

The Courier

September

First Congregational Church of Almont

2006

Scott Davis
Ministries

presents

**Hope Through
Hilarity**

September 23rd
7:00—9:00 PM

Fellowship event
in Fellowship Hall

Love offering
will be taken

*Look inside
for details!*

Inside this Issue

Youth Ministry News

Trustee & Deacon updates

Men's Ministries

Women's Ministries

Children's Ministries

And much more

Discipleship 101 by Keith Langley

This month I have been asked to write the “front page article” for the Courier. I guess I’m moving up in the world. Perhaps my readership will increase. ☺ Anyway, as I thought about what God might have me say to the congregation at large, my mind came to rest on the idea of continuing the idea of discipleship.

By now, we should all have some understanding of what discipleship is. A brief review of the definition should make things fresh in our minds. Discipleship: changing one’s life to become more like Christ through intentional training, and teamwork. That pretty well sums it up. However, I would like to focus on the first part of that definition; “changing one’s life to become more like Christ...”

T – Teaching: the knowledge needed to be a disciple of Christ

R – Relationships: Are you plugged in with a group of people who expect and encourage you to become more like Jesus day by day?

A – Attributes: How are your attitudes, and your characteristics becoming more like Christ?

I – Investments: spiritual disciplines that take an investment of time, energy, and effort.

N – Needs: Seeking to meet the needs of others.

Rather than going through each of these items in the acrostic individually in this article, I would like to focus on two of them today. One of them I have watched grow in our church over the years, namely relationships.

We have done a pretty good job emphasizing relationships within our Body. People have bonded, and look forward to being with one another. One of the best avenues for this has been the proliferation of small groups. If you have

not plugged into a small group, I strongly encourage you to find a group that is a comfortable place for you to be yourself.

Further, in this area of relationships, I encourage each person within our church to have two or three people who you are willing to allow to speak into your life. This means when things are going well, but also when things are not going well. These folks will encourage, rebuke, teach, and correct you. And what is more, you allow them to without getting offensive because you know that they are doing so because they love and care for you, and they expect you to become more like Jesus, as revealed in God’s Word.

The second area I wanted to mention in this article is the area of attributes. I think this is perhaps a neglected, yet needed area of our lives. If we truly want to become more like Jesus, then we have to take an honest look at who we are. Let me stop right there. That can be a painful process. That is why this area is so ignored. It takes a lot to make a very honest self-evaluation. After we have evaluated ourselves (this is a great area for those two or three individuals to help you with that we mentioned earlier), we need to look for areas that need to change. The question to ask ourselves is: What area(s) of my life need to be worked on to become more like Jesus? Is it love, forgiveness, humility, obedience, or you fill in the blank. Whatever it is, I think we all need to make commitments to ourselves, and with close friends that we will work on areas of our life that need to be more like Jesus.

As we turn our attention to becoming more like Jesus, don’t forget that this does not happen overnight, or effortlessly. It will take both time and concerted effort. It’s work to become more like Jesus. However, the time and intentional effort invested will be the wisest investments we can ever make.

TRUSTEE UPDATE:

The Board of Trustees asks you to join us in giving thanks to God for His unfailing love and mercy. He has extended His grace to us in many ways in spite of some difficulties we have faced as a church family. Therefore, we should come together often for the purpose of “giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20). The following are some things to be thankful for regarding the Body of Christ here at First Congregational Church:

- That many have stepped up into service, volunteer, and board positions. The list of service areas is too long to list, but it includes music, worship planning, prayer groups, children’s church, nursery, VBS, lawn care, gardening, building maintenance, Love INC ministries,

small groups, youth ministries, sound and screen technicians, ushers, greeters, coffee hour hosts and hostesses, library workers, etc. If you are unsure where your talents and gifts lie, try several things that interest you and God will show you your gifts!

