

April 2011

The Tie That Binds

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Cadillac, Michigan

PASTOR REYNOLDS' RAP

Dear Friends,

As many of you know, we are currently considering whether we would like to become an **affiliate** of the **Center for Progressive Christianity**. You are invited to familiarize yourselves with the TCPC's **8 Points** (listed below), which are the marks they use to identify progressive Christian individuals and organizations, as well as to peruse their website--www.tcpc.org. As you are reading, please ponder if and how these ideas correspond to your own beliefs, as well as to your understanding of our church's overall identity.

After worship on **Sunday, April 10** we will **vote** on whether we would like to affiliate with the Center and formally proclaim ourselves a Progressive Christian Organization. If we do vote to claim this identity, joining would connect us with other progressive Christian individuals and churches and provide us with resources written from a progressive perspective. In addition, membership has the potential to attract visitors through a listing on their website as an affiliate. (According to the Center, member churches have reported 25-40% increases in visitors since listing on the website. Currently there are only 2 member churches in the entire state of Michigan.) Most importantly, whether or not we decide to join, these 8 Points are an opportunity to continue our visioning dialogue, to get an ever clearer sense of who we are (and are not) theologically and of how we wish to live out our Christian identity and mission as a small UCC congregation in Cadillac, MI.

The 8 Points

As defined by the Center for Progressive Christianity, progressives are Christians who...

1. Have found an approach to God through the life and teachings of Jesus.
2. Recognize the faithfulness of other people who have other names for the way to God's realm, and acknowledge that their ways are true for them, as our ways are true for us.
3. Understand the sharing of bread and wine in Jesus' name to be a representation of an ancient vision of God's feast for all peoples.
4. Invite all people to participate in our community and worship life without insisting that they become like us in order to be acceptable (including but not limited to): believers and agnostics, conventional Christians and questioning skeptics, women and men, those of all sexual orientations and gender identities, those of all races and cultures, those of all classes and abilities, those who hope for a better world and those who have lost hope.
5. Know that the way we behave toward one another and toward other people is the fullest expression of what we believe.
6. Find more grace in the search for understanding than we do in dogmatic certainty - more value in questioning than in absolutes.
7. Form ourselves into communities dedicated to equipping one another for the work we feel called to do: striving for peace and justice among all people, protecting and restoring the integrity of all God's creation, and bringing hope to those Jesus called the least of his sisters and brothers.
8. Recognize that being followers of Jesus is costly, and entails selfless love, conscientious resistance to evil, and renunciation of privilege.

Thank you for taking the time to review, ponder, and dialogue with me and one another.

As we approach the dark days of Jesus' passion, may we know that God goes with us, and that new life that lies on the other side of the cross's suffering.

Easter Blessings,
Pastor Carol

PASTOR'S SCHEDULE

Vacation

Pastor Carol will be on vacation April 3-9. If you have a pastoral care need in her absence, please contact Mercy Hospital chaplain Rev. Ed Gilbert at 231-342-4397.

Office Hours

In an effort to maximize Pastor Carol's half-time schedule, the Pastoral Relations Committee has recommended that appointments be made in advance to meet with her during her Thursday afternoon office hours. If she has unscheduled timeslots, there is a possibility she will be out making visits or conducting other church business off site. However, she will be reachable by cell phone and able to return to the office, if needed.

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR APRIL 2011

April 3	Matthew 5:14-16 (Rev. Ed Gilbert preaching)	Light of the World
April 10	Ezekiel 37:1-14	Breath of Hope
April 17	Matthew 21:1-11	Palm Sunday
April 27	Matthew 28:1-10	Easter Sunday

THANK YOU!

Many thanks to **Karma, Colin** and **Dorothy** for the delicious soup lunch they prepared and served at the March 13 congregational meeting.

NURTURE & CARE

Please contact **Diane**, chair of the new Nurture and Care Committee, if you or another member or friend of the congregation is grieving, returning home from the hospital, or suffering from continued injury or illness and would like to receive one of the services the committee provides. These include meals, transportation to and from doctors' visits, cards, and visits. Diane can be reached at home (231-775-7367) or by cell (231-920-8764).

Many thanks to Diane for her great compassion, enthusiasm and efficiency in administering this and our Love Inc. ministry, as well as to our members and friends who have given generously of their time, talent, and resources to show the love of Christ to individuals in our church and local communities.

