



Building Bridges • Transforming Lives

first touch

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

First Church Celebrates 100 Years of Unity



Two former pastors will be coming to help us celebrate our Centennial. Former Pastor Jim Cook will speak at all services the weekend of October 31. Former Pastor Robert Moss is our featured speaker at our Anniversary Celebration and will also be speaking at both Sunday services the following day.

In the late 1800s, a small group of Christians, weary of religious division and prejudice, began searching for Christian unity. Casting aside the man-made tenets of their individual denominations, they reached out to one another to begin the "Church of God Reformation Movement." ("Church of God" not because God belongs primarily to us, but because we belong to Him.)

The *Church of God Reformation Movement* claimed three simple tenets:

- Wear the name of Christ, simply claiming to be Christians;
- Take the Bible as sole authority & Christ as their only creed;
- Depend on God's Holy Spirit to unify them with other Christians, regardless of denominational affiliation.

First Church of God began as one of over 6,500 congregations which trace their roots back to this experiment in Christian

unity. One hundred years later, we are still reaching out to other denominations to minister in the name of Christ.

In that spirit, our Saturday evening service attendees invite everyone to unite with us on November 7 in an all-church celebratory dinner and program. Former Pastor Robert Moss is our featured speaker that evening and will also be giving the message at both services on Sunday morning. *(Read his biography on page 5.)*



Many special people from past years will also join us at this time. Meet with them and hear their stories during a Heritage Reception in the Fellowship Hall prior to dinner (3-5pm).

Reservations are necessary for this dinner; the deadline for registering is October 18. Place your paid reservation into the silver "Registrations" mailbox in the Gathering Area or bring to the church office. Cost for the dinner is minimal to cover expenses (\$5/person up to \$20/family); there is no cost for the Heritage Reception.

Along with Bob Moss, two other former pastors are celebrating our centennial with us. Former Pastor Luz Sorrell has already joined us as we near this special date. Former Pastor Jim Cook will be speaking the weekend of October 31. *(Read his biography on page 7.)*

Celebrate with us as we begin our second hundred years of faith and unity here in St. Joseph, Michigan.

THIS CHANGES Everything group life conference 2009
 October 24 Live Via Satellite

See Page 3 for details on a Small Group-Transforming Seminar!

Communications from the Chairman

By Jim Schueneman, Chairman

In our effort to keep the congregation informed, here is an update from our last Advisory Council meeting.

We welcomed two new members to the council, Mitzi Tompkins and Arden Bradley. New members to the council are nominated by the nominating committee, approved by the council, ratified by the church membership and serve a three year term. We acknowledged the services of past members Monica Bolin and Greg Kachner for their years of service to the council and the church. There was also a review of the roles, responsibilities and expectations of council members.

The council as a whole has an opportunity to converse with all the Associate Pastors and gain insights to their ministries and hurdles they face. This is an important part of our meetings as we learn about the many needs, as well as the many lives we touch in our community and our church. The Associate Pastors are excused at this point of the meeting.

For the balance of the meeting we discussed: church finances, debt reduction, lowering sound levels in the Sanctuary, improvements to the Sanctuary, new projectors and screens, opening a coffee shop in downtown St. Joseph as an outreach for young people. We approved of revisions to the staff manual which will now go to our attorney for review before it is released.

Lastly, the Advisory Council decided to not actively go after the purchase of the house near the canopy entrance. At some point and time it would be beneficial to do so, but our desire is to retire the debt.

A Sense of Community

Come and join your friends for a good inexpensive dinner on Wednesdays at First Church. For just \$5 you receive a salad bar, entrée with potato and vegetable, drink and dessert. Join your friends for a nice meal. We serve 5:00-6:15pm every Wednesday.

Also, if you are looking for a deeper experience, volunteer to help in the kitchen. Call Julie Wuerfel at 428-5095 for more information on available positions. See you Wednesday!

