

# First Connection



December 2011 (mailed November 29) Phone: 983.3929 - E-mail: [office@sjfirstumc.org](mailto:office@sjfirstumc.org)

*Scripture: But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law.” Galatians 4:4*

Dear Friends in Christ,

You have noticed with the coming of Christmas that our calendars and schedules become especially full. There is shopping and caroling, parties and dinners, decorating, wrapping, travel and worship. With all the activity, it is easy to lose sight of the real meaning of Christmas. God sent his Son! We and the world have never been the same since.

As we make our plans for the season, here are some things to keep in mind. We give gifts because God gave us his Son. We sing because there is joy in our heart. We party because we celebrate the coming of salvation through Jesus Christ. We feast because of God’s abundant provision for us. We decorate because our lives and the world have been enhanced and enriched by the coming of Jesus. We travel because fellowship with others multiplies the blessing of Christmas. We worship because adoration and praise are appropriate for the coming of our Savior.

In the fullness of the season, let us not forget to celebrate the One through whom the seasons were designed. Jesus Christ, Son of God, has come into the world! Let the world rejoice!

Merry Christmas,

Wade S. Panse, Pastor

## RECOGNITION SUNDAY

On Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, Pastor Wade Panse will be honored for his many years of service to the St. Joseph First United Methodist Church.

A program will be held in the Sanctuary at 1:00 PM. There will be testimonials as well as video and musical tributes. The Rev. Neil Davis, our District Superintendent will be one of the speakers during the program. In addition, an Open House will be held in the Fellowship Hall, 12:00-1:00 and 2:00-3:00. Light hors d’oeuvres will be served during the Open House.

Please join with us in this tribute, which will be a fun and meaningful time. Please sign up at the Opportunities Desk and let us know how many will be attending.



Cantata – Dec. 18  
Christmas Eve Eve –  
Dec. 23, 6:45  
Christmas Eve –  
Dec. 24, 7 PM  
Dec. 24, 11 PM  
Christmas Day –  
Dec. 25, 10 AM

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### MISSION STATEMENT

We are a community of committed followers of Jesus Christ who influence our world to imitate Christ through an intentional strategy of winning the lost, building the believer and equipping each person for effective ministry.



## MORE PARISH NOTES

- I want to thank my church family for all the love, concern and prayers that have blessed us with the passing of my Mom, Corrinne Orr. She loved many of you, too, and was aware that you were praying for her. The cards you have sent have been comforting and assuring to my whole family and we have read them over and over. - Love, Wade, Patti and Family
- A huge thank you to all who helped make the Women's Ministry Bazaar so successful: the many generous crafters and bakers, the enthusiastic shoppers, and the workers who set up and ran the Bazaar. Our profit is over \$1,500 and will help fund Women's Bible study kits, outreach events, donations to other ministries and projects locally, nationally, and globally, events to nurture women and children.
  - Liz Allen and Renee Foote, Co-Chairs
- A great big THANK YOU to everyone who participated in the 24-hour Prayer Vigil on October 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to the person who added the cushion to kneel on at the prayer rail, also for the extra CDs to please the listening ears, for using all the candles, and to whomever opened the vertical blinds. I drove by late in the evening and saw in the shadows the candles flickering, the silhouette of the person praying. What a touching sight. Thank you for your faithfulness to this event, your support to our church and your love of conversation with our God. You are precious.
  - Judy Thompson, Lay Leader, for Stewardship/Finance
- Dear Friends, The pink hand-knitted prayer shawl, delivered to me by Ruth Ryberg, is so very much appreciated. Thank you for remembering me, down here in these North Georgia mountains, with such a thoughtful gift. I am a quilter, so I am aware of the time and effort involved in this shawl!
  - Most gratefully, Janie P. Taylor
- Thank you for the beautiful prayer shawl. It was the most wonderful gift. The shawl was so nice to keep my very sore neck warm. I just love it and all of you are a blessing to others. Thanks, too, for all the prayers that were said for me during my illness and surgery. The cards, food, and visits have been wonderful. Special thanks to Rev. Panse and Julie Lester for their concern and visits. - Love, Peg Williamson Mitchell
- Thank you for the loan of your pipe racks to Temple B'nai Shalom for use at our recent rummage sale. We have borrowed the racks several times for our every-other-year sale, which we appreciate very much.
  - Sincerely, Mike Eliasohn, Rummage Sale Chairman

