

# CALLER

## SEPTEMBER 2007



**CHRIST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**



United Church of Christ  
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**From the Desk of Jerry Eslinger.....** “Giving Voice”

After reading about, but not yet seeing, CNN’s disturbing report on “God’s Warriors,” I lost a few hours sleep, mainly because it stirred my impatience with the faith world I know. The challenge facing us, it seems to me, is to go deep without going extreme. All around us are people crying out for faith, for reasons to believe, for ways to put faith into action.

The report essentially interviewed fundamentalists from the Islamic, Jewish, and Christian traditions. It appears to me that without self-restraint, this yearning leads to zealotry, from the “I Found It” of smug triumphalism to the bombing of any perceived threat to faith’s purity. To people hungry for values, religious zealots give moralistic crusades that scapegoat some to bolster others. To people willing to serve, religious zealots give single-issue political action that sneers at mercy and justice. To people begging for opportunity, religious zealots give weapons and a toxic stew of victimhood and hyper-righteous. To people seeking respect, religious zealots give enemies deserving death.

In time, religious extremes square off in open warfare, declaring struggles that must lead to all-out victory. Take no prisoners, make no treaties, seek no peace – God demands total devotion.

This tragic tapestry has many threads. The greed of American industrialists undermined the 19<sup>th</sup> Century dream of liberal democracy. Slavery and segregation surrounded noble architecture with hypocrisy. Colonialism offered easy wealth at a cost of human suffering. Foolish leaders wandered dreamily into one World War and blustered meekly as fascism pursued another. Lazy politicians expended America’s moral capital in a mindless black-and-white worldview, and they mired the nation in debt. Marketing replaced invention.

Meanwhile, liberal Protestantism lost its voice. We built handsome buildings, competed for members and took aim at easy targets like Southern racists. But we had little to say as the post-war economic expansion turned ugly, as the infrastructure of American life crumbled, and as television, consumerism and anomie left people isolated and insecure.

As some would say, our center is crumbling, isn’t standing. The energy now lies in extreme fundamentalism, both Christian and Islamist, which channels people’s yearnings into rage and absolutes.

Now we hear rumblings of homegrown terrorism and demands for theocratic rule. Politicians try to game this anger for votes. The super-wealthy game the economy to amass fortunes.

It seems to me the liberal center needs to assert itself, to set aside easy agendas, to go deep in our faith, and to nurture communities grounded in more than politeness and sweet stories. We need our voice back. But we must have more to say than the synagogue leaders who whined to Jesus about religious propriety.

### **Homelessness Project Update**

Our new family has arrived! We have just been assigned a new family to mentor through the Family and Senior Homelessness Initiative (FSHI). Tricia is a single mother of two daughters ages 12 and 1 and is employed (we are told - we haven't met Tricia yet!) as a phlebotomist in Lakewood, CO. She has been living with family and friends but looks forward to having a home for herself and her daughters with just a little bit of help from our congregation and from FSHI. We are delighted to have three new volunteers. Virginia Black, Mim Willyard and Carolyn Anderson will join our mentor group and receive training. FSHI is coordinating with us to try to schedule training on the same day as, and just prior to, our first meeting with this new family.

Sandy Maben has attended the first of what is expected to be a quarterly roundtable gathering of mentor teams from churches that are participating in the FSHI program across the metro area. The group shares a meal as well as stories, victories, frustrations, common experiences and questions on what we are doing. It is a wonderful way to keep up with the total impact that the program is having.

Please see a member of the mentoring committee if you have any suggestion or ideas that will support our work with the families.

### **New Bylaws Create Seven Ministries**

The new Christ Congregational Church bylaws were approved at the August 26 congregational meeting. So, what is the next step?

Many of our existing church boards will become ministry teams and new ministries will be created. All existing boards will retain responsibility until the new bylaws go into effect on Sunday, September 30. The Nominating Committee, composed of Vice-Moderator Sandy Selzer, at-large council members Janet Burns and Marve Evers, and the Rev. Jerry Eslinger, has begun recruiting and encouraging individuals to serve as coordinators of the new ministries. These coordinators will be elected by the congregation.

