
THE FIRST WORD

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First United Methodist Church of Pittsburgh

February, 2009

Building Renovation Update

After delays related to repairing the basement floor under the Library, finalizing drawings for the education wing, obtaining work permits, and dealing with inclement weather, Phase 1 renovations of our building are boldly underway. Here's what's happening:

Basement Below the Library

This space will be used in multiple ways, including Christian education classrooms for the congregation and meeting spaces for neighborhood groups such as the Scouts and Alcoholics Anonymous. It has a separate outside entrance and can be accessed without entering the rest of the building. The source of the water problems in the basement has been addressed and new plumbing has been installed. Over the next few months:

- The new concrete floor will be poured.
- A handicap-accessible bathroom will be added, including a shower.
- A coffee bar will be installed.
- The electrical system, including wiring for outlets and lights, will be substantially updated.
- The floor will be finished with a combination of carpeting and buffed concrete.
- Members of the congregation will help finish and paint the walls and create a prayer labyrinth on the center of the floor.

Fellowship Hall

Work to replace and insulate the roof has begun. Equipment and roofing materials fill the courtyard. Over the next month:

- The roof work and insulation will be completed when there is a break in the weather.
- The ceiling will be refurbished.
- Construction of the new corridor between Fellowship Hall and the courtyard will begin.
- The stage will be removed.
- New entrances will be cut into the Centre Avenue side of the basement under Fellowship Hall. One will be for the Toy Lending Library and one to enter the pantry under the new kitchen which will replace the current stage.

The Building Committee is meeting with the architect and contractor bi-weekly during the renovation. The committee has also been meeting with an interior designer to select carpeting, floor tile, wall tile, and paint. Those decisions should be finalized over the next month so materials can be ordered as needed. Watch for monthly updates in upcoming issues of *The First Word*.

Celebrate Black History This Month

Until civil rights protests became televised in the sixties, many Americans heard little about the proud heritage of Black America. Designating February as Black History Month, condescending as this designation sounds, does provide a special opportunity to learn and reflect. Giving particular attention in our short-attention-span society, we can celebrate movements and persons we should have known about long ago, as well as affirm unbelievable

capacities of contribution and survival. Recently, the Underground Railroad and Tuskegee Airmen were written about in local newspapers.

For February, Pastor Bob and our Justice Team seek contributions to a display “Of All the People, By All the People, For All the People.” This could be artwork, written thoughts, memorable quotations, and tangible pieces, something to evoke or express a valiant history. Please help – contact Pastor Bob, Liz Wolfskill, or Deb Stiokis.

In the meantime, we recommend three books, all available at Carnegie Library:

- *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle of Civil Rights in the North*, by Thomas Sugrue (2008)
- *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, by Marcus Rediker (2007)
- *The Souls of Black Folk*, by W.E.B. DuBois (1903)

Leadership Council News

Our January meeting was held Monday, January 19. In honor of Martin Luther King Day we started our meeting with a responsive reading and prayer using some of Dr. King’s words written from the Birmingham Jail. This was the first meeting for three new members of the council, Hannah Morris, Deb Stiokis, and Deborah Wells, and we spent some time with introductions and getting to know each other. We were delighted to have Fred Watts, representing the Building Committee, give us a report on the building renovations to date. He answered questions and updated members of the council on plans for the next several months. The Building Committee has done a huge amount of work on this project, and the Leadership Council is grateful for the strong leadership and guidance of the Building Committee. We are blessed to have the renovation project in such capable hands. We concluded our meeting with a discussion of summer worship plans. There was a strong consensus that the ongoing work in and around the courtyard makes an outside worship service unlikely, and that moving to one service for summer Sundays makes sense, at least for this summer. The time of the service is still under discussion, and members of the council agreed to talk to the congregation informally about their thoughts on summer worship plans. We ended the service with another reading about the importance of prayer in the life and work of Martin Luther King.

Ash Wednesday

On the evening of Wednesday, February 25, we will gather to begin our Lenten journey as we have the opportunity to receive ashes and share the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Our sister churches will be joining us. We will share more details as plans are confirmed; however, in the meantime, plan to begin your Lenten season by coming together for worship.

Boy Scout Sunday

Our Boy Scout Troop will be joining us for worship on Sunday, February 22, at 11:00 a.m. We will have the opportunity to celebrate the work of this troop and their leaders. The Scouts will help lead our worship service.

