

Faith Community United Church of Christ

Dialog

FEBRUARY 2006



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Rev. Ms. Susan M. Taylor, *Pastor* / Mel Barrios, *Certified Lay Minister* / B.J. Lord, *Editor-Secretary*

From the Pastor's Study ...

I am about 50 years old (two more years) and believe it or not, much to my chagrin, I am becoming set in my ways. I don't like change, and yet, I am aware that this is not a "good thing." Life is meant to be lived and enjoyed. One can only endure life if we get stuck in the same rut. Life should be so much more. In fact, the same old rut is easier to travel and the comfort of it can become our excuse to keep us from the adventure of creating new pathways and enjoying more of life.

Ron had a response to the sermon I gave on New Year's Day. I shared the print I have of "Seven Steps to Stagnation" during that sermon. Ron's reflections on that sermon are wonderful (they are printed later in this issue of the *Dialog*). It is very easy to let these seven sentences bog down our individual lives and our church's life. Change is good when it takes place with careful thought. So I have written a response called "Seven Steps to Revitalize" and they are as follows:

1. Let's try it!
2. We are ready to try a change and be stretched.
3. Let's add something new and different.
4. We did try that once before; let's tweak it and try it again.
5. Let's find the money or have a special fundraiser.
6. It is needed; let's make it our responsibility.
7. It will work if we give it our best effort.

All of the above seven steps are not meant to be entered into lightly or frivolously, but with thought and prayer, with creativity and sound reasoning, with biblical and theological guidance. Our attitude is at the base of our success and revitalization. I'm speaking about our lives and this congregation's life.

... continued on page 2

From the Pastor's Study

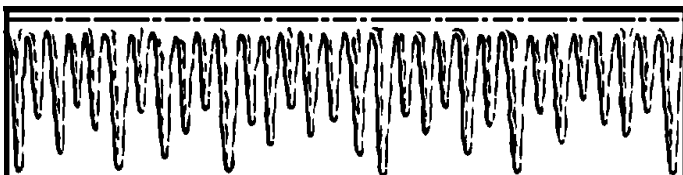
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I am also thinking about my personal faith journey, my daily walk with Christ, my living and my life. It is easier to stay in our comfort zone. Does this resonate in your thinking?

It is easy to find excuses and reasons not to change. It is more difficult to change, even if we know it is for the best. Working together toward revitalizing our lives as individuals will help us revitalize our faith lives, and it will help us revitalize our congregation. We have to create our own vitality to become a vital welcoming congregation.

One way to revitalize is to make a commitment during Lent to participate in Sunday worship, and the special times of worship and study during the Lenten season. You can also read the "Worship Notes" in the *Dialog* for each week to begin to prepare for Sunday worship. Use a daily devotional or "The Upper Room" to strengthen your biblical studies and personal faith. Make a practice of praying regularly. Read the scriptures. Sing and listen to hymns or other inspirational music. Fill your life with joyous sounds. Put the positive in and you'll reap the revitalization and become a happier Christian. Our congregation will be revitalized as well.

Love,
Susan



The Seven Steps to Stagnation

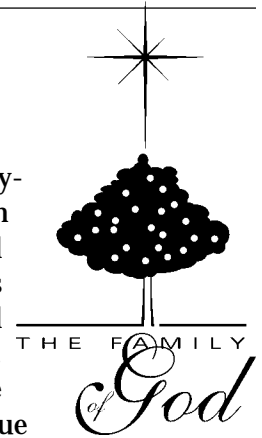
1. We've never done it that way.
2. We're not ready for that yet.
3. We're doing all right without it.
4. We tried it once and it didn't work out.
5. It costs too much.
6. That's not our responsibility.
7. It won't work.

Thank you ...

Thanks to everyone's efforts and donations, we delivered a large box of mittens, scarves and hats to the Sparrow's Nest to help keep many women and children warm this winter.

Sunday sermon inspires a response

On New Year's Day, Pastor Taylor gave an inspiring sermon on doing the right thing. She talked about: approaching situations with wisdom, having faith, and treating each other with respect. She showed us a plaque that she has had for many years. The plaque was titled "Seven Steps to Stagnation."



