The Parchment Monthly Newsletter of First Congregational Church UCC April 2017

Saying Goodbye Isn't Easy! - Paul Flyger, Director of Music

Born and raised on a farm in South Dakota, one might wonder how I ended up in Michigan having lived in South Dakota, Utah, Arizona and California before spending the last 28 years in Southwest Michigan. And after spending the largest half of my life here, making the decision to move to Portland, OR hasn't been fast nor easy.

Early Years as a Pianist

My life as a musician began at age 6 when my second cousin taught me how to play The B-I-B-L-E on the piano one Christmas. I started my formal piano training when I was 7 and continued through college. My first two years of high school were on a farm in Lennox, South Dakota. I was a home-school student and at age 17, I had the opportunity to enter the J. Earl Lee Piano Competition. I received high marks but as the youngest pianist competing against college students up to age 24, I wasn't likely to win, but it certainly was a great experience. I remember attending the Winner's Recital in complete awe and amazement. This was my first hearing of Chopin's *Fantasy in F Minor* played in a live performance. I went home both inspired and determined to be the best musician I could become.

I finished high school at Castle Valley Academy in Moab, UT. I sang in and accompanied the Academy Choir, played for church services, and even took my first few organ lessons from the Academy organist. In my Junior year, the choir attended a SDA Fall Rally in Salt Lake City. Coincidentally, I turned pages for the church organist, Linda Wildman (now Mack) and we had lunch together following the service. This was the beginning of 33 years of friendship with Linda. Little did I know what a mentor and colleague she would become to me as a musician. Her postlude became my "goal" organ piece, the Finale from *Symphony No. 1, Op. 14* by Louis Vierne. (I would never forget this piece or its tune and was completely overjoyed the moment Dr. Becker suggested I learn it. It will be the Postlude for Easter this year.) While at lunch that day, I asked if she would be able to accompany our choir on the organ for the afternoon program. We were singing *Ave verum corpus* by Mozart and I thought it would be beautiful with the pipe organ. Unfortunately, she had a wedding to play at another church, but she was willing to help me choose an appropriate registration so I could do it. Both stunned that she would allow me to play the pipe organ and scared that I could even pull it off – we went back to the organ and worked out what I would do in the concert that afternoon (my first organ lesson on a pipe organ). From THAT moment on, I was hooked as an organist!!

College at Andrews University

My first two years of college were at Weimar College (Weimar, CA) and at some point I attended an organ recital by Dorothy Oster, former student of Dr. C. Warren Becker from Andrews University. Following her concert, I asked if she taught organ lessons. She arranged for me to receive college credit for lessons and thus began my formal training as an organist. During my sophomore year, Mrs. Oster told me I was making great progress, and thought it was time for me to consider becoming an organ major at Andrews University and to study Organ Performance with Dr. C. Warren Becker. I set to work and made a scholarship recording, applied and became awarded the Virginia May Hamel Performing Arts Scholarship. I arrived in

Berrien Springs, Michigan in the fall of 1989. For the next 3 years, I finished my Bachelors of Music degree graduating in August 1992. I was also the organist at the Pilgrim United Church of Christ in Stevensville and became their Choir Director for the last 1 1/2 years as their organist.

Organist at First Congregational Church UCC

Before arriving in Michigan, Linda Wildman (from SLC) had previously returned to Michigan to become the Music Librarian at Andrews University. As a student, I worked closely with Linda in the Music Library, Andrews University Singers and we both accompanied Graduate Conducting students. In the spring of 1993, when Linda wanted to visit her fiancé, Ed, she asked me to play for a worship service at FCC and told me to prepare myself well, because the church was aware of her plans to move to Florida. She suggested this would likely be an informal audition for the organist position at First Congregational Church. Indeed, I had a phone message when I returned to my dorm room that Sunday. I interviewed and accepted to become the new organist on the condition that I would remain at Pilgrim UCC until Easter. That will be 24 years ago on Sunday, April 23. I have grown a lot with this congregation, playing over 1200 worship services, many weddings and funerals, seen kids be born, grow up, get married and have kids of their own. I have attended many AGO conventions, and taken post-graduate lessons with Dr. Karl Schrock from Western Michigan University. I was initially challenged with the task of finishing the organ renovation with the Fowler Organ Company (1994), and learned much more about organ building when working with Georg Buck on the renovation, repair, and expansion of the organ in 2011. I have ALWAYS felt very privileged to play this pipe organ with its great resources!!

