



Christian Courier

First Christian Church of Minneapolis (Disciples of Christ)

January 17, 2009

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Upcoming Dates

Sunday Jan. 18
Elders Retreat

Tuesday, Jan. 20
Board Meeting

On the Web: (fccminneapolis.org)

- Bob's new blog
- Ron Anderson's travel letter
- FCC's Facebook page

Church Transformation emphasis to begin with "Unbinding the Gospel" series

Under the guidance of the church Elders and Pastor Bob, FCC is about to embark on a year-long journey of spiritual development in an emphasis called *Unbinding the Gospel*.

This approach to church transformation was developed by Martha "Gay" Reese, a Disciples pastor who, under the auspices of a Lilly Endowment Grant, studied over 1200 mainline Protestant churches to find out what was working in evangelism.

Reese discovered that churches who had a strong foundation in prayer and in knowing and sharing one's individual faith-story had a strong witness to their communities. Knowing your own relationship with God, and being able to share the story of that relationship, translates into effective evangelism.

Reese, on the basis of that study, developed a strategy for "Unbinding the Gospel" in peoples' lives and congregational ministry.

It comes in the form of three study manuals for congregations: *Unbinding the Gospel*, for small-group leaders, *Unbinding Your Church*, for church leadership, and *Unbinding Your Heart*, which is a devotional guide for congregational members.

The strategy involves the development of small groups for spiritual sharing using *Unbinding the Gospel*, followed by more small groups for

spiritual sharing using *Unbinding Your Heart*, guided by the leadership guide of *Unbinding Your Church*.

In addition, we'll be working with and sharing with other congregations (at this point, four United Methodist churches), who are doing the same thing.

Beginning sometime in February, we'll be establishing three small groups, each consisting of 6 - 10 people, who are willing to work with daily devotions and study for a period of at least eight weeks.

This will be followed by a multi-congregational gathering in late-spring/early-summer, followed then by everybody in the congregation, from 7th grade on up, plus others in the community, participating in what's called an "Event" – a similar time of small group study, prayer, and faith-story sharing. The last will happen in the fall.

We ask for prayers to start NOW for God's Spirit to "unbind" our souls and equip the ministry of FCC Minneapolis.

Watkins to give Inauguration Sermon

Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), has been asked by the Obama Inaugural Committee to give the sermon at the national prayer service the day after the inauguration.

The service should be carried live on national television, so tune this historical moment.



A Look at the Brite Side

“A Thoughtful Church . . .” or something else?

Shortly after I arrived here last February and got to know you a bit, I began looking for a phrase that could serve as a one-line description of who we are as a congregation. Part of it is a matter of marketing: What describes us accurately to the outside world? And part of it is matter of defining who we are to ourselves: What is our distinctive way of relating to one another, where we are, and what we’re doing in community and ministry?

The phrase I came up with was: “A Thoughtful Church in the Heart of the Cities.” (Whether that was the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or simply a matter of trying to get a handle on who FCC is, I haven’t a clue.) Since that time of origination and my men-

tion of it at a meeting of the Board, we’ve put the phrase on our newsletter, and added it to our new website.

What hasn’t occurred, however, is any official notice, sanction, or agreement on whether or not that is an acceptable phrase of self-description. So I’d like to ask y’all: What do YOU think? Please let me know, and let church leadership know. It seems to me that “thoughtfulness” is an appropriate adjective for FCC; we are in the heart of the Twin Cities (or at least Minneapolis), but does all of this come together for how YOU see First Christian Church?

I’d like to see YOU Sunday.
Bob

“What describes us accurately to the outside world?”

In our prayers

Gracious God, we lift up these persons in our prayers, asking the blessing of your Grace and outpouring of your Love upon them.

Enid Griffin, now in therapy after her fall; **Shirley Draine**, recovering from surgery on her wrist; **Jay Hillested’s mother** who quickly recovered from a heart attack; Nancy Curry and family, grieving the loss of Nancy’s aunt; **Kathy Merkel’s** brother and family; **Ann Wolverton’s** brother-in-law; **children, families and soldiers** suffering the effects of war in Gaza; **people out of work** or losing their homes in this difficult economy; **all those serving in armed services** around the world, and their families at home who wait their return; **homebound members** of FCC including **Phyllis Dunlap** and **Velma Fancher**; **this congregation**, that we may discern God’s will for us now and in the future; **leaders of our country**, especially president-elect **Barack Obama** for safety, wisdom and guidance

Art Project combines two loves for Deb Murphy

The Three Kings appeared on one of First Christian Church's windows Epiphany Sunday (Jan. 4), one more colorful window decoration among many that Deb Murphy designed and created as a "Christmas card for the neighborhood" this Christmas season.

