



The Allegan Congregationalist

November 2023

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

God is Blessed as He Comforts Us by Greg Carlson



Calendar Events:

- 11/18 Annual Bazaar 9-1
- 12/1 Downtown Christmas Parade 6:30 PM
- 12/3 Advent begins
- 12/24 Christmas Eve Service

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

In this benediction, Paul speaks of the blessings we receive in God’s merciful comfort, the same comfort we can give to others. But Paul also offers blessings to God for His great mercy. Paul says that the comfort of God comes to us “in all our afflictions.” Here, “afflictions” refers to the inner turmoil and trouble we feel from external difficulties, particularly those difficulties we face from a world that is hostile to Christ. God promises to be with us in our suffering to comfort us and to give us the grace to endure (Deut. 31:8; 2 Cor. 12:8-9).

Suffering is a gift from God. It is not that pain in itself is a good thing; rather, as we share in Christ’s sufferings, we are granted the privilege of sharing in God’s comfort. But here is the thought that stands out to me today. Our suffering can also be used to bless God. God is blessed when we bring our distresses and fears to him.

We are often tempted to live in a state of distress and fear. Each temptation, however, is an opportunity to approach our Father with the attitude of “I will trust in you” flowing from our hearts and lips. You may have a child, grandchild or pet who can be easily frightened by sights or sounds threatening to them. At that point, they may look to you to hold them for reassurance with calm and encouraging tones. You and I love this, of course, not that we want them to be scared, but that they look to us and find comfort when troubled.

Psa. 56:3-4 says, “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise—in God I trust and am not afraid.”

Life will bring its frights and insecurities to us just as it did to Jesus before he was crucified. We live in a fearful world, both in real and



Inside this issue:

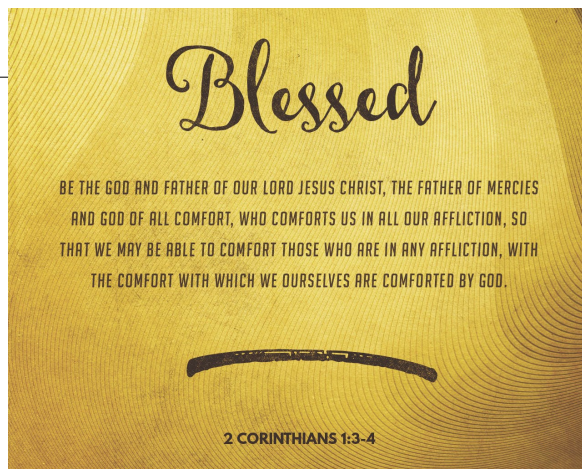
Annual Bazaar	2
Do What Matters	3
Trunk ‘N Treat	4
Hymn Sing	5
Missions Update	6
Calendar	7

God is Blessed as He Comforts Us (cont.)

perceived dangers. Our flesh reacts to threats of harm, a good thing in one sense, because fearful reactions can serve as a warning to avoid danger. However, those fears that abide with us as paralyzing hindrances to our walk with the Lord in His peace must be overcome.

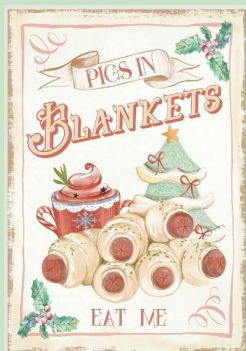
How blessed God is when we come to Him for reassurance, far more than are we by receiving it. Each time we draw near the Lord in heart and faith, he is able to secure our heart in his peace. He is glad to do this because he loves us and delights in meeting us at our point of need. In this moment, the Prince of Peace offers His heart of peace as our haven in times of temptation to worry, fret and fear. The Holy Spirit who came to dwell within our spirits when we believed is not a “spirit of fear.” Instead, power, love and a sound mind flow from His presence to our hearts. Our role involves remembering and affirming the truth by coming to our Father for His promised assurance.

