



# The Courier

March

First Congregational Church of Almont

2007



I am now entering my third month here at the First Congregational Church of Almont and I have been loving every minute of it. I am enjoying getting to know so many of you and look forward to becoming

familiar with even more of you in the future.

I have heard from many of you with some great thoughts and ideas and my list is ever growing. Some of the things that have been requested or brought to the attention of myself and the boards are simple and can be set in motion right away. While still others, though just as good ideas, might take some time to get going. Please be patient with me and with the leadership you have all elected to handle the task of administration and oversight of this local church body.

As I attend each of the board meetings, I observe that they are each very sensitive and responsive to the needs of this flock. They all genuinely love each and every person in this church. Although it is still early in the year, I have *already* watched them spend hours upon hours in the service of Christ and this congregation. They have all been an inspiration to me, and I wanted to pass that along to the rest of the church body. You all did a great job of choosing these board members. I am overjoyed with the opportunity to work with each one of them.

Having said that, I would like to encourage you, the people we love so very much, to consider the opportunities for ministry in our church and give serious thought as to where you might serve. Some are very simple tasks that would make a very nice difference in our weekly worship experience, and still others might call for a greater commitment from those who would rise to the challenge. However, before you go any further with the idea of serving, I would like to challenge you to consider what Scripture has to say about ministering in your local church body.

In Ephesians 2:10-22 Paul explains that true believers are the workmanship of Jesus Christ Himself, created to do good works in the household of God. So, Christ did a good work in us with the intention and purpose of us in turn doing good works for Him.

Many people in the church today are a little intimidated by the idea of working in the church thinking

perhaps that they are somehow not spiritually qualified to do a specific task in the house of God. However, Scripture teaches us that we are not just expected to be industrious in the church but that we have been supernaturally equipped to work within the church.

When the Holy Spirit of God comes to dwell within us (I Cor. 6:19) at the moment of conversion, He gives us a supernatural capacity to perform spiritual functions within the spiritual body of Christ. It is a capacity that we did not formerly possess. Romans 12 teaches that each believer has been given a specific measure of faith proportioned by God to correspond directly with the spiritual giftedness allotted the individual believer.

This topic could easily be a class or multiple week sermon series, and in time, hopefully it will be; but for now, I would like to just give you some of the spiritual gifts listed in Scripture given to believers by our Lord through the Holy Spirit. Now before I do, please understand that not all of us have the same gifts, and none of us has the same proportion of giftedness. In other words, God gives various gifts and combinations of gifts so that no two believers are alike in their ability to serve. Therefore, when a believer chooses to sit on the sidelines and withhold his unique ability to minister within the church, there is a deficit that can not be simply compensated for by the labors of another. The entire church body loses out on an irreplaceable commodity when I choose to not use the instruments God gave me to minister to others.

## Inside this Issue

Calendar	Insert
Children's Ministries	5
Mission Moment	7
Trustee Update	3
Women's Ministries	6
Youth Ministry News	4

What's more, I lose out on an abundance of blessing both in the here and now, and in the eternal when I refuse to get involved in some way in the ministry of believers in my local church body.

Scripture lists these gifts in various places. The two main places are in Rom. 12 and in I Cor. 12. I will name just a few in this article and briefly describe them in their context, but for a fuller treatment I would encourage you to read the passages for yourself.

***The gift of Pastor-Teacher (Eph. 4:11).***

The work of a pastor has a clear analogy to the work of the shepherd in caring for his sheep. "As a pastor, he cares for the flock. He guides, guards, protects, and provides for those under his oversight." An example is found in Acts 20:28 where Paul exhorts the elders from Ephesus "to shepherd the church of God."

***The gift of Teacher (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28).***

A number of factors would show that a person has the gift of teacher. He would have a great interest in the Word of God and would commit himself to disciplined study of the Word. He would have an ability to communicate the Word of God clearly and apply the Word to the lives of the people. This gift is clearly evidenced in a man who has the ability to take profound biblical and theological truths and communicate them in a lucid way so others can grasp them.

***The gift of Service (Rom. 12:7).***

The word is used in a broad sense and refers to ministry and service to others in a general way. From Biblical examples such as Acts 19:22; Rom. 15:25; 2 Tim. 1:18; Philem.13 and Heb. 6:10, it appears an important aspect of serving is

helping other believers who are in physical need. This could also be simple tasks in the church that some might think are mundane, but that need to be done on a weekly basis like nursery duty, or arriving early to church and preparing refreshments for the rest of the church body to enjoy. If one has this gift of service, these tasks are not drudgery, but a joy. The folks who will be walking around heaven with the most decorations are those who have served faithfully week in and week out without notice, and yet they are there, faithfully, cheerfully serving Jesus by ministering to His children.

