

January 2012
The Tie That Binds
First Congregational United Church of Christ
Cadillac, Michigan

PASTOR REYNOLDS' RAP

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road. (Matthew 2:9-12)

Dear Friends,

I imagine by now many of you have made New Year's resolutions, set goals for the coming year, and begun to fill in some of the blanks on your brand new date books. We are doing much the same things here at church as we fill the calendar with activities and get ready for our annual meeting later this month. Yet the tasks are even bigger and broader than that as we prepare to revisit the visioning process we began a year ago, take stock of the past year's accomplishments, and map our way forward into 2012 and beyond.

A little overwhelming? Yes. It's too bad we can't simply follow a star to our destination like the magi did. Or that, unlike those wise men, we can't clarify right upfront exactly what or whom it is we're seeking. The magi were very clear from the outset that that bright light in the sky would lead them directly to the newborn King of the Jews. But do you suppose they ever in a million years expected to find a poor boy wrapped in rags lying in a feeding trough? Given that they ventured first to the royal city of Jerusalem, it's probably safe to assume they had envisioned someone altogether different. And yet, despite whatever shock they may have experienced when they first set eyes on baby Jesus, they were joyful as they knelt down to pay their respects and present lavish gifts to this unexpected king. Apparently God's upside down plan had delighted, rather than disappointed, them. So delighted, in fact, that they weren't about to follow King Herod's instructions and report back to him the child's exact location. When a dream warned them of danger, they veered off their normal route and took another road home. They discerned where light and life lay and sought to protect them from what they had now identified as forces of darkness.

Again, it's too bad the roads leading away from evil and brokenness toward peace and wholeness aren't so clearly marked for us who stand outside of this story. Nevertheless, we can still learn a thing or two from the magi:

- ❖ First, their actions invite us to use all the gifts and tools we have at our disposal. While presumably these wise men had high IQs and made good use of their **minds**, their **hearts** were also open to receive and reflect the love and joy the Christ child offered them. They in turn opened their treasure chests and gave generously of their own **material resources**. Then they tapped into their **intuition, emotional intelligence, and faith/spiritual connectedness** to discern and act in opposition to King Herod's evil motives.
- ❖ Second, although the magi must have carefully planned for their trip--packing up their treasure chests and preparing sufficient provisions for themselves and their camels—they didn't hesitate to act upon **new opportunities and information** that were revealed along the way.
- ❖ Third, they knew it wasn't about getting home as quickly as possible or about making King Herod happy. They **took the time** that was needed to discern God's call to them and do the right thing.

And so I wish us and all a happy, healthy, opportunity laden journey for 2012. May we, like the magi, be so faithful and bold as to follow God's brilliant light wherever it may lead us.

Grace, Peace, Love, and Joy to each one of you,

Pastor Carol

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR JANUARY 2012

January 1*	II Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 2:22-40	Feast of the Holy Name
January 8**	I Corinthians 12:12-31a	Healthy Congregations I: Being a Community in Christ
January 15***	Romans 12:1-8	HC II: A Mind Truly is a Thing to Waste
January 22	Mark 1:14-20	Moving Forward
January 29	Mark 1:21-28	With Authority

*Linnea Stifler preaching. No communion due to Pastor Carol's absence.

**Associate Conference Minister Rev. Dr. Thom Webster preaching in Pastor Carol's absence.

***Communion Sunday; Rev. Dr. Thom Webster preaching.

PASTOR'S SCHEDULE

Pastor Carol will be away through January 10. If you have a pastoral care emergency in her absence, please contact **Rev. Paul Tomlinson** at First Presbyterian Church (**775-7111**). Pastor Paul can provide crisis counseling, visitation, and prayer; and can officiate at funerals and memorial services.

Mondays and Tuesdays are Pastor Carol's Sabbath days, during which emergency calls can be directed to her cell phone (884-9884).

PASTORAL CARE

Due to HIPAA privacy rules, hospitals no longer notify pastors when parishioners are hospitalized. Therefore, when in doubt, please assume the pastor is unaware that an FCC member or friend is in the hospital and kindly pass the word along to her. Thank you!

NURTURE AND CARE TEAM

Please contact our Nurture and Care Team Coordinator **Diane** 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.