- That we are meeting our financial obligations despite decreased summer attendance. We are now facing some new challenges (fire alarm system, office insulation, window painting, steeple repair, etc.) that need our attention, but God’s mercy and faithfulness are infinite (Psalm 36:5)! May we all strive to be faithful in our sacrificial giving to the work of the Lord here at FCC.
- That God would give us the privilege of calling

and affirming the next pastor He would have for us. Continue in prayer for the Search Committee as they labor to discern where the Holy Spirit is leading them regarding this important matter.

We have much to be thankful for. And to whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48). May we all determine to demonstrate our love for each other, through good works, as a natural outpouring of thanksgiving for His love and grace extended to us in salvation.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, in you have love for one another (John 13:34-35).



www.almontfcc.org

Our new website is up and running! It’s not only a gateway to those who are looking for a new church, but also a great way for us to stay connected with each other. The site will be updated constantly, so it will be the key place to check out the latest church happenings. Be sure to look at the **Coming Up!** and the **Ministries** pages for upcoming events, and **GET CONNECTED!** for information on our newest **Small Groups**. While you’re there, be sure to **Become a Site Member** so that you’ll have access to our online church directory and other pages. For all this and more take time to visit our site, then come back often to stay connected!

Youth Ministry News

Oh How the Months Go By By Pastor Keith

Believe it or not, we are already staring Fall in the face. The summer has come and gone like a thunderstorm in the night; we never really noticed it, but we sure do see the results of it after it passes. This summer has been crazier than most for me. As you can imagine, recent events within the church have played a part in my crazy summer. However, that is not that part of summer that I choose to dwell on in this article. This summer we had two major trips that took place: Jamaica and our annual Canoe/Adventure Trip with our Jr. High students.

Many of you have heard the students' testimonies of our trip to Jamaica. I believe it was an eye-opening experience for each of us who went. Some realized the value of short term missions, some connected on a deeper level with their Savior, and some realized the power of God's love being acted out in very real ways.

Allow me to fill in some of the gaps of the trip. We intentionally arrived one day early due to the flight being cheaper, and to allow our students one day to have to themselves. It was meant as a fun day, which it was, but it also was a help in an unexpected way: we were well rested. You see the rest of the church groups that came had less time to rest for ministry. We wound up with an extra 24 hours to rest, get our bearings, and prepare for the task at hand.

AIM (the company we went with) worked us hard all week, yet gave us appropriate rest breaks

from the heat and humidity. At the end of the week, AIM gave us a full day off in which we were able to take in one of Jamaica's most well-known attractions: Dunn's River Falls in Ocho Rios. It was a good day to relax, have some fun, and unwind from a long draining week.

The following day, we were worshipping in the church we had served with all week long. We performed our drama, gave testimonies of what God had done in our lives, and then took Sharon out for lunch along with her two children. Sharon is the one we helped purchased groceries for, cleaned her house, and gave her some extra money to assist with bills. Overall, the trip was a phenomenal investment in the lives of several Jamaican people, as well as in our lives.

The other big trip just ended a week or so ago with our Jr. Highers. I knew this trip would be different because of the types of things we were doing, but WOW was it good! We began by hiking in 4 miles to our camp site. The whole hike was done with harnesses on, and tethered together by a rope, a la mountaineering style. Near where we camped there was a small river that emptied into the bigger river. The small river formed a "natural water slide" in the rocks where the kids were able to chute down the slide, and into the river.

The next morning we got up, were handed large pieces of foam, inner tubes, and rope and told to put together a raft. This would be our transportation for the day. The kids

had a blast; figuring out how to keep the boat together, rafting down the river, and trying to take over the other team's raft. Along the way there were several places to swim, use the rescue boat to dive, or as a water slide into the river.

Our final day was spent biking. 28 miles. On tandem bicycles. After you get the hang of a tandem bike, it is actually easier than riding a regular bike. However, coming out of our campsite we were greeted with about a mile long hill. Gut-busting is the only word for it. The good news is that we got to go down that same hill on the way back. That made for speeds around 35-40 miles per hour. Lots of fun!!!

