



Building Bridges • Transforming Lives

# first touch

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

## Warm Winter Evening Shares Recipes for the Heart with Kelly Minter

Women's Ministries is pleased to host the 18th annual *Warm Winter Evening* on Thursday, February 24, 6:00pm, featuring guest speaker/singer Kelly Minter, author and worship leader from Nashville, Tennessee.

The purpose of *Warm Winter Evening* was determined back in 1993, that is, to provide an event that brings women to come together to share the warmth of God's love in a cold world. That purpose still hold true today! God showed us early on that it was not just for the women of our own church, but for all women in our surrounding communities as well. As a result, what started out as an intimate gathering of 45 women has grown into an event of hundreds of women, reaching across generations to help them experience God's love through this much-anticipated evening.

We hope that you plan on joining us this year. Bring a friend to share this special night of friendship and inspiration. Last year we again reached sell-out capacity so get your tickets early. Tickets are on sale now in The Good Word bookstore at First Church (\$270/table of 10; \$29/individual. Cash/check only, please) No tickets will be available at the door. If you would like to make a donation to help provide tickets for women who might not otherwise be able to attend, please make your check payable to "First Church of God" with "Warm Winter Evening" in the memo line and place it in the silver "Financial Office" mailbox at the St. Joseph campus.



## Get Ready to Make a Masterpiece!

First Church is excited to be hosting *The Art of Marriage*, a 6-session premier video-event offered by *FamilyLife*, the weekend of February 11-12

For more than three decades, *FamilyLife* has been helping couples understand God's design for relationships. Now, in this fresh new seminar, couples have the opportunity to look at their relationships in a whole new way. Weaving instruction from respected pastors and Bible teachers together with compelling stories, humorous vignettes, man-on-the-street interviews and more, *The Art of Marriage* will help couples apply what the Bible teaches about marriage in a powerful way. It's practical, funny, and goes straight to the heart of your marriage. Cost is just \$45/couple (cash/check payable to "First Church of God"), so be sure to register today at [myfirstchurch.com/marriage](http://myfirstchurch.com/marriage) to make your marriage a masterpiece! Free childcare available. Check website for details.





## Thank YOU for Giving!

The generosity was overflowing from First Church this Christmas season and there has been much gratitude expressed as gifts and gift cards, turkeys and checks were

picked up by, delivered to, and sent to individuals and families within our church, our community and other parts of the world.

One hundred & seventy individuals from McCord School, the Safe Shelter, our Benton Heights campus, and community at-large received hundreds of gifts donated by First Church families. The Woman to Woman jail support and Military support ministries received an outpouring of donated items and hundreds of dollars were provided to make Christmas brighter this year for some of our own First individuals and families. One family expressed their gratefulness this way:

*“Happy New Year! We’ve had quite a challenging year in 2010... hoping God will bring healing to our family for the New Year. We’ve got peace in our home for the time being...but we can only take one day at a time. God is good and we are seeing God orchestrate one event after the other. God is in control...His ways are higher than our ways and we are so thankful for His grace, mercy and all that He is providing for us. His love never ends and we are so grateful to be part of First Church and how the Bible is being “lived out” by so many. God works in miraculous ways: Thank You to all who thought of us this Christmas and gave so generously to bring a special money gift to us. We were shocked and overwhelmed at the same time. May God Bless each and every one who prayed, gave and support us each day by your love, compassion, and listening ear. We are forever grateful.”*

Thank you to all who have given and will continue to give!

### DivorceCare Support Group has Begun



Divorce is difficult. Don't go through it alone! Our DivorceCare support group meets Tuesdays, 6:30pm, in the Heritage Room of the St. Joseph campus.

Meet friendly, caring people who will walk alongside you through one of life's most difficult experiences. Gain access to valuable resources to help you re-build your life.

For more information: [s\\_schwalich@yahoo.com](mailto:s_schwalich@yahoo.com) or call 269.926.9880

### Good Reading Sought for Inmates

The Chaplain of Berrien County Jail needs soft-cover books ONLY, for their library. He would like any books of a spiritual nature, but they can also be secular in nature (on most any topic) as long as it's appropriate.

Book donation box is in the Gathering area of the SJ campus.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### First Tuesdays

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 February 1, 12:00-1pm.

### Urgent Need! KidZone / Little KidZone

Children & Family Ministries at our St. Joseph campus is in immediate need of volunteers during our 11:00am *KidZone* and during *Wow* on Wednesday evenings. If you can help, contact Bill Shepard at: [bill@myfirstchurch.com](mailto:bill@myfirstchurch.com) / 269.983.1524 (x50).