## SERMON SCHEDULE

Date	Theme	Title	Scripture
December 4	Peace	<i>Here Is Your God!</i>	Isaiah 40:1-11
December 11	Joy	<i>A Great Exchange</i>	Isaiah 61:1-3
December 18	Love	<i>That All Might Believe</i>	Romans 16:25-27
December 24, 7 & 11 PM	Incarnation		
December 25	Celebration	<i>Full of Grace and Truth</i>	John 1:1-14

## SURPRISE ANNIVERSARY PARTY

Help Bob and Jean Smith's family celebrate their 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with a surprise party on Sunday, December 18, 2:00-4:00 PM, at the Whitcomb. Shhhh, it's a surprise!



**Staff members make daily visits to the hospital.** If no one stops by, it's because we don't know that you're there! **Please call the church office.**



*Have you been in the hospital?*

## SILENT SERVANT, HIDDEN HELPER



Often a lead usher or assistant in worship, faithfully and effectively teaching the men's group every Saturday morning, assisting frequently with projects and cleanup around the church, and gladly serving the church with various positions of leadership, Bill Funk is our Silent Servant, Hidden Helper for the month of December.

Thank you, Bill! May God bless you as you have been a blessing to others.



**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15**

All articles for the next newsletter need to be clearly written out and in the secretary's mailbox by **8:00 AM, Thursday, December 15**. Or email them to [office@sjfirstumc.org](mailto:office@sjfirstumc.org). Thank you.

### HEADED SOUTH?

Please call the church office with your change of address. This saves the church the charge (50 cents) when the post office forwards your third class mail. And you don't want to miss out on any of the news!

### NEW PASTOR



Neil Davis, our District Superintendent, has notified us that Bishop Keaton has assigned an "Interim Pastor" to serve our church from January 1 until July 1, 2012. Normal pastoral assignments occur on July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year hence our new pastor will be assigned at that time.

Pastor Terry Euper will be our interim pastor. He is a graduate of Asbury Seminary and his theology mirrors that of Pastor Wade and of our congregation. Pastor Euper comes to us from the Detroit Conference and has served as a Clergy Assistant to our last two Bishops. Those who know Pastor Euper have expressed the opinion that they are sure our congregation will be very pleased with the appointment.

January 1<sup>st</sup> will be Pastor Euper's first Sunday in the pulpit. I encourage your attendance at our one New Year's Day service, which will be held at 10:00 A.M., to welcome him and his wife to our church family.

Bill Foust, Chair  
Staff Parish Relations Committee

### HOLIDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Quite unusual this year is the fact that Christmas Day and New Years Day both fall on a Sunday. As a result, we are revising our Sunday worship schedule to accommodate this unique opportunity and celebrate these special days as a community of faith. **Both Sundays, December 25 and January 1, we will have one service of worship at 10:00 AM.** With careful worship planning, we are trying to make each service very special and appropriate for the day. Invite your family, friends and neighbors to worship with you here on Christmas and New Years Day.



More traditionally, we will have three Christmas Eve services from which to choose your worshipful celebration of the Lord's birth. On Friday, December 23, at 6:45 PM will be our contemporary worship Christmas Eve service. Saturday night, Christmas Eve, there will be a family service at 7:00 and a candlelight service at 11:00.

Please come and worship with us at any one, or any combination, of service opportunities. We look forward to seeing you!

