



# FIRST CONNECTION

## *From the Pastor*

### **Focus on the Christ Child!**



As the Covid-19 numbers continue to climb and people are scared to gather with family and friends to celebrate the holidays, I want to encourage you to spend the month of December focusing on the Christ Child, not on the pandemic or problems in your life. This month focus on what God wants to give you through his Son, Jesus Christ. He wants to give you a personal relationship with himself. He wants to give you peace. Through Jesus Christ may you find peace with God and learn how to live in peace with your neighbor. Through Jesus Christ may you find joy. There is joy in the birth of a newborn child and

there is joy to be found in being born again through Jesus Christ. There is joy in our salvation and being made right with God. There are also great joys to be experienced in following Christ. Jesus also came to bring us hope. 2020 has been a tough and depressing year for most of us, may you find hope for better days in Jesus Christ, and remember, as long as we have Jesus, there is hope! Jesus also came to bring us love. The love of God truly came down to us at Christmas! For it was God's love for humanity that inspired him to come down in human form, as baby Jesus. This child grew up and showed us how to live a life of love, and Jesus commanded us to love God and to love each other.

This December let us focus on the child who was foretold about in the Old Testament and who was revealed in the New Testament. Let us focus on baby Jesus and the peace, joy, hope, and love that he came to bring.

Isaiah 9:2-3,6 says, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder...For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

This Christmas season may you find the Light and discover the joy, peace, hope, and love that Jesus came to give you!

*Pastor Dan*



Church services will continue to meet online at 11 am for the next several weeks. We hope to offer 2 in person Christmas Eve Services one at 6:45 pm and one at 11 pm.

### Get Involved In an Online Small Group

- Co-Ed Adult Sunday School Class, Sundays, 11:00 a.m.
- Women's Bible Study, Wednesdays, Noon
- Y & R (Young Adult Small Group), Wednesdays, 7:00 a.m.
- Women's Bible Study, Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.
- Men's Bible Study, Saturdays, 8:00 a.m.

### Ministries for Young Adults

We have many great ministries for young adults to get involved with at St. Joe First UMC.

1. You could join the Monday Night Small Group that meets at Pastor Dan's house at 7:00 p.m. This group prays for each other, has a Bible Study, and then plays card games or board games together.
1. You could join the Young & the Rest of Us (Y & R) on Wednesday nights at 7:00 p.m. This group eats snacks and chats, has a Bible Study, and sometimes goes out to eat together.
2. If you're looking for some fellowship with other young adults, join us at Applebee's on Thursday nights, 9:00 p.m. This is always a fun night with great food, conversations, and ½ price appetizers. Look for this event to start up again soon!
3. Young Adult Dodgeball every other Friday, 8:30-10:30 p.m. Please check the church calendar (SJFirstUMC.org) to see what days we are meeting or contact Pastor Dan Colthorp at (269) 369-8475 for information on this group.

**Office Closed at noon on December 24<sup>th</sup>.**

**Office Closed December 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, & 28<sup>th</sup>**

**Office Closed January 1<sup>st</sup>**

A new Sunday school study will be offered during the month of December. In this study we will utilize a DVD-based series from Andy Stanley titled "The Bible for Grown-ups". There are no materials to purchase. This will be offered via a Zoom meeting and will begin at 11:00 each Sunday. Anyone interested in this short study is welcome to join in. Access to the Zoom meeting is via the following: **Zoom Meeting link:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85952374503?pwd=SEovMkRNTTMvYkd0dXdpdjVxZy9UUT09>

**Meeting ID:** 859 5237 4503

**Passcode:** sunday

Soup Kitchen - We continue to learn how to deal with the new Soup Kitchen routine. In November, we prepared 150 sack lunches that included hot dogs, baked beans, applesauce, homemade cookies, bottled water, and condiments. The workers were Sue O'Neil, Jim O'Haver, Joan Hine, Elaine Graves, Ron and Barb Petzke. Cookies bakers included Shirley Johnson, Sue O'Neil, Dawn Ankli, Jean Edwards, Sue Lea, and Denise (friend). We saved extra cookies for December. Watch Facebook or the announcements to see where you can help, if you're interested in being the hands and heart of God in our community.

## Andrew's University is offering Free Counseling Services starting January 2021.

If you know of potential clients (children, adolescents, adults, couples, families) who may benefit from counseling services, the Andrews Community Counseling Center (ACCC) will have openings for many new clients when we re-open in January, 2021 after the semester break (although individuals interested in services are encouraged to call now and leave a confidential voicemail message to get their name toward the top of the waiting list now). Graduate-level practicum students who provide these free counseling services at the ACCC have training in counseling adults, adolescents, and children. Counseling sessions are completely confidential.

