



Building Bridges • Transforming Lives

# first touch

*This is a monthly publication of First Church of God, St. Joseph, Michigan*

## Warm Winter Evening presents. . . . . . Fresh Bloomed Hope

Speaker/dramatist Nicole Johnson comes to Lake Michigan College Upton Hall as the featured speaker of our winter event for women, "Warm Winter Evening" on Thursday, February 11, 6:00pm.

Doors will open at 5:30pm for dinner and dessert, followed by an evening with Nicole Johnson. Bestselling author, performer, and motivational speaker, Nicole Johnson is one of the most sought-after creative communicators in America today. Her unique ability to blend humor with compassion as she captures the innermost feelings of women facing life's daily struggles, has enabled her to create a unique sense of community for women of all ages.

The youngest of five children, Nicole grew up in the southeastern United States, primarily in Louisiana. Like many women across America and around the world, she has faced challenges in her life: the divorce of her parents, childhood loneliness, loved ones touched by breast cancer and Alzheimer's disease, and a difficult marriage ultimately ending in her own painful divorce. In the midst of all the brokenness, Nicole gathered together the pieces of her pain and formulated a life-changing philosophy:

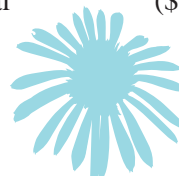
*Life's greatest value can be found in the broken pieces.*

Tickets are \$29/individual for 10 at \$270). Get your Center by February 8--door. For more information warmwinterevening.com.

*If you would like to donate offer tickets to those who might place your check for any amount in FCOG with "WWE Scholarship"*

(\$27 each when you purchase a table tickets at The Good Word Resource tickets will not be available at the on this event, visit us online at

*to the Scholarship Fund to help us not otherwise be able to attend, please Sandy Mason's staff mailbox made out to indicated on the memo line.*



freshbloomedhope



featuring speaker & dramatist  
**nicole johnson**

*"We live in a world of great beauty and enormous pain. I like to write about the strange way they come together on the shores of hope."*

--Nicole Johnson

# Christ Birthday Offering Says “Thank You!”



Thank you First Church. You have lived up to your reputation. You are an incredibly generous and giving congregation. Your focus on Christ this Christmas season has brought in an amazing \$23,654.59 for the Christ Birthday Observance.

Your gift goes towards the mission and ministry efforts of the Church of God both in the United States and around the world. Bless everyone who gave generously and sacrificially.

Contributions can be made to this mission effort until January 10.

*A heartfelt thanks from Women of the Church of God (WCG), Nancy Hemingway, President*

## WCG Prayer Retreat

Women of the Church of God will meet Tuesday, February 2 at 1:00pm, in room 5. Jean Hayden will lead a prayer retreat, “Women Developed by God To Think on These Things.”

All women are invited to attend.

## GlenAire Bible Study

Patty Needles will continue her popular weekly Bible Study sessions on Tuesday, January 12, 10:00-11:30am, at Glen Aire Mobile Home Park.

Sessions will be held in the Community Room of the park, located just inside the gate. Glen Aire Mobile Home Park is located on Glenlord Road in St. Joseph.

Call Patty Needles (429-3345) for more information or to sign-up for the class.

## Hymn Sing at Baroda Church of God

A Hymn Sing with special music will be held at Baroda Church of God on Sunday, January 31, 6:00pm The church bus will leave at 5:15pm, if you would like a ride.,

All area Church of God congregations are participating. Be sure to join us for a night of music and friends!

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### First Tuesdays

Join us in the Sanctuary at lunchtime the first Tuesday of each month for prayer and fasting. Our next First Tuesday is February 2, 12:00-1pm. Beth Weichhand leads with special prayer and anointing at the front of the sanctuary, but feel free to pray on your own or come and go as your schedule requires.

### Blood Pressure Clinic

Blood Pressure Clinic will be held on Sunday, February 7, 10:30-11:30am, in Room 5 (*downstairs at First Church.*) This is a free service offered by our Parish Nurse Beth Fiskars.