Additional volunteers are always needed. Please see Diane if you are able to lend a hand.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING APRIL 10

Please plan to attend a congregational meeting after worship on April 10 to discuss and vote on affiliation with the Center for Progressive Christianity, as well as continue budget and fundraising strategizing to bridge the significant budget gap currently projected for 2011.

WORSHIP

Lenten Breakfast

On **Wednesday, April 20** from **7:00-7:50 am**, we will host the CAMA (Cadillac Area Ministerial Association) Lenten Breakfast in Fellowship Hall. It will be a truly ecumenical event with Mercy Hospital Chaplain **Rev. Ed Gilbert** providing music, First Presbyterian **Pastor Paul Tomlinson** delivering a brief reflection, and **Pastor Carol** offering the welcome and blessing. The entire Cadillac community is invited to this series, so community and business leaders, members and pastors of other churches are likely to be among our guests. It's a terrific opportunity to pause first thing in the morning for a bit of food, fellowship, and sacred space, as well as to offer our trademark hospitality to our sisters and brothers in Christ. Hope to see you there!

Maundy Thursday

Please join us for a Maundy Thursday **Liturgy of the Table** in Fellowship Hall at **6:30 pm** on **April 21**. Reenacting Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples, we will share a simple meal of bread and soup, then celebrate communion together.

Good Friday Service

CAMA's annual Good Friday service will be held on **Friday, April 22** from **6-8 pm**. The theme for this year's service is "**The Path to the Cross.**" Beginning at the **United Methodist Church**, participants will journey to the **First Baptist Church**, visiting stations along the way where Holy Week events will be dramatically reenacted. The last hour of the service will occur at First Baptist. We hope to be able to provide shuttle service back to the UMC for those who are unable to do the walk in both directions. It is also possible to simply begin with the indoor portion of the service at 7 pm. This year there will be greater participation by lay people, including our own **Ralph**, who will be playing a dramatic role and **Penny Phelps**, who will be doing a scripture reading.

Easter

Please join us for a jubilant, music-filled Easter Sunday service celebrating the Risen Christ and the victory of love over death at 10:30 am on **April 24**. To order Easter lilies to decorate the sanctuary, please submit the order form toward the back of this newsletter to the church by **April 18**.

Earth Day

This year Earth Day falls on Good Friday. Rather than forgo its observance because of this overlap with Holy Week, we will celebrate it the following **Sunday, May 1**. Please stay tuned for further details about a special speaker and gathering in Fellowship Hall.

Taizé

The Taizé worship service is on hiatus during Lent and Holy Week. It will resume on **May 25**.

FUN!

A team is currently coming together to plan and schedule fun, multi-generational recreational activities. Some of the ideas discussed so far include after-church hikes, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and canoeing; euchre tournaments and movie outings when the weather fails to cooperate;

church picnics and camping trips. If you have suggestions for activities and/or would like to participate on this team, please see **Pastor Carol**.

MISSIONS

Our Mission Target for April: Love, INC

Penny Phelps

Now that we are an active participant in the good work of Love, INC, more of us are aware of what this organization does. Love, INC serves as a clearinghouse for goods and services offered through a number of community churches. Whether it is responding to a sudden emergency such as a house fire, or an on-going problem such as transportation to an out-of-town doctor's appointment, Love, INC volunteers answer the calls and pass the request along to the church or group that has offered to provide the service. Diane, our Love, INC coordinator, has told us of the kinds of requests that our church has been able to fill. Our space is too limited to keep food, bedding, clothing, or other supplies on hand, but our volunteers have helped in many ways. Our mission donations enable Love, Inc to lift the burdens of people in need in these tough times.

Japan

Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has been in contact with our Japan partners to offer prayers and support at this difficult time. GM Co-Executives sent a message of solidarity to the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) immediately following the earthquake. Xiaoling Zhu, Area Executive for East Asia and Pacific is monitoring the situation.

Donations may be made through the UCC's primary emergency relief fund, One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS). Funds from OGHS have been channeled through the Global Ministries East Asia and Pacific Office to our denominational partners in Japan. See <http://globalministries.org/get-involved/special-giving-opportunities/> for more information.

RE-MEMBER

The date for the **RE-MEMBER Summit** has been pushed back from April 2 to **Saturday, April 16**.

For the second year, the United Northern Association will be sending groups to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation: a youth group in the summer and an adult group in the fall. To learn more, please attend the Summit at First Congregational Church **Gaylord**. It will be an opportunity for interested parties and folks who have gone out before to meet and have any questions answered. Commitments would need to be made ASAP after the meeting.

