



The Allegan Congregationalist

February 2023

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

The Importance of Listening in Conflict

by Greg Carlson

Calendar Events:

- 2/10 7 PM
Lamb of God at
Miller Auditorium
- 3/29 Good
Friday
- 3/31
Resurrection
Sunday

James 1:19 - My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

Proverbs 18:2 - Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.

Those verses are simple enough in principle, and challenging to live. Too often we are slow to hear, quick to speak, and quick to anger. Especially if we are in conflict with someone.

A wise person said, "God gave us two ears and one mouth." The implication was that we should listen more than we talk.

What does listening accomplish? What does listening look like? What place does listening have in your own communication? What does a humble attitude look and sound like when attempting to solve problems?

Good listening affirms the other person, lets them know you care for them and builds trust. At the moment of conflict, you focus on the person and the problem. You need to respect the other person enough to let her get her story out in her own way. That story will come out in a chaotic mix of past, present, emotions and personal interpretations.

Let her know you have heard her struggle. If possible, restate her major themes to her, preferably in her own words. She wants to know that your focus is on her – not just the problem. She needs to be understood.

If you have an issue with a neighbor, colleague, church-goer or family member, he may share deeper issues of his heart if he knows you are actively listening. He may share fears, desires or hopes. There could likely be things you disagree on if the two of you are in a dispute, but take the time to understand him. Your listening to him could very well encourage him to understand your viewpoint when it is your turn to speak.

How often have you had the experience of starting to share something with a person? Instead of drawing you out and letting you talk, they offer some trite advice? That person did not see you. They saw the problem and addressed it, but didn't see you.



Inside this issue:

Become a Worker	2-3
CE	3
Bazaar Recap	4
Women's Fellowship	4
Upcoming Events	4
Calendar	5

The Importance of Listening in Conflict (cont.)

So, set your phone aside. Lean in and focus. Maintain eye contact. Give verbal and non-verbal feedback. Your time to speak will come. She may listen to understand you. If not, you could gently remind her that you have thoroughly heard her out and would appreciate if she would hear you out as well.

As you address shortcomings in others, do you do so with a recognition of the gospel—i.e., acknowledging God’s forgiveness, his enabling grace, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in both of you? Do you seek to leave the other person built up rather than torn down?

I appreciate the words of the late songwriter Joey Martin. “Speak love in everything you do. Speak words if you have to.”

Become a Worker

By Todd Wagner

As I sat down this morning with my coffee, I decided to switch on the TV (against my better judgment) to see what was going on in the world by watching the news. It didn’t take long to see that nothing had changed for the better, including my decision to watch the news. By now, I’m sure you can figure out that I encountered more news outlets reporting on divisive topics in our society and bringing fears of war and crime front and center, and this was all before attention was drawn to cutthroat politics between the two primary political parties.

It didn’t take long to see what else was on before shutting down the entertainment box completely to engage in something more productive, like reading. But as the morning continued forward, I couldn’t help but think of what I was watching earlier in the news cycle. Then it hit me, Matthew 9:37-38. Needless to say, I continued with my list of things to do, such as putting out the weekly church schedule, working on the annual report, and considering what to contribute to February’s newsletter. Again, Jesus’ words from Matthew 9:37-38 came to mind. By now, I’ve learned to pay a little more attention when the Holy Spirit is trying to say something despite my human ignorance.

In Matthew 9:37-38, Jesus says this, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.” When we look at this passage, there are two things we can see in the first four words, “The harvest is plentiful.” Considering the analogy Jesus uses, we picture a farm where all of the crops are ripe and ready for picking. When the farmer sees that the crops are ready, they know it’s time to get to work. So here, we see both the **opportunity to harvest** and the **need to harvest**. Because if the harvest doesn’t happen,



the farmer will lose much of what he had hoped to gather and save. But then Jesus mentions that the “workers” are few. This seems to indicate a **sense of urgency**, because if you don’t have the people to do the work, then much, if not all the crops will be lost and later laid waste.

If we apply this same analogy to our world today, we can see that the harvest [those who are lost in darkness] is plentiful and all around us. If you're not sure, then do like I did this morning and just watch the news for about 10 minutes, you'll see the harvest is

Become a Worker (cont.)

By Todd Wagner

ripe. Then consider why this is. Simply, it is because the workers are few. There are not enough Christians going out into the world to fulfill their mission. There are not enough disciples of Christ engaging in the spread of the Gospel message. And in case you're wondering, the context of this passage is not referring to not having enough preachers, pastors, or ministers available for our churches. Though this may be true, the context is referring to everyone who has received the gift of the Gospel and possesses its saving power. The context of not having enough workers is referring to you as a disciple of Jesus.