***The gift of Helps (1 Cor. 12:28).***

The gift of helps means "to take firm hold of some one, in order to help. These 'helpings' therefore probably refer to the succoring of those in need, whether poor, sick, widows, and orphans. There is, however, another dimension to this gift that must not go unnoticed, and that is, like the gift of service, the faithful ministry week in and week out in ways that make other aspects of ministry happen. A good example of this might be setting up and taking down tables and chairs; operating the sound board; greeting people and offering them assistance as they arrive on Sunday morning. Understand this...the smaller the task, the greater the faithfulness, the greater the reward. I'll let you do the math.

***The gift of Faith (1 Cor. 12:9).***

While all Christians have saving faith (Eph. 2:8) and should exhibit faith to sustain them in their spiritual walk (Heb. 11), the *gift of faith* is possessed by only some believers. "The gift of faith is the faith which manifests itself in unusual deeds of trust. This person has the capacity to see something that needs to be done and to believe God will do it through him even though it looks impossible.

With God nothing is impossible... and this person lives that truth.

***The gift of Exhortation (Rom. 12:8).***

The exhorter is one who has the ability to appeal to the will of the individual to get him to act. The gift of exhortation is often coupled with teaching (cf. 1 Tim. 4:13; 6:2), and is addressed to the conscience and to the heart. The gift of exhortation may be either *exhortation*, urging someone to pursue a particular course of conduct (cf. Jude 3), or it may be *consolation* or *comfort* in view of someone's trial or tragedy (Acts 4:36; 9:27; 15:39). This is one of the gifts that makes a good counselor.

***The gift of Showing Mercy (Rom. 12:8).***

The gift of showing mercy involves showing compassion and help toward the poor, sick, troubled, and suffering people. Further, this compassion is to be performed with cheerfulness. The one possessing this gift should perform acts of mercy with gladness, not out of drudgery. This too, is one of the gifts that makes a good counselor.

***The gift of Giving (Rom. 12:8).***

The one who has the gift of giving shares his goods eagerly and liberally. It refers to open-handed and open-hearted giving out of compassion from a singleness of purpose, not from ambition. This gift is not reserved for the rich but for ordinary Christians as well. The Philippians apparently exercised this gift in their giving to Paul (Phil. 4:10-16). If someone gives something away, but has certain expectations as to how that gift is to be used, that person did not give out of a pure heart. There was *something* in it for the giver. This is not true giving. The one who gives from a pure heart gives the matter of

the gift completely over to God, the true recipient, to use the gift as He sees fit. Even if to us it seems a waste, God makes no mistakes—and to Him nothing is a waste.

***The gift of Administration (Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28).***

In Romans 12:8 Paul refers to the one who leads. This is from a Greek word that means “to stand before,” hence, to lead, rule, or preside. It is used of elders in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 and 1 Timothy 5:17. First Corinthians 12:28 refers to the gift of “administrations” using a Greek word that literally means “to steer a ship.” God gifted some individuals with the spiritual capacity to lead well in ministry and gifted others to be excellent followers and supporters. We can’t all lead... neither can we all follow...!

As you can see, the spiritual gifts God has equipped us with are not meant to be glamorous. They are not intended to separate some elite group from others that are the common group. They are simple and functional. Did any of the gifts listed in this article resonate with you? Did you at any point say to

yourself, “Oh yea, that’s me” or, “I could see myself doing that”?

Here is an uncomplicated way to identify and use your spiritual giftedness:

**1. Examine the Scriptures.** What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit as listed in Scripture? You can’t just make them up; as much as I would like to say that there is a spiritual gift of fishing and napping, it’s just not in the Bible. Next, understand which ones are operational in the church today, and which ones have ceased to be functional because we now have the completed Canon of Scripture. God willing, within the next year we will be offering a Christian Growth Class to give more information about these issues.

**2. Examine your desires.** Ask yourself in what capacity you would like to serve the body of Christ. Then try it! If it was a drag then try another one. If you enjoyed it and thought you did it well, then move on to easy step number three.

**3. Examine the Fruit.** First, ask a trusted friend who will be honest with you to confirm whether or not

this is something you did well and should pursue. Second, look for God’s blessing in your efforts. Do other believers in the church seem to be blessed by what you are doing? Are others encouraged to minister in some way as a result of your ministry? Are people being facilitated in becoming more like Christ as a result of what you are doing?

