

October 2010

The Tie That Binds

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Cadillac, Michigan

PASTOR REYNOLDS' RAP

Dear Friends,

My message to you this month will be abbreviated, as I am off to the United Northern Association's Fall Meeting in Manistee shortly and will be spending much of the weekend there up until Sunday worship and our Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting.

It was such a joy to bring a new ritual to life with you this past Sunday--our very own ceremony of stones and water/remembrance and reunion--and to share deeply of ourselves with one another. It is my hope that we will continue to craft resonant ways to make meaning together, and I invite you to share any ideas you might have with me and with one another. I had hoped to purify the water and use it for the October 3 Animal Blessing, but there wasn't quite enough for that purpose. The stones, on the other hand, have been stacked in cairns on the table at the back of the sanctuary, where they stand as solid, lasting symbols of our beloved community.

One of the many great things about belonging to our progressive UCC denomination is that there is so much room for creativity. And that is fitting, given that we are a congregation blessed with such an abundance of creative gifts. As co-ministers with one another and co-creators with God, we are each called to use our unique gifts for the glory of God and the healing of the world. This may sound like a vast, overwhelming undertaking but, truly, it only has to start with little steps. Not only that, but God does not call us to be or to do that which is onerous to us. No, God actually calls us to **follow our bliss and our deepest yearning**. Ministries that are grounded in joy and meaning have the capacity to generate energy and healing, to light a Holy Spirit fire that spreads person-by-person, community-by-community.

And so, as darkness descends early and we go inside, I invite each of us to sustain summer's warmth and light by seeking out, following, and sharing our bliss. May that bliss cultivate healing. And may the bliss and the healing alike point toward the glory of our God who is love, joy, healing, and wholeness.

Grace and Peace to each one of you, God's beloved,
Pastor Carol

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR OCTOBER 2010

October 3	Psalms 137	Free to Grieve
October 10	Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7	Planting Life
October 17	Luke 18:1-8	Ask Boldly, Live Justly
October 24	Luke 18:9-14	Just Worship
October 31	Luke 19:1-10	Transforming Love

WORSHIP

The Blessing of All Creatures Great & Small

Please join us for a pet blessing in honor of the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi on **Sunday, October 3 at 3 pm**. St. Francis of Assisi lived in the 12th century and is the patron saint of animals. The Feast of St. Francis is October 4 and to commemorate this day, many churches in the United States and the world hold special animal blessing ceremonies on or around this date.

You are invited to bring your creatures, great or small (or a picture, if you prefer) to be blessed and to spread the word to neighbors and friends and their animal companions.

Liturgists

You may have noticed that this past Sunday the Call to Worship and Unison Prayer were led by Robin Corbin instead of Pastor Carol. This marked the debut of what will become a regular part of our worship life. Going forward, the last Sunday of each month the assigned liturgist will be invited to not only read the scripture, but to lead the Call to Worship and Unison Prayer as well, and to sit up front during the service. (If you are a liturgist and don't feel comfortable with the additional duties or with sitting up front, please let Pastor Carol know, and adjustments can be made as needed.) Depending upon the response, we may eventually move to having liturgists perform these duties weekly.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

As our Sunday school teachers' lives grow increasingly full, we find ourselves with greater and greater need for additional volunteers to step forward and share in the responsibilities of this rewarding ministry. With just a few more bodies, each teacher would only need to lead one class per month.

Please consider whether you might feel called to help in this way. It's fun, and the curriculum is straightforward and easy to teach. Most importantly, our kids are great, and they are our future. To respond to this invitation, please contact **Melissa Thompson** at melissat@netonecom.net.

CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

We are pleased to announce that, at long last, we have resolved the issues with the church voicemail system. When you call, you will now be greeted by a human--not an automated--voice and clear instructions to press 0 to leave a message for the church office and 1 to leave a private message for Pastor Carol. (If you prefer, you may also leave Pastor Carol a private message on her cell phone.) Thank you for your patience and understanding as we worked with Charter Communications to gain access to the voicemail system, which turned out to be a far lengthier undertaking than any of us had anticipated.

MISSIONS

Our Mission Target for October: Neighbors in Need (UCC)

Penny Phelps

Have you been following the news about the residential community in California where property taxes have sky-rocketed while city officials have paid themselves VERY WELL? Just the other night the former mayor was arrested. He had been receiving over \$800,000 a year for his services. This community, like many in California, is made up of a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, folks not likely to get together to ask questions and demand answers. And the city officials counted on that.

Neighbors in Need is a special UCC offering that supports all sorts of grass-roots, community-based activism, from helping the unemployed find services, to promoting interfaith dialogues, to working with citizens like the ones in California to achieve social and economic justice.

By contributing to Neighbors in Need we can do more than talk the talk—we can walk the walk!

Re-Member

Our Re-Member mission trip participants will be on Pine Ridge Reservation October 1-7. Please hold them and the Oglala Lakota people whom they are serving in your prayers.

PASTORAL CARE

Pastor Carol

Hospitalizations and Other Pastoral Care Needs

As your pastor, I care very deeply about the physical, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being of each one of you, our church members and friends. I would like to be able to be present for you when you are ill, injured, grieving, or in crisis. But I'm unable to do that if I don't know about your situation. Nor do I always feel comfortable responding to third-hand information. When in doubt, please assume that I don't know. I invite you to reach out to me in times of need and to use my cell phone number during non-office hours. Thank you.