Deb's window banner project grew out of an assignment for a class she is taking called Evangelism Through Arts. The church board gave her some financial backing for materials (she came in under budget), and 17 people from the congregation helped Deb prepare the various banners and watercolor scenes that

graced windows all around the building.

"Some people came more than once, and everyone kept having fun cutting and pasting and gluing," said Deb.

Deb is studying for a Master of Arts in Theology and Art (MATA) at United Theological Seminary. She is about one and a half years into this five year program, which she is pursuing part time while she continues her regular work in the costume department at the Guthrie Theater.

A lifelong Disciple and a "preacher's kid," Deb has always had two abiding interests: the church and the arts. This master's program

has given her an opportunity to balance these two passions.

The masters program does not lead to ordination, but it does require Deb to take a number of traditional seminary classes. Programs like United Seminary's MATA program, with its emphasis on how to use fabrics or textiles or drama to enhance sacred space, are relatively new around the country and, according to Deb, United's is one of the best.

Deb recently created some banners for her brother's church in California and is hoping to create more art to enhance FCC's Lenten and Easter season



Deb Murphy



Week of Compassion coming in February

This year's annual Week of Compassion offerings will be received Feb. 15 and 22.

Ron and Judy Anderson, FCC members currently on the road doing mission projects, wrote about Week of Compassion in a recent email:

"In the past to me it has been just another offering envelope, God's work going somewhere, but it was hard to put a face on it.

"We saw and met the future own-

ers of the two Habitat homes we built. Week of Compassion paid for 1/2 the cost of the materials that went into those homes -- \$50,000.00. They got more bang for the buck as a lot of the construction cost was offset by the volunteer labor that we provided.

"Judy and I have seen first hand the good that this money does. I believe that with Week of Compassion we are on the

right track.

"Thanks, and God bless everyone. Love, Ron"

Give generously to Week of Compassion

FCC News in Brief

Cory White transfers membership to FCC



Cory White transferred his membership from Casa View Christian Church in Dallas to FCC, Minneapolis on Sunday, Jan. 11.

Cory moved to the Twin Cities last month, and works for St. Jude Medical. Welcome. Cory!

Bradys called to Interim Pastor position

Mike Brady has accepted a call from Central Christian Church in Jefferson, Iowa, to serve as their Interim Minister starting Feb. 1

Mike expects the post to last for 12 months or less. Central Christian is Mike's home church; his father's memorial service was held there in December.

"I had 2009 all laid out," Mike said. "I had my own plans – and then God surprised me!"

Janice and Mike, who served as co-chairs of the Elders during 2008, will spend most of their time in Iowa, but will be back to the Twin Cities areas frequently.

Foodshelf note: Cash or checks for the Groveland Foodshelf can always be left in the worship offering plates. Checks can be written to First Christian Church, with "For Foodshelf" written on the memo line.

Warm Saturdays. The furnace blowers must be on 10 to 12 hours before the building gets warm. So in order to have heat on Sunday mornings, the blowers are not turned off on

Friday evening when the staff leaves. Don't be surprised to find a building warm on a Saturday even when no one is around. It's the only way not to shiver on Sunday morning!

Bob's Blog: Rev. Bob Brite has a new blog linked to FCC's newly-rebuilt webpage. "Blog" is short for "web log," a journal, diary or opinion column which is published on the internet. Find the link on FCC's webpage, fccminneapolis.org.

Leadership and Budget approved at annual meeting

Congregation members attending the annual meeting on Jan. 11 voted to accept the slate of new leadership positions presented by the nominating committee and to accept the 2009 budget as presented by the Finance committee.

New trustees elected were Karen Kandik and Chris Morton.

New Diaconate members are Elaine Tucker, Mike Morgan, Kip Barker, Phil Kinney, Kathy Hintz, Pat Dunlop, Julie Andrix, Karen Plantikow and Bobbi Hall.

New to 2009 Board of Elders are Arlene Hillestad, Jay Hillestad, Dean Creighton, Barb Creighton, Ann Wolverton, Skip Wolverton, Val Dunham and Martha Harris.

