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Stephen P. Savides, Senior Pastor  
Jane B. Anderson, Co-Pastor  
Maynard E. Beemer, Pastor Emeritus  
Karon Sandberg, Seminary Intern  
Gene Sinner, Church Administrator

Kara J. Woodford, Director for Children's Ministries  
Maja Glidden, Interim High School Coordinator  
Deb Burich, Director for Volunteer Ministries  
John M. Albrecht, Director for Music Ministries  
Jon D. Riehle, Organist

## SCHEDULE OF WORSHIP

### SUNDAY, JANUARY 10, 2010—THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

Meditation ..... Rev. Stephen Savides  
“Visions of Spiritual Renewal”  
Ezekiel 47:1-6, Luke 3:15-17, 21-22, Psalm 29

#### Music

8:45 a.m. .... The Sanctuary Choir  
10:30 a.m. .... The LU Music Scholars

### SUNDAY, JANUARY 17, 2010—SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Meditation ..... Karon Sandberg, Seminary Intern  
“Visions of Socio-Political Renewal”  
Ezekiel 47:6b-9, I Cor.12:4-11, Psalm 36:5-10

#### Music

8:45 a.m. .... The LU Music Scholars  
10:30 a.m. .... The Sanctuary Choir

**SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP IS BROADCAST OVER  
RADIO STATION WECB 104.3 FM AT 8:40 A.M.**

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC ANNUAL MEETING  
JANUARY 24, 2010**

**8:45 a.m.—One service only**

**ALL CONGREGATIONAL GAME NIGHT  
Saturday, January 30, 2010**

Announcing an “All Congregational Game Night” with supper and games for all ages and interests.

### **WARMING SHELTER**

The Fox Valley Warming Shelter returns to our church January 10-16. Let's warm them from the inside out! We will be collecting men's underwear to help clothe the warming shelter clients. Please donate new men's boxers, briefs, or long underwear, sizes medium and up and place in the box in the narthex. Any questions, call Mary Sullivan 740-9452.



## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK:

For unto us is born a Savior...

Dear Friends,

The New Year begins. Some of us will be assured that a new year has begun when we see familiar signs telling us it's so—the turning of the clock past midnight on December 31<sup>st</sup>; the Ball dropping in Times Square; the long awaited kiss that we hoped for from someone we love; the breaking out that new 2010 calendar we received as a Christmas present from a thoughtful friend or family member. Others will look for more meaningful signs of a new year, in the hope that they can put the pain, disappointment, grief and struggle of the old year's events and experiences behind them and move on and into times of joy with family and friends. Still others will not notice one way or another that a new year has begun because the anticipation, excitement, and hope of a new year is lost on them as they are lost in devastation and despair.

For Christians, the signs of a new year do not come with the festive banners and dancing balls, photographic calendars or hallmark commemorative moments, but with the proclamation of the birth of a messiah—one who will change lives by the gift of his life, the gift of his love and grace into our lives and the life of this world.

For those who look for Jesus and look for signs of Christ living among us, the New Year is always dawning, as his love and grace are shared abundantly.

The gift of God's love and grace is so amazing and wonderful that I am constantly surprised and overjoyed at the simple ways in which this gift brings hope, joy, peace and love to our troubled, broken world.

A few years back, I had the privilege of taking some youth on a mission trip to Norfolk, VA. We stayed in the inner city, an experience many of these young people had not had. The homes we renovated had been damaged not by floods or hurricanes but by the daily life and workings of an inner city: drug dealers, slumlords, poverty and extreme hardship. I will never forget the first day on the jobsite as I

looked into the faces of our youth and young adult leaders wondering how in the world we would be able to do anything that would make a difference. I then surveyed the faces of the local folks who looked at us and must have thought to themselves, "How are these scrawny young things going to be able to tackle the work that needs to be done here?" (And that's the polite way of saying what indeed I believe they were thinking.) But during the course of the week, the minds and hearts of our youth, young adults and the neighbors were changed as they worked side by side, facing each task as it came and pressing on in the face of big building and weather challenges. By week's end, with the help of long-term community residents, we renovated three houses, turning them into homes which Habitat for Humanity was able to gift to three families.

During the course of that week, more than houses were made new—lives were given new hope and joy, new relationships were built between neighbors and new friends, and radical social divides were bridged. That blitz build week brought the gift of God's love and grace to a whole community and new life was born there.

