

A JOYFUL NOISE!

December 2011

Two months ago, I began sharing with you my experiences this summer as a voting delegate at the I don't know how we did it, but we did it again! It's December, and 2011 is winding to a close. The hustle and bustle of the season is upon us, moving our already hectic schedules into warp drive! Maybe you are already done with your Christmas shopping and/or annual Christmas card/letter writing campaign, maybe you are just now thinking about it, or maybe that's something you wait until the last minute to do. Whatever your tradition, it's time for Christmas!!

Except, it isn't. Radio stations tell us that it is. Television commercials, and stores tell us that it is. And even though stores are opening for Christmas sales before Thanksgiving Day is even over, it isn't Christmas time yet. (And I'm not saying this because as of yet we have not accumulated any snow!)

We have instead entered the season of Advent. This is the season of waiting. We are waiting with expectation and hope for the birth of the Christ child. This is a truly wonderful time of the year, not just because of our excitement to be with family and continue our long-standing traditions, but because this is one of the few times during the year that the secular world becomes very interested in the traditions of the sacred.

The closer we move toward Christmas Eve, the more the secular world thinks about gift-giving and maybe even thinking a bit about going to church. This is a perfect time to talk with our friends and neighbors, co-workers and classmates when they bring up the subject of Christmas to tell them that actually this is Advent. It will probably stop them for a moment while they ponder what you are saying, that Christmas is on the 25th of December, and that now we are prayerfully waiting. This is similar to our waiting in Lent for the miracle of Easter. Many people would rather skip to the end for the celebration than wait, yet as Christians, this is part of our story.

Thankfully, this is not all of our story. We do not just wait, but we sing hymns, pray, give, and be together in fellowship. This year we will continue our church traditions of decorating the sanctuary, working with our children for the Advent Workshop on Sunday, December 4, gathering for our annual Christmas pageant on Sunday, December 18, and gathering for Christmas Eve family worship at 5pm or the late service at 11pm. This year, we will also celebrate the beginning of a new tradition. We will gather in a Live Nativity, in a stable built by Sonny Rodriguez. We will wear costumes and position ourselves like Mary, Joseph, the angels, the wise men, and other favorite characters and become a reminder to all who drive by on US 31 who we are and that we are waiting for Christmas. Look for us on Saturday, December 17 from 5 - 7pm and on Sunday, December 18 from 1 to 3pm. Tell your friends to drive by. Join us outside, or help warm us up with refreshments inside.

Let us take this wonderful opportunity to share with the people we all know who could use the support of our loving community by inviting them to wait with us and to join us on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day for worship. May the peace of Christ be with you.

Pastor Dan Furman

Poinsettias

'Tis the season to order poinsettias for the sanctuary. Please submit your orders no later than Sunday, December 11th. You may call the church office or email: who you wish to provide a poinsettia in memory of, or in honor of, and how you would like your name printed in the Christmas Eve bulletin. Checks for \$15 may be made out to First Congregational UCC with poinsettia in the memo section. Emails may be sent to secretary@benzoniacongregational.org.



News from the Deacons

This is such a special time of year when we look forward to the birth of baby Jesus. In our church we have many traditions to prepare us for this. We will have our Advent Workshop on December 4th beginning at 9:00 a.m. This is a special time for our youth to make all kinds of crafts to decorate their homes. The older youth and adults will be decorating the church at this time. After worship, a delicious brunch will be served by Circle 1. Please join us for this wonderful tradition.

Our next annual event is our Cookie Walk. This will take place on December 18th right after church. Let the women (and men) of our church do the baking and candy making for you. The youth of our church will also be presenting their Christmas Program that day during worship. Don't miss this special day.

The Deacons are trying a new tradition this year. We will have a "Live Nativity" on the US 31 side of the church on Saturday, December 17th from 5 - 7 p.m. and Sunday, December 18th from 1 - 3 p.m. This is something new and we hope it will reach out to our community and bring the true meaning of Christmas to their hearts. Sonny Rodriguez has been busy working on the stable and now we need costumes. If anyone has extra material or patterns they don't need, we could use them. Also, if you can sew, we need your help! We are meeting at the church on Monday, December 5th at 10:00 a.m. to get to work, please join us.

