

# THE CONGREGATIONALIST

FIRST CENTRAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH United Church of Christ

Established 1856

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

[www.firstcentral.org](http://www.firstcentral.org)

Volume 15 Issue 24

June 23, 2011



**Please remember in your thoughts and prayers:** : *Scott & Ashley Girvan*, as they celebrate their marriage; *Ruth Ralston*, recently hospitalized; *Cindy Hoellen*, recently hospitalized; *Lynn (Wiebel) & Jeff Schumacher*, married here in May; family of *Allen Wotherspoon*, who died June 15<sup>th</sup>

*Note: Remember, hospitals DO NOT let us know when you are hospitalized. Please call and let the office know (402-345-15330) when you are hospitalized, or have any other information you would like to share with the church.*

## Need a Ride?

If you need a ride to church, see the upcoming driver schedule below. Please call the driver directly for the Sunday you'd like to attend:

June 26, Steve Trautman, 402-556-4215

July 3, Allan Bucknam, 402-393-7092

July 10, Sam Pfeifer, 402-691-8776

## Why Support Thrift Shops?

*From the article "The Thrift Economy" by Larry Hollon*

1. Thrift shopping provides lower economic groups access to goods they might not normally be able to afford. Immigrant populations are able to dress themselves and their children with appropriate clothing that allows them to assimilate into our culture easier.
2. The thrift stores are giving back to the community. These non-profits are original examples of social business because they have invested in providing for their community needs – children's health, job skills, feeding the poor and more.
3. Thrift shopping is appealing to a new breed of eco-chic. Social consciousness and an increased focus on recycling and repurposed goods are at the heart of a portion of thrift purchases. Many conscientious Americans are trying to reduce

their carbon footprint and impact on the environment. So repurposing clothing and other household items is seen as a green alternative. In addition, shopping takes on a new "feel good, do good" experience when you know you are contributing to a charity that you believe in.

4. Thrift shopping has a global impact. Have you ever given thought to what happens to the unsalable goods from thrift shops? Or have you seen someone in Africa wearing a t-shirt from your community and wonder how it got there? About half the garments donated to places like The Salvation Army eventually wind up in overseas market stalls or as industrial fiber. That second life translates into 17,000 jobs in the United States, an estimated 100,000 jobs in Africa's informal economy and a multi-national trade in second-hand clothing valued at more than \$1 billion a year. Between 1999 and 2003, the U.S. exported nearly 7 billion pounds of used clothing and worn textiles.

Social enterprise provides the ability to help on many levels. So when you are thinking about clearing out your closet or purchasing a new garment, think thrift and think social.

*Shop our **Evergreen Thrift Shop**, Wednesdays and Thursdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.*

## Fireworks!

You're invited to watch the Midtown fireworks on Sunday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, beginning at 8 p.m., in the *Switzer's* front yard – 1333 S. 36<sup>th</sup> Street. Bring your own snacks, drinks, chairs, and bug spray. The fireworks usually begin just after dark.

## Eves

Join the Eves for Jazz on the Green at Midtown Crossing, July 7<sup>th</sup>, at 7 p.m. Look for *Susan Fortina*, who hopefully will have a good spot picked out for us!

## The Heartland Proclamation

On Wednesday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, over three hundred people gathered at the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge, overlooking the fast-rising waters of the Missouri River, for the public release of the Heartland Proclamation by Heartland Clergy for Inclusion. First Central was represented by myself, *Rev. Jeannie Bates, Rev. Fred Felger, Rev. Jim Harmon, Rev. Donald Wester*, and a handful of our members who were present in the enthusiastic crowd.

We proclaimed, "In repentance and obedience to the Holy Spirit, we stand in solidarity as those who are committed to work and pray for full acceptance and inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons in our churches and in our world." You'll find a copy of the proclamation inserted in this Congregationalist, along with a list of clergy who had signed the document as of June 15. You can also check out the Heartland Proclamation website at [www.heartlandproclamation.org](http://www.heartlandproclamation.org) in order to see the latest list of clergy signers and to read comments, news stories, and blog posts.

Early this year, the *Rev. Dr. Eric Elnes* of Countryside Community Church called together a group of local clergy to address the need for more public statements by Christian clergy on behalf of the full equality and inclusion of LGBT persons. *Fred Felger* and I have both worked on the planning committee of the group that eventually selected the name Heartland Clergy for Inclusion. It has been fun ecumenical work with a group of energetic and gifted clergy.

Acceptance of LGBT persons has increased dramatically in American culture in recent years. The latest Gallup Poll revealed that 53% of Americans support marriage equality for lesbians and gays. Now, all but one mainline Protestant denomination (the United Methodist Church) ordains openly gay ministers. And important laws have recently been implemented.

For many people, the issues of LGBT civil rights and inclusion are settled, but there is still much work to be done before full equality and recognition are achieved. For instance, in Omaha in 2011 it is still legal for an employer to fire an employee whom they discover to be dating someone of the same gender. Last fall the City Council rejected an ordinance that would have made it illegal to fire someone for that reason.

