



# The Courier

## Thanking Those Who Serve

by Pastor Mark Melillo

This last month has been a dream come true for me! It is my great joy to serve as the Sr. Pastor of this church. I am enjoying getting to know you all as best I can with the time that I have. I truly hope to get to know each and every one of you as time goes on. I have so enjoyed my first volley of monthly meetings and have been most impressed with the desire I have seen by each board to faithfully serve the Lord to the best of their abilities. There is much to be done to carry on the work of our precious Lord, and the brothers and sisters that I have thus far encountered are working hard to get the job done. They have my full support and I wish to encourage each member of FCC to take a moment to encourage and thank those in our church that labor so diligently to make ministry happen week to week and month to month.

*Audrey Minter* does a bang up job at the office keeping things running smooth and communication flowing. If you get a chance this next week or two drop by, give her a big hug, and hand her a bouquet of flowers or box of chocolates. Yes, her reward is in

heaven for her ministry to FCC but I think she's entitled to a few tokens of appreciation from us down here, too.

*Keith Langley*. What can I say—the guy is great. He's sharp, creative and faithful all rolled into one youth pastor. In some churches, it's hard to tell if the Youth Pastor is mature enough to mold young lives for the Lord. Not so at FCC. With Pastor Keith, parents can take courage. Now, I can't really speak for Keith on this matter but, I think he would prefer the chocolates over the flowers. However, please do take a little time from your busy schedules to bless him in some way for all his hard work here at the church and with our youth.

*Melody Weber* exudes love for little children. Just a few minutes watching her with the kids on Wednesday nights and that is clear. The kids have a great time, but what's more, Melody has the time of her life in there with them. That's an ingredient that can't be taught folks; a sincere love for children. If your kids enjoy the Wednesday night AWANA program, be sure to bless Melody and her husband for all their hard work.

*Steve Porter* leads music second hour and is so faithful in so many areas of ministry in the church, I even see him teaching a youth Sunday School Class each week. You've all seen how gifted *Tim Young* is with the kids each Sunday morning. *Steve and Llewellyn Moyer* are so faithful in facilitating worship each Sunday morning 1<sup>st</sup> service.

*David Shall* gives of his time to man the sound board as well as others. I see *John Bishop* in the office nearly every week to help with certain administrative tasks as well as *Eric and Shelli Bourque* and *Stacy Kmetz*. As you know, ministry doesn't just happen; people sacrifice in the name of Jesus Christ to do it. These are only some of the faithful servants here at FCC.

Again, we all understand that they do it for the kingdom of God and their rewards will be realized when they see their Lord and King. But I just wanted to encourage everyone who benefits even in the smallest of ways to express appreciation to those who are faithfully serving here to make ministry happen.

By the way, there are more opportunities for service available. Some of which are as greeters, sound board techs, ushers, musicians, soloists and the list does go on. As a pastor I am not begging people to work for free. That would be misrepresenting your role in the kingdom of God and the positions for service available. I am talking about opportunities to serve the Lord that gave His all for you. An opportunity to earn rewards in heaven. An opportunity to give to the people and families you love and that love you in the name of Christ.

Give a hearty thanks to those in ministry here at FCC and strongly consider where you might plug in and utilize your spiritual giftedness in God's program to win the lost through the local church.

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# TRUSTEE UPDATE:

By Kathy Merrifield

By the time you receive this month's newsletter, our new Pastor Mark Melillo will have officially been our pastor for one whole month! The Board of Trustees is VERY excited about Pastor Mark and his family making Almont and First Congregational Church their new home.

As Pastor Mark joined us in his first Trustees' meeting, he described our positions as Trustees as "watchmen on the wall." Whereby it is our job to protect the body from outside influences that are trying to infiltrate and perhaps harm our body. All of us on this board take our positions very seriously, and it's been really tough to weather the storms of pastoral and membership changes.

Unfortunately through these changes, many people have gotten hurt. Which make many people "back out" from serving this body. The Board of Trustees knows the pain associated with serving and how much it hurts!! But I am here to PLEAD with you, that if we give up serving each other, then

the enemy has won the battle and has crippled our ability to be used by God to witness to those who don't know Him. You see, if Satan can convince us to stop serving each other as we use discouraging remarks toward those who are serving, then we will simply give up and stop serving all together. Believe me, A LOT of this has been going on! I think we've forgotten the verse in Hebrews 10:24, "*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*"

Spurs have been used all right! Fortunately, God has poured out His grace and forgiveness upon us, and He empowers us to extend that same grace and forgiveness to others. I'd like to give you two illustrations of how we can do that. First, imagine yourself driving in your vehicle, where you have a rear-view mirror and a windshield. Notice how small the rear-view mirror is, and how large the windshield is. Now think of it this way: wherever we have traveled in the past (and have been hurt) is not as important as where we are going. We need

to focus on where God is taking us in this present day, and leave the hurt behind! Secondly, when someone hurts us we should write it down in sand, where winds of forgiveness (God's grace) can erase it away. But when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone where no wind can ever erase it.

