



Building Bridges • Transforming Lives

first touch

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



First Church at Benton Heights Celebrates First Anniversary

Our Benton Heights campus is already celebrating its first anniversary! It has been a very exciting year as we've watched God join together two churches with one BIG heart to reach into our communities with the love of Christ. We have worked hard on the renovation of our Benton Heights campus, gotten to know our neighbors, fed a multitude of people, held a block party, baptized fellow believers in Lake Michigan and at the Benton Heights campus, grew a community garden, hosted a revival and VBS, added a youth group, as well as many other activities. We have also been challenged, encouraged and strengthened through our Sunday morning worship times. We have so much to celebrate!

We recognize that none of this would have been possible without the sacrifice and investment of our church family, both at St. Joseph and Benton Heights. There are many within the church and in the community who have given their time, talents, and treasures to make this dream a reality and we are deeply grateful for every deed offered, both large and small. Because of this, we would like to invite you to join us in a time of celebration for what God has done over this past year. We will have a special anniversary service on Sunday, March 13 at 11:00am at the Benton Heights campus. Dr. Bill Jones, Church of God State Pastor, and lead Pastor David Colp will be our special guests. We will also have a potluck luncheon immediately following the service. Meat and drinks will be provided. Please bring a side dish to share.

If you cannot join us in person, we hope that you will share in the excitement and continue to support the ongoing ministry and growth of our Benton Heights campus through the gift of prayer. *God is not finished yet!*

1st Anniversary Celebration

Sunday, March 13 | 11:00am
COG State Pastor Dr. Bill Jones speaking
Potluck follows
Bring a dish and join in the celebration!

EASTER/HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

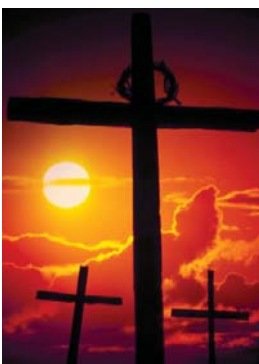
Wednesday, April 20: D-Groups Prayer Labrynth (There will be NO adult/children classes).

LifeGroups Imitate Christ (A footwashing video will be distributed to *LifeGroups* to use during their usual small group time before Easter, if desired.)

Maundy Thursday, April 21, 7:00pm: Upper Room Experience (Pastors Rick Blumenberg & Bob Confer will conduct an "Upper Room Experience" at the St. Joseph campus for those who would like to experience communion and footwashing.)

Good Friday, April 22, 12:00pm: Good Friday service. (There will be no evening Good Friday service.)

Easter Weekend Services: Saturday, April 23, 6:00pm | Sunday, April 24, 9:30 & 11:00am at both locations each time at the SJ campus | 11:00am only at BH campus *Watch for details!*



Staying in Love

Falling in Love is Easy,
Staying in Love
Requires a Plan



We all know what's required to fall in love...a pulse. Falling in love is easy. But staying there—that's something else entirely! With more than a thousand matchmaking services available today and new ones springing up all the time, finding a romantic match can be easier than ever. But staying together with the one you've chosen seems to be the real challenge.

So, is it possible for two people to fall in love and actually stay there? Absolutely! Join us as we study God's word on making marriage last and create a plan for our marriage through this 4 week DVD series by Andy Stanley.

This class will meet Wednesdays at 6:30pm, beginning April 13.

Annual Rummage Sale:

April 14 & 15

As you start spring cleaning of closets, basements, and garages, be sure to set aside quality, slightly-used clothing, dishes, furniture, and household items to donate to the Women's Ministries Rummage Sale for Missions. Please donate working appliances only – no broken items or unusable clothing.

In order to maintain a quality sale, we *cannot accept* refrigerators, freezers, mattresses, televisions, computers, monitors, and encyclopedias.

Proceeds from the sale will benefit local and global mission projects of Women of the Church of God (WCG) and Women's Hands-On Ministry (WHM).

The sale is Thursday & Friday, April 14 & 15. Items can be brought to the Life Center at the St. Joseph campus on Monday and Tuesday of that week.

