

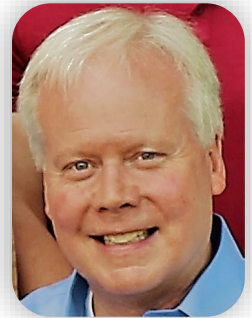


# The Allegan Congregationalist

May 2023

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

## Anticipating Christ Moments by Greg Carlson



### Upcoming Events:

- 5/9 Ladies' Banquet
- 5/12 CCCC Spring Conference
- 5/21 Special Worship Service
- June—Graduate Celebration TBA
- 7/30 Annual Picnic & Outdoor Service

I recently sat in the presence of a man who was full of God's Spirit and had lived a life of service and obedience to Jesus Christ his Savior and Master. I felt I was sitting at the feet of a man who knew Christ intimately and loved Him dearly. I experienced the joy of several visits with this Christian brother and his family.

At my last visit, I realized those moments were a gift from our Lord, as are many moments of joy we have in life. The thought occurred to me that the Lord Himself graces us with His presence, causing our fellowship to be more, far more, than simply a pleasant human experience. We have moments of Christ, much like the disciples Cleopas and Simon experienced on the Emmaus Road. *"And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"* (Luke 24:32).

God provides many such moments to His trusting children along the pathways of our lives. As did our brothers of old, we often fail to recognize the presence of the Lord Jesus, focusing on the human elements of our encounters. *"We see through a glass darkly"* declared the Apostle Paul, who included himself among those whose spiritual vision remained hindered and far less than it would one day be (I Corinthians 13:12). So, we must often remind ourselves and each other that the God who numbers the hairs of our head intimately involves Himself as the true Blessing of our blessings.

Do you remember Christ moments in your life where you experienced his beauty in a way that was encouraging and strengthening to you and others? That moment may have come as a result of your devotional life. Your experience of Christ may have become evident in a conversation, a musical, a sunrise, a meal with a friend, a gift, a seemingly random conversation in an elevator or plane. Perhaps you had an act of service you were blessed to perform in Jesus' name. You may have come away from that experience saying, "Lord, you are so good." But there may have been other moments in your life you failed to so clearly recognize.

I have learned to expect such moments, while resisting the temptation to create or rely upon them. Our Light of the World graces us with Himself all along the way of life. We

### Inside this issue:

Awake recap	2
Reason for Hope	3-4
Ladies' Banquet	4
4C's Spring Rally	5
Mission Update	6
Calendar & Birthdays	7

don't always recognize Him, but can always look for Him. We trust Him to open our eyes when and as His purposes allow. Such expectation helps us to be ready so that we will not miss the Blessing that resides in the blessing. Perhaps today the Light of heaven will pierce through earthly skies to grace us with a time wherein our Savior becomes so obvious that we clearly recognize how near to us He has drawn, and how *"in Him we live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17:28).

May you each day arise, eager to experience Christ in your day. In the words of Mary Ann Barrett, a leader of the Dominican Sisters in Grand Rapids, "May your outreach and service stretch you to embrace all that comes your way with trust, without judgment. May your eyes be opened to see below the surface of things; may your ears be opened to hear God's voice in the pleas for your attention; may your heart be opened to love like God, so that your 'being and acting' bring a little more hope into our world."

I would add a simple thought. Take joyous note of the moments in your life, as from the hand of your Savior. *"In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore"* (Psalm 16:11).

# NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

ENGAGING FAMILIES AND GROWING KIDS IN THE GOSPEL.



On Friday, April 28, not a mouse was sleeping at the First Congregational Church. The Awake Youth Group gathered for an evening of fun. After feasting on a taco bar, we toured the Old Jail Museum with docents Mark Lovett & Greg Hipps. After learning about eight churches built in Allegan around 1850, we toured over 20 displays throughout the museum. Youth and chaperones returned back to church for some more games, a movie and popcorn, and setting up assorted camp gear for a short night of sleep. The event concluded with breakfast out at On the Grid.



