



# Christian Courier

First Christian Church of Minneapolis (Disciples of Christ)

February 28, 2009



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## Events in Lent

- Unbinding the Gospel Study and Prayer Groups each week
- Sunday morning Lenten prayer circle
- Women's Lenten Brunch, March 21
- Feed My Starving Children service night, March 30

## Making Every March Sunday a Food Sunday

*"True evangelical faith...cannot lie dormant; it clothes the naked, it feeds the hungry, it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute, it serves those that harm it, it binds up that which is wounded, it has become all things to all creatures."*

*~ Menno Simons, Founder of the Mennonites*

We hear the news every day: job losses at this or that company. People who made enough to put food on the table are now finding themselves not able to do what many of us do every week without thinking: go to the supermarket and buy a week's worth of groceries.

Hunger was a problem in Minnesota during the "fat" years when the economy was doing well. It's an even bigger problem now during the "lean" times.

First Christian has had a long tradition in trying to combat hunger. We have helped served meals to the homeless at St. Stephen's Shelter and packed food for the hungry at Feed My Starving Children.

We recently revived Food Pantry Sundays on the Third Sunday of the month. The donated items and cash donations go to support Groveland Emergency Foodshelf a ministry that First has supported for nearly 30 years. Groveland Emergency Food Shelf, located in at Plymouth Congregational Church, is part of a five-

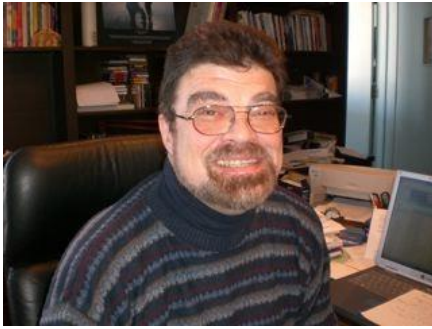
church effort to feed food-insecure youth and adults. Per month, the Food Shelf sees about 1,000 people and hands out 25,000 pounds of food. It provides three to five days of food at a time, an emergency supply. Groveland recently started Groveland Food for Youth which serves homeless and transitional youth.

Beginning March 1, we will take part in the March Campaign for Minnesota FoodShare. Minnesota FoodShare is a statewide drive to help combat hunger in our state by supporting local foodshelves that are lifelines to those in need of food. During the month of March, **every Sunday is Food Pantry Sunday**. Please consider bringing your non-perishable food items every Sunday during March.

Don't have time to go to the supermarket and buy groceries? No problem: we will accept cash donations. The thing is, Groveland can buy more with a \$25 donation that any of us could. The monetary goal for the month of March is \$100. I think we can not only make that goal, but exceed it. You can give cash donations two ways. The first is to give during offering time. You can write a check made out to First Christian Church and place Food Pantry on the Memo line. If you have some spare change you would like to get rid of, consider dropping it in the basket located in the narthex.

As a congregation in the heart of the city, let us be Christ to those dealing with hunger.

*Dennis Sanders, Associate Minister*



Pastor Bob Brite

## A Look at the Brite Side

### Enhancing our Journey with the Tools of Lent

It was a good Dixieland service yesterday for Fat (or Shrove) Sunday, and a fine Anniversary Dinner, and we're now looking at entering the season of Lent.

Disciples' observance of the liturgical calendar is a relatively new thing in our history over the last 30-40 years or so.

Being a non-doctrinal church based on Biblical tradition, other traditions of other churches are not something to which we've paid a lot of attention.

But the tradition of Lent is based on the Biblical theme of following Jesus on the journey to the Cross and Resurrection and, as such, it's a helpful tool; observing Ash Wednesday, and following Lenten observances (such as using a

quieter worship mode, staying away from "Alleluia" in music and liturgy, etc.) are all tools for reflection.

What was it like for Jesus to journey to the Cross? And what are we to take, as followers of Jesus, as we journey with Him?

Rugged Biblical individualists that we Disciples are, we sometimes close our minds, or think that such tools don't relate to us (or we don't relate to them). A tool is just a tool, however; it can be useful or useless, depending on the mind of the user.

It is my hope that the tool of Lent is a useful one for us, helping to enhance our Christian journey.

I'd like to see YOU on Sunday,

Bob

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*What was it like for Jesus to journey to the Cross? And what are we to take, as followers of Jesus, as we journey with Him?*

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### 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.*

We pray for all individuals and families experiencing the hardships of this economic crisis, including the brothers of **Warren Westphal** and **Jay Hillestad** and their families; in thanksgiving for the joy of jazz, especially the Dixieland jazz of the **Mouldy Figs**; in concern for former pastor **Rev. Mary Ann Glover** as she undergoes a biopsy; for patience and understanding as we begin our ecumenical partnership with Tiempo Nuevo and Spirit of St. Stephens Community; for all our home-bound members including **Lois Cobbs** and **Velma Fancher**.