As you experience and exude that peace, God is glorified in and through you even as he is blessed by your trust in him.



Annual Bazaar: Saturday, November 18

For Sale:



Homemade Pigs in a Blanket

We are taking pre-sale orders.
\$6 for 6 or \$10 for a dozen

On Saturday, November 18 from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM the Women's Fellowship will host our annual church bazaar. This is the largest fundraiser for our group and will help with housekeeping projects, ladies' ministry programs, and fellowship events. How Can You Help?

Donate

We are seeking your donations of baked goods and cookies. It will be most helpful to have your items by Friday, 11/17, when set-up commences.

Volunteer

Come join the fun. Many hands make light work and we'd love to join together for a successful fundraiser. Volunteers are needed to setup, oversee tables during the bazaar, and teardown.

Shop

Please contact Theresa Prolo at 269-650-2037 for additional information.



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.

Doing What Matters

By Todd Wagner

The other day I feverishly tried to whittle down my ever-growing “to-do” list at home. I knew I would only be able to get a couple of things checked off. After finishing one project out by the barn, it was off to the next. While I was walking down the gravel drive toward the house, I began thinking of the many more things I *needed to get done* [keep this statement in mind as it will be applicable here shortly]. I wasn’t just thinking of small things, like mowing the lawn or changing the oil in the truck, but more labor-intensive home improvements such as replacing my back deck, installing new flooring and remodeling a bathroom and laundry room. These things were on my mind because, in just a few months, we will be celebrating our last child’s high school graduation, two or three college graduations, and a Silver Jubilee (aka our 25th wedding anniversary). I am planning on doing a lot of celebrating and having as many friends over as possible to celebrate with us, therefore everything must be just right and completed to perfection.

Now as I am still walking along the drive, my mind looks at where I am taking my next steps. I said to myself, “I wonder if anyone will care that I lived here one hundred years from now? Will anyone care about all the hard work I put in to make this home what it is? “Will anyone in my future family even know who I was?” The funny thing is, the answer to all these questions came rather swiftly with a big resounding **NO!** Nothing worldly I do will matter to anyone, even my descendants. It was then that the Spirit reminded me of our Lord’s teaching. Jesus tells us plainly, *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* **Matthew 6:19-21 NIV.**

God speaks to us during times when we least expect it. He seldom answers back when you intentionally sit to listen for Him, but instead, He chooses the perfect time to have a chat. As I began thinking of His words, I could not deny just how right He was. Though I already was deeply engaged in doing this with intense study so I could go and preach His message, I realized that I could preach this message now to whoever would read this small article. Jesus sent his disciples on a great mission (**Matt. 28:18-20**), and we are to be His witnesses (**Acts 1:8**), spreading the Good News. We’re living in a time and season where the world is ugly, filled with secularism and anti-intellectualism. The world is involved in various wars that may be spreading, and many have turned away from the faith, and embraced their hearts’ desire. We should not be worried about the worldly things we think are important. Instead, we should be worried about being obedient followers of Christ who bought us with a price (**1 Cor. 6:20**).

What matters here and now is showing our love for one another, building unity within the body of Christ, and proclaiming the Gospel to all of creation (**Mk. 16:15**). So, how shall we build our treasure in heaven? Simply by being a witness for Christ Jesus and the Kingdom of God. The original twelve were sent on a mission where they were to go out into the world and all nations. Today, like those of the early Church, our mission is not to go out to far-off places, but to simply be witnesses. We’re to testify about Jesus, His death and resurrection, God’s grace, and the free gift of eternal life. About everything that is good and righteous. We can do this whether at work, in our local community, or even in our local and state government. Author Steve Walton once wrote, “Testimony of Jesus involves speaking uncomfortable truth...” Some people may be receptive, others may not. You may be hated because of the truth you speak (**Jn. 15:18**). But with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can continue what the apostles started. Remember how I mentioned the things I ‘*needed to get done*’? What I need to get done more than anything is to be obedient to the One who bought me. What we need to get done is to spread the Gospel. What I encourage all of you to get done is to be witnesses for Jesus Christ, and build your treasure in heaven, so your heart may be there also. This is what matters in this life.