### Prayer Shawl Ministry

Bring your knitting/crochet needles to the Heritage Room on Tuesday, January 12, to create prayer shawls for the ill and those needing comfort. Or just come by to learn more about this heart-warming ministry.

### Military Support Group

Our Military Support Group meets the first Thursday of each month, 7:00pm, in Room 5, to pray for, care, and support our military troops and their families. The next meeting is Thursday, February 4, 7:00pm.

### Volleyball Moves to Thursdays

Join us on Thursdays, 6:30-9:30pm, beginning January 9, if you'd like to get some fun exercise. All levels are welcome; several volleyball courts are set up.

### Pizza with the Pastors

If you have been attending First Church six months or less, sign-up to visit with some of our pastors over pizza on Sunday, February 28, immediately following the 11:00 service downstairs in Room 1 (Community Cafe). Contact Debbie at 269.983.1524 x34 / [debbie@myfirstchurch.com](mailto:debbie@myfirstchurch.com) to register.

# Snowed In?

## Time to Treasure Hunt!

Are you snowbound? What a great time to start cleaning your closets, basements, and garages to set aside quality, slightly-used clothing, dishes, furniture, and household items to donate to the Women's Ministry Missions Rummage Sale. (Please do not donate broken items or unusable clothing.)

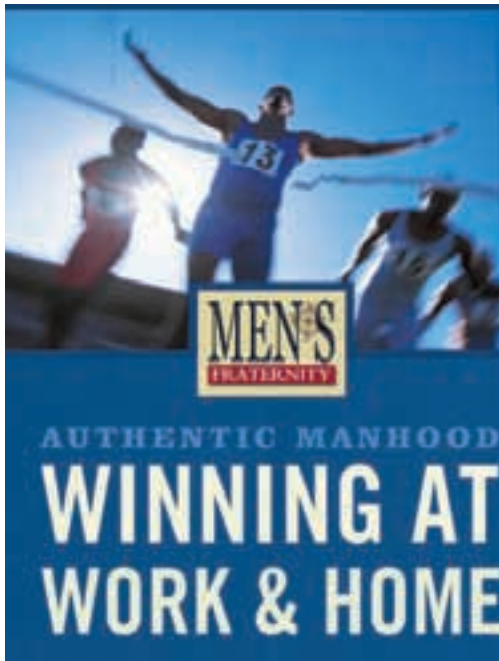
Proceeds from the sale will benefit Women of the Church of God (WCG)-supported missions, such as, Mediterranean Bible College, Children of Promise and our own church mission trips, as well as, Women's Hands-On Ministry (WHM) projects, including McCord School and local outreach programs.

Items can be brought to the Life Center Monday & Tuesday, April 19 & 20. Sale is Thursday & Friday, April 22 & 23. Many hands are needed to have a successful sale. Look for ways to be involved. Call or e-mail Deb Ward (429-0925) warddj@hotmail.com (subject: rummage sale) for more information. You will be blessed.

## Men's Fraternity

Learn "How to Win at Work & Home." Men's Fraternity meets Wednesdays at 6:30am and 6:30pm (choose your time).

Become a man with a more satisfying life.



## Women's Expresso:

### Calling All Scrappers!

All women are invited to come to the Fellowship Hall on Saturday, January 16, 10am-5pm, and catch-up on your scrapbooking.

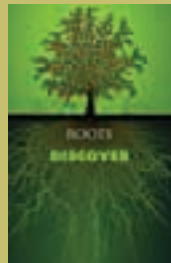
Bring your friends and family and spend a winter day working on your projects together.

Lunch will be potluck, so please bring a dish to share. Sign-up online or call the church office. Looking forward to seeing you there!

## Centennial DVDs Now Available

First Church of God Centennial DVDs are now available at The Good Word Resource Center for \$10.00. We also still have some ornaments and memory books available.

## New to First Church? Discover Takes You from Spectator to Participant!



Taught by Pastor Bob Confer, Discover, our Roots connection class, is an important first step in learning what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ at First Church.