Many hands are needed every day to have a successful sale. Look for ways to become involved. Call Deb Ward for more information (269.429.0925).

Military Support Group

Our Military Support Group meets the third Sunday of each month. The next meeting is Sunday, April 19, 12:30pm at Asian Grill in Benton Harbor (near Applebees). Military troops, their families, and others interested in supporting our troops in prayer and care packages are welcome.

If you have someone you would like to add to our military list, please contact Mark/Lisa Baldwin at 269.429.1930 / baldwinideaworks@yahoo.com.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

First Tuesday

Join the First Church pastoral staff in the Sanctuary at lunchtime the first Tuesday of each month for prayer and fasting. Our next *First Tuesday* is April 5, 12:00-1pm.

Walk with Us in the Springtime

First Church walkers meet at Grand Mere Park in Stevensville every Monday, Wednesday, & Friday (10:00am) for a brisk walk. Join us!

Women of the Church of God

WCG will meet Tuesday, April 5, 1:00pm in Room 5 for their Easter program, *The Lord is Risen*, presented by Becky Beach. All women are invited to attend.

Prayer Shawls Date Change

Join us in the Heritage Room of the St. Joseph campus of First Church on Tuesday, April 5, 9:30-11:30am, to knit/crochet prayer shawls to be distributed by our Parish Nurse Beth Fiskars to those in need of comfort/healing.

Juvenile Diabetes Support

Is your child battling Juvenile Diabetes? Our support group meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month, 7:00pm. Contact Francine Jordan (269.757.2310 / fjordan@myarbonne.com) or Brenda Shepard (269.556.1322 / shepard5@sbcglobal.net) for information on the next meeting.

DivorceCare Support Group

Don't go through separation/divorce alone. Led by Randy and Sherrill Schwalich, DivorceCare will help you deal with the pain of the past and look forward to rebuilding your life. This group meets Tuesdays, 6:30pm, at our SJ campus. INFO: s_schwalich@yahoo.com / 269.926.9880

Griefshare Support Group

If you've lost a loved one, GriefShare can help you face loss and move toward re-building your life. Led by Cindy Herzog, each session is "self-contained," so you do not have to attend in sequence. This group meets Wednesdays, 6:30pm, at our SJ campus. INFO: Cynthia_k_herzog@whirlpool.com / 269.429.2539.

Warm Winter Evening Thank You

Thank you to the many volunteers who helped make *Warm Winter Evening 2011* such a wonderful evening for the community! Eight hundred women enjoyed food (that we didn't have to cook!), laughter, great door prizes, and music and inspiration. Our speaker, Kelly Minter, challenged us with the Word of God and shared her gift of singing. Paula Deen (really, our own Jackie Flanagan) had us laughing as we learned her recipe for a butter popsicle! With our MC, Crystal Colp and Paula Deen (Jackie), it's a wonder we didn't ALL leave with southern draws!

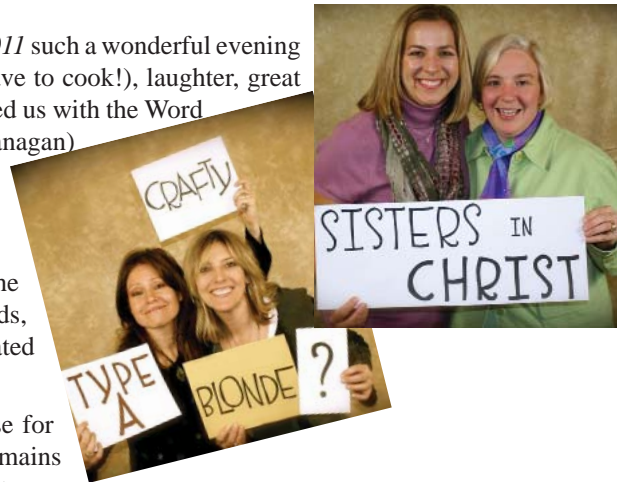
We even had a photo booth. The many women who took advantage of the photo booth shared lots of giggles and the opportunity to connect with friends, old and new. We also want to thank the many women who sewed or donated aprons for the hostesses to wear. It truly was a *"Recipe for the Heart!"*



After 18 years, the purpose for *Warm Winter Evening* remains the same: to reach out to our community with the warmth of God's love. Thank you to those who provided scholarship tickets so that we could bless many women with a night out, to those who prayed so faithfully, and to those who gave of their time and talents and to make it happen.