Do you agree that we all are responsible for making these changes work? Is it really true that 20 percent of the people do 80 percent of the work? Consider asking yourself, "How am I involved in the activities of Christ Church? Am I part of the 20 percent or the 80 percent?"

Our first ministry coordinators will play an important role in charting the church's path over the next seven months – until the next Annual Meeting in May. We need a dedicated team of ministry coordinators and ministry volunteers. Would you be willing to serve? We invite you all to be a part of this new day for Christ Church! The Nominating Committee

## **YOUTH GROUP CORNER**

### **CHILDREN, YOUTH VOLUNTEERS NEEDED AS ACOLYTES**

One of the most important and visible ways our church's children and youth participate in the worship service is to serve as acolytes. Acolytes light our altar candles at the beginning of the worship service to remind us that we have entered into a sacred time and space. The act of candle-lighting also reminds Christians that we are each called to be a light in the world. Two volunteers are needed each Sunday morning, beginning September 9, to serve as acolytes. Children, ages seven and older, as well as high-school age youth are invited to volunteer. If you are interested, please sign up on the acolyte chart located on the Education Bulletin Board outside of Fellowship Hall. Acolytes are asked to arrive 10 minutes before the start of worship and to dress appropriately, since we are not wearing robes this year. The ushers will help you light the candles. Thank you in advance for your help!

### **CONFERENCE HOSTS FALL MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT**

The Rocky Mountain Conference UCC's 2007 Fall Middle School Retreat will be held September 28-30 at the La Foret Conference and Retreat Center near Colorado Springs. The retreat is offered to youth in grades 6-8 from across all the Rocky Mountain Conference's churches in Colorado, Wyoming and Utah. The cost of the retreat is \$120 and the registration deadline is Thursday, September 13. Scholarships are available, so don't let cost keep you from attending! All participants must register through the church office. For information, or to register, please see Jeremy Shaver, Director of Education and Family Ministries.

### **Youth Sell E-Books To Earn Ski Trip**

The Christ Congregational Church Youth Group will sell the familiar and fantastic e-Book this fall. The e-Book is a coupon book with discounts from dozens of area businesses. The books cost \$10 and the church earns \$6 from each sale. The books are a particular bargain for King Soopers shoppers! King Soopers is offering four \$5 off coupons on a purchase of \$50 or more. So, the books will pay for themselves in just two shopping trips! Proceeds from the books will help support youth programs at Christ Church, as well as the church itself. Youth who sell 15 books will also earn a free lift ticket for a Christ Church Youth Group ski trip! A sales table will be located in the Narthex every Sunday through September. Please support the church and youth group by purchasing an e-Book today!

### **Usher Volunteers Needed For New Church Year**

Ushers are an important part of our church's ministry of hospitality. They not only help pass out bulletins on Sunday morning and collect the offering, they help parents with infants find the nursery, distribute hearing devices for those who need them, and welcome visitors and guests. Won't you consider serving as an usher? If you are interested, please contact Randy Marble, the coordinator of our user program, at 303-233-4540. Our church's youth are also invited to volunteer. Many thanks to all those who have volunteered as ushers during this past year!

### **Adult Forum Features Progressive Christianity Video Series**

The Sunday morning Adult Forum will resume at 8:45 a.m. Sunday, September 16 in the Commons Room. This popular adult education series is led by the Rev. Jerry Eslinger. This fall, the class will feature a new and exciting curriculum – “Living the Questions 2.0,” a popular video and internet-based small-group exploration of progressive Christianity, featuring the premier theologians and religious voices of our day. The curriculum is composed of three parts and 21 sessions. Some sample session topics include: “Thinking Theologically,” “Out into the World: Challenges Facing Progressive Christians,” “Social Justice: Realizing God's Vision,” and “Compassion: The Heart of Jesus' Ministry.” Each class session will include a 20-minute video segment, followed by group discussion. Coffee and donuts will be provided.

