

THE CONGREGATIONALIST

FIRST CENTRAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH United Church of Christ

Established 1856

421 South 36th Street Omaha NE 68131 Phone: 402-345-1533 Fax: 402-345-6212

www.firstcentral.org

Volume 16 Issue 11

December 1, 2011



Please remember in your thoughts and prayers: the family of *Monte Fey*, who died last week.

Thank You

Shirley Jensen

Thanks for the calls, cards, and visits following my surgery. It means a lot.

Congregational Outreach Ministry

Together Inc. Thanksgiving Meal Bags & Holiday Gift Store

Susan & Steve Dolezal

We would like to thank the generous people of First Central Congregational Church! Your support of the Thanksgiving Meal Bags gave 35 families in the Omaha area a Thanksgiving meal for Thanksgiving. Also, there have been bags and bags of toys donated to the Together Inc. holiday gift store, so children and parents in our community may have a joyous Christmas. Thank you so much for your support of Together Inc. and the greater Omaha area!! HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO YOU AND YOURS!

Habitat 2012 Build

Fred Felger

The site of next year's build is 2460 South 19th Street. Work has already begun. What a sight to see the deteriorating house demolished and the debris removing trucks ready to clear the site. More info as it becomes available.

Mitten tree

Sara Sharpe

There is a Christmas tree in the Narthex – but it's not just any Christmas tree. It's a Mitten Tree (or hats, gloves, scarves ...). Please bring new or gently used mittens, hats, gloves, or scarves for folks of all ages and place them on the tree. All donations will be taken to *Together, Inc.* after the holidays.



SCRIP for the Holidays

Pete Peterson

Don't forget to order your SCRIP gift cards for the holidays (or any occasion). Shopping with SCRIP cards is an easy way to support our church every

time you shop. A complete list of retailers is available in the office or the parlor. See *Pete Peterson* or *Chris Steffen* for your holiday SCRIP card needs. You may also email Pete through the church website – firstcentral.org. Just look for the SCRIP information.

Need a ride?

If you need a ride to church, take a look at the schedule below. Please call the driver by Saturday if you need a ride:

December 4: *Martin Richards*, 402-558-1214

December 11: *Sam Pfeifer*, 402-691-8776

December 18: *Martin Richards*, 402-558-1214

December Team of the Month:

The Flower Delivery Team!

This team delivers flowers to our hospitalized and home-bound members during Easter and Christmas, as well as throughout the year as chancel flowers are donated. It is a wonderful way to make a real difference in someone's life with a visit from their church family. You can sign up to help once, or commit to a regular delivery. If you'd like to help deliver Christmas poinsettias, a sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board in the parlor, under the clock. Contact *Melanie Naughtin*, 402-556-0189, or *Pat Lange*, 402-556-2201 for more information.

Growing Cities

Growing Cities (growingcitiesmovie.com) is a documentary, currently in production, about urban farming in America. The producers/directors are both Omahans – *Dan Susman* and *Andrew Monbouquette* (*Bernie & Wendy's* son). Whole Foods is hosting a fundraiser for the movie on Tuesday, **December 6th**. They will donate 5% of the day's proceeds to Growing Cities. Get out there and shop!

Open Your Eyes

Last July we tried a very congregational experiment in worship planning. We held an adult ed First Forum with the theme "Anticipating Advent." That Sunday morning we went over the history and purposes of Advent, read some of the assigned scripture readings for this year, and then discussed. That conversation, which was open to everyone, generated this year's theme. The staff and the Worship Ministry then took all the ideas shared in that forum and used them to design our worship services.

In that forum the discussion quickly turned to the questions, "How are we as progressive Christians supposed to treat these stories? How are we supposed to celebrate Christmas?" Then *Nikki Zimmerman* posed the question which guided all the rest of our Advent worship planning and design – "How do we as contemporary, progressive people prepare for an encounter with God?"

The images that kept resonating with me as we designed the worship were those of deep space taken by the Hubble Space Telescope. These images fill me with awe and wonder as they are of such incomprehensible beauty and majesty. They seemed to fit with the cosmic themes contained in several of the season's lectionary texts. The Advent Decorating Team used this motif of the starry night sky in what they've done in the sanctuary.