**4. Examine your church.** Every local church body has a huge list of ministry opportunities that need to be filled. Listen to the spoken announcements in your church services. Read the ministry opportunities in the church bulletin and monthly newsletters. Understand what needs to be done, which opportunity you would best fulfill with your giftedness and jump in!

There is much to be done; and by God’s sovereign design, the one to do the job is...you guessed it, it’s YOU!

Serve Him *generously* and *cheerfully*!

## TRUSTEE UPDATE:

By John Bacholzky

Another annual meeting has come and gone. Things seem to be moving forward for FCC. It is certainly a comfort to have Pastor Mark and his family in place to get us off to a fresh start for 2007. The trustees still have a full agenda for the year. The addition of Bob Jones to the board will definitely help to make things run more smoothly.

Probably the most important

long-range goal for us in terms of building maintenance is to tend to the exterior brick structure of the church. Time and weather have taken their toll.

Other concerns we are looking at are: finding a worship leader for Sunday services; maintaining a current status of the technological portion of our ministry; replacing the thermostats in fel-

lowship hall; investing the donation from the LaMar estate; upkeep on the office house.

With all the needs we will encounter, we would certainly appreciate your input and prayers. Don’t hesitate to contact any of the trustee members if you have any questions or suggestions. We are here to serve the LORD and you.

# Youth Ministry News

By Pastor Keith

*“I will show you the most excellent way...Love never fails...these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.”*  
*I Corinthians 12:31, 13:8,*  
13 –

Ever notice how one simple act can spark a whole lot of something? Maybe that something is interest, or creativity, or friendship, or love. It’s amazing how something that seems so simple can turn out to be so significant.

It’s been a while since I have been able to give my full attention to the students. I am so excited to do so once again. When this opportunity came to me to focus again on the teens I so dearly love, I wondered how could we communicate we love them in a significant fashion. We started with a simple idea of making and delivering exam baskets to our Senior Highers who were facing exams. We filled the baskets with anything containing sugar or caffeine (the parents loved us for this ☺). This went over very well. The students appreciated the munchies, and the fact that someone was thinking of them at exam time.

Next we created little Valentine bags with candy hearts, chocolates, and other things tucked inside along with a valentine card. We delivered these to all of the Jr. High and Sr. High students. If we had a camera with us that day, we could share with you the priceless expressions on each face.

As we delivered those little care packages, more creative ideas began to flow in our adult leaders. We began bouncing ideas off of one another regarding creative ways to love on the teens.

While I can’t share with you all of the ideas we are thinking about for the future, I can tell you a few more things we have done. We created little posters of encouragement for the students. We choose one student every few weeks to encourage. This week gave the posters to the parents and asked them to place the posters in their rooms so when they came home from school, they would find a special encouragement just for them.

Do you see how one idea sparks other ideas, which we believe will spark a revolution in the ministry. In fact, we have already seen some positive things happening. We

are seeing students who had previously not been coming regularly showing up more often. We as youth leaders are building stronger bonds with the students. The stronger the bonds, the greater the influence we can have in their lives. I have seen the students bonding with one another.

We recently helped in a classroom of a friend of mine in Detroit. We had a blast helping the kids in gym class, with artwork, with math games, writing games, all kinds of things. However, the greatest thing that happened that day to me was that all of these students (all from different grades and different ages) got together on their own accord to hang out more that night. That tells me that they are finding something in those relationships that draw them together.

In closing allow me to give a plug for the upcoming Cake Auction on March 18<sup>th</sup> after the second service. The proceeds will go to the students attending the mission trip in July to Washington D. C. It’s a great afternoon of fun, food and fellowship with one another.

# Children's Ministries! March AWANA Report!

There will be no AWANA on March 28th. This is when the Seder Super will take place. Meetings are Wednesday from 6:30-8:00p.m. If you are a kid who is in kindergarten through 5th grade, please join us. We just sang for the congregation on the 25th of February. We hope you enjoyed it!



This month we will be focusing on the Sparks. Please thank Jason & Melody Webber for spending their Wednesdays with the children who are in kindergarten through 2nd grade. The Sparks are memorizing verses and are ready to learn what Sparky, Steven, Grumpella, Kim, Ricky and Michael are up to next. We recently got a CD to help us with our memorizing to be warriors for the King!

# JUST FOR OUR AWANA CLUBBERS...

## AWANA Challenge - Here are some questions for our Sparks!



### FILL IN THE BLANKS

Fill in the blanks to help remember the Sparks Code!

