



Christian Courier

First Christian Church of Minneapolis (Disciples of Christ)

December 5, 2009

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fccminneapolis.org

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Advent Activities fill the Season at FCC

Advent begins this week at First Christian with the annual **Women's Ministries Brunch** on Saturday, Dec. 5, followed by the "**Deck the Halls**" party in the afternoon. Wednesday night **Advent vespers** also began on Dec. 2, and will continue for the Wednesdays leading up the Christmas. The brief service begins at 7 pm in the Fireside Lounge, and is an informal gathering time of prayer, meditation and communion.

Three music programs will be presented in our sanctuary during the Advent Season.

We are thrilled to be able to host for the second time a production of Gian Carlo Menotti's opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors* on Friday night, Dec. 18, at 7:30 pm. Laura Anderson, our soprano soloist, is producing this opera, and James Barnett, our pianist, will conduct the orchestra. Both the orchestra and chorus will feature student musicians from the University of Minnesota. Members of our choir will join student singers in the chorus. James Baumgartner, choir tenor, and Anna DeGraff, alto, will sing leading roles. The role of the boy will be sung by Luke Bilotta, who is a member of the Minnesota Boychoir. Freewill donations will again go to Feed My Starving Children. Please invite family and friends to this special Advent performance.



Join Us for
the Holidays!

Nicolas Carter will present two concerts during Advent. Saturday, Dec. 12, Nicolas will be joined by his ensemble *Nube* for a program called "The Golden Bird." *Nube* is a four-member group of harp, guitar, percussion and Andean flutes. This event also begins at 7 pm with tickets \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door.

The following Saturday, Dec. 19, Nicolas will perform a solo program of music and reflections on the season. The program will begin at 7 pm, and tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door.

Advent will culminate on Christmas Eve, with a service at 8:00 pm. The service will be preceded by a reception at 7 pm, and a Prelude Concert at 7:30.

More Advent Celebrations:

Cookie Baking... Special Pageant Invitation... "Advent Conspiracy" See page 4 for details!

A Look at the Brite Side

Bob offers Beard as gift and challenge



Pastor Bob Brite

Following our current round of Unbinding the Gospel meetings, a week ago Sunday I put forth a challenge to the FCC worshipping community. It was a challenge that contained both a gimmick and a gift. The gimmick is that if all of you together invite enough people to have 250 in worship on Christmas Sunday, December 20, I will shave off my beard of 31 years. That means that every person currently attending will have to invite about 2.6 people (how you work out inviting .6 of a person is your concern). The purpose of this

proposal: it's weird enough, perhaps, to be an encouragement for you to invite folks to church. The gift is that, as well, if we have 250 in worship on December 20, I will donate \$300 to regional ministry.

"The first people a church needs to evangelize are those closest to us"
Martha Grace Reese

Why am I doing this, you may ask? Martha Grace Reese, in her viewpoints on evangelism, says that the first people to whom a church needs to evangelize are those closest to us, family and friends. Tex Sample, a leading Disciples scholar, in his book [U.S. Lifestyles and Mainline Churches](#) found in his demographic studies that fundamentalist churches grow because they hold on to their family base; as the families grow and add children, they tend to stay with their church community.

He also found that with mainline churches, the opposite is true: We don't hold onto our families, and therefore, we are shrinking. If we can start by reclaiming our community base – the families and friends around us, then we have the opportunity to rebuild the community by adding new folks through a second worship service and other efforts.

I like my beard. And if you get 250 folks in church on Dec. 20, I'll shave it off that morning, but it probably won't stay off. Nevertheless, it's a sacrifice for me to offer up my beard for the FCC cause. I'm encouraging you to sacrifice, to risk yourselves a bit, to help grow the body of Christ, and I've tried to give you an easy, somewhat wacky way to do so. How about it, folks?

I'd like to see YOU (and 2.6 or more of your family/friends) on any Sunday!

Bob

In Our Prayers

Gracious God, we lift up these persons in our prayers, asking the blessing of your Grace and outpouring of your Love upon them.

We pray for **Ali Hesano's friend** who sprained her wrist recently and all those who have suffered accidents or injuries; for **Nancy Curry's good friend** in West Virginia who was recently hospitalized for cancer treatments and for all those live with chronic or critical illnesses; for all those in the armed services at home and abroad, and for their families who wait and worry; for all who mourn the loss of a loved one; for all who suffer during the season of holidays; with all legislators who are working on health care legislation; for all our homebound members, especially Stan and Elaine Moe. Amen.