You Are Invited to the

*Ordination Service for
Mary Shawl Ranke*

*Sunday, November 22
at First Church of God*

Watch for the time and details in November.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Espresso for Women: Holiday Meals

Are you looking for a creativity boost for the upcoming holidays? Join us in the First Church kitchen on Thursday, October 29, 6:30-8:30pm, to get inspiring menu ideas and fall decorating designs. Watch and participate as the food is being prepared. Receive recipes and inspiration! Cost: \$5. Sign-up online or call the church office. Seating is limited.

McCord Library Volunteers Needed

We still have openings for volunteers to go to McCord School to help classes in the library and with some reading to the children. Times are flexible, mostly afternoons, for an hour or two. Contact Deb Ward at 429-0925 or warddj@hotmail.com with "McCord School" in the subject line.

Blood Pressure Clinic

Blood Pressure Clinic will be held on Sunday, November 1, 10:30-11:30am, in Room 5 (*downstairs at First Church.*) This is a free service offered by our Parish Nurse Beth Fiskars.

First Tuesdays

Join pastors/staff of First Church in the Sanctuary at lunchtime (12:00-1pm) the first Tuesday of each month for prayer and fasting. Our next First Tuesday is November 3.

Pizza With the Pastors

If you've been attending First Church six months or less, call the church office (269.983.1524) to register for our next Pizza with the Pastors on Sunday, November 15. Get to know some of our pastors over pizza!

Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministry is a caring ministry. Stephen ministers will be available to answer your questions about the Stephen Ministry at their table in the Gathering Area after every service the weekend of October 24/25.

WiFi at First Church

The Gathering Area of the First Church is now equipped with free wifi. The wifi connection only goes to the internet. Currently, no password is needed. Enjoy!

Christmas Wreaths

Our Boy Scout troop is taking orders for Christmas wreaths in the Gathering Area October 18 & 25. Support our troop and decorate your home for the holidays.

This Changes Everything!

Group Life Conference '09

Saturday, October 24

9:30am - 4:30pm

Live By Satellite!

Right Here at First Church!



Authentic change begins when the next step is the right step, but what is the right next step for your Life Group? Spiritual growth happens in the fertile soil of genuine Biblical community—this is the place where hearts open to grace, relationships heal, sin patterns break, and connections to God are made strong (all this equals transformed lives)!

How do you bring your Life Group to such transformation? *This Changes Everything!* is a one-day training event to help give direction and practical steps to foster spiritual growth in your Life Group. Best of all, it is convenient and affordable—Live by Satellite, right here in our Family Life Center!

Who should attend? All small group leaders and anyone interested in leadership. Why attend? New laser-focused, one-day training with unrivaled teaching from experienced group life experts Andy Stanley, Henry Cloud, Russ Robinson, Mindy Caliguire, David Johnson, Heather Zempel and Bill Donahue.

It would be marvelous if every First Church Life Group leader could be inspired and trained with this outstanding (and convenient) one-day event!

The cost is only \$49 each. Any one of these speakers is worth that price (and you also get lunch). There will be great fellowship with other Life Group leaders from our church and other congregations in our area. But it gets even better. Because we believe in this so much, First Church Life Group Ministries will subsidize all First Church folk so the cost to you is only \$25.

For questions on the Group Life Seminar, talk to Beth Weichhand, Event Chair, or Pastor Rick. Tickets are available now! Call the Church or call Shelley Guffey at 408-1972. Put this on your calendar. It's too good to miss!

MOPPETS: Come Play With Us

Are you free on some Thursday mornings? Do you like caring for young children? MOPS has a position for you!

Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) is a national faith-based group for mothers of young children. Meeting at First Church of God on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month, May-September, we focus on ways to encourage, equip, and develop mothers of young children to realize their potential as women, mothers, and leaders. We provide resources and education to help during this season of early mothering. Our meetings give us the opportunity to recharge our batteries, listen to informative speakers on topics that matter to us as moms, all while our children are cared for in a loving environment.

That's where you come in!

We need more volunteers to help those we already have. Openings are available in several age groups, from birth up to age 5. Come share giggles, smiles, snuggles and play. Make a difference for moms and kids right here in your community! Come, play with us. We need you!

