

Lakeshore Congregationalist

March 2025

A monthly publication of the First Congregational Church of Saugatuck, est. 1860

From the Pastor's Desk

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

Luke 9: 57-58

The Holy Lenten season is just around the corner. Ash Wednesday is on March 5th, which kicks off the traditional Christian devotional season that prepares our hearts and minds for the heft of Holy Week and the glory of Easter morning. Forty days of prayer, contemplation, service, acts of charity, sacrifice, and the "rending" of our hearts. Forty days to buckle down in our discipleship before we shout out our Alleluias and pass around the Peeps.

This year, our worship series for the Lenten season is called **Everything [in] Between**. This is a worship series that we are doing in partnership with the creatives at A Sanctified Art. Our weekly Scripture study will feel familiar. Ahead of us we have stories like The Good Samaritan, Mary and Martha, the Fruitless Fig Tree, the Lost Sheep, wee little Zacchaeus, and more. Most of which are well known within both sacred and secular imagination, carrying major cultural relevance and lore.

There is a theme that threads all of these stories together: Jesus navigating dichotomies and division. Mary or Martha? The 1 lost sheep versus the safety of the 99. The Samaritan and centuries of stigma. Jesus intentionally highlighted the cultural polarities of his time to emphasize the radical, inclusive, and surprising love of God! When we study these stories afresh within their historical and culture context, we are invited to consider how they mirror the cultural and political divides that many of us experience every day in our own families, churches and communities. Jesus' teaching and guidance will reveal some holy nuance and complexity that could help us see the divisions of our world in 2025. To see them for what they are, false. God is in between.

This Lent, we are all encouraged to notice the dichotomies that define our lives, and wonder at how God might be meeting us beyond those categories. There is no doubt that we are living in divided times, where people are retreating into a black and white social narrative. May God help us find our way through! May God show up in shades of gray, the rainbow hues, and everything in between!

In this series you can expect fresh artwork, poetry, opportunities for prayer and nutritious food for thought!

Also, Danny Mayer and Cathy Brockington are working hard to bring special music to the service each week of the season! Thank you!

All together in Christ,
Pastor Sarah

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- Congregational Corner
- Spring Cleaning
- Prayer Requests
- March Birthdays
- March Anniversaries

...And much more!



Both, Please By Rev. Sarah A. Speed

It's one thing to speak of love.
It's another to hold a newborn in your arms,
to sing someone to sleep,
to lean down and listen for their breathing.

It's one thing to speak of faith.
It's another to press your forehead to the floor,
to cry out in prayer,
to ask the hard questions and still

thank God for the meal.

It's one thing to speak of the Divine.
It's another to walk under a tunnel of wisteria,
to stand barefoot at the edge of the sea,
to hear the birds sing as the sun returns

and whisper, *Thank you, thank you, thank you.*
It's one thing and another, so I pray,

Give me both, please. Show me both, please.



Visio Divina

March 5th, 2025
7pm

Everyone is welcome to come together in the Gathering Room for a time of contemplation and Scripture to honor Ash Wednesday.

A little about Visio Divine: Latin for “divine seeing,” Visio Divina is a method of meditation, reflection, and prayer through a process of intentional seeing. Visio Divina extends the 6th century practice of Lectio Divina by the use of visual imagery. Traditionally, Visio Divina was accompanied by Benedictine iconography and illuminations. However, different faith traditions have adapted the process over time, utilizing both secular and nonsecular images.

Ways to Worship

Each Sunday at 10am.

You are invited to worship with us in person, or online via our Facebook livestream. The video of our worship service is also uploaded every week to our church's YouTube Channel, so you can catch the whole service any time. The church can be found on Facebook and YouTube by doing a simple search for First Congregational Church of Saugatuck. It is also on our church website.

Ways to Serve

In Worship:

There are sign up sheets for Greeters, Fellowship Host, Liturgist, Poet, Tech Helper, and Hymn Leader. Sign ups are open to everyone!

In the Community:

Check out the “Donation Zone” by the handicap entrance of the church. There you will see shelving and baskets to place your in-kind donations for our various seasonal mission projects. We regularly collect requested items for area non-profits like the Christian Neighbors food pantry or the domestic violence shelter. Their needs change often so keep your eye on the weekly worship bulletin for updates.

Ways to Give

Make a Donation:

Your financial gifts to the church remain vitally important to keeping our building functioning for the community, keeping our staff paid, and keeping our ministries active! Thank you for your ongoing support.