### Child Dedications

Our next Child Dedications will be held the weekend of February 12. If you are interested in dedicating your child to the Lord, we ask that you attend our one-hour class on Sunday, January 30, 9:30. To sign-up or for more information, contact Bill Shepard: 983-1524 (x50 or [bill@myfirstchurch.com](mailto:bill@myfirstchurch.com)).

### Yes! We Walk in the Snow!

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, February 1, 1:00pm in Room 5. All women are invited to attend.

### Prayer Shawls

Join us in the Heritage Room of the St. Joseph campus of First Church on Tuesday, February 8, 9:30-11am, 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. The next meeting is Tuesday, February 8. Contact Francine Jordan (269.757.2310 / [fjordan@myarbonne.com](mailto:fjordan@myarbonne.com)) or Brenda Shepard (269.556.1322 / [shepard5@sbcglobal.net](mailto:shepard5@sbcglobal.net)) for information.

# Thank You for Supporting our Military Troops!

Our Military Support Group would like to thank everyone for the cards/gifts/support to our troops at Christmas. Your thoughtfulness has helped many a troop to connect with the joy of Christmas. In the words of one troop. . .

*"I would like to thank you for the 'goody' package that you all sent to me. I truly appreciate you thinking about me during the Christmas season. Your support for the military does not go unnoticed. I appreciate your support for the Armed Forces. God bless. --Respectfully, Captain Patrick J. Hall"*

## Thank You for Your Loving Care of Lee & Mary Davis

Lee Davis, former custodian for FCOG, was diagnosed with a brain tumor in June, 2010. Lee's recovery process has been long and is yet continuing. Since his wife, Mary, is legally blind; she too has required various forms of help from the church.



In response to their need, more than 20 people have volunteered their time, talents, and resources to help this couple out. Some have

provided meals, rides, trips to the store, lawn care, snow removal, Christmas decorating, TV/DVD, trips to the bank, companionship, friendship, and prayer support. To each one of you, we'd like to say...

*THANK YOU for being the hands and feet of Christ!*

Please continue to pray for and support our troops. A current list of soldiers and deployments can be found on the prayer list included with our weekend church bulletin.

Families/volunteers/troops are also encouraged to join our support group that meets the third Sunday of each month, 5-7pm, at Applebees. For more information on this support group, contact Mark Baldwin: 269.429.1930 / baldwinideaworks@yahoo.com

## Many Thanks to All of Our Christmas Eve Volunteers

Were you blessed by our Christmas Eve services? Part of that blessing came through the efforts of the many volunteers who stepped up to help make it an inspiring experiences for all attendees. To those many volunteers, we can only say,

*"THANK YOU! May God bless you in this coming year because you cared enough to give your best to him at Christmas!"*

### Christ Birthday Offering



Thank you for giving to Christ Birthday Offering! Total Offering at First Church is \$23,094.50! Your gift goes towards the mission and ministry efforts of the Church of God both in the United States and around the world.

## Fourteen Candidates Begin Stephen Training on January 18



Nearly 15 years ago First Church became a Stephen Ministry church, when three people from our congregation attended Leadership Training. Based on the idea that all Christians are ministers and each of us has a responsibility to pass on God's love, Stephen Ministries, Intl. (begun in 1975) provides Christ-centered training and resources to more than

8,500 congregations in over 100 denominations in 22 countries. At First Church, we currently have more than 20 active caregivers and that number will increase significantly next year with fourteen new candidates scheduled to begin training on January 18.

Participants are: Nancy Anderson, Lisa Baldwin, Don Blackmond, James Bolton, Mary Bolton, Christie Hartzler, Erin Lehmann, Peggy Lemire, Kathy Neuenschwander, Alyson Olmstead, Mitzi Tompkins, Barb Vegter, Shirley Weirick and Suzon Williams.

The skills our candidates learn and practice prepare them to provide a very high level of Christian care giving to people grieving or in crisis. The training explores some serious life issues; however, it is also a personal growth opportunity and an enjoyable experience. Pastor Bob Confer recently observed, *"During the past fifteen years the impact of our Stephen Ministry on our congregation has been tremendous. People whose needs might otherwise slip through the cracks are coming face to face with Jesus' love through their Stephen Minister."* Please lift up the participants and this training in your prayers over the coming months."

