



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NEWSLETTER

Volume 51 Number 4

February 28, 2007

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| Sunday School for all ages at 9:30 A.M. | 700 Poyntz Avenue |
| Sunday Worship at 10:45 A.M. | Manhattan, Kansas 66502 |
| Second Helping Dinner at 5:15 P.M. | telephone 785-537-7006 |
| Thursday Evening Taizé at 7:00 P.M. | e-mail ucc@interkan.net |

Testimony: Welcome to Church

From the Pastor: We continue to seek ways to lift up the practice of testimony in our congregation—in worship, education, and in this newsletter. Some testimony is spoken, but in this case it is written. Thank you to Mary Ray for this testimony. – Kent

Today in Sunday School for Adults Kent asked us a question to discuss as though we were at a kitchen table with friends. The question or actually more of a statement went as follows: “I believe in Jesus but the Christians that I know are hypocrites who lie and cheat. I don’t see myself going to church with people like that.” The statement brought something up in me that happened to me many, many years ago that I would like to share.

I had been away from church for probably about 10 years and decided that I would like to have a church home, especially since my children were then 2 and 4 years old. So I called a local church in the town in which we lived at the time (not Manhattan). My concern was that I did not have a nice *[continued on page 2]*

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dress or actually any skirts or dresses at that time. I also did not have the financial assets to purchase one. So my phone call to the church was to inquire whether it would be acceptable to come to church in pants. The response was that I should try to wear acceptable clothing to church since I should be at my best when worshipping God. I can’t even begin to describe how devastated I was when I heard those words. I was at a very vulnerable stage in my life and was looking for a church home. I was looking to come home to God. Those words told me that I was not welcome in that church in my current circumstances. The result was that I simply did not go to church and did not try another church for several months afterward.

As I recalled that personal incident in my life and how abandoned and bereft I felt, I also thought about the stories I have heard about others who have been turned away from the doors of God’s home. How much more hurtful it must be to hear something like, “Sure you can come to our church but don’t mention that you are gay.” That statement is mild compared to others I have heard other people tell about their experience.

So I was very happy when I invited two of my friends to come to church and hear Jo speak on Women’s Sunday several weeks ago. After church they told me that they had been to several other churches in Manhattan that were either open and affirming or at least okay with homosexuals coming to their church. However, this was the very first time they had come to a church and felt safe enough to hold hands. They felt safe enough to be themselves and be a couple. I can’t tell what it is about this church that they felt this comfort here. I can tell you that I am so very proud and honored to be a member of this church and be acknowledged as a child of God on equal footing with everyone else. It means a lot and I want to say, “Thank You.”

Mary Ray

Sharing and Caring

Prayers and Concerns

THESE ITEMS ARE NOT AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE
PLEASE CALL THE CHURCH OFFICE FOR MORE
INFORMATION

Thank You

- Thank you for the support in the amount of \$300.00 that we received from you during the months of July through December, 2006. Your faithful commitment to theological education at Chicago, United and Eden Seminaries is vital to our seminaries, and your dollars provide critical operating support.

Ann S. Moyer, Executive Director of CUE Seminaries

- I would like to thank you on behalf of The Crisis Center, Inc. for the opportunity to use your facilities and equipments for our Winter 2007 Domestic Violence/ Sexual Assault Workshop and Volunteer Training program.

Gaby Neal, Volunteer Coordinator at The Crisis Center

Helping

- **Need a ride to church?** Contact one of our transportation volunteers: Jim Hodgson & Carolyn Schwab, Mike & Martha Miller, Bill Pallett, and Jeff Keller.

White Memorial Camp Spring Work Day

March 23-24, 2007

**Call the K-O Conference Office
(316) 767-5165 to sign up.**

With snow and frost on the ground and the furnace cranked up, summer seems far away, but its not! Now is the time for you and your church to prepare for your involvement at White Memorial

Camp. Cabins need to be reopened and cleaned, air conditioner covers removed, and there may be some electrical and plumbing projects. Both skilled and general labor tasks will be available.

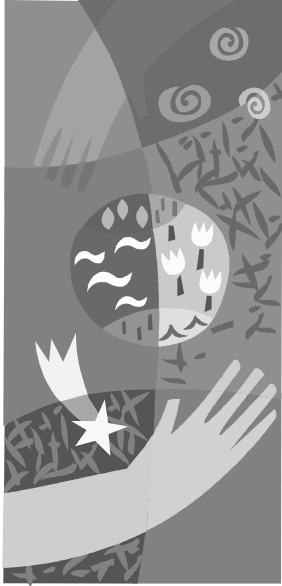


First Congregational UCC of Manhattan has adopted the Green Cabin, so we will need to get it ready for the summer.

