

First Connection



January (mailed December 23) Phone: 983.3929 - E-mail: office@sjfirstumc.org

WELCOME PASTOR TERRY AND JACKIE EUPER

Pastor Terry Euper will be our Interim Pastor from January 1st through June 30. He brings a real passion for the Bible and a wealth of experience to our church family.

Pastor Terry and Pastor Wade are both graduates of the Asbury Theological Seminary. Pastor Terry is a member of the Detroit Conference and has served several churches throughout Michigan. His last appointment was as the Clergy Assistant to our last two Bishops. He has served on the Detroit Conference Board for Global Ministries and was the Spiritual Director and Assistant Director for several Emmaus Walks. He also served a church in Coventry, England, as part of the pastor exchange program.

Pastor Terry served a congregation where he was a long-time pastor. He has also replaced a pastor who had served a long appointment in the church. Pastor Terry brings a real sensitivity to what it means for a congregation to lose a beloved pastor who has served them for many years.

Pastor Terry's interests run from camping and backpacking to traveling the world. He has been involved in the Detroit Conference Camping program as the Dean of Bay Shore Junior High Camp for over 30 years. He has also backpacked extensively with youth groups from various churches. Their trails included the Bruce Trail, Pictured Rocks, North and South Manitou Islands, Porcupine Mountains and Isle Royale. He has section-hiked 530 miles of the Appalachian Trail. Pastor Terry and Jackie's worldwide travel experiences read like the index to a National Geographic magazine.

Pastor Terry is married to Jackie, his high school sweetheart. She graduated from Asbury College with a degree in Christian Education. Jackie was employed by the Flint District of the United Methodist Church for 25 years, retiring in 2010. Her focus was Youth Ministry and Christian Education. She is the Chair of the delegation of the Detroit Conference to the United Methodist General Conference. She serves the General Church on the Women's Division of United Methodist Women, General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM)/ United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), and in the new ministry, Justice For Our Neighbors (JFON). In addition to traveling, she enjoys collecting Coca Cola memorabilia. Pastor Terry and Jackie have a son, a daughter and six grandchildren. Let us all join together in giving the Euper family a warm and loving Saint Joseph First UMC welcome!

Bill Foust, Staff Parish Relations Committee Chair



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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.

ATTENDANCE - OUR PRESENCE

| | | |
|-------------|--------------|-----|
| November 13 | 8:30 | 86 |
| | 9:45 | 136 |
| | 11:00 | 139 |
| | Total | 361 |
| November 20 | 8:30 | 102 |
| | 9:45 | 123 |
| | 11:00 | 137 |
| | Total | 362 |
| November 27 | 8:30 | 83 |
| | 9:45 | 146 |
| | 11:00 | 136 |
| | Total | 365 |
| December 4 | 8:30 | 87 |
| | 9:45 | 118 |
| | 11:00 | 115 |
| | Total | 320 |
| December 11 | 8:30 | 98 |
| | 9:45 | 125 |
| | 11:00 | 181 |
| | Total | 404 |

WEATHER-RELATED CHURCH CLOSURE ANNOUNCEMENT

You may learn of Sunday morning closures in the following locations:

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Radio | WSJM (1400 AM) WAUS (90.7 FM) |
| Television | WNDU (Channel 16) |
| Internet | wsjm.com OR wndu.com |
| Phone | Church: 983-3929 (cancellation message or no answer) |

Please cut out this box and post!

PARISH NOTES - OUR PRAYERS AND SERVICE

In the Hospital Recently:

| | | |
|------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Wes Arent | Jackie Rothfuss | Ginny Stuck |
| Tom Cooper | Barb Kiesel | E. Lee Benson |

Sympathy: We extend our love and prayers to –

- The Szymanowski family on the death of Brian's mother, Dolores.
- The Bergehagens on the death of Carolyn's aunt, Lynn Herr.
- Family and friends of Genevieve Weaver, a former member.
- Family and friends of Rolf Ovik, who died December 2.
- Family and friends of Zelda Albrecht, who died November 24.
- The Myers family on the death of Raymond Myers on November 27.

Weddings: We ask God's blessings on Joseph and Michelle Mabry Daignault who were married on December 2. Ed and Sandy are Joseph's parents.