Oh, sounds like just a fun trip? No. Our guides gave us a devotional book that walked us through the fruit of the Spirit. Each day we would take time to meet with God. Each evening we would discuss the day's events; from what we learned in our devotions, to what we learned walking together being tethered, or our tandem bike ride. Here's a hint: LOTS of teamwork!

Thank you for your prayers! They have meant more than you can imagine. Please continue to pray for the youth ministry, the volunteer leaders, and for me as we work with students to help them conform themselves to Christ's image.

Men's Ministry Fall '06

"Moving Forward"

Author Ken Miles tells an interesting story. In college he got into the habit of grabbing a cardboard cup of instant coffee from a machine on the way to his first class. His interest, of course, was jump-starting his brain, not indulging his taste buds. Several weeks later a friend offered him a cup of freshly ground, freshly brewed, real coffee. Finding it no kin to the thin, bitter liquid to which he had become accustomed, he didn't care for it. For a long time after that he actually preferred the cardboard coffee. Only after he had weaned himself off the instant

did he come to appreciate the real thing.

In many ways this story sums up what can happen to us spiritually. If we're not careful, we can find ourselves drinking a convenient-but-watered-down religion. When our spiritual digestive system begins to rebel and we long for the real taste of God, we discover something: He's not an instant God. There are no shortcuts. If we want to reconnect with Him, we will have to "do time" with Him.

What are you doing to "Do Time" with God?

- Are you in God's Word?

- Are you *actively participating* in Prayer with God?
- Are you connected with other men in some discipleship or small group role?

If you want to help yourself and/or others reconnect, recommit, or further strengthen their relationships with God, their family or their friends, take a look at the upcoming schedule and plug in. You can also check out at www.almontfcc.org for more details.

September Schedule

September 15th–16th

Promise Keepers
Grand Rapids, MI
Transportation available from the Church Lot
Contact Steve@ 798-3983 or
snorfolk@almontfcc.org

September 30th

Bring Your Own Steak Night 2
Looking for Grillers!
Contact Troy Kanirie @ 798-2881

Coming Up in October

Men's Fraternity Part 2—Winning at Work and at Home
Details coming soon

Men's Small Groups

There is talk buzzing around of several Men's Small Groups getting ready to start this fall. Please contact the Church office to relay Days, Times, Material Used, Contact Info and openings. We have several men inquiring about opportunities.

Life is a TEAM sport!

NOT THAT I HAVE ALREADY
 ATTAINED, OR AM ALREADY
 PERFECTED; BUT I PRESS
 ON, THAT I MAY LAY HOLD
 OF THAT FOR WHICH CHRIST
 JESUS HAS ALSO LAID HOLD
 OF ME.

PHILIPPIANS 3:12

Women's Ministries

Helping Women Reach Their Full Potential in Christ

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

September 5	First Tuesday Ladies Prayer at 11:00 a.m. in the library
September 10	<i>The Patriarchs</i> Bible Study begins at 7:00 p.m. in Taylor Chapel
September 12	<i>Breaking Free</i> Bible Study begins at 9:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall (childcare avail.)
September 22	Craft & Hobby Night 7:00 p.m. Fellowship Hall

FALL BIBLE STUDIES

The Patriarchs: Encountering the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Beth Moore brings her dynamic teaching and passion for God's Word to this 11-week study. Taken primarily from Genesis, chapters 12-50, Beth provides fascinating details from the lives of the patriarchs. She explores important concepts such as blessing,



covenant, and promise, and how they forever shaped the lives of Abraham and his descendants.

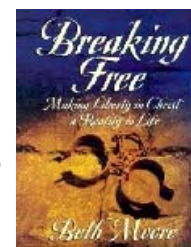
This study will be offered Sunday nights from 7:00 to 8:30 beginning September 10 in Taylor Chapel.

