



Building Bridges • Transforming Lives

# first touch

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



## Women of All Ages Invited to The Surrender Conference

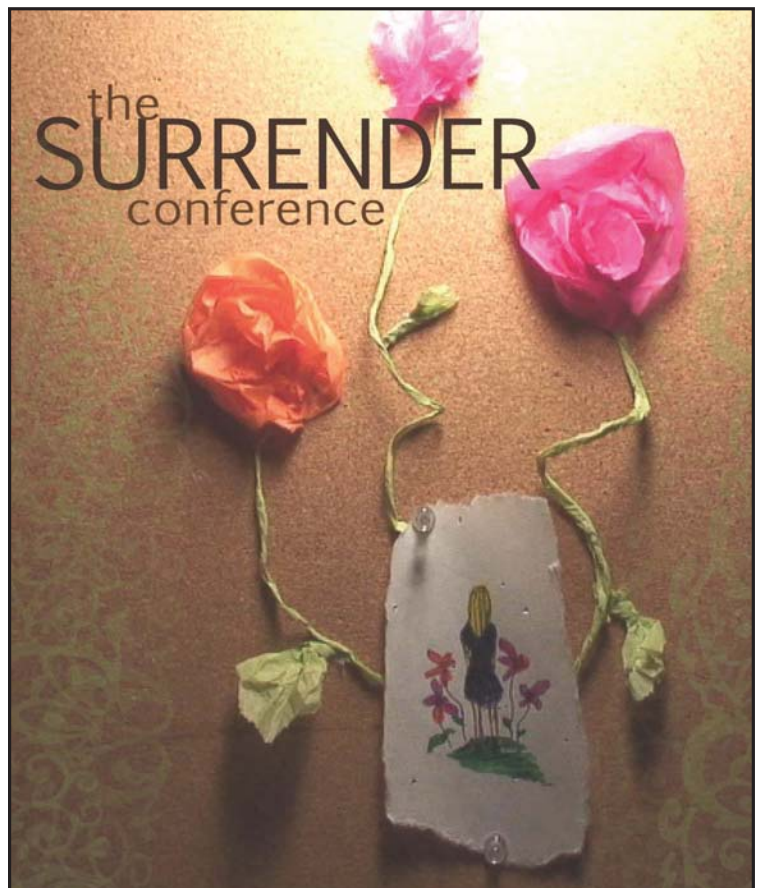
After a long conversation with my friend Kristan, I found myself questioning whether or not I had ever really surrendered everything I am to the Lord. I wondered what areas of my life I had held back from Him. I recalled several conversations with other women in my life and realized we were all asking ourselves the same question. Am I really sold out to God? So, I made a few phone calls, and we came to the conclusion that we girls should get together and look at the subject of surrender. This conference is very simply a time when any woman young or old--teenage girls, moms, single women, grandmothers--can come fellowship, talk, laugh, worship, learn, examine, and even cry together if we need to, while pondering the idea of surrender. You may be asking yourself what that exactly looks like.

In his book, "*The Me I Want to Be*," John Ortberg says this about surrender: *Surrender is the glad and voluntary acknowledgment that there is a God and it is not me. His purposes are wiser and better than our desires. Jesus does not come to rearrange the outside of our lives the way we want. He comes to re-arrange the inside of our lives the way God wants. In surrender, I let go of my life. It is a revolution of the soul in which I take myself out of the center of the universe and place God there. I yield to Him. I offer obedience. I do what he says. I am not driving anymore.* Don't think about surrender in terms of giving up. Think about it instead as giving in...giving in to God's best for our lives.

I hope you will join us Sunday, November 6, 3-6:30pm, here at First Church as we try to figure out what surrender looks like in all of our lives as individual women. My friend, Kristan Dooley, will be our guest speaker for the

afternoon. Bring your friends, your teenage daughters and granddaughters, anyone that you believe needs a spiritual pick-me-up and challenge. I truly believe that God will do amazing things when we surrender wholeheartedly to Him. Can you have your cake and eat it, too? Yes! Come find the 'cake' God wants for you at *The Surrender Conference*. It will be SWEET!!!