Baptisms: We ask God's blessings on Landon James, son of James and Paige Ward, who was baptized on November 27.

New Members: Welcome to Nancy Dunbar who joined December 18.

Thank You:

- To Bob Dyer, Ted Fleisher, Randy and Annie Kaeding, Wyna Johnson, Barb Carlson, Edy Harding, Barb Pullins and Shirley Johnson for collating the last newsletter.
- To Melissa Iwan for designing the Advent Worship bulletin covers. In addition to these covers, Melissa also designed the Lenten bulletin covers this year. We have been fortunate to have her share her artistic talents with us and it is truly appreciated. – Sue O'Neil, Worship Co-chair
- To everyone who provided cookies for Wade's retirement party. You helped to make the party a success. Once again, thank you. – Sue O'Neil
- To Sue O'Neil for wrapping all the shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child.
- To everyone who purchased fruit. You will make many dreams of going to summer camp a reality!
- To Nick Auringer, Dan Colthorp, Brock Emery, Missy Emery, Terri Gast, Julie and Mark Lester, Jim Martin, Joyce Ochs, Shari and Donnie Phillips, and Stephanie Schadler for helping with fruit delivery and pick up.

Thank You Notes:

- Dear Friends in Christ, Patti and I want to thank you very much for the kindness and generosity you have shown to us as we make a transition into retirement. So many cards and calls, letters and prayers have been presented that we are blessed beyond measure. Thank you. The carefully designed Farewell Event on Sunday afternoon, December 11, was a thrill for both of us. The music, the video, the testimony, the gifts, the cake, the refreshments, the décor, as well as the time and attendance of so many were a very complimentary and emotional time for us. Thank you. Ministry for us here at the St. Joseph First UMC has been a holy privilege. We have grown much in faith and service to our Lord, Jesus Christ. Worship has been inspiring, learning has been tremendous, serving has been a delight, leading has been a privilege, laughter has been often and love has been abundant. Thank you. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

- Blessings, Wade and Patti Panse

- Dear Church Friend... Thank you for your love gift! You have blessed me beyond words! - Love, in Christ... Melissa Iwan

MORE PARISH NOTES

- We sincerely appreciate your prayers, cards, calls, emails, notes, and, beautiful flowers at this trying time. We will always remember your caring and thoughtfulness. God Bless You. - Raymond E. Myers Family
- Jimmy Butt thanks all his fellow Methodists who helped him celebrate his 90th birthday. (A complete thank you is on the board across from the office.)
- To the Sit and Stitch Ministry – I want to thank you so much for the prayer shawl. I need to tell you I have used it every day since you brought it to me. It seems to be extra warm. I believe it is from all the prayers in it. You have a wonderful ministry and I have enjoyed the shawl so much.
 - Thank you, Carol Williams
- A special thank you to Miriam Pede, Keith Foote, Les Herrman, Judy DelVecchio, Denise Peterson, Jean (Bugg) Edwards (and anyone I have left off) for helping me babysit on Friday mornings so that mothers of young children can attend Bible Study. It is always a blessing serving with you.
 - Renee Foote
- To the Sit and Stitch Ladies: During my 40 days in the hospital, the prayer shawl never failed to wrap me in love and warmth. Many thanks also to Julie and Wade for their many visits and prayers during this time. It was a blessing to return home again, where I'm enjoying your many phone calls and visits.
 - Love, Barb Kiesel
- To those in the Funeral Ministry – Our family so much appreciated the luncheon ready for us after the funeral of my husband, Roy Oberheu. The food was great and it gave us as a family the opportunity to just “let down” and visit with family and friends while we had lunch. Many thanks to all who had a part in preparing and serving lunch for us. This is a wonderful ministry.
 - Vivian Oberheu
- Thank you to everyone who sent me a card while I was mending from surgery. I really enjoyed them and they seemed to come every couple of days. Some were so funny, I nearly popped a stitch. – Renee Foote
- Women's Ministry would like to thank all the people who attended as well as helped with our first Advent by Candlelight. We do hope everyone enjoyed themselves and we are grateful for the opportunity to serve with all of you.
 - Sincerely, Renee Foote and Judy Thompson
- Thank you to all who helped make this past Christmas season a musical celebration to the glory of God. Whether you played an instrument, sang a solo or in the choir, rang a bell, beat a drum or played a guitar, thank you for being a part of our worship at St. Joseph First UMC. I appreciate all the groups who worked to make their part of the Christmas music service a success – thank you Will Flaherty, Valerie Dent and Robyn Richards for helping me with the Young Singers Choir and to the young singers who have been working together all fall. Thank you, too, to the Handbell Choir for their extra playing during December for two Sundays and for Pastor Wade's Retirement Program. And thank you dear Chancel Choir members for working with me to make some beautiful choral sounds – all to the glory of God. Thank you also worship band and singers and other instrumentalists who all played throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons and making the Eve Eve Service so thrilling. Again, to God be the glory and thank you for all offering your talents.
 - Jim Kraus