The gift of a new year doesn't begin with the turn of the calendar but with the birth of God's love and grace in our hearts. And that hope for new life is made real when we share God's love and grace with others each and every day.

May your New Year be full and rich with many blessings as you are a blessing to others.

Peace and love,

Jane

## JOYS AND CONCERNS

Members of our church family benefit from our prayers, continuing support, and words of encouragement as they celebrate special times or struggle with difficult times in their lives. Please keep these people in your prayers. Greet them with a loving word when you see them.

Wanda Beemer  
Alden Grade  
Georgie Harris  
Carol Huebner  
Syliva Huth's granddaughter  
Candi Koenigs, friend of Deb Burich  
Craig Miller  
Kirk Nichols  
George Petersen  
Donald Phillips, father of Rick Phillips  
Trina Reynolds  
Gwen Salonen's mother, Betty Becker  
JoAnn Shropshire  
Sue Wisneski  
Ellen Witwer's friend, Pat High

## CONTINUING PRAYERS:

Dee Abts' mother  
Katie Behl  
Cheryl Benzschawel's father  
Heather Genke Bogacz  
Judy Bowman  
Ingrid Fields  
Steve Furstenberg  
Ken Geiger  
Paul Grube's sister-in-law, Connie  
Ethel Jesse  
Judy Kaddatz  
Tammy Nelson's mother, Jacki Krause  
Richard Miller's son-in-law, Rick Kramer  
James Marsh, father of Mae Van Driest  
Donald Phillips, father of Rick  
Bette Schmidt  
Joyce Spurlock  
Mya Wardle, daughter of Brian and Lecia  
Wardle  
Melba Webster, grandmother of Rhonda  
Vanden Boogaard  
Helen Wright

## MUSIC NOTES

*From Director For Music Ministries, John Albrecht*

The Advent and Christmas seasons are especially rich with music at First Congregational. Thank you to all our youth who participated in the Middle School Orchestra, and to their directors – Beth Vercooteren, Jim Thaldorf, Vicky Daniel, and Marlessa Benson. Thank you to Dee Savides (writer and director) and cast for the Children's Christmas Pageant. Thanks to the 40+ singers who joined us for All-Church Caroling, reaching out to shut-ins in our community. Thank you to our dedicated and gifted Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra, presenting beautiful extended works on December 6 and singing the 10:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service. Thank you to flutist Jane Bent and the many instrumentalists who have shared their gifts in our mid-week Advent services, coordinated by pianist Joan Jensen. Thanks to our Children's Choir, singing in December worship and on Christmas Eve. Thanks to our Youth Handbells for their December ringing. Many thanks to our many vocal and instrumental soloists for our four Christmas Eve Services: Organ Scholars Katie and Kelsey LaViolette; harpist Sunny Link; flutist Barb Boren; oboist Leslie Michelic; violist Matt Michelic; Brass Quintet members John Toussaint, Amy Sherwin, Kelli Thaldorf, Cal Patton and Jim Thaldorf; soloist Karen Leigh-Post; soloist Steven Paul Spears; soloist Leland Raymond; oboist Howard Niblock; harpsichordist, pianist and organist Jon Riehle.

Mark your calendars for **Sunday, January 10, at 7:00 p.m. when the Millikin University Concert Choir** presents a concert in our Sanctuary. This nationally renowned ensemble will present a program of sacred and secular works. A free-will offering will be received. Bring a friend, and come join us!



**THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE  
OF THE OPEN DOOR IS 9:00 A.M. ON  
MONDAY, JANUARY 4, 2010.**

## **MAIZE PROVIDED FOR THE KERIO VALLEY, KENYA**

During our visit to Kerio Valley, Kenya in June 2009, we observed dried river beds where on the previous trip water had flowed abundantly. In the southern part of the valley we noticed the lack of vegetation, cattle, goats and people. We were told that many people had to move to higher areas because of the drought, leaving their homes and plots of land. Land that had once provided their food and rivers that had given them and the animals' sustenance were now dried and barren.

Over the last months we have received emails from our friends in Kenya that tell us that due to continued drought conditions, many people in the Kerio Valley were starving. Some were dying. Many children ate their only meal of the day at school – a bowl of ugali. There was no food at home. We were told that maize (corn) could be purchased in the highlands where the rains had come and maize had grown, but for people who relied on their own maize crops to sustain them, there was no money to purchase maize or other food, nor send their children to school.