With deep appreciation,

Sandy & the Women's Ministries Team



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL July 10-14 2011

Evenings at our SJ campus

Get in on the planning! CONTACT Bill Shepard (bill@myfirstchurch.com) or Sue Jennings (269.983.1524 x 17)



First Church of God will join the 2011 CROP Hunger Walk on May 15

From CWS (Church World Service): CROP Walks are one way we can help to overcome hunger and poverty in our world. In fact, CROP stands for . . . Communities Responding to Overcoming Poverty.

When you support CROP Hunger Walks, you're:

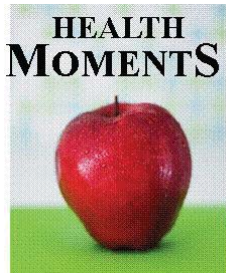
- Helping local hunger-fighting initiatives (Crop Walk will give up to 25% of the funds raised to these local agencies)
- Supporting long-term development in some 80 countries
- Helping meet the special needs of refugees
- Assisting in disasters and famines
- Sharing some \$3,600,000 annually to support local hunger fighting efforts across the U.S.
- *Getting some exercise, too!*

Look for more information to follow!!

CAR MINISTRY WISH LIST

The First Church Car Ministry has found a home on Colfax and had its first work day! We are looking for the following items: If you have or would like to purchase any of these, please contact Tim O'Leary: 556-0262 / miwllc@sbcbglobal.net

- Large trash can
- Small office desk
- Picnic table
- Bench grinder/vise
- Trash bags
- Filing cabinet
- Microwave
- Floor jacks/stands
- 2 white boards
- 2 work benches
- Mechanics hand tools
- 60-80 gal. air compressor
- Printer
- Small electric water heater
- Mechanics air tools
- Utility sink/faucet



Nutrition Quiz: For Your Health's Sake

Greetings! I hope you and your loved ones are experiencing Christ's peace and wholeness. March is recognized as National Nutrition Month, and I would like to focus our attention on healthy eating.

Since the beginning of time, eating and diet practices have been considered from many different perspectives. Eating has provided for physical needs, social needs, and even has spiritual implications. The sharing of food historically has been associated with generosity and fellowship (Pr. 22; Lk. 15:1-2). Jesus used the common diet ingredients of bread and wine when He shared the Last Supper with His

disciples. Eating supports our bodies, emotions, and spirits! Nutrition is an important part of our eating practices. It is the real reason we need to eat.

Test your knowledge on the questions below, and learn more about nutrition!

1. How much sugar does the average American eat in one year?
 - a. 62 lbs
 - b. 25 lbs
2. You are better off using which of the following sweeteners?
 - a. "raw" sugar and honey
 - b. granulated sugar
 - c. it makes no difference
3. Vitamin C prevents infections and promotes healthy gums and blood vessels. Which of the following is a good source of this vitamin?
 - a. broccoli
 - b. citrus fruits
4. You have a burger, fries, and a chocolate shake for lunch; how many calories are in this meal?
 - a. 600
 - b. 1,150
5. Iron is important for producing hemoglobin, which carries oxygen to the body's cells. Not enough iron and you will be tired and run down. Which food has more iron?
 - a. milk
 - b. red meat
6. From which of the following food groups should everyone have four or more servings (1/2 cup) per day?
 - a. fruits and vegetables
 - b. milk and milk products
7. TRUE or FALSE: It is recommended to reduce daily sodium intake to less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) and further reduce intake to 1,500 among persons who are 51 and older and those of any age who are African American or have hypertension (high blood pressure—anything over 120/80), diabetes, or chronic kidney disease.
8. What does potassium do?
 - a. promotes fluid balance
 - b. builds strong teeth
9. Which of the following two groups is the best source for Vitamin A?
 - a. spinach, sweet potatoes, & liver
 - b. cereals, fish, legumes
10. Which Vitamin promotes a clear, blemish-free complexion and healthy hair?
 - a. vitamin D
 - b. vitamin K
 - c. vitamin A

How did you do? The correct answers are below. For more information on healthy eating, you can visit www.health.gov and look up the new 2010 dietary guidelines. Happy Healthy Eating!