Where can you find a collection of yardsticks, a ship mast, courtroom furniture, antique perm rods and a visual representation on the history of cameras? And that's just the beginning... A living legacy of Allegan history awaits at the Old Jail Museum open on Fridays and Saturdays from 10 AM—4 PM. Check it out!

## From Death to Life—Our Reason for Hope

by Todd Wagner

Spring has arrived, or so it seems. The bitter and unforgiving cold has reluctantly begun to give way to warmer breezes as the sky slowly transitions from the dreary, dull grey to a bright blue, bringing the warmth of the sun to creation. The buds on the trees have broken open bringing forth new leaves and the grasses have greened up coloring our landscape. While the snow desperately tries to hang on, those April showers have taken over to bring us many spring May flowers. The dismal death of winter has yielded to the new life that comes with spring.

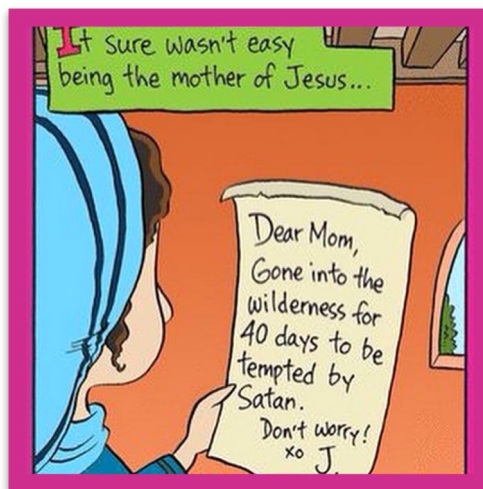
Every year as the seasons change and spring rolls around, I can't help but to reflect on the death and resurrection of our Lord, Christ Jesus. Maybe it's because Easter and Resurrection Sunday were just barely three weeks ago. But I think it's more than that. The visual revelation God provides seems to spur this reflection in my heart. As Christ endured the intolerable scourging and was nailed to the cross, He willingly gave up His life saying, "*It is finished.*" John 10:11 reminds us, "*The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*" And from there He was laid in a tomb and the earth was darkened, both physically and spiritually.

But during His time in the grave (metaphorically speaking – winter time), a divine miraculous thing happened. Jesus, who laid down His life, took it up again! The light is shown through the darkness, just as the spring sun drives out the dull, grey skies of winter. This a reminder of what Jesus said, "*I am the light of the world.*" (John 7:12a) The tomb was opened just like the buds on the trees, allowing the new leaves to escape their temporary prison. "*Death no longer has mastery over Him.*" (Romans 6:9b) The grasses green up, the flowers shoot up and the song of birds returns to testify that new life is here. "*Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life.*" (John 11:25a) And those rainy days in April which get us all down nourish the earth bringing in the new life, our spring-May flowers, which bring us much joy. The season has transformed from death to life. Yes, springtime for me is that visual reflection of the hope we have in the risen Messiah.

The apostle Peter reminds us as believers, "*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.*" (1 Peter 3:15) Just as the transformation from winter to spring gives us hope for better weather and more comfortable temperatures, the resurrection of Jesus gives us hope for our escape from sin and death to eternal life. But is this the hope we're to provide to those who ask? No, it's only part of it. The real hope is the message of the gospel, and we need not only to provide it to those who ask but also proclaim it to all of creation!

Now before you even think that you're no evangelist, I must tell you that you don't have to be. Our culture and the wicked ones do all they can to discourage people from thinking they cannot properly or accurately spread the good news. But that is a lie and do not believe it! After His resurrection, Jesus, to whom all authority has been given, instructed His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). The application for us today is exactly the same as it was in the first century, the command from our Lord hasn't changed.

