



January 2013

The MESSENGER

January 2013

A Newsletter for the First Congregational United Church of Christ, Park Falls, WI

279 North First Avenue, P.O. Box 258, Park Falls, WI 54552

Worship: 8:45 AM

Telephone: (715) 762-3220

E-mail: parkfallsucc@pctcnet.net

From the pastor's pen... Membership!

It seems that every church wants to increase its membership. Some churches brag openly about how many members, or how many new members they have. The ordinary world looks at numbers and finances and declares the big, rich churches to be what they call a success. However, Jesus watches us and hopes we spread Good News. Regardless the statistics, I'd prefer Jesus' view. So all through this, please keep an eye open for the gospel.

Does Park Falls UCC need more members? Yes, we could do the gospel work better if we had more hands on the plow. And not only are there more people in our neighborhoods who need to hear Jesus, there are messages we need to hear from the people in our neighborhoods. Yes, we need to hear them as much as they need to hear prayer.

There's many misconceptions about new members. The worst is that we need new people to join, get to work, give money, and not make any changes. That presumes that we are the perfect church. There's also a misconception that if we get more members then we will be back like the old days. Another bit of foolishness is to think that new members will just fit seamlessly into our church and do exactly what they're told.

So let's begin with a gospel view. The Holy Spirit wants to send us new members because they have something to teach us. As Jesus both promised and warned us, "the harvest is ready." There are lots of folks out there who are prepared and ready to join in praising God and sharing the Good News. The heavenly effort is already underway. They are not just ready, they are hungry for Christ. So we have any number of neighbors around Park Falls, Butternut and Fifield who are intended by God to be part of our Sunday morning worshiping group called a 'church.' We need only open their doors and they will be here to make us what God intends.

And that's the important aspect. What does God intend? There is a beautiful mosaic picture that is in the Holy Spirit's mind, and each of us is one sparkling chip of color. And the mosaic is nice enough now, but there's a divine ambition of how the artwork will fill with meaning and purpose once the new members are among us. Just imagine how we will move as a church once the rest of the voices are joined with ours in work and worship! Imagine what we will be doing!

That, of course, brings up another reality. New members will move us in new ways. They have gifts in

the Holy Spirit and will be teaching us. Inspiring us. Changing us. There are ways that God wants us to live the gospel, and new folks might very well be the messengers to tell us. So we need to prepare and be open for the leadership we need. Are we too comfy and settled in our ways? Will we hear the holy word from newcomers?

Still, be careful. What would happen if they answered God's and our invitation, came to join us one Sunday, and were welcomed only halfheartedly? So we need to plan ahead for the welcome we offer. Nobody says we are a bunch of sour-pusses. We are cheerful enough on any given Sunday. Just look at how we go on saying hello to one another at the start of Service. But is that how we'd greet a newcomer? Are we ready to not chat with our best buddies so we can listen to someone new? We'll need to be alert to our own behavior as new folks join us.

Even more, are we ready to put aside the various complaints and dissensions of church life? We have to be ready, not to just paper over our differences, but to open our hearts to each present member now. There is a reality called gossip, and we cannot avoid it. There are no secrets. People around town know whether we are being good Christians to each other. The world notices hypocrisy. If we have any kind of grudges or difficulties we can't hide them. People will see right away if we are not a church at peace with one another. They'll catch on all too quickly if we have been in troubles lately. They might not even be willing to step in our doors if we have been building the wrong reputation.

Are you having second thoughts about inviting new members? Good! Because only now can we start to talk about what to say to people. And of course we can't tell them that they're terrible sinners who need to come to church. But we can admit that we have our own problems, and our church helps us to face them or solve them. We can't tell them that we are the perfect church or the right church or the only church. But we can tell them how this church works for us. We can't tell them that they know nothing, but we can share that we enjoy growing here. And most of all, we can be ready to say that we are seeking God, that we are looking for wisdom, that we are confident that divine grace will keep revealing to us how we are to live and how to move the world. After all, God is still speaking.

*Blessings,
Pastor Jim*

January Duties

USHERS

- January 6 Peterson Family
- January 13 Fox Family
- January 20 Paul and Teresa Norlander
- January 27 Jim and Jana Ferkovich

If you cannot usher on your assigned Sunday, please call Jim Ferkovich at 715-762-2385.

SCRIPTURE READERS

- January 6 Mary Ruth Rodel
- January 13 George Faltinosky
- January 20 Arlene Morrison
- January 27 Edna Kroepel

OFFERING COUNTERS

- Jan. 6 Arlene Morrison & Lois Gwinn
- Jan. 13 Jana Ferkovich & Heidi Peterson
- Jan. 20 Kurt and DiAnn Brown
- Jan. 27 Renee Donner and Alice Megna

COMMUNION SERVERS

- January: Morrison Family
- February: Heisler Family

If you are on any of these lists and cannot make it on your assigned day, please call someone else to change dates. Thank you for volunteering!

