

March 2012

The Tie That Binds

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Cadillac, Michigan

PASTOR REYNOLDS' RAP

Remember that the person who plants few seeds will have a small crop; the one who plants many seeds will have a large crop. You should each give, then, as you have decided, not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves the one who gives gladly. And God is able to give you more than you need, so that you will always have all you need for yourselves and more than enough for every good cause. As the scripture says,

He gives generously to the needy;
his kindness lasts forever.

And God, who supplies seed for the sower and bread to eat, will also supply you with all the seed you need and will make it grow and produce a rich harvest from your generosity. God will always make you rich enough to be generous at all times, so that many will thank God for your gifts which they receive from us. (2 Corinthians 9:6-15, GNT)

Dear Friends,

Now that we have officially entered the Lenten season, has anyone asked you what you have given up for Lent? For that matter, have you asked yourself? Perhaps chocolate or caffeine or Facebook? Maybe you're still thinking about it. Or maybe it's just not a practice you engage in. Well, fear not, I have a feeling God is not overly concerned with your love of chocolate, your daily coffee ritual, or the number of friends you are religiously tracking on Facebook.

Nevertheless, done in the right spirit, giving up habits can make for a meaningful spiritual discipline. Self-emptying (fasting) can create more space and intentionality for prayer, self-evaluation, and reflection. It can help to renew our spiritual lives in preparation for the Easter joy awaiting us 40 days down the road. It can help us to discern the movement of God in our lives right now, and the next direction in which the Holy Spirit is gently nudging us. It can teach us humility and help us to grow and mature in our relationships with God and one another. It can strengthen or reignite our faith.

Clearly these are extremely valuable personal outcomes. Yet the example of Jesus and the words of the Hebrew prophets invite us to go a step further. Says Isaiah,

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? (Isaiah 58:6-7, NRSV)

Often the kind of self-giving Isaiah describes will flow naturally out of an experience of self-emptying. Maybe we learn something about ourselves and our relationships to God and the world that inspires us to be more intentional in our efforts to give back. Maybe we experience an overflowing gratitude for the gifts we have received in our walks with God and can't help but respond to that spiritual abundance with concrete generosity to a world of people in need.

Lent, then, is another one of those both/and paradoxes. If we had to make a choice between giving and giving up, the biblical imperative would guide us toward giving. Yet giving requires faith. Without a strong foundation, we can tend to get caught up in feelings of lack, which tell us that material resources are scarce and that we simply aren't up to the task. It is in self-emptying that our spiritual tanks are filled, preparing us for self-giving that is joyful, generous, and even risky--generosity that transcends fear through trust in the grace and abundance that are God.

May God abundantly bless each of you and your walks through this season of Lenten preparation,

Pastor Carol

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR MARCH 2012

March 4	Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16	Always Close
March 11	Psalms 19	Beautiful Law
March 18	Ephesians 2:1-10	No Matter What
March 25	tbd	Rev. Cheryl Burke preaching

PASTORAL CARE

Due to HIPAA privacy rules, hospitals do not notify pastors when parishioners are hospitalized. When in doubt, please assume the pastor is unaware of a hospitalization and pass the word along to her.

On days off (Mon, Tues), please direct emergency calls only to her cell phone (884-9884). Thanks!

NURTURE AND CARE TEAM

Diane can coordinate rides to church or doctor's appointments and meal delivery for those recuperating from surgery, illness, injury, grief or a family emergency.

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Congratulations to **Katie**, who recently made the Dean's List at Ferris State University.

Many thanks to **Tom** and **Diane** for hosting the recent Sunday Fun-Day of cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, games, chili, and hot chocolate at their home. See the group shot on page 5. Clearly fun was had by all!

Prayer List*

Please hold these members, friends, and family in prayer: **Lee, Dorothy, Brian, the Burchett family, Margaret, Pat, the Teasdale family, Jenny, Sherry, Lynn, the Harvey Family, Troy, Charles**

*Please contact **Pastor Carol** to have your own or a loved one's name added to the Prayer List.

VISION

Please join us after worship on **March 26** as we continue our church visioning process with **Rev. Cheryl Burke**. A big part of our focus will be on how we might use the collective FCC assets we identified in earlier session (talents and treasure alike), to move beyond nagging budget deficits and live into a future marked by vitality in our ministries to one another and our neighbors.