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Prayer List

Please hold these members, friends, and family in prayer: **Lee, Dorothy, Brian, Margaret, the Campo family, Jen, Marge, the Teasdale family, the Burchett Family, Cullin, Sherry.**

Thank You!

Many, many thanks to

- All the cooks, crafters, food donators, servers, cleaners, set up/take down, etc. people who made the Holiday Bazaar a success. A special thank-you to **Ginny** for drawing caricatures for the event and to all of our **Sunday school kids** for creating Christmas ornaments for sale at the bazaar. (A more detailed report is in the Board section.)

- **Bob & Troy** for having the carpet in our new youth room cleaned and to **Linda, Sue, Connie, Jake**, and others who have donated floor lamps and comfy chairs,
- **Karen** and **Pat** for creating and applying beautifully illustrated labels to the children's books donated for Project Christmas indicating that they were given in memory of **Mary** and **Candy**, as well as to **Karma** for her tireless work on behalf of Project Christmas, to **Kelsi** for volunteering to assist Project Christmas shoppers, and to everyone who donated books or toys.
- **Christmas carolers** who brought music and Christmas blessings on behalf of the church to older and shut-in members in 6 different locations in Cadillac and McBain.
- **Larry & Connie** for hosting a delicious, festive after-caroling dinner at their home.



Lucy D carols with Dick P.

UNITED NORTHERN ASSOCIATION

Our UNA **sister church** for January is **First Congregational UCC, Alpena**. Please lift up the congregation and its interim pastor, **Rev. Richard Hotchkin**, in prayer during the coming month.

From First Congregational Church UCC, Onkama

May God's peace and the joy of Christ's birth be with you this season and every season.

Please know you are all in our thoughts and prayers this month!

Have a very blessed Christmas.

Love from your friends at 1st Congregational UCC, Onkama

COMMUNITY

Movies for the Mind

Dave G

The next Movies for the Mind film screening will be on **Sunday, January 22** at **6:00 pm** at **the Old Phartz** across Mitchell Street from the Blue Heron. The film is Forks Over Knives.

Here is a brief description: Focusing on the research of two food scientists, this earnest documentary reveals that, despite broad advances in medical technology, the popularity of modern processed foods has led to epidemic rates of obesity, diabetes and other diseases. The film examines the profound claim that most, if not all, of the degenerative diseases that afflict us can be controlled, or even reversed, by rejecting animal-based and processed foods.

MISSIONS

Mission Target for January: Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) Penny Phelps

Who we are as members of the United Church of Christ is all bound up in Our Church's Wider Mission. As we review our values and goals, the concept of social justice keeps coming up – an awareness of deep economic disparity and tribal conflict and gender issues and lack of education and opportunity – and we are committed to doing what we can to right those wrongs. As individuals -- even as a small congregation – what we are able to do is minute, like the widow's mite, but when our efforts and voices are combined with all those in the UCC, mountains can be moved!

Our gifts to OCWM help support the national church and the Michigan Conference, which connects all the local UCC churches in Michigan. The national church and the conference help local churches find clergy, celebrate ordinations and installations, offer conflict resolution, and support new churches. The national church collects funds for victims of hurricanes, earthquakes, and other natural and man-made disasters – without siphoning off a large chunk of donations for "administrative expenses." Presently, of all the OCWM funds collected in Michigan, 29% is sent on to the national church and 71% is kept here in Michigan to pay salaries and maintenance on the conference center in Lansing and to support all the programs (such as sending Rev. Cheryl Burke to help us discern our mission) and needs of the 156 local churches in Michigan. The budget is small and carefully monitored – there is no fat to trim. Please support who we are with a gift to OCWM.

From CROPWALK

Thank you for your efforts this year. With most of the money collected, we did bring in \$7104.48.

We have four agencies getting money this year. Each agency will get about \$445. The agencies are Family Care Network (Manton), Salvation Army, King's Storehouse, and the Revival Center. Last year there were 13 teams, this year only 9 teams. Well, maybe next year there will be more. We will have the first meeting for CROPWALK 2012 on **January 18** at the **Cadillac UMC** at **6:30 pm**.

Mark your calendar.

Marv Wallender, Treasurer

(This past year FCC raised \$50 in CROPWALK pledges.)

