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Our Covenant

We covenant with the Lord and one with another, and do bind ourselves in the presence of God, to walk together in all his ways, according as he is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his blessed word of truth.

Our Goal

The church exists to change lives. That's what we're about. It's simple to say, harder to live. Every single week, we find a way to love God through worship, one another through fellowship, and the Saugatuck/Douglas area through simple acts of service. We don't always get it right. But we have fun trying.

The Lakeshore Congregationalist

March 2015

A Publication of First Congregational Church of Saugatuck
Serving our community since 1860

"We take God seriously, not ourselves."

Am I Missing Something?



"I think that if God forgives us we must forgive ourselves. Otherwise, it is almost like setting ourselves up as a higher tribunal than Him." ~ C.S. Lewis

Lent is a solemn religious observance in the liturgical calendar of many Christians around the world. The purpose is to prepare us through prayer, voluntary self-punishment for having done wrong, and repent after reviewing one's actions and feeling contrition or regret for past wrongs.

All in all, it is supposed to make us commit to personal change and live more responsible lives as Christians. The problem is it does not work! Really? No, really, it does not work. I have tried it!

I don't like the season of Lent, because every time I try to fast, I eat. Every time I try to pray I blow it. When I start to look at myself I see how weak and self centered I am. I would get depressed and not want to get out of bed...I am just kidding.

The truth is I was missing something. I realized I was missing the most important thing about being a Christian. I was forgiven and loved by God through Christ forever.

The problem is we try harder to be a Christian instead of just being a Christian. We run on our own gasoline, not his. I was missing the "you are forgiven" part. I missed the acceptance and love. Most of us miss those parts.

Billy Graham said the uniqueness of Christianity is that God is seeking man, in every other religion, man is seeking God. When we realize he is seeking us, it changes everything in life. That makes a huge difference as how we love and accept others.

Continued →

'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness,'[1 Pet. 2:24]

In theological terms it is the "atone-ment of Christ". His act pays for and erases all my sins and transgressions. Our past, present and even the sins in the future are forgiven. I wonder does that make us want to go out and sin more? Certainly not, just the opposite is true. I want to sin less because of it.

Bruce Larson tells the true story of a Catholic priest who had committed a grievous sin during his days in seminary. He knew a woman who deeply loved God and claimed to have visions of Christ. The priest, however, was skeptical of her claims. So he tested her. "You say you actually speak to Christ in your visions. The next time, I want you to ask him what my sin was in seminary."

The woman agreed and a few days later, the priest asked, "Well, did Christ visit you in your dreams?" "Yes, he did she said." "Well, what did he say?" "He said, 'I don't remember.'"

So, this Lent season forget about who you are and what you are and remember whose you are. It makes all the difference.

Pastor Bruce

Daylight Savings Time Begins Sunday, March 8th. Spring forward 1 hr.



March Activities

Sunday Worship Services – 10:00am

Nursery Provided

Communion will be served 1st Sunday of the month

Sunday School – 10:15am

Social Hour after Worship – 11:00am

Blood Pressure Clinic after Worship, every 1st

Sunday of the month, with Parish Nurse, Renna Birkholz or Terri Borgman.

Pilgrim Fellowship Group meets every Sunday, 4-6pm @ FCC.

New Praise Practice: Wednesdays, 7:30pm, with Jack Nyland.

Chancel Choir Practice: Sundays March 1st, 15th, 22nd, & 29th, at 9am, in the Fellowship Hall, with Cathy Brockington. Singing during worship on Palm Sunday, March 29th.

Sun, March 8th, 11am (after service) Diaconate Board & Trustee Board meetings.

Mon, March 9th, 7pm Prudential Board meeting.

Tues, March 10th, Woman's Fellowship Circle's Bible Study & meeting, 10am.

Mon, March 16th, 6:30pm St. Patrick's Day Corned Beef & Cabbage Community Dinner @ FCC.

Sunday, March 22nd, last day to order Spring Easter flowers. (See order insert in Sunday bulletins)

Mon, March 23rd, April Newsletter submission deadline.

Sat, March 28th, 10am-Noon, Church indoor Spring Clean-up.

Women's Fellowship Circle

Tues, March 10th @ 10am, the ladies will meet in The Fellowship Hall for a time of fellowship and Bible study taught by Jennifer Wingard. Please read Luke 8:40-56 in preparation. All women, any age, are invited.





Celebrating in March!

- March 4th** – Beverly Nieusma
- March 6th** – Catherine Page
- March 7th** – Sally Palmer
- March 11th** – Kirke White
- March 12th** – Anna Lynn Overway
- March 14th** – Sophia Camarota
- March 17th** – Terri Borgman
- March 20th** – Nicholas Stormer
- March 22nd** – Kay Van Horn
- March 31st** – Carolyn Raebel



Congratulations to our March Anniversary Couples!

