

Faith Community United Church of Christ

Dialog

JANUARY 2006



1201 South Byrne Road • Toledo, OH 43614 • 419-385-3747 • faithcomucc@toast.net • www.faithcommunityucc.org
Rev. Ms. Susan M. Taylor, *Pastor* / Mel Barrios, *Certified Lay Minister* / B.J. Lord, *Editor-Secretary*

From the Pastor's Study ...

We are about to celebrate Epiphany—the arrival of the three wise men. Why do we celebrate the Epiphany? What is it all about?

To have an epiphany means to have a sudden awareness, to figure out a reality in your life that makes your faith clear to you. It is an “aha” experience that opens your eyes to the wonder and mystery of God. This is what happens to the three wise sages when they find the new born son of God after their long journey. In a dream God reveals the evil intent of Herod toward the baby and they leave the country by another route. This epiphany made clear to them how special this child was and that he was God's son.

What will be the epiphanies in our lives in this next year? When will we suddenly feel God's spirit breaking into our lives and our hearts? How will our lives suddenly be shaken up as we realize another truth of God? Where will we feel the warmth and comfort of

suddenly understanding God's will and direction for our lives? What will be the mysteries of God we discover?

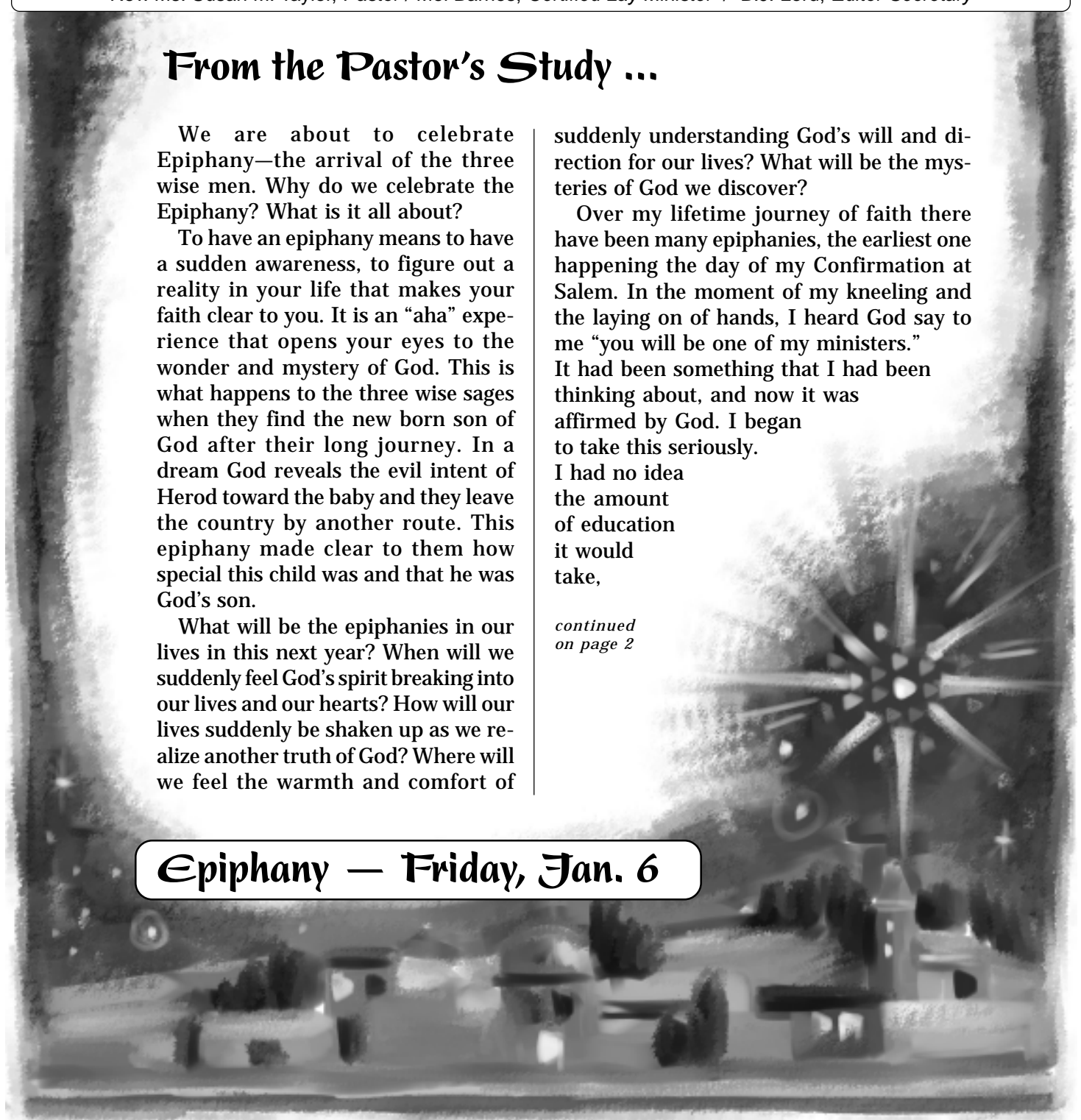
Over my lifetime journey of faith there have been many epiphanies, the earliest one happening the day of my Confirmation at Salem. In the moment of my kneeling and the laying on of hands, I heard God say to me “you will be one of my ministers.”