Most supplies will be provided. However, whatever tools, professional equipment or cleaning supplies you can bring will be greatly appreciated. To help us do the best job possible, please contact the conference office in advance to make reservations for yourself or your group, and alert us to any folks with specialized skills who are planning to attend.

One Great Hour of Sharing~ Who is My Neighbor?

The Bible has a lot to say about neighbors. God expects us to treat our neighbors fairly, to care for them, and to give them a hand when they need help. Of the many, detailed, legalistic rules that



God gave the Israelites, *Jesus prioritized the commandment to love our neighbors, making it second only to love of God.*

In Old Testament times, a neighbor was generally what we think of today as “neighbor”—someone who lives nearby, who shares our life in some way, who is like us. The laws in Leviticus and Deuteronomy focus on that traditional neighbor.

“So just exactly who is my neighbor?” a young lawyer wanted to know. *Jesus greatly expanded the meaning of “neighbor” by telling the Parable of the Good Samaritan.*

Seeing a crying need, the Good Samaritan generously shared his resources to ease the suffering of a total stranger. Had he met the injured man in the market, they might not have liked each other at all; they had different religious beliefs, different political views, and were perhaps of different social positions. But the Good Samaritan acted in a selfless and merciful way, he took the law to heart, and put heart into the law.

Jesus then told the young lawyer to “go and do likewise.”

Many of us are moved to help our distant neighbors when their need is sudden and dramatic and when it receives a great deal of

media publicity such as a 9/11 or a tsunami, hurricane, or earthquake. Such disasters are easy to understand; the damage to lives is dramatic and devastating.

Yet for billions—yes, billions—of people in developing countries, disaster is a way of life. Children walk for miles several times a day to collect water—often from an unclean source, and have no time left for school. Women and children work for hours to gather bits of firewood for cooking fires that often fill their rooms and lungs with smoke and ash. In countries like Sudan, hundreds of thousands don’t even have a home, having fled their villages with just the clothes on their backs to escape violent militia intent on ethnic cleansing.

Aren’t these the very people Jesus calls us to love? They live in chronic disaster every day, experiencing extreme poverty and hunger, suffering from diseases brought on by unsafe water and a lack of adequate sanitation. They are parents who go hungry so their children can eat. They are siblings who struggle to keep each other safe and warm. They are our neighbors, and *One Great Hour of Sharing offers us a way to reach out to them in love.*

This Newsletter contains an envelope for your One Great Hour of Sharing special offering on or before March 18. It is one of our opportunities to respond to Jesus’ reply to “go and do likewise.”

(Extensive information about the work of OGHS is available at ucc.org.)

¹ Condensed from UCC 2007 Planning and Resource Guide.



Progressive Christian Book Club

The book club will continue in 2007, on select Fridays at noon. The first date is March 2, Room 202, the Student Union, KSU. The last two book discussions of the spring semester will be March 16 and April 13. We will move to Chapter 4, the 95 theses Rev. Matthew Fox tacked on the door of the same German church where Martin Luther posted his 95 theses of the Reformation early in the 16th century. In

addition, we will begin to discuss the book we would like to tackle starting in late summer. Please come with suggestions. Please be on time. We intend to start our discussion at 12:10 and end by 12:50. This gives us time to get our food beforehand and for some of us to get back to our offices (or other obligations) by 1:00 P.M.

Jo Foy

Rainbow Table Our next Rainbow Table event will be on March 10. There are seats reserved for the 2:00 P.M. showing of the play, *You Belong to Us* at the Manhattan Arts Center. PFLAG Support Group parents and members will be sitting with us. There will be a discussion after the play. Rainbow Table will convene at Kent and Bill's home, 212 Carlisle Terrace, at 6:00 P.M. for Cincinnati chili. Letters are in the mail, but if you get this newsletter first, please RSVP to Mary or Jo by Monday, March 5.



Rainbow Table will work with PFLAG, GSA, QSA, Delta Lambda Phi, the Regional HIV/AIDS Project, and the Flint Hills Human Rights Coalition to sponsor a Pride Prom on May 5. Allies and friends will be invited; the attendance is limited to 150. More information to come!

2007 Lenten Opportunities

Lent began February 21

Community Lenten Services

Wednesdays at Noon, February 21 through March 28 at First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) located downtown on Courthouse Plaza

A simple lunch follows at 12:30 P.M.