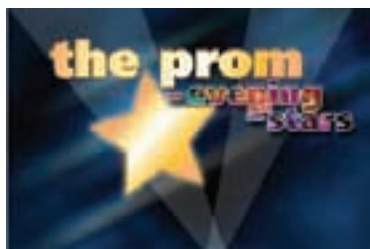
For more information, contact Jennifer Van Beek: 269.927.0170 / jenvanbeek@gmail.com



Sunday Night Live was a night of laughs for everyone who attended. Here, in a "*Honeymooners*" golf skit, Ralph Kramden (played by Marcus Pigman) has had just about all he can take of Ed (played by Greg Gordon).

“The local church is God’s strategy for changing the world.”

--Experiencing God



Thank You to the six local churches, community businesses and organizations, and over 400 volunteers who made “*An Evening with the Stars 2009*” a dream come true.

To God be the Glory!



For upcoming opportunities to get involved in outreach ministry check out the First Church website at:

[myfirstchurch .com](http://myfirstchurch.com) / Ministries/ Missional Outreach/ Go Local

Questions: contact Jenny Fry at jenny@myfirstchurch.com / 269.983.1524 x39

Christmas Love Through Giving

One of the best ways to celebrate a Christ-centered Christmas is giving to others in need. Through our ministry at McCord School, we are offering you many ways to share your love of Christ and your appreciation for the gift of God’s Son. Watch for these special opportunities to give this Christmas season:

October

COAT COLLECTION: We are collecting gently-used/new coats all month for students at McCord Elementary. Donation boxes are available in the pre-school wing and at the green awning entrance.

November

CHRISTMAS STORE: During the month of November, we will be collecting gifts for the “Christmas Store” at McCord School. The Christmas Store is an exciting opportunity for children to learn the joy of giving. They love being able to “shop” for the perfect gifts and wrap them for those they love! Suggested gift items will be posted at each of the collection boxes. This is a fun experience for volunteers as well, and you will be able to connect one-to-one with students. The store will be “open” December 7, 8, & 9. Let us know if you can help.

FOOD DRIVES: Also, in November we will be hosting a food drive. Teachers at McCord Elementary see children arrive at school hungry and go home to an empty kitchen. The food drive will allow them to send home non-perishable, healthy groceries with students. We will be handing out grocery bags you can fill on November 14 & 15 to return the following weekend (November 21/22)--watch for details!

December

ANGEL TREE: Beginning November 28 through December 13, we will have our “Angel Tree” up in the Gathering Area, allowing everyone to choose an angel from the tree representing a child/family in need. Your gifts bring Christmas to children who would not otherwise have one, and bring joy to those parents who cannot provide a Christmas for their children, but would like to. Gifts can be brought to the church December 12-15.

**Come & Hear
the Children Sing!**

November 1

Our Cherub Choir will be singing
at the 9:30am service.

Invite the whole family!

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF UNITY--

Pastor Bob Moss to Speak at 100-Year Celebration



Pastor Bob Moss in early 1990s

Robert L. “Bob” Moss has served as Senior Pastor of the Salem Church of God near Dayton, Ohio, since September 2008. In more than 30 years of pastoral ministry, Bob has served congregations in four states and has served in many national leadership roles within the Church of God.

Prior to serving the Salem Church, he was Executive State Minister for Indiana Ministries of the Church of God, and is currently the chairman of the national General Assembly of the Church of God.

In 1991 Bob and Renée Moss and their three children left Spokane, Washington, as Bob answered the invitation to become the Senior Pastor of First Church. He led the ministry of the congregation for 15 years, departing in April of 2006 to answer the call of leadership extended by the pastors and congregations of Indiana.