It had been something that I had been thinking about, and now it was affirmed by God. I began to take this seriously.

I had no idea
the amount
of education
it would
take,

*continued
on page 2*

Epiphany — Friday, Jan. 6



From the Editor

It's a new year

With the beginning of a new year and a new pastor, Faith Community will be moving forward in many new directions. One of those new directions will be in the Dialog. With Pastor Taylor's blessings and guidance, I will begin filling the role of "editor" in a whole new way. I will be working over the next few months to turn the newsletter into a real tool for the congregation with more depth to enhance your worship experience, more knowledge of your Christian heritage in general and, specifically, the United Church of Christ. There will also be more contact with the UCC through stories and news items from around the nation and around the world.

Of course, everything you are accustomed to finding in the Dialog will remain as well. It will still function as the source to learn what is happening in the congregation. You may have already noticed that your weekly bulletins are coming with more inserts designed to enhance your experience as a member or friend of the United Church of Christ. You can expect the same type of new material with your Dialog.

Anyone in the congregation with a desire to write or participate is welcome to stop by the office to see how you can help. There will be story assignments available for every issue if anyone wants to become involved. Those assignments will be available by the first of each month and are due completed by the 15th of each month in order to be included in the next issue.

But don't confuse these assignments with what many of you are already doing. This is something completely new. For everyone who has been contributing to the Dialog, please continue to do exactly what you have been doing.

This issue is just an example of what you can expect in the Dialog for 2006. Look it over and offer your feedback. If you like what you see and want to become more involved, stop by on Wednesday or Thursday morning or call the office. If there are other things you would like to see in the Dialog, please let us know.

B.J. Lord
Editor/Secretary

From the Pastor's Study

Continued from page 1

or the sacrifices I would make in my life by following God's leading. Neither did I know the joys it would bring to my life—all of the baptizing of God's children into his family and the care of a congregation, performing marriages, preparing services, preaching sermons, celebrating the Lord's Supper, leading the many Christmas Eve Services, and the many sunrise services on Easter, confirming youth into full membership, and so much more has brought great joy.

I realized recently that all I have learned, celebrated, and endured, would bring me to serve one day a congregation I had pondered serving during my high school and college years.

My latest epiphany is that God has been preparing me all these years for this ministry with you. Each one of the ministries I have been called to have not been an accident or just an incident of fate. Each call has prepared me for the next and has been a meaningful part of my journey of faith. Now this journey has led me to Faith Community United Church of Christ and this part of the journey is just beginning.

I wonder what wonderful gifts God has yet to bestow on us in this journey? What growing pains will we experience? What joys will fill our hearts? That is yet to be revealed as we continue to experience the epiphanies in our lives, as we seek to serve him with the very best we have to offer him and his world.