*If you desire to have a Stephen Minister for yourself or someone else in need, contact Pastor Confer at 983.1424, (ext 14) or confer@myfirstchurch.com.*

# Best Wishes & Many Thanks to Joe & Sharon Boersma

Best wishes to Joe & Sharon Boersma as they begin a new life in Knoxville, Tennessee, where Joe is starting a new business (a Home Inspections business franchise) and Sharon will continue her work as a nurse.

Jesus spoke of people like them--those who do not make a lot of noise or draw attention to themselves, they just quietly go about their work for the kingdom of God, asking for no praise/reward for their efforts.

Joe & Sharon Boersma began attending First Church of God in October of 1983. They did not just attend services, but became a vital force in many of the ministries at First Church, including:

teaching Sunday school,

singing in the choir,

playing in the orchestra,

and (Joe) serving as chairman of the church association

In addition to all of that, Sharon served as Congregational Nurse for several years and Joe directed the Joyful Noise Children's Choir, leading children in annual musicals and many, many service performances.

Joe led the way in First Church community outreach as he directed First Church involvement in Habitat for Humanity before we had an official missional outreach ministry.

Joe & Sharon raised a son and two daughters here: Patrick, Kristi, & Melissa. In November, they became proud grandparents of Colton Andrew Boggs, born to Melissa, and her husband, Landry Boggs.

*For those who would like to stay in contact with Joe & Sharon, their new address is: 2338 Slate Valley Lane, Knoxville, TN 37923*

*You heard it here first...*

## BoomerLife Coming in February!

A new ministry just for the Baby Boomers in our church family and community kicks off with **THE EVENT** on Saturday, February 26, 7:15pm. Come to the Fellowship Hall of the St. Joseph campus of First Church for a fun evening with comedian Craig Tornquist, great food, live 60s/70s music, lots of great conversation with friends and much more. Ticket price is only \$10 per person; tickets will be available at the church office.

Watch the website and your weekend church bulletin for more details on **THE EVENT**. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact Patty Needles at 269-429-3345 or Pastor Bob Confer at 269-983-1524

### HEALTH MOMENTS



*Have you developed your New Year's resolutions yet?*

Whether we write them out, or just think about them, most of us can't help but consider the fresh beginning a new year brings. The making of resolutions brings with it

the thoughts of past failures and guarded hopes for the future. This month I would like to share with you a poem (thanks to Jan Burg, R.N)

#### My Resolution

*I won't look back; God knows the fruitless efforts, the wasted hours, the sinning, the regrets; I'll leave them all with Him who blots the record, and mercifully forgives, and then forgets.*

*I won't look forward. God sees all the future, the road, that short or long, will lead me home; He will face with me its every trail, and bear with me the burdens that may come.*

*But I'll look up - into the face of Jesus. For there my heart can rest, my fears are stilled; and there its joy and love, and light for darkness, and perfect peace, and hope fulfilled.*

The Lord is your partner and He will bless your efforts at growth (...being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion, until the day of Christ Jesus!. Phil 1:6). Enjoy the knowledge that all things are in the hands of our loving Lord.

If I can be of any help to you in setting new physical, emotional, or spiritual goals, please contact me:

**Beth Fiskars RN/BSN Parish Nurse**

983-1524 x40 / fcogpn@gmail.com

#### Blood Pressure Clinics

Blood Pressure Clinics are a free service offered by our Parish Nurse Beth Fiskars and her team of medical volunteers.

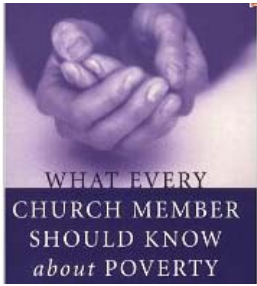
#### February 6:

SJ Campus: 10:30-11:00am, in Room 5

#### February 13:

BH Campus: immediately following service in the Fellowship Hall

## Book Discussion #3: What Every Church Member Should Know...



Another great book discussion and good soup was shared January 9. We talked about the book, *Friendship at the Margins*, and we were definitely challenged by the philosophy of mission that the *Word Made Flesh Ministry* talks about in this book. "Mission, then, is less about our efforts to help or evangelize "them," and more about how we can live into the kingdom together."

We will continue to explore the idea of community mission in our next book discussion which will be based on the book, *What Every Church Member Should Know About Poverty*, by Ruby Payne, and Bill Ehlig. The Good Word Bookstore has books available for \$20 for anyone who is planning to join the next book discussion on Sunday, March 6, 5-7pm. At the time you purchase your book, you will be required to register for the discussion and Outreach ministry will pick up the balance. If you are interested in reading the book on your own you may purchase a book for \$26. For more information on the Book Discussion group, contact Jenny Fry at 269.983.1524 (x39).