Prayer List

Please also contact me directly if you would like to have your name or the name of a loved one added to our weekly prayer list. In an effort to honor confidentiality and peoples' varying privacy preferences, I add names to the printed list and to the pastoral prayer only after I have received direct permission to do so.

Know that I am also happy to pray for you or your loved one privately, if you prefer. Either way, I invite you to reach out to me directly with your cares and concerns.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

There has been some interest in resuming Group Spiritual Direction through the church. Spiritual Direction is the attentive listening to those wanting to understand, deepen or refine their relationship to the sacred in their lives. Our gatherings involve silence, prayer, journaling and sharing insights with each other. The plan is to meet once a month for a two hour block of time.

WELCOME

New Members/Inquirers Class

Classes for inquirers and those interested in becoming members of First Congregational Church are scheduled for Sundays, October 17, 24, 31 at 9 am at the church. Those who decide they would like to join the church will be received into membership during worship on November 14 and celebrated during the annual Harvest Dinner after the service. If you are interested in attending, please contact Pastor Carol. If the meeting time is problematic, alternate arrangements may be possible.

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Feeding America

Around 2 pm on the 1st & 3rd Thursday of each month, a Feeding America truck arrives at the warehouse behind Goodwill. There are always a few people in charge. Volunteers can just show up to help. There is no pre-arranged schedule. Volunteers assist the driver in unloading the truck, stacking the food, arranging the distribution table, handing out the food, helping to carry out the food, and cleaning up. By about 3:30-4:00 pm the food is distributed, and the warehouse has been swept out.

Persons can obtain food by showing up & registering with their name. Then folks go through the line in order of arrival. Numbers average between 150 and 200. If food is left, people can go through the line again in the same order.

Munson Hospice and Palliative Care

Munson Hospice and Palliative Care is accepting applications for volunteers for the Fall Training Class. Volunteers are needed for respite care in the patient's home, extended care facility or adult foster care residence in Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Osceola, Otsego and Wexford Counties including the Cadillac area. All volunteers are trained through an independent self-study course in addition to a training class with other new volunteers in Traverse City, Cadillac, Gaylord, Manistee or Reed City.

Volunteer applicants must be at least 18, available for an interview prior to training, and willing to make a time commitment of at least 8 hours per month on a regular basis at Hospice House or 4 hours a week in the patient's home. Volunteer beauticians, massage and pet therapists are also needed. If you have experienced a significant loss through death in the last year and wish to volunteer with direct patient care or public relations activities, you are encouraged to wait at least one year before completing the application process.

For more information please contact Judy Goodrich, Munson Hospice and Palliative Care Volunteer Supervisor, at 231-935-8485 or 1-800-252-2065 extension 58485.

UNITED NORTHERN ASSOCIATION

Our UNA **sister church** for October is Portage Lake United Church, **Houghton**. Please lift up the congregation and its pastor, **Rev. Cynthia Method**, in prayer during the coming month.

A NOTE FROM SPERRY CLAYPOOL

I want to comment on the addition of promoting the ASIST program with a sign up sheet in our [September] church newsletter.

Suicide is a very serious problem. I have spent a lot of time and thought on this subject in the last 18 months since my grandson, Alex Harrison took his own life. Every year school age children commit suicide. Almost all have been severely bullied, at school, by known bullies and electronically by email, facebook and tweets.

Right in the first boxed in section of the ASIST promo was the statement " Most people considering suicide SHARE their distress and their intent." This is not the case with young people who are subject to constant, repeated bullying. They seldom share their grief with parents, teachers or even with their closest friends. They seldom make tentative unsuccessful suicide attempts as a call for help. They just reach the end of their rope and get the job done right now.

All suicide is a tragic event for the ones left behind. Adults with their full maturity recognize the finality of their actions. That's the reason why they quite often give clues to those around them. Young school age people, not in the same state of maturity and just sick and tired of being bullied, lied about and being excluded, end their lives to escape. They don't see that time may change their lives. So in summary if you want to do some good, rather than signing up for two days of sitting in a class I suggest you do the following.

1. If you see bullying try to stop it and if you can, report what you saw to someone, the parents of both the bullied and the parents of the bully. Let teachers and school administrators know what you saw. Get involved SEE IT. HEAR IT, STOP IT.
2. Call a state senator. Urge passage of the bill that only requires that school systems have a stated anti bullying policy as part of their program. Our legislature has been in limbo on this for ten years. You may find this a bit curious that a big sticking point has been language that made gender orientation bullying one of the factors that would not be allowed. I understand that a few homophobic legislators feel that this would encourage homosexuality. According to their thinking you could not bully over race, color, creed, weight or handicapped status but feel free to mock the gay kid. Dinosaurs still roam in our legislature.
3. Finally I am trying to spend some of my day wishing a good day to people I see as I move about, even complete strangers. Just last week I saw a young guy(14 or so) alone in a very crowded place, looking like he didn't have any anyone to buddy with. I said, "Hey man it sure is a nice day, how you doing?" He looked up from his game or phone and said "I'm fine how about you" His big smile made my whole morning.