
THE FIRST WORD

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First United Methodist Church of Pittsburgh

November, 2009

Create, Commune, Connect

By Phil Gibbons

There is an excitement that comes with the dramatic visible changes to our church building. As we *create* new and improved spaces, we enrich many of our ministries and, with God's help, *create* new ones.

New spaces such as the gathering/welcoming center (formerly the library), the revitalized Fellowship Hall, and the new courtyard will provide wonderful settings for us to *commune* as a church family. Christ calls us to *communion* with him, to be a church sharing his *communion* of grace to all.

These same spaces will help us better *connect* with one another, with the first time visitor, with all the folks who use our building, and with our local community. We offer to *all* our hospitality of acceptance, our call for social justice, our vibrant worship service, our nurturing children's programs, and so much more!

And with these strengthened connections, we open ourselves to God's *creative* will for our church, and we *create* again!

Pledge Sunday is November 15

Our vision of a creating, communing, connecting church is made possible only by your faithful support of First Church's day-to-day expenses. Each November, we ask you to prayerfully consider what God is calling you to give in support of our programs and missions for the coming year. Please look for our Stewardship mailing (containing a pledge card), which should arrive in early November. Please bring your completed pledge card to church with you on Sunday, November 15. We will have a special dedication of pledges during our worship service that morning. If you are unable to come that Sunday, you may mail in your pledge card. On behalf of First Church's programs and missions, thank you for your continued generosity!

With your help and God's blessing, let's create, commune, connect, and create again! Thanks be to God!

Green Kingdom Come

On Sunday, November 1, Dr. Joe Grabill will be here to share with the Seekers and others who wish to join us concerning his book, *Green Kingdom Come*; it concerns Jesus and the issue of sustainability. Dr. Grabill was a professor of environmental and religious history at Illinois State University; he has researched the ecology and culture of first-century Galilee and has made seven research trips to Galilee. He will also be introduced during worship and folks may converse with him at fellowship hour.

Interfaith Dialogue on November 8

The public is invited to "Connecting Our Faith with the Death Penalty" at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (Knox Room) on Sunday, November 8, beginning at 1:30 p.m. Moderator is Rev. Don Green, a Lutheran pastor who is executive director of Christian Associates of Southwest PA. Ours and a number of Jewish and Christian congregations are co-sponsors. For more information, please see our bulletin board or Liz Wolfskill.

Leadership Council News- God is in the Midst of the City

We started our regular meeting on October 19 with a Lectio Divina experience on the 46th Psalm. This time spent in spiritual conversation reflects our ongoing commitment to leadership meetings as both a time of business and an opportunity to be gathered in God's name. Council members were especially drawn to the proclamation of this psalm that God is in the midst of the city, a reminder that our work in the city of Pittsburgh continues a long history of God's powerful presence in urban areas.

After discussing minutes, Phil Gibbons reported on the start of our annual Stewardship Campaign, which will begin in the next week and conclude with a dedication of pledges on November 15. Jeff Miller updated us on the "Conversation Continues" group that has been meeting, giving council members an opportunity to keep up with the important work of this group. The Staff Parish Relations Committee, represented by Don Cameron, reported that SPRC has met, and their recommendation to the church conference will be to freeze Pastor Bob Wilson's salary for the upcoming year, due to current economic conditions. The Leadership Council discussed this, and endorsed this recommendation by consensus. Pastor Bob brought us a wide variety of news in his jottings, including his gratitude for the cooperative spirit that has allowed a great start to the Sunday School year, in spite of space constraints due to the renovation.

We concluded our meeting with a finance report from Deb Wells and Michele Jury, reminding us that the budget process for 2010 is underway, and bringing several important issues to our attention. Pastor Bob ended our meeting with a prayer.

Imagine Advent

Imagine Advent together on Tuesday evening, November 3, (Soup at 6:30 p.m.—discernment begins at 7:00 p.m.) Advent/Christmas is just around the corner, and it is time for a group to gather and discern how God is leading us to envision Advent Worship and other ministries. If you would like to engage the Advent biblical texts and participate in designing our worship, you are encouraged to come. Last year our discernment led us to embrace visually proclaiming the two major dimensions of Advent: the celebration of the birthday of Jesus and the expectation of his coming again; thus we had two advent wreaths. Where will we be led this year? You may sign up at the "clipboard table" where you will also find copies of the Advent scriptures.

