



Congregational News

From FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Corvallis, Oregon

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December 30, 2011

READERS' THEATRE SUNDAY

Sunday morning, there will be a Readers' Theatre performance during the sermon time, The text is from W.H. Auden's "For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio," and features a cast of characters including Gabriel, Mary, Joseph, shepherds, angels, and Wise Men.

Written in 1942 when the world was at war, Auden's Oratorio merges the Biblical with the contemporary by anchoring the Christmas story in the modern world. The familiar story holds timeless and transformative truth – beneath the commercial layers of American capitalism. We invite you to join us as we explore what it means to exist "in the time being."

UNHANGING OF THE GREENS

After worship this Sunday, *January 1*, help is needed to take down the greens and trees around the building. Many hands make for quick work! Please plan to stay for a short time after the service and help "de-deck" the halls! Thank you.



Epiphany is a celebration of God made manifest among us. And what better way to celebrate epiphany than with an art show! Through art,

we explore God's world, discover God's gifts of joy and beauty, and share our experience with others. Be a part of the celebration either by sharing your artistic creations, or by helping to install the show. Artwork should be brought into the church narthex *January 2-5* between 8:00 a.m. and noon. Hanging will begin at 9:00 a.m. on *Saturday, January 7*. Art

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THIS SUNDAY

January 1-Communion

Scriptures: Isaiah 61:10-62:3

Luke 2:22-40

Sermon: Readers' Theatre
from W.H. Auden's
"For the Time Being:
A Christmas Oratorio"

I'm one of those people who *really* loves Christmas: the lights on my neighbors' houses, the scent of pine filling the living room, nights spent baking sugar cookies and fudge, wrapping packages in an attempt to make even Martha Stewart envious...

I kick off the holiday season at Halloween by watching *Elf*, followed a couple of weeks later by *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, and finally *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*. I gladly embrace these secular traditions of the season. But I love the religious sentiment of the holiday, as well – Advent meditations, the hush of Christmas Eve, the birth story... In both secular and religious aspects, I'm a Christmas-consumer. I greedily ingest the story of the Christ child's birth without *really* paying attention to the meaning of God entering human time and history. I fail to pay attention to how utterly disruptive the birth of Christ is; what an enormous paradigm shift took place once, so long ago. The Divine chose a teenage girl (an invisible member of society) to bear the Christ. God demands a ridiculous amount of faith from Joseph, and for some reason Joseph believes. The child of God became human flesh on a silent night in the shadows of a cave because there was no place for the Holy Family among the warm and comfortable.

Instead of living as though this miracle of love – Divinity-itself reaching out and marrying heaven with earth – is actually the catalyst that changes *everything*, I'm content to consume more-or-less thoughtlessly. I let Christmas slip away once the festivities are over, and resume the mechanical tasks of life (wash the dishes, feed the cats, scrub the kitchen table, take out the trash, repeat...) without remembering that the birth of Jesus turned the world on its head.

During worship this Sunday, a group from our congregation will be performing an edited version of W.H. Auden's poem, *For the Time Being*: "A Christmas Oratorio." Written during World War II, Auden anchors the Christmas story in the modern world. The proletariat masquerade as shepherds, philosophers are wise men, Mary and Joseph are ordinary people who choose the extraordinary: *belief*. Auden challenges us to consider what the Christmas story has to do with 'the time being' and what it would mean to live with incarnational vision.

I find this piece to be especially provocative, especially in this period of time where Christmas is just vanishing into another ghost of the past, packed and stored away for one more year.

Instead of rote traditions and consumer-driven holidays, may the journey to Bethlehem transcend yearly events. May each of us find a way to the manger.

In love,

Jen

ART FESTIVAL *from page 1*

must be framed and ready to hang. Please attach a label to the back or bottom of your piece stating your name, phone number, medium, title, and value. If the piece is not for sale, please give an insured value and state "NFS." You are welcome to bring up to three pieces. The show will continue in the sanctuary through *Sunday, February 19*. Call **Julia Lont** (541-752-4781) if you have any questions.

VOLUNTEER TO HELP AT THE COLD-WEATHER SHELTERS

First Congregational UCC is responsible for staffing the Men's Cold Weather shelter for one week, beginning on the evening of *January 1*. We are still in need of many volunteers. The early shift acts as greeters, welcoming the men each night, and providing simple hospitality such as making coffee. The overnight volunteer is primarily there to serve as an assistant, should a concern arise. There is a regular paid staff person at the shelter each night.

Please e-mail **George Mueller-Warrant** at muellerg@onid.orst.edu if you can help or have questions. We also need snacks for each evening, enough for 39 people. This could be shared by two people each evening.

On *Sunday, January 1*, please plan to attend a short training about helping at the shelter, right after church. If you've worked there in the past, plan to come and lend your experience.

The sign-up for the Women's Shelter will begin next Sunday too. That week of service starts on *January 15*. These venues are some of the places where our faith gets legs and walks in the real world.

HAVE YOU MAILED YOUR PLEDGE CARD?

As the year draws to a close, the Budget Committee is working to put together the 2012 budget. However, we are still missing some pledges. We know that in this busy season, it is very easy to put something in the "to do" pile and then forget to do it! If you are one of those who said you would mail in your pledge, but haven't yet, we would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible. If you have misplaced your pledge card or can't remember whether you sent it in (also easy to do in this season), call the church office and we can help you. Thank you for your help in this.

Your Stewardship Committee

Winter Weekend

SIGN-UPS BEGIN SUNDAY

Winter Weekend (*January 14-16*) is a great opportunity to have outdoor fun in the snow and indoor fellowship with church friends in the low-key and beautiful setting at Suttle Lake.

Registration begins *January 1*. If you have questions, contact **Nanette Dupuy** (541-619-9532, nanjam2@comcast.net) or the church office.



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Editor: 541-754-0117 or
 susanwickes@comcast.net
 Facilities: 541-753-2106

Copy deadline for next issue of newsletter is Tuesday noon, January 3.

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Friday, December 30

6:30 p.m. Readers' Theatre
 rehearsal, Sanctuary

Saturday, December 31

3:30 p.m. Badminton, Gatton Hall

Sunday, January –New Year's Day

10:30 a.m. Worship
**(following) Unhanging of the
 Greens**
[see page 1]

Tuesday, January 3

9:00 a.m. Staff
 Noon Lectionary class
 6:30 p.m. Worship Committee
 7:30 p.m. Personnel Committee
 (dinner at 6:30)
 7:30 p.m. Diaconate

Wednesday, January 4

7:15 p.m. Sanctuary Choir

Thursday, January 5

6:30 p.m. Girl Scout Troop 20142

Friday, January 6

7:00 a.m. First Friday Forum
 7:30 p.m. Badminton



Congratulations to **Angie Dahlke** and **Terry Walters** on the birth of their son, **Kai Everett Dahlke**, on December 21! Kai weighed in at 7 lbs. 15 oz. Mother and baby are doing well.

**CHURCH FINANCIAL BOOKS
 CLOSE JANUARY 1ST**

December brings an increase in financial activity: pledges are completed, some new pledges are prepaid, and we have the opportunity for several special gifts. All of your gifts are appreciated—whenever you make them. However, if you want to include these gifts in your 2011 taxes, it is important that your gifts be dated in 2011 and be at the church by *Sunday, January 1*. Postmarks don't count! We'll gladly receive your December gifts after January 1st, but they will be included in your 2012 giving record.