

Advance
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Can't get to church? Plug in to Internet podcast for sermon

By CATHY RUNYON

It may be the oldest church in town, but Hudsonville Congregational United Church of Christ, 4950 32nd Ave., has adopted the latest in technology.

Jim Sullivan, a church member and owner of Progressive Media Partners, serves as the church's Web master. Each week he records the Sunday sermons, then edits and pub-

lishes them for broadcast on the Internet. They can then be downloaded for listening at your leisure.

"Podcasts are like Internet radio shows that listeners can download onto a computer and listen to at home on their computer, or on-the-go using a portable music player," Sullivan said. "Once a listener subscribes to a podcast feed, the audio can be automatically

downloaded when a new episode is released."

Mars Hill Bible Church makes sermons available for podcast. Listeners can access the Hudsonville Congregational UCC sermons at www.hudsonvilleucc.org.

"Offering podcasts of our sermons is one of the ways we are making an effort to reach out to people in the community," said the Rev. Eric Thorsen, sen-

ior pastor at Hudsonville Congregational UCC.

Sullivan said the term podcast was coined in 2004 and is a combination of the words iPod and "broadcast." Despite the name, podcasts can be heard on any digital audio player, not just Apple iPods.

"Podcasts are not tied to any one geographic location, so people are finding that they can take the Sunday sermon with

them throughout the week," Sullivan said. "People on the other side of the world could be listening to a sermon and we can never guess what kind of positive impact that will have on their lives."

Sullivan emphasized that listening to a podcast is not a substitute for fellowship at a local church, "but it does allow you to hear the sermon on your time." Having the sermon read-

ily available for repetition helps people review portions they may not have understood, or hear sermons they have missed. Sullivan said in the process of recording, editing, and publishing the sermons, he hears them multiple times. "I've noticed the points being made sink in a lot better."

Sullivan said he hopes to begin tracking the service to see how often it is being used.