## WONDERFUL YEARS OF MINISTRY



Patti and I want to thank you for 15 wonderful years of ministry. Our lives have been enriched greatly, and our hearts wonderfully warmed, because of the faithfulness of Christ to bless our offerings of worship, study, service, mission, prayer, laughter, learning and travel.

Thank you for letting us serve you as pastor and spouse and allowing us to share your lives in so many special ways.

These words from Scripture are appropriate for us to share at this time: "(We) thank God every time (we) remember you. In all (our) prayers for all of you, (we) always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now...It is right for (us) to feel this way about all of you, since (we) have you in (our) hearts; ...for all of you share in God's grace with (us). And this is (our) prayer: That your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God." (Phil 1:3-11)

Blessings to you in Christ,  
Wade and Patti Panse

## TRUSTEE NEWS

**Fall Yard Cleanup Day** - Thanks to Bill Funk, Scott Wagner, Keith Bundy, Keith Foote, John Helsley and Richard Wallace for cleaning up the church grounds on Saturday, October 29.

Trustees Larry Merritt and Bob Husek also cleaned up the re-landscaped areas by removing dead bushes and hauling away branches that had been blown down by the recent winds. Also, that morning, Dave Benson, Russ Hahn, Ron and Barb Petzke and Lynn Rayle attached the new Memory Garden plaque to the church wall. Special thanks to Brian Moore for donating a tube of super cement to permanently attach the plaque to the brick wall.

**New bus driver** - Doug Babcock has completed the steps to obtain the commercial drivers license needed to drive our bus. Doug joins Russ Hahn, Mark Acker and Don Russell in sharing the driving duties to bring many of our members to church each Sunday morning. Thanks, Doug, for your time and dedication to support our bus service.



## JOB JAR

If you are widowed, handicapped or over the age of 65 and need a minor repair or chore done in your home, the men of your church would like to help. The **request cards** are above the Opportunities Desk. Please fill in the blanks on the card and place it in the nearby **Job Jar**.

We will call you as soon as possible to let you know if the job or chore is one we can handle. If it is, we will schedule a time to come to your home and make the repair or perform the chore. The Job Jar's contents are reviewed weekly, so please plan on a week or two before you receive a reply. We are glad to have the opportunity to serve Christ by helping you in this way. No payment will be asked or expected for this service. If you have questions, please call Russ Hahn at 429-1452



P<sub>3</sub> – People with a Purpose at Panera

Come, eat and discuss the topic of the week! We are continuing a series on Counter Culture Christians. How does your faith relate to every area of your life? Discuss topics like Christianity and Science, things that matter in life, and is there only one path? This group is always open to new people. Come and join in the discussion anytime!

## MYSTERY MEMBER

We wonder as a parent how our children will turn out. Will they become bullies, will they become true students, will they have the ability to complete a task once it's started? The parents of this boy found out early in life that he had the gumption and fortitude to finish what he started. He became tennis champion at the age 12 of all of Kalamazoo!

He not only picked the right sport, he also picked the right wife. 'Course it didn't hurt that she was a neighbor and attended the same school.' But they chose each other and have enjoyed an enviable relationship for 43 years.

In high school he strengthened his arms by participating in the percussionist section of the band and orchestra. She exercised her vocal chords in the choir and enjoyed the background chorus in *Funny Girl*. She was not shy and that was one of the qualities he loved. While in high school she volunteered as a candy striper, working with the Red Cross and assisting an orthopedic surgeon. After graduation she answered three ads requesting an assistant for on-the-job training. She interviewed them, as well as being interviewed, and chose a successful local dentist. She became a dental assistant and followed this calling for many years.

After two years in college at Michigan State University, he was called to serve in the Air Force. Watch for his wartime experiences in the upcoming Book Three of *Lest We Forget*. Succeeding his tour in service, during which he volunteered, among other things, to teach English in Thailand, he returned to school. He received his BA and Master's Degree at Asbury College in Kentucky.