Beth Fiskars, RN First Church Parish Nurse You can reach me at: 983-1524 ext. 40 or nurse@myfirstchurch.com.

Blood Pressure Clinics -

Blood Pressure Clinics are a free service offered by our Parish Nurse Beth Fiskars and her team of medical volunteers. The next clinics are Sunday, April 3.

SJ Campus: 10:30-11:00am, in Room 5 | **BH Campus:** immediately after service in the Fellowship Hall

ANSWERS: 1. a 2. c 3. both 4. b 5. b 6. a 7. true 8. a 9. a 10. c

You are invited to hear how God is at Work in Paraguay



A team of 35 from First Church, two from South Meridian Church in Anderson, and two from the Michigan State Mission board travelled to Paraguay in January/February. With the help of a local contractor and some local construction crews, our team built a beautiful church in the community of Katuete.

The work days were long, part of our team didn't get there

due to the blizzards back home, and we were challenged almost every day with hard rains, but God's plan for this church was accomplished and we were able to be part of a dedication service attended by many Paraguayan Church of God leaders and families. It was an exciting celebration.

Along with the building project, relationships were renewed with Julie, Norberto, Marcos, and Priscilla Kurrle, pastors and families from previous church builds, and many of the sponsored children in *Children of Promise*. New relationships were made with Pastors Silas & Nancy of the Katuete Church of God and members of their congregation, our hotel hosts, and one very special bus driver during the time we were there.



We experienced some torrential rain and consequently some challenging driving conditions during one of the days we were travelling in Paraguay. That just happened to be the day that Edgar, our bus driver, and his wife had just delivered baby Benjamin that morning. Our group took a collection and bought them some baby gifts and a soccer ball for his other four children and this is the letter that he wrote to us (*translated by Julie Kurrle*).....

Paraguay Report Night!
Stories - Pictures - Vision for 2013
Sunday, March 27 | 6:00pm
in the Fellowship Hall of our St. Joseph campus

"I really don't know who you are...the only thing I know is that you are very special and you are a group of people sent by God. I don't have words to thank you for the gifts, for the care, especially since I'm unknown to you. Nobody knows destiny, but I never would have imagined that something like this would happen to me. I am very emotional, grateful, and very happy. Thank you, thank you, thank God, and thank you!"

--The family of Bejamin Samaniego"



Please join us Sunday, March 27, 6:00pm, in the Fellowship Hall as the team shares more stories and shows pictures of our time serving in Katuete.



Middle School Ministry. . .

5th-Graders & Parents Meet MS Ministry

On Sunday, March 27, 12:00pm, 5th-graders and their parents have the opportunity to learn more about our Middle School ministry. Come to the youth center café downstairs for pizza and important information.

Spring Break

D-groups will not meet April 6, due to Spring Break. Enjoy your break with your family!

More information about middle school ministries can be found at myfirstchurch.com/middleschool

High School Ministry. . .

Tribe

Brunch

Sunday, March 13, we will have brunch down in the Attic at 11 AM. We will introduce our new series while munching over some delicious food!

Mission to Appalachia

As a way to help raise funds for this summer's mission trip, we will be offering you the opportunity to sponsor a high school student. Watch for sponsorship booklets to be released soon!

Superbooks

Student ministries will be selling *Superbooks* soon.

Spring Break

On Sunday, April 3, Tribe will not meet due to Spring Break. Enjoy the break and catch up on some sleep!

Check out the high school ministries webpage at myfirstchurch.com/highschool



Benton Heights Campus Student Ministry

Our Benton Heights campus has begun its own Student Ministry, led by Everett Gaston and Heidi Heald. Students (6th-12th-grade) gather every Thursday evening at 6pm for a Bible study, prayer, and fun & games.