January Meetings

- * 1/9 Trustees, 7:00 pm
- * 1/15 Search Committee, 6:30 pm
- * 1/16 Diaconate, 6:30 pm
- * 1/17 Women's Fellowship, 1:30 pm
- * 1/18 Mission Board, 10:30 am

HELP FEED THE PIG!

A huge thank you to all who have donated to the Youth Programs by "Feeding The Pig"!

As we work to increase our numbers of kids in the Sunday School and Confirmation programs we count on this money for sending confirmation kids to the Moon Beach Retreat, purchasing student bibles for confirmands and gifts for our graduates and for those who are baptized.



We also use this money for Sunday School curriculum and supplies and also for the VBS program. These things are so necessary in attracting young families to join us.

Thank you for your continued generosity!

Shrink-a-Bill

Can you help? Copies of current bills are posted on the bulletin board in the narthex of the Park Falls church. If you are able to pay all or a portion of a bill, please put your check and the bill in the collection plate or a notation on the check as to which bill you want the payment applied. All donations go a long way towards helping us meet our budget. Thank you for your help.

The Chancel Choir continues to bless us during worship.

If you would like to join the choir contact Mark Donner



at 715-762-2808.

1st Congregational UCC is Going Green for the Green!

For the 'giving' year 2013, The Trustees have elected to use offertory envelopes left over from previous years rather than ordering new boxes of envelopes. There are 75+ boxes of offertory envelopes in storage.

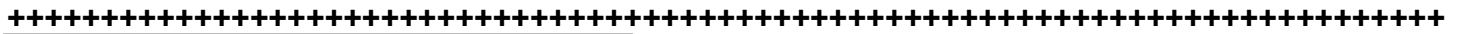
This is an efficient, effective way to recycle, utilizing existing envelopes and save



money while giving to the church. The dates will not match, that will not matter; simply write your name on the envelope and put in the offertory plate.

Thank you for helping the Church go Green for the Green!

The Trustees




Corner of Rock Youth Outreach Center Offering

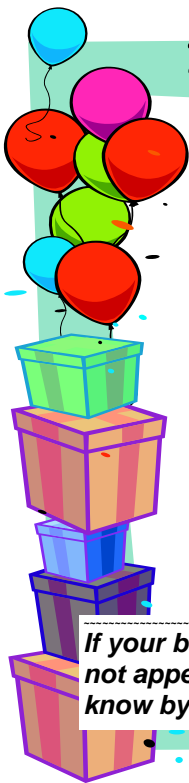
The Mission Board would like to extend a big thank you to all who donated to the Corner of Rock offering this past month.

We received over \$600.00 in offerings. This local mission offering is a wonderful way to help support this youth program within our city. The monies collected are much needed and very much appreciated by the Corner Rock.

Thank you for your support and the Mission Board would like to wish our congregation a happy and healthy 2013.



A Huge Thank You to Don Danielson for filling up our paper supply closet once again. Not only did Don stock us up with white paper and colored paper, he rearranged and sorted all the paper to make it much easier to find and get at. Thanks Don!!



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1/5 Morgan Becker | 1/26 Lore Wakefield |
| 1/5 Larry Marsh | 1/31 Elfrieda Falstad |
| 1/8 Rosie Slack | |
| 1/10 Bill Oswald | <u>ANNIVERSARIES</u> |
| 1/11 Heidi Peterson | 1/7 Jeff and Lola Coffin-Baars |
| 1/11 Ira Follen | 1/13 Mike and Sherry Casey |
| 1/19 Casey Calhoun | 1/21 Nels and Kathy Lee |
| 1/19 Gary Griesel | |
| 1/19 Gary Metz | |
| 1/23 Chase Vuchetich | |
| 1/25 Carol Keller | |

If your birthday or a family member's birthday has not appeared in the monthly birthday lists, let us know by calling or emailing the church office.



STAY UP TO DATE WITH THE HAPPENINGS AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH!

Visit and 'like' our Facebook page at First Congregational UCC - Park Falls.

Also check out our webpage at parkfallsucc.org. You will find links to the national and regional UCC websites as well as scholarship forms and newsletters.

Let Heidi know if there is anything you want to announce on either or both pages.

The Lord's Cupboard News

Bill and Connie Uhlig, on behalf of Trinity Lutheran Church, applied for a Bridge Grant from Thrivent Financial Services for Lutherans to be given to the Lord's Cupboard. Thrivent granted the maximum amount of \$5,000.00 to our food pantry.