During their marriage, they have raised three children and lived in several different cities in Michigan. For 12 years, he led week-long bicycle trips in various counties in Michigan. She followed the entourage in a support car. This kept him physically fit and he enjoyed adult tennis for years until bursitis in his shoulder caused him to discontinue this physical sport.

They finally settled in St. Joseph where they have lived for the last fifteen years. They love it here and plan to stay after his retirement. Meanwhile she discovered she had a natural talent and has been practicing it ever since. She has used her natural ability of color and balance to become "Best of Show" in Milwaukee and St. Joseph. She has won awards in Home Design Magazines, been hired by Whitcomb Towers to redesign resident rooms as well as at Woodland Terrace in Niles. Her DBA is "Color & Design" and she has received many accolades from pleased customers. She doesn't advertise – relying on word of mouth for her opportunities.

One of the highlights of their marriage was their travels. It is difficult to mention a place on earth that they haven't visited. To hear him enumerate them, one feels like he's listening to a geography teacher explaining the world. Incidentally, he would like to substitute teach after he retires and would be excellent at explaining personally the "sights and sounds" of the different countries they have visited.

Many years ago he asked for a clear sign to point to his future. He received one. As a result he followed it. You know him as a capable leader and gifted speaker and you know her as a past choir member. We know them as Pastor Wade and Patti Panse. And now you know the rest of the story.

Robert Hatch  
History Chairman

A notebook containing all past copies of Mystery Members can be found at in the church office.

## MUSIC AND WORSHIP

As this church prepares for our next phase of history and ministry, I want to thank Wade and Patti for their ministry and service here and for their lives, lived for Christ and shared with us. Wade has helped this church celebrate many years of ministry. As a congregation and community, we have benefitted from his stewardship and leadership over our church, including our Sanctuary and pipe organ renovation which has made our church a venue for musical events to the glory of God. We have been able to host many concerts – organ, orchestra, choirs, handbell choirs, and even a Christian Rock group. We have enthusiastically celebrated the “High Holy Days” with grand praise, as well as adding the vibrantly successful Catch 9:45 services on Sunday morning.

Personally, I became a Deacon in Full Connection and became an additional clergy person on staff, and I felt Wade’s support and encouragement throughout the process. He stood by me when I was ordained and carried my clergy stole. I have musically served with Wade at many services, weddings and funerals. It has been my pleasure to be a Christian minister with him, and I have grown as we have worked and served together.

I appreciate his support with the music programs I have undertaken, from my cantatas to the Music Theater offerings we have performed for the community. I wish Wade and Patti great enjoyment in his retirement from the pulpit. And I look forward to working with the person God sends our way in the next few months.

I am reminded of the hymn “Blest Be the Tie that Binds” where it describes our experience together in Christian community as mirroring the joy and community of heaven. Thank you, Wade, for leading us in rehearsal for eternity in heaven with Christ.

See you in church  
– Jim Kraus

## WORSHIP AND MUSICAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SEASON



**December 18** – *Christmas Joy* – A Concert of Carols by the Chancel Choir, Children’s Choir, Handbell Choir and Orchestra at 8:30 and 11:00 AM services. Come and worship Christ the new-born King with us as we celebrate the birth of Jesus through various carols and songs of the season.

**December 23** – *Christmas Eve Eve @ 6:45 pm* - Contemporary Christmas Service featuring the worship band and a “Birthday Party” for Jesus. Mark your calendars for our 4th Annual Christmas Eve Eve celebration. This will be a night of family, fun and music where we celebrate Jesus’ birthday. Join us after the service for snacks and birthday cake. All ages will love this new spin on an old classic.

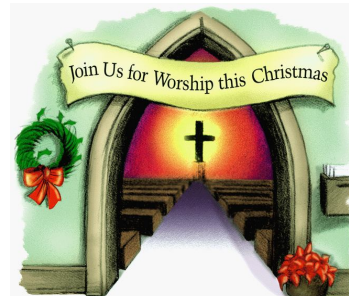
**December 24, 7:00 PM** – *Christmas Eve, Family Christmas Eve Service* with children offering musical gifts throughout the service. This is a beautiful service with a focus on the Christmas Story told to the children celebrating the joy of this night.