As individuals, we all too often become rigid, uncompromising, and stubborn. This writer can certainly plead guilty to those characteristics. Not to be misunderstood, we should not accept unrighteousness in the name of tolerance. But, our objective should be to do God's will. And part of God's will is to do God's work. And one work is to spread the good news of our Lord and Savior. There are many ways to tell the world of the love and grace of God, and the salvation that is offered through Jesus Christ.

Through faith, our Lord uses us to accomplish his will. That is, if we allow God's wisdom to work through us.

PROVERBS 8:4-9 (NIV)

To You, O men, I call out: I raise my voice to all mankind. You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding. Listen, for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right. My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness. All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse. To the discerning all of them right; they are faultless to those who have knowledge.

Jesus himself tells us what is truly important.

MATTHEW 6:31-34 (NIV)

So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

James, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote much about wisdom, faith in action, and treating each other properly.

JAMES 1:2-7 (NIV)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts

is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord.

JAMES 1:19-20 (NIV)

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

JAMES 4:1-3 (NIV)

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

JAMES 4:11-12 (NIV)

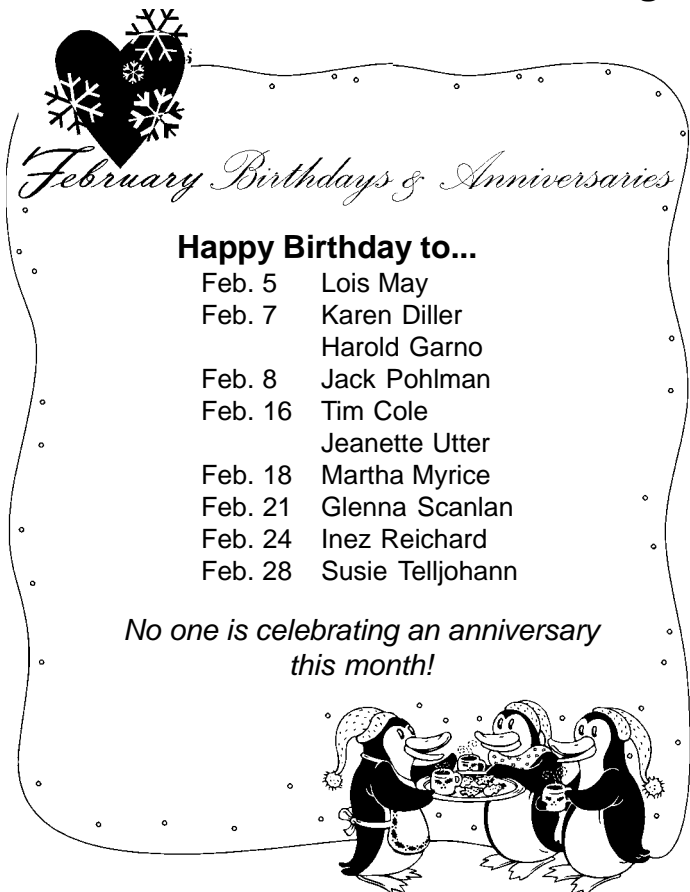
Brother, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

After calling the church of Laodicea “lukewarm,” our Savior continues . . .

REVELATION 3:20-21 (NIV)

“Here I am! I stand at the door. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

In His Service,
Ron Denlinger



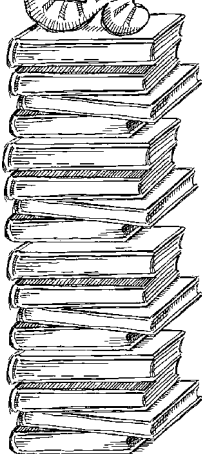
February Birthdays & Anniversaries

Happy Birthday to...

Feb. 5	Lois May
Feb. 7	Karen Diller Harold Garno
Feb. 8	Jack Pohlman
Feb. 16	Tim Cole Jeanette Utter
Feb. 18	Martha Myrice
Feb. 21	Glenna Scanlan
Feb. 24	Inez Reichard
Feb. 28	Susie Telljohann

No one is celebrating an anniversary this month!