Do You Hate To Go To Meetings But Want To Get Involved? We Have Just The Thing For You!!!

You will never need to go to a meeting, but you can have fun getting to know other folks while you set up, serve and clean up for the monthly church dinners. Creating a third kitchen team will keep the burden light. Your only time commitment would be only on the Sundays that your team is in charge, which happens about 3-4 times a year. Below are the tasks involved. Won’t you think about volunteering your time? You don’t even have to cook...just be here to help on your assigned Sundays. The new team will also need a team leader, so if you would like to fill that role, the duties are listed below.

Team Responsibilities:

- set tables
- serve food including dessert

- clean up dining room tables
- assist in kitchen clean-up

Team Leader Responsibilities:

- call team members to get about 8 workers
- decide on and provide table coverings and centerpieces (church will reimburse)
- assign tasks to team members
- collect bills from cook and repay her from money collected; give paid staff their checks (from minister)
- make sure all tasks are complete

Do these seem like things you would like to do? Please contact Betsy Shaw of the Nurture Team if you are interested or have other questions. 412.782.0288

Witness Team

The Witness Team has been requesting various groups within the church to host the Fellowship Hour following the church service. For years, Lois Cook recruited individuals to prepare refreshments, and when she was unable to find anyone she got up early Sunday morning and made cookies or cupcakes herself. This was a burden for Lois and one she relinquished gladly.

Furnishing refreshments is only one facet of hosting Fellowship Hour. As important, or more so, is what the name states: "Fellowship." Fellowship with church friends and fellowship with visitors is what the time following worship is all about. All three ministry teams have hosted, as well as the Coffee, Chat and the Bible Adult Sunday School Class and the Chancel Choir.

The Witness Team will be asking various small groups to host the Fellowship Hour for one month. Generally that means a total of three Sundays as the last Sunday of each month is the All-Church Dinner. It can be helpful if more than one individual serves each Sunday; i.e., one could bring drinks and the other cake and/or cookies. The rest of the group, as they are available, should help greet the visitors that come to the Fellowship Hour. It is a great opportunity to extend a warm hand of friendship and promote your small group as well.

Tips: Prepare for at least 60 people and, depending on the popularity of the refreshment, more may be necessary; i.e., fruit isn't as popular as brownies or cookies; go figure. Lamont Hunter, our top-notch Sunday morning custodian, will bring the coffee cart with cups and cream and sugar. So a cold drink (milk/juice) is nice, even water is good.

If you have questions, please contact Don Cameron, cameron.d@comcast.net, 724.935.6501 or 724.316.5090 (cell)

Benefit Concert for "Our Little Roses"

For her High School Senior Project, Ingrid Frembgen Petersen is planning and hosting an evening of music and entertainment to benefit "Our Little Roses", an orphanage in Honduras. This will be held at the Union Project (Negley Avenue) on March 28 from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. Save the date and watch for details. Volunteer help is needed. You may contact Ingrid for more information at ingrid.Lpetersen@yahoo.com.

Food For Thought

On Sunday, March 1, we will begin to explore how to discern God's presence in our midst, in our work, in the shadows and in our habit of being. Sue Anne Steffey Morrow wrote the study book and will be participating in our class on Sunday, March 8; we are pleased that she will also be preaching that morning during our 11:00 a.m. worship. If you would like more information or a study book, please be in touch with Pastor Bob who facilitates this lunchtime Christian formation group.

Living The Questions

Each Sunday beginning at 9:30 a.m., we gather in the Parlor to discuss such questions as “Will the Real Jesus Please Stand UP?” or “What are we doing reading other people’s mail?” You are encouraged to join us. You will be able to participate even if you have not attended previous discussions. You will have the opportunity to engage via DVD the work of today’s top notch Biblical Scholars. For more information contact Pastor Bob or Phil Gibbons who facilitate the group or other Seekers who are participating.

Angels Among Us

Many thanks to those who offered their services in creating our angels this Christmas/Epiphany season and those who were able to return to help later in the month. Our 'Angels of the Angels' who stuffed and taped and twisted and wrapped odd materials to create our beacons of joy were: Becky Oratto, Elizabeth "Jett" Downey, Anne Hayes, Lauren Kerchner, and Gail Ransom.

Thank you, Becky

Becky Oratto’s creative hand has helped with many projects this season, including bulletin boards, outdoor signs, tablecloth angels, and the large “dreamcatcher” for the January Open Table Worship Party. Thank you for your many gifts!