You can mail your checks to:
First Congregational Church
PO Box 633
Saugatuck MI 49453

Or you can give online via the Tithe.ly platform. Scan this QR code to get connected.



Weekly Worship Volunteers

Communion Set Up

Sue Nelson

Hymn Leader

March 2: Wendy Van Tassell

March 9:

March 16:

March 23:

March 30:

Poet

March 2: Danny Mayer

March 9: Cathy Brockington

March 16: Linda Escott

March 23: Sue Nelson

March 30:

Greeter

March 2: Danny Mayer

March 9:

March 16: Sue Nelson

March 23:

March 30:

Fellowship Host

March 2: Thom and Char Houseman

March 9: Nyla Hensley

March 16: Kristyn Boyce

March 23: Sue Nelson

March 30: Tina and Gerrit Sturuss

Liturgist

March 2: Linda Escott

March 9: Danny Mayor

March 16: Cathy Brockington

March 23: Kristyn Boyce

March 30:

From the Creatives at A Sanctified Art

Neighbors

by Steve Prince

Inspired by Luke 10:25-37 *Ink on paper*

Each individual carries generations within them, made up of billions of people who have occupied this earth before us. We have an individual and collective responsibility to be good stewards (Good Samaritans) of our bodies, neighbors, and communities, rooted in love. Every day we make a dance of life and death—celebrating the entrance and exit of life, the progression of age and maturity, and the expansion of our tent, grafting to people who share our blood and our beliefs. We are the structures, those temporal buildings that weather the storms, that creak and wither away daily, but are fortified by our relationships to each other and with the sharing of the good news planted by the Heavenly Father. This dance is an open profession of our vow to live by God's commandments and find a way to collectively preserve the truth of our origin while moving as one communal body into an untouched future.

Prompts for contemplation:

- Observe the figures' posture and movement. Do you see connection, conflict, or both? How does this reflect your own relationships?
- Focus on the textures and shading. What story might these elements tell about resilience or fragility?
- Pay attention to the empty spaces around the figures. What do these spaces evoke for you?
- Imagine yourself as part of this scene. What role would you play in this dance of connection, tension, and movement?

Worship Arts

Submitted by Linda Escott

As your new Worship Arts Captain, I'm excited to share information about the upcoming Lenten season! The theme this year is "Everything in Between." Wednesday, March 5th starts the Lenten season with Ash Wednesday and a *Visio Divina* event at the church at 7:00pm that evening.

Throughout the season there will be new art, new music, and a couple changes to our worship service. During Lent, the *Moment for the Family of God* portion of our service will be replaced with *Lessons on the Passing of the Peace and a Choral Response*. (Thank you to Danny Mayer for taking charge of the teaching of the choral response). Also, I'd like to thank Pastor Sarah and Sue Nelson for creating the décor for our church for Lent.

Thanks to those who have signed up to assist with the Worship service each week as well. Please note: there are still spaces available in the weeks ahead. I hope you'll prayerfully consider signing up to volunteer.

Finally, off the Lenten topic, we now have plastic candle holders for our Christmas candlelight service. We will no longer be using the paper holders as they drip wax on hands and clothes!

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Worship Arts Captain, and for your support. Watch this space for future information regarding Holy Week plans as well as Holy Humor!

Joyfully in Christ,
Linda Escott

Prayers & Possibilities

Saturday, March 22nd,
10am-11am

Prayers & Possibilities is an open time of conversation and prayer for our community. We talk about concerns on our heart and opportunities to spread God's love in the neighborhood around us.

Come and chat! Come and wonder at how the church might be welcome to all!

a note about church photo usage

We take lots of pictures around here! From capturing musicians on a Sunday morning as they lead our worship, to candid smiles, to leaning in for a photo with friends around the fellowship table. We have lot of pictures of joyful moments within our congregation.

Please note that sometimes we use photos of the congregation in advertisements and marketing material - including print and digital/social media materials. If you would prefer NOT to have your photo featured in such publications, please let Pastor Sarah know.

Thank you! And keep smiling :)

Saint Patrick's Prayer

Christ be with me.
Christ be beside me.
Christ be before me.
Christ be behind me.
Christ at my right hand.
Christ at my left hand.
Christ be with me
everywhere I go.
Christ be my friend,
for ever and ever.
Amen

Women's Fellowship

*Bringing women together for service,
Fellowship, and spiritual growth.*

Our Bible Study in February was Psalm 56, A Call for God's Protection.