- March 1st** – Mike & Katie Doucette
- March 25th** – Vic & Jane Mayer
- March 28th** – Gerrit & Tina Sturrus

If you notice that your birthday or anniversary was omitted just call the church office (269-857-2929) and update our records. Thank you!

Volunteer Opportunities Join the Fun!

Sign-up Clipboards at the Welcome Desk

What a privilege it is to serve the Lord, in so many diverse ways. Greet, take up an offering, read the Scriptures, take care of a baby or host a coffee hour. Be a blessing to the congregation by signing up at the Welcome Desk, on the clip boards provided, on the Sunday of your choice, in the month of your choice, and in the avenue of your choice. Thank you.



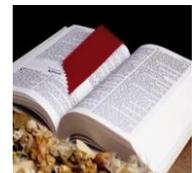
Fellowship Host Schedule

- March 1** Kristyn Boyce & Jon Van Raalte and Youth Group
- 8** Hank & Bonnie Stegenga
- 15** Mike & Laura Camarota
- 22** Terri & Steve Borgman
- 29** Brad & Janna Rudich
- April 5** Diaconate Board
- 12** Thom & Char Houseman
- 19** Women's Fellowship Circle
- 26** Barb Baker, Cindy Raue & Phyllis Yff
- May 3** Frank & Joan Lamb
- 10** Greg & Sheryll Van Portfleet
- 17** Gerrit & Tina Sturrus
- 24** Marlene Rininger & Joanne Schippa

If you have a conflict with the date assigned you please feel free to swap with someone else, however contact the church office with any changes.

Scripture Reader Schedule

- March 1** - Brad Rudich
- March 8** - Connie Rusiecki
- March 15** - Cindy Raue
- March 22** - David Edwards
- March 29** - Linda Escott



To volunteer for future Sunday Readings, sign-up on the clipboard at the Welcome Desk or speak with Jennifer Wingard.

Welcome Team Schedule



- March 1** – Dotty Houser
- March 8** – OPEN
- March 15** – Joe & Cathy Brockington
- March 22** – OPEN
- March 29** - OPEN

The Welcome Team is coordinated by Dan Rusiecki & Dave Edwards.

Volunteer's Schedule

March	1	Marlene Rininger
	8	Janna Rudich
	15	Terri Borgman
	22	Renna Birkholz
	29	Myrna Dornan
April	5	Renna Birkholz
	12	Pat Gentry
	19	Janet Hanscom
	26	Connie Rusiecki
May	3	Karen Baker
	10	Tina Sturuss
	17	Peggy Boyce
	24	Joan Lamb
	31	Paige Vander Molen

If your assigned date does not work with your schedule, please find a substitute and contact the church office with any changes, thank you.

Monday, March 16th, 6:30pm @ FCC St. Patrick's Day Celebration for All!



A traditional Corned beef and cabbage dinner will be prepared by our own Master Chef Ralph Birkholz, assisted by his Sous Chefs, and then served in the Fellowship Hall. The meal's cost is \$12, which includes dessert & a beverage. We ask those planning to attend sign-up and pre-pay at the Welcome Desk by Sunday, March 8th, to give us a head count. Eve & Roween Panning of "FiddleFire", will be providing musical entertainment, with Irish folk tunes on fiddle and guitar, so bring your friends. If you have any questions call Terri Borgman, 616-218-8586.



In Sunday School we are learning about God's love for us through Jesus life. Students are learning about what John wrote about Jesus. They will uncover the truths that Jesus teaches us about who God really is and that believing in Jesus is the one and only way to real life!



In Sunday School for the month of March we will be reviewing Holy Week and the death and resurrection of Jesus, all in preparation for the celebration of Easter. After all we would not have Easter without the events that preceded it.

Our students will travel back to the in time and pretend they are right there watching the events of Holy Week happening in front of their eyes. We will present a play, take part in the last supper, journey with Jesus and the disciples to Gethsemane, follow as they arrest, convict and put Jesus to death. Remembering each step of the way that this was God's plan for Jesus, all to save us and take our sins to the cross.

Please come and join us for Sunday School and take the journey.

As a reminder Our Sunday School students have designated their offerings from January - April to go to "St. Jude's Children's Hospitals".

Thank You! Goes out to everyone who helped with the Children's Message and Sunday School on February 15th when I was snowed in..... Thank you so much!
Ms. Diana Hoppe

Jr./Sr. High Youth Program: Pilgrim Fellowship



The Pilgrim Fellowship group will be working through "The 7 habits of highly effective teens." One habit the girls have requested to work on is eating more healthfully. Appropriate for the New Year! We will be meeting **every Sunday from 4-6pm**, so we have enough time to cook a meal and eat it together while discussing such topics as self esteem, making good choices in all situations, peer pressure, etc.