**December 24, 11 PM** – *Christmas Eve* – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with “Lessons and Carols” including the Chancel Choir, soloists and chamber orchestra. This service allows us to worship God and celebrate the birth of Christ with inspirational music, reading of Scripture and sermon followed by candle lighting as we welcome the beginning of Christmas Day.

**December 25, 10:00 AM** – Christmas Day Service – blending our regular three morning worship services with the worship band, choir and Christmas Day sermon.



**January 1, 10:00 AM** – New Year’s Day Service – Blending our three worship services, we will be offering a special service to welcome the New Year with our new interim pastor.



**Hunger/Relief Fund** is received the first Sunday of each month. The funds are divided among the Groves New Life Ministry (includes a banana farm and a ministry of community health education and evangelism); Haiti Hot Lunch Program; Midwest Mission Distribution Center; Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen and Mujila Falls Agricultural Project in Zambia.

**Missionaries:** The missionaries are grateful for your prayers and support. They would love to hear from you. (Addresses are on the prayer side of the calendar.)

**The Nordstrom Prayer Group:** Laurie and Robert are strengthened by the prayers of their friends. By the same token, the prayer time blesses and strengthens those who gather to pray. **In December we will meet on the 19<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 PM in the Library.**

**Emergency Pantry:**

I delivered 10 bags of groceries to the Benton Harbor Street Ministry. I was also able to leave some canned food on our selves. Our church family really came forth very strong this month in the food they donated. Please continue with stews and soups for the winter months. Even some warm cereal would be appreciated. Remember you can leave canned goods anytime you might come to church.



- Mary Ann Robinson

## MISSION/CSRR NEWS

**Soup Kitchen** – Mother Teresa said, “I see Jesus in every human being. I say to myself, this is hungry Jesus and I must feed Him. I serve them because I love Jesus.”



Those serving at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen on November 14 were Shirley Johnson, Joyce Bliss, Gene and Mary Ann Robinson, Julie Evans, Randy Kaeding, and Carol Starks. They prepared and served a meal for many hungry people who included eight children and four teachers in daycare; 170 adults and three children in the Soup Kitchen for a total of 185. The cakes were provided by Sue O'Neil, Glenna Collins, Gene Robinson, Julie Evans, Barb Petzke, Lou Ann Stelter, and Shirley Johnson. Beverages were donated by Marcia Bowers, Gloria Muth, and Shirley Johnson. And we could not provide the rest of such a meal without the support of our congregation. Thank you to all who serve and contribute in anyway to get supplies every month. Our next date is December 12<sup>th</sup>. Please sign up and do whatever you can to make life a little better for the needy. And Merry Christmas!

- Rolene Gorske



**Angel Tree** - This year's dates for choosing an Angel Tree gift tag from the tree are Sundays, November 20, 27 and December 4, 9-11 AM, in the Fellowship Hall. There are two gift tags per child - a fun gift and a clothing gift - from which you can choose, and another gift tag to purchase a Bible for the family. Gifts are given to the child on behalf of the prisoner parent, which brings joy to the child. We also include age-appropriate Gospel literature. This year, we were given 27 Angels. Please do NOT remove the Angel tags from the tree unless a Mission person is there to record needed information. Return all wrapped gifts to the Fellowship Hall on or before Sunday, December 11, 9-11 AM. (Put gift receipt inside the package and the gift identification tag, detached from the small bottom tag, taped to the outside of the package.)

Delivery teams (at least two people per team) are needed to make deliveries, starting approximately Wednesday, December 14, when gift bags are picked up. Sign up at the Opportunities Desk. Thank you so much to everyone who participates in this mission! Call June Rayle, 428-2621, if you have any questions.