Sponsored by the Manhattan Ministers Association

Weekday Lenten Study

Tuesdays at 10:30 A.M., February 27 – April 3

No meeting on March 20 (Spring Break Week)

Folks have asked for an opportunity like the Adult Sunday morning class but on a weekday, so during Lent we will give it a try. Our resource will be another offering from the *Living the Questions* series: *Countering Pharaoh's Production -Consumption Society Today*, with renowned Old Testament scholar, provocative lecturer, and UCC member Walter Brueggeman. We will utilize 12-20 minute video presentations by Brueggeman followed by discussion. This class will be offered in the fall semester on Sunday morning.

Cinema & Soul:

Reel Theology

- *Films that explore issues of justice, otherness, and the "isms" of the world we live in.*
- *Showtime is 6:30 P.M. Tuesdays. Snacks provided. Come at 6:00 with a sack supper if you wish.*

Tuesday, March 13: **Call Me Malcolm**

Narrated by Malcolm himself, this documentary explores the life of a recently ordained UCC pastor. For most of his life, Malcolm felt trapped in the body of Miriam. Focusing on trans-gendered people, the film follows Malcolm returning to his hometown as he describes his experiences after transitioning from female to male while in seminary. This is an unusual transgender story in that it is remarkably positive. Malcolm is supported by his church and his pastor, his friends and eventually his family. This film was produced in part by the United Church of Christ and received considerable play and several awards at film festivals.

This film is not MPAA rated, but is suitable for all audiences. 2005. 90 minutes.

Tuesday, March 27: **Water**

A visually stunning film set in 1938 India, *Water* examines the plight of a group of widows forced into a life of poverty by ancient custom and religious belief. It tells the story of 8-year old Chuyia who is sent by her family to a widows house after her much older husband dies. There she struggles to understand this community of women who are themselves beginning to question their place. This is the time when Gandhi, and the political and social winds of change are felt even in the widows house.

MPAA: Rated PG-13 for mature thematic material involving sexual situations, and for brief drug use. 2005 Hindi with English subtitles. 114 minutes.

Youth Corner

Eight youth attended the 3rd Annual Progressive Dinner on February 17. It was a great evening with the Hanna's, Smit's, and Lewis' serving as hosts. Thank you!

Seven youth met at the Manhattan Arts Center to make soup bowls for the Empty Bowls project. What a great time! Everyone got a chance to use the pottery wheel, and the finished bowls looked pretty good.

Upcoming events:

Sunday, March 4 at 7 P.M. Youth meeting at Neil Dayton's house.

Saturday, March 10 at 7 P.M. Lock-in at the church. All youth are invited to spend the night at the church. There will be food, movies, games, stories, you name it! Bring a friend!

— Tracey Weston, Youth Ministry Coordinator



E-mail Prayer Chain Forming

Would you like to know during the week when people in our church family need our prayers and other forms of support? We hear news of our church family

on Sundays at worship, but sometimes that's too late to make a hospital call, or reach out in some other way right at the time of need. If you would like to be informed of church family needs during the week through email, please give your email address to Marian Fuller. Or you can put your name and email on the sign-up sheet on top of the piano as you leave worship Sunday. This will make you part of a group notification called "First Congregational Prayer Concerns."

Adult Forum Class Continues

Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian

That's the title of a book by well-known teacher and preacher Thomas G. Long, and it's the topic for our Adult Forum through mid-March. Join us Sundays at 9:30 A.M. in Pioneer Hall.

Christianity is not just about belief; it's also about practice. Our focus will be on the practice of talking about our faith. Long's book helps us think about how we can thoughtfully, considerately, and effectively talk about what our faith and our church mean to us. The class is being lead by Pastor Kent and is part of our Church Vitality initiative.

Marcus Borg's *The Heart of Christianity*

On March 18 Adult Forum will begin a class, led by Craig Weston, which will take up Marcus Borg's book **The Heart of Christianity**. Since its publication, this book has sparked a renewed sense of a progressive, inclusive, and Jesus-centered faith in folks from all walks of life. If you would like to order a book, contact the church office. Paperback copies will probably cost about \$12.

Christian Education for Kids

In our quest for our identity as Christians, the story of the Resurrection is central. During this Lenten season, the children will be learning about the crucifixion and resurrection through the eyes of Mary Magdalene. According to the biblical accounts, she was an eyewitness to both. Please join us in this exploration of the serious and profound subject enhanced by literature, art, food and fun.

Teachers are still needed this spring. So if you can squeeze time into your busy schedule, please let me know. The Easter season will be an exploration of Easter celebrations from around the world. That will be followed by a look at Christian history from the Apostle Paul to Martin Luther.