Library News



A knowledgeable member of our church recently commented that her Bible understanding and appreciation have been greatly enhanced by learning its historical and geographic background. Bruce Feiler has written three books which provide entertaining reading while greatly expanding the reader's knowledge. The first book, *Walking the Bible: A Journey by Land Through the Five Books of Moses*, is the story of the author's 10,000 mile trek over three continents and five countries retracing the route of the Hebrew patriarchs, reading the Biblical accounts within their natural surroundings as he goes. His companion, Avner Goren, one of Israel's most eloquent authorities on life in the ancient world, provides insights into the latest archeological findings. Interviews with other pilgrims and local residents contribute to further understanding of our religious heritage. This book has been made into a three-part miniseries shown on local PBS stations. In *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*, Feiler explores the life of the man who is pivotal in all three religions – Islam, Judaism and Christianity – from the viewpoint of each in an entertaining and insightful account of his travels and the people he met on a second journey. He illustrates how differing views of the patriarch contribute to present-day conflicts and prays that honest and straightforward discussions may lead to the healing of our wounds. In his most recent book, *Where God Was Born: A Journey by Land to the Roots of Religion*, Feiler picks up the story with Joshua and follows the history of the Jews through the Hebrew scriptures. On a dangerous journey through Israel, Iraq and Iran he reinforces his conclusion that the Bible's moral vision presents a powerful argument for unity among the three religions. These three books make the *Old Testament*, which is often shunned by Christian readers, come alive.

Gloria Parker

Thank you from Anne Grady

“With a final big push from Nancy Barrios and her church group, who donated many clothing items, we were able to ensure that everyone who lives here, as well as respite clients, had a gift to open Christmas morning. Many, many thanks to all who gave so generously.”



Calendar of Events

Faith Community United Church of Christ



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Office Open 9 a.m.-1 p.m.	2 Office Open Pastor Susan in 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Thursday Morning Bible Study 9:30 a.m.	3	4
5 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany Worship 10:30 am Feed Your Neighbor Ministry	6 Block Watch 6:30-7:30 p.m.	7	8 Office Open 9 a.m.-1 p.m.	9 Office Open Pastor Susan in 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Thursday Morning Bible Study 9:30 a.m.	10 Glass Capital Decorative Artists 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.	11 Glass Capital Decorative Artists 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
12 Sixth Sunday after Epiphany Worship 10:30 am Finance, 9:30 a.m. Bake/Candy Sale GCDA, 12 to 5 pm	13	14 The Good Bunch 11:30 a.m. at Dolly & Joe's Valentine's Day	15 Office Open 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Dialog Deadline	16 Office Open Pastor Susan in 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Thursday Morning Bible Study 9:30 a.m. Council Meeting 7:30 p.m.	17	18
19 Seventh Sunday after Epiphany Worship 10:30 am	20 Presidents' Day	21	22 Office Open 9 a.m.-1 p.m.	23 Office Open Pastor Susan in 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Thursday Morning Bible Study 9:30 a.m.	24	25
26 Last Sunday after Epiphany Worship 10:30 am Transfiguration	27	28				



The Good Bunch met at Dolly & Joe's Restaurant in January. The program was a famous person from the 1940s and 1950s who greatly influenced the world. Below are scenes from that luncheon.



Council Highlights

The regular council meeting was held on Thursday, Jan. 19. Highlights of the meeting included:

1. The council decided to expand our ministry with our children. We are going to order children's bulletins and an Upper Room magazine called "Pockets."
2. The music committee is organizing its process for hiring the new Music Director. We are accepting resumes and will be conducting interviews in a timely manner.
3. The locks will be changed on all the doors, outside and inside, and a tracking system is being established. If you need to sign out a key, see B.J. or Pastor Susan.

Women's Guild
**Baked Goods and
 Candy Sale**
 Sunday, February 12, 2006
 Please sign the list on the bulletin board
 if you can contribute.
 Sugar-free items
 welcomed.



Worship Notes for February

Following are the scriptures that the worship services in February will be based on. In order to get the most from your worship experience, you can prepare by reading the scriptures in your own Bible before Sunday morning. Think about the scriptures and see if and how they are tied together. Then read the brief notes offered here. The "For Reflection" section is designed to help you think about what you've just read and to help you begin preparing to attend the worship service on Sunday morning ready to raise your voice in song, pray with more depth, and listen to the message with greater understanding.