I have grown as a church musician by becoming the Handbell Director in the fall of 2011. I've had great fun helping to teach and train the Jubilate and Alleluia Ringers. We owe a great deal of our success to Janet Van Valey, my dear friend and mentor in the handbell world. Both Janet and Tom have given of the time and talent as they have nurtured our handbell program from Paw Paw, MI. When I became the full time Director of Music, I waited a year to join the Kalamazoo Ringers in order to focus on my job here at FCC. I eventually joined the Kalamazoo Ringers because I knew it would be important for me to become the best ringer I could be in order to lead and teach handbells here. I've also challenged myself by becoming the Director of Music Ministry three years ago and adding on additional responsibilities as Children's Choir Director. This ensemble has been a delight and joy and I feel its the most fun part of my work as Director of Music Ministry! Since I started teaching piano lessons at age 17, I have always enjoyed the elementary age, and I still do. I leave each Kids Connection Choir rehearsal uplifted and energized after singing with our great elementary kids. I will miss these loving and energetic singers who always have smiles on their faces.

Changes in Life Direction

Back in 2005 when my father was diagnosed with Pancreatic cancer, I had been considering going back to doctoral school. I wanted to complete my college education with either a Doctorate in Church Music or Choral Conducting degree but these plans were put on hold until after my father passed. In order to go to school, I needed to sell my house but the economy went into recession and the value of my house plummeted. So instead of selling, I ended up doing a renovation including a new roof, some new windows, new soffits and gutters and a complete rebuilding of the garage (2010-11). After this was completed, I was asked to serve on the American Guild of Organists Planning Committee for the AGO Regional Convention to be held in Kalamazoo in July 2013. So for the next two years I was heavily committed to committee meetings, and hours and hours of computer work building the convention website and designing and typesetting the Program Book. It was at this AGO Convention that I met my dear friend, Christian Bischof, organist and Choir Director at the large parish church of St. Margaret in Munich, Germany. He invited me for a visit in the spring of 2014. This was a life-changing event. I came home fully determined to live a more simple, European lifestyle as best I could. The "American lifestyle" has never appealed to me, and I resonated with the social norms that I found in Germany. The value they place on personal time, friendships, and relationships and how they value the resources they have, their focus on sustainable energy, their use of space, public transportation, and the preservation of the natural countryside was incredibly refreshing. It is still my dream, to be able to live and work there.

A New Direction for the Future

Every January for the past 10 years, I ask myself the question, "Why am I still in SW Michigan?" The answer has always been because I worked my way through school and through this process have became highly involved in the musical community of St. Joseph and Benton Harbor. But with the sale of my house in December 2015, I began taking small steps in seeking a new direction for my life. As I get older, being closer to my family and finding a new career that doesn't require me to be on duty for all holidays and weekends is increasingly important. In July, I'll spend a week with my sister, Teresa, and then spend the remainder of the summer with Dana's family in Portland, OR. Saying "goodbye" isn't easy. My Grandma never said it - with tears in her eyes, she would say "so long." I prefer the German expression, *Auf Wiederschen* - "until we see again." I wish continued success for the music program at FCC, and in the search for a new Director of Music Ministry and look forward to a future visit in the renovated sanctuary - a dream come true!

Greetings from Dr. Charles Guerreno

Back in 2000 the Irish poet and Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney published a new translation of *Beowulf*. I know, I know: Beowulf? Beowulf?! That was my reaction when I read the first review, but then there were so many other reviews praising Heaney's work that I wanted to see it for myself.