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** and let us know if you or a loved one is in the hospital.



*Have you
been in
the hospital?*

P₃

Wednesday evenings at 6:45 PM at Panera

Are the Holidays finally over? As enjoyable as the Christmas season is, P₃ is anxious to get back together again! Starting January 11 we will be back on schedule! This is not your typical Bible Study! We discuss topics like: Is there such a thing as absolute truth; and aren't people basically good? We look at these topics from a Christian and non-Christian point of view. Each topic stands alone so anyone is welcome to join us anytime!

FUNDRAISER

Sign up for the Meijer Community Reward Program and help support the church. Pick up a Meijer Community Reward application from Dan Colthorp or the church office. Fill it out and send it in. Simply swipe your card every time you make a purchase at Meijer, pay with your debit card or with cash and ½% of your purchase will be donated to the church; use your Meijer Credit Card, and 1% of your purchase will be donated. Those monies are divided equally between the church and FLAME Ministries.

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!

TRUSTEES YEAR-END REVIEW

In 2011, we were able to complete two significant projects to enhance our church buildings and grounds. The first was the re-roofing of the gabled roofs with the addition of new insulation to improve the energy efficiency. The second was the re-landscaping of the lawn and tree area on the southwest corner of the church property.

The new stained glass panel in the Sanctuary exit door is the last item for the completion of this project. The Trustees want to thank the congregation for their special giving to completely pay for these significant projects. We also want to thank everyone that has supported our work during the year including clean up days, snowplowing, mowing, sidewalk edging, personal property inventory and bus driving. This has saved us significant money during these tight financial times.



The ongoing maintenance and special projects for the church and grounds are overseen by your Board of Trustees. For 2011, the members were Lynda Acker, Lee Benson, Russ Hahn, Bob Husek, Larry Merritt, Ron Petzke, Wes Eichler and Chairman, Lynn Rayle. Lee and Wes's terms have ended, and they will be leaving the board to be replaced by Mary Funk and Les Herrman. We thank them for their service. In addition to attending the monthly meetings, the Trustees close the church every Sunday. Also Russ Hahn and Bob Husek donate their maintenance skills to keep our vehicles, plumbing, and machinery working.

And sadly, we must also say goodbye and thank you to Pastor Wade and Patti. Wade has been the staff liaison with the Trustees and his guidance and efforts, in the many large and small projects, have resulted in a facility with enhanced capabilities and esthetics that will be enjoyed from this point forward. Patti's friendliness and decorating skills have made us a more beautiful church.

MYSTERY MEMBER

Was her father a dreamer or an entrepreneur? She learned from him hard work, patience and enterprising accomplishments. But they moved so many times in her youth that rarely did she complete a school year in the same place she started it. Eventually, however, on their 500 acre farm in Kalkaska, they raised and cared for 250 horses with only one full-time ranch hand. The weekends were exceptionally busy when the Chicago horse owners came over to ride and enjoy their boarded animals.

She had her favorite horse, Freckles, and loved to ride with her brother, enjoying the countryside. As a cloud watcher, the beautiful skies of fall and winter were especially appealing to her artistic soul. This art ability showed up later in life and furnished the family with additional income.

They had a huge barn which they re-floored, including the hay loft and held old time barn dances, with the whole area attending along with the Chicago people. She got pretty good at "do-si-do-ing" and "swinging your partner."