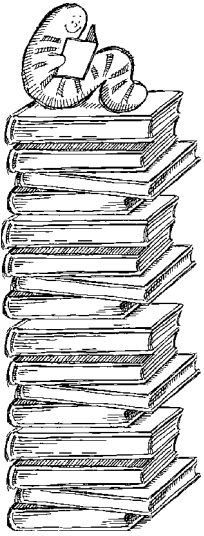
Love,

Susan



January Birthdays

Jan. 3 —Norma Cole
 Jan. 5 —Florence Heinig
 Jan. 9 —Andrew Timothy Moran
 —Sally Telljohann
 Jan. 10 —Eleanor Huss
 —Matthew Utter
 Jan. 12 —Bill Harrison
 Jan. 19 —Terry Cole
 Jan. 21 —Eric Stroud
 Jan. 23 —Helen Shearon



Library News

Happy New Year

We hope you had a wonderful Christmas and that your friends and relatives followed our advice in the December *Library News* and you are now well-stocked with new reading material. Even if you aren't, your library is overflowing with great new and old titles begging to be read.

The problem is finding time to enjoy them. Here are some tried and true suggestions to help you.

1. Talk less.
2. Carry a book in your bag.
3. Put a book under your pillow at night; if you can't sleep, read.
4. Wake up 15 minutes earlier every morning and read.
5. Keep a book handy to pick up while in the kitchen, dressing, or on the telephone.
6. Have a book ready when meeting unpunctual people.
7. Keep an unread book in your car in case of a traffic jam or a wait for repairs.
8. Take along your own book when going to the dentist, doctor or lawyer.
9. Never go on a trip without a book.
10. Remember that a book in the hand is worth two on the shelf!

When you're in the narthex be sure to take a look at the side table for "freebies." These are perfectly good items we've been forced to withdraw from our overcrowded shelves. You are welcome to keep them; they are no longer in the library records. Any leftovers will be donated to the rummage sale.

Happy Reading!

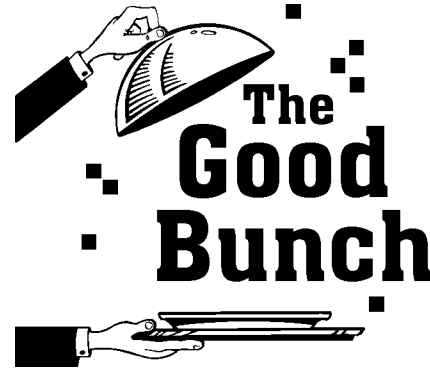
Gloria Parker

Mission Notes

Over 40 fleece garments were delivered to the residents at Anne Grady Center on Wednesday, Dec. 21. Thank you to all who contributed to those in need.

An appreciation letter has been received from the executive director of Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi, thanking us for the recent donation:

"Thanks in part to gifts like yours, Back Bay Mission is making progress in its recovery, and we are once again playing a vital role in our storm-battered community. In December we will provide Christmas gifts for nearly 450 children and their families."



The Good Bunch will meet at Dolly and Joe's on Tuesday, January 10 at 11:30 a.m. Come and meet a famous person in history who greatly influenced the world in the 1940s and 1950s. Please sign the reservation page on the bulletin board or call Susie Telljohann.

Council Highlights

The regular council meeting was cancelled due to bad weather and road conditions. To make up for the cancelled meeting, they met at a special time on Sunday, Dec. 18 at 9 a.m. Highlights of the meeting included:

1. The need to pray for Pilgrim Congregation, which has voted to leave the denomination.
2. The worship/search committee is actively pursuing the hiring of a music director.
3. The release of a public compliment to B.J., secretary, for a great job.
4. Finance reported starting the year with around \$40,000 in the general fund and will end the year with about \$17,000.
5. The stewardship committee reported receiving 15-16 pledges totalling \$19,000 on Stewardship Sunday.



