

# The Open Door

July 2011

**L**ove for Truth

**P**assion for Righteousness

**E**nthusiasm for Service

## Book of Timothy



*The doors are open at FCC . . .*

*There is no cost . . .*

*All ages welcome . . .*

*Check us out . . .*

*Sunday morning*

*10 a.m.*

*The door is open at  
First Congregational Church*

*All are Welcome*

## God and Country — Citizenship and Christianity



*Pastor Jamey Nichols*

As many of you may already realize, I love living in America. I am extremely proud to be a citizen of this nation. Perhaps you've seen me walking around in my handsome red-white-blue jacket with the majestic eagle on the back? I love that jacket. When I think that God could have caused me to be born in a different country, I find myself feeling extremely grateful that I was born here instead.

Adding to that American pride is a family history with strong military service. Every Memorial Day or 4th of July, I'm drawn in my heart and mind to a grandfather whom I've never met. He was killed in WWII at the Battle of the Bulge. I think of another grandfather for whom I was named. He survived WWII, but not without some painful consequences affecting him to the end of his long life. I think about my father, my brother, my uncles, and many, many friends who've all served willingly and faithfully. Many times I have found myself regretting that my own life path never passed through boot camp or OTS.

Hoping to have made my love for the USA very clear, I want to reflect on a higher love—one that supersedes any sense of nationalism. You see, even if I had been born in Russia or Africa, I could still know the same God. Even if I had been born before

Columbus said the ocean blue, I would still be eligible for a heavenly citizenship thanks to the Righteous Lamb of God who took my sins upon Himself. Make no mistake, I am proud to be an American. Even greater still is my pride at being a citizen of Zion, the holy city of God.

My hope for all citizens of heaven is that we never forget the "God" part of the expression "God and Country." Everything good about America is just like any other blessing in our lives—it can always be traced back to the kindness of our Father who art in heaven. Whether or not we live in America, God is still God. Whether or not our founding fathers fought against English rule, God is still God. Whether or not a Democrat or a Republican occupies the White House, the security we most hold dear is unmovable and well established throughout eternity. God was on his throne long before George Washington crossed the Potomac, and He'll still be on His throne a thousand years from now. When that day comes, my American citizenship will only be a fond memory. My heavenly citizenship will be all that matters.

I write all of this for two reasons: 1) to honor our national celebrations, and 2) to address the question, "What does it mean to be a Christian and a citizen?" Have you ever paused to reflect on this? "

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The E-100 Challenge continues with the following passages relating to upcoming sermons and the worship schedule during the first two Sundays of July:

July 3, 2011 - #70—The Ascension (Acts 1:1-11)

Sermon title is: "So Long . . . for Now!"



July 10, 2011 - Recap of Series Numbers 66, 67, 68, 69, 70

(Sermon - Bits and pieces from the Cross of Christ series)

Due to many events during the months of July and August, the E-100 Challenge will be on summer hiatus until September!

### ***Pastor Jamey's column continued ...***

You see, it's very natural for us to say "God Bless America" and to "pray for our troops." But the lead concept in both of those expressions is "God" and "pray." That tells me that even in our common expressions, there is an underlying recognition that something in the universe has superiority over a democratic society. That "something" is where my heart is. I love America, and I proudly fly her flag, but I may only live within her borders for 80 years, give or take. I long for my better citizenship in a better place. More than American pride, I burst with Christian pride. The God of the universe reigns supreme over all presidents and kings who've ever lived. And, the day is coming when I will enter as a permanent subject of His eternal kingdom.

For now, I live as a proud American and with higher aspirations in view. (*At this point start humming Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA."*) "I'm proud to be a Christian, where I know I've been set free. And I won't forget the Man who died, who gave his life for me. Will you gladly stand up next to me and proclaim Him still today? 'Cause there ain't no doubt I love that Man! He took my guilt away.

*—Pastor Jamey*

### **Watch out!!!**

The manager of a grocery store nabbed a shoplifter in the act. He was escorting the shoplifter to his office when the shoplifter tried to run away. After a brief scuffle, the manager wrestled the shoplifter to the floor. He looked up to see a number of surprised customers staring at him.

"Everything's fine, folks" he said. "This guy just tried to go through the express line with more than nine items."

## *Greetings from the Moderator . . .*

—Dawn Wadle

Welcome to summer!!!

I don't know about your first month of summer, but mine has been extremely busy. We had no open houses or weddings but have been busy helping family and friends.



I have lost touch with the happenings of our church and the wonderful people who are part of that family. When I actually attend a Sunday service, I sometimes feel like a visitor instead of a member . . . only because I have been away. So my commitment to myself is to take a deep breath and dig in with a new study.