***If you have never participated in the Adult Forum, we invite you to consider making it a part of your spiritual journey this fall!***

### **Campaign Helps Faith Communities Address Climate Change**

The Governor's Energy Office and Colorado Interfaith Power & Light are teaming up to sponsor the 2007 “Change a Light, Change the World” initiative for communities of faith. The purpose of the program is to equip congregations to share important information with their members on global climate change and discover ways faith communities and individuals can make changes in their uses of energy. Christ Congregational Church will join dozens of other Colorado churches in participating in this program. The 30-minute class will be offered after worship on **Sunday, October 7** in the Commons Room. As an incentive for participation, each individual will receive a free compact fluorescent light bulb. If you are interested in participating in this program, **please R.S.V.P. with Jeremy Shaver, Director of Education and Family Ministries, by Sunday, September 9.**

### **Generation Gap Participates In “Hands For Hope” Day**

Members of Christ Congregational Church's Generation Gap group will participate in the 2007 Hands for Hope Day sponsored by Hope Communities, Inc. on Saturday, September 29. Hands for Hope is an annual community-building workday that engages hundreds of volunteers from the Denver area to paint, landscape, and repair community spaces in the historic Five Points neighborhood. The day will begin with check-in and breakfast at 7 a.m. at the Hope Communities Neighborhood Center, 2543 California Street. Work will conclude around 1 p.m. Jeremy Shaver, Director of Education and Family Ministries at Christ Church and Outreach and Communications Coordinator for The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado, was invited to offer the prayer of invocation at the opening ceremonies for the event. Several Generation Gap members have already signed up for this event. If you can join us, please R.S.V.P. by Sept. 14 by calling Jeremy at the church office. This event is just one way to put our faith into action. Please join us!

### **Interfaith Music Festival Aims To “Turn The World Around”**

The Seventh Annual Interfaith Music Festival sponsored by The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado is set for 7 p.m. **Sunday, October 14** at Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church, 1980 Dahlia St. in Denver. The theme for this year's concert is “Turn the World Around.” The festival will feature performers from a variety of faith traditions, including: Los Lantzmun, a group that plays a lively combination of Jewish and Sufi music; Alandi Ashram of the Boulder Kirtan, who

will raise his voice in Hindu chanting; and the Sojourners, and ensemble of The Spirituals Project. Tickets cost \$12 and can be purchased from Jeremy Shaver, Director of Education and Family Ministries. This is an event that will touch your heart and move your spirit!

### Community Ministry Food Bank

They have asked for our church to donate **Canned Soup** for the month of September. Of course, any other donations (food, children's clothes, children's undergarments, personal care items) are always appreciated.



## NOTES FROM THE MUSIC DIRECTOR



Psalm 95:1-2

O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise with songs of praise.

Our grateful thanks to all our members and guests who shared their talents with our special music program during our summer worship.

O come, all ye of the Chancel and Bell Choirs and let's once again join in joyful noise to praise and thank God for all His marvelous gifts.

Regular Chancel Choir rehearsals will resume on THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, at 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 (usually). For our kick-off Sunday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, both the Chancel and Owd Dabar singers will join in the rousing song, "Shout, Amen!" which we'll rehearse together on Thursday from 7-7:30.

The Bell Choir will begin its regular rehearsals on SUNDAY, SEPT 16<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 a.m. in the sunshine room (1<sup>st</sup> floor, west side, past the library and nursery.)

Both Chancel and Bell Choirs warmly welcome new or "returning" singers and ringers. Altho' being able to read music is helpful, it is NOT a prerequisite—nor is there any age restrictions. Please come and help us make a joyful noise!