Breaking Free: Making Liberty in Christ a Reality in Life

Breaking Free by Beth Moore is a video-based study of selected passages from the Book of Isaiah. This 11-week study draws

several parallels between the captive Israelites and today's Christians, focusing on making freedom in Christ a daily reality.

This study will be offered Tuesday mornings from 9:00 to 11:00 beginning September 12 in the Fellowship Hall (childcare available).



Prayer Chain Requests:

If you have a prayer request that you would like to add to our Prayer Chain, please call Shirley Wallace at 798-3208.

If Shirley is unavailable, please call Shelli Bourque at 798-8168.

Or you may submit a request at our website, www.almontfcc.org.

BETH MOORE COMING TO COBO ARENA

Our favorite Women's Bible Study teacher is coming to Detroit! **February 16-17, 2007.** Join us as Beth delivers her one-of-a-kind message and Travis Cottrell leads Worship. We'll car-pool there and back each day (feel free to book a hotel room if you'd prefer). The event times are Friday, 7:00 -

9:30 p.m., and Saturday, 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Tickets are \$55 and may sell out long before the event. Get your money to Shelli Bourque or the church office to reserve your spot. Don't forget to invite family and friends - they'll thank you for it!

Child Caregivers Needed:

Without the help of child caregivers, many of our ladies would not be able to participate in our Tuesday morning bible study. Do you have 2 hours each week (or every-other week) to give to this much-needed ministry?

- Tuesdays 9:00-11:00 am beginning September 12
- We will gladly pay our caregivers!
- Please call Shelli at 798-8168 to volunteer

Sunday School Begins September 10th

One way we at the First Congregational Church are committed to discipleship is through our Sunday School Program. On Sunday mornings from 10:00-11:00 we have classes designed to teach God's word to people from the ages of 4-140. Check them out below:

YOUTH EDUCATION



We use the curriculum "Faith Weaver" from Group Publishing for our Pre-Kindergarten through Junior High School Classes.

Pre-K through Kindergarten
1-2 Grade
3-5 Grade
Junior High (6-8 Grade)

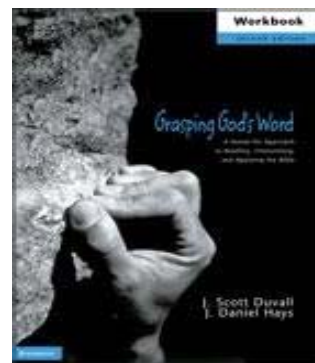
Senior High is with our adults in the Grasping God's Word class!!! (See below)

ADULT EDUCATION

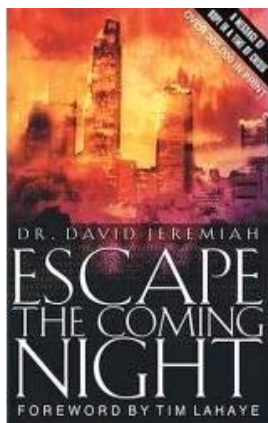
Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible

This class is taught by two men from our church who are passionate about the study of the Scriptures: Keith Langley and Eric Bourque.

This curriculum is published by Zondervan and it teaches an approach to reading, interpreting and applying the Bible. It teaches students how to carefully read Scripture in the biblical context, and to dig deeper into the Word of God so they will be able to understand the Bible correctly and apply its meaning to their lives. It fills the gap between approaches that are too simple and others that are too technical.



Escape the Coming Night: A Study of the Book of Revelation



This is an ongoing study through the book of Revelation using a curriculum from noted Bible teacher and author Dr. David Jeremiah (and facilitated by our own Shirley Wallace). This study attempts to unravel the imagery contained within this often mishandled book of the Bible and explain the significance of the events it describes. Within its pages are the hope and encouragement we need to lift us from the gloom of present events to the promise of a brilliant future. It is a vivid reminder of how in the face of the coming darkness we should live out today.

We will be picking up this study at Revelation 11:15, which is in Chapter 12 of the book, *Escape the Coming Night*.