MISSIONS

Mission Target for March: One Great Hour of Sharing

Despite our superficial differences, isn't it great to know that One Great Hour of Sharing is a cooperative effort by 9 denominations to pool resources and tackle problems world wide? For example, when floods devastated vast areas of Pakistan in 2010, OGHS gifts enabled Church World Services to distribute 16,540 food packages to help 91,200 individuals. In addition, temporary shelter supplies, household goods, medical supplies, and tents were made available.

With so many worthy causes soliciting our aid, it's reassuring to think of our small contributions being combined with contributions from many other churches all over the country—and the globe—and then effectively distributed where the need is greatest. In 2009 the UCC received \$2,833,600 for the One

Great Hour of Sharing offering. The largest portion of that, 64%, went to support developments in health, education, and agriculture. Another 25% was spent in relief of national and international disasters as well as refugees. Please help support the good work of this worthwhile special donation.

Cadillac Cares for Children

Cadillac Cares for Children is a mission project sponsored by CAMA (Cadillac Area Ministerial Association) under the auspices of **Numana**, a hunger relief organization. Through the packaging work and financial donations of local churches, Numana sends food to countries where intense food insecurity exists. Currently, the **Horn of Africa** has been receiving food from these local events. Food will be packaged in Cadillac is **April 28**. Our goal is to raise **\$12,000** in order to package **40,000 bags of high protein food**. To date, **\$5200+** has been raised. In addition to monetary donations, CAMA is seeking volunteers to help on Packaging Day. It would be terrific if we could form a team from our congregation to participate in this worthwhile ecumenical, community wide event.

Precious Gems Home for Women

Plans are underway to establish a home in our area to house young women ages of 18- 25 who are homeless. In the first stages of being organized the home is envisioned as a safe, welcoming place where the love of Jesus is shown to young women in need.

Assistance from local churches would be a large part of this ministry. Here are a few ways that churches could support this home:

- A one-time gift to help purchase a house and furnish it
- Monthly support to keep the home functioning
- Food drives
- Donation of paper, laundry, cleaning products, and household items (phone, toaster, etc.)
- People to mentor or teach skills (baking, budgeting, balancing a checkbook, driving, etc.)
- People to donate their time and skills (plumbers, builders, bankers, dentists, nurses, etc.)

If individuals in our church might like to participate in this project, Precious Gems Board Members would love to formally present it to us. Interested? Please see **Pastor Carol**.

Re-Member Mission Trip

Rev. Keith Titus has just confirmed that the 2012 the United Northern Association mission trip to Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota is scheduled for **October 12-20** (inclusive of drive time). We will need to receive participants' registration forms with **initial deposits of \$78 per person by Sunday, March 11**, followed by the 1st payment of **\$156 on June 1**, and the final payment of **\$156 on August 1**. Forms are available on line by going to **www.re-member.org**. Click on "Volunteer", then "pre-trip info", then "volunteer registration packet." Fill out pages 5 & 7, (6 is only for youth). The rest of the packet is for your information. Some time after March 15, Keith will set up a time for participants to meet to go over trip details and answer any questions. You might also like to speak to FCC's 2010 participants—**Ruthann, Sandy, Vicki, and John**—to get a firsthand perspective on the experiential, educational, and work pieces of the trip.

Unfortunately, **Dave** is unable to serve as trip coordinator this year. We're therefore urgently seeking someone to fill that role this year. Please see **Pastor Carol** right away if you can help.

Please prayerfully consider supporting this important cause, which is a terrific opportunity for transformational learning and service. The needs are great, and the poverty and other challenges faced by the Lakota people of Pine Ridge Reservation profound: From 1980-2000, the counties making up Pine Ridge comprised the poorest of our nation's 3143 counties. The 2000 census found them the 3rd poorest, not because things improved on Pine Ridge, but because things got worse on 2 other South Dakota reservations. The poverty on Pine Ridge can be described in no other terms than

3rd world. It is common to find homes overcrowded, as those with homes take in whoever needs a roof over their heads. Many homes are without running water and sewer.

