

May 2011

The Tie That Binds

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Cadillac, Michigan

PASTOR REYNOLDS' RAP

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit..." (John 20:19-22, NRSV)

Alleluia! Christ is risen indeed!

In this season of Eastertide, we celebrate Jesus' resurrection and reflect upon its many layers of meaning--from the victory of love, life, and hope over violence, death and despair; to the possibility in God for new life to spring from even the most tragic of situations, to God's boundless empathy for our human suffering, to God's desire to, not just alleviate, but redeem that suffering.

We can ponder the Easter event in both personal and global terms, for we are Easter people both as individuals and collectively as the Church. In the words of poet Wendell Berry, one logical outcome of our meditation on the season is for us to follow in Jesus' footsteps by practicing resurrection; that is, to mindfully seek the healing and redemption of our selves and our world in all things, big and small. Granted, this is rarely an easy task. Often it means interrupting the status quo, from ingrained habits to cultural norms. But that is why the Risen Christ blesses his disciples, including us, with his abiding peace and his Holy Spirit. They are there for us to draw upon for sustenance as we walk a pilgrim path that is bound to put us at odds with the world from time to time.

One way we as a congregation are currently practicing resurrection is by exploring who we are and who we seek to become as a faith community. Through the visioning process with Rev. Cheryl Burke, we articulated our gifts and values, and began to identify and pursue activities springing out of them: A book study group was resurrected, a fundraiser concert and dinner occurred, and fun, potentially youth-oriented activities are in the works, as is a "Bring-a-Friend-to-Church Sunday." These are all very, very good things indeed, and I encourage you to keep up the good work.

At the same time, I believe it is important for us to continue to dialogue together about our underlying values and beliefs, and to define for ourselves how we want to be known in the broader community. This is why I brought to you for consideration the **8 Points** of the **Center for Progressive Christianity** and the **UCC Identity Markers**. The intention is not to narrow our sights theologically or socially or in any other way, but to attempt to identify and name in very broad strokes what it is that we share--the ties that bind us together as a UCC church family.

At the latest congregational meeting, we agreed to explore both of these initiatives through dialogical sermons, group discussions, and lay-led task forces. On **May 22** I will begin a monthly sermon series on the **TCPC's 8 Points**, which is intended to help us gain a better understanding of exactly what it is that they mean, their scriptural basis, and our personal responses to them. Those who would like to continue the dialogue after worship are invited to join Pastor Carol in the Sunday School Room off of Fellowship Hall. We aim to have covered all 8 Points by the September Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting, so that we will all feel prepared to vote on potential affiliation.

In the meantime, individuals are encouraged to consider the **UCC Identity Markers** on your own. If you feel so inclined, focus on one that is particularly compelling to you and form a task force with other interested folks to explore it more deeply, with the goal of eventually presenting findings to the congregation. The Identity Markers 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). Please note that **Karma** has committed to spearheading a group investigation of the **Open and Affirming** identity marker and process, so please see her if you are interested in participating in this particular task force.

May Jesus' great courage and God's never-ending grace, love, and mercy nourish, inspire, and energize us throughout this Eastertide.

Abundant Blessings,
Pastor Carol

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR MAY 2011

May 1	Luke 9:10-17 (Christopher Bedford preaching)	Integrity of Creation
May 8	Luke 24:13-35	Breaking Bread
May 15	Acts 2:42-47	Powerful Witness
May 22	John 14:1-14	Progressive Christianity Point
2:		Recognizing Others'
	Faithfulness	
May 29	John 14:15-21	Witness of Love

WORSHIP

Integrity of Creation (Earth) Sunday

We will belatedly celebrate Earth Day on **May 1** by inviting renowned film maker, sustainability advocate, and Episcopalian layperson **Christopher Bedford** into our pulpit. He will return to Fellowship Hall from 4-6 pm for a film screening and forum, which are open to the community. (See the "Whole Earth" section below for more information.)