The *Rev. Dr. David Ruhe*, one of First Central's former pastors, has signed the proclamation and also drove to Omaha on June 15 to speak publicly at the event at the pedestrian bridge. David said, "We have not spoken in

the public arena as regularly and forcefully as faith in a God of love and justice requires of us. To borrow words from the prophet Micah, we have perhaps been too busy 'walking humbly with [our] God' to truly 'do justice and love kindness.'"

Peace,  
*Scott*

## Thank You

*Donald Wester*

It is hard to believe an entire month has passed since my ordination service on May 22. The joy I experienced that day can only be compared with the joy of my marriage to *Cathy*, and the joy that our kids and grandson bring to my life. I especially want to thank the choir who sang so beautifully my very favorite hymn, "Be Thou My Vision," the Spirit moved, my heart leaped. I also want to thank the Friends and Family Team for all of the wonderful work they did in preparing and serving the reception. I want to say a special thanks to *Sam Pfeifer*, for doing so much to help my out of town family and guests feel welcome for our lunch at the church, and *Val Himes* and *Jenny Pfeifer*, who endured my nervousness and made sure the chancel and sanctuary were properly prepared for the service. I know there are a lot of others that contributed in unique ways to the events of that day and I want you to know I am very grateful to each of you. First Central, you have truly blessed me. Thanks, is my prayer!

## **THE CREEK IS RISING AND WE GOTTA MOVE!**

*Barbara* and I would like to thank our friends from First Central who came down June 10<sup>th</sup> and helped us pack our home. We at Lake WaConDa had been told by the Army Corp of Engineers that it would be best for all of us to move away from the upcoming flooding of the Missouri River. Our lake is a finger lake right off the river south of Omaha some 35 miles.

We do not list these friends in any order but do want to name them and certainly thank them: *Joan Eddy, Ken Friedman-Fitch, John & Julie Hodgson, Eddy & Mike Godfrey, Judy Gaeddert* and her grandson, *Joe*, and last and best of all our good friends *Kathy & Gary McConnell*. We could not have been ready for moving the next week-end by our children and grand-children if it were not for these true Christians... praise the Lord!

*Barbara & Luther MacNaughton*

## Christian Education

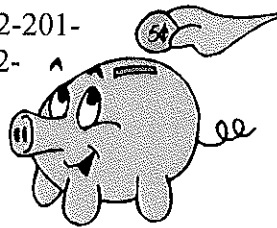


**Our Thanks  
to Nursery  
Attendants  
Carolyn  
and  
Melissa!!**

This month we give thanks for the women in our nursery who take such great care of our youngest church attendees. *Carolyn Ladwig* is the most tenured staff person here at the church with 16 years of service to First Central. Her assistant, *Melissa Robinson*, has worked here throughout high school and even though she's headed to college, she's planning to stay with us – yea! Though you may not see them upstairs much, their dedication and consistent care help our children feel comfortable in the nursery and get them ready to join Grand Central Stations when they are ready. Please stop by the nursery and say thanks.

### FirstYOUTH Mission Trip Fundraising

The Carnival on June 18<sup>th</sup> was lots of fun and netted \$575 towards the mission trip. Special thanks to everyone who donated, volunteered, or participated. Penny Wars, the raffle, and other events are ongoing, so please continue to stop by the YOUTH table on Sundays. Questions or ideas for the Youth Group? Call *Lamar Jones* at 402-201-1158, *Elizabeth Wearin* at 712-623-3414, or *Madeline Ferber* at 402-341-6757.



### First Forums: Adult Education

**June 26 – The Re-emergence of Spirituality**  
Join *Scott Jones*, Sr. Minister of First Central, as he presents some introductory understandings of the creative work of the spirit in our post-modern life.

**July 3rd** – no class due to the holiday weekend.

## Grand Central Stations

### We are the Church together

This summer, all of the church school classes (10:45 to 11:30) are open to parents, YOUTH, new members, or anyone who would like to learn more about the church.

**June 26** – Who works here and just what do they do? Join *Sara Sharpe*, our Office Administrator, and *Sam Pfeifer*, our Sexton, for tours and demonstrations of the work areas.



**July 3** – No Grand Central Stations – children will stay in Worship with their families.

### Classroom Changes

There are new window blinds in the Nursery, Music and Art Stations, and they look great! Thanks to *Wendy Monbouquette* for sharing her expertise, and the memorial funds from *Peggy Blount*, who made this possible.

Volunteers are needed this summer to help consolidate and deep clean the church school classrooms, including carpet cleaning, window washing, and moving/organizing the costume rack. If you have a few hours to volunteer, please talk to *Peg Peterson*.

### It's time to Share the Bounty

Once again there will be a table in the parlor where you can bring or buy extra garden produce. All proceeds from the Mini Farmer's Market table will go towards purchasing food for the Community Meal. First Central will be serving the meal again in August, so please stop by the table in the parlor and take home some fresh fruits, vegetables, or herbs and make a donation.



## Sunday Mornings

*Regularly scheduled events*

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

**next newsletter deadline**

**Sunday, June 19<sup>th</sup>**

email articles to [sara@firstcentral.org](mailto:sara@firstcentral.org)

## Week of Sunday, June 26

### Sunday, June 26

First Forum, 9:15 a.m.