## LMC Hosts MLK Gospel Concert

In celebration of the 2011 Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, Lake Michigan College is hosting a gospel concert at the Mendel Center on Thursday, January 20, 7:30pm. Featured music is the Mt. Zion Baptist Church Choir from Kalamazoo, one of the region's finest gospel choirs with the ability to minister with excellence all gospel music styles from traditional to contemporary praise & worship. Soloist and recording artist Carolyn Quinn-Allen from Grand Rapids will be joining the choir for this concert.

This is a free event. Register by calling Jannette Yergeau at 269.927.8100 (x5266). Walk-ins are also welcome.

## Pray for Paraguay Work Campers

As many of you know, First Church has an exciting and growing relationship with the Church of God in Paraguay. Since 2004 a group from First Church has gone to Paraguay four different times to build three new, fully completed church buildings. The neat thing about these trips is that we don't just go and start something; we have enough different construction fields/skills represented in our group to be able to completely construct a building, dedicate it, and present the keys ready for use in just about two weeks!

This month we are going to the city of Katuete. The congregation at Katuete (a new district of about 11,000 residents) has about 70 active members under the pastoral leadership of Silas & Nancy Dias, who have served as their pastors since 2009.

A group of 45 persons are going on this trip--36 from First Church, 7 persons from our sister church, South Meridian COG in Anderson, and 2 pastors from other Michigan churches--to

build Katuete a church building of about 50' X 80' or about 4000 sq. ft. Several of our team will also build a second floor on a COG school near Encarnacion, about 9 hours away from the rest of our group. Both groups will be working with skilled Paraguayan construction workers to help us complete our work.

While we are there, twelve of us will also meet and share with the children we sponsor through the COG Children of Promise ministry, as well as, with our COG Missionaries, Norbert and Julie Kurrle and many of our new friends we have made in that country. We'll also present six new puppets and puppet scripts created by several persons in our congregation as gifts to the church at Katuete.

We request your prayers for safety as we travel and all of the time that we are there. Also, pray for all of the COG pastors and congregations in Paraguay, and especially, Pastor Silas & Nancy Dias at Katuete. May our work and efforts be a true blessing to the Kingdom of God in Paraguay.



## Men & Boys Camping Trip: July 9-13

Enjoy five days of canoeing fishing, camping, and fun with your son/grandson/nephew/friend as First Church men and boys head back to the UP for another fun fishing/camping trip in the beautiful Sylvania Wilderness Area .

For the past 15 years, First Church men & boys have enjoyed this great trip together, and Sylvania is a favorite place to go. This year, we will leave on July 9 and return July 13, traveling in the new church bus.

Registration is limited to the first 24 persons who sign-up. Cost for everything but meals on the road will be about \$180/person. Sign-up by putting half down (\$90/person) in the silver "Registrations" mailbox at the St. Joseph campus of First Church or bring to church office. Make checks payable to "First Church of God."

Boys must be at least 10 years of age and accompanied by a responsible male adult. Questions? Contact Pastor Bob at 269.983.1524 (x 14) / confer@myfirstchurch.com or Garry Zick at 269.429.3478.

# Middle School Ministry

## D-Groups

D-Groups has reconvened from break and is now kicking off a new series called “Tools.” Every Wednesday from 6:30-8:30pm, students try out a tool to help them build intimacy with God.

**Parents Night** for D-groups has been rescheduled for February 23. Make sure you don’t miss out on this opportunity to meet your student’s leaders and see the cool stuff we do with student(s) on Wednesday nights.

## Winter Retreat

We will head off to Warner Camp February 4-5 for Winter Retreat. Don’t miss out on the fun and the meaningful moments! Forms are available either online at <http://www.myfirstchurch.com/winter-retreat> or from the church office. Please turn them in as soon as possible because space is limited.

*More information about middle school ministries can be found at [www.myfirstchurch.com/middleschool](http://www.myfirstchurch.com/middleschool)*

# High School Ministry. . .

## Tribe

**Tools:** It’s time to start off a new series. We will discover new tools to help us build a more intimate relationship with Christ every Sunday night from 7:00-8:30pm at the church.

**Winter Retreat:** March 4-6: Don’t miss out on this! Forms are now available for Winter Retreat online or from the church office

**Mission to Appalachia:** This summer high school students will head off for a week into the Appalachians to help rebuild and restore homes in parts of West Virginia. Forms are available at either Tribe, the church website, or the church office. Hurry before all spots are filled—only a few remain open!