We also will need volunteers to play the parts of Mary, Joseph, shepherds, angels and the three wise men. There is a sign up sheet on the bulletin board. Please join us for this special ministry.

Our Christmas Eve services will be held at 5:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. Please celebrate the birth of Jesus with us.

Women's Fellowship News

Women's Fellowship will meet at the church on December 7 at 1:00. Circle IV is in charge. Everyone is welcome to join us. We hope to have the kitchen back together by then. Plans have been made to have the old dishwasher removed. The Executive Board meets at noon on December 7, just before the general meeting. Circles will not meet in December.

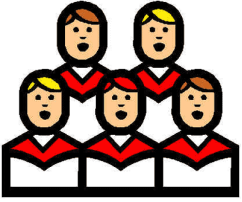
Annual Advent Workshop

This year our Advent Workshop will take place on Sunday, December 4, at 9:00 a.m. We need people to share quick, simple crafts with children. A brunch will be served after the worship service. If you can help with this project, please contact Chris Gehring at 882-4653.

Annual Cookie Walk

This year our Cookie Walk will take place on Sunday, December 18. If you can contribute cookies, we would like eight dozen, but we will welcome any amount that you can make. We also would like small loaves of holiday bread, fruit cakes and candies like fudge, caramels and peanut brittle. Please contact Chris Stone at 882-5205.

Christmas Concert



Once again, our church will be hosting the annual Christmas Concert presented by Benzie County Community Chorus on December 10 at 3:00. Women's Fellowship will provide refreshments following the program. This is a wonderful way to get into the spirit of the holidays.

Mission:1

On Sunday, September 4, Pastor Dan issued a series of challenges to our congregation. The national office of the United Church of Christ is encouraging all churches to participate in the Mission 1 campaign to promote mission in a special way by November 11, 2011 or 11/11/11.

Pastor Dan challenged the church to:

- 1) collect 111 items of food for BACN. This goal has been met and exceeded. Our new goal was 1,111 items of food. By 11/11/11 we had collected and donated **938 items of food!!**
- 2) Donate 111 collective hours of volunteer service anywhere in our communities. This goal has been met and exceeded. Our new goal was 1,111 hours donated. By 11/11/11/ our church members donated **988 hours!!**
- 3) Collect \$1,111 to Benzie Home Health Care. By 11/11/11 our church donated nearly **\$1.400!!**

Thank you for all you have done for our community. It is amazing what we can do!

BIG Sunday

As has become our tradition, the first Sunday of the month is Bring In Groceries Sunday. It is also the Sunday we celebrate communion and recognize birthdays and anniversaries after worship.

This year, we are adding an ACE to BIG SUNDAY: Adult Christian Education at 9am. In October, we welcomed four Muslims from the Grand Rapids area for our ACE hour. On November 6, Kay Bond, the Executive Director of BACN, came to share what was happening and to tell us what their needs are. As we will be celebrating with our Advent Workshop on December 4, and BIG Sunday in January is New Year's Day, there will be **no** Adult Christian Education until February.

Mission Trip

Our Christian World Service Board is exploring the concept of a summer 2012 mission trip to Missouri. This will be an intergenerational experience. All ages are welcome. Part of the trip will be educational with stops at Eden Theological Seminary a UCC institution, and visiting the Missouri Mid-South Conference office in St. Louis. Part of the trip will be tourism with stops to tour the St. Louis Arch and other sites. Part of the trip will be mission to help the communities that suffered tornado devastation in Joplin, Missouri. Tentative dates are June 17 - 23, 2012. If you are interested, please speak with Ruth Catton or Pastor Dan.

Memorial Garden

On the north side of our church property is a beautiful memorial garden for members and friends of the church who would like their cremated ashes interred on our sacred grounds. For \$250, you may reserve a one-square foot plot. That price includes future opening and closing as well as a memorial plaque to be placed on the stone located along the walkway. Please speak with Pastor Dan for more information. Donations for perpetual care are also welcomed.

