



The Allegan Congregationalist

January 2023

Our church exists to introduce people to Jesus Christ and train those who already know Him.

After our former pastor, Cory Klein, received a call to ministry at New Hope in Oxford, MI, the Pastor Search Committee was formed by membership election. This consisted of moderator: Mark Lovett, board chairs: Todd Wagner, Margaret Brown, Joanie Townsend, Sue Belden, and members at large: Elsie Jones, Jeff Polonowski, Theresa Prolo, Carrie Lovett, and Rick Allen. After many planning sessions and thoughtful prayer, FCC signed an initial 12-month contract with IMI/SOS to supply an interim pastor. We are pleased to welcome Pastor Greg Carlson to the pulpit and our church family to follow the Holy Spirit's lead to our future. Pastor Greg kicked off 2023 with a message from Psalm 139 entitled *Flying High in the New Year*. He gave us a written introduction for the newsletter and is eager to get to know you better in face-to-face interactions.

Upcoming Events:

- 1/22 Annual Meeting
- 1/29 FCC Luau—Come join the party!

An Introduction, Part One

by Greg Carlson



I married Lorelei in 1987 while she was earning her degree in education at Calvin College and Grand Rapids Baptist College. Having previously earned her licensed practical nursing degree, she worked in geriatric, internal medicine, and obstetrics settings. She attended several births as a mid-wife apprentice. Lorelei considers her primary ministry to help me be successful in my calling. She educated our children at home until they entered Allegan Public High School. She enjoys being a hostess, reading, and compiling photo albums. She is active in First Baptist Church of Allegan youth and children's ministries. Because of these responsibilities and her work at both Ascension Allegan Hospital and Gull Lake Christian Ministries, we'll not see her often at First Congregational Church as was true in my previous interim ministry churches.

Lorelei, our son, Ben, and I live in Allegan on the corner of Thomas Street and Old Pine Road next to the new Nature Conservancy entrance. We have four older children who live in Texas, California and Michigan. One of them is married. We are hearing wedding bells for two more this year. Ben is actively involved at the Baptist Church along with Allegan Public School as a Junior. Our children were all born while we lived in the U.P. I was a pastor there in a Baptist church for 18.5 years. We lived in the parsonage but built a house where pastors and missionaries could have their vacations at cost. Our children were sad when it came time to leave their friends and lives they knew as Yoopers in 2007. In hindsight, however, they knew God had directed their lives to Allegan.

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Pastor Greg Carlson's Introduction (cont.)

From 2007 to 2013, I had the privilege of pastoring the First Baptist Church of Allegan. I enjoyed the folks there and appreciated their work in the Allegan area as well as missions around the globe. In 2012, I knew my calling was changing to hospice chaplaincy. I had some additional training to do in the Clinical Pastoral Education program at Bronson Hospital. The Lord blessed me with a good ending at the Baptist Church as the folks gave their blessing in seeing I was "cut out" for hospice work. After preaching the last Sunday at the church in October of 2013, the next day found me visiting Wings of Hope Hospice patients and families. I have worked full-time as the Spiritual Care Coordinator at Wings ever since. During my transition to Wings of Hope, I knew I would want to plug into churches through interim ministries. FCC is my seventh interim ministry in nine years. I've been blessed with friendships throughout Southwest Michigan in the churches and with Wings of Hope.

I enjoy family outings, being on a golf course, and visiting church folks in their living room or at their kitchen table. I've enjoyed playing piano and organ most of my life. I served on a regional hospice board for 12 years, two medical ethics committees, various civic committees, and on the leadership council of a state association of churches. I have enjoyed pulpit supply ministry in churches during those times I am in-between interim ministries.

My heart is filled with treasured relationships and memories. At age 63 and after ministering in many churches, I want you to know that you are a welcome addition to my heart. Your church is a blessing to me already. I have an anticipation of what God will do in us and through us during the time he gives us together. In short, I have a commitment to put God's love on display in my ministry. I want you friends at First Congregational Church to know you are loved. My primary way of communicating love to you is by listening to you. That is how God has wired me to contribute to the church and community.

Next month, we'll continue with *An Introduction, Part 2*. Pastor Greg has anticipated questions you may have and will respond. If you have a specific question you'd like to pose in the newsletter to him, please send him an email.



How to communicate with Pastor Greg

My home phone is 269.673.5289. If we don't answer, feel free to leave a message and I will call as soon as possible. I check my personal email several times most days at gcarlson4u@gmail.com. I don't give out my cell phone number as it is used for communication with the Wings of Hope team and patients 24/7.

