

January 2009

Glimpses of Faith Newsletter

Faith UCC  
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New Braunfels, TX 78130

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It is now 2009 A.D. Did you know that when you say this you are making a theological statement? You are. A. D. is the abbreviation for the Latin phrase *anno domini*, which means “year of our Lord.” Theoretically it signifies that it has been 2,009 years since the birth of Jesus the Christ. Many scholars would say it has more likely been 2,010 or 2012 years, but let’s not quibble over a few years. The main point is that the Birth of Jesus of Nazareth marks a pivotal point in human history, so much so that we mark time based on when he was born. In a sense we are saying we measure the passing of time by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

This is not meant to be just a backward looking designation. It also makes the claim that the Christ is Lord of history, not just past; but also present and future. As Christians the present and future are to be inspired by, marked by, shaped by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

If ever there was a need for this, it is now. This is not just any new year. The world is in the midst of the worst economic conditions since the Great Depression. Many economists say this will not completely turn around until the end of 2009 or even 2010. Global warming continues to take an increasing toll on the earth. Terrorism continues to strike many nations on the earth and the United States is fighting two wars. Gang and drug violence is growing in our inner cities and along our southern border. We have not solved the

problem of how to fix our public schools and the rising cost of college will reduce the ability of poor and middle class families to access higher education. These are just a few of the major issues our nation and world face as we move deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We are at a pivotal point in human history. We need to draw on the best wisdom of the past and seek inspired new answers to rise to the challenge. We will need to develop a long range vision and avoid getting trapped in short range answers that seem to work to our personal benefit but rob future generations of their posterity. We will need patience and a sustaining hope. As people of faith we find this in our trust in God.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu spent most of his adult life under the oppression of apartheid, dreaming and working for a better day. There must have been times when he despaired of a brighter day ever coming, yet he writes, “**As Christians we are PRISONERS OF HOPE.**” Bishop Tutu was blessed to live to see this day. In some ways he must have felt like Simeon of old, who upon seeing the baby Jesus at the temple proclaimed:

*“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory to your people Israel.”*  
(Luke 2:29-32 NRSV)

## Thanks for Supporting the Steeples Ad!

Here is the CHURCH.

Here is the STEEPLE.

OPEN the DOOR, and see...



**ALL** the  
**PEOPLE**

Thank you for helping us bring *Steeples* to the people!

Your church's generous contribution of \$500 will help us reach millions of people with the United Church of Christ's message of unity, hope and welcome by airing the *Steeples* ad to a national audience this fall.

Your generosity of spirit and support enables us to tell the friend and the stranger, the faithful and the doubting, that *no matter who they are, or where they are on life's journey, they are welcome here.*

Many thanks,  
Rev. John Thomas  
General Minister and President



Thanks for the "Christmas envelope" from the church. I would also like to thank everyone for their cards, cookies and other food items, invitations and holiday good wishes that many of you sent my way. It is a blessing to be part of this community of faith.

Pastor Scott

## Thanks from SOS Food Bank

Thank you and your congregation for supporting the SOS (Spirit of Sharing), Inc. Food Bank's mission to feed the hungry of New Braunfels.

Please be aware that the SOS is an all volunteer (160+ volunteers) nonprofit corporation. SOS has no employees and owns its facility, thus no salaries, nor rent. All monetary donations go directly to food purchases, utilities, and insurance.

SOS partnered with the San Antonio Food Bank in June of 2008 and is taking advantage of exceptional food prices (example prices: ground meat 14 cents a pound; chicken 56 cents each; peanut butter and canned vegetables 17 cents each; etc.) We cannot get everything we need from them, so we must buy them from retailers at a discount, and rely on food drives.

In the past 6 months the number of needy coming to our front door has increased 25% (from 409 families in June to over 500 in October and November). Our monthly food requirements have increased from 8 ½ tons to approximately 12 tons a month to keep up with both emergency requests and monthly allotments to our certified families.

.... We thank you for your continued support of food drives and the inclusion of your financial support in your budget. Lastly, if you haven't visited the SOS facility in awhile, I would very much like to give you a personal tour at your convenience. ....

Sincerely, Don Earles 830-629-3663



**Ushers:**

- 1-4 Richard Hitz; Benny Harst;  
Darlene Stephens; Bruce Ridgley  
1-11 Courtney & Lois Swander  
Jan Hunley; Leslie Woods  
1-18 Jo Ann Brown; Norma Gilbert  
Betty Triesch; Jennifer Franklin  
1-25 Sol Fuss; Judy Anderson  
Joe & Mikki Ward

**Liturgists:**

- 1-4 Jennifer Marlow  
1-11 Curt Leonhardt  
1-18 Karen Kramm  
1-25 Betty Heinemeyer

**Communion Assistants:**

- 1-4 Richard Hitz & Bennie Harst

**Acolytes:**

- 1-4 Kayce Lewis  
1-11 Larissa Hunley  
1-18 Cody Allen  
1-25 James Lewis

**Greeters:**

- 1-4 Dorothy Rest  
1-11 Courtney Swander  
1-18 Norma Gilbert  
1-25 Sol Fuss

**Council Reps:**

- 1-4 Joe Ward  
1-11 Nicolle Perry Clark  
1-18 Sheri Haynes  
1-25 Tim Marlow

**Faith UCC  
Annual Meeting  
Sunday January 25  
After church**

Mark your calendar for the Church Annual Meeting on the January 25<sup>th</sup>. We want everyone's input. We will be looking at a number of important issues.

