

A JOYFUL NOISE!

March 2013

Last month, I shared that this year I am working with the Center for Progressive Renewal's CoachShare program. In this program I will be working with a nationally trained Coach along with five other UCC pastors across the country to help our churches become more vital in our worship, identity, and mission. We have connected so far once by teleconference phone call, and once by Skype. I have already learned several key characteristics that I will be sharing with you via the newsletter and in worship.

Last month, I shared the first key characteristic of a spiritually vital congregation is to recognize that people who have never attended church on a regular basis want to experience God, not just hear about God. In other words, it's not about the Sunday morning presentation to them, it's not about a well-crafted and delivered sermon, and it's not about the music program. What is more important to them then sitting in the pew is being active in mission, interacting with others and sharing their experiences and beliefs.

The second key characteristic of a spiritually vital congregation is that we are connected to our local neighborhood in a meaningful way and seen as relevant. If we were to plot out on a map of Benzonia, a circle with a one mile radius, what percentage of the residents within that circle would see First Congregational United Church of Christ of Benzonia, as a relevant and spiritually vital congregation?

My hope this year is for us to create and nurture a new relationship with Crystal Lake Elementary School. So far we have a beautiful Book Deposit waiting to be filled with children's books for us to deliver to the children; we have two people who are volunteering their time with the children. It is my hope that more of our congregation will donate some time to spend with the children of our neighborhoods. Think about how many more residents in that one-mile radius would see us as relevant if they identified us as "that church that donates books and volunteers at my child's elementary school." Volunteering and donating books will also help new seekers experience God in a new way that benefits the children.

And so, I would like for us to set a goal for our church to donate at least ten books per month to Crystal Lake Elementary School. Let's make an effort to be mindful of the needs of the children in our neighborhood. Please place your donated books in the deposit so we may add our stamp into the cover so the children know where the books came from.

This month culminates with the celebration of Easter, which in addition to being a central tenet of our faith, is also a reminder of the opportunities for renewal of life and revitalization. On Ash Wednesday, we received these words along with ashes on our skin, "This is an ending. This is also a beginning." As we move through the season of Lent and prepare for Easter, let us also be aware that we too can grow with faith toward being a more relevant, vital, and spiritual congregation in our neighborhood. See you in church or in Spirit.

Pastor Dan Furman

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP NEWS

On Wednesday, March 6, the Women's Fellowship will meet at the church at 1:00 PM. Come for dessert... All women are welcome. The program will be helping get ready for the Lenten Program supper. The Executive Board will meet at noon, before the general meeting.

CIRCLES

Circle I will meet Wednesday, March 20, at 1:00 PM at the church. This is an important meeting. We have the Mother/Daughter banquet coming up the end of April.

Sarah Circle IV will meet Wednesday, March 20 at 11:00 AM at the church, and go out to lunch afterward.

MOTHER-DAUGHTER BANQUET

Save the date for the Mother-Daughter Banquet on Friday, April 26, at 6:00 p.m. All women and girls are invited to attend. You do not need to bring a mother or a daughter for we are all daughters. Plans are being made for a fun program, good fellowship, and delicious food. More details will be in April's newsletter. Hope to see you there.

COMMUNITY LENTEN SERIES

You are invited to join St. Andrew's Presbyterian and St. Philip's Episcopal churches in a Lenten worship, fellowship, and lecture series on Wednesday evenings at 6pm. Each church will host twice as we gather as a community on our collective walk with Christ toward Holy Week.

HOLY WEEK

Holy Week is early this year. Join us for the celebration of Palm Sunday on March 24, the remembrance of the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday March 28 at 7pm, the community observance of Good Friday at St. Philip's Episcopal Church at noon and our own worship service that evening at 7pm on March 29, and the victorious celebration of Easter at the sunrise service at 8am in the Memorial Garden and our traditional service at 10:30 on March 31.

EASTER LILY ORDER FORM



We will once again order and arrange lilies in the sanctuary for Easter. If you wish to donate a lily plant, please submit your order no later than Sunday, March 24. This form may be dropped off in the church office or put in the offering plate. The cost of a lily plant is \$14.00.