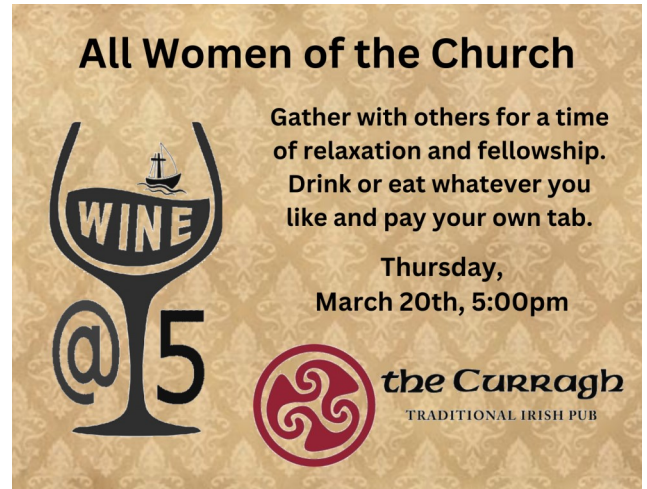
There were only four items on our agenda this month. First, the format for our Bible Study this year. In the past we've studied women of the Bible. Most recently, Bible stories that were not in the lectionary. Both led to deeper discussions. This year we will take a more potpourri style of Bible Study as members (who volunteer) will lead our study each month. Our Bible Study in March will be led by Wendy Van Tassell using the "Pray as You Go" app.

The second item on our agenda was care packages sent to our college students and those in the military. Members chose a student/military member and will purchase items for their boxes. In March we will assemble the boxes and mail them off.

The third item was to agree to the purchase of two shelving units and six containers for organizing and storing decorations in the Fellowship Hall closet.

Our final item was an idea for a "Ladies Tea." Myrna Dornan, our Community Life Captain, has asked us to assist her with holding a "Ladies Tea" in May and we agreed. The date chosen is Saturday, May 3rd so mark your calendars! More information to follow closer to the event.

Our next meeting will be held in the Fellowship Hall on **Wednesday, March 5th, 10am**. Our next **Wine @5** will be on **Thursday, March 20th** at **The Curragh** located at 73 East 8th Street in downtown Holland.



Community Life

Submitted by Myrna Dornan

Our church theme for 2025 is "PRAYER AND POSSIBILITIES", I would like to add "with intention" to that theme. Along with Sue Nelson and Dan Mayer our intention is to:

SIMPLIFY*SIMPLIFY ***SIMPLIFY**

Our first step in this intention is to identify "prime real estate" in the church for storage. We will then purge, clean and sort stuff. Our goal: a place for everything and identified with labels. This can only be maintained with your help.

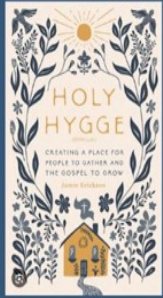
Please ask if we have an item before you purchase one we may already have. Second, if you use something, remember where you found it and replace the item in its proper place when finished. If you can't remember, place it on the back counter in the kitchen with a note. We will be happy to put it back.

The second intention is to make Fellowship Coffee Social Hour simpler. I will always have store bought cookies including gluten free, in a labeled container for use on the kitchen counter. Robert has offered to be available to help setup coffee, serve, and cleanup if you can provide cookies or treats for 24. Just ask him, he loves to serve the church. Remember this is a coffee time and is not a brunch. Keep it simple and make it easy for yourself.

The third intention is dishwasher procedure. Only use Finish Detergent Pods per the manufacturer. Do not hand wash items. They must be sanitized in the dishwasher per the Health Department. Yes, coffee pots can be placed on the top rack. Do not rinse, just scrape, this is a low water use appliance, and it saves gallons of water verses rinsing. Place nothing larger than a dinner plate in the lower rack. Anything larger stops the washing arm from spinning and will prevent cleaning properly.

If you have any ideas you think could help us, let me know:
myrnadornan70@gmail.com or we can talk live: 269-857-7611.





Books are available
on the Welcome
Table for \$10

This book is also
available as an
ebook.

LENTEN SOUP SUPPERS & BOOK STUDY

Beginning March 12th
6pm, in Fellowship Hall

A sign up sheet
for providing soup
and bread will be
available starting
March 2nd.