Seek 'N Treat, Tuesday October 31



The weather forecasted snow for Halloween...and was right! Mrs. B. said the move indoors was such a blessing! "The community was welcomed in with warmth from our volunteers and the warmth from God's house. I heard people saying how cool it was as they walked in and more than one family said they'd like to come on Sunday as they ushered their kiddos out the door. There was a small table set out with Bibles and all found new homes by the end of the night. We had an abundance of candy, treats, and popcorn. Thanks again to everyone who made this evening such a success...from help getting the parking lot set up, encouraging families to come in, welcoming our guests through the door, popcorn poppers and runners to restock the table, the "cast of characters" who manned the booths who went above and beyond, everyone who helped pick up AND the GENEROSITY of our church family with candy, cookies, chips, etc. was above and beyond! It was an evening I will cherish as an opportunity to serve our Lord!"



Hymn Sing



Voices may have been slightly hoarse at Sunday worship throughout several southwest Michigan churches. The cause? Not flu season. Not a sporting event amidst rival teams. Rather, the First Congregational Church hosted its annual hymn sing on Saturday, October 28. What a joy to fill the sanctuary in song with beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life. Elaine Cochran polled the crowd from the pulpit for favorite hymns while Pastor Greg Carlson and Phil Siegler sat ready at the organ and grand piano. Their fingers flew over the keys while voices soared. There is a special power in music that directly hits the heart. Elaine Cochran said, "We cannot have such words spoken without emotion. We must not. Just like singing. I felt the strength and emotion of the music coming from the crowd . . .so overwhelming at times, I had to take steps back in order to absorb it!" She wasn't the only one. Todd Wagner commented, "When the people of God are gathered together in the name of Jesus, God draws near. Our praises through song are sacrifices to the Lord."

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name..

Hebrews 13:15



Except from Will Dickerson's Letter

In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus tells the well-known "Parable of the Talents." In the ancient world, a talent was actually a large amount of gold or silver. I have read various estimates that put a talent at somewhere between 75-100 lbs. Can you imagine how much 100 lbs of pure gold would be worth today? It is clear that the master entrusted each of his three servants with an enormous treasure. So, what exactly was this treasure? As we are told elsewhere in Scripture, the greatest treasure that we have been given is the Gospel itself—it is the Good News that Jesus Christ has set us free from the condemnation of sin and death, and that He offers us eternal life. This is the "treasure" for which a man sacrifices all he has (Matthew 13:44). Likewise, it is the "pearl of great price" (Matthew 13:45-46). Let us suppose, therefore, that each of the master's servants was entrusted with the Gospel. What did each do with it?...In turn, how are we doing with the great treasure—the Gospel—that has been entrusted to us? Is our love for our Master so irrepressible and so contagious that others cannot help but see Christ through us? Are we gladly employing our abilities, skill, and gifts to help others come to know the Good News of Jesus Christ? Are we using our material resources to build God's Kingdom? Or are we driven by fear? Have we turned inward? Have we dug a hole in which we have hidden the treasure entrusted to us?

Sometimes it is obvious when individuals have dug a hole. They may attend church regularly, but once the worship service ends and they go home, their words and deeds offer no evidence that they love Jesus Christ. Rather, we see people driven by fear and guilt. We see people simply hoping to avoid hell by following the rules. In the same way, sometimes we see congregations do this at the institutional level. These congregations say that they want to reach the world with the Gospel, but their actions speak otherwise. They become more interested in maintaining what they have than in expanding the Kingdom of God... Often there is a richness to our customs and traditions that help us in our worship of the Almighty. However, we always need to be alert as to how easy it is to begin putting our faith and trust in our rules. When these rules begin to supersede the practice of Christian love and charity, they become holes in which we bury the Gospel.