**LEARN TO WRITE YOUR  
HURTS IN THE SAND  
AND TO CARVE YOUR  
BLESSINGS IN STONE**

Finally, within the next month or two you will see pictures of the Trustees posted in the hallway. No, these are not to be used for dart practice! We want you to know who we are so that you can come to us with any issues or questions, or any ideas of how to improve things . . . and even complaints. We are here to serve with you, and we ask that God would find favor in our body as we begin to forgive and to heal, and that He would shift our focus on loving and serving each other, loving and serving Him, and most importantly to seek the lost.

## **ANNUAL MEETING**

**Monday, February 5 at 7:00 p.m.**

The annual congregational meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 5 at 7:00 p.m. We will review the past year's accomplishments, and vote on proposed budgets and board and committee nominations for the new year. We will also discuss the future goals and ministry opportunities for 2007. We encourage everyone to attend.

# Youth Ministry News

## *A Plain Ol' Report*

By Pastor Keith

In recent months I have used the Youth Ministry article to do a lot of things. I have addressed issues in our church in (hopefully) a tactful and straightforward fashion. I have shared my heart for the ministry, my own life, the circumstances going on in each, and how they intersect. I have even, once in a while gotten around to what the youth have been up to. ☺

So today, without further ado, allow me to get to the “plain ol’ reporting” of the student ministry. But ya know, how can student ministry ever be “plain?” How can it ever be “old?” Honestly, it can’t! Teenagers always keep you on your toes. There is nothing plain about it. So maybe the title is a misnomer. Oh well, I digress.

In recent months the teens have been working their way through a series on who a leader is. It’s really about the qualities of leadership. Which by the way, we re-defined the word leader. A leader is simply someone who influences those around them. We want the students to realize that they can either be a thermometer, or a thermostat. A thermometer merely registers the temperature. A thermostat regulates the temperature. Which are you?

Both the girls and guys small groups have been working

through a good study called “Vital Pursuits”. The study covers the things we need to maintain a vital relationship with our Savior: prayer, listening to God, Bible study, memorization, etc. The study is well laid out, including devotions for the students to do at home. I am excited to see the results that God will bring from the study.

The Jr. High has been working all year long through a study on the book of Romans. Not a subject for the faint of heart. They have been doing a great job in studying, and following some of the tough areas that can be confusing even for theologians.

Beginning in February we will begin a series on “Three Story Evangelism”. This has nothing to do with architecture, construction, or city planning. It is a system of evangelism that makes sharing the gospel more a part of everyday life rather than an event. Quite honestly, that is really the way evangelism most likely worked in the early church – people having simple conversations about what God had done in their life. I feel like this will be a great study for the students, and for the ministry as a whole. Our desire is to turn out complete disciples for Christ. Part of that means both knowing how to and having the drive to share our faith with

those around us.

Coming this summer we are working on a mission trip here in the states. Admittedly, I just received word today that may throw a kink into our plans. However, I trust that God will open the doors that need to be opened so that His Word may be shared, and that our students will have the opportunity to grow in their knowledge and skills for Christ.

Pray for the Student Ministry:

- Pray for the building of the program.
- Pray for the building of the students into fully devoted followers of Christ.
- Pray for the leaders
  - o Wisdom
  - o A love for the students
  - o A listening ear to Christ to know when to nudge, and when not to.
  - o Pray for the hearts of the students
  - o Pray that their hearts will be open

Pray that God will do what only He can do: reform hearts into what He desires

Thanks so much for all of your prayers and all of your support of me, and the ministry throughout the past year. I trust, and desire your prayers and support as we work hard to minister to our wonderful community of Almont.

# Children's Ministries! February AWANA Report!

We have a whole month of AWANA Meetings! Bring a friend to have some fun learning about God. We are up to thirty some kids that attend on a regular basis. Our Meetings are Wednesdays from 6:30-8:00 p. m.



This month we are recognizing the T&T group. Please help me in thanking Sarah Moyer and Cindy Baden who have given their time to lead the 3rd-5th graders closer to Christ. They are doing a fantastic job! Ask a T&Ter what the penguins are for that are in our classroom.

# JUST FOR OUR AWANA CLUBBERS...

## AWANA Challenge - Here are some tougher questions for you older kids!



### FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. Your word is \_\_\_\_\_  
(John 17:17b)
2. For I trust in Your \_\_\_\_\_  
(Psalm 199:42b)
3. I have put my \_\_\_\_\_ in Your word.  
(Psalm 119:74b)
4. Tell someone the books of the New Testament!

Answers on page 7

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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:

February 6 First Tuesday Ladies Prayer at 11:00 a.m. in the library

February 16-17 Beth Moore retreat at Cobo Arena

Every Tuesday First Place: *Making Wise Choices* 6:30 p.m.