During the pandemic, we know the need for mental health services is great and we also recognize that the need for physical safety is essential. Therefore, all counseling sessions will be provided using HIPAA-compliant Zoom tele behavioral health services. We have successfully used confidential Zoom sessions since April, 2020 and have had good success with this modality; clients of all ages, experiencing a variety of issues, and from a variety of backgrounds have benefited from Zoom sessions.

All practicum counselors are doctoral- or masters-level students who have had at least preliminary counseling experiences, have been evaluated by licensed professionals as ready to provide counseling in a supervised clinic setting, and each practicum counselor provides services under professional supervision.

Types of referral issues accepted include, but are not limited to:

- loneliness and isolation due to pandemic
- relationship issues (e.g., marital and premarital counseling)
- grief and bereavement
- social skills problems
- behavioral problems
- bullying problems (victims and perpetrators)
- depression
- anxiety
- academic problems
- career guidance
- parent-child conflict
- personality assessments (for the purpose of treatment planning)
- and many others (including needing a listening ear when social support is limited for you)

We cannot take on cases that involve court testimony, disability evaluations, custody disputes, walk-in crises, or that require around-the-clock availability of intensive services (e.g., frequently actively suicidal or violent thought disorder).

**The phone number for the ACCC (269-471-6238). We will re-open January, 11, 2021 and start contacting clients within a couple of weeks after re-opening, but individuals may call now and leave a confidential voicemail message to get on the waiting list now.**

### Altar Flowers

Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> - In Memory of Kay Benson, Robert Gaylord, Robert and Carol Dunn. Love, Lee Benson and James Dunn.

Dec. 27<sup>th</sup> - In honor of Mark and Lynda Acker's 24th Anniversary (Belated)



On November 1<sup>st</sup>, we celebrated All-Saints Day. A rose was placed on the altar for our family and friends that have died in the past year. This year we honored the following:

James Bachteal, Bob Argue's Friend  
Roger Braatz, Renée Foote's Uncle  
Russell Colthorp, Dan Colthorp's Father  
William Devitt, Member  
Loismarie Edinger, Member  
Marie Evans, Brian Evans' Mother  
Merry Sihombing, Maria Freed's Sister  
Helen Handy, Mary Glisson's Daughter-in-law's Grandmother  
Robert Hatch, Member  
Gary Lockwood, Member  
Burr McGrath, Morris McMurray's Brother-in-law, Martha McCrevan's Uncle  
Barbara Mitchell, Bill Goodman's Mother  
Ben Naumann, Marilyn Herrman's Father  
Robert Palma, Julie Lester's Stepfather  
Terry Plaxton, Loree Barnhart's Cousin  
Beverly Rodgers, Meg Rodgers Mother  
Robert Smith, Member  
Jack Stark, Bob Stark's Brother  
Elizabeth Adent Tomaszewski, Jerry Tomaszewski's Mother  
June Yeske, Member



Thanks to all those who participated in Operation Christmas Child and the Angel Tree Mission. Also, thanks to all those who organized these wonderful mission projects.

Thanks to the Praise Band, the Sound Desk Crew, and Ryan Tucker on the Livestream camera - without all of you we would not be able to offer online worship services and the church staff wants you to know we really do appreciate all of you very much!

James & Georgia Dunn and I are grateful for the generous monetary donation, Thanksgiving food donation and \$50 gift card that we received from our church family in this time of great need. The generosity of our church family was unexpected and is greatly appreciated. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for thinking of us. We do have a very caring church family. Lee Benson, James and Georgia Dunn.

Thank you to Renee Foote for weekly up keep of the church kitchen. Thank you to Sue O'Neil and Barb Petzke for deep cleaning the church kitchen.

We want to thank you so much for making, praying over and giving the prayer shawl to Dennis Hanson. He kept it on the head of the bed while in rehab and now on the foot of his bed. We cover him with it once in a while. We know that God is covering him with his love and care. - Thank you and God Bless, Carolyn and Dennis. PS I made dozen before I gave the yarn to someone with younger and faster fingers.



**January 10<sup>th</sup> - February 7<sup>th</sup>, Promised Land by Ray Vander Laan – 5 weeks**

In this first volume of the "Faith Lessons" series, historian and teacher Ray Vander Laan will show you how God guided his people to a specific place - the Promised Land - to impact the world both in ancient times and today.