Please pray for the missionaries we support as they work abroad to introduce people to Jesus Christ and train those who already know Him.



**Will & Julia Dickerson
in Hungary**

- Praise that Julia's declining vision has stabilized.
- Praise for a new school year and evangelist opportunities from the discovery of Will's book by one of his juniors.
- Prayers for OMS English Club and that the love of Jesus Christ would be made known through words and deeds. Specifically, Helena
- Continued prayers for relationship with and salvation for Janka & Balázs and Goddard Zsuzsa & Marcel.
- Pray for the Stout family as Julia's father passed away on 10/4.



**John & Tricia Fraser
in Hungary**

- Praise for Tricia's successful surgery following her breast cancer diagnosis.
- Continued prayers for her cancer treatments to follow.
- Continued guidance for John as he seeks apologetic ministry options with students



**Ed & Valerie Johnson
in Papua New Guinea**

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



11/3 Madds Luedecking
 11/4 Lizzy Ehrich
 11/4 Jacob Hansen
 11/7 Kim Klein
 11/10 Joan Simmons

11/10 Elaine Cochran
 11/16 Elsie Jones
 11/17 Olivia Belden
 11/19 Doug Nooney
 11/21 Cathy Moored
 11/24 Ashton Prolo



11/1 Al & Lisa Letts
 11/5 Stub & Cathy Moored
 11/7 Rob & Denni Proctor



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 5:45 Prayer Mtg	2 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Dinner	3 8 Food Warehouse	4 
5 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship CE Mtg	6	7	8 10 Grief Group 5:45 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Choir Practice	9 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Dinner	10 8 Food Warehouse	11 8:30 Men's Breakfast 
12 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Trustee Mtg	13 5:30 Women's Fellowship	14 7 Diaconate Mtg	15 5:45 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Choir Practice	16 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	17 8 Food Warehouse	18  9 AM—1 PM
19 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	20	21	22 10 Grief Group 5:45 Prayer Mtg	23 Happy Thanksgiving 	24 8 Food Warehouse	25
26 9 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	27	28	29 5:45 Prayer Mtg 6:30 Choir Practice	30 9:45 & 12:30 Food Warehouse 3-5:30 CK Take-out Dinner	8 Food Warehouse	LITURGIST: Joanie T. GREETER: Rick A.



The First Congregational Church of Allegan

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Worship with us on Sundays at 10:30 AM!

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Giving Thanks

By Rick Warren

The Bible tells us “Give thanks IN ALL circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” The key is the word “in.” God doesn’t expect me to be thankful FOR all circumstances, but IN all circumstances. We’re not supposed to be thankful for evil or sin. But even in heartache and grief and disappointment, there are still good things that I can be thankful for. I used to think that life was a series of mountain highs and valley lows, but actually we get both at the same time. In our world broken by sin, the good and the bad come together. So what am I thankful for this Thanksgiving?

- I’m thankful that, although not everything that happens is good, God is a good God.
- I’m thankful that, even though I don’t have all the answers, God does. It is God’s presence that eases our pain.
- I’m thankful that this life is not all there is. It’s not the end of the story. One day God will right all wrongs. Evil loses.
- I’m thankful for the hope of heaven.
- I’m thankful for my church family.
- I’m thankful that God can bring good even out of the bad in my life, when I give him the pieces. It’s his specialty. God loves to turn crucifixions into resurrections, and then benefit the whole world. God never wastes a hurt if we give it to him.

Itzhak Pearlman once broke a string at the start of a Lincoln Center recital. Rather than replacing it, he played the entire concert with a broken instrument. At the end he said, “Sometimes it is the artist’s task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left.” That kind of humility honors God. This Thanksgiving, don’t dwell on what’s lost, but on what’s left.