



Congregational News

From FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Corvallis, Oregon

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January 5, 2007

ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING
Sunday, January 28, after worship
to approve 2007 budgets

UPDATE ON THE MEN'S COLD WEATHER SHELTER

We had great success signing folks up to host/greet during our church's week, *January 14-20*. On the Sunday our shifts start, **Rhonda Mueller-Warrant** will offer a short training to help acquaint all the volunteers with how things are set up at the shelter. This one works very much like the previous shelter at St. Mary's, which many will remember.

At the training, we will look at the rules or guidelines for the shelter and go over the check-in procedure. Bring your questions so we can have a lively discussion. If you haven't already signed up, we can still use your help. We can use people who will bring a snack. And we need a minimum of two greeters during the 6:45-11 p.m. shift. More would be a bonus and enable us provide a greater service to the guests during the evening. If we had four people, two could be at the check-in station, and two up in the coffee and quiet recreation area. Please give this ministry a chance; you will

leave counting your blessings.

Call Rhonda to volunteer or ask questions.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION UPDATE

Christian Education classes resume this week with a full slate of classes. Children, youth, and parents are invited to gather in Room 5 to kick off our classes with singing, scripture, and community time. Our God@Home class will discuss the final chapter of the book and the Adult Forum will be back in the Meeting Hall. The Christian Education Board hopes you will find your place during our education hour.

THIS SUNDAY

January 7

Adult Forum: Japan trip report from the group who recently visited our partner church in Takarazuka as well as Hiroshima and Kyo-Sei-An

Scriptures: Isaiah 43:1-7
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Sermon: "Baptized for What?"
Elizabeth Oettinger

Dear Friends,

When was the last time you thought about baptism? Every year on the first Sunday after Epiphany, the scripture texts lead us to the baptism of Jesus, the beginning of his ministry. It is a traditional day in the church year to perform baptisms, especially adult baptisms. More importantly though, I think, it is an opportunity for all of us to reflect on who we are as baptized Christians. The sacrament of baptism, in its various understandings across denominations, is the sacrament of entry into the Christian community. In baptism, we outwardly and conspicuously affirm that we are Christian, that we have chosen to develop and express our faith within this particular context and community. In the United Church of Christ, to make that affirmation is not to proclaim that our faith path is the only way to God. I want to make that clear. To affirm our baptisms is not in any way to negate or trivialize any other religious tradition. It is, however, an opportunity for us to reflect on what it means for us to have made that choice.

Why are you a Christian? Is it simply an accident of history, a choice made long ago for you by your parents? Is it a choice you have ever consciously made for yourself? Why? What draws you to this faith tradition? Have you ever considered other spiritual paths or practices? What brought you back here? If you come to church regularly, you have at some level chosen this, and you continue to choose it, but can you articulate why you made and make the choice?

I know, that's a lot of questions! They are important questions to ask, however, and worship this coming Sunday will mean more to you if you've taken some time for reflection beforehand. It's so easy just to go on from day and day and year to year, never asking yourself the question of, "Do I still choose this for myself and why?" On Sunday, I will be preaching about baptism, my sense of our commitments as baptized Christians, and then any of you who wish it will have an opportunity to participate in a reaffirmation of your baptismal promises.

Liturgies and rituals of reaffirmation of baptism have come into being across denominations in recent years. Some are very simple: for example, in some churches, the baptismal font is placed in the front of the church on communion Sundays and as worshipers come forward for communion, they can choose to dip their fingers in the water and make the sign of the cross of their foreheads. In other places, the liturgy of reaffirmation of baptism is a word-for-word and act-for-act recapitulation of the service of adult baptism. What these services have in common is the opportunity for choosing. Do I still say "yes" to this?

Choosing is powerful. To consciously affirm choices made years earlier can

strengthen and renew our commitments. That's what happens when married couples renew their vows or ordained clergy participate in rituals of re-commitment. On Sunday at First Congregational, after the sermon, those who wish it will be given the choice to stand in front of the clergy and be asked the question, "Do you wish to reaffirm your baptism and your commitment to live in the world as Christ's servant and friend?" When the question is answered in the affirmative, the clergy will make the sign of the cross in water on their forehead. A simple act, but one that many people have found meaningful.

Whether or not you want to participate in this ritual, come Sunday prepared to think about your faith and why you choose it. Epiphany is a season of enlightenment, a season of thoughtful reflection on how we live out our faith in a vast and diverse world.

See you in church!

Liz



Our Confirmation class will be having a retreat on *January 19-20* when we will jump into worship, the history of the bible, and the history of the church. By the time you read this you should have hard copies of some advance work in the form of a questionnaire. Questions? Contact **Ryan**, the church office, or ryan@ucc-covallis.org.

THEY CAME, THEY SAWED....

Thanks to the crew cleaned up the downed trees near the exit drive New Year's Day. **Greg Christianson, Al Goldner, Frank Hall, John Hawkins, Sho Kimura, Dale Kirk, Neal Peterson, Jay Sperling, and Larry Thornton** came with chain saws prior to the Rose Bowl Game, and finished the job that **Larry and Tim Thornton** started the

day before. Stacks of wood are near the exit drive and are available to anyone who wants some firewood.

For the wonderful 50th wedding anniversary celebration, the Sherry family wants to thank this congregation – for the use of the church building, for the newsletter space, the folks who generously helped our kids get things together, for those who came to help us celebrate and for all those who couldn't be there but sent us cards. This truly is a great church family which we appreciate more than words can tell you,
Keith and Doris Sherry

Thoughts and Prayers

... are with **John Holmes** as he recovers from knee replacement surgery performed on January 2;

... and with **Ginny Lucker** following the death of her father, **Dave Gustafson**, on December 30 in Gresham.



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Copy deadline for next issue of newsletter is Tuesday noon, January 9.

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Saturday, January 6

9:00 a.m. Art show hanging

Sunday, January 7

- 9:00 a.m. Sanctuary Choir
- 9:15 a.m. Church School, Room 5
- 9:30 a.m. Adult Forum
- 9:30 a.m. God@Home, Library
- 10:30 a.m. Worship
- 5:00 p.m. Middle School Youth
- 6:30 p.m. High School Youth

Monday, January 8

- 5:30 p.m. Basketball
- 7:30 p.m. Boy Scout Troop 1

Tuesday, January 9

- 10:30 a.m. Staff
- Noon Lectionary class
- 7:00 p.m. Trustees Board

Wednesday, January 10

- 7:15 a.m. Breakfast Group
- 5:30 p.m. 40+ Basketball
- 7:15 p.m. Sanctuary Choir

Thursday, January 11

- 1:15 p.m. Women's Fellowship Board, Library
- 7:00 p.m. Girl Scout Troop 142

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP PLANS EVENING MEETING

On *Thursday, January 18*, our Choir Director **Steve Zielke**, will present a program titled "Why We Sing," the role of music in worship. Dessert is at 7:00 p.m. in the Fireplace Room. The program will follow in the Meeting Hall. Everyone is invited (men, women and children) and guests are welcome. Sign up in the foyer on *Sundays, January 7 and 14*.

A VERY GRATEFUL THANK YOU

... to all—especially the chairs of the sub-committees—who helped with the Hanging of the Greens on December 16 and with the "take down" this past Sunday. For two special weeks our church looked beautiful in its green finery and received many compliments!

Jerry Groesz and Sandy Piper