

CALLER

FEBRUARY 2008



CHRIST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH



United Church of Christ
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Christ Congregational Church Identity and Mission Statement

Christ Congregational Church is a progressive, caring, and celebrating Christian Congregation of the United Church of Christ. We are a serving, learning, and worshipping community of faith. We welcome and care for one another. We desire to be diverse, justice-promoting, tradition affirming, future directed, and multi-generational. The focus of our ministry is on our neighborhood and to the larger Metro area, with ongoing attention to the needs of the global community.

From the Desk of Jerry Eslinger . . .

What's This About Lent?

The word "lent" is first cousin to our word "lengthen," and bears a family resemblance. In the spring of the year, when days began to lengthen, a period was set aside to lead up to Easter Sunday, the day of resurrection. Over a period of many years, the church settled on forty days as the length of that period. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, the fortieth weekday before Easter, and officially concludes at noon on Saturday of Holy Week.

If there is one word that Lent forces on us, one word that characterizes its original purpose, it is the word "discipline." Lent has always been a time for getting oneself in line, of gathering up some loose ends of life. Discipline is not a popular concept in our day. Many of our commercials point us in the opposite direction. "Pamper yourself," they tell us. "You deserve a break today." So what really does a Lenten discipline mean?

Discipline involves saying "No." As parents, what a difficult assignment we give ourselves and our children here, to become aware of and adapt to urges and actions that move so quickly and inexplicably back and forth between the acceptable and the forbidden. And all this must take place in a setting where some witnesses say, "anything goes" and others say, "ain't it awful." But a conversation with them might go like this: every decision we make – what to read, where to go, what to do -- is a door leading to something else, something more involved and complex. Little decisions are doors leading to certain rooms, and when we make the decision, we enter that room full of implications and dangers and possibilities and doors to other rooms. Lent is a time to practice saying "No" to some of those decisions that lead us to consequences we are not prepared to handle. A good discipline during Lent would be to identify a habit, a weakness in our lives that keeps getting us in difficult situations, and for forty days, at least, say "No" to it.

But discipline involves saying "Yes," too. One reason Lent fell out of favor

with many people is that it came to be almost an orgy of gloom. Given the choice, when Lent begins, I would rather see someone take up something than give up

LAST LAUGH.
“Doubts are the ants in the pants of faith.
They keep it awake and moving.”

- Frederick Buechner,
From About.com

GLOBAL PARTNERS 2008

Venezuela and the United States

Join a mission trip to Venezuela with the Global Partners program. The purpose of these trips is to provide cultural exchanges between the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela (UEPV) and the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ in the United States. There are three trips a year, with each trip centered on a project. The process of relationship building, however, is more important than what we do. Therefore, you do not need specific skills for any of these trips. Please fill out an application for one of the following trips. YOUR LIFE WILL NEVER BE THE SAME!!!!

Now taking applications for:

Intergenerational Construction trip ---- April 13-20, 2008. Rev. Jeff Scott and others will lead. This team will work to enlarge the existing kitchen and library at the Pacto Offices in Maracaibo. The UEPV are hoping that as usual we'll provide some funding for this project as well as labor. The funding for the project comes from a grant written to the Global Ministries in Indianapolis. Apply ASAP for this trip.

Youth trip (for ages 15-18)---July 20-28, 2008. Rev. Chris Gilmore, Nathan Thrasher and others will lead. July 21 the youth will work in Maracaibo on a project with their youth and do a cultural reality exchange. Tue July 22 they will travel to Barquisimeto for a National gathering of the UEPV Youth. The UEPV know that our youth like to do work projects while there and they plan to start construction on an auditorium at the UEPV camp in Barquisimeto. This youth experience will also include music, sports, reflection, and worship. They will return to Maracaibo on July 27.