Liana Lansing (cell phone: 720-272-7044)

### SEPTEMBER MISSION OFFERING:

#### The Gathering Place and Second Wind Fund

For the month of September, the Mission Board has agreed to support two agencies, and you may very well ask why. Let's talk about the Second Wind Fund first. At the last meeting of the Mission & Outreach board, we decided to become a Faith Partner with Second Wind. The Second Wind Fund provides funds for counseling by licensed therapists at reduced rates for teens identified as being at risk for suicide that are uninsured or under-insured for such services. Since 2003, Second Wind has referred 670 youth throughout the metro Denver area for these services. There were 66 participants in the first walk/run event in 2002 that raised \$4,000 for the Second Wind Fund. Last year, 1,900 participants raised over \$100,000 and the goal for 2007 is 2,500 participants! This year's walk/run/bike event is on Sunday, September 23, 2007 beginning at Green Mountain High School. As a Faith Partner, Christ Congregational will donate \$200 and attempt to provide 14 walking, running or bike riding participants to the event. See Sandy Maben to join.

Any amount raised over \$200 in September will be donated to The Gathering Place. The Gathering Place is Denver's only daytime drop-in center for women and children who are experiencing homelessness or poverty. Did you know that the number of homeless children in families in the metro Denver area has grown from 1,931 in 1998 to 3,261 in 2006, a 69% increase? Women and their children find a safe haven at The Gathering Place. Here they can receive 3 meals a day, emergency food and clothing, hygiene supplies, bathing and laundry facilities, bus tokens and access to telephones, mail and messaging services as they work their way out of homelessness to self-sufficiency. The Gathering Place sees between 15 and 40 children every day, most of them under the age of 6. Age appropriate activities are provided as well as links to immunization and health services, literacy support and early childhood education. Adult education opportunities, such as GED preparation, computer labs and writing skills classes are also provided.

Please give as generously as you are able this month to these 2 wonderful agencies.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Fall Worship Hour Returns In September

Our 10 a.m. worship hour will return on Sunday, September 2 and will remain the same through the end of May. Don't forget to mark your calendars!

## Fall Kick-Off Sunday Slated For September 16

All Christ Congregational Church members and friends are invited to the start of our new church year and fall program on Sunday, September 16. Our education programs for children, youth, and adults will resume that morning and our Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir will return to lead us in worship through inspiring music. As a special treat, the Chancel Choir and Owd Dabar – our contemporary music ensemble – will offer a special anthem. We will gather for worship at 10 a.m. and then enjoy lunch on the church patio and grounds. The children and youth will serve up hot dogs, hamburgers, potato salad, chips, watermelon and cookies. You are also invited to participate in some games, including volleyball. Plan now to join us for this exciting event and invite a friend!

## Volunteer Teachers Needed For Sunday School Program

At Christ Congregational Church, we believe our children and youth *are the church*, not simply the future of the church. We seek to teach our children and youth the stories of our faith and encourage them to develop a spiritual practice that is meaningful to them. One of the most important ways we carry out this goal is in our Sunday School classes for children and youth. We are looking for volunteer teachers to lead our grades K-8 and 9-12 classes. A special teacher training session will be held at 11:15 a.m. Sunday, September 9 in the Sunshine Room. If you would like to work with our children and youth as a teacher, please contact Jeremy Shaver, Director of Education and Family Ministries.

Please consider teaching this year and please let Jeremy know by Wednesday, August 22 if you will attend the teacher training session. Without the support of our volunteer teachers, our church could not offer a quality education program for our children and youth. Thank you!

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY

01	Marie Smedes
03	Sandy Griggs
03	Andy Nelson
05	Verna Ashley
06	Heidi Tegeder
10	Rick Wells
12	Emmy Fisher
16	Marve Evers
16	Linda Sue Larson
19	Mary Wilderson
22	Daryl Coleman
26	Carolyn Anderson
27	Vesta Giltner
28	Lou Bindner
28	Helen T. Smith
29	Judith Wilson
30	Susan Kennedy

*We are sorry if your name was omitted; please call the church office so that we may add your information to our Birthday List.*