



Congregational News

From FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Corvallis, Oregon

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February 13, 2009



SPECIAL BOOKS ON DISPLAY

Currently on display in the church library are books for both adults and children featuring Black History Month. Also, there are several books dealing with Islam as a follow-up to the recent adult education series.

CARING FOR CREATION

On *Tuesday, February 17*, at 7:00 p.m. the University of Oregon's Coalition against Environmental Racism (**Emily**



Chi is one of the co-directors of this organization) is hosting a free lecture by Dr. Robert Bullard in Columbia Hall on the U of O Campus. Dr. Bullard is the Ware Distinguished Professor of Sociology and the Director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University and has been referred to as the father of the Environmental Justice movement because of his influential work. He has also been instrumental in the United Church of Christ's work on environmental justice issues. The lecture will certainly be worth the trip to Eugene!

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION UPDATE FOR PRESIDENT'S DAY WEEKEND

Due to several families being gone to Winter Weekend and for the holiday our children and youth classes will be combined this week: Middle and High School will meet in Room 1 and Pre-School through 4th Grade will meet in Room 5. We will return to our regular room assignments on *February 22*.

THIS SUNDAY

February 15

Adult Forum: **Nancy and Pete Klingeman** will present a program about the post-Katrina work camp in which they participated last September at UCC's Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi. The group of 14 was from Central Pacific Conference and included our new conference minister, **Walter John Boris**.

Scriptures: 2 Kings 5:1-14
Mark 1:40-45

Sermon: "The Bottom Line"
Elizabeth Oettinger

Dear Friends,

The watchword throughout the land these days appears to be "change." From politicians to business leaders, and yes, even in the church, we are all looking to the changes that will make our endeavors more effective, relevant for this new century with its particular opportunities and challenges.

With the blessing of the Diaconate and Church Council, this church is gearing up to take a comprehensive look at our future, setting goals and priorities for our ministries. This process intends to be inclusive: taking a fresh look at everything from church structure and governance, to worship and worship space, to education and outreach. It's a large undertaking; to do it well will take somewhere between a year and eighteen months probably, with both a central coordinating committee and several small task forces studying individual aspects of ministry.

Though I know that such an extensive planning process will be a lot of work, I am convinced it will be an energizing force in the church's life. We are in an ideal position to begin such an endeavor. The staff and congregation are stable and engaged. As a community, we are skilled at listening to each other and respecting differences of opinion. We are not going into the process to solve a problem, but rather to challenge ourselves to a deeper, more effective life of faith, both within our community and outwards in the world. We are ready to move to the "next level" of ministry, however we, as a group, envision it.

Since we are just in the beginning stages of planning how this process will happen, I can't yet lay out for you exactly how it will work. What I do know is that it will involve a lot of congregational input and discussion in both large and small group settings, that we will be challenged to dream, to use our imaginations, and to look at familiar issues in new ways. Some of the questions we will be addressing include: how do we best utilize volunteer time, the church's most valuable resource? How do we most effectively use technology in ministry to help us in doing business, in worship, in social networking, in reaching prospective members, in facilitating volunteer recruitment? What are the mission priorities of the church? How do we provide more hands-on opportunities for ministry and mission, and what kinds of opportunities best fit the time commitments of our congregation? When we look at worship, how do we create both liturgy and physical space that engages a multi-generational congregation? What kinds of educational opportunities will best meet the spiritual needs of this congregation?

I'm hoping that as you read through these questions, you find them exciting, and you want to give your personal input on some or all of them. You'll have your

chance! And we, as a congregation, will find new ways to move into the future together.

God bless you all.

Liz



Thank you to **Jenny Koch, Kaia Larson, Brooks McCann, Claire** and **Gwyneth McMorris, Davis and Dory Nafshun, Julie Rorrer, and Grant Thackray**, who worked so hard at the Community Soup event last Sunday.