When asked to recap his years in St. Joe, Bob listed the following highlights:

- The blessing of many new persons being added to the congregation
- The increase in financial stewardship providing income for growth
- Development of an effective team of pastors and support staff
- Construction of the Life Center (dedicated in 1999).
- The acquisition of property for parking that enabled attendance growth
- The expansion of the mission focus resulting in opportunities to minister in many settings around the world including India, Paraguay, Lebanon, Germany and Hungary.
- The opportunity to mentor interns Dwayne Beggs, Joseph Steiner, Chris Confer, and Lerone Martin
- The weekday “Positive Moment” radio broadcast adjacent to *Paul Harvey News* giving us a “voice” in the community.
- Publication of the book, ***Rediscover the Passion, the Promise, the Power***, by Warner Press in 1998
- The way the First Church family nurtured our children
- The opportunity to be involved in community life

Regarding his years in St. Joseph, Pastor Moss writes:

“Serving and leading the First Church of God in St. Joe was one of the greatest privileges of my life. From the very start of my ministry there the congregation showed me respect and eagerly accepted my ideas. The historical DNA of the church is in creating an atmosphere of respect in which leaders can grow and develop. I am forever grateful to countless individuals who helped me become a better leader while I served in your midst.”

Pastor Bob Moss will return to First Church to speak at our 100-Year Centennial Celebration on Saturday, November 7. He will also be speaking at both Sunday morning services that weekend (*see front page article*).



Pastor Bob Moss today

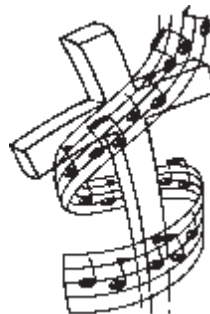
Women of the Church of God

Women of the Church of God will meet Tuesday, November 3, 1:00pm, in room 5.

Nancy Hemingway will present the Geographical Study - *Ecuador: Women Developing in a World Bound by Ancient Chains*. An Ecuadorian luncheon will be served. All women are invited to attend.

See Shirley Zick for tickets to World Community Day program and luncheon on Friday, November 6 at Saron Lutheran Church.

Stayed upon Jehovah



The Prime Time Choir fall musical, ***“Stayed Upon Jehovah,”*** directed by Ren Baldwin, will be presented at First Church on Sunday, October 25, 6:00pm. Don’t miss it!

As we focus on our Rock of Serenity and Source of Peace, this musical will give you calm in this midst of a world of violence, senseless crime, and financial turmoil.

On Sunday, October 18, 5:00pm, the musical will also be presented at First Church of the Nazarene.

Joe Boersma Receives Outstanding Christian Service Award

Long time First Church member Joe Boersma has been selected to receive the Outstanding Christian Service Award by the Berrien County Association of Churches.

Joe has served for many years with Habitat for Humanity, acting as the coordinator for the involvement of First Church, as well as, serving on the Jimmy Carter Work Project while employed at Whirlpool Corporation. His commitment to Harbor Habitat for Humanity has earned him the appreciation of many and made him many friends throughout Berrien County and beyond.

Joe began his volunteer service at First Church years ago when he and his wife, Sharon, taught a children's Sunday School class. When his youngest daughter was seven-years-old, he served as First Church's director of the *Joyful Noise Children's Choir*, then continued to serve even after she had grown. Joe served as Director for 17 years before retiring from the choir last year.

Joe has also chaired the Music & Worship committee and served on the First Church Advisory Council, the Spiritual Advisory Board, and was also Chairman of the Association.

In addition to his current Habitat work, he also serves as secretary

of the First Church Mission Leadship Team. And, putting his feet where his heart is in Missions, he and his wife, Sharon, have walked many miles for CROP to raise funds for hungry people around the world.

In addition to his volunteer work, Joe is a devoted family man, married to his wife, Sharon, who is a nurse. They have three lovely daughters.

Joe is dedicated to God, his family, his church, and his community, both local and worldwide. It is altogether fitting that he received this special award and we at First Church are pleased to call him a part of our church family.

D-Groups Hayride

Middle School students are going on a hayride at 5 Pines on Wednesday, October 28, 7-9pm. Drop off and pick up at 5 Pines. Tickets (\$5) at the wagon.