The class has good discussions, and questions are always welcome. You will leave with answers to questions like:

- What is the Church of God?
- What do we believe?
- How do we compare to other Christian churches?
- What is the structure/organization of First Church?
- What is so unique about the First Church family?
- What does it really mean to be a follower of Jesus?

In February, Discover is Offered 2 Ways:

### 4 Wednesday Evenings

Beginning February 3

6:30-8pm

OR

### 2 Saturday Mornings

February 20 & 27

(8:30am-noon / Room 6)

Sign-up online ([myfirstchurch.com/roots#discover](http://myfirstchurch.com/roots#discover)) or call the church office (269.983.1524)



What is the meaning of life?  
 What happens when we die?  
 How do we deal with guilt?  
 Does God still heal?  
 Is there a God?

## Got Questions? Looking for Answers? Come to Alpha

**Come & See**  
**Dinner & Sample Program**  
**January 20**  
**6:00-8:00pm**

If questions like the above have never been answered adequately for you, then *Alpha* is for you!

*Alpha* is for anyone interested in finding out more about the Christian faith--whether you have been a Christian all your life, if you're a new follower of Christ, or if you have never walked through the door of a church before.

The night begins with dinner--bring your family and leave the dishes to us. After dinner, we'll present the night's theme, then break into smaller groups that will allow you the opportunity to discuss any questions/issues anyone has.

**Ask anything!** *Alpha* is a place where no question is seen as too simple or too hostile. You will meet new people and make new friends at *Alpha*. *Alpha* meets every Wednesday, 6:00-8:30pm, for 10 weeks, beginning January 20.

**Still not sure?** *Come & See* on Wednesday, January 20, offers dinner and a shortened program, just so you can see if *Alpha* is for you or not. There is no pressure and no commitment! Dinner will be served promptly at 6:00pm. After dinner, children can be registered into childcare as the real conversations begin.

Registration is urged (we want to cook enough food), but if you don't know if you can make it until the last minute, walk-ins are welcome. Register online at [myfirstchurch.com/what-is-alpha](http://myfirstchurch.com/what-is-alpha) or call the church office (269.983.1524).

## Growing Beyond Worship



Life wasn't meant to be lived alone. That's why First Church offers a wide range of small group learning experiences to help you connect with others and grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ. Our classes are short term, usually running 4-12 weeks, which means you'll have frequent opportunities to try something new.

Be sure to pick up a "*Growing Beyond Worship*" brochure or visit our website for more information on all of our classes. Make 2010 a year of growth in your life!

## The Lord Isn't Finished With You Yet!

On Saturday, January 23, Prime Timers will travel to Kalamazoo Westwood Church of God for a morning seminar called "*Purposeful Aging Seminar: Time to Re-calibrate and Fulfill your Mission.*"

Guest speaker will be Bryan Walker, Executive Director of Kalamazoo Area Christian Retirement Association. He and his wife, Ami, have been married for 19 years and have three children. His life experience brings a unique blend of leadership from both the profit and non-profit segments.

In our youth-oriented culture, many senior adults believe the assumption that "age brings completion," rather than using our vast storehouse of knowledge, wisdom and experience to bless and strengthen our churches, families, and communities. We urge you not to sell yourself short and lay down your talents too soon. The Lord isn't done with you yet! It's time to take stock of what you have to offer and fulfill the purpose God has for you in this world

Deadline for this great time of learning is Monday, January 18. Cost is \$4/person. We will stop for lunch (pay on your own) on the way back home.



## GET TO KNOW YOUR STAFF!

Too often, our days are spent busily running in myriad directions without time to stop and get to know one another. In 2010, we're going to take a moment to allow you to become better acquainted with the folks who work in the First Church office by having them answer a few simple questions. So, here is our first one: your *First Touch* editor.



Teresa kneeling at the ancient Roman Baths in Bath, England

**NAME:** Teresa Ann (Smithers) LaPlante

**POSITION:** Communications Specialist. That is, I create most of the printed publications of First Church, including: weekend bulletins, *First Touch*, *Prime Time Newsletter*, advertisements, flyers, bulletin inserts, brochures, and our church sign.