To be obedient to the command of our Lord, all one must do is share the good news of the gospel. And this message is so very simple. As we read in Romans, the Apostle Paul plainly tells us, "*But what does it say? The Word is*



## From Death to Life—Our Reason for Hope (cont.)

by Todd Wagner

*near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim:*” And here it is folks, the plain and simple message of hope requiring absolutely no exuberant effort or specialized training. *“If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord”, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”* (Romans 10:8-9) That’s it. The message of the gospel was plainly spoken and simply put by the Apostle Paul whom Jesus Himself had chosen to spread the good news to the Gentile nations. Believe and have faith – and **YOU WILL BE SAVED!**

Are you an obedient believer? Have you shared the good news with others you know, or even those you don’t? If you haven’t, is it because you’ve been fearful to do it incorrectly or that you are not trained enough in God’s Word? Faith in Christ Jesus is what justifies us before God, and faith is a gift from God. Why keep this gift to yourselves? If you’re a believer, then you must feel the love for others in your heart to share the good news. Don’t listen to the whispers of the adversary who tries to discourage you. Don’t listen to the whispers of the adversary who says, “You can do it tomorrow,” because tomorrow may be too late. The Holy Spirit will guide you and lead you in sharing the good news, just trust Him. Each of us will give an account before God. Make sure your account reflects the sharing of God’s gift in Christ Jesus.

Spread the word, our world needs it!



### Ladies’ Banquet

The Women’s Fellowship will host their annual Ladies’ Banquet on Tuesday, May 9th. Dinner and dessert are provided and will be served at 6. Becky Wallace, our sister in Christ from the First Baptist Church, will conclude the evening with a keynote address. Becky and her husband, Kent, raised 7 sons, gained 7 daughters-in-love, and delight in 27 grandbabies. Becky has a Bachelor of Communication from WMU and is a health coach teaching and coaching people to live their “Best Life.”

Ladies, please join us for a fairy wonderful evening. Pre-registration is most appreciated. There is a sign-up sheet on the round table in the lounge, or call Theresa Prolo at 269-650-2037.



Each week following service, the Women’s Fellowship hosts coffee and snacks to help foster community within our church family. How can you participate? Please stay after and join us Sunday mornings. Also, let Julie (269-673-4071) know if you would like to host one Sunday to celebrate a special occasion. We’ll be right along side you to help with the coffee, set-up, & clean up.



CONSERVATIVE CONGREGATIONAL

CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE

## CCCC Spring Rally

The First Congregational Church is honored to host the spring rally for the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC). The conference will be held on Friday, May 12 from 8 AM—3:15 PM. The guest speaker, Pastor Steve Perry, currently serves Faith Based Life Legacy Church and Word Encounter Church in Detroit, MI. Born and raised in Detroit, Steve was called to ministry at a young age. Just 10 days out of high school, Steve enlisted in the U.S. Army completing 5 years of active-duty service to his country followed by 2 additional years in the Reserves. He later earned a degree in Business from ITT Technical Institute in Wyoming, MI. In 2007 Steve planted his first church in Detroit and several others thereafter. Steve is an author, motivational speaker, entrepreneur, and loving husband to his wife Dr. Tiarra Perry.

Our own Congregational Kitchen will be providing breakfast and lunch for conference attendees.

Your presence is encouraged. If you plan to attend, please register with Todd Wagner so we have an accurate count.

Registration/ Breakfast/Fellowship	8:00 AM - 9:00AM
Welcome and Announcements	9:00 AM
Worship	9:15 AM
Opening Prayer	
Word of God: Romans 10:14–15	
Song & Time of Testimony—How is God leading in your life/your church/your family, etc.?	
Break	9:45 AM
Conference Greetings:	10:00 AM
Tim Debeau, Mid-East Regional Pastor	
Business Meeting	10:15 AM
Guest Speaker:	11:00 AM
Pastor Steve Perry, Faith Based Life Legacy Church and Word Encounter Church	
Lunch	Noon
Worship	12:45 PM
Opening invitation to prayer	
Challenge in prayer 1 Corinthians 3:5–7	
Worship through music	
Sharing of Prayers among the brothers/sisters in Christ	
Lifting up in prayer the needs of our brothers/sisters in Christ	
Closing in Song	
Guest Speaker:	1:15 PM
Pastor Steve Perry – Final remarks	
Break	2:30 PM
Final Words & Closing	2:45 PM
David Balicki	
Closing Song	3:15 PM

## Mission Update

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The First Congregational Church exists to introduce people to Jesus Christ and train those who already know Him. It is our privilege to partner with three missionaries internationally who are bringing the good news to areas outside of Allegan County. Please pray for these folks.