This Advent, I invite you to explore the question "How do you prepare for an encounter with God?" You can probably guess that here at the church we won't be supplying answers to that question so much as providing ways for you to explore it for yourself. In the remaining three Sundays we will open our eyes to our nature, possibility, and mystery. Let's join together in this journey of exploration. Open your eyes!

Oh, and don't forget all the other Advent events like caroling, Cookie Walk, Mourning Light Service, World AIDS Day, etc.

Peace,
Scott

New Members

New members will be welcomed during worship on **December 11th**. If you are interested in joining our church family at this time, please call *Pastor Scott Jones* or *Sara Sharpe*, 402-345-1533.

Lectionary Texts

Week of December 4: Isaiah 40: 1-11; Psalm 85: 1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3: 8-15a; Mark 1: 1-8.

Week of December 11: Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24; John 1: 6-8, 19-28.

Women's Fellowship

Church Women United will hold a Christmas Coffee on Tuesday, **December 13th** at 9:30 a.m. at Kountze Memorial Church. Program presented by The Salvation Army.

It's time again for the famous Cookie Walk. Bring your baked goodies to Memorial Hall before worship on Sunday, **December 11th**, and then return after worship to shop the bounty! The more bakers, the more variety, so start your engines. Err, ovens ☺

Eves

Join the Eves for their annual white elephant gift exchange on Monday, **December 12th**, 7 p.m. at the home of *Susan Fortina*, 3504 Woolworth. Bring your fabulous gift (beautiful wrapping is sometimes better than the gift ...), and an hors d'oeuvre to share. All women, of all ages, are invited.

From Bob Vassell

You are cordially invited to attend "Christmas in Germany" at the German American Society, 3717 S. 120th St., Sunday, **December 4**, 11:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Free admission, plenty of parking. Enjoy traditional holiday singing, dancing, food, Christkindlmarkt, and much more! Come early, stay late!

Mourning Light Service

In the midst of all the holiday joy and festivities, we realize that for those who are grieving, lonely, sad, or depressed, the holidays are a mixed bag. Therefore, we as a community of faith will set aside a special time to recognize, honor, and care for the other side of the holiday season. Join us for a service of prayer, music, and reflections on Sunday, **December 11th**, at 3 p.m., to be followed by cookies and coffee in the parlor.

Christian Education



Intergenerational Advent Workshop

Please join us after worship on Sunday, **December 4th**, for some delicious soup and fun Christmas crafts. We need volunteers of all ages to make decorations for our homebound and hospitalized friends.

Grand Central Stations

Children ages 4 to 12 are escorted from Worship after the Children's Conversation and returned to their parents during Coffee Hour in the parlor.

The Birth Stories of Jesus

December 4 and 11: Learn the nativity story and carols with teachers **Curt Cannon** and **Elizabeth Wearin**.

December 18: Enact the nativity story with costumes, readings and songs in Memorial Hall. **Linda Hotchkiss** will provide the piano accompaniment.

Learn by Heart Scripture:

"The light keeps shining in the dark, and the darkness has never put it out." John 1:5

Adult Education: First Forums

Classes are held in the Fireside Room on third floor at 9:15a.m. each Sunday. For your convenience, childcare is available in the Nursery from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.

December 4 and 11: Caring for Our World – Rick Brenneman and **John Schalles** will present two classes on the evolutionary formation of the Midwest, the species who live here, and how we can best preserve God's gifts for future generations to enjoy. Again, this topic was a huge hit at last spring's retreat.

December 18: The Evolving United Church of Christ – Daryl Malena

The Nebraska Conference will be voting on some historic changes proposed at the General Synod last summer. Come and learn what's changing in the UCC.

Confirmation

Classes are held the first Sunday of the month in the pastor's office with Co-Leaders **Scott Jones** and **Lizzie Patterson**.