**Coat Box and Mitten Tree** – Sunday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, will be the last Sunday for the Coat Box and Mitten Tree. They are now a familiar part of Christmas as they appear every year in Fellowship Hall. Please share good used or new coats, hats, scarves and mittens to be given to those in need in our community. The bulk of these items will be distributed to the Safe Shelter, Emergency Shelter, Benton Harbor Schools and the Benton Harbor Senior Center. Make someone's Christmas extra happy this year. If you know of someone in need of any of these items, please contact Bob Dyer (429-0078) or the church office. Thank you!



## STEPHEN MINISTRY



In our congregation, there are many people blessed with the gifts of mercy, encouragement and helping. With training and organization they can provide quality Christian care for members who are hurting or suffering. A Stephen Minister has the

opportunity to share Christ's love using his/her gifts to make a difference in someone's life.

In 2012 we will begin a new training class for Stephen Ministers. Please consider becoming a Stephen Minister. Contact Julie Lester (428-5832) or Donna Dumke (983-0439) for more information about Stephen Ministry.

If you are having a difficult time right now and need someone to care, to listen and to share God's love, don't struggle alone. Consider allowing a Stephen Minister to encourage, pray and provide one-on-one confidential care to support you. Call Julie Lester for more information.

## PARENT'S NIGHT OUT

Attention!! Parents of all children ages 3 years-5<sup>th</sup> Grade, want to go shopping, see a movie, go out for dinner or attend a Christmas party without the kids?? HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO ESCAPE!!! F.L.A.M.E. Youth group is having a fundraiser. On Saturday, December 17, 5-

10 PM, we will watch your kids. Activities planned include crafts, games and movies on the big screen!! Food – pizza, mac and cheese and veggies with dip – are on the menu for supper as well as popcorn during the movies. The kids will also get to decorate and eat a Christmas cutout cookie for dessert.

The cost for this activity is \$25 for the first child and \$20 for each additional child. All profits will be used to fund winter retreats and the summer mission trip. For more information, please contact Julia Duschek (269-277-1640 or [joeandjulia@comcast.net](mailto:joeandjulia@comcast.net)). On-line registration will be available.



**Blood Pressure Screening** – The next blood pressure screening will be December 4. If you need to have yours checked before then,

please call Julie.

Also check out Julie's door for health-related programs, information and educational opportunities.

## MUSIC DEPARTMENT FUNDRAISER

The music department will again be selling the RADA products (kitchen knives, utensils, cookbooks and mixes). These American-made products make great Christmas gifts. See any Chancel Choir or Handbell Choir member to place your order. The monies raised from this project help defray music costs throughout the year. Deadline to place orders is December 12<sup>th</sup>. Your orders will be delivered before Christmas.



## CIRCLE NEWS

**Esther Circle** will hold its Christmas Gathering Thursday, December 8, 9-11 AM at the home of Liz Allen. All members will be called with the details.

**Lydia** – Tuesday, December 27, 6:00 PM at Papa Vino's Italian Kitchen. Sign up at the Opportunities Desk. All women are welcome!

## WOMEN'S MINISTRY PRESENTS... SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT THE MOVIE

Please join us Sunday, January 15, at 3:00 PM. We will be watching *Ramona and Beezus*. Bring along your favorite snack to munch. Popcorn & hot cocoa will be provided. Come join the fun and relax on a winter's day. Contact Tara McKibben with questions (983-3895).



## WOMEN'S NEWS

### **New Bible Studies -**

**Cozy Winter Mornings** - Begins Thursday, January 19, 9:00-11:30 AM - Once again the Thursday morning Women's Bible Study will offer an escape from the ordinary. While winter is in full swing they will be meeting in cozy homes for a time of fellowship, study and prayer. They will be looking at practical ways to apply God's Truth to our overly hectic lives. Please join us as we strive to deepen our relationship with Jesus and each other. To join or if you have questions, please contact Sheila Nemethy ([lakeeffect@prodigy.net](mailto:lakeeffect@prodigy.net) or 982-1852). Sign up at the Opportunities Desk.

