

February 2013
The Tie That Binds
First Congregational United Church of Christ
Cadillac, Michigan

PASTOR REYNOLDS' RAP

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven..." (Matthew 5.13-48, NRSV)

Dear Friends,

I can hardly believe we have reached the end of our time together in ministry. These past 90 days since I first shared news of my resignation with you have simply flown by, a sure sign that some fun was being had, that love and care were flowing freely, and that good things were happening in our midst. For all of these reasons and more, leaving you continues to be a bittersweet prospect for me. Home, family, and a new congregation beckon; but I shall miss you very much and grieve the ending of our covenantal relationship, a sacred bond from which we will release one another on February 3rd.

As I shared in my exit interview with the Board last Sunday, throughout my recent search process I would return to Cadillac from out of state interviews yearning for "my salt of the earth people." Of course, there was an element of pre-anticipatory grief involved in these feelings, but also the re-realization of just how unique and special this church family is: the great care and commitment you extend to one another and the local community, the ways in which you share from the depth of your hearts each week during our time of Joys and Concerns, the tears that sometimes flow around the love circle at communion, the warmth of your welcome to one another and visitors alike, your commitment to diversity of all types, your clear enjoyment of each other's company (and cooking!) at coffee hour, your ready laughter and down to earth demeanors. I can't deny that I have grown to love you very much, and, even as we go our separate ways, I will continue to hold you in my heart.

On January 13 you demonstrated that you are not only salt of the earth people; you embraced your identity as a beacon on a hill, illuminating God's extravagant love and justice and refusing to be hidden under a bushel or dimmed by fear. Your decision to become an Open and Affirming congregation in the United Church of Christ is a landmark one. You are #1068 overall, but you are the **first** in the United Northern Association of the Michigan Conference! This is an achievement you can be proud of. Some would say that it was merely a vote, but I recognize that it was not something anyone took lightly. There may have been some misgivings initially about the need to walk through a year-long process of education and conversation, but, in the end, many committed to following this path and not only learned that there's always more to learn, but grew in relationships with one another and in dedication to the cause of justice and welcome for LGBT persons. Your time is limited and valuable, and you chose to devote many hours to this labor of love. That, to me, speaks volumes. I laud you for having your courage and perseverance. I know ONA is a topic you have pondered in this church over a number of decades. This vote represents the culmination of all those years of conversation.

It was a great joy and an honor to walk with you through this process. As you enter the next leg of your journey with an interim pastor, you will live more fully into this new ONA identity. And you will

likely discern together which UCC identity marker you'd like to explore next: Accessible to All (A2A), Multicultural Multiracial, Just Peace, or Whole Earth. Whatever you decide, I have no doubt that an exciting journey lies ahead. I pray that you will continue to let your beautiful lights shine, and I wish you abundant blessings today and always.

Grace, Peace, and Love to you,
Pastor Carol

NURTURE AND CARE TEAM

Please contact our Nurture and Care Team Coordinator **Diane Jobson** if you need a ride to church or a doctor's appointment, or if you are recuperating from surgery, an illness, an injury, a death or other family emergency and would like the congregation to bring some home-cooked meals to your home.

WORSHIP

There will be a farewell service for Pastor Carol and Communion on February 3rd.

WE ARE OPEN AND AFFIRMING!

Penny Phelps

Our journey to becoming an ONA congregation has been exciting and rewarding. Here are some messages received from the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns since we informed them of our vote: Congratulations! Your church is now officially listed with the Coalition. We are so pleased to welcome you to the ONA Family. You will soon receive a certificate of recognition of your status.

We hope you stay in touch with other ONA churches by subscribing to the Coalition's free email newsletter, Ripples (www.uccoalition.org/news/subscribe/). Any member of your church is welcome to our email connections.

Last year we welcomed ONA church number 1000 [we are #1068] and celebrated forty years of LGBT ministry in the UCC at the historic Coalition National Gathering at Elmhurst College near Chicago last June. We are delighted that you are part of this movement with us.

Kathie Carpenter

National ONA Consultant

UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns

This, of course, is just the beginning of our commitment. We must educate ourselves about issues facing the LGBT community and strive to be proactive and supportive in any way we can. I am constantly on the look-out for articles relating to the inequalities faced by LGBT groups and families. I will post news on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall and make sure pertinent information is passed along through the bulletin and the newsletter. I urge all of you to share with us any useful news or materials you come across.

MISSIONS

Mission Targets For February:

Diane

New Hope and OASIS (Men's and Women's Shelters)

The figures for 2012 aren't in yet, but in 2011 local shelters served 576 homeless people: 176 men, 228 women and 163 children. However, these figures don't include the 2,483 "bed nights" that were purchased at local motels using funding provided by the U.S. Department of Housing.

New Hope averages more than eleven men a night. Every night all of the beds are filled, but many times men have resorted to sleeping in the overflow areas on a mattress on the floor. OASIS takes in a few homeless women, but most of their beds are already taken by victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. A lot more shelter space is desperately needed for homeless families. Leaders within our community are trying to provide shelter space for all who are homeless, but funding is hard to find.

As you might expect, shelters operate basically like any home. This means that just buying and maintaining a space costs a great deal. In addition to the building expenses, however, monies are also needed for all the things the survivors need to maintain their daily living: fresh food, personal care items, bedding, etc. It is easy to see why any help we can give these shelters will be greatly appreciated.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

New meeting day and time: February 21st 6pm. Future meetings will be on the third Thursday of the month at 6pm.

FUN!

WINTER FUNDAY

Diane

February 24th, at 3pm, come to the Jobsons' – regardless of the weather!

Snow means cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and sledding. But Winter also means indoor fun. Come to the Jobsons' just to sit by the fire, visit with friends, sip cocoa and eat chili. Other indoor fun: playing pool or cards or board games, maybe you'd like to finish up a jigsaw puzzle with your church friends, or listen to one of our talented members play the piano(?).

There's no need to bring anything, but if you think you might be coming, please let Tom or Diane know (for planning purposes).

LOOKING AHEAD...

Please make a note on your calendars: due to scheduling difficulties, the Pancake Brunch has been rescheduled for March 16th.

Another March item you may be interested in is our Lenten Breakfast. The Cadillac Area Ministerial Association organizes a series of breakfasts at area churches during Lent. They begin on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 13th at the Presbyterian Church and continue through March 27. Each Wednesday the breakfast begins at 7 a.m. and includes a brief devotional offered by a different clergy person. The program is over by 8 a.m. so that folks can get to work in a timely fashion. Our church is on the schedule for March 20th, with Ken Pastotnik offering the devotional.

THANK YOU

Our Annual Meeting on January 13th was such a lively one, with enthusiasm over the ONA vote, and great participation in the "cake discussion," that we forgot a very important detail: Many thanks to Sandy and Vickie for the wonderful lunch that they prepared for us that day. All the great soups were perfect for a gray, icy day when sensible folks would have stayed home, and the embellishments of salads and bread and desserts were very satisfying. Great job, ladies – your work is appreciated.

The **After 26 DEPOT** project expressed their thanks for the generous donation given to them from our church. They are one of the missions of our church family.

Pastor Carol was delighted to receive the laptop computer that has "so much of her life on it" as a gift from the church at Christmas time. A bright red bow in a plastic bag grew into the computer after she read the attached card.

BOOKS, BOOKS, BOOKS

Are you finished with all of the books at your house? – Then bring them to our book table and buy some new ones. -- All monies received go to the kitchen fund. Thank you.