As of 2007, the Reservation had

- An **unemployment** rate of 80-90%
- Per capita **income** of \$4,000
- 8 Times the United States rate of **diabetes**
- 5 Times the United States rate of **cervical cancer**
- Twice the rate of **heart disease**
- 8 Times the United States rate of **tuberculosis**
- An **alcoholism** rate estimated as high as 80%
- 1 in 4 infants born with **fetal alcohol syndrome** or effects
- A **suicide** rate more than twice the national rate
- A **teen suicide** rate 4 times the national rate
- **Infant mortality** three times the national rate
- The lowest **life expectancy** in the United States and the 2nd lowest in the Western Hemisphere. Only Haiti has a lower rate.

Stehouwer Free Clinic

Our next 2 pancake brunches are from **10 am-12 pm** on **April 14** and **June 9**.

Wexford Habitat for Humanity

Wexford Habitat for Humanity wants to make its partner churches aware that Glen's Market in Cadillac is again participating in **Spartan Foods' Scan Program** beginning **February 19 thru March 10**. This program gives Glen's customers the opportunity to purchase \$1, \$5 or \$10 medallions that go to support Habitat. That support allows customers to receive coupons for their next Glen's purchase. Glen's has been very generous in their support of Habitat. You're encouraged to thank them for Habitat, especially during the Scan Program. Habitat also extends its thanks for all of you who continue to assist them in so many ways.

You are invited to celebrate Wexford Habitat for Humanity's "**25 Years of Building Homes and Building Hope**" within the community on **March 20** from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm at the Habitat Office and Restore at 7545 E. 34 Road in Cadillac. The celebration will include tours, refreshments, and program presentations at 10:30 am and 12:30 pm.

FUN!

March Sunday Fun-Day

Sandy

March 18 is slated to be a maple syrup outing, but that will depend on Mother Nature, who has been a bit fickle this winter. As the time approaches, **Laura** will be filling us in on the details. There will be a potluck lunch, as the day will involve being outside a lot, dress for the weather. Carpooling from the church will be an option, or meeting at the Bristol Store, which is only a couple of miles from the 'Sugar Shack' where the big event will hopefully be taking place. Dave and I will not be around that weekend, so please talk amongst yourselves!

April is shaping up to be very exciting as well. Our Fun-Day will be on **Saturday, April 14** as we join the **Audubon Society** on a guided adventure in eagle nest observation. Our knowledgeable guide, **Don Stroup**, will be taking us to several, occupied eagles' nests in Manistee County. More details will be forthcoming, but you'll need to bring binoculars and be prepared to do a little hiking.

Looking for Fun-Day opportunities for May, June...

Here is a photo from the February Fun-Day at the home of **Tom** and **Diane**:



COMMUNITY

Transition Cadillac (www.transitioncadillac.org)

Shelley Youngman

In keeping with our mission, we have launched the 100 YARDen DASH challenging residents of Cadillac and surrounding areas to create 100 new food gardens in 2012! Food gardens may be as simple as growing pots of tomatoes and herbs on your back deck or as big as a community garden, expanding an existing garden, or any other form of a foodscape. Go to our website to register your garden and for more information on educational and hands-on organic gardening workshops.

Upcoming Events for Transition Cadillac

- ***1st Thursday of each month:** Community Planning for the DASH!
- ***3rd Thursday of each month:** educational talks about growing food:
- ***March 15:** Craig Schaaf, Seeding for Abundance: Greatest Yields for The Home Gardener.
- ***April 19:** Craig Schaaf, "Season Extension - Strategies to Stretch Your Gardening Season"
- ***April 22:** KICKOFF CELEBRATION FOR THE 100 YARDen DASH! 2 pm. LIVE BAND: Earthwork Collective with Seth and May Bernard! REGISTER YOUR GARDEN! Vendors, demonstrations, raffles for cool stuff, educational materials, and fun!
- ***May 17:** Craig Schaaf, Learn What Different Garden Plants Need to Thrive.
- ***June 21:** Craig Schaaf, helps us to develop our own SEED SAVING GROUP!
- ***July:** Garden Tours with Craig Schaaf, (maybe one will be yours!), TBA
- ***August/September:** Various Food Preservation Workshops, TBA
- ***September:** COMMUNITY HARVEST CELEBRATION!! Potluck picnic with our own home grown food! Music, games, and some good ol' fashioned fun to celebrate our successes and our neighbors! TBA

NB: Unless otherwise noted, all meetings start at 7pm and are held at the church.