What's New in the Library

God is in the Manger...these devotions from Dietrich Bonhoefer, one of the most well-known theologians of the twentieth century, will guide and inspire you as you move thematically through the weeks of Advent and Christmas. (Librarians note: there are several Advent-Christmas books available in the library; you are welcome to check one out for the whole season)

When the Emperor was Divine...this actually was the first novel written by Otsuka, I shelved the second to put the tale in chronological order. This novel carries on the story from when Mother reads a sign in a post office window and returns home to matter-of-factly begin packing the families belongings. In the same sparse, unsentimental language of the previous novel, we learn of their life in the internment camp in Utah and their reception when they returned home at the end of the war.

Faithful Unto Death...closer to home & a some 40 years earlier we read the fictionalized tale of Benzonia's first murder/suicide. The decision is up to you, the reader. Author Becky Thacker has taken an 1894 death in her family to write a historical mystery novel. You may be bogged down in places, but read on to the end...it may leave you with more questions than answers! Thank you, Pastor Dan, for the donation.

When the Morning Comes (2) and When the Soul Mends (3)...ready to read the continuing story of Hannah, Paul, Sarah and the rest of their Amish community? Well, here they are, books 2 and 3! Thank you, Ann Nordbeck for donating this delightful series.

Mosque...as a follow-up to the recent visit of the four Islamic people, it was suggested that this book by David Macaulay would be a good addition to the library. As he has done in several previous books, Macaulay's illustrations and text allow the reader to follow through the design & construction of the typical mosque of the late sixteenth century. The book is classified as 'young adult and up'...Adults, don't be put off, it is thoroughly enjoyable.

Sunday School Activities

For the Project One (11-11-11), everyone showed up at the Church on November 12th to make cookies for the Bake Sale after church on November 13th. The kids not only got to work in the kitchen – some played games, others played outside. Bake Sale on the 13th was a great success. We doubled our goal of \$111.11- and actually brought in \$222.22. This money will be donated to Benzie Home Health Care along with the rest of the Project One donations.

Other activities included Trick or Treat for Unicef (over \$209 was raised). Kids had lots of fun at the Fall Festival helping to make apple cider and donuts. Hope everyone enjoyed the Youth Bell Choir last week. Sometimes, the melody might be a little hard to follow but you can't beat the enthusiasm. We will be working on another presentation for January.

Coming up: The Advent Workshop and the Christmas Pageant. Sunday School and Youth will be providing a SOUP LUNCH at the Community House for the Annual Christmas Craft Show on December 3rd. Last year's Craft Show was well worth attending – hope you have time to stop in.

Just so you know, all is not fun and games. We read and talk about at least one Scripture Lesson each week. Throughout the fall, we have also focused on having our students become more familiar with and learning the Lords Prayer.

GOOD NEWS!! We are building our Sunday School Staff. Carolina Jones brings great ideas and has been so helpful. Penelope Olson, Johnna Milks Titworth and Kay Bos also step in to help. We are thankful for these people and for all who support our program.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Happy birthday to the following members of the church family!

| | |
|----|-------------------|
| 1 | Alan Vigland |
| 6 | Anne Young |
| 7 | Phoebe Vance |
| 8 | Flora Wellman |
| 8 | John Hanmer |
| 9 | Larry Ross |
| 10 | Geri Thornell |
| 10 | Bernice Rankin |
| 13 | Hal Bruning |
| 13 | Shirley Jones |
| 14 | Margie Peacock |
| 14 | Elizabeth Case |
| 15 | Dorothy Hall |
| 16 | Ralph Williams |
| 18 | Emmeline Wolowiec |
| 18 | Michael Call |
| 18 | Elizabeth Ehman |
| 20 | Rosemary Abbett |
| 23 | Judy Westphal |
| 28 | Brenda Case |
| 29 | Kay Bos |
| 31 | David Call |
| 31 | Wayne Strom |