February 2006						
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Feb. 5—Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 40:21-31
 Psalm 147:1-11,20c
 1 Corinthians 9:16-23
 Mark 1:29-39

In Isaiah we are reminded that in spite of diversity, God is still sovereign in all the earth and will continue to sustain and support those who serve him. Psalm 147 repeats the same theme. In Paul's message to the Corinthians he points out that he is unable to not preach the gospel and goes on to explain how he meets people right where they are in order to share God's gift of salvation. We see the same zeal in Mark when Jesus spread the gospel and healed throughout all of Galilee.

For Reflection:

Have you had times, like Israel in verse 27 of the Isaiah reading, when you were sure that God did not see or understand your plight? Can you see the assurances in these scriptures that present just the opposite?

Jesus had to spread the word throughout the region—it was the reason he came and what motivated and compelled him. Paul also was compelled to spread the gospel. He could not do otherwise. Have you ever felt compelled to share the reason for your faith?

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Feb. 12—Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

2 Kings 5:1-14
 Psalm 30
 1 Corinthians 9:24-27
 Mark 1:40-45



In 2 Kings we read the story of Naaman, a general who was afflicted with leprosy. When he came to Israel seeking healing, he balked at the prophet's message to bathe seven times in the Jordan River. But when he was per-

sueded to follow the instructions, he was healed. Psalm 30 could have been Naaman's song of praise—"O Lord my God, I cried out to you, and you healed me."

When we move to the New Testament we find another healing in Mark. A leper comes to Jesus for healing and once healed he can't keep his mouth shut about this wondrous thing that has happened. Later, Paul urges the Christians at Corinth to discipline their bodies as if preparing for a race. While he is using the winning of a race as an analogy to make his point, the message is to discipline one's heart and way of life in order to win the prize of salvation, evidenced by his own concerns of being disqualified.

For Reflection:

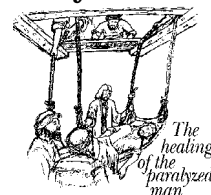
Have you ever encountered a time when you received clear instructions from the Lord and balked at following through? Maybe, like Naaman, the instructions were too simple and you expected something much more "showy" or "spectacular."

We may often wonder why Jesus instructed people to not tell of the wonderful healings he performed. Why do you think he told the leper to remain silent? Have you ever received a gift of healing, or any other gift of God, and found you just couldn't remain silent?

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Feb. 19—Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 43:18-25
 Psalm 41
 2 Corinthians 1:18-22
 Mark 2:1-12



There is a twin theme that runs through the readings this week—paralysis and forgiveness. In Isaiah, God announces that he intends to do something new to break the spiritual paralysis of his people. Even though they have not offered the sacrifices or honored him, he will blot out their transgressions and make them new. In Psalm 41, we see the Psalmist aware of the need for God's grace to raise him from his sickbed. Regardless of the nature of the illness, it is only through God that preservation and healing come. In 2 Corinthians, Paul is seeking to assure the people that his promise to visit them (read also verses 15-17 and verse 23 through 2:11 to put this reading in context) has not been simply idle conversation. Paul sees that visiting when planned would only cause them and him more pain. Instead, he encourages them to offer forgiveness to one another so they can move forward.

In Mark, Jesus forgives the sins of a paralyzed man—something that scandalizes the religious authorities. They

believed that only God could forgive sins and that only through the offering of sacrifices. Jesus exposes the ways that religious system kept people paralyzed in more ways than one and offers forgiveness to set folks free.

For Reflection:

Have you had times of spiritual paralysis? Or times when you were “stuck” or felt like you were facing a brick wall with no way around? Many feel that turning to God at these times is not enough, yet these scriptures tell us that God’s grace is the way out—the way to freedom.