I plan to be in the church office on Friday morning, visiting shut-ins and parishioners in homes. I should also be available for the church family before and after church services.

If you as an FCC attender would like prayer before or after a surgery, please let me know personally. Todd Wagner has my cell phone number if there is something that needs urgent pastoral attention.

Home Phone:

269-673-5289

Email:

gcarlson4u@gmail.com

ALOHA! Please Join Us for a STAY-CATION Hawaiian Luau by Sue Belden

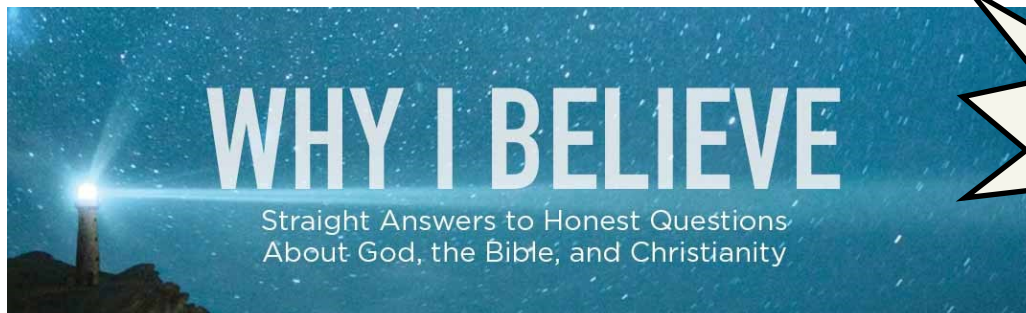


ALOHA to all! Your Christian Education Board is helping everyone escape winter a bit by having a STAY-CATION Hawaiian Luau at First

Congregational Church on Sunday, January 29th. Come to service in your Hawaiian shirts and shorts (or whatever you're comfortable in!) ready to enjoy a luau with food and fun!!!

A sign up sheet is on the famous round table to give us a number for food. PLEASE sign up before January 22nd!

Invite your friends and tell those you haven't seen in a while to come and enjoy fellowship and fun! AHOLA!!!



Scripture calls Christians to “be prepared” to give answers to anyone who asks about the faith. FCC teens will be journeying through a video series by Chip Ingram entitled *Why I Believe* during Sunday School. The facts of the resurrection, the reliability of the Bible, and the evidence for creation will be discussed and can all be understood and shared with anyone seeking hope. Tweens & Teens, we hope to see you January 8th to begin!



1/15/23



The FCC Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, 1/22, following our worship service. In this meeting, we will review what has happened in our various committees over the past year as well as elect those who will serve in the future. Please come. If you are a board chair, your written report is due to the office no later than Sunday, January 15th.

Update from the Johnsons in Indonesia

12/19/22 letter from Ed

...But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” This familiar passage from the 2nd chapter of Luke hit me again this past weekend as it was shared in a Sunday service. ... indeed the Good News of Christ’s birth should bring us great joy and bring a challenge too. ... GOOD NEWS: the savior has come! The one mediator between God and man. The only hope for sinful people like you and me. The sure hope for anyone who puts their faith in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This should bring us “great joy”. People who have put their trust in Jesus Christ should be people of joy. God’s word gives us a future and a hope. The last few words of that passage bring the challenge when it says that the good news of great joy.... “will be for all the people”.

The facts today are that there are billions of people who have yet to hear and understand this life-changing good news. Valerie and I are rejoicing this year in the progress of the Momuna Translation project. There is still much to be done, and it is getting even busier with final checking and editing, but it is looking like 2023 could be the year when the entire Bible is available in the Momuna Tribal language. Thank you for partnering with us in this long project. We welcome your continued investments specifically for the Momuna Bible Translation. Please pray for progress and provision as we move toward the end of this important project.

We rejoice that there are two Diuwe men (from Obukain) attending school in Sentani. Please continue to pray with us for Isak (in his second year of college-level bible school) and his wife Bakiawde, and four children as they continue to learn to navigate life in the city. When Isak is not in class or otherwise studying you can often find him helping me move forward on translating the scriptures into the Diuwe language (of Obukain). And please also continue to pray for Kirinius (name comes from the Christmas story in Luke 2:2) and his wife Mona and two sons. They are attending a discipleship program that teaches the scripture and helps to apply it to daily life and ministry.

We are thankful for Valerie’s ongoing opportunity to disciple and influence young students, even as she teaches her four high school classes, and supervises the Student Council at Hillcrest School. We are rejoicing this year as well, that we are able to spend the Christmas holiday with our oldest daughter Hannah and her family (including three of our 5 grandchildren) as they take a short break from language study on another Indonesian island to explore and consider ministry opportunities in Papua.