There will be no youth group this week, but we will gather next at the **Thackray** home on *Sunday, February 22*, at 5:00 p.m. for fellowship and award predictions as we watch the Academy Awards. We will be giving awards to youth for being the best-dressed and for choosing the most award winners! Plan to join us!

Special Congregational Meeting

This Sunday, February 15

at the end of worship,
to consider funding sidewalk repair

CHRISTMAS FUND THANKS

Greetings in the name
of the Christ Child!

The Pension Boards, and the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, write to THANK YOU and the members of your congregation for your support of

the Annual United Church of Christ Christmas Fund Offering.

Gifts received by the Christmas Fund during calendar year 2008 totaled \$1,597,000. This sum represents the largest number of dollars ever raised for the ministry underwritten by the Fund in its 106 year history!

Approximately ninety-four cents of every dollar raised will become a direct gift to more than 1,500 retired and active clergy and lay employees in the United Church of Christ. The Christmas Fund provides for supplementation of small pensions, help in paying health benefit premiums, emergency grants and gifts at Christmas time to about 900 low-income retired clergy and lay employees.

During January 2009, there have been 26 requests for assistance. In past years we have received eight to nine requests a month. It is clear that the need is greater than ever and that we are fortunate to be part of a church whose members are so generous when it comes to supporting those who serve.

Again, a big THANK YOU! on behalf of all those who will benefit from your generosity during these economically challenging days.

Sincerely,

The Reverend Dr. M. Douglas Borko
Director, Ministerial Assistance

WEDNESDAYS IN LENT†

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, *February 25*. Again this year, we hope to provide opportunities for conversation, worship and study during this special time in the Christian year. Call the church office to enroll in a class or sign up this Sunday at church.

On Ash Wednesday evening, our traditional soup and bread supper is at 5:30 (donation), followed by a brief service of penitence and the imposition of ashes at 6:15. At 6:45, classes begin. Child care is available beginning at 6:10. You are welcome at any and all events.

On each subsequent Wednesday in Lent through *April 1*, the schedule will be the same:

5:30 p.m.	A simple supper (with vegetarian alternative), Fireplace Room
6:10 p.m.	Child care begins, Room 5
6:15 p.m.	Worship in the Chapel
6:45-7:25 p.m.	Flash classes (see below)
6:45-8:15 p.m.	Full-length classes (see below)
7:30 p.m.	Sanctuary Choir

"Flash" classes 6:45-7:25 p.m.

Flash Bells -- Kim Thackray. Have you ever wondered how the bell choir makes that beautiful music? Ever thought that you might like to give it a try, but were too hesitant to join in with the more experienced ringers? Then Flash Bells is the class for you! We will help you start at the very beginning--how to ring a bell, how to figure out when to play that bell, and how to stop the bell from ringing. We'll try some familiar music, practicing until it is recognizable...and then playing it a few times more. If the class would like to perform, we can plan an opportunity, but performance is not required if the group doesn't feel ready. The objective is to learn about these wonderful instruments, and to have fun. To make this class most successful, it would be best if you can attend all the classes. If you must miss one or two, please let Kim know ahead of time.

Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Benaras--Liz Oettinger. Diana Eck's book by this title chronicles what it was like for her, a good Methodist girl from Bozeman, Montana, to encounter Hinduism and make sense of her own religious tradition in a multi-faith world. The class will allow participants to learn more about the theology and iconography of Hinduism in particular, while exploring the deeper themes from the book: How does it benefit us to learn about other religious traditions? What can be gained spiritually from interfaith dialogue? How do we learn to understand and speak of our own traditions in a way that respects others? Eck is a professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University, also Director of the Pluralism Project that seeks to map the religious pluralism of the United States. The book is an absorbing read, and an engaging springboard to discussions of religious plurality

[More classes on other side]

Full-length classes 6:45-8:15 p.m.