CREATE (or Allow) THE LIFE YOU WANT

After a brief hiatus, **Penney McRae**, LifeSuccess Consultant/Trainer/Coach, is back with a new seminar—Create (or Allow) the Life You Want--is scheduled for **11:00 am to 2:00 pm** on

Saturday, April 21 in Fellowship Hall. Details about the seminar's topics are below. The cost is **\$49** by cash or check. To reserve a spot, please call 876-0643 and ask for Penney.

- ❖ Are you where you want to be in life? Are you fulfilled? Are you happy with your results?
-OR-
- ❖ Are you "waiting" for life to change? Are you resentful? Are you frustrated with your results?
 - If you answered "YES" to the second set of questions, and you are seeking answers for the life you WANT to lead, this seminar is for YOU!!!
 - You will be provided with the information necessary to CREATE your life!!! Instead of ALLOWING life to happen to you!!
 - It is YOUR future, and it happens ONE day at a time, and ONE choice at a time! The definition of insanity is to expect different results while continuing the same behaviors (choices).
 - IF (and this is a BIGGIE), YOU are WILLING to do what it takes today in order to win tomorrow, YOU are ready for this journey!

Everything you want is just outside your comfort zone. --James Allen

MICHIGAN CONFERENCE

Camp Talahi Retreat & Nature Center

It's time to sign up for camp! Camp Talahi has their Summer Camp Schedule set and is eagerly awaiting camper sign-ups from their website--<http://camptalahi.org>.

Here is a snapshot of the camp's offerings:

Youth Overnight Camps	June 24-29
Counselor in Training Camp (grades 9-11)	July 5-8
Mini Camp (grades k-2)	July 8-13
Junior Camp (grades 3-5)	July 15-20
Senior High Camp	July 22-27
Music, Arts, Dance and Drama Camp (grades 6-8)	July 22-27
Wilderness Adventure Camp (grades 6-8)	July 29-August 3
Adventure Camp	

*Please note that grade levels refer to the grade that a camper has just COMPLETED.

Weekend Camps	May 25-28
Young Adult Weekend (long weekend w/2 night option)	June 29-July 2
Family Camp I (long weekend w/2 night option)	July 27-29
Family Camp II (2 nights only)	

*For pricing visit: <http://camptalahi.org/summer-camp/costs-registration/>

Take advantage of the Early Bird Discount and sign up before **April 15**. Get a \$50 discount for the 2nd session a camper registers for or for each additional child who registers from the same family!

MICHIGAN: 1

The Michigan Conference invites us to participate in MICHIGAN: 1 to help send 111+ youth from Michigan to the July 2012 **UCC National Youth Event** at Purdue University in West Lafayette, IN.

- Goals:
- 111 churches give \$111
 - 11 churches give \$1,111
 - 11 individuals give \$1,111
 - 1,111 individuals give \$11
 - 1 individual and/or church give \$11,111

Any unused money would be added to the endowment for youth and young adult ministry being developed by the Conference Board of Directors.

Checks should be made payable to **Michigan Conference UCC** and mailed to

Michigan 1
P.O. Box 1006
East Lansing MI 48826-1006

UNITED NORTHERN ASSOCIATION

Our UNA **sister church** for March is **Benzonia First Congregational UCC**. Please lift up the congregation and its pastor, **Rev. Dan Furman**, in prayer during the coming month.

OPEN AND AFFIRMING (ONA)

Please stay tuned for dates of our next study session plus a spaghetti dinner and ONA movie night.

A RECIPE FROM THE KITCHEN OF SUZIE

Easy Hummus

- Two 15 oz. cans of chickpeas/garbanzo beans
- 1/3 cup of liquid from the can of chickpeas
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- 3 tablespoons of olive or grapeseed oil
- 2 tablespoons of tahini (sesame seed paste)
- 1 teaspoon of salt

Directions: Mix all the ingredients in a food processor until the consistency is smooth. Enjoy!

(Suzie had many requests for this recipe after she brought the hummus to a recent coffee hour.)