Even as we miss other children and grandchildren who live in the US, we count this opportunity as part of God’s goodness to us. But as we celebrate Christmas we are also challenged to realize that, even here in Indonesia there are more than 130 ethnic groups, with populations greater than 10,000, (several in the millions) who have yet to hear and understand the Good News that came to shepherds over 2000 years ago. I believe that this challenge needs to be owned by everyone who has called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is God’s work, building His church, but He has chosen to use people like you and me to reach others who have yet to hear. Let’s be praying that the Lord of the harvest will continue to send laborers into the harvest. We will be praying that each of us is quick to recognize God’s goodness to us during this special holiday season. And let’s pray together that more of those who are today “unreached” will hear the Good News in 2023. Grateful for your partnership with us throughout our years of ministry in Indonesia.



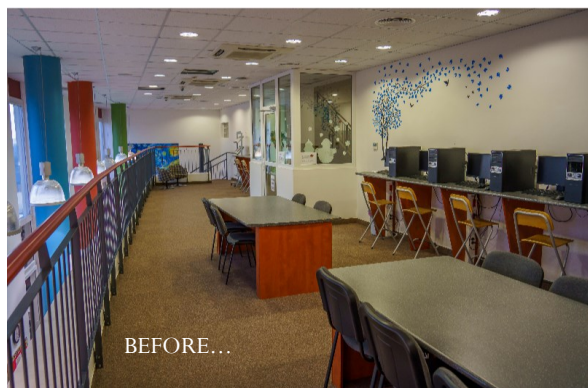
Update from the Frasers in Hungary

Excerpts from 12/9/22
letter from the Frasers

This winter has some looming challenges and a lot of uncertainty. The war in Ukraine continues, along with all of the effects in the region. Inflation and the rising costs of utilities are issues everywhere, but they are particularly bad in Hungary. Post offices and many businesses are closing due to the cost of heating. Hungarian schools cancelled their fall break in order to move that week of vacation to Christmas when it will be colder - thus saving on energy. And there's talk that some schools will go online to avoid heating the buildings. The government has issued price caps on many basic necessities like eggs, milk, flour, and sugar which has led to shortages of some of those items. In the midst of all this, there are still many reasons to be thankful! We are where we need to be, and God is providing. God is good.... all the time!

Tricia recently started a section in our school library for books in Ukrainian, Korean, Russian, and Chinese, to add to our small section of books in Hungarian. The students are excited! And it's warmed our hearts to see that excitement and hear students offer to donate their own books to expand this section. It's only possible to make this new section in the library because the upstairs renovation is finished! Tricia had never taken on a project like this before, but with a lot of help from colleagues her vision came together and the students are enjoying the new space. John is continuing to serve as team leader. At the same time, he is in discussion with TeachBeyond about some new teaching opportunities and partnerships in the area of apologetics, which is his passion. Pray for guidance for him and that God will open just the right doors in the coming year.

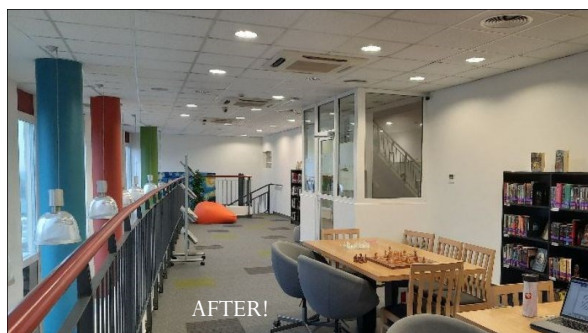
Hannah and Matthew will be joining us for Christmas and we're excited to see them. Please pray for guidance for them as they look toward next summer. Hannah will be graduating from Houghton University and Matthew is applying for summer internships. Pray for God's provision for us, as our support account has been dropping.



BEFORE...



Students enjoying their new library space.



AFTER!



The old library space had old carpet, unused computers, and was hard to supervise. Renovations installed new carpet, furniture and bookshelves replaced old counters. The new bookshelves mean space for more books! And now we have security cameras that feed to Tricia's desk downstairs so that studying students can more easily be supervised. This space is getting so much more use now!