## Using Rev. Gomes' "Three S's" – Silence, Study, Service – as a Lenten Practice

Growing up as I did on the edge of the Bible Belt in Southern Illinois, I didn't know much about Lent when I was young. I knew my Catholic girlfriends complained about not eating chocolate before Easter, but I didn't really understand why they seemed to have to give up something for a few weeks before Easter.

It was not until much later in life that I began to have more awareness of the cycles of the church year and how Lent fit into this ancient scheme. Following the lectionary led me year in and year out through the scriptures for the seasons of the church -- Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Ordinary time. Revisiting familiar stories and rethinking them through changes in the world and in my own life over the years has helped my faith to grow.

The Ash Wednesday services we used to share with St. Stephens years ago prompted me to try observing Lent. Since then I've tried various practices, some years giving up a special treat like my girlfriends used to do, and other years choosing a theological book to read or committing to some small activity such as weekly food shelf donations during the season.

In 2005 I was in Boston for Palm Sunday, and my daughter Laurie and I went to service at Harvard Memorial Church, where I picked up a little pamphlet written by the Harvard's minister, Rev. Peter J. Gomes,



Rev. Peter J. Gomes called "How to Keep a Good Lent."

In this pamphlet, he sets out a very simple Lenten discipline based on the three S' of Silence, Study, and Service:

- **Silence:** clearing your head in a time of absolute silence, which is "not simply the absence of sound but also the presence of that which sound ordinarily obscures."
- **Study:** reading the Bible or a book of reflection for "some ordered reflection in which your mind is engaged on a regular basis."
- **Service:** the communal or civic dimension of Lent for good works and public charity, "lest you become too private and self-absorbed."

Gomes suggests setting aside 15 minutes a day once a week for each of these three disciplines, for example Mondays for study, Wednesday for silence, Fridays for service. On the alternate days, he suggests journal writing or some other type of reflection

to chart your journey through these 40 days.

He also reminds readers that, as always, Sundays represent Sabbath – a rest from the physical labor and also the spiritual labor of Lent.

The Lenten journey has begun. I've made my plan, adopting some of Rev. Gomes' advice and also, like others here at FCC this year, using the forty-day prayer journal from *Unbinding the Gospel*. I'll be interested to hear what your Lenten experience is and hope that our Lenten experience will make a difference in our lives and in the life of our church.

*Martha Harris, Elder and newsletter editor*

### *Sunday Lenten prayer circle*

The Worship Committee is sponsoring a Sunday morning prayer circle during Lent. Anyone interested in a time of silent and communal prayer based on Biblical texts is invited to participate.

The prayer circle will meet from 9:30 to 10:00 am in the Narthex library corner each Sunday during Lent. Come as you can, and as you are.

Also, watch for information in future Courier issues about a Maundy Thursday prayer chain.

## March 2009 Calendar

<p>Regular Sunday Schedule: 9:15 Church School Classes 10:30 Worship 11:45 Fellowship Time in Lounge</p>				<p>Minnesota FoodShare Month – Every Sunday is Food Pantry Sunday</p>			
1 9:30 Lenten Prayer Circle	2 -Mikaharu Kai (FH) -8 pm AA (FH)	3 7 pm Worship Committee	4 9 am Nikkei Group (FH) 6:30pm Bell Choir 7:45 pm Chancel Choir	5	6	7 9 am- Men's Group 9 am- St. Ste- phen's Lenten Retreat (FH)	
8 9:30 Lenten Prayer Circle  <b>Daylight Savings Time</b>	9 Mikaharu Kai (FH) 8 pm AA	10 7 pm- Property Committee Meeting	11 5:30pm Finance Committee 6:30pm Bell Choir 7:45pm Chancel Choir District 18A (FH)	12 7 pm North Da- kota State Uni- versity Choir Concert (sanct- uary)	13 7:30 pm Piano & Vocal Recital	14 9 am- Men's Group	
15 9:30 Lenten Prayer Circle 12 n - Elders Meeting	16 Mikaharu Kai (FH) 8 pm AA	17 9 am Mpls Re- tired Teachers <b>7 pm Board Meeting</b>	18 9 am—Nikkei (FH) 6:30 pm Bell Choir 7:45 pm Chancel Choir	19	20 6:30 pm Christian League	21 9 am- Men's Group 10 am <b>Women's Ministry Len- ten Brunch</b>	
22 9:30 Lenten Prayer Circle	23 Mikaharu Kai (FH) 7 pm Book Group 8 pm AA	24	25	26	27	28 9 am- Men's Group	
29 9:30 Lenten Prayer Circle	30 Mikaharu Kai (FHM) 8 pm AA 6:30 FMSC Service event	31	<b>Unbinding the Gospel Prayer / Study Groups during March:</b> Sunday morning at 9 am Wednesday evenings at 6 pm Saturday mornings , time TBN				

