



# The Allegan Congregationalist

September 2023

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

## The Hunger for Performance by Greg Carlson



### Calendar Events:

- Sept. 8-16  
Volunteers needed to host the info table at the Fair for the Congregational Kitchen
- 9/9 9 AM Float Building at the Wagner's
- 9/11 6:30 PM Fair Parade
- 9/24 Special Celebration to honor Leah VanOrder

I recently sang an old hymn, *Abide with Me*. The second stanza stood out to me perhaps because, as a chaplain to dying folks, I see a lot of change, sickness, and death. In our ever-changing world, it is helpful to think about what, rather Who, is truly permanent.

*Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day  
 Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away  
 Change and decay in all around I see  
 O Thou who changest not, abide with me*

### In this rapidly changing world, I am thankful for a fixed point.

“For I, the Lord, do not change...” (Malachi 3:6).

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow” (James 1:17).

“His dominion is an everlasting dominion” (Daniel 7:14).

“You are the same, And Your years will not come to an end” (Hebrews 1:12).

**Knowing who God is.** David Gibson, the Scottish Pastor said, "I want to suggest that knowing your place in the world and your times in God's hands provides the most wonderful ballast when all around is tumult and chaos. Mature believers know who God is, so they know their places in the times in which they live."

**The genius of the book of Ecclesiastes is to set our brevity against God's eternity.** Its stunning surprise is that the more we come to terms with how we are like the morning mist - here one moment and gone the next - the more we are free to enjoy life for the good gift from God that it is. This happens the more we are astounded at the constancy of God. He is not like us.

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## The Hunger for Performance (cont.)

**God has every moment at once.** God is not limited by increments of time as we are. He exists outside of time as He created it. Hence philosophers such as Francis Turretin, (1623-1687) have well said that “neither the future nor the past (He will be or He was), but only the present (He is) can properly apply to Him.” In his perfect intelligence of all things at once, God is not subject to the succession of time.



**Chapter three of Ecclesiastes contrasts the transitory with the eternal.** The first part of the chapter shows the various transitions we face. For example, there is a time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot, etc. 3:11 shows the contrasts to those transitions when he says, “[God has...] set eternity in the human heart.” In this life of change, we long for a fixed point where life will remain the way God intended it in the first place. The certainty of our hope is in the unchanging God.

## A Celebration to Honor Leah VanOrder

A luncheon will be served on  
 Sunday, September 24  
 following our  
 worship service honoring  
**Leah VanOrder.**

Please join us to celebrate

Leah's years of  
 dedicated service!



## Three Things Not To Do

By Todd Wagner

It's hard to believe that September is here already. Where did our summer go? Inquiring minds want to know – at least I do. But moving into another season is not a bad thing either as it brings change which can be exciting. Speaking of change, have you ever considered how much you've changed after you became a believer in Christ Jesus? If you haven't, maybe you should take some time to think about it. When we first come to faith in Christ, something happens to us. We die to our old selves and are reborn as a new creation in the spirit (2 Corinthians 5:17). As we're reborn, God creates in us a new heart (Ezekiel 36:26) and promises the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will then dwell within us and work on us, creating change from within. He will help us and be with us forever (John 14:16). As we begin to live with the Holy Spirit, we develop a relationship with Him, Jesus, and God. All that is left for us now is to think about how to enjoy and live out our communion with the Lord.

Last month I wrote about the promise of the Holy Spirit, and how He works in us and for us. We saw a number of promises involving the Holy Spirit and the blessings He provides the believer. But did you know there are things that we should avoid as we enjoy our communion with the Spirit? This month, I would like to share these things with you so we can continue to grow and change in the likeness of our Savior.

1. **Do not Grieve the Holy Spirit.** One of the things we must avoid doing is grieving the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul tells us this in Ephesians 4:30, **“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”** Like any good friend, the Spirit loves us and desires what is best for us. He cares about us deeply as any good and kind friend would. And like any friend, he is not pleased when we make foolish choices and engage in self-destructive behaviors, because that's the exact opposite of what he wants for us. Therefore, we must walk away from and put off sinful behaviors. If we do not, then we work against the Holy Spirit who works to sanctify us and make us more holy than we were or are. Not grieving the Spirit requires us to live holy lives, both avoiding sin and cultivating godly virtues. So how do we avoid grieving the Spirit? Paul explains in verse 31 saying, **“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”** Instead, Paul continues, **“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”** (Ephesians 4:32). The danger of grieving the Spirit is very real, and the consequences are steep. Isaiah 63:10 tells us, **“But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore He turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.”**

2. **Do not quench the Holy Spirit.**

Because the Holy Spirit is powerfully at work in us, we should not quench (or extinguish) the Spirit. Unlike grieving the Spirit,

### HOLY SPIRIT FIRE

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit...