Calendar of Events
Faith Community United Church of Christ

January
 2006



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><i>1</i></p> <p>First Sunday after Christmas Day Worship 10:30 am Feed Your Neighbor Ministry</p> <p><i>New Year's Day</i></p>	<p><i>2</i></p> <p>Block Watch 6:30-7:30 p.m.</p>	<p><i>3</i></p>	<p><i>4</i></p> <p>Office Open 9 a.m.-1 p.m.</p>	<p><i>5</i></p> <p>Office Open Pastor Susan in 9 a.m.-1 p.m.</p> <p>Thursday Morning Bible Study 9:30 a.m.</p>	<p><i>6</i></p> <p>EPIPHANY</p>	<p><i>7</i></p>
<p><i>8</i></p> <p>First Sunday after Epiphany Worship 10:30 am Finance Committee, 9:30 a.m.</p> <p><i>Baptism of Christ</i></p>	<p><i>9</i></p>	<p><i>10</i></p> <p>The Good Bunch 11:30 a.m. at Dolly & Joe's</p>	<p><i>11</i></p> <p>Office Open 9 a.m.-1 p.m.</p>	<p><i>12</i></p> <p>Office Open Pastor Susan in 9 a.m.-1 p.m.</p> <p>Thursday Morning Bible Study 9:30 a.m.</p>	<p><i>13</i></p>	<p><i>14</i></p> <p>Glass Capital Decorative Artists 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.</p>
<p><i>15</i></p> <p>Second Sunday after Epiphany Worship 10:30 am</p> <p><i>Dialog Deadline</i></p>	<p><i>16</i></p> <p><i>Martin Luther King Jr. Day</i></p>	<p><i>17</i></p>	<p><i>18</i></p> <p>Office Open 9 a.m.-1 p.m.</p> <p><i>Week of Prayer for Christian Unity—Jan. 18-25</i></p>	<p><i>19</i></p> <p>Office Open Pastor Susan in 9 a.m.-1 p.m.</p> <p>Thursday Morning Bible Study 9:30 a.m.</p> <p>Council Meeting 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p><i>20</i></p>	<p><i>21</i></p>
<p><i>22</i></p> <p>Third Sunday after Epiphany Worship 10:30 am</p> <p><i>Ecumenical Sunday</i></p>	<p><i>23</i></p>	<p><i>24</i></p>	<p><i>25</i></p> <p>Office Open 9 a.m.-1 p.m.</p>	<p><i>26</i></p> <p>Office Open Pastor Susan in 9 a.m.-1 p.m.</p> <p>Thursday Morning Bible Study 9:30 a.m.</p>	<p><i>27</i></p>	<p><i>28</i></p>
<p><i>29</i></p> <p>Fourth Sunday after Epiphany Worship 10:30 am CONGREGATION MEETING 11:30 a.m.</p>	<p><i>30</i></p>	<p><i>31</i></p>				

New Feature**Worship Notes for January**

Following are the scriptures that the worship services in January will be based upon. In order to get the most from your worship experience, you can be prepared by reading the scriptures in your own Bible before Sunday morning. Think about the scriptures and see how they tie together. Then read the brief paragraph or two offered below. The "For Reflection" section is designed 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. (As there will not be a separate Epiphany service, read and reflect on both the Jan. 6 and the Jan. 8 entries together before Sunday, Jan. 8.)

January 2006						
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Jan. 6—Epiphany

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

Ephesians 3:1-12

Matthew 2:1-12



In Isaiah we see that the light has come and people from all over the world stream to it. Psalm 72 offers a celebration of the kingship God blesses and bestows upon the earth. Ephesians tells us that the mystery of the gospel is now revealed to all people, including Jewish peasants, Palestinian shepherds, and Iraqi astrologers, and all are being made into one new humanity in Jesus Christ. Matthew tells us the story of the Magi from the east offering adoration to the newborn king and returning home by another way.

Epiphany is a remembrance of the high honor bestowed upon Jesus by the Magi who came "from the East" to worship him. The day does not simply celebrate this event, but rather the revelation of God in Jesus Christ that reaches out to and seeks to bring salvation to people of all faith traditions, cultures, and practices.

For Reflection:

Consider the contrast between the spiritual symbolism of **light** and **darkness** in the scriptures—light is fellowship with the holy God, while darkness is life apart from him.

What is the light coming into the world that all these scriptures reveal?

Is it not the focus of the Magi's long journey in search of the meaning of the star rising in the East?