**FAVORITE PART OF YOUR JOB:** I have an absolute passion for choosing just the right words and pictures to create the best way to get each ministry's message across and entice everyone to read it. And meeting so many wonderful people is a delightful bonus!

**FAVORITE ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF WORK:** I love to write, read and research--all at once if I can! My reading tastes run from mysteries to anything historical (fiction and non). My research includes anything that strikes my fancy, but a longtime project has been genealogy (last names: Smithers, Mensinger, Knapp, Robare).

**FAVORITE CHILDHOOD MEMORY:** Times spent up north at my grandparents' cottage, walking the woods with my grandmother and canoeing down the river with my grandfather. I love the stillness of nature.

**FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE:** "...and who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14b We are all where we are for a reason and a purpose, sometimes as yet unknown. I also love the story of Jonathan and David--there are so many layers of meaning in it!

**FAVORITE FOOD/S:** Fresh raspberries, bar none! Besides that I love Italian and Cajun dishes.

## Men & Boys Trout Fishing Trip



Imagine enjoying bonding time with your father or son (or both!) and other male friends.... discovering a beautiful trout stream full of stocked rainbows and browns with an (almost) guarantee of catching several nice ones each day... swimming, canoeing, hiking, sitting around a campfire..... great meals... and ending each day in a real bed in

an air-conditioned apartment! We're describing the 2010 Father/Son Fishing Trip to Bennett Spring State Park near Lebanon, Missouri.

Instead of going north to Canada or Sylvania Wilderness Area in the UP, we will travel about the same distance south to a trout park in Missouri, Bennett Spring State Park for 4 days/5nights of fishing You can check it out at [missouritrou.com/bennett.html](http://missouritrou.com/bennett.html) for pictures and more details.

We will leave early Monday, July 5, and return the evening of Friday, July 9.

Total cost will be about \$120/person to cover lodging, transportation, plus food while we are there. In addition, there will be approximately four travel meals, a Missouri fishing license (about \$40) and a daily trout license of approx. \$4/day. We are helping to underwrite the cost of this trip, like we did last year, so more can afford to go. A deposit of \$50 by Tuesday, January 12, will reserve your place on this trip.

Stop and think about it. Just a little over \$170 plus travel meals is an excellent price for such a get-away! If you do not have a son/grandson who can go, feel free to invite another boy or man.

For more information, call Bob Confer at 983-1524 or Gary Zick at 429-3478, or email [confer@myfirstchurch.com](mailto:confer@myfirstchurch.com)

## Soup's On: January 15

Prime Timers will enjoy a luncheon of delicious homemade soups, breads, and desserts on Friday, January 15, after which, we'll learn the latest news on hearing technology.

Cliff Tallman, a Hearing Technology Resource Specialist, will be with us on Friday, January 15, at 12:00pm. He is NOT a salesman; instead, he displays and demonstrates products, and makes available the resource from which to purchase them, if you so choose. You'll be amazed at all the equipment and technology available to help you hear better.



Darl Williams, who leads a support group for the hearing-impaired at The Chapel, will bring a devotional.

Register no later than Monday, January 11.

# D-Groups Delve Into Acts

D-Groups is back! And we are diving into winter by taking a journey through the amazing, miraculous book of ACTS! This is a life-changing study! To help kids really dig into ACTS with some excitement and success, devotion books are back. If parents want a copy for themselves, they are available in The Good Word bookstore or check with Candi Spitters (269.983.1524 x25 / candi@myfirstchurch.com).

*Well of GRACE Ministries offers...*

## *Club H2O*

*Well of GRACE* is expanding its ministry to include a 12-week meeting place especially designed for girls ages 13-18. **Club H2O** is a safe place for girls to connect, increase self-esteem, find potential and celebrate what makes them unique.



Two classes will begin on Tuesday, January 12. One class will meet at First Church; the other will meet at Overflow Café at Orchards Mall.