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

| | |
|----|----------------------------|
| 7 | Sonny and Esther Rodriguez |
| 21 | Alan and Joanne Appelhof |
| 21 | Mike and Carolina Jones |
| 22 | Neil and Linda Nugent |
| 22 | Andrew and Christy Case |
| 27 | Roger and Helen Dewey |
| 29 | Bill and Kay Boss |

Remember In Your Prayers

In the month of November, four members and friends of our church passed from this life to the next. Please remember in your prayers the families of Dick Kishline, Trudy Collins, Craig Baker, and the Rev. Tom Lindsay, (who was our Interim Pastor from 1977-1978).

You are also invited to remember in your prayers some of our members who are home-bound, in assisted-living, or are facing health concerns: Doug Joy, Marylou Patee, June Trost, Norm Stewart, John Robson, Marjorie Call, Buck and Dorothy Hall, Ruth Masters, Liz Ehman, Betty Peters, Barb Nason, Bernice Rankin, Mona McElderry, Bruce Jenema, Jo Danford, and Betty Henry.

Reminder

If you, a loved one, or a church member you know is in the hospital, please let the church office know so that Pastor Dan may visit. Due to privacy laws, hospitals no longer contact the churches to let them know church members are hospitalized. The church wants to know so that we can support you during this time of need.

UCC Sister Church of the Month

As part of our continuing efforts to work together as a community of faith, in worship we pray for UCC churches in our United Northern Association. You are invited in December to pray for the ongoing mission and ministries of Lewiston Congregational United Church of Christ.

Thank You

to Jean Bowers, Patti Catton, and Jean and Wally Edwards for folding, labeling and stamping the November issue of The Joyful Noise;

and to Ron Olson, who single-handedly moved tables to The Barn and set them up for the Zonta ladies.

Many thanks to everyone who has already completed and mailed back your Estimate of Giving card for 2012. This will greatly help our church leaders plan for the future. If you have not received an Estimate of Giving card and would like on, please contact the church office.

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR DECEMBER VOLUNTEERS -

| | <u>COFFEE HOUR</u> | <u>NURSERY</u> | <u>GREETERS</u> |
|--------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 12/4 | Deacons and Circle I | Esther Rodriguez | Brenda and Leonard Case |
| 12/11 | Jean Bowers | Gillian Soholt | Jean Bowers |
| 12/18 | Cookie Walk | Lynn Hopkins | Doug and Mary Rodriguez |
| 12/25 | Brenda Case | Chris Stone | Cath Kelder |
| | <u>HEAD USHER</u> | Jim Sheets | |

Volunteer Opportunities

Have you ever sat in your pew and listened to someone read the Scripture or lead the Moment for Mission and thought to yourself, "I could do that." ? If you would like to be a lay reader in the spring or summer of 2012, let Pastor Dan know so that he can work you into the schedule.

We have church members who would like to come to church but have no transportation. If you are willing to pick people up on your way to church, please contact the office or Pastor Dan.



Benzie Area Zonta Club

In the spring of 2004, the Benzie Area Zonta Club was looking for a new service project. They acquired a pattern for a mastectomy pillow from another Zonta club. This is a heart-shaped pillow that goes into a case with a shoulder strap, the case opens so an ice pack can be inserted. These pillows provide comfort to women who have had breast surgery.

Zonta held their first sewing bee in the Fellowship Hall of our church. They cut and pressed, sewed by hand and by machine and completed fifteen pillows that day. Seven years later they are delighted to be back here and using The Barn for their sewing bees. On a recent Saturday, fifty-five pillows were completed. To date they have made 1852 mastectomy pillows, 637 chemo caps and 938 satin pillowcases for chemo patients. These items are donated to the Smith Breast Health Center in Traverse City for distribution to those in need.

Flowers

There is a sign-up sheet outside the church office for altar flowers for 2011. If you are interested in supplying flowers, please sign up for a certain date (or if you are unable to be in worship call the church office to make arrangements). You may then bring in your own flowers or donate \$25 to the church to make the arrangements with a local florist. If you would like the bulletin to reflect your donation, please let the church office know who the flowers honor or memorialize as well as identifying yourself as the donor.

