



The Link



Volume 41, Number 8

December 24, 2009

Sunday Worship:

12/27/09 at 9:20 AM

Suzanne Stout preaching
FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS
"Now What?"
Colossians 3:12-17

1/3/10 at 9:20 AM

Tim Diebel preaching
SECOND SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

1/10/10 at 9:20 AM

Tim Diebel preaching
FIRST SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY

Prayer Themes:

December 25: **Christmas Day:**
Please pray that Christ will be born anew in all our hearts, and that there will truly be peace on earth, with goodwill toward all.

January 1: **New Year's Day:**
Please pray for God's guidance and provisions for us in the upcoming year.

January 6: **Epiphany:** Please pray that as the Messiah was revealed to the world, so Jesus will be revealed to those around us through God's presence in our lives.



Care Groups Kick-Off Sunday, January 10

"We are disciples of Jesus Christ honoring the God-given worth of every person and all creation."

"The Caring Connection" will begin in January.

EVERYONE in the congregation is a part of a care group. Since this is a new endeavor, we have printed many questions and answers. If you still need further information, please contact Sondra Eddings at the church office.

Why have care groups?

The congregation of First Christian Church has recently engaged in a visioning process to better prepare to serve God in the days to come. Out of that process came four key result areas and goals including being a Stewarding Community, a Welcoming Community, A Reconciling Community, and a Caring Community. Care Groups are part of our effort to answer this call to serve.

What is a Care Group?

The entire congregation of First Christian Church is divided into several care groups. These groups provide opportunities for members to relate more closely and to be mutually supportive of each other in times of special need. They also are designed to disseminate information more efficiently so that everyone is better informed about church activities and particular needs of individuals and groups.

"Caring Connection" continues on page 4

Food for Thought



As I write this column, I am celebrating my 10th anniversary of serving this church. I don't know what it is about anniversaries which end in zero, but they seem to demand that one take time to reflect and evaluate. Throughout the years my tool for evaluation has been the "Follow The Fire" document that you developed prior to my coming. I have been profoundly grateful for the time and thought and prayer that went into providing it; the goals gave clear direction while providing flexibility in developing the means to attain them.

Now it's tempting to spend time listing the successes of the past ten years, but that would imply that I have accomplished them and that would not only be immodest, it would be dishonest. The fact is, you were already half-way there when you published the "Follow The Fire" document which spelled out what you had heard God saying regarding the future of this church. And for all these ten years, you have volunteered and prayed and given money and encouraged and made dreams come true.

Today we are attempting, once again, to vision for the future. We are focused on how to be disciples of Christ who honor the God-given worth of every person and all creation.

Four goals have been suggested as a means to understanding the direct implication for our lives. They are as follows:

1. We model and advocate for a faithful and responsible use of all God's resources and gifts.
2. We are intentional about extending hospitality to all people.
3. We mend estrangements caused by conflicts, injustice, or ignorance.
4. We build and nurture active relationships that respond to human concerns, joys and needs.

On January 10, 2010 we will initiate our Caring Connection groups. Every member and active visitor will be placed in one of the nine groups. The first meeting of the individual groups will be during the Learning Hour on the 10th. It will be an organization and information meeting.

The Caring Connection groups will hopefully be a means by which we can move toward the accomplishment of the goals listed above. They will provide a means through which you may use your gifts, extend hospitality, be informed and have enlightened discussion and nurture relationships.

Each group will decide for itself what future meetings / activities it will undertake. Our hope is that they will provide opportunity for us to know one another beyond the limits of Sunday mornings. In future gatherings that you will plan, there will be possibility for deeper interaction. utilization of your gifts, expansion of knowledge and, of course, some fun. This will also be an avenue for inviting your friends and neighbors to acquaint them with the hospitality of our church folks.

Please begin now to pray for the development of these groups and for how they might enrich your life and you, in turn, might enrich the lives of others. The groups will provide a banquet of choices for all of us. Let's make sure we don't miss out on something wonderful just because we've not tasted it before.

In Christ's Love,

Sondra

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH STAFF

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LOGOS

*LOGOS is on holiday
until January 13*



Your Contribution Counts ...

But YOU determine the year for which it counts!

If you want your gift to be listed on your 2009 statement, your contribution **must** be *received* in the church office OR *postmarked* no later than **Thursday, DECEMBER 31.**

If you wish to *prepay* a 2010 contribution during 2009, please mark your check "for 2010."

- Don Sanning, Treasurer

Reminder...

Learning Hour classes will be on holiday and not meet on December 27 and January 3.