Complete figures from the 2009 budget will be published in the next issue of Christian Courier.



Tristan Joel Whitaker was dedicated during worship on Jan. 4. Parents Becky and David and brother Aiden joined Rev. Brite in the service.

Rooms are “works in progress” as FCC building remodels

Have you peeked in any doors along the hallways at First Christian lately? If you have, you would have seen the four “works in progress” rooms that are in various stages of completion:

- The new youth room at the end of the hall next to the steps has colorful new walls, which were painted by the youth during a lock-in over the holidays. Once the paintbrushes and drop cloths are put away, this room is ready for use.
- The new library room, formerly a pastor’s office, has shelves installed and loaded with books. The room will be ready for readers as soon as boxes and miscellaneous furniture are moved
- The new “gathering room,” formerly the old library room, has a fresh coat of paint and, now that a wall has been removed, more space. It should be able to hold close to 70 people for large group meetings and even dinners once it is completed. Asbestos tile was exposed when some carpeting was taken up, so progress on the room is temporarily delayed until subcontractors come in to take up the tile. Mike Morgan, Bob Brite, Ron Anderson, Max Hurlocker



Wesley Creighton and Zack Hesano liven up the youth room with color during recent lock-in. Photo by Serena Carlson

and Skip Wolverton contributed many “man hours” (literally!) to this remodeling project.

- The new Hearthstone classroom is also in a “holding pattern,” waiting for bids for a handicapped bathroom addition. Carpet will not be laid until construction plans are finalized. The room is being used for meetings and church school, even without all its décor.

Congregational forum discusses replacing pews with “modular seating”

Congregation members considered the possibility of replacing sanctuary pews with moveable chairs at a congregational forum held Jan. 11 following the annual meeting.

Glen Nelson from the Gunder Church Furniture Corporation showed two samples, one chair and one bench, and Board Chair Pat

Dunlap moderated a lively discussion about advantages and possible drawbacks of such a change.

Reasons people raised for switching from pews to chairs included

- increasing space flexibility for a variety of worship settings and activities,
- investing in furniture that would move to a new loca-

tion

- increasing a sense of warmth and connection in among worshipers

Discussions will continue and the Board will consider action in the near future.

People with ideas and opinions on pews vs chairs should contact Ann Wolverton, Worship Chair Pat Dunlap, or Rev. Brite.

Sundays at First Christian Church

Worship at 10:30 am
 Church School Classes, 9:15 am
 Fellowship Hour, 11:30 am

This Week at FCC

Sunday, Jan. 18

FOOD PANTRY SUNDAY

Elders Meeting (Hearthstone Rm), 12 n
 Diaconate Meeting (Sanctuary) 12 n

Monday, Jan. 19

Martin Luther King Jr. Day (church office closed)
 Whittier celebration, 1-3 pm, Whittier Park, 26th and Grand Av.

Tuesday, Jan 20

Church Board, 7 pm

Wednesday, Jan. 21

Bell Choir 6:30pm
 Chancel Choir 7:45pm

Saturday, Jan. 24

Men's Group 9 am

Next Week at FCC

Sunday, Jan. 25

LAITY SUNDAY:

Panel of Lay People share faith stories during worship
 St. Stephens group meeting, 12.n (Hearthstone room)

Monday, Jan. 26 – Wednesday, Jan. 28

Minister's Institute, Newton, IA

Wednesday, Jan 28

Bell Choir 6:30pm
 Chancel Choir 7:45pm

Saturday, Jan. 31

Men's Group 9 am

Lectionary Reflections

Selected Lectionary Verse

And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people."

Mark 1: 17

Reflection:

In the midst of our everyday lives, God breaks in. This is the good news: we are called each day anew to follow Jesus.

Prayer:

God, we know you keep your promises. Help us to remember this while we answer the call to follow Jesus. Amen

from Disciplines 2009, p. 37

*Celebrating Gods Presence,
 Serving God's People*

Ministry Team

All Members of the Congregation

Robert Brite, Interim Minister

Dennis Sanders, Minister of Diversity and Mission

Chris Wogaman, Office Manager

Bill Stump, Director of Music

Rick Bowman, Building Manager

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Christian Courier is published bi-weekly. Send items and ideas to church office or to Martha Harris

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Jan. 23 for next issue.

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Address Correction Requested