Giving In,  
Crystal Colp





## CARS Ministry Takes Off!

The First Church CARS Ministry was created "To show God's love through the repair and provision of adequate transportation for people in Berrien County without the means to provide it for themselves."

A number of cars have been repaired and two cars have now been made available at a very affordable cost to two individuals who were really in need of transportation. This is an exciting ministry and is beginning to fill a big need in our community.

Please consider supporting the CARS Ministry in any of the following ways:

- Donate the vehicle you are no longer driving
- Contribute financially to the ongoing ministry
- Consider volunteering at the garage, for administrative needs, or as a member of the planning team

For more information, contact Jenny Fry at: [jenny.f@myfirstchurch.com](mailto:jenny.f@myfirstchurch.com) or 269.983.1524 (x39)



### Taste of Young Life

**November 3 | 6:30pm**

**First Church of God  
2627 Niles Avenue, St. Joseph**

*GREAT PROGRAM!*

*GREAT FOOD!!*

*REALLY GREAT DOOR PRIZES!!!!*



Young Life impacts teens and adults alike.  
Learn more about it at this exciting event.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Giving Envelopes

When you give an offering or pay your tithes, please be sure to PRINT dollars and cents on your envelope. Electronic scanners can only read printed numbers. Thank you!

### Women of Church of God

Women of the Church of God will meet Tuesday, November 1, 1:00pm. in room 5. Candi Spitters will share her experiences in Uganda. All women are invited to attend.

### BH Campus Head Start Bus Ministry

Our 2011/12 Head Start Bus Ministry has begun. Every Monday, we offer parents and children a comfortable place to wait for the Head Start bus that arrives at 11:36am & 1:13pm. We also offer snacks and pleasant conversation. Starting in November, we will be there on both Mondays and Wednesdays. Volunteers are needed. Contact Vicki Felner at: [msvick@yahoo.com](mailto:msvick@yahoo.com) / 269.470.3150

### Be a Role Model

One of the Stump School teachers would love to have a male volunteer/role model in her classroom. Female volunteers/role models are also needed, of course. For more information contact Ann Frakes 429-0624/[anntomfrakes@yahoo.com](mailto:anntomfrakes@yahoo.com)

### FCOG Walkers

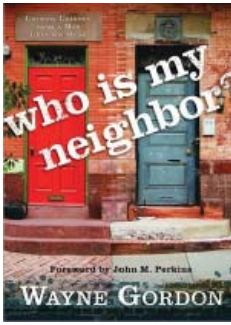
We meet every Monday, Wednesday, & Friday at Grand Mere Park at 10:00am for a brisk walk.

### Prayer Shawls

Love to knit/crochet? Want to learn? Bring your knitting/crochet needles (and yarn, if you have it) and help us create shawls to bless those who need healing/comfort. We meet Tuesday, September 13, 9:30-11:30am.

### BH Campus Starts a Library

We have the books, we need your help. Can you help us create a library? Please contact Wendy @ 313.5341 for more info.



# Who Is My Neighbor? Soup & Book Discussion Returns

by Jenny Fry

Now that the weather is cooling down, the Outreach Ministry team will be cooking up some warm soup and hosting another series of Soup & Book Discussions.

Our first discussion is Sunday, November 13, 4-6pm, based on the book, Who is My Neighbor? Lessons Learned from a Man Left for Dead, by Wayne Gordon.

“Coach” Gordon is the founding pastor of Lawndale Community Church in Chicago and president of the Christian Community Development Association.

This book is based on the parable of the good Samaritan and draws more than 40 characteristics of the man who was beaten, robbed and left for dead on the road to Jericho--the character Jesus created to show His followers how to recognize our neighbors.

## Please help to Support our Military this Christmas

We will collect money to send packages to our military personnel this year each weekend in October at both the St. Joe campus and the Benton Heights campus.