Medical mission trip ---October 12-20, 2008. Diane Otsuka and Dawn Nottingham will lead. This team will work with the Wayuu one day. The remainder of the time they will go to Portuguesa, a medically underserved state further south and conduct clinics with the people there. Possibly an eye specialist could be included, as many people have poor vision. *Spanish translators are needed on all trips!* For an application and contact information with the leader of a given trip, go to rmcucc.org/outreach/globalpartners/gpappply.htm or contact Alice Silver, 9845 Poppy Ct, Highlands Ranch, CO 80129, 720-344-6947 home, 720-219-0316 cell, agsilver@pair.com.

This global partnership between UCC, DOC, & UEPV started in 1998. *Our church’s Wider Mission* donations supported the creation of this relationship and continue to fund technical and coordinating assistance.

More from the Desk of Jerry

something. So little decisions are also doors to rooms full of light and life and promise. Lent can be a period of choosing certain of those doors and going in them, and opening oneself to unexpected renewal there. What might those doors be? Perhaps a devotional period, a discipline of prayer or Bible reading. Perhaps a discipline of affirming people about us – consciously looking for ways to affirm people who work with us or for us, or who live with us. Perhaps a discipline of gratitude – taking the trouble to write or call persons who today or years past entered our lives and we grew from it. Perhaps a discipline of physical exercise – perhaps a discipline of community service – perhaps a discipline of reading for understanding of those with whom we might disagree – in other words, let Lent bring us to a lengthening of the mind and spirit.

Discipline helps us to see God. Back in the early 1400’s, when daring sailors were pushing farther and farther westward into the Atlantic, reports kept coming back of a beautiful set of islands out there called the St. Brendan Islands. The reports differed on where they were, but all agreed they were out there. It was then that King Ferdinand of Spain, in order to reward one of his sea captains, issued this proclamation: “I grant to Captain Vogado full title to the St. Brendan Islands, provided he can find them.”

We don’t know if he found them, but we never heard of Vogado again. Are there times in our lives when we really find God? God is here for us, all about us and within us, provided that we find God. Lent is a time for looking, for disciplining ourselves to see.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

YOGA CLASS

Enjoy classical hatha yoga, the Day-Star method, to build strength and flexibility both inside and out. Day-Star Yoga is gentle enough for beginners and yet challenging for the more experienced. If you have never done yoga before, this is the perfect opportunity for you to try it! Students are encouraged to work at their own level. Please wear comfortable layered clothing and bring a mat to class.

Class is held in “sessions”; however, you may begin at any time. The current session began on January 14 and will run until February 25. The next session dates are March 3 – April 28 (with no class on March 24). The cost is \$50 or \$10 “drop-in.” Payment for the session can be made the first night of class or on a drop-in basis. Your first class is free. If you decide you love the class, you can register for the session or pay the drop-in fee. If not, there is no obligation.

OWD DABAR NEWS

Wow! Another year has passed and another starts. It is hard to believe. In the past year that I have been involved with Owd Dabar my spiritual journey has grown. I am excited for this year as we move forward with the Friday Night Song Services as well as the new music we are learning. With the feedback we got from the questionnaires on Friday Night song services, we move forward with change. I would also like to welcome a new voice to Owd Dabar – Georgia Bachmann. I look forward to a new and exciting year for both Owd Dabar and Christ Congregational Church. “God is still speaking.”

Renee Marble

FAMILY AND SENIOR HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVE UPDATE. We continue to provide support to three families who now all have homes through the FSHI program. On Sunday, Feb. 10, Sherry Johnson will be here to speak about her involvement in the program, and how the support she has received from our congregation has impacted her life. I heard her presentation at the Denver Rescue Mission’s Annual Dinner. It was very powerful and made me feel proud of our church’s support. Please make a point to come hear her speak.

Thanks, Sandy Selzer

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE THANK YOU. Your Stewardship Committee would like to thank you for your support in a very special way. Come join us for lunch on Sunday’, March 2, following the church service. Let’s fill the church for communion and communing together at lunch. We are truly blessed with a congregation of many talents. COME – spend this time with us.