I read it a year or two later and was glad I had. I've turned to it a few times since, and when I did recently I came across something I'd not noticed before. Early in the poem, as the monster Grendel is having his way with the Danes, the poet says:

... Oh cursed is he who in time of trouble has to thrust his soul in the fire's embrace, forfeiting help; he has nowhere to turn. But blessed is he who after death can approach the Lord and find friendship in the Father's embrace.

Isn't that good? I'd forgotten (if I ever knew) the Christian understanding of the world which operates in the author's mind. I'd forgotten it, and was glad to find it again.

Another example, this one from the lament of a father for his dead son: Alone with his longing, he lies down on his bed and sings a lament; everything seems too large, the steadings and the fields.

That's good too, isn't it? "Everything seems too large" What touching, complete way to describe sadness and grief, the overwhelming sorrow of loss and separation. "Everything seems too large."

Ever feel that way yourself?

Easter's coming, you know. April 16.

God is good. See you in church (and bring someone with you!).

Holy Week Schedule

- April 9, Palm/Passion Sunday We remember Jesus riding into Jerusalem to the waving of palm branches and shouts of *Hosannal*, evicting the money-changers from the Temple, and planning the rest of a very difficult week.
- April 13, 6:30 p.m. Maundy Thursday Jesus eats his last supper with the disciples, washing their feet to drive home his insistence that the best leaders are servant leaders.
- ✤ April 14, 12:00 p.m. 1:00 p.m. Good Friday Meditation The Sanctuary will be open for meditation and Communion.
- ✤ April 16, Easter Sunday We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and the true beginning of the Christian faith.



Greetings from Nurse Jan April is Autism Awareness Month

Most people recognize April 1 as a significant day on the calendar because of April Fools' Day, but within the realm of autism, the first day of April marks something a little



bit different. Namely, it's the first day of National Autism Awareness Month, first given this designation in April of 1970 by the Autism Society.

The goal of this month is to educate the public and build awareness around autism spectrum disorders and the difficulties and challenges that children with an autism spectrum disorder face. The official imagery has since come to be a puzzle piece. The idea behind the puzzle pieces is to represent the complexity of autism spectrum disorders, and also, as every puzzle piece is different in some way, they represent the diversity of every individual affected by autism. Lastly, the bright colors of the ribbon signify hope - hope that through increased awareness, early intervention and appropriate treatments, all people with autism will be able to lead happier, fuller, more complete lives and improve their daily living skills. In addition to the puzzle piece, the official color for National Autism Awareness Month is a bright royal blue.

First Congregational Church of St. Joseph has a significate recent history with autism and its treatment thru our connection with the Logan Autism Learning Center-Southwestern Michigan. We had the privilege to be in on the ground floor of this center by partnering with them as their first home in Berrien County. Please continue to keep the staff and their clients in your prayers for their continued success and future breakthroughs in Autism.

Mission Board Outreach: InterCare Farm Worker Drive

The 2016 collection of items for farm workers through InterCare Community Health Network was a great success due to the generosity of our congregation. InterCare distributed our donations among 50 families in our area. We are back at it again for 2017 and will conduct a **collection** campaign on **April 9, 16 & 23**. Personal hygiene items, pantry supplies (pinto beans, corn tortillas, rice, etc.) and general need items (bath towels, wash cloths, sheets, cleaning supplies, etc.) are needed. Thank you for helping those in our community!

The Capital Campaign Team and Renovation Committee is

scheduling one more **final Focus Group Session** immediately after church on **Sunday, May 7**, in Fellowship Hall. Anyone who has not had the opportunity to view the PowerPoint presentation and get answers to questions about our three phase Renovation project is encouraged to attend. The first six Focus Group Sessions have lasted approximately 45 minutes and have been very informative. Grab your coffee and come on downstairs, this will be your last chance for information!