*Check out the high school ministries webpage at [www.myfirstchurch.com/highschool](http://www.myfirstchurch.com/highschool)*

## 2 First Church Retreats at Warner Camp Give Students a Winter Break



### High School Winter Retreat

March 4-6 | \$75 (\$85 after Feb 13)



### Middle School Winter Retreat

February 4-6 | \$75 (\$85 after Jan 19)

*Winter Retreat is...* fun, friends, football, snowmobiling, inspiring worship, deep conversations, relevant teaching, closeness to God, awesome memories, and pretty good food if we do say so ourselves! Registration forms are online and at the church office.



**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
Gregory 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*

# It's Time for our Annual 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 Ministries Missions Rummage Sale. To keep our reputation for quality that brings many people each year, please do not donate broken items or unusable clothing.

Proceeds from the sale will benefit Women of the Church of God (WCG) support missions such as Mediterranean Bible College, Child of Promise, Heart of Lebanon, and our own church mission trips. Women's Hands-On Ministry (WHM) projects have included McCord School, Safe Shelter, and local outreach programs.

The sale is Thursday & Friday, April 14 & 15. Items can be brought to the Life Center April 11-12. Pickups will be available the afternoon of April 10.

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.



## Women's Scrapbooking/Crafting Retreat

A Women's Scrapbooking Retreat is Friday, January 28 (beginning at 3pm), & Saturday, January 29 (beginning at 9am). This is a come-n-go event--bring your crafts and join us when you can! Cricut machine, scrapbooking and other supplies will be available.

Bring an appetizer on Friday; donuts, coffee and lunch are provided on Saturday. We will order take-out Saturday evening. Cost: \$3. Register online.

For more information, contact Darcy: 269.266.2322 / barkersbears@aol.com

## Lisa Winnege Moves to Golden Age Manor

Lisa Winnege has moved to Golden Age Manor (4167 N. Roosevelt Rd., Stevensville, MI 49127). Friends are encouraged to visit her or call her at 269.408.0475.

## When the Hurting Doesn't Stop...



You probably know friends, neighbors, co-workers or members of your family who are hurting because of the death of someone close to them. Please tell them about our weekly **GriefShare** support group. By doing so, you can be an important part of their healing.

Or you could be going through a time of grief yourself. If so, we can help! For more information, call: **269.983.1524**



**Wednesdays at 6:30pm**  
*Beginning February 2*

First Church of God  
Heritage Room at our St. Joseph campus  
2627 Niles Avenue, St. Joseph - myfirstchurch.com



2627 Niles Avenue  
St. Joseph, MI 49085

269.983.1524  
recep@myfirstchurch.com  
myfirstchurch.com



## Joining Together in a Single Mission & Vision

This month finds us kicking off the new year with a series inspired by *Cliffs Notes*. *Cliffs Notes* are summaries of literature, such as, stories and novels. They are designed to allow someone to quickly learn the key points of the longer work. Here is the overview of our *Cliffs Notes* series on the Church:

- Our Silhouette – Who We Are
- Our Statement – Where We are Going
- Our Stand – What We Believe
- Our Steps Part 1&2 – What We Do Together

Think about the energy that could come as the entire First Church family comes together, embracing a single mission and vision for our future! Imagine the power of everyone that calls First Church their home finding and becoming engaged as a fully functioning partner in their role as a part of First Church!

The mission and vision that God has for First Church will never be fully realized until we all join together to make our potential a reality. There can be tremendous benefit in realizing that kind of alignment as a church family.

I trust that you will take the opportunity to be a weekly part of this series on First Church. God needs us all to find our place, giving our lives in service to our Lord in the kingdom work of the church. If you miss a week be sure to check it out on the website. Also, watch for opportunities that will be offered at the end of this series for those who have specific questions or would like to go deeper in one- or two-week classes led by Pastor Confer.

First Church, we have a great future, but to realize our full potential we need everyone that calls First Church their home to be a part of realizing it!

Your Excited Alignment Director,

Pastor David



**Want to have a little fun? First Church Lead Pastor David Colp is joining the Admirals as the Celebrity 13th Player in the Admirals vs Bisons match at Lake Michigan Catholic High School:**

**Saturday, January 22 | 7:00pm**

Saturday evening service will be dismissed a little early so everyone can join in the fun. Tickets and more information are available online at lakemichiganadmirals.com or call: 269-208-3397. A limited number of tickets are also available in The Good Word bookstore at the SJ campus.

TICKET INFO: Adults, \$11 / Students/Senior Citizens: \$7 / Military (with ID) and 5 years & younger: FREE