We'll also have the opportunity to go to some inspiring area events. Join us!

For more information on this ministry, contact Everett at: everettg112@hotmail.com / 269.470.2300.

Warner Summer Camps

MIDDLE SCHOOL SUMMER CAMPS:

5th-6th grade camp - August 1-5

7th-8th grade camp - June 20-24

These are the camps that Chris Spitters is directing. Make sure you mark these dates down so your middle schooler won't miss out on summer camp!! Registration forms will be available shortly.



HIGH SCHOOL SUMMER CAMP:

High School Camp at Warner Camp is June 27- July 1. Make sure you mark your calendars, so you don't miss this opportunity! More information to come shortly on the high school website.

LIFT YOUR HEART

by Tara

Lift your heart, you are loved by so many!

The enemy waits, always looking for opportunity.

Guilt is his weapon, trying to weaken your spirit,

Putting doubts in your head,

Stealing your joy,

All his way of trying to destroy.

Refuse him! Push all his poison aside!

Do not let guilt reside!

You are God's child, be strong, have pride.

"I created you and have carried you since before you were born. I will be your God throughout your lifetime, until your hair is white with age. I made you and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you." --Isaiah 46:4



2 LOCATIONS

St. Joseph Campus & General Office

First Church of God
2627 Niles Ave, St. Joseph, MI 49085
SERVICES: Saturdays at 6pm
Sundays at 9:30 & 11AM

Benton Heights Campus

First Church at Benton Heights
990 N. Euclid Ave., Benton Harbor 49022
SERVICES: Sundays at 11am

OFFICE HOURS

M-Th, 8-4:30 | 269-983-1524
recep@myfirstchurch.com

Deadline for First Touch articles

1st Friday of each month
Send to: teresa@myfirstchurch.com

WEBSITE: myfirstchurch.com

Web Designer: Julie Beam

PASTORAL STAFF

Lead Pastor
David Colp

Prayer/Missions

Rick Blumenberg

Life Groups/Assimilation

Ryan Carrell

Discipleship/Older Adults/

Pastoral Care

Bob Confer

Young Adults, Worship

Dan Deitrich

Executive Administrator

Gregory Gordon

Benton Heights Campus Pastor

Mary Shawl-Ranke

Student Ministries

Chris Spitters

Advisory Council

JC Anderson	11
Bob Dowsett	11
Vance Price	11
John Fozard, Oklahoma	11
Arden Bradley	12
Michelle Kerns, Chair	12
Mark Krenz, Arizona	12
Mitzi Tompkins	12
Gary Bolin	13
Rajean Alexander	13
Dave Eichberg	13
Greg Gordon and David Colp	13

Staff Missionary: Joseph Steiner

Church of God, Debrecen, Hungary

Missionary Partners:

Camille Melki, Beirut, Lebanon

Church of God in Paraguay

Tammie Tregellas, Malawi, Africa

BOOMERLIFE

BoomerLife Plays at Southshore

On Saturday, March 26, 7-9pm, baby boomers are invited to join us at Southshore Health & Racquetball Club for some friendly competition on and off the courts. We'll play "walleyball" (that's volleyball in a racquetball court- fun!), racquetball, tennis, and euchre. Cost: \$5 (bring a snack to share if you like). Contact Dan/Diana Deitrich (269.422.2708) to sign-up or call the church office.

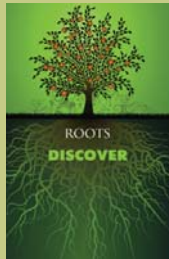
BoomerLife to enjoy BJ Thomas Concert

Twenty-four tickets are available to hear BJ Thomas and Gary Puckett at the Holland Tulip Time festival on Sunday, May 13. The church bus will leave at 5:00pm (concert at 7pm). Cost: \$33. Deadline: April 4. For more information, contact Craig/Judy Nitz: 269.422.1210

Would you like to be part of a BoomerLife team? *BoomerLife*, our new ministry for 40-70 year-olds, is seeking helpers in all areas of leadership. If you would like to become more involved, contact Doug/Patty Needles (269.429.3345) or Dan/Diana Deitrich at 269.422.2708.