What is the mystery that Paul says in Ephesians was not made known to previous generations? (Look at Eph. 3:6)

God revealed to the world two thousand years ago that the good news promised in Christ is for all people, not just the Jews. The revelation came in a brief glimpse at who on the earth were the first to acknowledge the birth of the Christ child (the light that came into the world). According to Luke, it was the lowly shepherds, and according to

Matthew, it was Gentile sages from the East. The mystery is revealed that God's promises are for all people—Jew and Gentile alike. Notice at what point in the story that this revelation is offered? Right at the very beginning.

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**Jan. 8—Baptism of the Lord
(1st Sunday after Epiphany)**

Genesis 1:1-5

Psalm 29

Acts 19:1-7

Mark 1:4-11



In Genesis we see darkness and chaos over the waters and then the Word brings order to them all—the emergence of light from the midst of darkness. In Psalm 29 we are offered images of the awesome and dangerous power of nature through floods, tornadoes, lightning strikes, and devastation, yet God reigns in the midst of it all. Acts reveals the power and extent of the ministry of John the Baptist—reaching all the way from Judea to the western shores of Asia Minor by the mid-first century (probably 25 to 30 years after his execution). John had taught people to live differently in light of the coming Kingdom; Jesus would give them the power of life. This is a tremendous achievement when one considers the very short length of time that John actually was active in Judea. In Mark we note that while John's baptismal ministry seems to unite people from Judea and all Jerusalem in confession and repentance, his baptism of Jesus literally "splits the heavens." The announcement of the voice from heaven answers the hope for the arrival of one chosen by God to pour out the Holy Spirit.

For Reflection

In these scriptures we are again reminded of the **light**. Light, among other things, is **life**. And what was the first act of God in creation?

Consider the awesome power of God that is also revealed in these verses. What does the power of God spelled out in Psalm 29 have to do with John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus?

Note the voice of the Lord in the storm in Psalm 29:3-4. Later we see the heavens torn apart, the Spirit descend like a dove, and the voice of God from heaven.

The light had come into the world. What does this tell us about God's presence in all things? The experience of Jesus was unique—not an experience that can be reproduced in the disciple, as it was wholly supernatural and what our Christian faith is built upon.

Jan. 15—Second Sunday after Epiphany

1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20)

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18

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1 Corinthians 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

God's call was difficult for Samuel to identify, and the message he received with the call (verses 11-20) was even harder to deliver to the one who had been like a father and mentor to him. Psalm 139 reveals how well God knows us and our inward parts. When God calls one, his call is not random or capricious. It comes from his thorough knowledge of the one he calls. In First Corinthians we see Paul confronting the ease with which some, who had received the call and the gift of God's grace, could justify turning to prostitutes. He reminds the reader of the call they received, which is like marriage, in that we are made one with Christ. In marriage, we are made one with a spouse, so in baptism we have been made one with Christ. As spouses belong to each other, so we belong to Christ, and so are to give glory to the One to whom we belong and to whom we were called. John details Jesus' call to Phillip to follow him. Phillip recognizes the call and immediately announces to Nathanael that he has found the one expected by Moses and the prophets. But Nathanael doesn't immediately recognize the call until Jesus reveals the supernatural aspect of it.

For Reflection

Have you recognized the call in your life? Has God been urging you to live more for him and his service?

The reference to marriage and Christians turning to prostitutes seems like a strange insertion in today's message. However, recall that a similar message was delivered to ancient Israel when they ran after other gods. The Bible uses similar language in accusing them of adultery with these other gods.

What are some of the other gods we chase after today in our modern world? Could it be money, fame, recognition, material possessions, just to name a few? Can you see how, in God's eyes, these things might represent a betrayal of our relationship with him? Are we guilty of turning to other gods in place of the one true God who alone offers deliverance?