If you are interested in attending this meeting, please RSVP to Pastor Carol asap. The meeting may be cancelled if there are not enough advance commitments made to attend.

Dear First Congregational Church, UCC,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Staff of Re-Member, I would like to thank you for your donation of \$330. Your generous gift will provide support for our projects on the Pine Ridge Reservation. We are helping the handicapped and elderly through our "Wawokiye" project of light home repair, building wheel chair ramps, skirting on mobile homes, painting and cleaning.

Our country's history with the indigenous people of our continent is indeed unfortunate and it represents a part of our world that is broken. Yet in spite of that history, our Lakota friends continue to hope for a day when all races of the world will live in peace, respecting each other's traditions and values.

Re-Member strives to put back that which is broken and build hope for a better world. Your walk with us is a step in that direction.

Mitakuye Oyasin (We are all related),
Jennifer Sklener, Financial Manager

FROM FEEDING AMERICA WEST MICHIGAN FOOD BANK, CADILLAC

Dear Members,

I just wanted to let you know how much the First Congregational Church donated to us in 2010. We received 61 pounds of food and \$2,061 in funding. These generous donations have helped us to provide 17,175 pounds of food into our service area. It is amazing what we can do with the support of our friends and neighbors. We greatly appreciate everything that you do for us throughout the year.

Sincere regards,
Laura Porter-Keller

VISION

UCC "Identity Markers"

Several church members have begun to explore with **Pastor Carol** ways we might more fully express the welcoming, inclusive, diverse, social justice-oriented, family-like environment that were so clearly identified as gifts of this congregation during our second visioning workshop with **Rev. Cheryl Burke**.

The UCC denomination claims several "identity markers" around which we might choose to gather ourselves. These include **Accessible to All** (welcome and accessibility extended to people of all ages and abilities), **Multicultural Multiracial** (welcome extended to people of all races and cultures), **Open and Affirming** (welcome extended to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities), **Just Peace** (proclaiming a public identity as a justice-doing, peace-seeking church), **Whole Earth** (demonstrated commitment to an ecological lifestyle and mission), and **United and Uniting** (active engagement in ecumenical relationships that seek to heal the broken unity of the Body of Christ).

Many UCC local churches study and eventually covenant around some or all of these identity markers. Some will express the Accessible to All, Multicultural Multiracial, and Open and Affirming commitments as a single Inclusivity Covenant. However a church chooses to approach them, the identity markers provide opportunities to more clearly and concretely articulate and live its Christian theologies, mission, and vision. The markers are also an opportunity to celebrate lived convictions already clearly present and active in a congregation, such as the commitment to accessibility demonstrated by First Congregational Church's fine sound system, hearing-assisted devices, large-print bulletins and music, wheelchair accessibility, and Faith Lift.

At the most recent congregational meeting, requests were made to have presenters come to the church to speak specifically to each of these issues. It will take time to research and gather appropriate individuals and resources since we have determined that there is not a single source that can provide them all. However, in the meantime, related study and activities have begun to bubble up behind the scenes. Anyone who has a special interest in one or more of these topics and would like to get involved is invited to see **Pastor Carol** to get "plugged in."

EDUCATION

A Nutritional Health/Book Discussion Group: EAT TO LIVE by Dr. Joel Fuhrman, M.D.
Sessions will be led by **Sandy** and begin directly after coffee hour and run about an hour on Sundays
April 3, 10, 17, and May 1 and 8.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Summary of 3/11 Meeting

Laura, Clerk

Present: Sara, Penny Phelps, Pastor Carol Reynolds, Bill, Sperry, and Laura. Absent: Colin, Susan Melissa, and Dave.

Special guests: Allen, representative of Insurance Board, and Jack.

Allen reviewed the church's insurance policy and explained that the policy covered both the church building and the contents of the church. Upon examination, the coverage for abusive acts and pastoral liability had been excluded from the policy, and he strongly suggested that this be reinstated. Members of the board concurred. he did offer some premium savings because of package and umbrella coverages; however, he admitted that these savings would be minimal when the abusive acts and pastoral liability coverage was reinstated.