**Shelter of God's Promises** – Friday mornings at 9:00, January 13-March 16 Sheila Walsh searched Scripture for what God has promised us, what God's promises mean, and how these promises provide the foundation for daily confidence, joy, and hope. Join this wonderful group of women as they learn from Scripture, Sheila Walsh, and from each other. Child care is available. Sign up at the Opportunities Desk by December 19<sup>th</sup>. The cost of the book is \$14.

**James** – Monday evenings at 6:10, January 9-February 27 Bible scholars compare James to the prophet Amos. In other ways James more closely resembles the Book of Proverbs than any New Testament book. Come along with Beth Moore on a journey to get to know both the man and the Book of James. You will never be the same again. This is a great night of study and fellowship with a great group of women! Join them for another wonderful study from Beth Moore! Sign up at the Opportunities Desk by December 19<sup>th</sup>. Cost of the book is \$16.

**Lunchtime Bible Study** – Come join our Wednesday Noon Bible Study in the Parlor from 12:00 to 1:00 PM sharp. We're all working ladies, but this is our one hour a week for group Bible study and fellowship – and it makes all the difference. Study begins January 11. Topic to be announced.

**Warm Winter Evening** - Nicole C. Mullen is a highly sought after speaker and singer, gracing the stage at *Women of Faith* Events, and has been recognized with seven Dove awards including Song of the year for *Redeemer*. Check out [www.nicolecmullen.com](http://www.nicolecmullen.com) for more details about Nicole.

This year's program will be held February 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM (doors open at 6:15) at the LMC Mainstage. We are offering tickets for \$15 and the money is due when you sign up. This is a change this year as it is the 19<sup>th</sup> year of *Warm Winter Evening* and they are gearing up for their 20<sup>th</sup> year next year! This year there will not be a dinner so we encourage you to invite your friends and get a group together and go out for dinner ahead of time for fellowship. May we suggest the Asian Grill Buffet in Benton Harbor? The food is great, it is quick and it would be great to "run into" all of the different groups before the concert. The tickets go on sale at LMC December 1<sup>st</sup> so we want to order tickets as soon as possible so we can all sit together in the same section. Sign up at the Opportunities Desk or call Shari or the church office by December 20<sup>th</sup>.

## EDUCATION NEWS

### Get Flipt \* Adventure Club/Crossings Club

Second-Fifth Graders are getting Flipt on Wednesday nights. Learn how knowing Jesus can flip your life, too. We meet in the Fellowship Hall where a freewill offering dinner begins at 5:30.

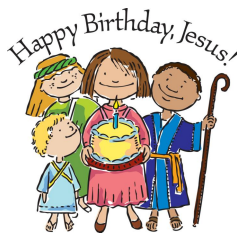
Activities are from 6:00-7:00. Our mission project/offering is non-perishable food items that will be distributed locally. Invite your friends for an evening of fabulous food, great games, vivacious videos, tremendous team time and lots of laughs!

### Adventure Club/Crossings Club Nights

December 14, 5:30 meal, 6:00-7:00 activities

January 11, 5:30 meal, 6:00-7:00 activities (slumber party)

January 25, 5:30 meal, 6:00-7:00 activities



**Happy Birthday, Jesus** – Four-year-olds through 1<sup>st</sup> Grade, come help celebrate Jesus' birthday. We'll play games, make crafts and even have some birthday cake as we learn about the day Jesus was born. We'll meet in the Fellowship hall on December 21 for 6:00-7:00 pm. Invite your friends and neighbors for this awesome birthday party. Please sign up at the Opportunities Desk.

## COUPLES RETREAT (JAN. 27-28 OR FEB. 3-4) REGISTRATION CONTINUES!

This weekend is a great way to reconnect with your spouse and with other couples of the church. We will be utilizing curriculum from Chip Ingram called *Marriage Build to Last*.