04 - Sue Barr-Burrows 05 - Lori Hellenga 06 - Amey Upton 08 - Linda Becker 11 - Jeff Yeager 12 - Emma Dibkey 12 - Ann Zimmerman 13 - Katy O'Donovan 14 - Dan Hopp 15 - Fran Chickering 15 - Nancy Schroeder 16 - Ashlyn Lawrence 23 - Barnaby Parin 23 - Darcey Steinman 23 - Fred Upton 23 - Talan Yeager 25 - Roger Bertsch 25 - David Hilbink 25 - Don Margoni 26 - Jay Van Den Berg 27 - Mary Griffin 29 - Tom Fowler 29 - Lynn Ward 30 - Andrew Paul

Church Women United

Their next event will take place at Lakeside United Methodist Church on April 7 at 11:00 a.m. The Human Rights Celebration is entitled, "Kindling New Fires of Hope" and Mediator Episcopal Church is co-host. A light lunch will be served after the program. Pearl Blaylock, Second Baptist Church in Benton Harbor, is the celebration chair. All women are invited to attend. We'll be blessing Birthing Kits that will help mothers and new babies in Haiti and Jamaica. Our Women's Fellowship Council has sponsored 50+ kits. Please see the bulletin board for information or contact Patty Nordberg at 429-7297.

Sunday Adult Bible Class

Join us in the Greeting Room at 9:15 a.m. We'll be learning about the historical, geographical, and cultural context of the sacred Scriptures as we travel with Ray VanderLaan on location to the Middle East. Beginning in April, our trips will be from the third volume of Faith Lessons, *The Life &* Ministry of the Messiah. Journey back to the time of Jesus. Marvel at the magnificence of Herod's palace. Scramble among the ruins of Qumran and wonder at the simplicity and wisdom of Jesus's parables. You will discover how the events of Jesus' day impacted his life, ministry and communication.

April 2

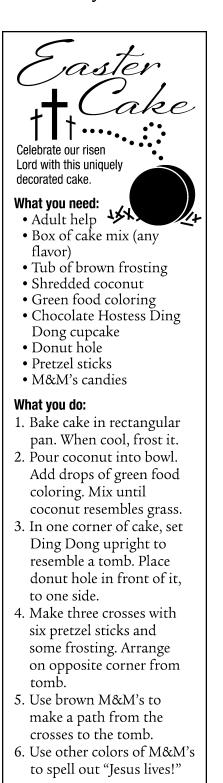
In the Shadow of Herod April 9 My Rock & My Fortress April 16 Easter – NO class April 23 The Time Had Fully Come April 30 No Greater Love

Women's Bible Study

Join us on Thursdays at 1:00 p.m. in the Greeting Room. During April the group will be finishing *He Chose the Nails*. Bring your Bible, a friend and join in the discussion. Books are still available for \$5.00. Questions? Contact Patty Nordberg at pnordberg@comcast.net.

On Thursday, April 20 the group will return to the study of *Enough* and the class will be held in the church Library.

Parents, help your kids make a tasty Easter treat.



Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall and Chapel Renovation Project FCC Focus Groups 4-6 Questions and Answers

Q. How long does it now take to make a DVD from a Sunday service?

The current video system is out of date. Videotapes are shot from the balcony view only with sound input from the microphones being used. These tapes are then downloaded to a computer where DVD's are burned for distribution to retirement homes, shut-ins, etc. It takes several hours with this process and the quality is poor with very little transient sound being recorded. The new system will allow for complete and accurate sound, multiple camera angles, and immediate download.

Q. What will the floor of the sanctuary be like?

A. There will be hardwood on the Chancel floor area and Chancel steps. A similar wood floor will replace the current flooring in front of the Sanctuary pews that is badly worn.

Q. Once decisions have been made for Fellowship Hall plans (colors, windows, stage curtains, etc., can they be viewed?

A. Yes, the decorating theme will be shared once those decisions are decided. Plans would be completed before work in that area begins after Memorial Day.