They moved farther north to Traverse City and settled on an 800 acre farm. They took three horses with them, including her favorite. The 500 cows they had required constant care. Milking and mucking out the barn were good lessons, albeit unpleasant. She learned hard work but she was often avoided when she climbed on the school bus with some of the cow droppings still clinging to her boots. She laughs about it now but at the time it hurt.

She was born and raised Catholic but eventually the constant attention to detail, the morning services, the stress in school wore on her and after marriage she and her husband went "church shopping." They wanted a foundation for their two beautiful daughters. They found our church and she put her soul into volunteering in many capacities, eventually officially joining.

Meanwhile, she became almost indispensable to the County Courthouse. They kept calling her back, after she had retired. This went on for 22 years. Seeking something she could do at home to earn money, she prayed about it and became a legal transcriptionist. A slogan in her kitchen reads, "Live, Laugh and Love." That says it all.

Among her time volunteering at the church, she has been an altar and communion steward, Secretary of Women's Committee, nominating committee, Funeral Ministry, office volunteer, Wedding Coordinator and many other positions. One beautiful day while driving, she looked up at the clouds. The sun shown through, making golden fingers of light down to her car. She knew it was a message from God and broke into tears for His revelation.

You know her as a tireless worker and we know her as Melissa Iwan, 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 in the church office.

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.

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 January we will meet on the 16th at 2:00 PM in the Library.**

Emergency Pantry:

The Thanksgiving Ingathering was such a huge success! Our church family donated so many food items. We had many people from the church help Yvonne from the Benton Harbor Street Ministry bag the items and get them to her van. Then the first Sunday of December, we were able to take seven bags to the Emergency Shelter. It is such a warm feeling to know that you have all contributed so much at this time of year, especially when so many families are in need of help with food. Please remember with the winter months here, we need stews, soups and other products for the cold weather. We are truly blessed to know you are so helpful!

- Mary Ann Robinson



MISSION/CSRR NEWS



Soup Kitchen – “The worth of a human being is priceless and the power of the human spirit must be prized and respected above all things. – Teresa Maud Sullivan (*The Porcelain Teacup*)

The people of our church who serve others at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen are loving and kind to those who are served. So on December 12th, Shirley Johnson, Gene and Mary Ann Robinson, Joyce Bliss, Carol Starks, Randy Kaeding, and Denise Foust fed 11 children and four adults in daycare and 172 adults and four children in the Soup Kitchen dining room for a total of 191. The cakes were provided by Sue O’Neil, Dawn Ankli, Glenna Collins, Marcia Bowers, Gene Robinson, Shirley Johnson and Judy DelVecchio. Lois Arent brought the milk and the church provided the juice. Thank you to all who serve and contribute foods or money to purchase supplies. All are needed and appreciated. Our next date is January 9, 2012, a new year to serve. So please sign up and help wherever you can. Happy New Year!

- Rolene Gorske

Operation Christmas Child – Thank you to all who spread the message of God’s love around the world by your gift of a shoebox. The shoeboxes are distributed at a lively, fun event for the children. Creative Gospel presentations by local churches and ministry partners are a part of this event, where appropriate. Please pray for each child, their family and their community, who received one of the 106 shoeboxes donated by our church family.

SAVE SHOEBOXES – As you purchase footwear this year, please save your boxes and bring them to the church to be used for next year’s Operation Christmas Child. Please place them under the Missions table next to the coffee machine in the Fellowship Hall. **THANK YOU** to Sue O’Neil for wrapping all the shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child.

Haitian Child - Grace Children’s Hospital, founded in 1967, is the flagship ministry of International Child Care. It is recognized as Haiti’s leading medical facility dedicated to the treatment of children with tuberculosis (TB). Each year, the hospital receives thousands of children who are suffering from TB, HIV/AIDS, malnutrition and other diseases. While the hospital is being rebuilt, as a result of the January 2010 earthquake, the children are being served at the transitional facility across the street. Children who are seriously ill are admitted to the 60-bed inpatient ward, where they receive constant care from the hospital’s all-Haitian staff. Both children and adults can be treated at one of Grace Children’s Hospital’s many outpatient clinics. People living in the slums around the hospital receive vaccinations, prenatal care, and other basic health services from specially trained community health workers and volunteers.