The board continues to discuss and explore ideas for meeting the **2011 budget** and making up the nearly **\$20,000 deficit**. Among those suggested were the use of Meijers Community Awards program and a similar program offered through Gordon Foods-both of which are totally voluntary. The congregation will be given more information on these programs soon. Other ideas centered on encouraging use of the church by for-profit groups to generate additional fees. The next congregational meeting to discuss financial matters is **April 10**.

The Board expressed much interest to becoming an affiliate of the **Center for Progressive Christianity**. Pastor Carol gave information to the Board regarding the action that would be needed to become such, and the board suggested that a congregational meeting be held to discuss such, after reading material had been distributed to the congregation. The date of this meeting is **April 10**.

The board approved of the motion to move the monthly **Pancake Brunch** to the **3rd Sunday** of the month during coffee hour (day change decision is being reconsidered). Proceeds from this will go to the Cadillac Community Clinic: Free Health Services (This decision is currently under reconsideration.)

April 16th is Spruce Up Saturday. Volunteers are needed to come in and do light cleaning and tidying in preparation for Easter Sunday.

Treasurer's Report

Penny Phelps, Treasurer

If you were unable to attend the annual meeting in January, or the financial update meeting in March, you may be unaware of where we stand. The Board thought that a monthly report from the treasurer would be helpful.

At the annual meeting, the trustees presented the congregation with a budget based on income totaling \$67,885 and expenses totaling \$87,841 – a difference of \$20,000. That's a pretty shocking gap for a church of our size! The trustees are doing everything possible to curb expenses, but there isn't much "fat" in the proposed budget to trim away. We clearly need to find ways to increase our income, and we have talked about a number of fund-raisers. Most would produce a few hundred to perhaps a thousand dollars – and require a lot of work. It is clear that the most feasible way to close the gap is to increase our giving.

Here are some figures: The **total budget** -- **\$87,841** – divided by 12 months, **equals \$7320 per month** that we need to generate in income. In **January**, our income was **\$5199**. In **February**, our income was **\$5177**. Those are alarming numbers that show the seriousness of our deficit budget!

Here's the **good news**: our income in **March** was **\$12,748**! Enough to cover the shortfall for January and February! And Ralph Annis reports that **pledges have increased \$7,000** from the

figure reported in January. Several folks responded to Pastor Carol's challenge in March, asking each adult to dig deep and **try to contribute an extra \$300, above and beyond pledged amounts.**

We need to express our thanks and gratitude to those who have met the challenge. and we hope the effort continues. This higher level of giving needs to be sustained to meet our budgetary goal.

UNITED NORTHERN ASSOCIATION

Our UNA **sister church** for April is **Ironton Congregational Church UCC.** Please lift up the congregation and its pastor, **Michael Ochs,** in prayer during the coming month.

Archiving Your Church History

The Association will offer a workshop on the nuts and bolts of preserving church history--helping participants get started recording oral histories and organizing and preserving pictures and documents. The workshop will be held at **First Congregational Church Alpena** on **Friday, April 29** from 6-9 pm. It will be preceded by a **tour of Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary** from 3-5 pm and dinner from 5-6 pm. Registration is \$10 for UNA members, \$15 for non-members and closes on **April 22.** Space is limited. Please see Pastor Carol for a registration form.

Spring Meeting

Reminder: The UNA Spring Meeting convenes on **Saturday, April 30** at **9:00 am** at First Congregational Church **Alpena.** This year's guest speaker is **Rev. Toby Jones,** author of *The Way of Jesus: Re-Forming Spiritual Communities in a Post-Church Age* and a northern Michigan Presbyterian pastor, living and working in a faith community modeled after his book.

If you are interested in participating in this year's meeting, please see **Pastor Carol** or **Penny Phelps.** We expect to receive registration forms just after April 1.

COMMUNITY

Cadillac Area Inter-Church Golf League

"FOUR!!!" That's right! Just four weeks until the Cadillac Area Inter-Church Golf League tees off again at the Eldorado Golf Course. If you would like to be in a **Summer Golf League** to keep your game improving, enjoy the outdoors, and meet new friends, please consider joining the Inter-Church Golf League. Some churches don't have enough golfers to make up their own league and miss out. But they don't have to miss out by joining the Cadillac Area Inter-Church Golf League where everyone who can play (no higher than 65 for nine holes) can be in a Summer Golf League at one of the best courses in our area. Call **Ken Nydam** @ 231-942-8455 or email him kjnydam@gmail.com to get more information and join. We tee off on **May 4** at **5pm** at the **Eldorado Golf Course.** Don't delay!