Every Sunday and Tuesday Ladies Bible Study: *Vertically Inclined* by Mary Kassian

Every Monday Little Lambs and Ewe 9:30 - 11:00 a.m.

## 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](http://www.almontfcc.org).

## THE TRAGEDY OF PRAYERLESSNESS

I invite you to consider these words from our Lord, followed by words from John Piper:

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:7-12)

When you pause to consider that God is infinitely *strong* and can do all that he pleases, and that he is infinitely *righteous* so that he only does what is right, and that he is infinitely *good* so that

everything he does is perfectly good, and that he is infinitely *wise* so that he always knows perfectly what is right and good, and that he is infinitely *loving* so that in all his strength and righteousness and goodness and wisdom he raises the eternal joy of his loved ones as high as it can be raised—when you pause to consider this, then the lavish invitations of this God to ask him for good things, with the promise that he will give them, is unimaginably wonderful.

Which means that one of the great short-term tragedies in the church is how little inclination we have to pray. The greatest invitation in the world is extended to us, and incomprehensibly we regularly turn away to other things. It's as though God sent us an invitation to the greatest banquet that ever was and we sent word back, "I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it," or, "I have bought five yoke of oxen,

and I must go to examine them," or, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come" (Luke 14:18-20).

I don't know about you, but these words cut right into me. How many times have I refused God's invitation to pray because I "just didn't have time" or I allowed myself to be distracted by the cares of this world?

How prideful I am to reject the Lord's invitation to pray! My head drops before the Lord as the conviction of the Spirit overwhelms me; and I realize afresh my need of the Savior and the tragedy of my prayerlessness.

*Lord, forgive me for rejecting Your invitation to ask You for good things. Help me to be a woman of prayer, believing that You will be faithful to Your promise to give them.*

*...one of the great short-term tragedies of the church is how little inclination we have to pray.*

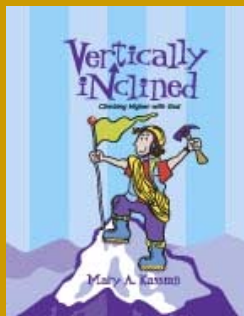
# Women's Ministries Continued

## WOMEN'S PRAYER CHAIN MINISTRY AN INVITATION TO PRAY

It's been nearly a year since we recommitted our **Women's Prayer Chain Ministry**. About 175 prayer requests have come to the chain since that time. Wow! If you would like to become part of this vital ministry, please contact Shirley Wallace (798-3208) or Shelli Bourque (798-8168) by Sunday, February 18. We will provide a new chart for all members of the chain shortly thereafter.

## Vertically Inclined: Climbing Higher with God

Most believers experience a life with a few highs and lows, ups and downs, and maybe an occasional mountaintop experience. But this exciting, seven-session, video-based study is especially designed to show Christian women how, by tethering themselves more securely to Him, they can climb to greater spiritual heights.



As a resident of the Canadian Rockies and experienced climber herself, author Mary Kassian brings a unique understanding of the difficulties and dangers that await on any journey—and offers fascinating insights on how that parallels our spiritual path

Along the way, participants will be challenged to: develop an increased loyalty to Christ and His work; to examine their values and renew their determination; to take steps to increase their love for Christ, and to enjoy Him more. And each week's lessons will equip women to safely and successfully ascend the peaks of the Christian life.

### This 7-week study will be offered:

Tuesday mornings from 9:00 to 11:00 (childcare available) beginning January 23

Sunday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 beginning January 28

## Little Lambs



My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. John 10:27

Ewe is YOU, the mom of a toddler or pre-schooler - your little lamb. We'd like to encourage you in a special way by offering a mom and child playgroup that teaches Bible stories and songs to your little lamb, and gives you a chance to meet and share with other "Ewes".

## Come and join our new playgroup Beginning Monday, January 29th!

This 5-week session will meet at church  
from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m.  
and we will be learning about Noah.

During this time you and your child(ren) will have some free play with other friends,  
listen to the story of Noah,  
sing some songs,  
make a craft  
and share a snack.

This is a wonderful opportunity to meet and share with other moms and children of the church and the community.

### Invite a friend and neighbor!

Please call Sharlene Viaene with any questions  
(810) 798-0063.

## AWANA ANSWERS

1. Truth
2. Word
3. Hope

## *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

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



## *Sunday Worship Schedule*

Worship Service @ 8:30 a.m.

Sunday School @ 10:00 a.m.

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

## FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH *of Almont*

AN INDEPENDENT EVANGELICAL CHURCH

### *CHURCH STAFF:*

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

### *CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:*

*Monday- Friday*

9:00 a.m. — 3:00 p.m.

Phone: 810-798-8855

Fax: 810-798-7092

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[office@almontfcc.org](mailto:office@almontfcc.org)