Our Church Calendar

You can check out our church calendar by going to the website (www.firstumcpittsburgh.org) and clicking on Current First Church Events Calendar. Many events have descriptions attached to them; simply click on the event and a dialogue window will open.

Sacred Space for Women

A time for quiet relaxation, reflection, rejuvenation, and prayer. Won’t you join us on Monday evening, February 23, from 7:00 – 8:15 p.m. in the Intergenerational Room (room behind the Kitchen)? All women are invited...come once, come every month on the 4th Monday. For more information you may contact Glenna Wilson at glennapgh@yahoo.com. All women are invited to attend. Hope to see you there!

Open Table Worship Parties, Here-to-fore and Yet-to-come

Our Open Table Worship parties have hit a new stride this holiday season bringing together church members, Chant Jammers, and interested members of the wider community. Each service was created through inspiration and improvisation engendered at our weekly Open Table Worship Jams. Trying to stay attentive to the Spirit, we experiment with ideas and experiences that are brought to the evening, and others just emerge right out of the moment. Some moments leave us speechless!

The Cosmic Walk (December 19): We took the themes from the four weeks of Advent and made four prayer stations that incorporated the four themes of Advent matched to the four paths of Creation Spirituality. The symbolic Cosmic Walk was laid out in gold cord to represent 14 billion years of creation. Each development was marked with a candle. The resulting effect was silent awe for Creation and a profound celebration of Communion.

Be a “Dream Catcher” (January 23): Under our large and colorful “dream catcher,” we began to share with the little things we would like to see changed and then moved out to our relationships, communities, and the world. We used the “dream catcher” to offer our intention and attention to the unfolding of these dreams through our actions. Communion was a sharing of God's healing dream for all humanity.

Jeudi Gras (February 20): During the week before Lent in Olney, Buckinghamshire, since the year 1445, townswomen run a 415 yard race wearing headscarves and aprons while flipping pancakes. The winner receives a kiss from the Ringer of the Pancake Bell and a prayer book from the local vicar.....wonder what the Chant Jammers will do with that tidbit? The “Shrove” of Shrove Tuesday is derived from the Old English word “shrive,” which

means to “confess all sins.” Can we confess our sins with fervor and abandon and then, having emptied ourselves of them, turn toward the spareness of Lent?

Women's Center and Shelter and the Health Ministry Team Thank First Church Congregation

The Health Ministry Team’s cell phone drive yielded 35 used/old cell phones that were donated to the Women’s Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh. For each used cell phone that is collected, the Center makes from \$.50 to \$50 depending on the age and condition of the phone.

The money raised through the Cell Phone Collection Program allows the Center to continue to offer free services to victims of intimate partner violence, including a 24-hour hotline, shelter for battered women and their children, legal, medical and housing advocacy, individual and support group counseling and prevention education and training, such as a school-based violence prevention program.

The Women’s Center and Shelter’s letter of appreciation closed with this statement: “By contributing to the WC & S mission, you are truly fulfilling yours of promoting and sustaining a healthy, strong and vibrant local community.” The Health Ministry Team also adds our thanks to First Church congregation for your generous support of this important community agency.

First United Methodist Church of Pittsburgh 2009 Leadership as elected at our December Church Conference

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Executive Committee

Sharon McCarthy, Chairperson	Gene Gruver, Vice Chairperson
Victoria Scharp, Secretary	Michele Jury, Treasurer
Lee Shaw, Lay Leader	Paul Jenkins, Assistant Treasurer

Member to Annual Conference: Jane Way
Youth Member: (to be chosen by youth)

Standing Committee Chairpersons

N.O.W. Chairpersons

Nurture: Jeff Miller Outreach: Stephanie Dorgan Witness: Don Cameron

Finance Committee: Deborah Wells
Staff-Parish Relations Committee: Tracy Merrick
Property Committee: Deborah Shearer
Stewardship Committee: Phil Gibbons

Members-at-Large

Class of 2009	Class of 2010	Class of 2011
Edris Ndimbie	Chris Benjamin	Deb Stiokis
Milton Swaby	Yajeh Ndimbie	Hannah Morris

MEMBERSHIP OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Staff-Parish Relations Committee

Class of 2009	Class of 2010	Class of 2011	Ex-officio

Tracy Merrick	Hal Burch	Don Hammonds	Lee Shaw-Lay Leader
Jim Schriver	Lois Cook	Susan Petersen	Jane Way- Conference Member
Valerie Benjamin	Don Cameron	Ron Arnett	