**February 14th - March 28th, A journey Through Lent by Timothy Keller – 7 weeks**

Lent is a time in which we anticipate the victory of the light and life of Christ over the darkness of sin and death. It corresponds to Jesus' time in the wilderness. This 7-week sermon series and study guide are from select Psalms which help us in times of self-examination, difficulty, and dryness and invite us to make our hearts ready for remembering anew Jesus' death and resurrection.

**April 11th - May 9th, Half Truths by John Hamilton – 5 weeks**

Join Adam Hamilton in exploring popular sayings that miss the point. They are simple phrases: "*God helps those who help themselves,*" "*Love the sinner, hate the sin,*" and others. They sound Christian - like something you might find in the Bible. We've all heard these words. Maybe we've said them. They capture some element of truth, yet they miss the point in important ways. Discover the whole truth by comparing common Christian clichés with the wisdom found in Scripture.

**May 23rd - June 27th, Ask It by Andy Stanley – 6 weeks**

*Should I take this job? Buy this house? Marry this person?* Before you ask another question, ask the most important question of all.

In this six-session DVD and the companion book, Andy Stanley identifies the one question that makes it easy to determine the answer to all other questions. Through Andy's dynamic teaching style, you'll learn how to make decisions with confidence simply by applying *the* question that brings clarity to life's most challenging decisions.

**July 11<sup>th</sup> - September 26<sup>th</sup>, Screwtape Letters Study Guide by C S Lewis – 12 weeks (book, no DVD)**

*The Screwtape Letters Study Guide* takes participants through a study of C.S. Lewis's classic, *The Screwtape Letters*. This Bible study digs deep into each letter from Screwtape, an understudy in the lower archy of Hell, to his incompetent nephew Wormwood, a junior devil.

**October 11<sup>th</sup> - December 19<sup>th</sup>, Desiring God: Finding Complete Satisfaction and Joy in God by John Piper – 11 weeks**

Strengthen your relationship with God simply by *enjoying* him and his creation! In this captivating 10-session DVD study, Piper reveals how delighting in God can motivate us to glorify him through worship, stewardship, loving our neighbor, suffering, and other "duties."



# DECEMBER

## Birthdays

### Caretel, St. Joseph

Earl Kugle, Vivian Oberhue, Maxine Mock

### Crown Pointe, Stevensville

Adrienne and Ed Bagatini

### Whitcomb Towers, St. Joseph

Noreen Sonnenberg,  
Dorothy Crow, John Helsley

### Royalton Manor, St. Joseph

Deloris Dettmann, Barbara Richmond

### Woodland Terrace, Bridgman

Dick Copeland

### Shenandoah Valley Westminster- Canterbury, Winchester, VA

Dorothy Gray

### Stately Living, St. Joseph

Joe Collins

### Carmel Village, Clovis, CA

Barbara Kiesel

### Golden Shores, Benton Harbor

Betty Cassidy

### At Home

Trudy Gillespie, To Grootendorst,  
Robert Dearing

- 1-Dec Cooper Clark
- 1-Dec John Edwards
- 1-Dec Tricia Hatfield
- 4-Dec William Goodman
- 4-Dec John Graves
- 5-Dec Darcy Baskin
- 5-Dec Marilyn Herrman
- 5-Dec Sue Lea
- 7-Dec Elaine Graves
- 4-Dec Barbara Russell
- 9-Dec Jhaylee Busby
- 11-Dec Melissa Beckmann
- 11-Dec Rebecca Devitt
- 12-Dec Brian Moore
- 14-Dec Madeline Richards
- 18-Dec Lydia Dearing
- 18-Dec Judith Thompson
- 20-Dec Don Peters
- 21-Dec Taylor Beukelman Glowacki
- 22-Dec Elliott Burt
- 23-Dec Carol Wick
- 23-Dec Richard Wick
- 24-Dec Chad Milletics
- 26-Dec Randy Kaeding
- 29-Dec Jack Kessler
- 30-Dec Catharine Grootendorst
- 31-Dec Janet Kuyers
- 31-Dec David Rutlin
- 31-Dec Roberta Smith

Church Calendar is online at [www.sjfirstumc.org](http://www.sjfirstumc.org)

Lifting up in  
prayer:



Nick Tomaszewski, John Hoffman, James Dunn, Ward Hine, Robert Argue, Robert Dearing, Aiden Zemon (LouAnn Stelter's nephew), Dorothy Brown (Kim Risk's Mother), Don Russell, Denise Peterson, Maxine Mock, Bob and Joan Cade and our homebound members.

*\*Please contact the church office when you would like to have your name removed from the prayer list.*