I wish to provide a lily plant in memory of: _____

Or in honor of: _____

(signed) _____

(as you wish to have printed in the Easter bulletin)

NEW IN OUR LIBRARY

Two books this month are about the first Hispanic and third woman appointed to the United States Supreme Court, Sonia Sotomayor. Both are a testimony to the American Dream coming true. Sotomayor was born in a poor part of New York City to Puerto Rican parents. With extraordinary determination, belief in herself & hard work she has risen to one of the highest positions in our country.

My Beloved World is Sotomayor’s memoir of her life from early childhood to her first becoming a judge. It is an engaging read. Thank you, Mickey Austin, for suggesting and donating it.

Sonia Sotomayor written for children ages 4-8 is naturally a much condensed story. It still conveys the lesson that with determination and hard work one can achieve their goals.

Beautiful Outlaw by John Eldredge is the author’s attempt to break Jesus out of the typical stereotypes, thereby helping readers discover the real human Jesus. After reading the book one may better understand why people were willing to tear a roof off a building to reach him. This was an anonymous donation

CHILDREN’S BOOK DEPOSIT

At the entryway from the parking lot, just inside the doors on the left, is a wooden cabinet labeled “Children’s Book Deposit.” The Christian World Service Board is working to enhance a new relationship between our church and Crystal Lake Elementary school by donating children’s books for their library or to be given directly to the students. Please bring books you would like to donate and use the new cabinet at the church.

WHO MEETS IN OUR CHURCH BUILDING ANYWAY?

From time to time we are asked about the various groups that meet in our buildings. So for the next several months we will share with you information about the various community groups that use our building. Over time you will see that the time spent here is less about the electric and heat used and more about the ministry we provide for the members of our community.

Love INC (In the Name of Christ), meets Monday nights from 6 to 8 pm at our church for ten weeks. They begin with a meal prepared by Blaine Christian Church, served in our Fellowship Hall. Then children go to play and the parents go to classes to learn parenting techniques, budgeting, how to balance a checkbook, and spiritual support.

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR MARCH VOLUNTEERS

	<u>COFFEE HOUR</u>	<u>NURSERY</u>	<u>GREETERS</u>
Mar. 3	Deacons	Anna Butts	Bill and Kay Bos
Mar. 10	Shar Patterson and Kris Johnson	Nancy Call	Ruth Catton
Mar. 17	Chris Gehring	Sharlene Patterson	Jo Bahry
Mar. 24	Mary Rodriguez	Christy Case	Anna Butts
Mar. 31	Easter Sunday	Chris Stone	Doii Burgett and Flo Wellman
	<u>HEAD USHER</u>	Doug Rodriguez	

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Susie Vigland
 1 Christine Gehring
 2 Helen Pickard
 3 Liam Jones
 3 John Riegler
 3 Brandon Sauer
 5 Pink Rearick
 5 Brent Strom
 6 Calvin Smith
 6 Carson Case
 9 Jo Bahry
 9 Mary Lou Pattee
 9 Ayden Webb
 10 Belle Van Hammen
 11 Ted Bahry
 12 Kristin Richards
 13 Lucas Richards
 16 Genny Bowman
 18 James Hinkamp
 19 Mary Hopkins
 22 Maria Wolowiec
 22 Caleb Case
 23 Roger Sattler
 24 Carol Davidson
 24 Nick Danford
 26 Judith Herban
 27 Pat Mead
 30 Spencer Manning, Jr.
 31 Becky Sattler

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

- 5 Dennis and Kristin Richards
 26 Rob and Debra Rafferty

SPRING AHEAD

Remember to turn your clocks ahead one hour before you go to bed on Saturday, March 9. You don't want to be late for church on Sunday morning.