New to First Church?

Discover Takes You from Spectator to Participant



Taught by Pastor Bob Confer, our *Roots* connection class, *Discover*, 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.

2-Saturday Seminar
April 30 & May 7 | 8:30am-noon

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

FCOG Pre-School Registration

March 23

Celebrating 44 years of offering two- and three-day developmental classes for children aged 3-Pre-K. We also offer a 5-day Pre-K class.

Registration forms are available at the church office and pre-school office.

For more information, call Kathy MacTavish, Director:

269.983.1816

Registration for NEW students begins March 23, 8:30am, in the Life Center of First Church

Current students and their families may register beginning March 22.





2627 Niles Avenue
St. Joseph, MI 49085

269.983.1524
recep@myfirstchurch.com
myfirstchurch.com



Calling the Church to 40 Days of Prayer & Fasting

The Church of God is being called to unite in a time of prayer and fasting during the 40 days leading up to Easter (March 16–April 24). Imagine the Divine power that could be unleashed if the church united in a time of prayer and fasting! How many lives could be changed? How many congregations could be healed and empowered for the sharing of the Good News of Christ? Imagine what could happen if we Christians humbled ourselves in submission, sacrifice and prayer? *Focus 40* is a call for the church to join together for just such a period of worship and obedience.

“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray...”
2 Chronicles 7:14 NIV

We are convinced that through prayer and fasting we reconnect in our relationship with God. We need to pull away from all the noise and confusion in our lives and focus on our relationship with our heavenly Father.

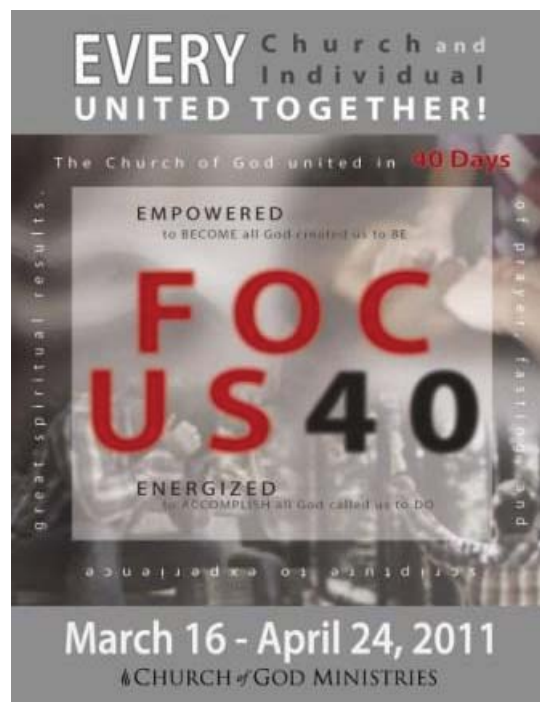
“Even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” Joel 2:12 NIV

There are several great examples in the Bible when God’s people prayed and fasted, and God “showed up.” The church at Antioch commissioning Paul and Barnabas as missionaries (*Acts 13:1-3*) is just one example. Imagine how God may choose to show up if his church comes together in one accord, all at the same time to call on his name! The results could be transformational!”

Will you take part in this spiritual journey? We at First Church are a people of prayer. We have seen God work many times in the past because His people prayed. Will you join with us as we join with other congregations across the Church of God, as well as, with Christians around the world during this lead up to Easter?

God’s promises are clear in 2 Chronicles 7:14 and throughout Scripture, that he wants to do an incredible work among his people. Prayer is God’s way to unleash His power through our lives. The goal of *Focus 40* is to set aside forty days of

prayer and fasting that lead to our transformation. When the Church of God comes together to pray, we really believe God will accomplish great things in His Kingdom.



**We will be acting out the reality that we are an army, not warring against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers in heavenly places. Church of God, we are being called to active duty!
Let’s stand shoulder to shoulder on our knees and see great victories won.**