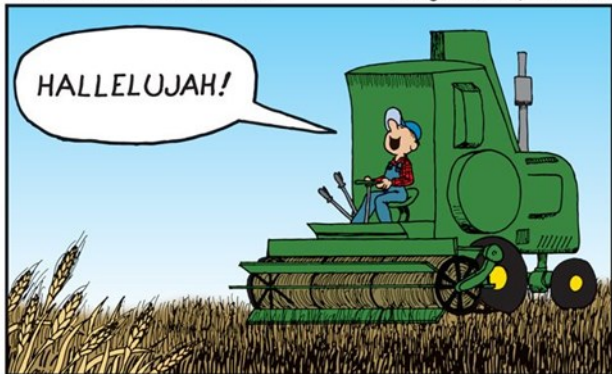
Now, the second part of this passage (v.38) says to "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field." I think we all can agree that this means we must pray to the Father asking Him to send messengers to go and spread the Gospel. But how do we know He will answer our prayers? How do we know He will send messengers to the lost? The Bible clearly tells us that God hears and answers our prayers, and Jesus Himself tells us that whatever we ask for in His name, the Father will do it (John 16:23). So pray for this to happen. But instead of asking God to send messengers to the spiritually lost and dead, ask Him to send you. Pray to Him asking how He can

use you to spread the Gospel message. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal ways you can use your natural talents and spiritual gifts to serve others, whether through direct conversation, influence through your social media, or by simply sharing God's word in an email. I bet if you think about it, you'll be able to come up with nifty ways to help fulfill your mission as Christ's disciple in spreading the Gospel.

So, as you go about your daily "to-do's," reflect on Jesus' words and ask the Spirit to reveal to you how you can be used by the One who has already saved you, so you can help sow the seeds of God's grace to save others from the pending judgment. Become a worker!

PRAISE HARVESTER

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us.
— PSALM 67:5-6 NIV



GAME
NIGHT

for teens

Engaging Families to Grow Kids in the Gospel

The CE board hosted FCC teens on Sunday, January 21 with a feast of subs, mac & cheese, and other delectable snacks & sweets. Our upstairs teen room has had a recent furniture update. The new tables were initiated with a collection of games including Tenzi, Sequence, Uno Flip, and Pictionary. Thanks for making the time to gather, connect, and laugh.





Secret Sister Reveal Party



The Mysterious Glow of Love— Robin Jones Gunn

My eyes are always laughing about some secret and
even my posture improved.

Love makes me beautiful and heals.

Love has enabled me to soar higher
into the heavens and into my relationship
with God than I ever have gone before.

Love has given me breath as I have plunged
deeper into the ocean
of understanding and patience.

Love has focused my eyes to the minutest
details, as minor as a ladybug
inching across a daisy petal.

And at the same time, love has enlarged my
embrace so that I can gather friends and
family closer to my heart than ever before.

Love is God's greatest gift and
His most cherished reward.

It is the echo of His own heart,
sounded back to Him by us, His children,
so that a decaying world might see firsthand
the power of resurrection and new life.

The Secret Sister program was
brought back in 2020 as a ministry of
encouragement among women at FCC.

For the past 3 seasons, participants have been paired with a
different sister in Christ who has offered encouragement and
prayer. Our goal has been to foster deeper connections with
one another. On Monday, January 22, an evening soup
supper was shared and Sisters in Christ learned who had been
their secret prayer partner. Our theme this year, Sister
Chicks, derived from a book series by Robin Jones Gunn. In
the series, gal friends reconnect as they travel together and
make memories growing deeper in their faith. We laughed
as we shared “adventures” in secret sisterhood, and hearts
were warmed by the bonds of support forged throughout the
year. Our evening benediction, *God be with you 'til we meet
again*, was sung to one another, wrapping each one in a
blanket of Christ's love.

Photo credit: Elaine Cochran



Lamb of God returns to Miller Auditorium

In this sacred musical retelling of the final days of the life of Jesus Christ, His atonement and Resurrection, the Lamb of God tells the story through the eyes of those who loved Jesus and knew Him best. The show will return to Kalamazoo's Miller Auditorium on Saturday, February 10 at 7:30 PM. (Don't be surprised to see someone you know on stage!)

Consider experiencing this powerful combination of song, music, and spoken word. Tickets are \$18-30.





04 Aaron Siegler
05 Margaret Brown
Olga Allen
Carol Sneller

13 Alex Letts
16 Shirley Ross
21 Lisa Letts
22 Milo Brown
23 Leon Belden
25 Trevor Belden



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 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	2 8 Food Warehouse	3
4 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship CE Mtg	5	6	7 5:45 Prayer Mtg	8 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Dinner	9 8 Food Warehouse	10 8:30 Men's Breakfast  7:30 Lamb of God @ Miller Auditor.
11 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Trustee Mtg	12 5:30 Women's Fellowship	13 7 Diaconate Mtg	14 10 Grief Group 5:45 Prayer Mtg 	15 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	16 8 Food Warehouse	17
18 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	19	20	21 5:45 Prayer Mtg	22 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	23 8 Food Warehouse	24
25 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	26	27	28 10 Grief Group 5:45 Prayer Mtg	29 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner		

The First Congregational Church of Allegan



323 Cutler St - Allegan, MI 49010

Church Phone: 269-673-3139

Email: fccofallegan@gmail.com

Website: fccofallegan.weebly.com

Worship with us on Sundays at 10:30 AM!

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Unending

Excerpt from Amy Carmichael
Edges of His Way

In Tamil, Amy learned a polite word which tells someone who asks for something that we have nothing to give;

we have run short of it — *Poochiam*.

One day, she felt like saying Poochiam about love. She felt her capacity for it had been maxed out. Sitting by the pool, the running water caught her attention. The stream ran in, down the smooth rocks from above, and out. There was always inflow, so there was always outflow. As she thought about it, “the hollow that we call the Pool had no water of its own, and yet all the year round there was an overflow.” And she remembered God’s good word from 2 Timothy 1:7 “God hath not given you the Spirit of fear, . . . but of love.” If love flows in, love will flow out. Let love flow in. That was the word of the Pool. There is no need for any of us to run short of love. We need never say

Poochiam.