— ACTS 2:3-4 NIV

## Before & After: A Life Transformation Story (cont.)

quenching the Spirit has more to do with our attitude toward his work than it does with how we respect and treat Him. In an article written by Mike McKinley titled, "Friendship with God," McKinley describes quenching the Holy Spirit this way: "Quenching the Spirit, then, is like throwing a soaking wet log onto the fire of his work in us . . . when we care infinitely more about the things of our daily lives than what He wants to produce in us, or when we do things we know are exactly the opposite of what the Spirit desires for us, then we are quenching His work." So instead of dousing the fire, we should be embracing the work of the Holy Spirit so we can "...fan into flame the gift of God..." (2 Timothy 1:6). To stoke the fire, we must put His gifts to work to bear good fruit for which they were given.

3. **Do not resist the Holy Spirit.** How can we do that you ask? First, you must understand that the Holy Spirit works through the preaching of God's Word and the proclaiming of the Gospel. The Bible speaks of this in Acts 7, as Stephen addresses the Jews who resist the Gospel message of Jesus. Just as the religious leaders and pious Jews could not silence Stephen, the Holy Spirit also demonstrated His power in Paul's preaching of the Gospel. Although we no longer have prophets or apostles today, we do have God's infallible word in Scripture and godly men who have been called upon to preach this word. The Holy Spirit empowers pastors and teachers to proclaim the word that He has inspired for the benefit and building up of believers in the church. When you are inattentive to, disinterested in, or critical of the Bible as it is preached to you, then you are resisting the Holy Spirit. Instead, we're to embrace God's word, giving God and those who preach His word due honor in humility and with reverence. This way, we live in a harmonious relationship with the Spirit, communing with Him, the Son, and the Father.



Because we've been afforded the incredible gift of grace through faith, we have also received the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit. We must be careful not to do the things outlined above, as they are sins that carry consequences. Instead, be on your guard against them and pursue the Holy Spirit and your walk with Him. Honor Him and cherish Him and His presence in your life. Take advantage of His guidance, and fellowship with Him in prayer. Do not grieve Him in poor behavior but embrace Him and the fruits of His Spirit. Do not quench the Spirit, but fan the flames of the gift of God, and do not resist Him by ignoring God's Word. Listen intently, ever seeking His wisdom. Remember, the Holy Spirit is working constantly and powerfully in the lives of all who believe in the Father and His Son Jesus. His work changes us, just as the seasons change. Now, examine yourselves and think, have I changed since I first believed? I bet you have, and the surest sign of this change is your desire for goodness, mercy, love, and the creation of a regenerated heart.



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.





### Christian Education

## Engaging Families to Grow Kids in the Gospel

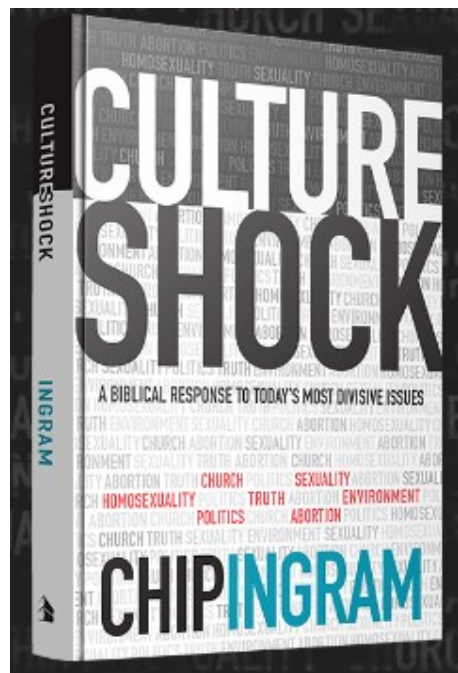
### VBS: Son Spark Labs July 10-12

Photo Credit: Theresa Prolo, Elsie Jones



Summer brings with it the fun of Vacation Bible School. For many years, we have partnered with friends from The River Church and Christ Community Church to make learning about Jesus fun in song, games, Bible stories, snacks, and crafts. This July, we learned that God’s Plan for Us is Jesus! Our science theme reinforced that God made the earth and all within it. Life works all around us according to His principles. He knew sin would separate us from Him and Jesus is the bridge that brings us back into relationship with the Father.

Learning continued throughout the summer with lessons and crafts for kids during the worship service. Our Sunday School will officially kick off again following fair. We can’t wait to continue growing in God’s Word with our youth. The teen group will begin a new study, *Culture Shock*. Through this video series, author, pastor, and radio personality Chip Ingram shows how you can bring light rather than heat to the most controversial and divisive issues of our day.





## Bumper Cars, Entertainment Stars ... & You!

Looking for a way to represent FCC in the community?  
See Mrs. B or Carrie Lovett for opportunities at this year's fair.