CONGREGATIONAL

ORNER

Early in February the churches of the NACCC received wonderful news. I have chosen to include the whole letter to keep you more thoroughly informed about our national association.

February 7, 2025

Dear Members and Friends of the NACCC,

As many of you know, the Rev. Dr. Ashley Cleere stepped down as the Executive Director of the NACCC, to accept a call to a church closer to family in CT., in June of 2024. In the wake of her departure, the NACCC Board of Directors was blessed to connect with the Rev. Dr. Barry Szymanski, who stepped in as our Interim Executive Director to help lead us through this transitional time. We will be forever grateful to Barry for the pivotal role he played in our Association during this complex time! If you have the opportunity, please join us in thanking Barry for all he has done in service to the Association throughout these many months.

With interim coverage in place, the Board of Directors quickly turned its attention to the creation of a search committee, which began its work shortly after the Annual Meeting last summer. Over the course of more than six months, the Executive Director Search Committee worked faithfully, and tirelessly, in their effort to seek the right individual to step into this role for our Association. The efforts of the search committee included sorting through more than 75 resumes, holding a number of special meetings with NA staff, leaders and stakeholders, and meeting regularly as a team to discern the most important skills and gifts that were needed in our next Executive Director. Prayerfully and diligently, the search committee selected four candidates for interviews and then narrowed it down to two finalists who were invited to participate in in-person interviews in Milwaukee in January of 2025. It was after this final round of interviews that the search committee made its final recommendation to the Board of Directors on January 24, 2025.

In light of all of these faithful efforts, it is with great joy and anticipation that we write to share with you that the Rev. Dr. Gerry Krupp has been named as the next Executive Director of the NACCC, with a start date of March 1, 2025. After serving multiple years as our Director of Programs, Dr. Krupp's spirit and skills have been apparent to many, and we are thrilled to look ahead towards all that he will bring to us as our new Executive Director. We ask that you join us in welcoming Dr. Krupp to this new role, and that you would lift him up in prayer, along with all of our Association leadership, as we step into this new chapter in the life of the NACCC. May God's abundant blessings unfold in and through the shared journey that we are all about to begin!

In Faith and Fellowship,

Jodee Lord
NACCC Moderator

Rev. Dr. Martin Hall Rev.
NACCC Vice-Moderator

Mark McCormick
Search Committee Chair

We are all in this together. For that I am grateful.

Shalom,
Wendy Van Tassell
Congregational Way Captain

Financial Snapshot

Submitted by Janna Rudich, Treasurer

- ◆ As of 1/31/25 we had \$7696 in our General Fund Checking compared with last year's \$4564.
- ◆ Heritage Fund - YTD gain/loss, transfers and expenses has our unrestricted balance up \$476.
- ◆ YTD money market transfers \$10,000.
- ◆ 1/31 Unrestricted Heritage Fund Balance \$116,763.
- ◆ January budgeted expenses are \$9515, Collections \$4689.
- ◆ YTD Expenses are \$2649 under budget, Collections are \$3061 under budget.

Save These Dates

May 3 - Ladies Afternoon Tea

A chance to invite your mother, daughter, granddaughter, friend or neighbor for tea and entertainment. Don't forget your fancy hat and gloves.

June - date TBD, Whitecaps Baseball Game Outing

July 4 - Parade

Join us at the parade in Saugatuck. We hope to have a float for those who cannot walk to ride on. We are in need of a truck, ATV, or trailer we can borrow.

SPRING
cleanup

April 5th, 9am
Inside & Outside



Sunday
Worship

At Douglas Cove

March 9th, 2pm

Congregational Care

Submitted by Sue Nelson

Thank you to Connie Rusiecki for overseeing the shepherds for the past years.

I am hoping to have a couple of brief meetings with our shepherds to see how we are doing out there within the flock. Also, to possibly have a questionnaire for the congregation as a whole on thoughts of how we can improve in our shepherding.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me:

- text/call: 248-310-7384
- email: marsuenel@sbcglobal.net

TOJA, (Trusting Only Jesus Always)
Sue Nelson

March 9th



Searching for a Shepherd

After years of serving as a shepherd, Joanne Schippa, is retiring from her volunteer role. Thank you Joanne! The Shepherd Program is currently looking for another partner shepherd.