These classes are free of charge and registration is easy. Simply hop online at [wellofgraceministries.com](http://wellofgraceministries.com) or call the Well of GRACE Ministries office at 269.428.9355 and we'll make sure you're signed-up for the session you'd like to attend.



## 2010 Warner Camp Dates

### JUNE

June 14-18: High School Camp (9th-12th grads)

June 21-25: JH2 Camp (7th- & 8th- grads)

June 28-July 2: JH1 Camp (6th- & 7th- grads)

### JULY

July 6-9: Kids Kamp 1 (3rd- & 4th- grads)

July 16-23: Historical Warner Campmeeting

July 27-30: Kids Kamp 2 (4th- & 5th- grads)

### AUGUST

August 2-6: Kids Kamp 3 (5th- & 6th- grads)

August 20-22: Grands Camp (K-4th-grade grads & their grandparents)

Warner Camp is located at Grand Junction, Michigan, just south of South Haven. For more information, visit their website:

[warnercamp.com](http://warnercamp.com)



## Middle School Winter Retreat

### February 5-7

It's happening at the one and only...WARNER CAMP! Winter Retreat is lots of fun, lots of snow (usually), great food (really!), hockey, great music, meaningful talks & worship, laughter and fun with friends, and really cool times with God. Cost is \$85/student.

Registration forms are available around the church. We recommend early registration. When space fills, late registrants are placed on a waiting list. Don't miss out!!



2627 Niles Ave, St. Joseph, MI 49085  
 myfirstchurch.com  
 Office Hours: M-Th, 8-4:30  
**269-983-1524**  
 recep@myfirstchurch.com

**Deadline for articles:**

1st Friday of each month  
 Email to [teresa@myfirstchurch.com](mailto:teresa@myfirstchurch.com)

**SERVICE TIMES:**

Saturday at 6:00pm  
 Sunday at 9:30 & 11:00am

**PASTORAL STAFF**

**Lead Pastor:**  
 David Colp

**Executive Administrator:**  
 Gregory Gordon

**High School Ministry**  
 Randy Bennett

**Life Groups/Prayer/  
 Missions**  
 Rick Blumenberg

**Worship Arts**  
 Ryan Carrell

**Discipleship/Older Adults/  
 Pastoral Care**  
 Bob Confer

**Student Ministries/  
 Middle School Ministry**  
 Chris Spitters

**Advisory Council**

Jim Schueneman, Chair	10
Lisa DeJong	10
Ron McKey	10
JC Anderson	11
Bob Dowsett	11
Vance Price	11
John Fozard, Oklahoma	11
Arden Bradley	12
Michelle Kerns	12
Mark Krenz, Arizona	12
Mitzi Tompkins	12
Gregory Gordon	
David Colp	

**Staff Missionary**

**Joseph Steiner**  
 Church of God, Debrecen, Hungary

**Missionary Partners**

Camille Melki, Beirut, Lebanon  
 Church of God in Paraguay  
 Tammie Tregellas, Malawi, Africa



# A Life-Changing Training Event

By Art Clark

First Church has been a Stephen Ministry congregation for more than 14 years, and we currently have 19 active Stephen Ministers. The name “Stephen” comes from St. Stephen, who was the first lay person commissioned by the apostles to provide caring ministry to those in need. Stephen Ministry is a ministry in which trained and supervised lay persons provide one-to-one Christian care to individuals in our congregation facing life challenges or difficulties. Stephen Ministry is an integral part of our caring ministries at First Church, and we will soon be expanding our capabilities.

Eight candidates are participating in Stephen Ministry training this time around: Cecilia Collard, Bonnie Craig, Beth Fiskars, Don Fiskars, Jane Hill, Ruth Magner, Katrina Portice and Debbie Puckett. It is a fast-paced course that begins January 12, and will continue on most Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings for approximately two-and-a-half months. Trainers for these classes include our current Stephen Ministry leaders, along with other leaders who are also trained but are currently inactive. The training combines sound theological principles and the contemporary psychology of care giving, which provides candidates with the resources to extend a high level of Christian care giving to people who are grieving, in crisis, or experiencing other stresses in life.