Flu Shot Clinics



Sunday, October 25

10:45am-12:45pm

Fellowship Hall

Seasonal flu shots will be given at this clinic. Cost: \$30. Medicare is accepted. Bring your card and a copy of both sides of your card.

You cannot receive this vaccine if you are pregnant, allergic to eggs, chickens, or chicken feathers or Thimerisol (*preservative in flu vaccine*), or if you have Guillian Barre syndrome, or are running a fever.

NOTE: *Injection is given in upper arm--dress appropriately.*

H1N1 Flu Vaccines

Monday, Nov. 2 (3:00-7:00pm)

& again Monday, Nov. 30 (3:00-6:00pm)

H1N1 (Swine) flu shots will be given in two parts at these clinics. This is a free vaccine provided by the Berrien County Health Department.

Volunteers are needed each day to help with registration and to play with kids as they wait their turns (*please plan to arrive one hour prior to the start of the clinic*), 4-6 strong people are needed to help put away the tables/chairs after the clinic (*approximately 1-1.5 hours after the clinic closes*).

Please contact Beth Fiskars if you are willing to help:

fcogpn@gmail.com or 983-1524 ext. 40

Help for those dealing with grief during the holidays.

If the prospect of facing the holidays without your loved one causes anxiety and dread, you are not alone.

Connect with support, encouragement and advice to survive the holidays in two special hours of

GriefShare: Surviving the Holidays

Sunday, December 6

6:30-8:30pm

Featuring video instruction and group discussion, it helps you deal with the intense pain of grief during the holiday season.

Register on line at myfirstchurch.com or call 269.983.1524.

Please register by Monday, November 16.



**SURVIVING
THE HOLIDAYS**



2627 Niles Ave, St. Joseph, MI 49085

Office Hours: M-F, 8-4:30

269-983-1524

recep@myfirstchurch.com

www.myfirstchurch.com

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*

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF UNITY--

Pastor Jim Cook Returns to First Church



Rev. Jim Cook, his wife, Carol, and daughter, Sara, at the time of the installation service, Sunday, November 4, 1980.

On November 4, 1980 James R. Cook was installed as pastor of the First Church of God in St. Joseph. Pastor Cook is a graduate of Anderson College and of Chicago Theological Seminary and a third generation Church of God minister. Pastor Cook served as Senior Pastor from 1980-1989.

In 1980, Pastor Cook, Dale Landis as Pastor of Christian Education, Youth & Music, and the First Church Council initiated a five-year plan for growth and expansion. Included among the fifteen priority ideas of this plan were the hiring of a third paid staff person, purchasing property for possible re-location, starting a shepherding and/or small

group program, and making a definite plan to reach the congregation's 50-50 giving goal (50% to missions and outreach, 50% to local needs).

To accomplish the goals set forth by the plan, church committees and boards organized many new programs while broadening the scope of others. Outreach to the community was made through mailed brochures, weekly radio broadcasts, newspaper ads, a library of taped morning worship services, a new visitation group, Christian Action programs for the elderly, sponsorship of a refugee family, and the organization of a men's fellowship group. Outreach goals were further accomplished when, in 1983, Ken Weidrick was hired as Outreach Pastor.

In 1982, the congregation voted to purchase 2620 Pixley and authorized a nearby property purchase as it became available. The Church Council made the decision to expand at the current location rather than seeking another community site. In 1983, two more lots were purchased.

In 1984, Sunday morning worship attendance was recorded as the highest in church history. The average of 410 per Sunday was a 14% increase over the 1983 average. To meet the needs of a growing church and community, outreach programs were further expanded to include *English as a Second Language*, aerobics classes, and the sponsorship of softball teams.

In 1985, after 13 years of service at First Church, Dale and Bonnie Landis left to new callings in Anderson, Indiana, and a new pastor was sought to work with Christian Education and Youth ministries. (That pastor turned out to be Pastor Bob Confer.) A hospitality committee was formed to assimilate new church members.