From the Stehouwer Free Clinic

Thank you for your financial support this year. Your contributions to the clinic helped fund \$153,407 in medications, \$215,550 in office visits, \$2796 in lab tests, blood draws, and x-rays; \$676 in splints, glucometers, and CPAP machines; and \$244 in in-office procedures for a total value of \$401,393.

****Save the date: February 18, 2012** celebration of the clinic's 10-year anniversary.**

Our next three pancake brunches are from **10 am-12 pm** on **February 11, April 14, and June 9**.

FUN!

January Sunday Fun-Day(s)

Sandy

First of all, I have been very impressed with the number of people offering their homes and/or ideas for the very important cause of having fun! Secondly, there are no rules saying we can only have ONE 'Funday' a month and with 5 Sundays in January we have even more opportunities! In fact, perhaps everyone's first resolution for the auspicious year of 2012 should be HAVE MORE FUN! That said, here's what's cookin'!

1) Come to **Tom & Diane's** home on **January 15** for a potluck and afternoon of winter fun. There will be something for everyone: cross country skiing and snow shoeing in the woods, pool in the

game room, and board games upstairs. Jobsons will provide chili and hot chocolate. If you like, you may bring a snack, a dish, or a beverage to share. (See map to their home on the next page.)

2) The State Theater in Traverse City will be showing the film 'The Artist' sometime in January or early February. This is a very interesting looking black and white, silent film. I would encourage you to look up the trailer on Google and check it out. The date is not yet known, but will be announced as that information becomes available.

3) It was brought to my attention that Caberfae Ski Resort has copied our idea and is offering a 'Sunday Funday' family ski event for the month of January! The cost is \$49 for a family of up to 3 people and only \$15 for each additional person. The price includes lift ticket, ski rental and a beginning lesson, quite a deal!! This special is for skiing after 4 PM. Let me know if anyone is interested in this and we can decide on a date that best fits everyone's needs.

Here is a group shot from the November pizza and bowling Fun-Day at the Pines:



WORSHIP

Healthy Congregations Two-Part Sermon Series

In preparation for our next visioning session with Acting Michigan Conference Minister **Rev. Cheryl Burke** on **February 26**, Interim Associate Conference Minister and trained Healthy Congregations facilitator **Rev. Dr. Thom Webster** will visit us on **January 8** and **15** to preach a two-part sermon series on congregational vitality. **Healthy Congregations** is an organization that promotes use of the Bowen/Friedman school of family systems theory to foster congregational vitality. The following information excerpted from their website (www.healthycongregations.com) will acquaint you with some of the ideas underlying family systems theory as it relates to congregational life:

The New Testament speaks of the church as a living system, "the body of Christ." The apostle Paul makes it clear that the "body of Christ" is a whole comprised of many parts, yet functioning as one. The various members and services of a congregation interact, much as the cells and organs of the human body do with the ongoing interplay of blood circulation, nerve endings, chemical messages, and energy sources. The mark of organic life is the continuing struggle of balance and imbalance. If

balance fails, there is sickness. Gross imbalance spells death. Health, therefore, is the drive for life, what an organism does to preserve itself, how it responds to challenges to its integrity, and how it adapts to changes. The same is true for the congregation. Its health is its response.

What responses create health in congregations? What kind of interactions and relationships happen in healthy churches? What type of functioning advances, rather than impedes, the mission of the church in the local congregation? Here are some of the most important health-promoting responses:

- Healthy congregations accept differences (rather than deny)
- Healthy congregations focus on their strengths (rather than weaknesses)
- Healthy congregations focus on mission (rather than “getting along,” the past, survival, “the minister,” or some other thing or issue)
- Healthy congregations respond to anxiety and change (instead of reacting)
- Healthy congregations manage conflict (instead of deny it)
- Healthy congregations act flexibly and creatively (instead of rigidly)
- In healthy congregations, leaders promote health through their presence and functioning (instead of techniques or skills)
- In healthy congregations, leaders challenge people (instead of comforting)
- In healthy congregations, leaders provide immune capacities (instead of enabling disease processes)
- In healthy congregations, people respond graciously and truthfully (rather than judgmentally or secretly)
- In healthy congregations, people develop caring relationships (rather than willful transactions)
- In healthy congregations, people empower others (rather than dominate them or cure them)
- Healthy congregations recognize the Creator’s interdependent design of life
- Healthy congregations practice stewardship gratefully and willingly (rather than begrudgingly)
- Healthy congregations combine money and the Christian Life (rather than separating them)
- In healthy congregations, people share their lives (instead of each living for oneself)
- In healthy congregations, hospitality is offered to all (instead of favoritism for the few or like-minded)
- In healthy congregations, beginning again is a way of life (instead of staying stuck)

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Annual Meeting Alert!

