

From our Pastor.....



Dear Friends,

I am pleased to note that lots of things happening in June, 2011 at the Olivet Congregational Church.

Sunday we honored our high school and college graduates. I am sure you extend to them, with me, congratulations for their achievements and their next step toward maturity and adulthood. We will be giving them a gift representing our blessing and esteem. The gift for the college graduates is a book by Francis Chan, a very popular Christian author: Crazy Love.

I want to tell you a bit about it. I recommend it to all who are reading this newsletter. It challenges us to get all of God, or more significantly, let God get all of us, our whole selves, minds, spirits, bodies, everything. He notes the absence in most Christian lives of radical attachment to Christ, of our being uninterested or distracted from letting God have all of us, including this present moment, let alone our futures and our plans.

What is interesting is the way he presents this challenge; he tells his own struggles and challenges and changes that have opened him up to God's priorities rather than his own. He shares the stories of Christians from various cultures who determined to go where God directs, or simply where needs are great. His approach is therefore rather more inspiring than guilt-inducing. He uses the insights of vital Christians who share their Biblical understandings, discoveries and commitments.

He invites us to move beyond lukewarm Christianity and to do what Christ did and to become what Christ is: a loving devoted son and servant of God and mankind. Jesus said, "I have given you an example that you should do as I have done for you." The Apostle Paul said, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." Francis Chan then gives a chapter of examples of people who followed Jesus example: Missionary doctors, orphans who became directors of orphanages, a young woman just out of college who followed the direction of God's spirit which resulted in her loving and caring for a child of a mom dying of AIDS and then adopting him, a Christian singer who used his songs to bless, but didn't consider his music his primary purpose but as a means to connect and help people in very practical ways, a home-less, recovered alcoholic who now feeds other homeless people, a persecuted Chinese Christian young man who found God's faithful and amazing provision through his trials and others.

What these people had is what we have – lots of needs, distractions, good things in our lives and some connection with God. What they found was more of God, or as Francis Chan would say, they let God have more of them. It was a risk for them, but it was also the route to great and significant lives and through their changed lives great blessing to those around them.

I hope you will pick up this book and read it. I doubt if you will be the same after you read it and think it over. You will be blessed to become a better blessing.

Something totally new for us this summer will be the presence of Lisa Bolton-Hunt who has finished her seminary course requirements at Western Seminary in Holland. She needs to complete an internship to receive her Master of Divinity Degree. She has had rich and varied experiences of ministry already but needs to complete this formal step in her academic preparation and requirements. Lisa and her husband are members of the Lansing, Plymouth Congregational Church where Lisa has served as an Associate Minister. During the school year she is a full-time employee of the St. Johns school district serving as an audiologist. She is also a part-time chaplain at Sparrow Hospital. She has been attending seminary part-time for over 7 years. She is the mother of a son and a daughter, both out of college (Mike Fales and I have served with her daughter, Lindsey, many summers at church camp).

Lisa has worshipped with us on a couple of occasions this past year and was impressed by the hospitality of our congregation and particularly wanted to do her internship here with us. She and the Dean of Students from her seminary met with our Church Council where she was unanimously voted to be with us for the 10 weeks of her internship. She will be with us this Sunday, June 12 and then will start her work with us on June 14.

Please make yourself and your family acquainted and welcome Lisa. I was well served by the congregation in Wisconsin where I did my internship and hope we can do the same for her in the development of her ministry. She will assist me with pastoral responsibilities, preach, help out on Sundays with Adult Bible Class, worship and children's ministry. I would encourage you to invite her into your home sometime this summer for a conversation about faith and ministry.

Some other June notes.

On Wednesday evenings this summer, Pamela, my wife, is hosting a Bible study for women, younger and older, on Women of the Bible. The studies are at the parsonage, 119 E. Green Street, right behind the church parking lot, 6:30-8:00.

Vacation Bible School will be the last week of June, June 28-July1, at Lee Center Methodist Church. I hope you will have your children take part. It is always a great experience learning about Jesus and the Bible stories in fun ways out in the country.

Frank Palacios, Judith Tellez-Gonzalez and I will be heading to Mission Mazahua in Mexico the last two weeks of June. If you have pastoral needs during that time please contact our Deacon Chairman, Greg Morrison and he and/or our summer Seminary Intern Lisa Bolton-Hunt will be pleased to assist you.

If you would like to follow our Mission Mazahua activities through our time of service just send your email address to Mazahuafolks@yahoo.com We would really appreciate your prayers day by day.

God bless you as you transition into summer. Worship with us as often as you can.

With you in Christ's service, *Jack Brown*