During the mid-1980s, the Church Council and the Board of Trustees focused upon expanding the sanctuary, the Friendly Chapel, the Gathering Area, and relocation of kitchen, storage areas, and the baptismal pool. Expansion costs were limited to one million dollars and it was decided to have \$500,000 reserved for the project before it was begun. Finally, with \$488,000 in secured pledges, the congregation gathered on April 26, 1987, to break ground for the new 760-seat Sanctuary and new 500-seat Fellowship Hall.



Pastor Jim Cook today

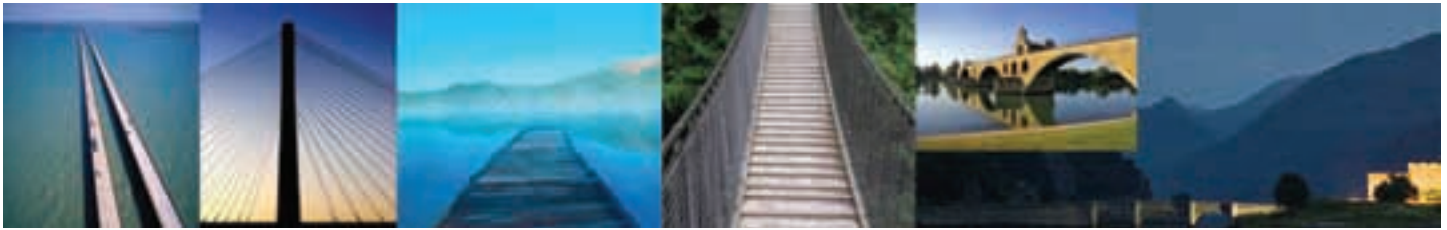
In 1989 Pastor Cook resigned his position as Senior Pastor at First Church and assumed the position of Senior Pastor at Meadowpark Church of God in Columbus, Ohio.

Currently Pastor Cook is serving as the Care Ministries Pastor at The Church at the Crossing in Indianapolis, Indiana. Jim and his wife Carol have two children Sara (Mark) McCleary who lives in Belfast, Ireland and Alissa Cook who lives in Columbus, Ohio.



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Celebrate 100 Years of Faith With Us

I remember how excited I was when our boys were born. When I brought Crystal and Caleb (our oldest) home from the hospital, we probably had close to thirty friends and family gathered there to welcome them. People were there from Illinois, Missouri, and Oklahoma. We had people everywhere in our little cracker box rental home. (By the way, I would not recommend letting that many people into your home when your wife brings home your firstborn.) Everyone gathered because they wanted to celebrate the birth of our son with us.

Just like a birth is something to celebrate, we are celebrating 100 years of life as a church! I hope that all of you will join us for what I hope is a standing room-only crowd just like when Crystal and I brought Caleb home from the hospital. November 7 is our big celebration evening. People from many states are traveling to be with us. This may be your only opportunity to meet some very significant people in our history. *(Two former pastors are also coming to speak--you can read their bios in this newsletter.)*

First Church is alive and well. When you study organizations, you see that most never make it to that 100-year mark, so we have something to celebrate. As we celebrate this milestone that many never reach, we want to make sure that we continue to minister with the same passion and determination that has been part of our DNA since the beginning. And that DNA is Jesus Christ. He is the root of our faith. *(“If the root is holy, so*

are the branches.” Romans 11:16b) Christ is what keeps us alive and healthy as a church. He causes classes to bloom that are bursting at the seams as they teach people to follow Him. He adds branches of new lives in Christ as 40-plus people follow Him in baptism. And never doubt that it is Christ--our Root--at work as our many new exciting outreach ministries begin to sprout up in our community. It is clear that God is alive and well, working through us to accomplish His vision of *Building Bridges and Transforming Lives*.

There is plenty about First Church--past, present, and future--to celebrate. Let's pack the house and celebrate together the start of our second 100 years!!

“Let’s pack the house and celebrate together”

Expectantly,

Pastor David Colp

P.S. You will find all of the details and how to sign-up to be a part of the celebration on page 1.