There is a box in the Information Center in the Gathering Area of the St. Joe campus on Sunday mornings where you can put your donation. For those who attend church on Saturday night or at Benton Heights, please put your donation in the collection basket and mark it “Military Support Group.” We will use the money to purchase items that we will send to the troops, and also to pay for the shipping. We also need people to bake and donate cookies. If you can help in this way, please sign-up at the Information Center.



\*\*\* Important\*\*\* We also need updated shipping information for ALL of our military, even if you have given it to us before. Military personnel move around a lot and we want to make sure that they get their package! So if you want your loved one to receive a package, please email this information to Mark Baldwin at [baldwinideaworks@yahoo.com](mailto:baldwinideaworks@yahoo.com) or call 269-470-2973.

Meet with us over pizza on Sunday, October 16, 12:45pm, in Room 5 at our SJ campus. Thanks for your prayers and support!

“Wayne Gordon writes as a father, as a football coach, as a pastor, as a neighbor, as an activist, as an economic developer....and as one who really believes Jesus meant the stuff He said.” Shane Claiborne (Author, Activist, and Recovering Sinner)

“Wayne Gordon has taken the Parable of the Good Samaritan and written a remarkable and wonderful book. Thanks to Gordie, I now know who my neighbor is. My neighbor is everyone, even those who are not yet Bears fans.” Pat McCaskey (Co-owner of the Chicago Bears)

You can purchase a copy of the book for \$10 and register for the discussion in The Good Word bookstore (located on our St. Joe campus). There are 40 short chapters that make great daily devotional reading. Start reading now and join the discussion on November 13.

Hope to see you then!

## At our Benton Heights Campus...

### A CHILDREN'S NATIVITY

Rehearsals begin OCT 20

The warm fall colors remind us through His creation of how marvelous our God is. It also serves as the precursor of what comes next... Christmas!!



Okay, I may have skipped ahead a holiday or two, but nonetheless, First Church is pleased to announce “A Children’s Nativity,” a celebration of song and testimony. The performance will be held at our Benton Heights campus on Thursday, December 15.

We are looking for kids/students ages 1st- thru 12th-grade: singers, musicians, artists, actors...anyone who wants to be part of a unique musical production celebrating the birth of Jesus. Whether you attend St. Joe or Benton Heights, you can be part of this new and exciting opportunity.

Our first rehearsal/information meeting is at Benton Heights campus on Thursday, October 20, 5-7pm. Parents, please plan to attend this meeting along with your young artists so we may answer all of your questions, as well as let you know what your roles are (not necessarily on stage...) as we need help in many areas to bring it all together.

For more information, call Kimi Martin at 269-369-0957 or email her at [kimimartin@hotmail.com](mailto:kimimartin@hotmail.com)

# Memory Loss: Is it Aging...or Alzheimer's?

## 2 Free & Informative Sessions Give You the Basics

### Know the 10 Signs: Early Detection Matters

Thursday, Oct 27 | 6-7:30pm | FCOG-SJ Campus Fellowship Hall

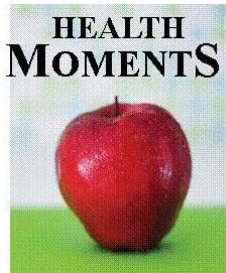
Hear from people who are living with the disease and find out how to recognize the 10 early warning signs in yourself and others.

### Memory Loss, Dementia, & Alzheimer's: The Basics

Thursday, Nov 3 | 6-7:30pm | FCOG-SJ Campus Fellowship Hall

Learn about memory loss issues and what they mean to all of us. Topics covered include: disease progression, current treatments, the difference between dementia and Alzheimer's, and much more.

*Both programs are free; registration is required. Call 269.983.1524 to register. Contributions to the Alzheimer's Association are welcome. Light refreshments will be provided by the First Church of God Healthcare Ministry.*



## Cultivating a Peaceful Life

This month I want to visit with you on the subject of Peacemaking.

The Bible provides many supportive verses for a call to peacemaking and Biblical reconciliation. In the

Old Testament, God blessed His people with peace and wholeness, and with promises of joy for those who promote peace. Jesus was prophesized to be the Prince of Peace (Num. 6:26; Prov. 12:20; Is. 9:6). In the New Testament, Jesus is seen as our Peace, and we are called and empowered to be peacemakers (Jn. 14:27; Mt. 5:9).