The Conversation Continues: Full Inclusion/Equality

This group will meet on Monday, November 2, at 7:30 p.m. You are invited to participate. This emerging and discerning group seeks to embrace the well-being of our community of faith, of our group and its concerns, and our individual selves as we explore possibilities for strengthening our hospitality and advocacy for our GLBTQ brothers and sisters. At this gathering we will continue to focus on the five dimensions lifted previously: 1) the language we use, (2) hospitality to individuals, (3) hospitality for those in relationships, (4) possibilities for expanding our ministries at FUMC, (5) nature of our witness within and without.

Young Adult Brunch

We are so pleased to be able to together bring our young adults for monthly after-church food and fellowship. Under the direction of Chef Jim Dunn, a delicious brunch has been prepared by our young adult leaders and offered in Fellowship Hall after worship. Conversation has been lively and new friendships and a sense of community has grown out of the gathering. If you are a young adult, or know of one, please take note of the brunch times as they appear in the bulletin, or give Gail Ransom your e-mail address to get in on the news. Who knows what might develop with this great group of young adults?

Outreach Corner

Throughout the summer and fall, the Outreach Team has been busy managing the basement renovations. We will be meeting in November to finalize the compilation of information collected from the completed FUMC Volunteer Registry form. We are striving to create an accessible format for the focused list of First Church folks who have indicated a skill and/or interest in a specific outreach area. When needs arise, this database will be consulted to connect interested volunteers with the specific outreach project or activity. We appreciate your response and will be in touch with you soon if we have not already followed up with you. If you have not completed a form and are interested, please see an Outreach Team member (Stephanie Dorgan, Octavia Graham, Tori Scharp, Elena Swann). Many thanks for your patience and interest!



Outreach Spotlight:

Renovation Work Teams

November 2009

We have much to celebrate. Praise God! The painting is completed (well, the large first phase that is)! A BIG THANK YOU goes to the First Church volunteers, First Church friend, Ryan Broe, and the University of Pittsburgh's Habitat for Humanity chapter. Of course, there are more tasks to tackle: wainscoting, finishing the floor and cleaning. However, with the continued assistance of your hands, your enthusiasm, and your energy, the end will arrive before we know it. Please consider giving generously of your time and talents to God's work and our First Church community. Contact Stephanie Dorgan at 412.241.0999 or stephaniedorgan@hotmail.com if you are interested in volunteering. We will be reaching out to you by Sunday announcements, phone and/or e-mail.

East End Cooperative Ministry

Pittsburgh East Rotary Club Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, November 7, 2009 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

That's right, it's time for Pittsburgh East Rotary Club's annual (and much-loved) Pancake Breakfast. Roll out of bed and head straight to Eastminster Presbyterian Church on Saturday, November 7, for pancakes, sausage, bacon and more. Proceeds from this event will benefit East End Cooperative Ministry! Eastminster Presbyterian Church is located at 250 North Highland Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15206.

EECM's Christmas Gift Program

November and December

Christmas Gift Program – Volunteers are needed to help sort and distribute gifts collected during our annual Christmas Gift Program. Interested in volunteering? Please contact: Tracy Hudson, Volunteer Coordinator, 250 N. Highland Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15206, 412.361.5549 ext. 403, or tracyh@ecm.org

Children's Offering for the Heifer Project

The children's offering taken every Sunday and placed on the altar has grown to \$1,127.90. During the month of November, we will be choosing which animal from the Heifer Project that the children would like to support. Rather than give funds, Heifer International gives animals to farmers and communities to support themselves. One animal can provide labor, food, and/or clothing. A gift of several animals can multiply the gift as offspring can support other neighbors and villagers. Heifer also supports key components for sustainable living in Africa, Asia, the South Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and rural America.

Operation Christmas Child Bring In Your Shoe Boxes! School Items! Small Toys!

Under the direction of Megan Morris, on November 8 and 15, we will be assembling Christmas gift boxes for children in poverty. We will need many empty shoe boxes for our children to fill before Sunday School and during the Worship Hour. Once filled, assembled, and wrapped, filled, these boxes will be sent by “Samaritan’s Purse” to needy children around the world as an expression of Christ’s love. “Samaritan’s Purse” is headed by Franklin Graham, oldest son of Billy Graham.

While attending the Christian Community Development Association National Leadership Conference, Glenna Wilson sent back this news: “Tonight while waiting a long time for an elevator, I met a young man from Uganda. When I said I was from Pittsburgh, he asked what church. I said FUMC and his face lit up and he said, “You sent us shoe boxes!” He gave me a video of the children receiving the shoe boxes! (Well, he sold it to me...) It made me cry. I am bringing the video home so that you can show it to the children. He also talked about needing more mosquito nets. I am still amazed at God’s serendipity.”

