The Farmer's Daughter USA. She is a local gal who will fill the group in on what is happening in our area. It should be a very interesting afternoon. If you are planning to attend, please let Patty Nordberg know (429-7297 or pnordberg@comcast.net) by Sunday the 5th.

Women's Fellowship Council

They will meet on Wednesday, February 15 at 1:00 p.m. in the Greeting Room. All women of the church are invited to attend.

Men's Ministry

The group meets on the 2nd & 4th Saturday of the month. They start off with a light breakfast at 8:00 a.m. in the Gathering Room and the discussion is from 8:20 - 9:30. Their next meeting will be on February 11. They will discuss God's creation of the universe and the earth and humanity. They are using the book, *Improbable Planet* by Hugh Ross as a resource. Books are available at the meeting.

Some questions for your consideration:

What is your understanding of dark energy in the development of the universe?

Do stars have any function other than emitting light and heat?

Are we part of a galaxy or separate from one?

Why do you think it took God nine billion years from the time of the beginning of the universe until He created the earth?

Greatly Appreciated

The Board of Trustees and members of our church would like to gratefully acknowledge the financial support given by the Upton Foundation and Priebe Creative Woodworking for the refurbishment of the beautiful Rose Window. This is a beautiful improvement to our Sanctuary worship area. Thank you for your kind donations!

Service Opportunity - Southwest MI Community Action Agency

Who: Anyone who can lift a can of food or push a cart.

What: Distributing food to seniors and those in need. Our jobs may include packing bags/boxes,

pushing carts to cars and assist in loading when needed.

When: If you would like to help, please contact Sue Howe @ 519-2278 or suehowe4@gmail.com.

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

8:30 a.m. Handbell warmup (if scheduled)

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

5:00 p.m. Jubilate 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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United Church of Christ

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