Partner in Grace-\$31/month - Your faithful partnership commitment of \$1.00 per day brings everyday blessings – food, medicine, clean water and healthcare – to people in need at Grace Children’s Hospital and throughout Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Be a Partner in Grace for a month supporting Haitian Child. Sign up for 2012 at the Opportunities Desk. Your gift will bring health and hope to children in need.

MORE MISSION/CSRR NEWS



Angel Tree - Missions Commission's Annual Angel Tree Program, a prison ministry, was very successful in 2011, thanks to the efforts and enthusiasm of our congregation and other volunteers. Each of our 23 children, from 11

families, was given a clothing gift, a fun gift, a family Bible and an age-appropriate Gospel booklet. The main purpose of this program is to help reinforce the connection between the prisoner parent and his/her child(ren). Volunteers include: our congregation, who purchased and wrapped 46 gifts and 11 Bibles; callers who contact the caregivers of the children to explain the program, get approval of the prisoner's suggested children's gifts and confirm other information provided by the prisoner; other volunteers who make up the recordkeeping spread sheets so others can keep track of the "Angels" chosen from the tree; those who shop for Gospel literature included in the gift bag, and purchase small gifts for any extra child(ren) who live in the same home as the prisoner's children, but are not children of the prisoner; volunteer teams who schedule and deliver the gift bags to the families; map maker who provides directions to each home for the delivery teams; and our church office staff and others in our church who assist in many ways too. We'd love to mention each person by name, but there are so many who contribute their time, talent and money, that it would be too easy to miss someone. Their combined efforts help spread the love of Christ to many young people in our community whose parents are in jail. Both the child and prisoner's spirits are no doubt lifted by this connection that they wouldn't otherwise have. Thank you very much for bringing joy to so many children and their parents!!

Peace and Blessings in the new year,
Denise Foust, Julie Evans and June Rayle
Missions Commission

STEPHEN MINISTRY



"Serve one another in love."
Galatians 6:2

Providing care for hurting people is an opportunity to show Jesus' love and compassion. Stephen Ministry is a quiet ministry providing confidential care to those in crisis. Our Stephen Leaders are planning a new training class for 2012. If you would like to grow in your understanding of your own faith and calling, to work closely with others, to experience the fellowship of a loving, caring group of people and to use the skills you learn in everyday life and relationships with others, please contact Julie Lester (428-5832) or Donna Dumke (983-0439) for more information about Stephen Ministry and the 2012 training session.

"They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit...And the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied...." Acts 6:5-7



Blood Pressure Screening – The next blood pressure screening will be January 15. 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 AND WORSHIP

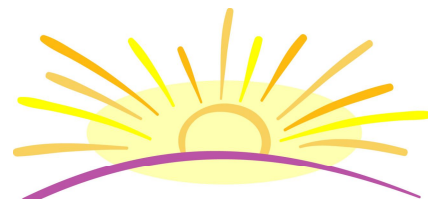
As we start the New Year and a new chapter in our church's life, we want to keep our focus on some things that do not change. Most of all we know that God doesn't change and is constantly with us. Psalm 121 reminds us that "He who watches over Israel slumbers not nor sleeps." God is always watching over us and is completely interested in who we are, where we are and what we are doing. God in turn is glorified when we keep our minds and hearts turned towards Him. We have no idea what this New Year holds for us but as we keep God in our focus, He will lead us and care for us. Knowing that God is ever present in my life and leading me is a great encouragement.

One hymn that is meaningful to me as I reflect on God's faithfulness and leading is Joseph Gilmore's "He Leadeth Me." Gilmore was a Baptist preacher on the east coast in the second half of the 1800's. He not only was a pastor but a poet/hymn writer as well. None of his hymns were used much but he still wrote them down. While working on a sermon series on the Psalms, Joseph was moved by Psalm 23 as never before. As he reworked an earlier sermon, he could not get past the second verse, "He leadeth me." He wrote in a later journal, "Those words took hold of me as they had never done before, and I saw them in a significance and wondrous beauty of which I had never dreamed."