**FELLOWSHIP EVENT
HOPE THROUGH HILARITY
BY SCOTT DAVIS**

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23RD
7:00 TO 9:00 PM**

Scott's ministry of comedy & music offers a concert event unlike anything else. It is fun, funny, and exciting, yet with a message.... a message of Hope through Christ! Using life-story humor and interactive video, mixed with inspirational music, woven together with the Gospel, Scott's concert is sure to be a fun night for all!

AWANA

**Begins
September 6
Wednesdays
6:30-8:00 PM**

**Sparks for Kindergarten
through Second Grade**

**T & T for Third through Fifth
Grade**

Please help me to welcome the following volunteers:

- Sarah Moyer—Director of T&T
- Cindy Baden—Leader of T&T
- Jason Webber—Leader of Sparks
- Brad McDonald—Director of Games

**We are going to have a
great year!**

Children's Ministries!

This school year we are beginning a new program for our children on Wednesday nights: **AWANA**, which stands for Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed. Check out 1 Timothy 2:15. Also, another motto of AWANA is "Kids matter to God!"



We will have two clubs:
Sparks (Kindergarten through Second Grades) and **T & T** (Third through Fifth Grades).



We will have a whole group worship time. Then we will break into the two clubs to have handbook time, and game time. Closing the night, we will have a prayer circle time.



We will be reaching out to children to help them feel the Love of God. If you feel that children touch your heart and want to donate some of your time to help them grow, please contact Melody Webber.

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK...

There are many people who volunteer in and around the church and office to make the ministries successful. I have observed and am encouraged, that in recent months there is a lot more enthusiasm. I cannot mention all of you by name; however, you know and, most importantly, God knows who you are. I'm thankful for all of the activity in the office; sometimes it can be viewed as interruptions, but the many phone calls and walk-ins indicate the overall health of the church. I sense that as a church family there is more cohesiveness and we are truly ready to move forward, focusing on being the family of believers that can be God's hands and feet in our community. So as we work together for His glory keep your eyes on the goal. *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God".* ~ Hebrews 12:1,2

Serving together,
Audrey Minter

FALL WORSHIP SCHEDULE

*Begins
September 10th*

Worship Service
8:30 a.m.

Sunday School
10:00 a.m.

Worship Service
11:15 a.m.
Jr. Church and
Child Care available

FALL KICK-OFF
Hot Dog Social immediately
following the Second Service
Sponsored by the
Hospitality Committee

Just for laughs...

Do you know your hymns?

Dentist's Hymn..... Crown Him with Many Crowns
Weatherman's Hymn..... There Shall Be Showers of Blessings
Contractor's Hymn..... The Church's One Foundation
The Tailor's Hymn..... Holy, Holy, Holy
The Golfer's Hymn..... There's a Green Hill Far Away
The Politician's Hymn..... Standing on the Promises
Optometrist's Hymn..... Open My Eyes That I Might See
The Tax Department Hymn..... I Surrender All
The Gossip's Hymn..... Pass It On
The Electrician's Hymn..... Send The Light
The Shopper's Hymn..... Sweet Bye and Bye
The Realtor's Hymn..... I've Got a Mansion Just Over the
Hilltop
The Massage Therapists Hymn..... He Touched Me
The Doctor's Hymn..... The Great Physician

AND for those who speed on the highway - a few hymns:

45mph..... God Will Take Care of You
65mph..... Nearer My God To Thee
85mph..... This World Is Not My Home
95mph..... Lord, I'm Coming Home
100mph..... Precious Memories

MISSION MOMENT

From your Board of Deacons

It's a God thing . . . and we need to keep it that way! Here's why. We'd like to share an excerpt with you from the author Jan Karon. It's based on Paul's letter to the Thessalonians – a letter that completely embraces how God wants us to react to the events over last several months.

St. Paul wrote in his second letter to the church at Thessalonica:

“In everything . . . give thanks.”

Four words that can help us enter into obedience, trust, and closer communion with God himself, made known through Jesus Christ.