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**Feb. 26—Last Sunday after Epiphany
Transfiguration Sunday**

2 Kings 2:1-12
Psalm 50:1-6
2 Corinthians 4:3-6
Mark 9:2-9



Transfiguration of the Lord

All four readings this week are disarming—ablaze with the glory of God appearing or demonstrating his magnificent glory in one way or another. In 2 Kings, Elisha dutifully stays with and follows his master, Elijah, until he is granted the double portion of the spirit that he had requested. He is left, after the chariot of fire receives Elijah, staring up into the sky. In Psalm 50, we read a description of God shining forth in all his glory to judge the people.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul points out that “the god of this age” has blinded some people to the radiant glory of God. But for those who declare Jesus Christ as their Lord, the light of God’s glory shines brightly on them. In Mark, three of Jesus’ disciples are witness to the transfiguration. Jesus was surrounded by light and his clothing became whiter than the disciples had ever seen. They were so overwhelmed that they did not know what to say.

For Reflection:

Have you had an encounter with the glory of God in your life? How did you respond? The readings this week speak of those who had witnessed God’s glory as being overwhelmed by it all, and in some cases, even being afraid. This seems like a natural reaction for us today also. Would you feel fear if the bright light of God’s presence suddenly shone around you?

February 2006						
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Mar. 1—Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
Psalm 51:1-17
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21



Today marks the beginning of Lent. In Joel the people

are told to prepare for the “Day of the Lord.” The prophet is calling for some serious acts of corporate lamentation and repentance on the part of Israel. Psalm 51 is one of the best prayers and confessions of sin in all the scriptures. Paul implores the Corinthians to be reconciled to God and to persevere in the face of many obstacles. In Matthew, Jesus instructs his disciples that acts of piety are important, but not to make one’s self look important, but as personal transformation in our relationship with God.

For Reflection:

As we enter the Lenten season, we are called to prepare and reconcile ourselves with God. Lent is not primarily about giving up something or depriving one’s self of things enjoyed. It is more a wilderness journey when we are “roughing it,” so to speak—a time of letting go of those things that distract us from our relationship with God. Have you thought about your relationship with God and what is necessary for you this season in your reconciliation and preparation?

February 2006						
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Mar. 5—First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 9:8-17
Psalm 25:1-9
1 Peter 3:18-22
Mark 1:9-15



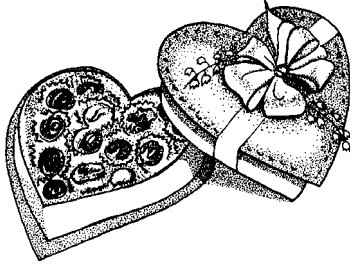
In Genesis, God offers the rainbow as a sign of his covenant not to destroy the earth by flood again. In Psalm 25 we see the people wishing to follow God’s way and wishing to learn it even better, unlike the people of Noah’s time who died in the flood rather than change their ways. Peter connects the death and resurrection of Christ with the experience of Noah’s flood and the sacrament of baptism. In Mark, we find Jesus being driven into the wilderness for a period of testing. This wilderness experience is metaphorically the example of the Lenten journey.

For Reflection:

The wilderness journey is surely a turning away from the normal flow of life as we know it. As you begin the forty days of Lent, are you prepared to face your inner moments of wilderness as Jesus faced off against Satan? Just as ministering angels watched over him, God sends angels to watch over us as well.

What does the Lenten season mean to you? Do you see it as a time of reconciliation and drawing closer to God? What other things might it mean to you?





The Good Bunch

will dine at
Dolly and Joe's Restaurant
Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2006
at 11:30 a.m.

*The Valentine's Day Party will have
special entertainment.*

Please sign up to make a reservation. The sign up
sheet is on the hallway bulletin board.

If you have any questions, call
Dorothy Kowalski
419-382-6171 or
Jan Wolff
419-385-3991

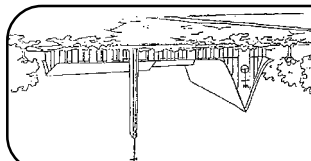


*Remember in
your thoughts
and prayers...*

- Norma Cole
- Dorothy Einsel
- Jean Sprow
- Kate Hillard
- Eleanor Huss
- Florence Heinig
- Lowell Wolff
- Marian Hamm
- Bessie Emch
- Ron Loe
- Peter Rex
- Christine Rex



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