“The Re-Emergence of Spirituality”

Conversational Dinner, 6 p.m., church

### Monday, June 27

Staff meeting, 11 a.m.

CrossOver Prison Ministries, 6 p.m., First Christian

### Tuesday, June 28

Council, 7 p.m., Fireside Room

### Wednesday, June 29

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

### Thursday, June 30

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

### Saturday, July 2

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

Yoga, 10 a.m., third floor parlor

## Week of Sunday, July 3

### Sunday, July 3

First Forum, no class

Grand Central Stations, First YOUth, no class

*Rev. Donald Wester* preaching

Food Pantry Sunday

Fireworks, 8 p.m., *Switzer's*

### Monday, July 4

Office closed in observance of Independence Day

CrossOver Prison Ministries, 6 p.m., First Christian

### Tuesday, July 5

Meditation, 11 a.m., third floor parlor

Tai Chi, 11:30 a.m., third floor parlor

### Wednesday, July 6

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

Yoga, 6 p.m., third floor parlor

### Thursday, July 7

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

Eves, Jazz on the Green, 7 p.m.

### Saturday, July 9

YOUth Mission Trip begins

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

Yoga, 10 a.m., third floor parlor

### Sunday, July 10

Advent Projects, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., Memorial Hall

First Forum, 9:15 a.m. “Anticipating Advent”

Evergreen Thrift Shop open after worship

Church Chat, 11:40 a.m., Pastor’s Study

Education Ministry, 11:45 a.m., Resource Room

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# ***The Heartland Proclamation***

## ***by the Heartland Clergy for Inclusion***

As Christian clergy we proclaim the Good News concerning Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) persons and publically apologize where we have been silent. As disciples of Jesus, who assures us that the truth sets us free, we recognize that the debate is over. The verdict is in. Homosexuality is not a sickness, not a choice, and not a sin. We find no rational biblical or theological basis to condemn or deny the rights of any person based on sexual orientation. Silence by many has allowed political and religious rhetoric to monopolize public perception, creating the impression that there is only one Christian perspective on this issue. Yet we recognize and celebrate that we are far from alone, as Christians, in affirming that LGBT persons are distinctive, holy, and precious gifts to all who struggle to become the family of God.

In repentance and obedience to the Holy Spirit, we stand in solidarity as those who are committed to work and pray for full acceptance and inclusion of LGBT persons in our churches and in our world. We lament that LGBT persons are condemned and excluded by individuals and institutions, political and religious, who claim to be speaking the truth of Christian teaching. This leads directly and indirectly to intolerance, discrimination, suffering, and even death. The Holy Spirit compels us:

- to affirm that the essence of Christian life is not focused on sexual orientation, but how one lives by grace in relationship with God, with compassion toward humanity;
- to embrace the full inclusion of our LGBT brothers and sisters in all areas of church life, including leadership;
- 
- to declare that the violence must stop. Christ's love moves us to work for the healing of wounded souls who are victims of abuse often propagated in the name of Christ;
- to celebrate the prophetic witness of all people who have refused to let the voice of intolerance and violence speak for Christianity, especially LGBT persons, who have met hatred with love;

Therefore we call for an end to all religious and civil discrimination against any person based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. All laws must include and protect the freedoms, rights, and equal legal standing of all persons, in and outside the church.

(Document approved 4/5/11)

Rev. Melanie Adams  
Trinity United Methodist Church,  
Grand Island  
Rev. Stephanie Ahlschwede  
United Methodist Ministries  
Rev. Terri Akkerman  
United Church of Christ, NE  
Rev. Chris Alexander  
Countryside Community Church (UCC),  
Omaha  
Rev. Zach Anderson  
United Methodist Church  
Rev. Joe Arganbright  
Ret. Southern Baptist, Oklahoma City  
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Elgin, NE  
Rev. Ray Avidano  
Elgin, NE  
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Trinity Lutheran Church, Omaha, NE  
Pastor John Backus  
Trinity Lutheran Church, Omaha, NE  
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United Church of Christ, Omaha, NE  
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Grace Lutheran Church  
Rev. Bob Lawrence

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Rev. Kevin Leischner  
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Plymouth Congregational UCC, Des Moines  
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ELCA  
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Pastor MaryBeth Nicholson  
Congregational UCC, Belvidere, NE  
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Columbus, NE  
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United Methodist  
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JustHope, Tulsa  
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United Methodist Church

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United Methodist  
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Metropolitan Community Church, Omaha  
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United Church of Christ, retired, Lincoln, NE  
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UMC, Oklahoma Conference  
Pastor Neil Spurgin  
Expressions Church, Oklahoma City  
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Kirkwood Baptist, St Louis  
Rev. Kurt A. Stecker  
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Churches, Craig, NE  
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United Methodist Church  
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Rev. Charlene Wozy  
Omaha, NE  
Rev. Rebecca Zelensky  
Central Christian Church (DOC),  
Terre Haute, IN

**Heartland Clergy for  
Inclusion** invites all  
Heartland area ordained and  
licensed clergy to sign the  
statement at our website  
[www.heartlandproclamation.org](http://www.heartlandproclamation.org)