“In *everything* . . . give thanks.”

If you believe as I do that Scripture is the inspired word of God, then we see this is not a random thought or an oddly clever idea of His servant, Paul, but a loving command issued through the great apostle.

Generally, Christians understand that giving thanks is good and right. Though we don't do it often enough, it's easy to have a grateful heart for food and shelter, love and hope, health and peace. But what about the hard stuff that darkens your world and wounds you to the quick? Just what is this *everything* business? It's the hook. It's the key.

Everything is the word on which this whole powerful command stands and has its being.

Please don't misunderstand; the word *thanks* is crucial, but a deeper spiritual truth, I believe, lies in the giving thanks in . . .

everything. In loss of all kinds. In illness. In depression. In grief. In failure. And, of course, in health and peace, success and happiness. In everything. There will be times when you wonder how you can possibly thank Him for something that turns your life upside down; certainly there will be such times for [all of us]. Let us then, at times like these, give thanks *on faith alone* . . . obedient, trusting, hoping, believing.

[We] have been through some trying circumstances these last months. Unsettling, Unremitting. Even, we sometimes think, unbearable. Dear God, we pray, stop this! Fix that! Bless us – and step on it!

As you absorb this powerful excerpt, stop and think for a moment that God needed these things to happen so that He may begin, continue, or complete a wondrous work within our body – maybe within ourselves. Our hearts should be open to the larger picture that only God can see and still be giving thanks in . . . *everything*.

So why these four words? The entire eighteenth verse reads:

“In everything, give thanks . . . for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

His will concerning you. His will concerning all of us. There are some other words in the first letter to the Thessalonians: “pray without ceasing, abstain from all appearance of evil, quench not the Spirit . . .” How we respond to this extraordinary, yet simple, command is a choice. Our

obedience will say, “Father, I don't know why you're causing, or allowing, this hard thing to happen, but I'm going to give thanks in it because You ask me to. I'm going to trust you to have a purpose for it that I can't know and may never know. Bottom line, You're God – and that's good enough for me.”

We'd like to share with you just a few of the blessings that have occurred as a result of these trying circumstances – blessings we believe could not have been bestowed upon us had we not allowed God to stretch us and help us to grow: excellent communication among the boards, constant communication between the boards and the office, new signs being purchased for each end of town, a new and improved web site (for full site access we encourage you to become a site member), God's provision of people stepping up and helping with church services, Courier newsletter coordinator, lawn/yard maintenance volunteers, garage roofing volunteers, meals coordinator for Special Delivery Meal Ministry, the list goes on!

God bless all of you and remember . . . *it is* a God thing and we need to keep it that way!

We welcome our new interim board members:

Keith Braidwood, Karen Richie, Bob Bacholzky and Betty Walton.

We are so thankful for their willingness to be apart of our team!

The Courier

First Congregational Church
201 E. St. Clair / P.O. Box 423
Almont, MI 48003

OUR VISION IS
TO FOSTER A
COMMUNITY OF
DISCIPLES WHO ARE:

Communing
with God

Connecting
with each other

Cultivating
our commitment

Communicating
the love of God

Caring
for our community

Non Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ALMONT, MI
Permit No. 1

*We exist to SERVE God by SHARING the
Good News of Jesus Christ and His
unconditional LOVE for all.*



Fall Worship Schedule Begins September 10

Worship Service @ 8:30 a.m.

Sunday School @ 10:00 a.m.

Worship Service @ 11:15 a.m.
Jr. Church and Child Care available

CHURCH STAFF:

Keith Langley, Youth Pastor
Melody Webber, Dir. of
Children's Ministries
Audrey Minter, Secretary
Rob & Mary Kalmanir,
Custodians

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:

Mon - Fri

9:00 a.m. — 3:00 p.m.

Phone: 810-798-8855

Fax: 810-798-7092

www.almontfcc.org

Articles are to be submitted
for the Courier by **15th**
of the month via e-mail to:
courier@almontfcc.org