- An increase in the church budget
- ONA Statement
- Church officers
- Where are we in the Visioning Process started in 2008
- Etc.

Those of you who have articles for the annual report need to have them in to the church office by Sunday January 11<sup>th</sup> so they can be typed up, assembled and distributed on January 18<sup>th</sup>. You can drop them off on paper, but if you can email them it would be even better. It saves retyping them!

**Happy Birthday!**

- 1-16 Bill Brown  
1-19 Julia Allison  
Lois Swander  
1-21 Bruce Ridgley  
Sharon Zillmann  
David Pena  
1-22 Bonnie Stark  
1-25 Emma Storms  
1-26 Annie May Pape  
Darlene Stephens  
Bennie Harst  
Arlon Meckel  
1-29 Kelcey Kramm

## For Everything There Is a Season

For those of you who were in church on the last Sunday of 2008 we did a meditative action in which we took all the times and seasons listed in Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 and asked all present to circle the one (s) that reflected “What time of the year is it for you?” and “How would you like God to be with you in this time?” We then brought them forward to the table, placed them in the basket and lit a candle. Here is a breakdown of the “times” we circled. (Note, many people circled more than one.)

Birthing	4
Dying	
Planting	5
Harvesting	2
Ending	
Healing	3
Breaking Down	1
Building Up	2
Weeping	
Laughing	4
Mourning	
Dancing	4
Throwing Away	2
Gathering	4
Embracing	7
Refraining	
Seeking	4
Losing	2
Keeping	1
Throwing Away	4
Keeping Silence	2
Speaking Out	4
Loving	6
Peace Making	10



May God be with us all in all the times and seasons of our lives and the life of the world. Amen.

## Christmas Cards From....

The church received Christmas cards from the following people:

Harold Baettcher  
Calvin & Irene Henze  
Harriet Jahncke  
Joyce & Milton Saunders

## Rev. Ruth Garwood to Preach at Faith UCC Sunday January 11<sup>th</sup>

On Sunday, January 11, our guest preacher will be Rev. Ruth Garwood, Executive Director of the UCC Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns, based at the headquarters of the United Church of Christ in Cleveland, Ohio.

She will also be sharing her experience with the ONA process and stories from ONA churches across the UCC at the Second Sunday Potluck program. Save this date and plan now to hear one of our denomination’s top leaders in the quest for justice for people of all sexual orientations.



## ONA Churches in the South Central Conference

As you know, we are in the midst of considering becoming an official ONA church. Here is a list of other UCC churches in the SCC that are also ONA:

Church of the Savior -Cedar Park, Texas

Congregational UCC-Austin, Texas

Friends Congregational UCC  
College Station, Texas

United Christian Church -Austin, Texas

Bethel UCC-Houston, Texas

First Congregational UCC  
Houston, Texas

Plymouth UCC-Spring, Texas

Cathedral of Hope-Dallas, Texas

First Congregational UCC-Dallas, Texas

First Community UCC-Dallas, Texas

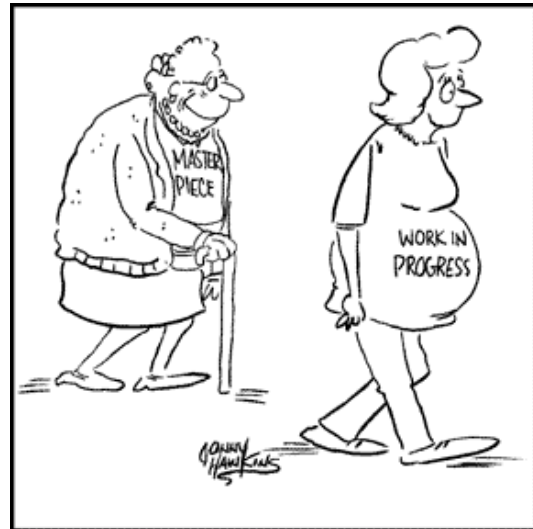
United Congregational -Lubbock, Texas

Spirit of Peace-San Antonio, Texas

St. Paul – Corpus Christi, Texas

“Prophecy brings development. The discernment process about becoming welcoming involves Bible study, education about sexual orientation and gender identity, storytelling and theological examination. They translate their beliefs about God’s love into the actions of welcoming God’s people into their churches.” Rev. Ruth Garwood