The Pet Pantry

Sometimes the best gift is keeping what you already love. The Pet Pantry provides pet food and supplies to families experiencing financial difficulties — because losing a job shouldn't mean losing a pet. The Pet Pantry is just now organizing, so the DMARC Emergency Food Pantry is partnering with them during this holiday season to collect donations. Help a dog or cat stay in a loving home this winter with your donation of unopened dog or cat food (dry or wet), leashes and collars, food dishes and bowls, cat litter and boxes, flea and tick medication, and toys. Contribute through your December congregational collection, through the Red Barrel program in local stores, or directly to the DMARC Food Pantry warehouse at 3816 36th St. in Des Moines and we will make sure that your pet food donations get to the wonderful folks at the Pet Pantry.



DisciplesWorld magazine discontinues:

DisciplesWorld, the award-winning journal of news, opinion, and mission for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), will cease publication after almost eight years, citing insufficient resources to publish, due to declining subscription and advertising revenue and charitable gifts. The non-profit entity which publishes the magazine — DisciplesWorld, Inc. — is also dissolving. To read the press release, go to <www.disciplesworld.com>.

Guest Choir

First Christian Church
will be hosting the choir of
Nebraska Wesleyan College on
Thursday, January 7.

GOD HAS DONE GREAT THINGS!

The Christmas Offering enables the 33 Disciples of Christ Regions across the country to perform the essential work of sustaining and enhancing ministry, programs, congregations, and clergy in their respective geographic areas.

How does the Christmas Special Offering support the Upper Midwest Region?

The Upper Midwest Region cares for and supports congregations and pastors in Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota, and...

- establishes new congregations that bring many people into a relationship with Jesus Christ;
- offers program assistance and ministry initiatives to existing congregations, encouraging congregational transformation in meaningful ways;
- provides education and training for clergy and church leaders, equipping folks for God's work;
- strives diligently to be a pro-reconciliation/anti-racist church;
- sponsors 26 summer camps and conferences at the Christian Conference Center that build and empower faith;
- supports pastoral search committees bringing new pastors to local churches;
- encourages Regional gatherings where the fellowship of the Body of Christ is so rich.

If you haven't yet made your gift to the special Christmas Offering, there is still time!

Who coordinates the Care Groups?

Each group has Elders among its' membership. These Elders of the church will serve as coordinators. They will be in communication with both staff and other members in order to share information with the members of their group. They will also be asking members of the group to accept special ministry roles as callers, visitors, event planners, etc. They will be responsible for conducting gatherings of the group twice a year.

What about meetings?

All groups will meet twice a year (Jan. and Aug.) to organize and update information and consider particular areas of ministry to which members might be called. These meetings will be set up by staff with all groups meeting at the same time at the church; they may be coupled with a social activity.

Individual care groups are encouraged to get together to provide interaction for its members and to find avenues of service as well as fun that can be shared. Examples would include the following:

- " A potluck meal
- " Cooking a meal for the shelter
- " Serving coffee and treats during Fellowship time on Sunday morning
- " Attending theater or concert or other special event together.
- " Bible Study and prayer time
- " Book study group
- " A social perhaps at a park, or someone's home
- " A work project such as a Habitat work day or work for a needy member
- " An original project that the group feels inspired to do.

What is your role as a care group member?

Simply put, to express your care by being a friend especially to the members of your group. This may involve visiting, phoning or sending a card. It may include participating in the activities listed above. It definitely involves communicating any needs of which you are aware to the coordinator of your group and to the staff.

Give examples of special needs to which a care group might respond.

Births or impending births -

the group might choose to have a shower before the birth if it is deemed appropriate or needed. Congratulatory cards, hospital visits and meals are always appreciated.

Deaths or families dealing with impending loss -

cards, visits, meals, baby sitting, transportation are all possible areas of service

Illness and convalescence - hospital, hospice, home -

cards, visits, meals, baby sitting, transportation, simply sitting with a person who is ill, or with the caretaker. Sometimes work around the home such as mowing the lawn or picking up mail is needed. Sometimes a trip to the grocery store is helpful.

New member or visitor assigned to the care group -

cards, dinner invitation, transportation, invitation to an event or class or to participate in an activity such as volunteering at the market, or Logos or to cook a shelter meal or to come to a special event.

What about the HOMEBOUND?

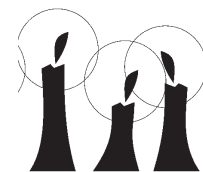
Any member that is homebound will be included in a care group. These members are visited regularly by the elders and will now receive the additional support of the care group members.