We will be building a float for this year's fair parade on Saturday, 9/9, at 9 AM at the Wagners. The fair parade begins in downtown Allegan at 6:30 PM on Monday Sept. 11. The ukelele band will play and members are needed to deliver goodies to the crowd.

The Congregational Kitchen will host an information booth all week long at the fair. This is a great opportunity to meet our community and share our mission & purpose.



### Missions Update from the Frasers

Friends, what started as a routine screening is turning into quite a journey. In July, Tricia went for a check-up and mammogram. The technician found a suspicious area, which led to a biopsy, then a diagnosis of early-stage cancer, and will next lead to a mastectomy. We don't have a date yet, but it's likely to be in the next 2-3 weeks. If you'd like to be in a special chat group to receive prayer updates, let us know. We definitely covet your prayers for peace and for the surgery to go well. A biopsy of her lymph node will be done at the time of surgery, so we won't know until later whether or not the cancer has spread, but the doctor who did the first biopsy thought it likely that surgery will be all that's needed.

Onto happier updates, thanks so much for praying our English Camp! The Lingo portion of our TeachBeyond Hungary team led their first ever English camp in Hungary! Lingo is the branch of TeachBeyond that focuses on teaching English in public schools. John was pleased to be able to help and the camp was a great success. He was able to build relationships with the students and also share his testimony with everyone at the camp. He also led a workshop about making home-made graham crackers, which led up to the s'mores around the campfire on the last night of camp!

Other prayer requests and quick updates:

- John will start teaching a middle school Sunday School class about apologetics in our church this Sunday. Pray that students will be strengthened in their faith!
- Hannah has started teaching 3rd grade in Buffalo. Pray that she will have a great transition and a great year of teaching. We are still praying for God's provision of a car for her.
- Pray for Matthew as he's starting his last year at the University of Rochester. He's carrying a heavy course load so that he can graduate in the spring.
- Jonathan is starting 10th grade and is now exactly the same height as John. Pray that he will continue to grow in the Lord.
- Pray for provision for all of our financial needs. We don't know how well our insurance will cover the surgery yet, but since our support account has been dropping, there's not a lot of room in the budget.



9/9 Janet Siegler  
 9/10 Austin Letts  
 9/11 Stephan Allen  
 9/30 Cathy Morgan  
 9/30 Randy Sneller



9/4 Ray & Gerry Harris  
 9/25 Denny & Leah VanOrder  
 9/27 Rick & Olga Allen  
 9/28 Pat & Rhoda Ryan



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 8 Food Warehouse	2 8 Food Warehouse
				9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Dinner		
3 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	4 	5 6:00 Uke Practice	6 5:45 Prayer Mtg	7 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Dinner	8 8 Food Warehouse	9 8:30 Men's Breakfast 10 Float Building
10 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Trustee Mtg	11 6:30 Fair Parade	12 7 Diaconate Mtg	13 10 Grief Group 5:45 Prayer Mtg	14 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	15 8 Food Warehouse	16
17 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	18	19	20 5:45 Prayer Mtg	21 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	22 8 Food Warehouse	23
24 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Leah's Celebration!	25	26	27 10 Grief Group 5:45 Prayer Mtg	28 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	29 8 Food Warehouse	30 <b>LITURGIST:</b> Joanie T. <b>GREETER:</b> Jeff P.

## The First Congregational Church of Allegan

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Email: [fccofallegan@gmail.com](mailto:fccofallegan@gmail.com)

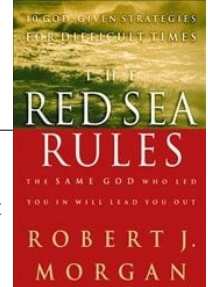
Website: [fccofallegan.weebly.com](http://fccofallegan.weebly.com)

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## Advancing Through Adversity

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Pastor Greg began a series in August highlighting how to advance through adversity. Our scripture reference comes from Exodus Chapter 14. You know the story, God has led the Israelite slaves out of Egypt. Pharaoh and his army of chariots are in swift pursuit pressing in from behind, the desert wilderness surrounds on the sides, and the Red Sea blocks forward progress...*until God makes a way.*

This series was inspired by Robert Morgan's *The Red Sea Rules* in which he outlines 10 rules to follow in adversity.

- Rule #1: Realize that God means for you to be where you are.
- Rule #2: Be more concerned for God's glory than for your relief.
- Rule #3: Acknowledge your enemy, but keep your eyes on the Lord.
- Rule #4: Pray!
- Rule #5: Stay calm and confident, and give God time to work
- Rule #6: When unsure, just take the next logical step by faith.
- Rule #7: Envision God's enveloping presence.
- Rule #8: Trust God to deliver in His own unique way.
- Rule #9: View your current crisis as a faith builder for the future.
- Rule #10: Don't forget to praise Him.

*If God has led  
you in, He will  
lead you out.*  
Join us for worship!  
God has a word for  
your heart in the next  
message in the series.