Update from the Dickerson's in Budapest

Excerpt from Will's
Dec. newsletter

Why was the birth of Jesus so “good?” The reason that this was such good news was because the One who had created the bright star of Bethlehem by the power of His Word set aside His divine glory and came to earth to become one of us. He came to find and save the lost. He also came to heal the sick and comfort the broken-hearted. Some people will tell you that all religions are essentially the same; they are all different rivers which ultimately flow into the same ocean. But the advent of Jesus, the Christ, separates Christianity from all other religions in several significant ways. For one thing, other religions teach us that we must go find God and somehow win His favor. But at Christmas time, we celebrate the fact that Jesus came to earth and found us. Jesus became one of us. He took on our flesh and became fully human. As such, he knows what it is like to be tempted. As a child, he learned what it was like to live as a refugee (in Egypt). Later, he learned what it was like to lose His earthly father. He wept when He was told that His friend Lazarus had died. Jesus knows what it is like to be accused falsely. He knows what it is like to have the people closest to Him deny Him. He knows what it is like to be humiliated, scourged and to have nails driven through His flesh. Ultimately, Jesus died as a sacrifice for our sins to free us from the power of death. Why? Why would the maker and creator of the universe do this for us? Simply because, as John tells us, God is love, and He loves us with a love that is so great it is beyond words. He loves us with a mad, crazy, passionate love, and He wants to spend all eternity with us.

If you know something of His love and have become one of His followers, we hope that this Advent season you will find ways and words to share this love in this broken world in which we all live. We are to be light in the darkness. It is our hope and prayer that all of us who are known as followers of Christ would truly be lights this Advent season — that we would be something like the star of Bethlehem and guide others to Christ the Lord. Or perhaps that we would be like the humble shepherds that the angels appeared to — that we would not be too busy or proud to hear what Christ has done and to spread that Good News.

In more personal news, we are delighted to inform you that Julia's histology report finally came back, and it bore good news. Julia's cancer had not spread, and the doctor is quite confident that she cut out all there was to get. Both of us continue to make good progress in our recoveries, and we are almost back to 100%. In fact, we are feeling so good, we plan to host pizza/movie parties for two of my “senior” classes later this month. Julia will do her best to fill these hungry teenagers with homemade pizza and other goodies, and we will show them *It's A Wonderful Life*. You can pray that these evenings go well. Also, next week I go for my quarterly PSA test. I would appreciate your prayers for another good result. Thank you, too, for your generous support and practical help. It is greatly appreciated! We have been humbled by the help, kindness, support and encouragement we have received in various forms from so many of you over the last several months. Thank you!



02 Julia Wolf
Matt Cochran
03 Aspen Hansen
Louann Cook
Alicia Olmstead
06 Josh Hansen
Jeremy Hansen
17 Maddie Wagner

19 Bob Simmons
21 Billie Lucas
Gwen Calkins
Tammy Thompson
24 Amy Hansen
25 JoJo Polonowski



January 2023

Please call the office if there is an anniversary or birthday you would like to add to the list.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	2	3	4 5:45 Prayer Mtg	5 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	6 8 Food Warehouse	7
8 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Noon Trustee Mtg CE Mtg	9 5:30 Women's Fellowship Mtg	10 7 Diaconate Mtg	11 10 Grief Group 5:45 Prayer Mtg	12 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	13 8 Food Warehouse	14 8:30 Men's Breakfast
15 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship  SEE TODAY! ANNUAL REPORTS	16	17	18 5:45 Prayer Mtg	19 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	20 8 Food Warehouse	21
22 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Noon Annual Meeting	23	24	25 10 Grief Group 5:45 Prayer Mtg	26 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	27 8 Food Warehouse	28
29 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Noon Stay-Cation Hawaiian 	30	31				

The First Congregational Church of Allegan



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Email: fccofallegan@gmail.com

Website: fccofallegan.weebly.com

Worship with us on Sundays at 10:30 AM!

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

GROWING
in grace **in 2023**

By Ron Hamilton, CCCC

We have turned the calendar to 2023! Many opportunities and challenges lie ahead in the coming year. There will be things that are beyond our control and others where our actions make a difference. As people of faith, we can live out this Scripture every day.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)

Christians are commanded to grow. This in itself is a reflection of the true nature of Christianity. It is not an emotional experience the memory of which we seek to perpetuate, rather it is a growing life. It has its beginning in a new birth, for there can be no growth where there is no life. And there will be critical points, experiences of unforgettable significance, but they will be just that - crisis points in a continuing life. The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is a process leading to consummation in glorification. Beware of teaching which lacks emphasis on steady growth in the spiritual life. (Daily Encouragement – YouVersion Bible Reading Plan)

We have 365 opportunities to “grow in grace” in 2023. This growth will be reflected as we strive to live in obedience to Jesus as we “love God...love others...and, as we go, make disciples.” Our faith will be stronger. Our relationships will be healthier. Our ministries will be more effective.