Q. Who sees my pledge card?

A. Only the bookkeeper.

Q. Currently the choir cannot always hear the pastor. Will the new system change that situation?

A. Yes, the new sound system will include speakers aimed at the choir and specifically for them.

Q. What about hidden costs?

A. Pearson Construction estimates high on purpose in case overruns do occur.

Q. I am still not sure about the area of projection under the rose window. Will it be large enough there to see?

A. When and if projection is used it will be on the white wall under the rose window and above the cross in an area about 9' by 6'. In early November Dr. Bob setup a make shift projection system to see if the area was large enough to be seen from all areas of the Sanctuary including the balcony. Most people were surprised at the clarity and the overall effect including people that were skeptical at first.

Q. I'm still a little concerned with projection being over the cross. Why can't there be screens on each side where the arched openings are?

A. There are many people who do not want screens. To project on both sides would involve two projectors along with screens that would cover the new organ openings. Those areas allow the sound from the organ to be projected into the Sanctuary. Screens in those locations would block the sound and would not be aesthetically pleasing.

Q. The choir used to have a much bigger role in worship. Is there a reason to even have the choir on the Chancel? All the money from risers and chairs could be saved.

A. The choir is involved each week with the Choral Greeting, the Message in Music, helping to lead the hymns and in other ways. Their presence is an important part of worship. Coming and going from the front of the Sanctuary would be a distraction and quite difficult for many of our choir members.

Q. European churches and Cathedrals have a wonderful tradition of sponsoring large scale concerts with choir and orchestra and often as a part of their worship services. With our enlarged Chancel area is this being considered at the FCC?

A. Our music staff has often dreamed of hosting such events including Handel's Messiah, and other major works for choir, bell choirs and instrumentalists. The available space we have now makes it extremely difficult to do so. Lakeshore Public Schools rents our Sanctuary for their annual Holiday Concert and other groups might as well if space and facilities were improved.

The additional questions above were raised at Focus Group Sessions 4-6. The March Parchment included comments and questions from the first three sessions. We have scheduled one more Focus Group Session in the spring (May 7) that will allow 'snow birds' the chance to attend since many members were gone during February and March. In the meantime, if anyone has any additional suggestions or questions please feel free to contact any committee member for information.

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Women's Book Group

Small Great Things, written by Jodi Picoult, is about racism, choice, fear, and hope. The novel is based on the true story of a labor and delivery nurse who was prohibited from caring for a newborn because the father requested that no African-American nurse tend to his baby. In this fictional version, Ruth, the African-American nurse in question, finds herself on trial for events related to the same request made by a white supremacist father. Using the narratives of Ruth, the baby's father, and the female public defender who takes Ruth's case, Picoult examines multiple facets of racism. This thought-provoking novel deserves to be read, digested, and shared with others. Sue Plummer will lead the discussion on Tuesday, April 25 at 9:30 a.m. Sue has graciously invited us to meet in her home at, 3134 Lincoln Avenue, St. Joseph.

CHURCH LIBRARY

"Love the Lord your God with all your mind."

Come visit the Library. Interested in a particular topic? Please leave a note in the Library. Looking for a devotion to start a meeting? We have many daily devotional books that might help. We are always trying to add selections. You will find copies of *The Shack* by William Young and *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel. Both of these books have been made into movies. *The Shack* is playing locally and *The Case for Christ* opens in April. We will be removing books that have not been read for a while so that we can create more space. Those removed will be available at the spring rummage sale. Books are being identified with color labels to help when shelving books. We are using white for Bibles, Bible references, and any books related to Jesus. Thank you to Sue & Curt Plummer for helping in March. If you would like to help, contact Patty at 429-7297 or pnordberg@comcast.net.