I thought I would also share with you what I will be learning. I have always wanted to study the Lord's Prayer—reciting this prayer said from the heart and not just something we say each Sunday. I have learned early on that prayers must come from the heart with faith that we will receive the answers. Even if that answer is no, not now, or maybe, we still must continue to pray with faith. So over the course of the next few months, I will be sharing my thoughts on what the Lord's Prayer means to me. Until then . . .

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

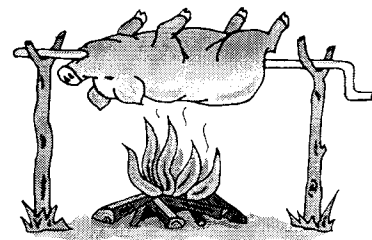
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A salesman, tired of his job, gave it up to become a policeman. Several months later a friend asked him how he liked his new role.

"Well," he replied, "the pay is good and the hours aren't bad, but what I like best is that the customer is always wrong."

## It's Annual Picnic Time . . .

Pack your picnic basket with a dish to pass and table service and join us for the Annual Church Picnic on Sunday, July 31, at 10 a.m. Roast pig and Dave Swanson's barbeque sauces will be on the menu. Beverages will be furnished. Bring your favorite lawn chair if you wish. There will be chairs and tables provided. Weather permitting, the service and picnic will be held on the south lawn.



The Women's Fellowship will be holding their second annual Baked Goods Auction with many goodies available to the highest bidder so you will be able to purchase a dessert (or desserts), or bread, or pie, or cake, or cookies, etc.



Steve Jeffris will be our special guest and will present a gospel concert during the worship service. Steve received his first guitar for Christmas at age 13. By his junior year in high school, he had formed a band and recorded his first album. In his senior year, he recorded his second album and has pursued his career as a full-time entertainer since 1990. A love offering will be collected to help offset the expense of the concert.

Bring your friends and neighbors and join us for a memorable and fun day!  
Thanks to the Diaconate Board for planning this special event!



When you have accumulated sufficient knowledge to get by,  
you're too old to remember it.

Just For Today — I will live through the next 12 hours and try  
not to tackle all of life's problems at once.

—More Heart Warmers

## ***Strangers in the Pew ...***



Jon and Elaine Muilenburg are no strangers to First Congregational Church. Elaine has been part of Stanton FCC for about 47 years, from the time she was a five-year-old wedged between her mom and dad. Jon followed her lead in about 1996, after some soul-searching and a long chat with Rick and Kate Zimbelman. Now, Jon sings in the choir (sometimes too loudly) while Elaine serves on various committees and as custodian, no doubt cleaning to get next to God.

The Muilenburgs own a small, diverse farm—*Rainbow's End*—featuring fruit and Christmas trees. The farm also houses a herd of 30 alpacas under the name of Heart of Michigan Alpacas, LLC, co-owned with Jon's brothers.

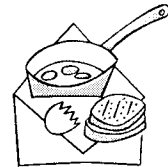
Jon and Elaine have four daughters: Elisabeth, 32, retirement program accountant for the MEA; Justine, 24, an RN at Greenville Memorial Hospital; Taryn, 22, a student at CMU; and Bree, a recent MCC grad enrolled at MSU for the fall. Yes, they are son-less, something Jon will, some day, "get over."

When they're not working, Jon and Elaine sleep . . . or Jon reads, watches sports on TV (especially NCAA hoops), and plays the guitar, while Elaine knits, crochets, sews, and plays with the grandkids: Lilah, two years old, and Mason, ten months old.

### ***: Final call for the Community Men's Breakfast . . .***

Men and boys are invited to a Community Men's Breakfast to be held at FCC on Saturday, July 9, from 8 - 9 a.m. Steve Billock will be the guest speaker and will share his journey of faith.

The Boys from Amsden will provide some music. Invite your friends and neighbors to come along. A free-will offering will be taken for the breakfast. Please RSVP to the church office (989.831.5240).



## ***Our Church at Work ...***

### ***Diaconate Notes/June 2011***

- Plans are well underway for the annual Church Picnic scheduled for 10 a.m. on Sunday, July 31.

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### ***Trustee Notes/June 2011 meeting***

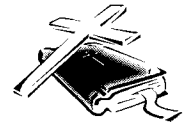
- Pastor Adam's departure— Sunday, July 31 will be his last Sunday at FCC
- Update on plans to rebuild ramp leading to the kitchen
- Received \$450 rebate from Consumers Energy

#### **FINANCIAL NOTES**

Income/May 2011	\$ 14,413
Expenses/May 2011	\$ 12,884
Parking lot update as of 06.28.11:	
	\$44,672,11

*It's the end ...*

*No, it's the beginning ...*



Four confirmands have completed a series of studies under the tutorage of Pastor Adam Wills.