**IN OUR PRAYERS**

You are invited to remember in your prayers those of our members who are homebound, in assisted-living, or facing health concerns: Marylou Patee, June Trost, Norm Stewart, John Robson, Buck and Dorothy Hall, Marjorie Call, Barb Nason, Mona McElderry, Bruce Jenema, Helen Pickard, Mary Hopkins, Susan Lutes, Betty Heckman, Brenda Case, and Ruth Blacklock.

REMINDER: If someone 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 have been praying for UCC churches in our United Northern Association. You are invited in March to pray for the ongoing mission and ministries of the First Congregational UCC, Ironton.

THANK YOU to Mickey Austin, Jean Bowers, Ruth Catton, and Jean and Wally Edwards for all their work folding and labeling and stamping A Joyful Noise last month.

JOYOUS GATHERINGS

In January, we had a wonderful Joyous Gathering at a home in Thompsonville. A few more are planned for the Spring. If you would like to host a future gathering in another part of the county, please let Pastor Dan know.

FLOWERS

There is a sign-up sheet outside the church office for altar flowers. If you would like to supply flowers, please sign up for a certain date. You may then bring in your own flowers or donate \$25 and we will order flowers from 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.

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 \$450 you may reserve a square-foot plot that covers future opening and closing as well as a memorial plaque to be placed on the stone along the walkway. Contact Pastor Dan for more information. Donations for perpetual care are also welcomed.

MARCH 2013

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT
					1 12 Noon LOWV	2 Zonta In Barn
3 10:15 Church School 10:30 Worship	4 10:00 Central Wellness - Barn 12-5 Bridge Club 5:30 Love, INC 7:00 AA - Barn	5 10:00 Yoga-Barn 6:30 - Kiwanis 6:30 Song Sisters 7:00 WAA - Barn	6 12 Noon - AA 2:30 Knitting Barn 6:00 Lenten Study 6:30 Bell Choir	7 11-2:30 Central Wellness Exercise - Barn 12-5 Bridge Club 5:30 NA - Barn 7:30 Choir Practice	8 12 Noon LOWV	9
10 10:15 Church School 10:30 Worship	11 10:00 Central Wellness - Barn 11Commodities Distribution 12-5 Bridge Club 5:30 Love, INC 7:00 AA - Barn	12 10:00 Yoga -Barn 6:30 Song Sisters 7:00 WAA - Barn	13 12 Noon - AA 2:30 Knitting - Barn 3:00 Deacons 6:30 Bell Choir	14 11-2:30 Central Wellness Exercise - Barn 12-5 Bridge Club 5:30 NA - Barn 7:30 Choir Prac- tice	15 12 Noon- LOWV	16
17 10:15 Church School 10:30 Worship	18 10:00 Central Wellness - Barn 12-5 Bridge Club 5:00 Trustees 7:00 AA - Barn	19 10:00 Yoga -Barn 6:30 Kiwanis 6:30 Song Sisters 7:00 WAA - Barn	20 12 Noon - AA 2:30 Knitting - Barn 6:30 Bell Choir	21 11-2:30 Central Wellness Exercise - Barn 12-5 Bridge Club 5:30 NA - Barn 7:30 Choir Practice	22 12 Noon LOWV	23
24 10:15 Church School 10:30 Worship	25 10:00 Central Wellness - Barn 12-5 Bridge Club 7:00 AA - Barn	26 10:00 Yoga -Barn 6:30 Song Sisters 7:00 WAA - Barn	27 12 Noon - AA 2:30 Knitting - Barn 6:00 Lenten Study	28 11-2:30 Central Wellness Exercise - Barn 12-5 Bridge Club 5:30 NA - Barn 7:00 Worship	29 GOOD FRIDAY 7:00 Worship	30
31 EASTER 8:00 Sunrise Worship 8:30 Pancake Breakfast 10:15 Church School 10:30 Worship						

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Chris Stone Treasurer
Mary Rodriguez.. Financial Secretary
James Sheets..... Church Moderator
Rosemary Miller Choir Director
Jean Edwards..... Newsletter Editor
Carolina Jones & Katrina Smith..... Christian Ed Coordinators
Hope Kochis Custodian
Nancy Eggleston Secretary

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