Sunday, December 4: 11:30 a.m. Lunch with the **Advent Workshop** in Memorial Hall, followed by class at noon in the Pastor's office.

Sunday, December 18: Caroling with others from church.

FirstYOUTH

Our YOUTH meet for class on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Sundays in the YOUTH room on the third floor with their teacher, **Scott Hoyt**. Sack lunch at 11:30 a.m., and discussion begins at noon.

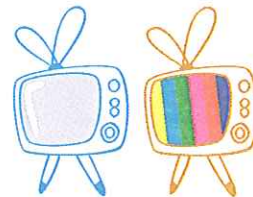
Sunday, December 4: No class with **Scott Hoyt**. No First YOUTH Activity.

Sunday, December 11: Sack lunch, class with **Scott Hoyt** at noon, First YOUTH activity at church: preparing gifts for the caroling event.

Sunday, December 18: Lunch with carolers, caroling event taking songs and gifts to homebound and hospitalized friends.

Equipment Needed for CE

Thanks to the **McConnells**, one of our televisions has been replaced. We still need one more set - if you have an extra TV that is not being well utilized, please consider donating it to the church. We will put it to good educational use!



Looking Ahead . . .

Lunch and Caroling Party on **December 18th** after church. Plan to stay after worship and help us take some holiday cheer to our homebound members.

Sunday Mornings

Regularly scheduled events

- 9:00 Coffee in the Parlor
9:15 First Forum (Adult Education), 3rd floor
9:15 Choristers Choir
9:15 Nursery Care to 11:45 a.m.
10:30 Service of Worship
10:45 Grand Central Stations (church school for Pre-K – 6th grade) *unless otherwise stated*
11:30 Coffee Hour, Parlor

next newsletter deadline

Sunday, November 27th

email articles to sara@firstcentral.org

Week of Sunday, December 4

Sunday, December 4

- First Forum, 9:15 a.m.
Choristers, practice, 9:15 a.m.
Food Pantry Sunday
Grand Central Stations, 10:45 a.m.
Advent Workshop and lunch, 11:30 a.m., Memorial Hall
Confirmation, lunch at 11:30 a.m., Memorial Hall, class at noon in the Pastor's Study
First YOUth, 11:30 lunch, Advent Workshop
Bell Choir, noon, back balcony

Monday, December 5

- Staff meeting, 1:30 p.m.
CrossOver Prison Ministries, 6 p.m., First Christian

Tuesday, December 6

- Meditation and Tai Chi, 10:30 a.m., third floor parlor

Wednesday, December 7

- Computer Class, 9:30 a.m.
Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Yoga, 6 p.m., third floor parlor
Sanctuary Choir, 7 p.m.

Thursday, December 8

- Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
MARCOS, 6-8 p.m., Bonefish Grill

Friday, December 9

- 40/50 Club, 7 p.m., *Jackson-Richards* home, 5008 Martha

Saturday, December 10

- Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Week of Sunday, December 11

Sunday, December 11

- First Forum, 9:15 a.m.
Choristers, 9:15 a.m. rehearsal, sing during worship
New members welcomed during worship
Cookie Walk, 11:30 a.m., Memorial Hall
Evergreen Thrift Shop, open after worship
Bell Choir, noon, back balcony
First YOUth, 11:30 sack lunch, class with *Scott Hoyt*, noon; activity to follow
Mourning Light service, 3 p.m.

Monday, December 12

- Staff meeting, 1:30 p.m.
CrossOver Prison Ministries, 6 p.m., First Christian
Eves, 7 p.m., *Susan Fortina's*, 3504 Woolworth

Tuesday, December 13

- Meditation and Tai Chi, 10:30 a.m., third floor parlor

Wednesday, December 14

- Computer Class, 9:30 a.m.
Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
"Sanctuary" Spirituality Group, 6-7 p.m., Memorial Hall
Yoga, 6 p.m., third floor parlor
Sanctuary Choir, 7 p.m.

Thursday, December 15

- Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Saturday, December 16

- Evergreen Thrift Shop, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Yoga, 10 a.m., third floor parlor
Siena/Francis House, 4:30 p.m.

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