The Kenya partnership team requested that \$2,000 of a special fund, the Claire Gehin fund, be sent to the Kerio Valley District Council of Churches for the purchase and transportation of maize to the valley. The Mission and Outreach ministry team unanimously supported this and the money was sent December 21<sup>st</sup>. The church leaders in Kenya are overwhelmingly grateful and will work together to share this maize with those who so desperately need it. It will hold many people over until the rain will come.

Even though only one crop of maize is harvested a year, having rain during other times allows the vegetables and grasses to grow and gives the animals water which in turn allows them to give milk.

They are praying for these rains to come and we join them in this prayer. Please keep our friends and partners in the Kerio Valley in your prayers.

*Deb Burich*

### **On Dec. 23, we received the following email from Pastor Richard Cherop:**

*"Receive special Christmas greetings in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ. We want to thank you and the entire church for your deep concern for those who have no food in Kerio Valley. We have received the gift of maize (USD \$2,000) with a lot of*

*appreciation. Together with Rev. Job, Mildred and the church leaders we are working on the purchase of the maize and will keep you in touch. Thanks and God Bless." Rev. Cherop*

### **On Dec. 23, we received the following email from Mildred Chepkonga:**

*"Thank you very much. Job said that they have received the information about the buying of maize to be taken to Kerio Valley. They will arrange for it soon so that people of Kerio Valley can get maize. Thank you very much for that for I know that the food will save the lives of people of the valley."*

*Mildred*

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## **19<sup>th</sup> Annual Fox Cities Martin Luther King Celebration January 18, 2010 – 6:30 p.m.**

**Lawrence University's  
Memorial Chapel**

**No registration needed  
Free & open to the public**

This year's keynote speaker will be Rev. Wanda J. Washington from Grace United Church of Christ in Milwaukee. After completing her master's degree, she worked in special education and taught deaf-blind students for 20 years in Chicago. In 1986 she accepted her call to ministry and began to attend the Chicago Theological Seminary where she received her Master's of Divinity degree. After she was ordained in 1993 she served as associate pastor and Director of Pastoral Services at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago. In April of 2006, Rev. Washington was chosen to take on the task of being the first African American female to start a new church for the UCCs in the state of Wisconsin. Reverend Washington will inspire us in the message that *Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can*. We are honored once again this year to hear the singing performance of Sigourney Tanner now in her senior year at Lawrence University. Performing during the offering will be the Menasha Blue Jay Marching Band. In addition, the program will include winners of the MLK essay contest who will read their winning essays. Also at this service we will announce the winner of the Jane LaChapelle McCarty Unity in Diversity Award. For more information, please contact Kathy Flores at (920) 832-1564 or Email [Kathy.Flores@appleton.org](mailto:Kathy.Flores@appleton.org).

## ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS MARKET 2009

**“This year, instead of giving more things, give more meaning.”**



**Congo youth bring the joy of education and alternative giving to the 2009 ACM!**

## ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS MARKET 2009

The joy of giving abounded at the 16<sup>th</sup> annual Alternative Christmas Market at First Congregational UCC on November 15. The Fellowship hall overflowed with eager shoppers who were enticed by educational and eye-catching displays. The 2009 market featured 60 projects sponsored by Alternative Gifts International, Church World Service, Global Ministries, and our own mission partnerships. More than \$12,225.00 was raised in gifts of food, shelter, health and rescue for those in need around the world and right here in Appleton.

My heartfelt thanks go out to the ACM committee members, including 16-year veteran Steve Hirby, Deb Burich and JoAnn Shropshire.

Always a favorite, the youth-sponsored booths were a hit! We thank the Hollar-Zwick family, Diane Ragus and senior-high youth Kaelyn Holgerson, Sydney Picard, Denver Collins, Chloe Peebles, Kelsey LaViolette, Jackie Reynders, Paul Savides, Andrew Rowland, Meg Hietpas, David Grube, and Jacob Gresens; Georgia Berceau and middle-school youth Riley Dougherty, Kayla Berceau, Julia Lammers, Sylvia Valk, Katie Hermsen, Hannah Klintworth, Rachel Adams, Tess Verheyen, Savannah Snelling, Ella Janson, Kristen Steinike, Paul Willems. You raised \$2209.