Transition Team Report

The Transition Team for FCC is responsible for developing and forwarding to the Board and Congregation recommendations for the congregation's future. The team, currently composed of Pat Dunlop, Tom Curry, Skip Wolverton, Val Dunham, Bobbie Hall, and Martha Harris, along with Bob Brite and Dennis Sanders, has met six times since late July. The issues the Team has discussed and are working through have been wide-ranging and complex, including, but not limited to the following:

- whether to move or to close;
- whether to move into ecumenical partnership with another congregation;
- whether to stay in the Whittier neighborhood or relocate to the suburbs;
- what sort of experiments to conduct in the ministry of FCC to define its ministry and encourage its growth; and,
- whether the energy of the congregation is of such a nature to invest itself in such experiments.

To this point, the Team has come up with the following understandings:

- 1) The central question to be addressed by FCC is "What is best thing that we can do to promote the life of the Church, the body of Christ, through FCC's future?"
- 2) The question of moving is secondary to the question of viability – in other words, it is not a good idea, and in fact is poor stewardship of God's resources, to buy or build another congregational plant if the church is going to continue to decline, decline to the point of closure in not more than another 10 – 15 years.
- 3) The question of viability is directly related to age demographic – the congregation has a strong group of people in their 60's, 70's, and 80's. The congregation's greatest need is to develop a minis-

try that attracts more of the younger generations: youth and children, 20's, 30's, 40's, and 50's.

In the light of these understandings, the Transition Team is trying to develop proposals for the congregation to chew over and consider concerning what the congregation may look like in five years.

The Team also endorses, in the spirit of transformation, a proposal by Pastors Brite and Sanders to begin an alternative worshipping community movement in the life of FCC, but with the provision that the current FCC community can see it as an appropriate ministry of the church and be willing to pour time, talent, resources, and ownership into the effort. The proposal for this has gone through the Worship Committee, been passed by the Board, and \$50,000 has been allocated by Finance Committee in the 2010 Budget for that purpose. That allocation, as well as the whole 2010 Budget, will be dealt with by the Board at a special board meeting on December 20 following worship.

The Team continues to meet on the average of about every 3 weeks, and in future meetings will be consulting with other congregations going through similar circumstances, developing further programmatic experiments for transformation, and continuing to wrestle with that central question defined above. Team members welcome congregational input as well.

Special Board Meeting set for Dec. 20

There will be a special, brief Board meeting following worship on Sunday, December 20, to deal with the matters of nominations and budgets. The regularly scheduled Board meeting on December 22 has been cancelled per the decision at the November meeting.

More Advent Happenings and Invitations



Here at First Christian, we believe that Christmas can [still] change the world. To that end we partnered with the Advent Conspiracy www.AdventConspiracy.org to celebrate Christmas

by spending less, giving more, worshipping fully and loving all in this season.

We offer the following opportunities to be a part of the Advent Conspiracy:

- **Buy** an animal at the Heifer Project on Dec. 6
- **Drop off** a used children's book for homeless children
- **Volunteer** with Project Homeless Connect on December 7
- **Adopt** a Family and buy presents for a through the Aliveness Project
- **Bake** cookies for the Aliveness Project
- **Donate** hygienic items for Community Emergency Service until December 24, and non-perishable items and cash to the Aliveness Project on Food Pantry Sunday, Dec. 13th.

The Advent Conspiracy is a grassroots movement with more than 1,000 churches in 17 countries participating as co-conspirators with projects as varied as drilling a water well for those who lack clean water, to simply encouraging congregations to think of meaningful acts of kindness as meaningful gift options to replace traditional gifts. Last year, through Advent Conspiracy, \$3 Million was raised for relief projects which included providing clean water and medical attention to communities in need around the world.

Why not be committed to giving gifts that really will change the world—like quality time, helping the homeless, feeding the hungry and looking for ways to be more loving? It's not just about saving money; it's about remembering that when we give presence instead of presents, the scandal of Christmas, of God's breaking into our humanity through the birth of Jesus, has been restored.

Special Needs Christmas Pageant promises a special moment for all

First Christian friends and families have been invited by Spirit of St. Stephen's community to come to a special Christmas pageant on Saturday, Dec. 19, at 10 am in Fellowship Hall.

The pageant will be put on by adults in the Special Needs Program. The Special Needs program, previously based at St. Stephens Catholic Church, is a four-decades-old gathering place for adults with special needs that includes a spiritual program on Saturdays and social activities on Thursdays.

The pageant is certain to bring out the spirit of the season. Julia Apaloo, who works with this program, invites us with these words, "We have found that our friends tell the story in a unique and meaningful way. They do so with seasonal music, lovely costumes, camels and sheep made of wood and a real babe in the manger. We offer this program and a reception afterwards as our gift to you and we cordially invite you and all members of your community to attend."