Property Committee

Deborah Shearer, Mark Dorgan, Mark Cooper, Jim Schriver, Fred Watts, A.J. Jenkins, Bob Moyer, Stefan Frembgen, David Hounshell

Finance Committee

Ex-officio: Chairperson, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Leadership Council Chairperson, Property Committee Chair or Representative, Stewardship Committee Chair or Representative, Conference Member, SPRC Chair or Representative

At-Large: Peggy Hooker, Helen Thornton, Susanne Wrage, Barbara Hamilton

Stewardship Committee

Ex-officio: Chairperson, Chairperson of Leadership Council, Finance Chairperson or Representative, Conference Member

Delegates to Church Union Board: Betsy Shaw and Lee Shaw

Lay Leadership Committee

Ex officio: Pastor is Chairperson; Lay Leader is Vice Chairperson

Class 2009	Class 2010	Class 2011
David Krackhardt	David Jury	Lynne Cameron
Elena Swann	Kym Hambleton	Karen Merrick
Lois Cook	Renee Davis	Jack Wilson
	Keith Gibson	

N.O.W. Ministry Teams

Nurture	Outreach	Witness
Jeff Miller, Chairperson	Stephanie Dorgan, Chairperson	Don Cameron, Chairperson
Lois Cook	Elena Swann	Julie Gammil-Gibson
Glenna Wilson	Tori Scharp	Yajeh Ndimbie
David Baker	Lisa Steimer	Kelly Caresani
Betsy Shaw	Octavia Graham	Lee Shaw
		Ada Schwerin
		Steve DeFlicht

There are many other ministries and responsibilities that are fulfilled by the members of First United Methodist Church that do not require Charge Conference Action.

We express our thanks to those who have accepted the call to fulfill these responsibilities, and the Lay Leadership Committee will continue working in concert with others to seek additional leaders.

Thank your Sunday School Teachers!

We are now in the thick of our education year and each class is moving along beautifully. Now is a good time to appreciate the fine teaching and care giving that our children are receiving from their wonderful dedicated teachers. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. The gifts you give will last a lifetime, coming back to them at their most challenging moments. By their attitudes, they will expect joy and friendship in their faith their entire lives.

Acolytes Take up the Torches

Our 5-7th graders have taken on the important responsibility of bringing the light into our sanctuary each Sunday morning with responsibility and enthusiasm. This light symbolizes both the fire of the Spirit, and the presence of Jesus Christ, the 'light' of the world. Each child has been prepared for this task by Susan Petersen, Gail Ransom, Tim Coles, practicing with the Chancel Choir to learn to process. We welcome Katya Graham, Allyson Gruver, Doug Meyers Jr. and Cheyenne Meyers to this important ministry. Thank you Doug Meyers, Sr. and Susan Petersen for watching over our light bearers during Sunday worship.

Third Graders to Receive Bibles During Lent

Our third graders have been studying the Bible during worship hour over the course of the year and will be receiving their bibles during Lent. Each child will study and then read the lectionary reading of the day on her/his assigned Sunday in Lent. Invite their friends! Bring home the grandparents! This will be an important occasion. Our young Bible scholars are: Zac Caresani, Raymond Davis, Richard Benjamin, Leah DeFlicht, Ruby Gibson, and Diamond Hunter.

Outreach Corner

In the first month of the New Year we'd like to say to thee, a Very Big THANK YOU!! The Outreach Team, Edris Ndimbie and the East End Cooperative Ministry's Food Pantry would like to thank the congregation for participating in the *EECM's Food Pantry Sings the Twelve Days of Christmas* food drive. We collected three large boxes of food items for the Pantry and they were delivered January 14, 2009. Pantry staff deeply expressed their appreciation for our contribution. If you would like to continue donating to the Food Pantry, volunteer for the Pantry or other services provided by the EECM, contact the volunteer coordinator, Emily Huck at 412.361.5549 ext. 403 or emilyh@eecom.org. You can learn about all the services EECM provides at www.eecom.org.

Cinquains from the All-Church Retreat

After an absence of several years, the Talent Show returned to the All-Church Retreat this year. Sharon McCarthy turned the spotlight on the audience by having us write a cinquain, a five-line poem with a certain number of words or syllables in each line. Between now and the next retreat, we will share a number of these cinquains with you.