Our shopping atmosphere was enhanced by the

aroma of a tasty breakfast, thanks to Bill Platt, Lisa Malone and Joy Seremeta, and the festive caroling by Tami and Gabriela Johnson and those who joined in! Let's not forget thanking Bert Poi for his extended duties, or the dozens of bakers led by Joyce Hanstedt whose delectable treats raised \$464 for LEAVEN. For everything from a cheerful greeting to our cashiers and calligraphers we can thank Tim & Sheryl DeHart, Pat & Doug Nelson, Ellie Olson, Gretchen Revie, Don & Kris Hietpas, Jeanne Ryerson, Steve & Pat Hirby, Leigh & Liz Grube, Kristy Albrecht, Kathryn Kolash, Pat McConnel and Joan Kust. Then there are the sponsors for the Kenya Partnership, Habitat for Humanity at home and Mexico, Back Bay Mission, Samaritan Counseling, the Emergency Shelter, LEAVEN, Redgranite Prison Ministry, and Kurgan Sister City to thank...whew!..for a total of over 50 volunteers and finally YOU, the ACM shopper!

See more good news and fun photos at [firstcongoappleton.org/missions/ACM](http://firstcongoappleton.org/missions/ACM).

***“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40)***

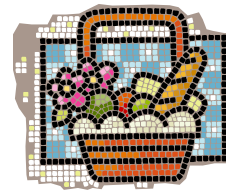
*Karen Leigh-Post  
for the Alternative Christmas Market Committee*

## COFFEE SERVERS NEEDED

Please take a turn serving coffee following the 8:45a.m. church service. It's an easy and enjoyable way to meet and greet other members of our church family. The coffee is made. Our church custodian does the cleanup. You just fill the carafes and pour the coffee. Juice is also available in the small refrigerator in the upper lounge. Sign up sheets are located in the narthex. Thank you.



## EXPRESSIONS OF FAITH NEEDS BASKETS



Did you get a fruit basket from Aunt Harriet this Christmas or from the neighbor whose driveway you shoveled after the last big snow storm?

Expressions Of Faith Group is in need of large baskets approximately 12 x 18 inches for making Habitat for Humanity dedication baskets. If you can be of assistance, please bring the baskets to the church office before January 10, 2010.

## SUMMARY, CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING, DECEMBER 15, 2009

The By-Laws of First Congregational United Church of Christ authorize the Church Council to act on behalf of the congregation between meetings of the congregation. Council would like to keep members informed about its work, so we offer in *The Open Door* each month a brief summary of our decisions and discussion. Readers who are interested in knowing more or providing feedback are encouraged to contact the Moderator, John Hoft-March.

### Decisions made:

- Council approved the HR Committee's recommendation that Jane Anderson be granted sabbatical leave for three months beginning May 2010.
- Noting that the draft operating budget for 2010 has expenses in excess of revenues by about \$42,000, Council agreed to ask ministry teams and committees to revise their expenditure requests.
- Council approved, subject to approval by Mission and Outreach, a grant of up to \$2,000 from Claire Gehin funds to allow our Kerio Valley partners to purchase corn for food.

### Other topics discussed:

- The HR Committee reported on several minor adjustments to the position description for the volunteer parish nurse.
- Vice-Moderator Maureen Ware reported on her work in developing nominees for officer and councilor positions for 2010.
- The Stewardship Committee noted that 2009 pledge revenue continues to run ahead of budget, and pledge commitments for 2010 are encouraging.
- Vice Treasurer Barb Uehling projected total revenue for 2009 in excess of budget. With continued control of expenses, we will likely finish 2009 modestly in the black.
- Steve Savides shared proposed plans for Annual Meeting Sunday, including discussion in small groups on the theme of becoming a more welcoming church.
- Kara Woodford reported on recent efforts with Pathways families in building a wider sense of community and noted the up-coming Christmas pageant.
- Deb Burich described the increasingly desperate food shortage in the Kerio Valley and indicated that Julia Rhodes' relocation means we'll need new leadership of our Habitat for Humanity team.
- Jane Anderson shared information about the Wisconsin Conference listening sessions on restructuring, noted Heather Bogacz's good progress toward ordination, reported on the work of our Seminary Intern, Karon Sandberg, and indicated growth in our Friends in Christ program.
- Gene Sinner reported on recent technology changes and noted the annual report deadline.

For more information on any of these topics, or to provide input about them, please contact the Moderator, John Hoft-March.

*Steve Hirby*

*Church Council Secretary*