Gilmore delivered the sermon further dwelling on the thought of God leading us. At a meeting afterwards with some of the church leaders, Gilmore turned aside and quickly jotted down the words to the hymn on the back of his notes for the meeting. He handed the page to his wife and forgot about it. His wife took the text and sent it to a Christian paper without telling him. They published it and William Bradbury, who also wrote the music for "Jesus Loves Me" and "Sweet Hour of Prayer" besides many others, set it to music. My favorite part of the story is when Gilmore was to preach at another Baptist Church in Rochester, New York a few years later he found out his hymn had been set to music and published in a hymnal. As he arrived at the church the people were already singing a hymn he had never heard but recognized the words. When he opened the hymnal he found the hymn he had written a while back and forgotten.

The Irish talk about how God sometimes is directly in front of us and we can't miss His leading. At other times God is behind us guiding us with His hand at our back and even other times He is beside us as we walk together. Whether we can sense God's presence or not, whether we can see God or not, God is always present with us to guide us. May we be even more aware of God's leading in our lives this New Year – have a blessed one.

See you in church
– Jim Kraus



New Year's Day WORSHIP SERVICE

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.

Choir News – As we start the New Year, if you are interested in joining the Chancel Choir, we would love to have you come and sing with us. We rehearse on Wednesday evenings, 7:30-9:00, in the Sanctuary. If you have any questions, see Jim Kraus

The Young Singers will meet Wednesday, January 18, at 6:00. Come join with us as we prepare to sing for upcoming Sunday services. Any singer in 4th Grade and up is welcome to join us.

He Leadeth Me Words

He leadeth me, O blessed thought!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

Refrain:

He leadeth me, He leadeth me,
By His own hand He leadeth me;
His faithful foll'wer I would be,
For by His hand He leadeth me.

FLAME start-up:

- High School: Sun., Jan. 8, 7:30-9:00 PM
- Confirmation: Sun., Jan. 8, 4:00-5:30 PM (Smiths' home)
- Middle School : Wed., Jan. 11, 7:00-8:30 PM
- All Small Groups will start up once school begins.

Upcoming Youth Events:

- High School Western/Burger Bash Night: Sun., Jan. 8, 7:30-9:00 PM
- Middle School Western/Burger Bash Night: Wed., Jan. 11, 7:00-8:30 PM
- High School Winter Retreat: Feb. 3-5
- Middle School Winter Retreat: Feb. 24-26
- High School Lock-In: March 23-24, 9:00 PM-7:00 AM
- Middle School Game Night: Friday, April 20, 6-10 PM
- Spring Rummage Sale Fundraiser: May 1-4
- Mission Trip to Georgia: June 10-16

Confirmation Class on the following Sundays

- January 1
- February 5 & 26
- April 1 & 8

No High School FLAME: January 1, February 5, February 26, April 1, & April 8.

No Middle School FLAME: January 4 & April 4.

YOUTH NEWS



Mission Trip Meeting: Thursday, January 19, 7:00 PM

Everyone interested in being a part of this year's summer mission trip to Georgia should attend the informational meeting on Thursday, January 19. Parents are also encouraged to attend. Many important matters will be discussed at this meeting (location, lodging, transportation, chaperones, cost, fundraising, etc.). We will also need to collect a \$75 deposit from all those who are going. Final numbers are needed by January 30. If you cannot make it, but are planning on being part of the mission team, please contact Dan Colthorp (369-8475). Your deposit is due before January 19.

Western Night/Burger Bash – Let's kick off the new year in youth group with a couple of Western Night/Burger Bashes! Please bring friends and \$3. There will be hamburgers, hot dogs, chips, cookies, desserts, and drinks. Everyone is encouraged to dress in western or Native American clothing.

- High School Burger Bash will be Sunday, January 8, 7:30-9:00 PM.
- Middle School Burger Bash will be Wednesday, January 11, 7:00-8:30 PM

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. We will meet at the church at 5:30 PM on Friday and return home around 1:00 PM on Sunday. Please sign up today and get your \$98 donation in by January 29. If you have any questions, please call Dan Colthorp (983-3929). If you need to get a hold of us while on retreat, please contact Dan at (269) 369-8475 or call Miracle Camp at 1-800-354-9609.



Youth Winter Retreat

High School: February 3-5

If you would like to go, please get your \$98 donation in by January 29.

Middle School: February 24-26

If you would like to go, your \$98 deposit is due February 19.