Stephen Ministry training is intense because it explores serious life issues, with particular emphasis on confidentiality, the art of listening, assertiveness, and feelings. In addition to the nearly 50 hours of classroom instruction, pre-reading and other outside preparation is required. Many Stephen Ministers, upon completion of the training course, have indicated they not only learned a lot about care giving but also experienced both spiritual and personal growth.

*As always, one of our trained Stephen Ministers is currently available to help you. If you would like additional information about our Stephen Ministry, or if you desire to have a Stephen Minister for yourself or for someone else in need, please contact Pastor Bob Confer at 983.1524, (x 14) or [confer@myfirstchurchstjoe.com](mailto:confer@myfirstchurchstjoe.com).*

## A Family F.U.N. Event: Tubing at 5 Pines



Bring the kids for a fun night of tubing! First Church Children & Family Ministries has reserved 5 Pines tubing slopes for Friday, January 15, 6-8pm.

Register for this event with Vance/Julie Price (269.408.8111 or [bisoncc@comcast.net](mailto:bisoncc@comcast.net)). Cost (at the door) is \$6 for children 6-11 years and \$7 for 12 & up.



## Making Marriage Better

Whether your marriage has room for improvement or even if your marriage is good and you'd just like to make it even better, *Two Becoming One* is for you. *Two Becoming One* helps couples to move their marriages from performance to faith as both engaged and married couples help to motivate each other to apply God's principles for marriage to their own relationships.

This class is offered on Wednesday evenings, 6:30-8pm, beginning January 6.



2627 Niles Avenue  
St. Joseph, MI 49085

269.983.1524  
recep@myfirstchurch.com  
myfirstchurch.com



## Got Kids?

Do we have a place for them! **KidZone** is a place that cares for them and teaches them about God’s love. It is a place where we work to partner with you as you lead your child to pursue Christ for a lifetime. It is a place devoted to making your child’s time at First Church the best hours of their week!



Here’s what we have for kids in 2010:

### **Beginning Wednesday, January 6, 6:30pm – KidZone’s WOW! returns to Wednesday Nights.**

For kids 3 years to 5th-grade, **WOW!** is our midweek program designed to magnify and explore the Bible in a creative, upbeat, exciting and dynamic ways!!! Both **Little Kid Zone** and the Kid Zone Clubhouse opens at 6:15pm for drop-off. Your kids won’t want to miss a single week of **WOW!**

### **Beginning Saturday & Sunday, January 9 & 10, during all service hours – KidZone returns to our weekend worship experience!**

**Itty Bitty Kid Zone** – for children birth to 3 year olds. Our Nursery is available during all services for children up to 18 months. Our Nursery staff loves babies. Sit back and relax during services knowing that your baby is being well cared for. Our Cricket Class is also available for children 18 months to 3 years olds.

**Little KidZone** – for children 3 years through Kindergarten. It is here we focus on three main truths: God Made Me, God Loves Me, and Jesus Wants to Be My Friend Forever. We sing, play and pray with your children as we present exciting stories from the Bible in a way that draws these youngsters closer to God.

**KidZone** – for children 1st grade through 5th grade. We make it our goal each week to create an experience that is truly the ‘best hour’ in a kids week! In everything we share with your kids we

stress “growing up the right way” with Jesus as our example. (“*And Jesus GREW in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.*” Luke 2:52.) We focus on these three main truths in **KidZone**: I can trust GOD no matter what, I need to make the WISE choice, I should treat OTHERS the way I want to be treated

There is something for everyone in **KidZone**. Got Kids? Got Grandkids? Been a regular in **KidZone**? Just getting started in **KidZone**? Haven’t started yet? Got Questions? Come, check us out! Our arms are open wide to all families and we want to partner with you. Come join us as we RELAY the love of Jesus Christ and build on the foundation of his word!

See you in the Zone – 2010!!

Enthusiastically for HIS Kids!



“Mr. Bill” Shepard

Director of Children and Family Ministries

[myfirstchurch.com/children-family](http://myfirstchurch.com/children-family)