20's to 30's-Somethings invited to bake, eat and share cookies

Saturday, December 12, from 1 – 4 p.m., the "younger" folk of the church will be gathering in FCC's commercial-sized kitchen, for the purpose of cookie baking. Bring your favorite holiday recipes and ingredients, and share in the fun and fellowship. (Bring along your appetites as well for sampling!)



FCC Board Notes

The Church Board met on Nov. 17 to hear reports and consider motions. Sixteen people plus the two pastors attended the meeting. Highlights from the minutes include the following:

- The Outreach committee brought a motion that the Board approve matching funds for the agencies (Feed My Starving Children and Community Emergency Service) designated to receive offerings for *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. Motions carried.
- The board chair brought a motion to extend Dennis Sanders' contract for another year. Motion carried.
- Several groups and committees reported using funds to support various missions

and programs. Women's Ministries contributed \$4000 to Disciples Mission Fund; Outreach provided \$5000 for an Emergency Fund for members in need, \$1000 to Rochester for a new church start, \$1000 to Heifer International, \$1000 for seed money for local mission funds, \$500 to Groveland Foodshelf, \$1500 to Week of Compassion, and \$500 to Reconciliation.

The special December Board Meeting on Dec. 20 after church will focus on the budget for the coming year and nominations for the 2010 terms of elders, deacons and trustees.

SAVE THE DATE!

Thin Place – Sacred Space: A performance and exhibition featuring the work of the Arts Practicum class of United Theological Seminary: Cyndi Bradbury, Kayla Daniels, Leslie Johnson, Kris Killam, Deb Murphy, Bob Tollefson

Thursday, December 10, 12:15-1:25 pm, Steckel Learning Center, United Theological Seminary—Conversation about artistic process, projects, and more. Bring your lunch and join in the discussion!

Friday, December 11, 7-9 pm, Bigelow Chapel, United Theological Seminary—Performance and Exhibition

Questions? Contact Kayla Daniels: kdaniels@unitedseminary.edu or Deb Murphy (612-807-2287). We hope you can join us!

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities
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Poinsettias in Short Supply this Year

Because of a city-wide shortage, our distributor of poinsettias has only red ones available this year.

However, they also have pink and white cyclamens available for the same price of \$11.00.

Please let the church office know of your preference ASAP. Otherwise we will need to order what is still available.

Bi-Weekly Calendar

Sundays at First Christian Church

Before Worship (9:15 am):

Art of the Covenant Class
Hearthstone Class
Bible Study Class
Prayer Circle

Worship 10:30 am
Fellowship Hour 11:45 am

This Week at FCC

Tuesday, Dec. 8

Property Cmte (may be canceled) 7 pm

Wednesday, Dec. 9

Finance Committee 5:30 pm
Lectionary Bible Study 6 pm
Advent Vespers 7 pm
Bell Choir 6:30 pm
Chancel Choir 7:45 pm

Thursday, Dec. 10

Handcrafters 9 am
Carter Circle @ Barb Rusinak's 7 pm

Friday, Dec. 11

-Article deadline for next Courier

Saturday, Dec. 12

Men's Group 9 am
20s-30s Cookie Bake 1 pm
Nicolas Carter Concert 7 pm

Next Week at FCC

Sunday, Dec. 13

Recital (sanctuary) 7:30 pm

Wednesday, Dec. 16

Lectionary Bible Study 6 pm
Advent Vespers 7 pm
Bell Choir 6:30 pm
Chancel Choir 7:45 pm

Thursday, Dec. 17

Handcrafters 9 am

Friday, Dec. 18

Amahl and the Night Visitors 7:30 pm

Sat. Dec. 19

Men's Group 9 am
Special Needs Pageant 10 am
Laura Lynne/Naomi Circle 10 am
Serve meal at St. Stephens 6 pm
Nicolas Carter and Nube concert 7 pm

Reflections on the Word *From Readings for 12.6.09*

“And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” –Luke 3:6

We know this common phrase from Handel's *Messiah*, and from yearly readings of the narrative around Jesus' birth. Think of “all flesh,” a literal translation of the Greek, meaning “all things now living”! All humans, all animals, all who live and love and suffer in this life, in the flesh of the living. First we see, then experience in hope and faith.

God of our salvation, give us eyes to see you, minds to perceive you, hearts to love you, and mouths to proclaim your salvation. Amen.

–Chris Wogaman

*A Thoughtful Church in the
Heart of the City*

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Dennis Sanders, Minister of Diversity
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