Cheryl Poister, Christian Education Director

The Second Helping

The Second Helping is a local mission of First Congregational UCC. It serves a hot meal every Sunday evening and provides sack breakfast and lunch items to each guest. To volunteer, contact church office @ 537-7006.



March 4, 2007

Chief Cook Bill Hargrove
Volunteers Paula Ford, Paul Hargrove
Ann Gleason
Dessert Kay Sinnett

March 11, 2007

Chief Cook Brent Maner
Volunteers Delta Sigma Theta Sorority
Christine Davis, Ann Gleason
Dessert Youth Group

March 18, 2007

Chief Cook Bob Atchison
Volunteers Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship
Ann Gleason
Dessert Mary Lee Cochran

March 25, 2007

Chief Cook Ann Smit
Volunteers ESA Sorority
Dessert Ann Smit

Worship & Church Volunteers

March 4, 2007

Sanctuary Flowers... Atina Hanna
Greeters Chantel Vogel
Scripture Reader Jo Foy
Acolyte Lily Marshall
Word for Children .. R. Kent Cormack
Fellowship Hour The Westons
Snow Removal Jim Fuller (*through March 10*)

March 11, 2007

Sanctuary Flowers... Gretchen Lewis
Greeters The Westons
Scripture Reader Hikaru Peterson
Acolyte
Word for Children .. Cheryl Poister
Fellowship Hour Brent Maner
Snow Removal Jim Fuller (*through March 17*)

March 18, 2007

Sanctuary Flowers... Kerri Keller
Greeters Brent Maner
Scripture Reader Mary Ray
Acolyte
Word for Children .. Cheryl Poister
Fellowship Hour Bonnie Lynn Sherow
Snow Removal *Volunteers needed (through March 24)*

Community News

You Belong to Us

In an effort to continue the dialogue started by the Family Ties Project in October, Flint Hills PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) is proud to announce the second of the plays written by students at Kansas State University.

You Belong to Us was written by Jemmie Godwin, a K-State graduate student, and uses dialogue taken from interviews with straight parents who have lesbian or gay children. The play will allow the community to understand the inner roller coaster of emotions that parents experience when they realize that their child is lesbian or gay. One emotion parents shared was fear—the fear that their child would be a victim of hate crimes—and in some cases anguish, because their child is suffering from violence and abuse in their daily school lives.

You Belong to Us will be performed at the Manhattan Arts Center:
Friday, March 9 at 7:00 P.M.
Saturday, March 10 at 2:00 P.M. and 7:00 P.M.
Sunday, March 11 at 2:00 P.M.

The production is funded by a generous grant from the Caroline Peine Charitable Foundation and is free and open to the public. The play is about inner conflict, acceptance, understanding and most of all, unconditional love.

The cast and crew have been busy rehearsing (in First Congregational's Andover Hall) for the upcoming P-FLAG production of the original play, *You Belong to Us*. Performances are scheduled at the Manhattan Arts Center.

Head Start Opportunity Preschool, serving the Manhattan-Ogden and Riley County School Districts, is accepting applications for the 2007-2008 school year. Head Start is a free, federally funded early childhood program that serves families with low income. To apply, a child must be 3 years old by August 31, 2007, but not yet kindergarten age eligible. For more information, call 587-2045 or stop by Head Start at 1700 Leavenworth.

**Legal Peace of Mind: A Workshop for
Unmarried Couples** March 10, 1:00-5:00 P.M.
Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship of Manhattan, 481 Zeandale
Road, (K-18 Highway East)

Workshop Sessions:

Session 1: Things to think about BEFORE you move in together:
the need for a contract

Session 2: Same-sex marriage and divorce: how the law just gets
more complicated

Session 3: Children and the legal issues involved

Session 4: Death & Dying: What happens if you don't take
control, and how do you take control?

From 5:00-6:30 P.M. a social hour and light dinner will be
provided for participants. \$10 Individuals \$15 Couples

Spring Break at Manhattan Arts Center

March 19-23 9:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M. Grades K-6

It's an exciting way to spend your spring break! Kids will rotate
through classes in painting, cartooning, theater, clay, sculpture,
papier-mâché, and more! There will also be exciting visits from
community members. We start each day with a special visit, and
then follow the theme with our art projects throughout the day.



Our visitor schedule for spring break:

Monday: Sunset Zoo

Tuesday: Riley County Police Dept.

Wednesday: The Commanding
General's Mounted Color Guard

Thursday: Manhattan Public Library

Friday: It's a SURPRISE!

Morning Sessions 9:00 -1:00

Afternoon Sessions 1:00-5:00

Cost \$15 per session, \$30 a day

Call the Manhattan Arts Center now at

(785) 537-4420

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Return Service Requested