John & Tricia Fraser serve with TeachBeyond in Hungary. In a recent newsletter, they shared their praise to God for opportunities to serve through hospitality in the last couple of months. Please pray for the following:

- Continued guidance for John as he seeks apologetic ministry options with students.
- Tricia prepared and hosted a Battle of The Books competition on 4/29. Pray that students remember the fun they had and go home hoping to read more and participate again next year.
- Hannah's college graduation this month. She has been receiving multiple job offers and will need to purchase a car this summer. Please pray for the Lord's leading in her decisions.



Will & Julia Dickerson serve with OneMission Society in Hungary. Will wrote a great essay to encourage us to consider Jesus' claim to be Messiah, the Son of God. He said, "Today, many people would deny that Jesus was God, but would claim He was a great man and a great teacher. But is this logical? G. K. Chesterton once pointed out that if somebody claims to be God, we really only have three options to choose from when evaluating that person: (1) The person is a liar, and therefore can not be a great moral teacher; (2) The person is a lunatic, much like someone who would claim to be an airplane; for anybody who isn't God but who truly believes himself to be God is lacking some basic cognitive facilities. (3) The third option is that the person is, in fact, God, as claimed. This person really is the Lord." Will asked us to consider our faith, as he did his class seniors recently. Was Jesus a liar, lunatic or Lord?

Will continues, "And if you say that He is Lord, what does that mean? What does it mean when you acknowledge that someone is the Lord of your life? Is He Lord of all of your life, or just a part of it? Have you given your whole life to Him or are you holding something back? What difference does it make that Jesus died on the cross? What difference does it make that His tomb is empty?"

Please pray for the following:

- Please pray for us as we attempt to share the good news of the empty tomb with the people we know. You can pray, in particular for my "seniors." I have had some very good conversations with them lately. Their last day of class is May 4.
- Please pray, too, for Julia's eyesight and praise Him that my latest PSA test (cancer marker) yielded a good result!



Ed & Valerie Johnson serve the Diuwe people in Indonesia through World Team. A complete Bible translation in the Momuna Tribal language is in its final edit with hopes to be completed this year. What great rejoicing that will be. Ed recently told Joanie about opportunities for willing hearts to serve along side them. If you know someone with a heart to serve in Indonesia, Ed would love an introduction.

- Please continue praying for the completion of the Momuna Bible translation.



# Happy Anniversary

12 Rick & Amy Hansen  
 15 Jeff & Barb Polonowski  
 15 Todd & Holly Wagner

02 Joey Polonowski  
 05 Ethan Belden  
 09 Rick Hansen  
 14 Cory Klein  
 15 Denise Lucas

15 Julie DeHaan  
 19 Tonya Goodenough  
 22 Jackie Thompson  
 27 Jeff Brown



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	2	3 5:45 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Uke Practice 7 Diaconate Mtg	4 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Dinner	5 8 Food Warehouse	6 Church Clean Up 
7 9 Breakfast 10:30 Worship CE Meeting	8 5:30 Women's Fellowship Mtg	 9 6 Ladies' Banquet	10 10 Grief Group 5:45 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Uke Practice	11 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Dinner	12 8 Food Warehouse 8 CCCC Spring Conference	13 8:30 Men's Breakfast
14 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship 	15	16	17 5:45 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Uke Practice	18 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	19 8 Food Warehouse	20
21 9 Sunday School 10:30 Special Worship Service 	22	23	24 10 Grief Group 5:45 Prayer Mtg	25 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	26 8 Food Warehouse	27
28 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	29 	30	31			

The First Congregational Church of Allegan

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Website: [fccofallegan.weebly.com](http://fccofallegan.weebly.com)

**Worship with us on Sundays at 10:30 AM!**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



## The Key

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Come Worship with us on  
Sunday, May 21.

We are planning a special service.  
An invitation with additional details will  
be sent to you in the mail.

The service will conclude with  
an ice cream social in the fellowship hall  
and an afternoon all age family  
pool party at the Allegan Aquatic Center.



**Ice Cream Social**