GoodSearch.com

Remember that if you use the Internet, you can earn money for the church using www.goodsearch.com. One penny per search, or more for Internet shopping, is donated directly from the website to our church. Designate us by entering our church name as the charity of your choice.

DECEMBER 2011

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SAT |
|---|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1 10 Central Wellness Exercise / Barn 10:00 Archive Team 5:30 NA - Barn 7:30 Choir Practice | 2 12 N - LOWV Library 1:00 Kishline Funeral | 3 8:30 Zonta Sew /Barn |
| 4 9:00 Advent Workshop 10:15 Church School 10:30 Worship 11:30 Brunch | 5 10:00 Central Wellness - Barn 7:00 AA - Barn | 6 10:00 Bible Study 10:00 Yoga-Barn 1:00 Bereavement Group - Barn 6:30 - Kiwanis 7:00 WAA - Barn | 7 12 Noon - AA 1:00 Women's Fellowship 2:00 MS Support Barn 6:30 Hand Chime Practice | 8 10 Central Wellness Exercise / Barn 5:30 NA - Barn 7:30 Choir Practice | 9 12 N - LOWV Library | 10 3:00 Benzie Chorus Concert |
| 11 10:15 Church School 10:30 Worship | 12 10:00 Central Wellness - Barn 11:00 Commodities Distribution 7:00 AA - Barn | 13 10:00 Yoga-Barn 1:00 Bereavement Group - Barn 5:00 Trustees 7:00 WAA - Barn | 14 12 Noon - AA 2:30 Knitting - Barn 4:00 Deacons | 15 10 Central Wellness Exercise / Barn 10:00 Archive Team 5:30 NA - Barn 7:30 Choir Practice | 16 12 N - LOWV Library | 17 5-7 p.m. Live Nativity |
| 18 10:15 Church School 10:30 Worship Cookie Walk 1-3 p.m. Live Nativity | 19 10:00 Central Wellness - Barn 7:00 AA - Barn | 20 10:00 Yoga-Barn 1:00 Bereavement Group - Barn 6:30 - Kiwanis 7:00 WAA - Barn | 21 12 Noon - AA Circle Meetings 2:30 Knitting - Barn 6:30 Christian Ed | 22 10 Central Wellness Exercise / Barn 5:30 NA - Barn 7:30 Choir Practice | 23 12 N - LOWV Library | 24 Christmas Eve 5:00 pm Worship 11:00 pm Worship |
| 25 10:15 Church School 10:30 Worship | 26 Church Office Closed 10:00 Central Wellness - Barn 7:00 AA - Barn | 27 10:00 Yoga-Barn 1:00 Bereavement Group - Barn 7:00 WAA - Barn | 28 12 Noon - AA 2:30 Knitting - Barn | 29 10 Central Wellness Exercise / Barn 5:30 NA - Barn 7:30 Choir Practice | 30 12 N - LOWV Library | 31 |

First Congregational Church, UCC
901 Barber Street, P.O. Box 234.
Benzonia, MI 49616
Phone: (231) 882-4922

A Joyful Noise! December 2011

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC BENZONIA, MICHIGAN

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Daniel E. Furman | Minister |
| Chris Stone | Treasurer |
| Mary Rodriguez.. .. | Financial Secretary |
| James Sheets..... | Church Moderator |
| Christy Case | Choir Director |
| Rosemary Miller | Assistant Choir Director |
| Jean Edwards..... | Newsletter Editor |
| Carol Dye & Katrina Smith..... | Christian Ed Coordinators |
| Hope Kochis | Custodian |
| Nancy Eggleston | Secretary |

Office phone: 231-882-4922 Office fax: 231-882-7992

Office hours: Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

<http://www.benzoniacongregational.org>

Office Email: secretary@benzoniacongregational.org

Pastor Email: pastordan@benzoniacongregational.org

For pastoral emergencies, call Pastor Dan at 231-930-7067