In addition, Trinity was offered a Challenge Grant for another \$5,000.00. This opportunity runs from 11/14/12 through 3/31/13. Thrivent will match 50¢ on the dollar for all donations given.

The only requirement is that any monies raised must be channeled through Trinity Lutheran's Financial System to be transferred to the Lord's Cupboard. All checks to Trinity should note "For the Lord's Cupboard" on the bottom of the check. This is a good way to stretch your charitable dollars.

ANNUAL MEETING

The Church Annual Meeting has been scheduled for **Sunday, January 27, 2013** after the morning service. All committee and board reports are due to the church office by **Sunday, January 13**. They can be brought in hand-written or typed or they can be emailed to parkfallsucc@pctcnet.net.

Please remember that the earlier these get turned in the sooner the booklet can be completed. Your

help is greatly appreciated. Thank you!

Also the Women's Fellowship and the Circle of Faith will be serving a brunch following worship before the meeting. Stop down and enjoy breakfast before heading back up to the sanctuary for the meeting.

+++++

Making Room for the Familiar Stranger

Luke 2:6-7 (*The Message*)

"She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in hostel."

Martin B. Copenhaver

I have always loved the writings of Dylan Thomas, particularly his short stories. His prose sounds more like poetry than most poems do.

So, when our children were still young, I was excited to take my family to a play adapted from Thomas' story, *A Child's Christmas in Wales*. It was a smashing success. Our children were enthralled. I was delighted to think we had created a new family holiday tradition.

For six years running we went to see the production. It felt like a Christmas liturgy that did not need to be changed from one year to the next. And I always looked forward to it.

Then one year the theatre company did not stage the play. I had to break the news to my family.

After a few understated expressions of sorrow, our daughter tentatively ventured, "You know, Dad, I think it's really okay. To tell you the truth, I never really did like *A Child's Christmas in Wales*."

Our son immediately jumped in: "I'm so glad to hear you say that. I thought I was the only one."

"You never liked it?" I asked.

"Sorry, Dad. Like... never."

I turned to my wife. She just shook her head.

It turns out that no one else in my family enjoyed *A Child's Christmas in Wales*. They all found it excruciatingly boring. But for years they did not tell me and they had not told one another, either.

In its fullest sense, hospitality is making room for the stranger. But sometimes the one we are making room for is that strange one who is very familiar. And when we make room for a stranger (whether someone we have never met or someone with whom we share a roof), in all of his flaws and odd devotions (like to *A Child's Christmas in Wales*), we are making room for Jesus. After all, Jesus told his followers that when we make room for the stranger, we are making room for him.

Prayer: God, help me to make room for the strangers in my life—both those I don't know and those I know so very well.

JOB VACANCY

Anyone wishing to fill the position of church secretary is asked to contact any trustee or leave your name and contact information in the office and a trustee will contact you. This is a part-time position consisting of 9 to 11 hours per week. Duties include but are not limited to typing and printing weekly bulletins and monthly newsletters, retrieving and opening mail, answering the phone, updating the Facebook page and website, and other clerical duties.

The MESSENGER - A Newsletter for the First Congregational U.C.C. in Park Falls

279 North First Avenue, P.O. Box 258,
Park Falls, WI 54552

Telephone: (715) 762-3220
E-mail: parkfallsucc@pctcnet.net

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

JANUARY						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	+ Lord's Cupboard, 10-12	+ Area Clergy Meeting, 11:30 am, Apple Basket, downtown Park Falls		+ Lord's Cupboard, 10-12		
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	+ Lord's Cupboard, 10-12 + Trustees, 7 pm				+ Worship, 8:45 am, with Communion + Park Manor Service, 2 pm	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	+ Lord's Cupboard, 10-12 + Diaconate Meeting, 6:30 pm	+ Women's Fellowship, 1:30 pm	+ Mission Board, 10:30 am	+ Lord's Cupboard, 10-12	+ Worship, 8:45 am + Deadline for reports for annual meeting	+ Search Committee meeting, 6:30 pm
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	+ Lord's Cupboard, 10-12				+ Worship, 8:45 am	
29	30	31				
		+ Peace-full Gathering Free Meal, 5:30 pm, Peace Lutheran Church basement			+ Worship, 8:45 am + Annual Meeting following worship	

Come worship with us!

8:45 am, Sunday Worship

With communion service on the first Sunday of each month.

Sunday School for ages 3 through Grade 6 takes place September thru May after worship from 9:45-10:30 am. All are welcome.



No matter where you are
on your life's journey,
you are welcome here!