Penny Phelps

Be sure to mark your calendars for **Sunday, January 29**, the date of our **Annual Meeting**.

Immediately following worship service, we will have a luncheon prepared by that dynamic duo: Sandy and Vickie. After that we will dive into the business of the church. Voting on the 2012 budget will be one of our primary objectives, along with electing church officers. There may be additional items on the agenda which require a congregational vote. **Don’t miss it!**

Summary of 12/8 Meeting

Laura, Clerk

Discussed were:

- The need for ushers for the Christmas Eve Service
- Postponing January Communion Sunday to January 15
- The return of Cheryl Burke to continue the visioning process she started with us last year
- Thom Webster has agreed to do his Healthy Congregations workshop/presentation and will preach during Sunday worship on January 8 and January 15.
- The Photo Directory is nearly done and ready for distribution.

- Funeral and Wedding policies are being reviewed by Donna Debney and Penny Phelps.
- The upcoming Annual Meeting was discussed.
- The Budget Committee is planning to meet on December 15 to begin looking at numbers. Penny noted that Sunday, Dec. 11 was Pledge Sunday.
- The Board discussed the feasibility of having an intergenerational confirmation class.
- Bob suggested that renaming the "building and improvements fund" the "Capital Improvements Fund" might be a good idea. All concurred that this would be brought up at the Annual Meeting.

Treasurer's Report

Penny Phelps

When we began 2011, we faced an alarming budget with a \$20,000 gap between projected income and projected expenses, but we did so with faith and conviction that we could meet the challenge.

As we near the end of the year, it is clear that our faith and conviction were justified. Receipts from all sources available for meeting our expenses (that includes rent as well as pledged and non-pledged contributions) totaled **\$75,642** at the end of November! And we anticipate that December giving, which is usually high, will bring us very close to our projected budget total. All this is due to the concerted effort of so many members and friends who stretched their own resources to make extra gifts to the church throughout the year. In addition, the income figures got a boost from our always successful Art Festival food booth and our newly resurrected Holiday Bazaar.

Looking ahead to 2012, we have already begun putting together a budget for the year, which will look very similar to this year's. We hope to have copies available for you before the annual meeting on January 29th so that you can be familiar with the breakdown before we discuss it.

The key factor in our ability to build a budget is knowing what our income will be. As of December 18, we have received 23 pledges for the coming year for the following commitments:

General Fund	\$39,245.
Building Improvement Fund	2,160.
Missions	1,260.
Food Bank	1,600.
Sunday School	600.
Kitchen Fund	<u>60.</u>
Total	\$43,665.

That is a wonderful amount, and we are grateful to those members and friends who have made that commitment. However, we know many folks haven't sent in a pledge card as yet, and we urge them to prayerfully consider their support of the work of our beloved church as soon as possible so that we can make plans based on realistic numbers. Thank you.

Many hands make "Holiday Bazaar" a big success

Penny Phelps

An ever-dwindling number of us recall the glory days of the Congregational Church Holiday Bazaar. It was always held on a Friday. Folks stood in line for a table at the popular luncheon; then wandered past all the tables of colorful crafts, the result of months of work-bees up in the "crow's nest." Other churches took a page from the First Congregational Women's Fellowship playbook when they established their own bazaars.

But that was then and this is now. Times have changed and Women's Fellowship is a thing of the past. Our numbers are fewer, and the thought of taking on such a daunting task leaves me weak in the knees. Nevertheless, the challenge was out there to find another way to raise money – something to parallel the summer effort of the Arts Festival.