### What are the Challenges to Peace:

Most of our days are punctuated with some measure of conflict and discord--within ourselves, with others, or in our spiritual life. Certainly some of the factors that contribute to conflict include our busy and hectic lives, with less opportunity for real communication to explore feelings, perceptions and experiences. The increasing tolerance for violence as a form of problem-solving does not help. Sometimes, real strength involves looking for another solution.

### What can I do to Cultivate a Life of Peace?

The Bible offers us some great wisdom on living lives as peacemakers, and my perspective is captured in the following acrostic:

**P** Pursue God, His Word and His way of responding to conflict (Mt. 6:33)

**E** Each person you meet, look at them as Christ sees them, and avoid focusing on minor faults (1 Jn. 4:7)

**A** Accept personal responsibility for your contribution to conflict, try to see the situation from the other person's view point. (Gal. 6:4)

**C** Connect with each person and ask for forgiveness (Mt. 5:23-24)

**E** Evaluate this situation and all others in the future for peaceable rather than punitive solutions. You can ask yourself, am I really committed to a peaceful solution, even if it take more time and energy....or do I feel I am in the right and I want the other person to "feel my anger?" (Ps. 34:14)

May you and your loved ones be blessed as you pursue lives of peace and wholeness (Mt. 5:9)

For questions or more information, feel free to contact me.

**BLOOD PRESSURE CLINIC** - Get your blood pressures taken free at both of our campuses on Sunday, November 6

**BLOOD DRIVE** - Friday, November 18, 11-5pm. Hosted by MI Blood.

Beth Fiskars RN/BSN, Parish Nurse | 269.983.1524 (ext 40) | beth.f@myfirstchurch.com



## Middle School Hayride

Oct 26 | 6:30-9pm  
Five Pines



## Meet Caleb Weeks: Our Student Ministries Intern

*I recently graduated from Mid-America Christian University with a degree in Music and Worship. I have always had a passion for youth and I think it's because I never grew up myself. Hanging with high school and middle school students allows me to be crazy, creative, and goofy. Acting this way builds relationships between me and the students which creates awesome opportunities for them to open up and have deep conversations. I feel like I'm the one who is learning through this amazing opportunity and I can't believe I get paid to do it!*

*I love anything with zombies including HvZ (Humans vs Zombies) – so fun! I also spend my time reading, playing music, and getting into trouble – sssh!...don't tell Chris!*

We won't tell Chris, Caleb. Welcome to First Church!

## Meet Jenni Button: Our Student Ministries Assistant



Jenni Button has come to take over Candi Spitters' tasks as Candi returns to "First Notes." (We wish you the best, Candi!)

Jenni is a hometown girl from St. Joseph. She loves to read (*John* is her favorite book of the Bible, *Messy Spirituality* by Mike Yaconelli her favorite book), write letters, listen to music, watch movies, photography, and travel. She also loves to sing and walk along our beautiful beach.

*"My biggest challenge is patience and waiting for things to happen. God's timing is not ours, and it is sometimes hard to live in the present when I am looking forward to the future!"*

Welcome to First Church, Jenni! We are blessed to have you.



## High School Students vs. Zombies

October 30  
7-9pm

The battle for survival will happen at the church starting at 7pm. Bring your friends, nerf guns, and bravery!



# be weird.

high school fall retreat  
november 18-20 | warner camp  
INFO: 983-1524

# BOOMERLIFE HEADS TO DOWNTOWN CHICAGO

a day of shopping, eating and whatever you want to do

November 19, 2011 | 7:00 a.m. - 10:30 p.m. | Registration deadline: November 16

First 25 people to sign-up ride on the church bus!

It's only \$8 for the bus ride to the Michigan City train station and \$16.30 (if you're under 65) for the train ride to Millennium Station in Chicago. What a great way to meet other people and enjoy Chicago at the same time! It will be a long day, so bring comfy shoes, a warm coat and spending money.