"The place where we vitally find God, deal with God, discover the qualities of God, and learn to think religiously about God is not primarily among the stars but within our own experience of goodness, truth, and beauty, and the truest images of God are therefore to be found in our spiritual life."
Harry Emerson Fosdick

"where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." *Jesus Christ.*



The Contemplative Corner



for your Spiritual Journey

Recommended Reading from Mary Jo Franklin

The Handmaid and the Carpenter

A great way to practice mindfulness in the season of holiday busy-ness is to read. One book that recently crossed my path is a fictional book entitled, "*The Handmaid and the Carpenter*" by Elizabeth Berg.



The story is this author's interpretation of the relationship between Mary and Joseph, spanning their first meeting to Joseph's death. It puts flesh around the fears, facts, and fantasies of young Mary and Joseph who meet, become betrothed, and finally marry under unusual circumstances, giving life to the human-ness of both Mary and Joseph, and lifting them from the often overworked and dry pages of the Gospel accounts. It's a joy to see Joseph, only a bit character in the gospels, fleshed out into a whole person. It is equally fulfilling to see Mary's personality more fully developed than the Gospels allow. The story follows the typical storyline - virgin birth, shepherds, and wise men, but portrays all with a fresh twist that enlivens the story and the meaning behind it. The following excerpts of the traditional "no room at the inn" storyline demonstrate that quality:

"We will go back to the last inn." Joseph said. "I will insist that he give us a room!"

Mary drew a deep breath and held on. The last inn they'd been to was not far. She thought she could make it.

When they arrived, Joseph left Mary in the street and ran to the door. She saw him gesture animatedly to the innkeeper; she saw the innkeeper shake his head. Joseph raised his voice so that Mary could hear him plainly, "I tell you she is going to give birth! Now!"

Joseph ran back to Mary. "What did they say?" she asked full of hope.

They have a stable. It is next to the inn, out of the cold."

"A stable?"

"Next to the inn. There is an empty stall." He began leading the donkey forward.

"A stable? I am giving birth in a *stable*?"

And this:

"A hard pain came upon her. She rose up, clenched her teeth, and pulled on the rope. When the pain subsided, she lay back down and allowed herself one more moment of pity for her poor circumstances: She lay on the floor of a stranger's stable. Somewhere, water dripped. The air was foul with the scent of the animals and their droppings. Wind blew in through the cracks in the walls. She closed her eyes. So be it."

This book is only one example of insightful and inspirational holiday reading. There are many, many others. As the season progresses, allow a pocket of time just for yourself and curl up with a book which feeds your soul. Happy reading!

Recommended reading from the church staff...

Suzanne's picks: *Let Nothing Disturb You* by John Kirvan (a 30 day devotion with Teresa of Avila)
Three Simple Rules by Ruben Job

Nanette's picks: *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* by Marva J. Dawn
Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight by Norman Wirzba and Wendell Berry
Finding Rest when the work is never done by Patrick Klingaman

First Christian Church

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Web: www.fccdm.org

Christian Church in the Upper Midwest:

www.uppermidwestcc.org

Sunday Morning Schedule:

9:20 am -- Morning Worship

10:45 am ---- Friendship Time

11:00 am ----- Learning Hour

OFFICE HOURS

Mon-Thurs — 8:30-4:30

Friday — 8:30-1:00

The Link ...

... is published twice per month.
Submissions are due Wednesday of
the previous week and may be edited
for length, clarity, or for consistency
with other articles.

NEXT DEADLINE:

January 6 (Jan 14 issue)

WE ARE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST, an Open & Welcoming community of faith, called to witness to God's creative power in the midst of a richly diverse neighborhood. We are challenged to share in a vibrant Spirit-led common life. As we mature in the Spirit and respond to God's calling, we are empowered and compelled to reach out to neighbors near and far in a reconciling ministry partnership.



SUNDAY FLOWERS

It's time once again to sign up to sponsor the flower arrangement for Sunday Worship.

The cost is \$30 and you may be the sole sponsor, or you

may split the cost with someone else for the same date. This provides a special way to commemorate a special occasion or honor a particular person. The sign-up chart is posted in the Fellowship Hall. If you have questions, please contact Leora Thomas at 278-0867.

First Christian Leaders for 2010

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| President: | Juanita Scriven |
| President-Elect: | Jerry Mogensen |
| Past-President: | Jo Ann Zimmerman |
| Secretary: (TBA) | |
| Treasurer: | Don Sanning |
| Celebrations: | Verna Cobb |
| Witnessing: | Terri Holmgren |
| Learning: | Lynn McCartney |
| Worship: | Barb Sanning |
| Personnel: | Beth Avery-Dokken |
| Resources: (TBA) | |
| Stewardship: | Caryn Evans |
| Endowment President: | Richard Walters |
| Elders Convener: | Vivian Mogensen |