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 6:00-7:00. Each week we enjoy a game, weekly speak out, video and team time. 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

January 11, 5:30-7:00 Slumber Party - Kids, wear your pajamas; bring your sleeping bag and stuffed animal. We'll gather for an opening activity and then watch a movie. Popcorn and a juice box will accompany the movie. Make sure to invite your friends.

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

February 8, 5:30 meal, 6:00-7:00 activities

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 Built to Last*.

We have arranged to not only have one weekend at the wonderful Inn at Union Pier, but 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 but space is filling fast! 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!



ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

The Best Question Ever led by 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 foolproof 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 8th at 10:00 AM in room F & G or 11:00 AM in the Parlor. Sign up at the Opportunities Desk.

WOMEN'S NEWS

Women's Bible Studies - It's not too late to sign up for the Women's Bible Studies.

James – Monday Evenings at 6:15 PM, begins January 9

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.

Lunchtime Bible Study

Come join our Wednesday Noon Bible Study in the Parlor, 12:00-1:00 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. This winter we will be doing a study of Galatians by John Stott. **The study begins January 11.**

Shelter of God's Promises – Friday Mornings at 9:00 AM, begins January 13

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. Sign up at the Opportunities Desk.

Cozy Winter Mornings – Beginning Thursday, January 19, 9:-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, we will be meeting in cozy homes for a time of fellowship, study and prayer. We 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 at Lakeeffect@prodigy.net or 982-1852 or sign up at the Opportunities Desk.

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).

CIRCLE NEWS

Esther Circle - This group will not meet in January or February. Next meeting will be March 22. They will be led on a tour of the church library and the collections we have there. Liz Allen will be leader.

Lydia – Tuesday, January 24, 6:00 PM at Panera Bread. Sign up at the Opportunities Desk. All women are welcome!

Warm Winter Evening with Nicole C. Mullen - Nicole 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." Read more about Nicole at www.nicolectmullen.com. *Warm Winter Evening* will be February 16th at 7:00 PM (doors open at 6:15) at the LMC Mainstage. We are offering tickets for \$15 which is a discount from the box office price and the money is due when you sign up. This is a change this year as it is the 19th year of Warm Winter Evening and they are gearing up for their 20th 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. Several tickets have been purchased so that we can all sit together in the same section. It's not too late to sign up, but please do soon! Sign up at the Opportunities Desk or by calling Shari or the church office.

FINANCIAL NEWS



SUNDAY, JANUARY 15

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

New Contribution Envelopes - You might notice that we have a change in size of envelopes. The envelopes we have used this past year had to be folded in order to fit into the mailing envelopes. This caused difficulty for both those stuffing the offering envelopes and those stuffing the newsletter into the mailing envelope. They were also heavier and cost more to mail. The new envelopes are smaller, do not require folding, weigh less and were cheaper to purchase; thus saving money and time.

We understand that you will have to fold your checks and cash in order to fit in the envelope and we are hoping you will not find this too much of an inconvenience. For those who mail their contributions in, the new envelopes will fit into a standard small envelope much easier.

Financial Campaign Update - The financial campaign yielded a total of \$447,627 in pledges toward the General Budget. A big thank you to all that submitted pledge cards. If you have not completed a pledge card and would like to, you may stop by the finance office and complete one at any time. Also, if you did not feel you were able to pledge at this time but find sometime during 2012 that you would like to, pledge cards are welcomed at any time.

Current Financial Status - As of November 30th we had received \$503,448. Income anticipated through the end of November was \$515,686 and we were \$12,380 below expected. Expenses budgeted through the end of November were \$512,964; however with very careful and restricted spending actual expenses were \$509,320.



Year-End Giving - In order for donations to be eligible for 2011 tax deductions, they must be in the office no later than 4:30 on December 30th or if mailed, they must be postmarked no later than December 31st.

Final Notes from the Financial Secretary - While the past few years have been ones of financial struggles for both our members and the church, it has also been years of growth and change for the church. Although we have struggled at times, we have paid all of our bills, payroll and Ministry Shares on time and in full. Thank you to all who have supported the church through their time, their talents, their gifts and their prayers. May you all have a Merry Christmas and may 2012 be a year of Peace, Prosperity and Spiritual Growth for all of you.