## ITINERARY



7:00am: Leave on church bus (stop @ McDonalds in Michigan City)  
8:30am: Take South Shore train to Chicago  
10:15am: Arrive at Millennium Station  
10:15am-7:20pm: Shop, eat, see a show, eat some more, look at the Christmas lights, whatever you want to do during that time  
7:20pm: Depart from Millennium Station  
9:15pm: Arrive at Michigan City  
10:15pm: Arrive back at First Church  
*\*Please note that all times are Michigan time*

## COG Hymn Sing

Sunday, October 30

5:30pm

The next Church of God Hymn Sing for area congregations will be held at First Church St. Joseph campus on Sunday, October 30, 5:30pm (note the time change)

Everyone welcome; refreshments will follow.

# CHRISTMAS GALA

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2  
6:00 - 10:00 PM  
SHADOWLAND CAROUSEL



On Friday, December 2, come and enjoy an elegant evening of music, riding the carousel and dinner.

Our Christmas Gala will start at 6:00pm with hors d'oeuvres and time to get your picture taken professionally. From 6:30-7:00, you can enjoy riding the carousel. Dinner will be served at 7:00 as a string quartet provides relaxing, mood-setting music. Then things will liven up with entertainment from John Tolhuizen and the Mockingbirds.

You will not want to miss this semi-formal event. The cost is \$50/ person, plus \$7 for your picture.

This event requires registration and payment in advance. The deadline is November 21. Register online at [myfirstchurch.com/boomerlife](http://myfirstchurch.com/boomerlife). (See page 4 for other ways to register.)

If you have any questions, please e-mail Diana Deitrich at [boomerlife.firstchurch@gmail.com](mailto:boomerlife.firstchurch@gmail.com)

Deadline for First Touch articles

1st Friday of each month

Send to: [teresa.l@myfirstchurch.com](mailto:teresa.l@myfirstchurch.com)

## FIRST CHURCH OF GOD 2 LOCATIONS

St. Joseph Campus & General Office

2627 Niles Ave., St. Joseph, MI 49085

SERVICES: Saturdays at 6pm

Sundays at 9:30 & 11AM

OFFICE HOURS

M-Th, 8-4:30 | 269-983-1524

[jennifer.r@myfirstchurch.com](mailto:jennifer.r@myfirstchurch.com)

Benton Heights Campus

990 N. Euclid Ave., Benton Harbor 49022

SERVICES: Sundays at 11am

WEBSITE: [myfirstchurch.com](http://myfirstchurch.com)

## PASTORAL STAFF

### Lead Pastor

Rev. David Colp

### Executive Administrator

Rev. Gregory Gordon

### Prayer/Missions

Rev. Rick Blumenberg

### Children

Bill Shepard

### Older Adults/Pastoral Care

Rev. Bob Confer

### Young Adults, Worship

Dan Deitrich

### Benton Heights Campus Pastor

Rev. Mary Shawl-Ranke

### Students

Rev. Chris Spitters

### Discipleship/Women

Sandy Mason

### Outreach

Jenny Fry

### Advisory Council

JC Anderson 14

Larry Holben 14

Vance Price 14

John Fozard, Oklahoma 14

Arden Bradley 12

Michelle Kerns, Chair 12

Mark Krenz, Arizona 12

Mitzi Tompkins 12

Gary Bolin 13

Rajejan Alexander 13

Dave Eichberg 13

Greg Gordon and David Colp

# Who Are Stephen Ministers?



Stephen Ministers are members of First Church who have gone through 50 hours of training in providing high-quality Christian care to individuals experiencing a crisis or challenge such as divorce, grief, loss of a job, hospitalization, relocation, or loneliness. Stephen Ministers are each assigned a care receiver and meet with the care receiver for about an hour a week. This caring relationship will last for as long as the care receiver needs it.

God has given us all gifts for ministry and called us to put those gifts to use. Stephen Ministry is a place where people with special gifts for caring and mercy can use those gifts to bring Christ's love to people in need. Does this sound like you and a ministry you would like to be involved in?