News from Christian Education

Important Dates for CE

April 2 – No Sunday school (spring vacation)

April 5 - No Wednesday night dinner and programs (spring vacation)

April 9 - No Sunday school (spring vacation)

April 12 - Wednesday night dinner and programs resume

April 15, 9:00 a.m. – Mission trip meeting with breakfast

April 19 - Wednesday night dinner and programs

April 22, 6:00-8:00 p.m. - Young adult book club (high school only)

April 22, 8:30-10:00 p.m. - Bowling, all youth

April 23, after worship-3:00 - Parent afternoon out youth fundraiser

April 26 - Wednesday night dinner and programs

April's Teaching Themes

Preschool

During the month of April, children will be hearing, "*JESUS IS #1!*" Children will learn the Easter story and will celebrate that Jesus is alive. He went away, but He came back!

The lessons we want the preschoolers to learn during this month include:

Jesus wants to be my forever friend

Who is the best? Jesus is the best!

April's memory verse:

"God loved the world so much that He gave His only son." John 3:16, GNT

<u>Elementary</u>

During the month of April students will learn about *HUMILITY* and that humility is putting others first by giving up what you think you deserve.

The lessons we want the students to learn each week include:

I can put others first by serving them.

I can put others first by letting go of what I want.

I can put others first because Jesus put me first.

I can put others first by doing what Jesus said.

Put others first.

April's memory verse:

"Don't do anything only to get ahead. Don't do it because you are proud. Instead, be humble. Value others more than yourself." Philippians 2:3, NRV

Youth

During April students will complete a series call ALL ACCESS.

Have you ever been to a concert? Maybe you had tickets for great seats. Maybe you were in the nosebleeds. Either way, you probably noticed that everyone had the same goal in mind, to get as close as possible. There's just something about being near the band or near the artist that makes a great concert even more fun. But there's a limit, right? No matter how good your tickets are, you can only get so close. There's a velvet rope you can't cross, a hall you can't walk down, or a security guard you can't stroll right past because those areas are reserved for certain people...special people-people with an all-access pass. Maybe you've felt the same way when it comes to God. Sure, you come to church and sing songs or listen, but there's a limit to how close you can get. It's almost like there's a velvet rope around certain parts of our faith that tells us those parts are restricted to special people, to church-staff people, or to super-spiritual people. But what if that's never what God intended? In this series we'll explore what the Resurrection of Jesus really meant-for real people like us. And, we'll discover that, because of Easter, we have an all-access pass to Him and to the life He has for us.

The lessons we want students to learn each week during the All Access series include:

Jesus gives you all access to God. When your will power runs out, you have access to His. God's will for you is to be you and love others.



Men's Ministry

The group meets at 8:00 a.m. in the Gathering Room for a light breakfast followed by a discussion until 9:30 a.m. Listed below is the schedule for April and the chapters that will be discussed. Books are still available

April 8

Chapter 7, 8, 9 Some thoughts to consider: Which came first - life or photosynthesis? Whatever happened to the hole in the ozone in the 80's? Is the heat of the earth increasing, decreasing, same?

April 22

Chapters 10, 11, 12 Some thoughts to consider: Where did all the dirt come from? From 3.8 to 2.45 billion years ago the earth lost 10-25% of the oceans water, was that a good thing or bad? What was the big deal about proliferation of advanced plants between 2 and 6 billion years ago?

Questions? Contact Bill Bock at wcbock31@gmail.com or at 983-7576. Please join us!

Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country.

Spring Rummage Sale

How are your closets and cabinets looking these days? If not too well, it's time to go through your items and the things you no longer need or use (in good condition) and set them aside for the big sale on May 4 & 5.

Donations will be accepted starting on the following dates:

April 27, 28, 29 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

April 30 11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

May 1 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

May 2 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Many volunteers will be needed to help unload, sort, set-up, mark items, and clean-up at the end of the sale. We'll also be looking for volunteers to provide snacks and meals for our workers.

Watch the Sunday bulletin for more information and the bulletin board across from Dr. Guerreno's office for sign-up opportunities.



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



INTERIM MINISTER

Rev. Dr. Charles Guerreno

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. Adult Education 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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