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**Jan. 22—Third Sunday
after Epiphany**

Jonah 3:1-5,10
Psalm 62:5-12
1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20



Jonah finally begins to fulfill his assignment to proclaim God's judgment to the people of Nineveh. He walks through about one-third of the city's streets on the first day, announcing that only forty days remain before doom arrives. The response of the entire city is rapid and complete: The entire human population fasts, "and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth." God relents and does not bring harm to the city. In Psalm 62 we are reminded that deep,

silent, centered, meditative turning to and confidence in God alone—not anxious action, not rulers, not business plans, not wealth—bring deliverance. Paul reminds the Christians at Corinth that they are to be a people whose lives are ordered by the arriving new world of God's Kingdom, not by the nature of the relationships and power systems that mark the current world order. In Mark we are given the core of Jesus' proclamation, perhaps the title or tagline of every sermon he ever gave—that God's Kingdom is drawing near—repent and believe the good news! He then calls the fishermen to leave their livelihood and their families and follow him.

For Reflection

Consider the contrast between trusting in God or trusting in humans. When we place high expectations on people we will be let down every time. Can you see a pattern of this in your own life?

Compare it to the times when you trusted solely in God. As the Psalm says, confidence in God brings deliverance.

Jesus' message is to repent and believe the good news. What does repent mean? It is not merely being sorry for a sin that one has committed, but rather its larger meaning is to "stop and change direction." It is a complete interruption of whatever path one is following and turning to go another way, just as Mark points out in the lives of the fishermen who gave up their livelihood to follow Jesus.

When was the last time you really "repented"?

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**Jan. 29—Fourth Sunday
after Epiphany**

Deuteronomy 18:15-20
Psalm 11
1 Corinthians 8:1-13
Mark 1:21-28



In Deuteronomy, the Lord promises to raise up a future prophet, like Moses, to continue speaking to the covenant people. The promise comes with a price for the prophet and the people. The prophet must speak only the words of God and the people must obey or face accountability. In the Psalms we are reminded to praise God for fulfilling his promises of deliverance. We are assured he is in his holy temple and he sees both the wicked and the righteous.

It seems that the scene shifts when we move to First Corinthians, but it, in fact, ties in with today's message. Paul is pointing out that some in the church in Corinth have no qualms about eating meat that has been offered in pagan rituals because they, personally, don't recognize the existence of the gods to whom the meat was offered or the validity of the rites by which they were offered. Paul reminds them, while their reasoning about these meats and these gods may be correct in theory, most people in Corinth would be so saturated by the polytheistic culture, they would have trouble separating following Jesus from any association with the other ritual practices. Therefore, he warns them not to engage in any action or practice that could be misin-

terpreted by “the weak”—a reminder to obey the only one true God from Deuteronomy. Jesus’ presence and authoritative teaching ministry is the highlight of the example in Mark. In Jewish practice, a person known to be a demoniac would not have been admitted into the synagogue, so the confrontation here is one that points to the authority given to Jesus—it points to him as the prophet referred to in Deuteronomy.

For Reflection

Think about the message contained throughout every book of the Bible—God always keeps all of his promises. If God has promised it, you can count on it!

He promised a prophet like Moses who would speak to his people. Do you see how God kept his promise?

Why do you think the promise came with a price? Is it because God wants to make clear that there is “no other God before him”? Is it because a prophet who does not speak only his words would not really be his prophet at all?

Do you see how Jesus fulfills the requirement?

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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, 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. 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?

Congregational Meeting

Sunday, Jan. 29, 11:30 a.m.
following the morning worship service.

Liturgical colors and the seasons of the church year

The use of colors to differentiate liturgical seasons became a common practice in the Western church in about the fourth century. At first, usages varied considerably but by the 12th century Pope Innocent III systematized the use of five colors: Violet, White, Black, Red and Green. The Lutheran and Anglican churches that emerged from the Reformation retained the traditional colors but they disappeared entirely (along with most other ritual) from the worship of the Reformed churches. During the 20th century, the ecumenical Liturgical Movement prompted the rediscovery of ancient Christian ritual—including the traditional colors of the Western church. To these have been added Blue and Gold—colors that were used in some Western rites before the 12th century.

Briefly, the colors express emotions and ideas that are associated with each of the seasons of the liturgical year. Violet is the ancient royal color and therefore a symbol of the sovereignty of Christ. Violet is also associated with repentance from sin. White and Gold symbolize the brightness of day. Black is the traditional color of mourning in some cultures. Red evokes the color of blood, and therefore is the color of martyrs and of Christ’s death on the Cross. Red also symbolizes fire, and therefore is the color of the Holy Spirit. Green is the color of growth. Blue is the color of the sky and in some rites honors Mary.