Describing the Holy: How Divine Metaphor Shapes Us -- Ryan Lambert. In this class we will look at how our understanding of the Holy informs the way we describe God and vice versa. Using classical and contemporary theology, literature, film, and art we will explore how people of faith have named the Holy and how that has shaped the church. What is the biblical basis for the Trinity? How have artistic renderings of Jesus shaped the Christian church? How do we "picture" God? Over the course of this class we will read, write, and explore the artistic side of our faith as we explore how we name, describe, and picture God.

Islam - Karim Hamdy. Karim Hamdy is a naturalized citizen of the US, born and raised in Tunisia. Having worked and lived for extended periods, both in Tunisia and in the US, he has the privilege of being intimately familiar with three cultures – Tunisian, American, and Francophone. He will conduct the first four sessions of this class:

February 25 - Islam Made Simple. Basics of Beliefs, Practices, and History.
Presenting the five pillars of Muslim Belief, the diversity of practices, and the main historical landmark of the spread of Islam.

March 4 - Faiths in Dialogue. Islam and Christianity Exchange in the 21st Century
Presenting the principal teachings and beliefs of Islam about Jesus and Mary, and biblical prophets. Discussing current dialogue initiatives, the hurdles they encounter, and their contribution to coexistence and peace.

March 11 - Jihad Concepts and Manifestations.
Presenting the etymology and the original meanings as well as contemporary interpretations and mis-uses of the concept of Jihad.

March 18 - The Muslim Minority in the US. The Paradox of Being Invisible but Notorious--
Presenting essential facts on the status and predicament of the Muslim minority - history, demographics, integration, Islamophobia, and the domestic tug-of-war over US foreign policy paradigms.

March 25 - Muslim Student Experiences in Corvallis Community
A panel by OSU students from OSU Intercultural Service Program Program. TBA.

April 1 - Muslim Food Fest--Palestinian, Saudi, and Libyan food samples. TBA.



Sign up after worship on *February 15*, or *22* to participate in this year's small group pancake suppers to be held on *February 24*. This is a wonderful way to visit with a few Congregational

friends in someone's home. You may sign up to be a host (we need 4-5) or a guest. Supper groups will be formed and those participating will know what group they will be a part of by *February 22*.

If you have questions, stop by the table in Gatton Hall on Sunday or call **Marsha Gulick** (754-8367) or **Tanya Andersson** (231-9713).



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Copy deadline for next issue of newsletter is Tuesday noon, February 17.

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Saturday, February 14

**Winter Weekend
 at Suttle Lake
 (through Monday)**

Sunday, February 15

9:30 a.m. Christian Education
[see page 1]
 10:30 a.m. **Worship and Special
 Congregational
 Meeting**

Monday, February 16 - Presidents' Day

Office closed

Tuesday, February 17

9:00 a.m. Staff
 Noon Lectionary class
 7:00 p.m. C E Board
 7:30 p.m. Spirit Quest
 7:30 p.m. Boy Scout Troop 1

Wednesday, February 18

7:15 p.m. Sanctuary Choir

Thursday, February 19

11:45 a.m. Lunch Group
 7:00 p.m. Girl Scout Troop 142

LOOKING AHEAD: *February 25:* Ash
 Wednesday, Lent begins; *Friday, March
 6:* World Day of Prayer; *Sunday, March
 8:* Daylight Saving Time begins.

THANKS

... to **Ginie Capan**, for service above
 and beyond. Ginie ran the dishwasher
 until all the many dishes were done after
 the Community Soup event!

CHRISTIAN MUSIC CONCERT

Grace Lutheran Church is hosting
 a Christian songwriter concert on *Satur-
 day evening, February 21*. This concert
 will feature two of their own singers **An-
 gie Gallagher** and **Jeff Lestmeister**.

The concert of original music, con-
 temporary music and gospel music be-
 gins at 7:00 p.m. at Grace Lutheran, 435
 NW 21st St. Corvallis. For more informa-
 tion contact **Frank** and **Ellie Carson**
 (503-838-0401).