We have arranged to not only have one weekend at the wonderful Inn at Union Pier but to TWO weekends! If you have never been able to join in this wonderful weekend, this is the year! We have reserved the Inn at Union Pier for January 27-28 as well as for February 3-4. The cost for the retreat is \$110 which includes your room, an evening snack and breakfast. We will have an opportunity to stay the second night for \$95 (all rooms except the Captain's Quarters which is \$110) which includes an early morning breakfast so you will be able to make it to whatever worship service you like on Sunday morning. What a great way to spend some extra time relaxing and having some much needed time with your spouse in these busy times!



REGISTRATION continues this month. Call Shari Phillips to sign up! Be sure to have your \$50 deposit and sign up for either the January 27-28 date or the February 3-4 date and choose your room! First come, first served!



## ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

*The Best Question Ever*, led Steve Sager - We've all done dumb stuff in our lives. We all have regrets. Yet none of us *plans* to mess up our lives. Why, then, does it keep happening? Life doesn't have to be that way. You can fool-proof your life...as this book shows. God's promise and pattern is for something better.

In *The Best Question Ever*, Andy Stanley effectively teaches the practical and lasting value of simply asking this question about our actions in all of life's arenas: What is the wise thing for me to do, in light of my past experience, my present circumstances, and my future hopes and dreams? This book probes for *honesty* – it pushes us to open our eyes to reality and helps us expose the little (and big) self-deceptions we have. Prepare yourself.

Classes begin January 8<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM in Rooms F & G or 11:00 AM in the Parlor.

Sign up at the Opportunities Desk by December 19<sup>th</sup>.

## YOUTH NEWS

**Confirmation Class:** We will meet every Sunday, 4:30-6:00 PM, except December 25 & January 1.

### **High School FLAME schedule (Sundays, 7:30-9:00 PM)**

- ★ December 4: Treating people as brothers and sisters in Christ
- ★ December 11: What makes Jesus so special?
- ★ December 18: Mass Mess Christmas
- ★ December 25 & January 1: **No FLAME**
- ★ January 8: Western Night & Burger Bash

### **Middle School FLAME schedule (Wednesdays, 7:00-8:30 PM)**

- ★ December 7: What makes Jesus so special?
- ★ December 14: Mass Mess Christmas
- ★ December 21 & 28: No FLAME
- ★ January 4: **No FLAME**
- ★ January 11: Western Night & Burger Bash

### **No Teen Small Groups December 19-January 6**



### **Join the Georgia Mission Team: June 10-16**

We are taking a group of 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders and adults on a mission trip to Georgia, June 10-16. If you would like to be a part of this mission team, please sign up at the Opportunities Desk and get your \$50 deposit in by January 15. Our first meeting will be Thursday, January 19, 7:00 PM in the youth room. The mission trip will cost approximately \$410. There will be plenty of fundraisers to help offset that cost.

### **College Winter Retreat: December 30-January 1**

This year we would like to take ALL college-age students on a retreat to Miracle Camp. There will be an excellent speaker and great worship opportunities. There will be dodge ball, basketball, volleyball, tobogganing, ice skating, and a game room to enjoy. Cost is \$85. If you would like to go, please contact Dan Colthorp (983-3929) and he will send you a packet with all the information. All money and forms by December 18.

### **Winter Retreats:**

Every year we go to Miracle Camp for a three-day winter retreat. During these days, the teens experience some incredible worship, hear some challenging messages, and have fun with many teenagers their age. This retreat has a great balance of God and fun. You will also have time to go tubing, tobogganing, and ice skating. If you prefer indoor activities, you may play basketball, volleyball, dodge ball, or hang out in the game room.

### **High School: February 3-5**

If you would like to go, please get your \$90 donation in by January 15. Cost goes up \$10 after this deadline.

### **Middle School: February 24-26**

If you would like to go, your \$90 deposit is due January 29. All registrations after this date will be an extra \$10. The first 26 people to hand their money in are guaranteed a spot (others are put on a waiting list).



### **Youth Winter Retreat**