The Shepherd Program is a group of volunteers within the congregation that assist with congregational care: sending cards, making phone calls, visiting, organizing a meal train when someone is sick, etc. Anything they can do to spread love, encouragement, and support to our congregation- they are on it! Sue Nelson, our newly elected Congregational Care Captain, is looking to reinvigorate this program. If you are interested in serving in this role, please contact Sue.



Prayer Requests

- For Gerritt Sturrus who is recovering from hip replacement surgery and a broken wrist after a fall. Gerrit is now home following a stay at Mary Free Bed rehabilitation.
- For those dealing with Influenza. For the Gentrys' and Housemans'.
- For those who mourn: for Sue Nelson, who is grieving the passing of her Aunt Anne, the Kelly family, the family of Stephanie DeRitter, for a little girl who discovered her mother had ended her life last week, the Boss and Osborne Family, the family of Steve, the Borgman family as they grieve the passing of Terry's mother, and for the Wallace Family.
- For those who are unhoused during this cold season.
- For the leaders of our nation - that they might be able to discern the ways of peace and love.
- For the leaders of all nations.
- For federal employees, and non-profit workers who are uncertain about their job security.
- For Kirk Raue, who is recovering from a surgery on his eye lids and is doing well.
- For Sandi (family of Pat Gentry), who is recovering from a car accident last week.
- For all those affected by the California wildfires.
- For the ceasefire in Israel.
- For the ministry of Christian Neighbors.
- For Andrew Rudich who is deployed overseas. May God keep him safe. And prayers for his wife Zoe.
- For Chris Raue (son of Kirk and Cindy) who awaits his retirement from his years of military service. He is expected home in May 2025.
- For Josh, who needs encouragement. And has made steps in the right direction :)
- For Brad Rudich's health.
- For those battling addiction.
- For Trish.
- For a friend on a spiritual journey.
- For those wrestling with their faith.
- For Brad (Carol Garvelink's son).
- For all those struggling with depression.
- For those navigating cancer: Jedd, Wayne, Tom, Judy, Tess, Mikey, Terry, Patty, Dave, Doug, Mike, Brenda, Ashley, Betty, Stu, Wayne, Rainna, Cheyenne and many, many more.
- Robert Moore's sister Sue who has had health complications.
- For all those seeking safe and affordable housing.
- For those on healing journeys.
- For all those with Dementia or Alzheimer's. That God might bring them peace and clarity of mind.
- We pray for all care givers.
- For our hurting planet, that we all might be motivated to take better care of our earthy home.
- For Adam Schafer (Mike and Pat Gentry's grandson) for his health, vitality, and joy as he manages Muscular Dystrophy.

- For all of those dealing with diabetes, and seeking to make significant life changes.
- For all of those recovering from COVID and enduring long COVID symptoms.
- For truth, wisdom and justice - and for the Holy Spirit to heal places of deep hate.
- For an end to gun violence.



The official greeters for worship on February 16th! A big thank you to the Van Tassell Joy Spreading Team.



MARCH

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

<p><u>Weekly Recovery Groups Schedule</u> Mondays: AA, 7pm Tuesdays: AA, 12pm Wednesdays: AA, 12:30pm Thursdays: AA, 7pm Thursdays: Alanon, 7pm</p>	<p><u>LCC Rehearsals</u> Tuesdays, 6pm</p> <p><u>Cub Scouts</u> Wednesdays: 6pm</p>					1
2	3	4	<p>5 WFC Bible Study & Mtg 10am</p> <p>Ash Wednesday Visio Divina 7pm</p>	6	7	8
<p>9 Douglas Cove Worship, 2pm</p> 	<p>10</p> <p>District AA 6:30pm</p>	11	<p>12</p> <p>Lenten Book Study 6pm</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Board of Ministry 6:30pm</p>	14	15
16	<p>17</p> <p>HAPPY <i>St. Patrick's</i> DAY</p>	18	<p>19</p> <p>Lenten Book Study 6pm</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Wine @ 5 The Curragh</p>	21	<p>22</p> <p>Prayers & Possibilities 10am</p>
23	24	25	<p>26</p> <p>Lenten Book Study 6pm</p>	27	28	29
30	31					

Worship with us every Sunday at 10am! In-person and online.



296 Hoffman - PO Box 633 - Saugatuck, MI 49453 - 269-857-2929
 1stcongregational.net - Office Hours: 8:30am-12:30pm, Tues-Thurs - office@1stcongregational.net