**The worship Task Force will meet on Tuesday January 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.**



## January Calendar

- 1-4 Worship 10:30 a.m. Communion
- 1-6 Worship Task Force 6:30 p.m.
- 1-11 Ruth Garwood guest preacher  
Second Sunday Potluck
- 1-11 Children’s Choir 9:30 a.m.
- 1-10 Men’s Breakfast 8 a.m.
- 1-14 Church Council 6:30 p.m.
- 1-16 SOS Food Bank 1-4 p.m.
- 1-18 Children’s Choir 9:30 a.m.  
Worship 10:30 a.m.
- 1-25 Children’s Choir 9:30 a.m.  
Worship 10:30 a.m.  
Potluck after church



“Happiness lies not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort. The joy and moral stimulation of work no longer must be forgotten in the mad chase of evanescent profits. **These dark days will be worth all they cost us if they teach us that our true destiny is not to be ministered unto but to minister to ourselves and to our fellow men.**”

Franklin D. Roosevelt  
First Inaugural Address, 1933

### **National Council of Churches Head Offers Prayers, Protest in Wake of Gaza Bloodshed**

“God of all creation, you who are so bound to humankind that you feel the joys that complete us and the sorrows that rend us; God of Abraham, you who have made covenant with our ancestors and called us to be special instruments of your peace, we come to you in pain.

You have commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves; yet throughout

the world we see horrifying examples of our failure to love as you command.

In the land made holy by the prophets and the birth of Christ, an insane cycle of rocket attacks and air bombardments has left hundreds of your children dead and wounded. Murderous conflict continues in Iraq, Afghanistan, Darfur, and Sri Lanka. A recent act of terrorism threatens the peace between India and Pakistan. Animosity lingers between Georgians and Russians. Thousands of persons who bear your image face starvation and violence in Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe, often because power-hungry leaders have put themselves above your law.

God of peace and justice, we come to you in pain and contrition. Forgive us for how we turn away from the suffering of others. Help us to face their agony so that you might use us as instruments of your peace.

We know, in the words of the psalmist, that you are the one who can make war cease to the ends of the earth, breaking the bow and shattering the spear; but we also know that you have



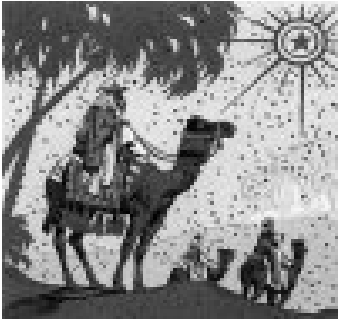
called us to participate in this holy mission. May this new year be the time when your name will be exalted among the nations, and when we will come to love others as we have been loved

by you. Amen.

Rev. Michael Kinnamon

## Epiphany January 6<sup>th</sup>

The Christian Church celebrates Epiphany January 6<sup>th</sup>. The Greek word means “to make manifest”. This day celebrates the light of Christ being made manifest to the world. The main



Scripture passage associated with the day is the that of the magi following the Star of Bethlehem and coming

to adore the Christ Child, who will be the Light of the World. The magi represent the wider, gentile world recognizing the Light of Christ.

The day is also closely associated with Jesus’ baptism, which is celebrated the following Sunday. This is a natural connection since Christ’s baptism marks the beginning of his ministry and mission, when his light begins to fully shine forth.

Because of the connection to the water of baptism, water often figures in the observance of Epiphany, especially in Eastern Orthodox Churches. In Russia pilgrims will bathe in the frigid, blessed waters of a local river or lake.



Near where I grew up in Florida was the city of Tarpon Springs, which has a large Greek Orthodox population. Many people their make a living from fishing and sponge diving. Each year on Epiphany the Orthodox priest blesses the waters and throws a wooden cross into the waters. Local youths dive into the water to retrieve the cross. It is the largest Greek Orthodox Epiphany celebration in the Western hemisphere.

Whoever recovers the cross is said to be blessed for a full year. In 2007 Michael Xitolit recovered the cross. He described this as being “an amazing feeling.” He was carried back to St. Nicholas Church, where he received a special blessing. Whoever possesses the cross is considered a source of God’s abundant blessing and grace for the community.



May the Light of Christ brighten your life and our world in 2009.

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**January 2009**



**NEWS OF FORMER  
CONFERENCE  
MINISTER**

The Rev. Mark Miller shares that he and Diane have sold their Dallas, TX home and are in process of moving to their new home in Austin, TX. They hope to be in their new home by December 29. Mark continues to serve as Senior Interim Pastor the Round Grove Christian Church (DOC).

The Millers' new address is:

7208 Lapin Cove  
Austin, TX 78739.  
e-mail: [markhmiller@att.net](mailto:markhmiller@att.net)

**Congratulations to Dr. Carla Cheatham who will be ordained on January 17<sup>th</sup> at Friends UCC at 3 p.m., College Station.**