Topics of study included:

- \* Theology (Bible introduction to basic doctrine)
- \* The history of God's plan (creation, fall, redemption, restoration)
- \* Jesus Christ (humanity vs. divinity, death, resurrection)
- \* Christian practice (devotion, church, prayer, social justice)
- \* Salvation (eternal security, Calvinism vs. Arminianism, exclusivity of Christ)

The goal in confirming students is to help them confirm their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and then to decide to follow him with their whole lives. The main task of the study was to answer the question, "Is Jesus worth following?"

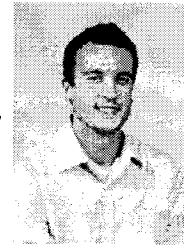
The following students (according to Pastor Adam) have responded with a resounding *YES* and will be confirmed on Sunday, July 17, during the morning worship service:

Gabe Nichols  
Samantha Nichols  
Chris Swanson  
Elizabeth Thornburg

Congratulation to all for a job well done!

## If Not Now, When?

As the seasons of life move along, we are often confronted with expected and unexpected change. I am personally experiencing a shift in the seasons of my life. As a newly married man, living in a new location with a new set of goals, I am feeling the tug and pull of these expected and unexpected changes. Sometimes in life, the fear of the unknown can be paralyzing. Yet, the unknown only asks of us to trust that the ground will still be there when we step out, a certain step of faith. We can spend our lives living in fear of what potential is out there for us. We can live a comfortable existence, padding and separating ourselves from this fear — the fear of the question “What if?”



Pastor Adam

Perhaps the question “What if?” is playing throughout your mind. I think we should replace that question with “If not now, when?” The question “If not now, when?” does not allow us to linger in the cerebral realm of what could be or the inertia of inaction, but rather demands us to think practically about this very moment. It forces us to think about the air we are breathing, inhale — exhale. It’s not necessarily challenging us to get up and jump on a plane to Africa or some sort of bucket list thing. Rather, “If not now, when?” challenges our mission—our life’s mission. Mission is, at its core, about glory. Every season of life presents opportunities to glorify God more than we glorify ourselves. James clearly hits on this point:

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” [James 4:13-17]

I am in this season called transition. From single life to married life. From eating alone to having someone cook tasty meals for me. From a singular existence to a shared existence. From scratching my own back to having my back scratched. From a set mission for life to a shared mission for life. It’s really about mission.

As I have spent considerable time evaluating this newly shared mission, I have had to make some tough decisions. There have been moments of sadness and moments of excitement. All in all, I know for a fact that I am doing what God is calling me to do. I ask myself “If not now, when?” Now is the time to respond to God’s calling.

It has been with a great sense of love and belonging that you have welcomed me here. I am deeply thankful to have experienced life with you for this past year. From the Blastoff program to leading music, teaching the confirmation class, preaching, most of all I have grown in my love for the Lord. I am deeply indebted. Many, many thanks for this experience.

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## Women's Fellowship ...

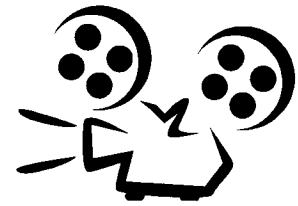
Women's Fellowship will be having a Baked Goods Auction at the annual picnic on Sunday, July 31. If you have a favorite recipe that you would like to make and furnish for the auction it would be appreciated.



The July meeting will be held on the 9th at 9:30 a.m. at the church.

Contact persons for Women's Fellowship are:  
Janet Brundage, coordinator (989.831.4405)  
Pam Russell, treasurer (989.831.0867)  
Martha Turnbull, secretary (989.831.4217)

## Movie Night for Young Adults ...



Two movie events for young adults (18 - 29) this month.

The movie, *Juno*, will be viewed on Thursday, July 14, and *Taken* will be shown on Friday, July 29. The events begin at 7 p.m. at FCC. There will be food, movie, and discussion.

Please RSVP via facebook (fbpage Veritas Young Adults) or e-mail Pastor Adam at: [awills@fccstanton.org](mailto:awills@fccstanton.org).

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## If Not Now, When? continued . . .

However, this good experience has come to a close, and a new one is about to begin. As the Lord is leading, I am looking at a few opportunities in Grand Rapids. Grand Rapids Theological Seminary has a scholarship program called the Kern Scholars program. I have begun the extensive application process for the Kern Scholars Fall 2012 program. Also, I have been looking into opportunities at some Grand Rapids churches. We are asking the Lord to open doors. Nothing has been solidified yet, but as it becomes clear, you will hear about it.

Please keep in touch. I may be reached by e-mail ([adamduanewills@gmail.com](mailto:adamduanewills@gmail.com)) or by phone (616.581.9939).

If not now, when?

Pastor Adam