A COLORADO WITHOUT POVERTY

The 2008 Faith Advocacy Day will be held on Tuesday, March 4th, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Scottish Rite Building, 1370 Grant Street in Denver. Plenary speakers are Bishop Allan Bjornberg of the Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA, Bishop Warner Brown, Jr., of Rocky Mountain Conference, United Methodist Church,

Dr. Steven Foster, Senior Rabbi, Congregation Emmanuel, and Imam Ibrahim Kazerooni, Imam to the Muslim Community in Denver. Breakout sessions will be held on the following topics: Advocacy 101; Affordable Housing; Colorado's Economy after Referendum C; Health Care in Colorado; and Predatory Lending. Hunger for Justice: Interfaith Voices against Poverty and Lutheran Advocacy Ministry are issuing the invitation. The costs are \$20 if registered by February 29 and \$25 after that date.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND MISSIONS MINISTRY -- FEBRUARY MISSION

OFFERING: The Social Justice and Missions Ministry has selected Veterans of Hope as its February mission offering. The Veterans of Hope Project is a multifaceted, educational initiative on religion, culture, and participatory democracy. They are a non-profit 501c3 organization based on the campus of the Iliff School of Theology. The project was founded in 1997 by Vincent and the late Rosemarie Freeney Harding, long time activists, historians, counselors, and teachers of spiritually based social activism, working for compassionate social change in the United States and internationally.

The primary mission is to encourage a healing-centered approach to community building that recognizes the interconnectedness of spirit, creativity, and democratic citizenship. Through taped interviews, Veterans of Hope gather and share the life stories of "Veterans," women and men who have worked for many years for compassionate social change. The interviews pay significant attention to the persons, institutions, practices, and beliefs that helped shape the veterans in their youth, and helped them through hard times in their life and work. The purpose of the interviews is to provide a powerful set of nurturing and challenging resources for young people, so they can discover the lives of men and women who have worked to create a more just, compassionate, and democratic society. The educational materials are strongly multicultural, intergenerational, and interreligious. The hope is that some of these young people will consider the great potential of their lives, and discover the role they can play in creating "a more perfect union."

Through the interview series, consultations, trainings, and forums, the Veterans of Hope are able to bring a rich variety of extraordinary individuals to the city of Denver and the Rocky Mountain Region. Often they travel with their veterans to other parts of the country, having their elders share their stories with the young people.

In 2003, Veterans of Hope began an annual program called Ambassadors of Hope. It brings together a group of 20-25 Denver-area young people across racial, religious, and economic lines to meet with the elders (veterans). The youth are encouraged to find artistic expressions (in dance, spoken word, graphic/mural art and video representation) and to explore traditions that have empowered the elders in movements for democratic social change.

YOUTH NEWS FOR FEBRUARY!

Welcome to **Amy Smith** who became our new CE Director and Youth Group leader as of January 20th! Amy has her Master of Divinity from Iliff School of Theology and is currently approved for ordination with the UCC pending a call. Amy is a lifelong member of the UCC having grown up at the Kirk of Bonnie Brae here in Denver and is currently a member at First Plymouth UCC where she is a youth mentor for their youth group as well. Amy brings a great deal of experience with the retreat and camping program of the Rocky Mountain Conference at LaForet to her work with us, as well as a professional background in curriculum development and instructional design from her work in business. Welcome Amy!

To launch 2008 with our youth, youth group will officially resume beginning on February 3rd! **Youth group will be held Sunday afternoons from 3:30 pm – 5:30 pm every other week**; we will also have special events and field trips on other days and times. Calendar of upcoming dates and events will be given out on February 3rd to parents and youth!

FEBRUARY 3RD:

- ♦ **PARENTS: Come join Amy for a brief "get-to-know-you" and organizational meeting immediately following the 10:00 am worship service.** Amy will be discussing upcoming youth group meetings, CE plans, and youth events for the spring and summer. A calendar with key dates will be handed out.
- ♦ **YOUTH: Youth Group will begin at 3:30 pm!** Come meet Amy for youth group and stay for a Super Bowl party! Bring some snacks to share.

FEBRUARY 17th: Youth Group at 3:30 pm. We've painted the walls, but how can our new youth room become our "Sacred Space"? Come help us begin to explore, claim, and consecrate our new "dwelling" place in the Jubilee room as