Congregations in the United Church of Christ have the freedom to use any combination of colors (or no particular colors) as seems best to them. The use of traditional colors, however, connects us to the wider Body of Christ and provides worship planners with visual aids that mark the transition from one season to another. Colors can be used in altar and pulpit decorations, vestments, banners and tapestries.

Season after Epiphany

The season following Epiphany continues the theme established on Epiphany Day: the spread of the Good News of Christ from its source in the Jewish community to all nations on earth. The Lectionary therefore explores the mission of the church in the world. The theme of this season (along with the sequence of readings from the Gospel) continues in the season after Pentecost, so both seasons together can be called the “Time of the Church.” The traditional liturgical color for both seasons, Green, is the color of growth.

**In
Memory of**



Rev. Albert A. Schwenke

A memorial service was held on Sunday, Nov. 6, for the Reverend Albert A. Schwenke at St. Stephen UCC in Sandusky, Ohio. He was pastor of Faith Community Church from 1970 to 1982. He is survived by his wife, Pearl; son, Bill; daughter, Beth Pitts; and grandson, Brock Pitts. He had lived in Sandusky since his retirement and had served several churches in Northwest Ohio as interim pastor. He was active at St. Stephen for many years, leading the senior group and teaching Sunday School. He and his family had served as missionaries in Ghana for ten years prior to his being ordained. The service was a Thanksgiving for his life and ministry.

Juanita Plessy

Juanita Plessy, sister of Mel Barrios, died in Pensacola, Florida on Sunday, Dec. 4. Mel was unable to attend the funeral, but made a trip in mid-December to visit with family members in Florida.

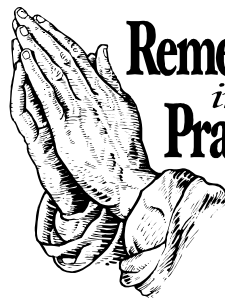
Oleen Amsden

Oleen Amsden, a member of Faith Community UCC for more than 40 years, died in Ripon, Wisconsin, on November 29 at her residence. She had served as church secretary for 21 years, and was active in teaching Sunday School, in the Women's Guild, and in the choir. She is survived by her husband, Donald, and her son's family, Robert, Jeanne, Phillip, and Nalani of Ripon. Funeral services were held in Ripon and a memorial service was held at Faith Church on Dec. 10. A memorial has been established.



Saying 'Goodbye' is hard to do

Debra Trail, Michelle Stecker, and Cathy Hammack at the Stewardship Dinner and Pastor Michelle's last Sunday at Faith Community on Nov. 20.

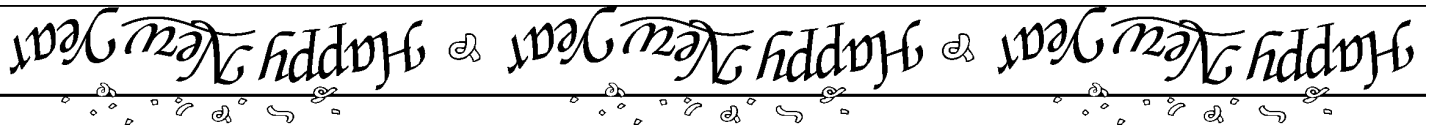


**Remember
in
Prayer**

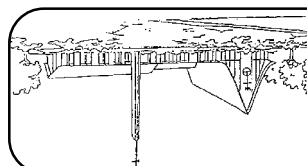
Norma Cole, Dorothy Einsel, Jean Sprow, Kate Hillard, Eleanor Huss, Florence Heinig, Lowell Wolff, Marian Hamm, Bessie Emch, Peter Rex, Ron Loe, Amsden family, and Mel Barrios family.

Epiphany potluck planned

Everyone is invited to a potluck dinner following the Epiphany celebration at 10:30 a.m. on Jan. 8. After lunch we will be taking down all the Christmas decorations.



1201 South Byrne Road • Toledo, Ohio 43614-2328



Dialog
Faith Community United Church of Christ