Rev. Dr. Steve Tuell Returns to the Seekers Class, December 6 and 13

We look forward to an animated, incisive discussion of how the Old Testament prophets prepared the way for the birth of Christ when Rev. Dr. Steven Tuell comes to First United Methodist on December 6 and 13. Dr. Tuell is a United Methodist Pastor and Professor of Old Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He is a gifted preacher and teacher. The Seekers welcome his wisdom and artful leadership as we approach Advent.

Are you Crafty? Clever? Culinary? Captivating?

Hanging of the Greens Festival, December 12

If you are crafty, clever, culinary, or captivating then your ideas and projects are needed for our ‘Hanging of the Greens’ Party on Saturday, December 12. The planning meetings for the Hanging of the Greens are almost as much fun as the party itself. So don’t be shy, let Gail know that you want to be a creative part of this festive church gathering. This year our theme will be.....well, you get to be part of that decision if you join the team.

Worship Jam Sparkles and Uplifts at the Bioneers Conferences

The buzz at the Bioneers Conference was that the Universe Celebration we created with “Dream of the Earth” and the conference participants was a highlight of the conference. For days after, people raved about how much fun they had and how grateful they were that we provided the opportunity to spiritually ground all their efforts to bring sustainability to Pittsburgh. There is a surprising amount of activity in Pittsburgh around creating and sustaining efforts to create a more ‘green’ lifestyle worldwide.

Our First Church Worship Jammers were also able to make important relationships with the leaders of the conference and various projects in Pittsburgh. This sparkling, celebrative worship hour may just be the beginning of our participation in ‘Green Worship.’

In Good Company: Being Faithful Readers and Doers of Scripture

We will gather at the parsonage at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 17, to continue our dialogue using the most recent edition of the Center Letter. Copies of the letter are available from Pastor Bob. Please R.S.V.P. by e-mail (a49always@alum.bu.edu) or by phone (412.681.4222) or by signing the RSVP sheet on the clipboard table in the front of the sanctuary.

Sacred Space

Starting in November, we will meet on the second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. All women are invited to a time of quiet reflection, Bible reading, and sharing our journeys. Won't you come and have a "mini" retreat with us? For more information, feel free to speak with Glenna Wilson or Michele Haas. You can call Glenna at 412.361.1211 or e-mail: glennapgh@yahoo.com

Race—The Power of An Illusion

On November 15, from 6:00—8:00 p.m. we will gather for the third episode of Race—The Power of An Illusion. This documentary has been a wonderful springboard for discussion and growth as we consider the realities of racism's ugly presence in our midst now. This third gathering will be at the Rosedale United Methodist Church. The first hour, we watch the documentary and the second hour, we discuss.

Below are a few quotes from the third episode that may whet your appetite to join the conversation:

- **NGAI:** Some historians have suggested that these new immigrant groups from Europe, uh, were "in-between peoples," they were in transitional stage. When compared to, uh, Anglo Saxon Protestants, groups such as Italians, um, or Jews were seen as not being fully white perhaps, but when compared to African Americans, or when compared to Asians, um, their whiteness became more salient, became more visible.
- **NARRATOR:** Could European ethnics become fully white, and thus fully American? By 1910, a new term was entering popular culture to describe the transformation of Europeans. The phrase came from the title of a Broadway play by Israel Zangwill. God, said Zangwill, would melt down the races of Europe into a single pure essence, out of which he would mold Americans.
- **EDUARDO BONILLA-SILVA:** So when the Irish, when Germans, when Italians were coming, and they didn't speak the language and they didn't know the culture, the idea was they will assimilate into Americanhood; they will become American, which in the American tradition has meant white American.
- **BONILLA-SILVA:** But that melting pot never included people of color. Blacks, Chinese, Puerto Ricans, etcetera, could not melt into the pot. They could be used as wood to produce the fire for the pot, but they could not be used as material to be melted into the pot.
- **NARRATOR:** Whiteness was key to citizenship. In 1790 Congress had passed an act declaring that only "free white" immigrants could become naturalized citizens. After the Civil War, naturalization was extended to "persons of African descent" as well. But it was the white citizen who had clear access to the vote, sat on juries, was elected to public office and had better jobs. Whiteness was not simply a matter of skin color. To be white was to gain the full rewards of American citizenship.
- **NARRATOR:** So if you can get a government loan with your GI Bill, your newly earned college degree and buy a house in an all-white area, that then appreciates in value, that then you can pass on to your children, then you're passing on wealth. That has all been made more available to you as consequence of racist policies and practices. To the child of that parent, it looks like my father worked hard, bought a house, passed his wealth on to me, made it possible for me to go to school, mortgaged that house so I could have, you know, relatively debt-free college experience, and has financed my college education. How come your father didn't do that? You know, well, there are some good reasons why maybe your father had a harder time doing it if you're African-American, or Latino, or Native American.
- **POWELL:** And the thing that's really, uh, slick about whiteness, if you will, is that most of the benefits can be obtained without ever doing anything personally. For whites, they are getting the spoils of a racist system, even if they are not personally racist.