Nancy Anderson who attended our 2011 training class and was commissioned in May, had this to say about the training she received:

*"Stephen Ministry training far exceeded what I thought it would encompass. The challenging reading and instruction is excellent for care giving in ministries beyond Stephen Ministry. I have not received a care receiver yet, but I've already instituted some of the principles I've learned in other relationships God has brought into my life. The time and effort of completing this training is a gift that I will use well beyond the time I am officially involved in Stephen Ministry."*

If God is calling you to a care ministry, I would encourage you to pray about taking this training.

Our next training class begins in January 2012. If you are interested in becoming a Stephen Minister, it is not too late to fill out an application. Please contact Pastor Bob Confer at 983-1524 for additional information and an application. Applications are due back October 23.

## New Projects at "DO Something Central"

We're donating 50,000 service hours to our community by June 2012. We are nearing 10,000 hours! Do you need DO SOMETHING hours? We've got a lot of brand-new community projects to choose from at Central (located in the Gathering Area of our SJ campus). Also, be sure to come to the Volunteer Fair (hosted by the Volunteer Center of Southwest Michigan) at our St. Joe campus on Saturday, November 19, 9am-1pm.



## Chris & Amanda Britton leave the Philippines for....

Well our time in the Philippines is almost up. Next Tuesday we'll be heading to our next country (remember it's a secret where we are going). Before we leave the internet behind for a month I just wanted to thank all of you for your support thus far. Your

comments on the blog and Facebook have been greatly appreciated. While we are away from the internet for next month please don't shy away from sending us e-mails or commenting on our Facebook walls or blogs. It would be great to log on in a month and get e-mails from you all updating us on your lives.

*If you would like to subscribe to updates of Chris & Amanda Britton's mission trip, visit their blog at:*

[chrisbritton.theworldrace.org](http://chrisbritton.theworldrace.org)

For updates on our work in Hungary: <http://www.myfirstchurch.com/steiners>



# Experience Poverty on Nov 29

We want to reach out to those in need, but can we really understand their needs? Do we understand how life is experienced by those who live in poverty?

- Do you know how the poverty line is established?
- Do you know what the poverty line is for a family of four?
- Are you aware of the struggles in navigating many of our social systems?
- Do you know the resources in our community for those in poverty?
- Do you know how you can personally help to reduce poverty in your community?
- Do you know how poverty effects the community as a whole?



November is *Homeless Awareness Month*, and on Tuesday, November 29, First Church will host a “Poverty Simulation.” If you have ever equated poverty with ignorance or have thought, “*If I was poor, I would...*” this will be your chance to step into the shoes of the poor for three hours and live life from that perspective.

Presented by the Poverty Reduction Initiative of Kalamazoo County on November 29, Experience Poverty offers a choice of two sessions (1-4pm or 6-9pm). This 3-hour workshop is an experience designed to help participants begin to understand what it might be like to be part of a typical low-income family trying to survive from month to month. Each participant will be assigned a new identity and become a part of a family facing a specific circumstance of poverty. The challenge will be to make ends meet through the month by using provided resources, as well as your own wit, and creativity.



Stop by “DO SOMETHING Central” in the Gathering Area of our St. Joseph campus and pick up a brochure with more information on this impactful experience. While you’re there, be sure to register for a session.

*Experience Poverty--it may change how you look at life forever!*

## Winter Wonderland: A New Way to Help

Christmas is just around the corner!

First Church is going to be part of an exciting new Christmas ministry. Instead of buying toys/gifts for specific families, we are collecting new toys and gifts cards to be placed in a special Christmas shop called ‘*Winter Wonderland.*’ This shop, filled with donations from many area churches, will be set up at the Mosaic Resale store.

*Winter Wonderland* will allow parents (on an invitation-only basis) to shop for .10 on every \$1.00 and have the joy of shopping for their own children, instead of relying on a hand-out.

A Giving Tree will be put up at each of our campuses on November 12, ready for your donations of new toys and gift cards to be placed around it. Watch for more details in the next few weeks!