New Members Sunday

On **May 15** we will celebrate the reception of new and returning members into the church. If you would like to join the church with this group, please contact **Pastor Carol** as soon as possible. Existing members, please be sure to come and offer our newest members a warm welcome into the beloved community of our church family!

Taizé

The ecumenical Taizé worship service at First Presbyterian resumes on **May 25**. Please join **Pastor Carol, Pastor Paul Tomlinson,** and **Judy Coffey** for a time of quiet reflection, prayer, and song in the unique style of the Taizé community in France.

THANK YOU!

Many, many thanks to all who lent a hand with our Lenten Breakfast, Holy Week and Easter services, including **Margie, Ralph, Charlotte, Karma, Linda, Ginny, Marge, Laura Jan, Troy, Candy, Bob, Joyce, Sam, Penny, John, Dan, Shari, Gary, and members of the choir.** Your many varied contributions went above and beyond the call of duty, helping to make these special events all that much more beautiful, welcoming, and sacred.

From the Community Church of Ludington Pastoral Search Committee

Your kindness is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for opening your church and hosting our potential candidate.

We loved your church, and we really felt welcomed.

MISSIONS

Our Mission Target for May: "Strengthen the Church" – UCC Penny Phelps

"Spread the Love" is the slogan of the Strengthen the Church campaign. The funds received in this special offering help to build the future of the UCC by supporting the God is Still Speaking Ministry, by giving grants to provide leadership for new congregations as well as helping renew churches and youth and young adult ministries.

The God is Still Speaking Ministry spreads the message of God's extravagant welcome, reaching out to those who have felt that there is no room for them in the church. In the last 3 years, Stillspeaking reached nearly 25 million people through national, regional, and local advertising. One of the offshoots of the ministry is Media with a Mission, which has empowered 165 churches in 38 states to reach 16 million people.

Often, the UCC is described as one of the best kept secrets among the major denominations. Your gift to Strengthen the Church will "let the cat out of the bag"!

RE-MEMBER

To date, four members and friends of our church have confirmed their interest in participating in the United Northern Association's **October 7-October 14** adult mission trip with RE-MEMBER to Pine Ridge Reservation. We will need to have a volunteer list finalized and submitted to RE-MEMBER with one-half of our registration fees by **June 8**. Final payments and registration forms are due **August 8**. The total fee for this year's trip is **\$390**. If you would like to add your name to the volunteer list, please see **Pastor Carol** or **Dave** as soon as possible. To access the registration form and view detailed information about the trip, please use the following link:

<http://www.re-member.org/docs/Registration%20Packet%202011.pdf>

UNITED NORTHERN ASSOCIATION

Our UNA **sister church** for May is **Lewiston Congregational UCC**. Please lift up the congregation and its pastor, **Rev. Toby Stadden**, in prayer during the coming month.

From First Congregational United Church of Christ, Charlevoix

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." II Corinthians 9:8

We send our thoughts and prayers to all of you.

We would like you to know that we are standing in the gap for you in prayer and believing you will receive all that God has for you this year.

Know that God cares for you and sees all that you do for Him!

God Bless,

First Congregational United Church of Christ, Charlevoix

(Apparently we are their sister church this month.)

Picnic

Rev. Keith Titus, UNA Moderator

I know it's hard to even think about warm weather and picnics, but let's put this on our calendars. Saturday, **August 6** will be the all-UNA picnic. We'll be meeting at Otsego Lake County Park in Gaylord. The "official" time will be 10:00 to 4:00, but feel free to come early and stay late. The UNA will pick up the fee for the use of the park that day. Each car will have to pay a \$3.00 parking fee. Bring your own beverages and whatever you want to eat, including stuff to grill if you'd like. Pastor Dan from Benzonia promises lots of activities, including games for the kids. Bring your swim suits if you want to plunge. Let's have as many folks as possible from as many churches as possible for a day of fun and fellowship (and gal-ship)!