For more info contact Kristyn Boyce.



March Purchasing Gift Cards from DeMond's Super Value

We are asking that \$25 gift cards be purchased, from DeMond's Super Value, which will then be donated and distributed to elementary students, so their families will be able to purchase weekend meals. Brandy Pyk, a social worker for Saugatuck Public Schools, will coordinate the distribution to the children she knows are in need.

Brandy is also asking for donations of K-4th grade boys' shoes, socks & pants, sizes 11-3 for the shoes. There is a clear plastic container, placed to the right of the pulpit in the sanctuary, to receive your donations.

Also, Douglas Elementary School, the recipient of our Teacher Appreciation Day Goody Basket, at the end of February, extends their thanks & appreciation for our kind gifts.

Spring Cleaning

Saturday, March 28th – 10am to Noon

Let's clean from the basement to the belfry! Bring your favorite cleaning supplies & gloves. We'll split up and clean the kitchen, nursery, Gathering Room, stairwells, library, Chapel and anything in between.

Not only will the church end up sparkling, we will have fun fellowshiping!

March & April's Mission Emphasis



Founded over 40 years ago by Tom and Sharon Gossett, this mission began "on the Rez" in Arizona and eventually spread far into Mexico.

Tom still continues this expanded ministry, with a group of very faithful laborers.

The mission operates a Christian Center in Naco, Mexico, just across the US border. Mexican and Arizona pastors used it for retreats, and also as a seminary, until the drug scene made it unsafe. Thankfully, because of a change in the Naco, Mexico government, the drug cartel has pulled out, and the seminary will receive students again in July.

Some more very good news – The Senderos de Misiones facility and (fenced in) grounds have been offered to another equally capable organization (The Naco Wellness Initiative) to be used by its' diabetes clinic, to teach nutrition, cooking and eating good foods, and a fellow from the Peace Corps is building more greenhouses and (lasagna) organic gardening. The Wellness Center is very well organized under the direction of Tom Carlson, including the overseeing of four medical sites in Mexico and Arizona.

Place your designated donations in the offering plates, made out to First Congregational Church, to be dispersed in one check, at the beginning of May.

News from the Pews



- We extend our condolences to the family members & friends of Terry Thomas, who passed away on February 1st.
- Two year old Colton Reese, the son of Katie Mayer & Anthony Reese, Phyllis Yff's grandson, on Jan 19th was diagnosed with tumors of the eyes. He will be undergoing laser surgery to remove his left eye and chemotherapy to save his right eye. This is a rare form of cancer with a 97% cure rate, so the family is extremely hopeful. Your prayers would be appreciated and you may mail notes of encouragement to Katie & Anthony at 1139 Lincoln St, #131, Holland, MI 49423. For more information or to assist with the ongoing, additional expenses go to: www.caringbridge.org.



Upcoming Fun Events @ FCC

Saturday, April 18th - Progressive Dinner. This is still in the planning phase right now, with more details to follow. However you will definitely want to keep this date open on your calendar!

2015 Church Directories are available at the Welcome Desk, and downstairs in the Fellowship Hall.

FCC's Contact Information:

Church Address: 296 Hoffman St,
PO Box 633, Saugatuck, MI 49453

Interim Pastor Bruce VanDer Kolk

Office Hours: M-T-W 9am-1pm

Cell: 312-504-2468

Office Mgr: Mrs. Kathleen Slawson

Church Office – M, T, W 10am-2pm, 269-857-2929,
after hours it will go to our answering machine.

Email: office@1stcongregational.net

Website: www.1stcongregational.net

Facebook: 1st Congregational Saugatuck



Easter Lilies & potted Tulips

will be available for purchase, to decorate the sanctuary for Resurrection Sunday. Cost for a lily is \$8.50, and tulip is \$7.25. There will be order inserts in the March Sunday bulletins, with an area



where you can have an, "In Honor of" or "In Memory of" designation made, for a future bulletin insert.

Deadline to order is Sunday, March 22nd.

Good Friday Ecumenical Worship Service

Hosted by

All Saints' Episcopal Church

Corner of Hoffman & Grand Streets

Saugatuck, MI

Friday, April 3, 2015

Beginning at Noon

For more information call 269-857-5201

~ Mark Your Calendars ~

The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches' 2015 Annual Meeting & Conference is scheduled for June 20-23 in Salt Lake City, Utah. A registration brochure, along with other information as it becomes available, can be found on the NACCC's website: www.naccc.org.