	Elders	Worship Leader	Children's Time	Bus Driver	Greeters	Diaconate
Mar. 1	Valerie Dunham Earl Dunham	Kathy Hintz	Dennis Sanders	Mike Hesano 612-645-6758	Dean and Barb Creighton	Team 2 Kathy Hintz
Mar. 8	Tom Curry Garry Hesser	Sandy Mor- gan	Elaine Tucker	Garry Hesser 612-721-4905	David Grant Ardie Armstrong	Team 2
Mar. 15	Garry Hesser Tom Curry	TBN	Bob Brite	Mike Morgan 612-926-9384	Karen Kandik	Team 2
Mar. 22	Martha Harris Karen Kandik	Garry Hesser	Steve Rusinak	Mike Hesano	Valerie Dunham	Team 2
Mar. 29	Karen Kandik Martha Harris	Lu Griffin		Mike Morgan	Martha Harris	Team 2



**The Mouldy Figs** entertained at the Anniversary Dinner on Feb. 22, after providing the music for the Fat Sunday Worship.

## Feb. Board Meeting hears Motions on Year-end Costs, Coffee and St. Stephen's

At the monthly meeting of the church Board, held on Feb. 17, several motions were presented, discussed and voted on, including the following:

- 1) Motion passed to transfer \$24,000 from the funds from the property sale to cover the year-end closing costs incurred by the Core Committee.
- 2) Motion passed to require all groups that use FCC facilities to provide their own coffee making supplies, including pots, paper products, and coffee.

3) Motion passed to accept the request from Spirit of St. Stephen's Community to hold their worship services in the Fellowship Hall at 9:00 am, preceding the Tiempo Nuevo service, and to use the Gathering Room for their post-service fellowship time.

The Board further agreed to try this arrangement for three months, with a careful review after one month to try to solve any problems may arise from this new schedule.

### *Something to Consider: serving in small ways*

Are you looking for an easy, "behind the scenes" way to help serve your church?

We're in need of people to help with the following jobs:

- Making sure lights get turned on and off each Sunday (Sanctuary, hallways)
- Keeping the oil candles on the communion table filled and clean.
- Setting out and putting away the hearing receivers.

You are welcome to volunteer for any of these things on a regular basis or even just once! We're happy to have you for whatever time you're willing to give. Please contact Becki Whitaker (becki@sporga.net, 651-686-6571) if you are willing to help or have any questions. Thanks!

### **NDSU Choir Concert set for March 12 at FCC**

The Concert Choir from North Dakota State University will perform in FCC's sanctuary on Thursday, Mar. 12 at 7:30.

This concert of one of eight performances the choir will present in the upper Midwest during March. Dr. Jo Miller directs the choir.

The complete concert schedule can be found at [http://www.ndsu.edu/finearts/music/ensembles/concert\\_choir.html](http://www.ndsu.edu/finearts/music/ensembles/concert_choir.html)

## Bi-Weekly Calendar

### 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, Mar. 1

Lenten Prayer Group 9:30 am

##### Tuesday, Mar. 3

Worship Committee 7 pm

##### Wednesday, Mar. 4

Nikkei 9 am  
 Unbinding the Gospel 6 pm  
 Bell Choir 6:30pm  
 Chancel Choir 7:45pm

##### Friday, Mar. 6

--Article deadline for next Courier--

##### Saturday, Mar. 7

Men's Group 9 am  
 Unbinding the Gospel Time TBA

#### Next Week at FCC

##### Sunday, Mar. 8

Lenten Prayer Group 9:30 am

##### Monday, Mar. 9

Carter Circle@ FCC 7 pm

##### Tuesday, Mar. 10

Property Committee 7 pm

##### Wednesday, Mar. 11

Finance Committee 5:30 pm  
 Unbinding the Gospel 6 pm  
 Bell Choir 6:30pm  
 Chancel Choir 7:45pm

##### Thursday, Mar. 12

NDSU Choir Concert 7 pm

##### Saturday, Mar. 14

Men's Group 9 am  
 Unbinding the Gospel Time TBA

## Reflections on the Word

*From lectionary texts for First Sunday in Lent, March 1*

*Mark 1: 10-11:* And just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

*Reflection:* The mysterious presence of God is here symbolized as a dove, reminding us of God's gentle, indestructible, and powerful gift of grace, and of God's promise to be with us as we fulfill the missions of our lives.

*Prayer:* O God, how I want you to be pleased with me! Please help me to rely on you, your promises, and your grace. Amen.

*from Disciplines 2009, p. 71*

*A Thoughtful Church in the  
 Heart of the City*

### Ministry Team

**All Members of the Congregation**

**Robert Brite**, Interim Minister

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 and Mission

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**Bill Stump**, Director of Music

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