WHOLE EARTH

Transition Cadillac

Please join us in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, **May 1** from **4-6 pm** for the premier of the inspiring film "Getting Real About Food and the Future" and a talk by **Christopher Bedford**, the nationally known film maker and advocate for local and sustainable food. This film is designed to help communities take the first steps towards true community sustainability. Also, meet neighbors who are promoting sustainability in our area. Donations appreciated.

And on **May 21** from **10 am-3 pm**, we welcome you to participate in a fun, interactive, and pivotal Community Based Initiative Workshop facilitated by **Steve DeGoosh**, Certified Permaculture Designer and Associate Professor of Sustainability at Northern Michigan University. The workshop is designed to engage the collective genius of community members to grow resiliency. This is the time to get involved in this exciting and powerful movement! Come learn more and share your vision as we co-create the future of our communities, transitioning from oil dependency to local resilience. Bring a dish to pass for a potluck lunch. Donations appreciated.

For more information about either event, please contact **Shelley**

Clean the Clam!

Who: Families and kids who want to make a difference in our own community

Where: **Lincoln Elementary School**, 125 Ayer Street

When: Saturday, **May 7** from **9-11 am** followed by hot dogs/refreshments at Kenwood Park

Why: To celebrate Earth Day and to spring clean our beautiful Clam River

Etc: Bring your "Swampers" and have some fun!

Questions? Contact **Candy**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Summary of 4/14 Meeting

Laura Topics discussed included:

- *Holy Week Activities
- *Dinner with Friends (list is still being circulated)
- *Postponement of Friendship Sunday (bring a friend to church) postponed to fall
- *Re-Member Mission trip - Oct. 7 - 14, 2011
- *Church Fundraisers
- *Decision to return Free Clinic Pancake Brunch to the last Saturday of the month for April and May and reassess the timing with Teams A and B over the summer.
- *The Center for Progressive Christianity and the UCC Identity Markers
- *Pastor Carol requested June 20 - 28 for vacation - board approved.
- *The next board meeting will be May 12, 2011 at 5:45

Treasurer's Report

Penny Phelps

Some people in our church family have expressed uneasiness about our focus on money over the past few months. The trustees are well aware that many of us struggle to meet our obligations and cannot easily increase our giving. It is never our intention to put pressure on folks; it's just that sometimes we are so discreet and low-key about finances that people are unaware of the state of our budget.

I will continue to outline our financial situation so you will know where we stand, but please do not think that the church ever equates level of giving with our need and desire to have everyone as part of this dynamic congregation.

Total 2011 Budget:	\$87,841
Monthly Need:	\$7,320 x 4 (Jan-Apr) = \$29,800
Income to date: Jan \$5,199 Feb \$5,177 Mar \$12,748 Apr \$5,887	
YTD Actual:	\$29,280
Difference:	(\$520)

You can see that after the great response in March, we retreated a bit in April. Please make every effort that you can to keep up with your pledges, and perhaps get creative with ideas to help the church fill the gap.

FUN!

Dinner with Friends

Dinner groups will be formed over the coming month, but there is still time to sign up! If you would like to gather with a small group of church members and friends to share a potluck meal in one of their homes, please add your name to the sign-up list at the back of the sanctuary or contact **Pastor Carol** as soon as possible.

BUILDING

A few weeks ago the church received a call from a man inquiring about our church bells. **Jack** returned that call and had a conversation with Eugene from Watervliet, NY. Eugene wanted to know if we had Meneely bells in our tower and could send photos of the bells and the church. He is part of a project tracing the whereabouts of bells made by Meneely & Co., Troy NY (now Watervliet). We do indeed have 3 Meneely bells in our tower. Apparently Meneely sent bells all around the world, but many have since been lost to fires, wars, and various other catastrophes. Jack emailed the photos and plans to stay in touch with the fellow "bell nut."