Retreat
Fun friends
Learning, eating, talking
Everyone has a good time
Intergenerational

Retreat
Fun, refreshing
Growing, learning, laughing
Connecting with others
Present

In Touch with Your Inner Teenager?

Do you find it difficult to express the following emotions in your day-to-day life: anger fits, hormonal rampage, suicidal drama, and the complete and total condemnation of society as we know it?

Bring your inner teenager to a recital of music from Bellini's "I Capuletti E I Montecchi" at 6:00 p.m. in the chapel on Valentine's Day, February 14th. Mezzo Soprano Elizabeth "Jett" Downey and Soprano Gail Novak star as Romeo and Juliet, accompanied by Pianist Mark Trawka of the Pittsburgh Opera.

\$20 ticket includes complimentary chocolate-covered-strawberries from "Taste of Chocolate," Shadyside. E-mail eesongstudio@gmail.com to order tickets.

Kelso Lecture Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at PTS

Plan now to attend the Kelso Lecture, "The World House: The Beloved Community As A New Global Vision For Peace And Justice;" honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., presented by Johnny B. Hill, PhD. Free and open to the public, it is at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Monday, February 9, 7:00 p.m.

Memorials Received

In Memory of June Ross by:

*John & Margie Wilson
Tim Coles, Designated for Choir Robe Fund
Gene & Marcia Gruver,
Designated for Find Us Faithful
Paul & Mary Ann Weibel
Mary Shultz & Janet Brink
Dean & June Hiles
Lillian Weibel & John Henry*

In Memory of Jean Kaltenbaugh by:

*John & Margie Wilson
Lee & Betsy Shaw,
Designated for Stained Glass Window Restoration
Alice May Backoefer,
Designated for Stained Glass Window Restoration
Gene & Marcia Gruver,
Designated for Find Us Faithful*

In Memory of Charles Hildebrandt by:

*Gene & Marcia Gruver,
Designated for Find Us Faithful*

Note of Thanks

Dear First Church Family,

Thank you to Rev. Wilson and all those who expressed their condolences and helped with the bereavement luncheon after the service for my mother, Jean Kaltenbaugh.

Sue Widmer and Family

First Folk

Hospitalized since last newsletter:
Lucie Crowe, Helen (Dot) Cramer

Congratulations to:

*Heather and Tom Saly on the birth of their daughter, Abigail Marie on October 25;
Rebecca Woomer on her recent engagement to Mark McGee.
They will be united in marriage at Hick's Memorial UMC in Duncansville, PA, on May 30, 2009.*

Our sympathy to:

*The family and friends of June Ross;
June died on November 28, 2008
The family and friends of Jean Kaltenbaugh;
Jean died on January 2, 2009*

Welcome New Members

*Illa Jean Boggs
James and Zauyah Waite*

Kudos to:

*Our Worship Hour Bible Class
who chose to use juice in cups instead of juice boxes
to be better stewards of the earth.*

February Birthdays

*February 2 Brent Hammonds
February 3 Emma Waite
February 4 Linda Moya, Lake Strobel
February 5 David Grinnell
February 6 Lynn Beckstrom Schreiber
February 7 Chris Hughes, Brian Cook
February 8 Bruce Baxter
February 10 Dot Cramer, Nancy Eddy,
Kym Hambleton*

*February 13 Aaron Furman
February 14 Mia Rajakovic
February 17 Brian Shaw
February 18 Ping Chan
February 19 Hal Burch
February 20 Karen Merrick, Tyler Jackson
February 21 Johnnye Miller
February 22 Susanne Wrage
February 27 Rebecca Woomer
February 28 Andrue Gruver*

**The First Word
February 2009**

First United Methodist Church
5401 Centre Avenue
Pittsburgh PA 15232-1621
Phone: 412.681.4222

How to contact us
Fax: 412.681.4224

E-mail: fumcpittsburgh@verizon.net

Robert A. Wilson, Pastor
E-mail: a49always@alum.bu.edu
Visit our web site at: www.firstumcpittsburgh.org

First Church Ministries Staff

Robert A. Wilson, Pastor
Paul Schrading, 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, Custodian
Dawna Horton, David Huss, Emily Nordquist,

Melissa Scott, Childcare Caregivers

Clergy who claim First Church as their Charge Conference:
Paul Schrading, John Wilson, Renee Waun, Scott Peterman,
Lynn Yeso, Kathy Clark