So we did it! Somehow, we managed to rise to the occasion and put together a bazaar worthy of our predecessors. On November 26 we offered a great luncheon, clever crafts, mouth-watering baked goods and preserves – not to mention chocolate bars and teas, tempting raffle baskets, and irresistible “attic treasures.” When all was said and done, the General Fund was enhanced by over \$1,000 and the Kitchen Fund by \$400. (It’s important to recognize that the usual supplies used in the kitchen – plates, plastic utensils, napkins, juice, coffee, etc. – are paid for out of the Kitchen Fund, which isn’t part of the overall budget, so it helps to have a means of injecting money into that fund.)

Here’s a **big “Thank You”** to all the folks who pitched in to make crafts, bake, set up, donate attic treasures, make soup, serve lunch (and popcorn), make aromatic ornaments, draw caricatures, assemble recipe booklets, and, of course, take money and make change! It never would have happened without

And just in case you’ve forgotten someone and need a little gift (even yourself), please keep in mind that **we still have available movie gift cards, chocolate bars, teas, and recipe booklets!**

OPEN AND AFFIRMING (ONA)

Education

No matter who you are or what your perspective, you’re encouraged to participate in FCC’s ONA exploration and education process, beginning with our first class halfway through coffee hour on **January 15**. Questions may be submitted to the box at the back of the sanctuary or **Karen, Margie, Linda, Jen, Karma, Catherine, Troy, Bob, Ann, Penny Phelps, or Pastor Carol--**

Task Force Members.

Vocabulary

In preparation for the first gathering, here is some more terminology excerpted from booklets by Ann Thompson Cook (And God Loves Each One and Made in God’s Image) by the UCC Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns.

- **Gender identity:** a person’s internal understanding of their own true gender.
- **Gender presentation:** the way people express their gender or gender role outwardly, including the clothing and jewelry they choose, their mannerisms, the way they walk and use their hands, their hairstyle, the interests they express, and their speech.
- **Gender Role:** what a society says is appropriate for males and females, including dress, behavior, and other activities, such as using a particular restroom.
- **Intersex(ed):** an umbrella term that refers to people who have physical or genetic attributes that are considered atypical for either males or females.
- **Sex (Assigned):** what people declare a baby to be at birth;. Assignment is the answer to the question, “Is it a girl or a boy?”
- **Sex (Physical):** in general usage refers to “male” or “female” and is thought to be determined by genitals. However, inspecting a newborn’s genitals to determine whether the baby is a boy or a girl can be inconclusive or misleading. Experts estimate that approximately 1% of babies (at least 40,000 annually in the US alone) are born with bodies that differ in some way from what is considered standard for males or females. We come in many varieties of physical sex, based on our own unique combination of chromosomes, hormones, and physical characteristics.
- **Transgender(ed):** an umbrella term that refers to a wide range of people whose gender identity, role, and expression vary from what our culture considers “normal” or appropriate for someone with a particular sex assignment.

- Included under that umbrella are **transsexuals**, whose gender identity doesn't match the sex they were assigned at birth. They have a strong, persistent sense that their physical and assigned sex aren't true for them. The process of bringing one's physical sex into conformity with one's gender identity is called "**transition**" and may involve therapy, hormone treatment, and surgery. However, for a variety of reasons, not all persons who identify as transsexual engage in this process.
- Also included are people who are comfortable with the sex they were assigned, but who feel out of synch with the strict societal rules governing how people of that sex should express themselves. Note that many women who dress like men don't think of themselves as transgender, but that men who occasionally or frequently dress like women usually do and may call themselves **crossdressers** or **bigender**.

A Gathering of Open and Affirming Churches

From **9:00 am to 1:00 pm** on **Saturday, February 11, Edgewood United Church UCC in Lansing** invites churches considering becoming Open and Affirming to meet with **Andy Lang**, Executive Director of the **UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns**, Acting Michigan Conference Minister **Rev. Cheryl Burke**, and churches that have already formally declared themselves ONA to explore topics like defining ONA and being ONA in the current political climate. This forum will be hosted by the. For additional information, please contact **Rev. Dr. Julie Kilmer** at jkilmer@etseminary.edu or 517-803-9685. See Pastor Carol if you'd like to carpool to Lansing with a group from the church.

SUNDAY SCHOOL



Sunday school gratitude activity for Thanksgiving