First Folk

Our Sympathy to:

Sue Bell and family as they grieve the loss of Sue's mother, Jean Burford

Hospitalized since last newsletter:

Karenmarie Young

Welcome New Member:

Tom Pettersen, received into the First Church family on Sunday, October 18

Baptisms:

*Carter Almon Burke, son of Al and Jennifer Burke
Ella Anne Saxon, daughter of Jim and Aimee Saxon
on Sunday, September 27*

November Birthdays & Anniversaries *Birthdays*

November 4	Carolynn Schrading	November 22	Sue Bell, Tim Schlak, Bob Wilson
November 6	Alva Barry	November 24	Raymond Davis, Camille Kail
November 7	Deb Shearer, Jane Way, Dawn Keezer	November 28	David McDougal
November 8	Marcia Gruver	November 29	Yajeh Ndimbie
November 9	Mira Moya-Gibbons		

Anniversaries

November 14 Michele & David Jury
November 18 Jennifer & Tim Coles

Memorials Received

*In Memory of David Gibbons (father of Phil Gibbons) by:
Gene & Marcia Gruver*

*In Memory of Jean Burford (mother of Sue Bell) by:
Alva & Bob Barry*

*Designated for Stained Glass Window Restoration
Joyce & Aaron Furman*

*Designated for Stained Glass Window Restoration
Gene & Marcia Gruver*

AN INTERFAITH, INTERACTIVE LGBT WORKSHOP FOR EFFECTIVELY SHARING OUR
STORIES AND CREATING CHANGE
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2009 1:00 - 4:00 P.M.

Come for an afternoon of learning how to more confidently and effectively tell your story as a GLBT person of faith, including:

- *Being focused*
- *Gauging your audience*
- *Speaking in a variety of settings and timeframes*
- *Sharing one-on-one, in small groups, or with a larger audience*

St. Andrew Lutheran Church ~ 304 Morewood Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, corner of Centre and Morewood in Shadyside. Sponsored by the *Pittsburgh Chapter of Lutherans Concerned/North America* Pre-register: e-mail LCPittsburgh@LCNA.org with your name(s) and contact info, or call 724-228-1862. Cost is \$5 if pre-registered or \$8 at the door. All money is payable at the event.



Christmas Chancel Poinsettia Order Form

Imagine how elegant the chancel will look banked with beautiful poinsettias. The cost for each 6-7 bloom plant is \$8.50. Each plant is foil-wrapped and wind covers are available. The poinsettias can be presented in honor or memory of your loved ones. The plants will be used to decorate the church for worship on Sunday, December 20, and for the Christmas Eve worship services. ***Deadline for ordering poinsettias is Sunday, December 6.***

I would like _____ red _____ white Cost is \$8.50 each
Total enclosed: \$ _____

Please circle whether in honor (IHO) or in memory of (IMO) your loved one.

1. IHO/IMO _____
2. IHO/IMO _____
3. IHO/IMO _____
4. IHO/IMO _____
5. IHO/IMO _____

Presented by: _____

Daytime Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

The First Word

November, 2009

First United Methodist Church

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E-mail: a49always@alum.bu.edu

Visit our web site at: www.firstumcpittsburgh.org

First Church Ministries Staff

Robert A. Wilson, Pastor

Paul Schradling, Pastor Emeritus

Gail Ransom, Director of Christian Education

Timothy D. Coles, Director of Music

Nancy Kostovny, Administrative Secretary

Curtis Mitchell, Building Maintenance Manager

Sherry Kaiser, Offering Steward

Lamont Hunter, Alan Scott, Custodians

Dawna Horton, Daniel Hatfield, Emily Nordquist,

Jean Schmalzried, Childcare

Clergy who claim First Church as their Charge Conference:

Paul Schradling, John Wilson, Renee Waun, Scott Peterman,

Lynn Yeso, Kathy Clark, Donna Fetterman

The First Word

First United Methodist Church

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