1. S is for \_\_\_\_\_.
2. P is for \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A is for \_\_\_\_\_.
4. R is for \_\_\_\_\_.
5. K is for \_\_\_\_\_.
6. S is for \_\_\_\_\_.

Answers on page 7

2007-2008  
2008-2009  
2009-2010



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:

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

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

Sundays beginning March 18 Tuesdays beginning March 20 Ladies Bible Study: *For Women Only: The Bible Study* by Shaunti Feldhahn

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).

## SPRING BIBLE STUDY - FOR WOMEN ONLY

**For Women Only: The Bible Study** by best-selling author Shaunti Feldhahn is for every woman who wants to understand and support her husband in becoming all that God intends him to be. Growing out of the popular *For Women Only: What You Need to Know About the Inner Lives of Men* and its eye-opening discoveries, this seven-week study can help you put your relationship under the searchlight of God's Word.

Through video teaching sessions and weekly readings, Shaunti sheds light on the mystery that our men

sometimes do appear to be! Her practical tips, growing out of biblical principles and extensive research with men, offer



ways to put your new insights into practice day-by-day.

With its focus on understanding the inner lives of men, the

primary application **For Women Only: The Bible Study** is to marriage. Yet what woman would not wish for such help before marriage? Many of the principles can apply to women who are dating or who relate daily to their male co-workers in

the workplace.

I know Spring is a very busy time of year, so I chose a Bible Study that is light on homework, but extremely practical. This study contains NO man-bashing. In fact, it teaches us women how to biblically honor our husbands. I am confident that you'll learn how to love and support your man for who he really is - and he'll be glad you did!

This study will be offered:

- Sundays beginning March 18 - 7:00-8:30 p.m.
- Tuesday beginning March 20 - 9:00-11:00 a.m. (childcare available)

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**Friday, May 11, 2007**  
**MOTHER-DAUGHTER BANQUET**  
 More details next month.

# Mission Moment

## Board of Deacons

With your benevolence offerings the Board of Deacons supports two young boys through Compassion International.

Glenn Oliver K. Relano, 14, is from the Philippines. He lives with his father and mother. His responsibilities include carrying water, gathering firewood and buying or selling in the market. His father is sometimes employed as a laborer, and his mother maintains the home. There are

five children in the family. He likes baseball, swimming and playing with marbles. His performance in middle school is average. He regularly attends church activities, Bible class, and Vacation Bible School.

Ndagijimana Bernard, 16, lives with his aunt. He is responsible for carrying water, gathering firewood and washing clothes. His aunt is sometimes employed as a farmer. For fun

Ndagiimana enjoys soccer, singing, and playing ballgames. He attends Sunday School regularly and is in primary school where his performance is average.

Please remember these children in your prayers. Your love and support will help them to receive the assistance they need to grow and develop.

## SEDER SUPPER March 28, 2007

Pastor Mark invites all to come and enjoy an evening filled with fellowship and encouragement in the faith. We will be having a potluck dinner followed by a condensed Seder Supper celebration, presented by Shaun Buchhalter of Jews for Jesus.

This special event will be held in the Fellowship Hall on Wednesday, March 28, at 7:00 p.m.

Please bring a dish to share corresponding to your last name:

- A - I Please bring a vegetable dish
- J - R Please bring a dessert
- S - Z Please bring a meat dish

There will also be traditional Kosher entrees for you to sample and enjoy!

Following the celebration there will be a love offering taken to help support this ministry.

## NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER May 3, 2007

Two hundred thirty years ago our forefathers drafted a Constitution guaranteeing the freedoms and benefits of a democratic society. Yet America has drifted far from her roots and now stands at a crossroads. Will we descend further into selfishness, complacency and apathy or will we humble ourselves before God and ask Him to bring us back to the spiritual foundations upon which this great nation was built?

Thursday, May 3, 2007 is the 56<sup>th</sup> annual **National Day of Prayer**. The Bible offers the assurance that God listens when His people humbly seek His face. He's waiting for us to come together in prayer on behalf of our nation and its leaders (2 Chronicles 7:14). Now is the time for us to unite in prayer for America. Please mark your calendars to join us.

More details next month.

## AWANA ANSWERS

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Savior (1 John 4:14)                             | 4. Raised (1 Corinthians 15:4) |
| 2. Power (Romans 1:16)                              | 5. Keep (James 2:10)           |
| 3. According to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3) | 6. Saved (Acts 16:31)          |

## *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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