



ECHO

Issue 03-10

March-April
2010

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The Articles for May-June are due the 25th of April

You can email them to Eileen Fletcher or put them in the Echo box in Kathy's Office.

Email address is on back of this newsletter

From the Pastor's Desk

Message from Rev. Ruth:

Ohio Ministries Speaker Probes Turn Offs to Attending Church

Dear SONKA friends,

Most of you missed the Ohio Ministries Convocation run by the Ohio Council of Churches recently so here are some teasers I got from the speakers:

The estimate is that 25% of Americans consider themselves "spiritual but not religious." Another 12% say they are neither. Some of both groups are actually in churches but most are not. "Who" is in these groups changes constantly but the baby boomers currently dominate the group. The challenge is to understand what has turned them away from organized religion and what attracts some of them back. All SONKA churches struggle with this if you want children and grandchildren to find meaning in church and remain – but even more if you believe God calls you to reach those dechurched in your communities to help them on their faith

journeys or quests for meaning. Do you believe God calls them and seeks them? How can you help God out? And will you help even if it means new ways of being and doing?

Dr. Linda Mercadante, who grew up in a home where religion was forbidden, tells of her own spiritual need and attending church alone as a child – caught by something yet unsupported. She understands the stories her many interviews have yielded of seekers trying one spiritual offering after another or one religion after another. She insists humans are naturally religious and will eventually seek to meet spiritual needs but may not know to go to churches or may be turned off when they do.

She also insists we in the church have assets and gifts the world needs and challenges us to not write off those outside church but rather to listen to them and learn where God is leading them and help. They are often disillusioned, have many bad stereotypes about church and religion, distrust authority but may be in a crisis of identity and truly searching and open.

Their ideas of God lean toward recognition of a divine energy, and mystery that relates to the whole but does not particularly notice or care about individuals. They expect nothing personal after death. But they see humanity as born “good” not “evil.”

According to her, spiritual but not religious people (SBNR) named the following among reasons they were turned off by church:

- Church matched the negative stereotypes they had heard
- They did not find diversity and saw kids, singles etc. segregated
- They could not see any real living of “love”
- Their own “gifts” (ideas, music, help with projects etc.) were spurned
- Worship felt inauthentic (in style, some want contemporary, some want ancient)
- Too many words they did not understand and no tolerance for questions
- Felt judgmental or exclusive or dogmatic

However, those who did settle into a church community said what attracted them included the following:

- A loving intergenerational, mixed, diverse community
- Was multicultural with global awareness (even diverse food/music helped)
- Found individual attention (now rare in wider culture for many folk)
- Saw creativity, meaning the church “tried stuff”
- Informality – so they relaxed, listened and participated more freely
- Felt the presence of God there
- Found a mission – a way to give beyond self, and people to do it with
- Found people confident, active and inviting

You can find more from Linda Mercadante at www.healthybeliefs.org/blog/

There’s lots more to explore and to try but what won’t work is just lamenting that “visitors don’t stay” or “nobody visits” or “we’re all getting old and the church is shrinking.” Churches can shrink and die but God is still seeking and finding people and new ways of relating to God will emerge. I encourage you to not be afraid – but rather to join God who continues to “do a new thing.”

Ruth M. Brandon, Association Minister, SONKA

From the Council

Notable Notes from Council

- At the January meeting, the Flight School Team was formally disbanded. Everyone on the team now serves on council as an Elder, Deacon, Trustee, Treasurer or Pastor.
- As a result of the inventory process and deciding what to do with so many of the things in the building, a motion was made not to accept tangible items as memorials. Undesignated monetary donations are welcomed. Council will make the decision on acceptance of designated funds. An example might be: Someone wants to donate funds for the purchase of a church bus. But, we have no one who will drive the bus and we can't hire someone or afford insurance and maintenance. We would decline the offer.



Mark Your Calendar



- March 14 - Set your clocks forward for Daylight Savings Time
- March 20 - Spring Arrives! (Yippee)
- March 23 - Moving Day to Ross Ave. for offices. Phone disruption.
- March 24 - Church office is now 140 Ross Ave.
- March 28 - Palm Sunday at 412 S. Front St.
- March 29 - Community Meal at 412 S. Front St.
- April 2 - Good Friday at 412 Front St. 7:00 pm
- April 3 - Power Source (Princeton Pike Church of God)
Move-in Day
- April 4 - EASTER at 140 Ross Ave 10:00
- The church phone number will remain the same.

Mark your Calendars



February Prayer Circle




Prayer Circle

Eloise Andrews
 Ada Mae Begley
 Sherri Brannon
 Bill Coffey
 Pat Davis
 Jack DuVall
 Fred Gaw
 LaDonna Gerhart
 Rachel Gonde
 Betty Gregory
 Barbara Hammon
 Vicki Howard
 Susan Hunt

Caroline Kerby
 Dave Mann
 Jackie McKinney
 Debbie Rainey
 Barb Schermer
 Marsha Schlichter
 Michelle Schoonover
 Seana Shepard
 Marsha Smart
 Marie Wurzbach
 U.S Armed Forces &
 Families
 Charlotte Wrackmen

Please check names carefully. If there are any names that need to be removed call Shirley M. Lovely.

Please leave a message for the prayer circle with Shirley. Include the following information: name of person, illness. Then pass the same message to Carrie so both are informed of the names. Thanks, Shirley M. Lovely, 726-6223 and Carrie Hann, 867-1505


 Jackie McKinney is currently staying with her daughter in Kentucky. Her Phone number is 859-491-2321

LA COMEDIA DINNER THEATRE

Church Basement Ladies – A celebration of the church basement kitchen and the women who work there. *Church Basement Ladies* is a new musical comedy that follows four women as they prepare food and solve the problems of a rural Minnesota church in 1964. From the elderly matriarch of the kitchen to the young bride-to-be learning the proper order of things, we see them handle a record-breaking Christmas dinner, the funeral of a dear friend, an Easter fund raiser, and a steaming hot July wedding. They stave off potential disasters, share and debate recipes, instruct the young, and keep the pastor on course. With good, clean laughs and memorable characters, *Church Basement Ladies* is heavenly fun for all.

Donna Burnett has reserved 20 seats for the evening performance on Sunday, May 16th. The cost is \$35 per person. First St. John members and friends are welcome. Please let Donna know by April 15th if you would like to reserve a seat.

Thank You

Oxford Community Choice Pantry

Dear First St. John UCC

On behalf of the volunteers, staff and board of directors of Oxford Community Choice Pantry, thank you for your generous support of our organization.

This donation enable us to help the men and women who daily struggle to put food on the table for their families.

We are extremely grateful to you for the part you play in this community effort and so are the families who use the services of the pantry. Without kind donations of time, money and food, we could not provide such a needed resource to the community.

Sincerely
Shelia M. Aranyos
Treasurer

*All and my family wants to say thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all that you have given us this Christmas season. Without you Christmas wouldnt have been as possible. Thank you
Audrey Shirley and husb!*

Dear First St John United Church of Christ

Thank You for the lovely Fruit Basket.

Lucile Reed

Questions About Our New Home

- Q. Where is Partners in Prime (formerly Senior Citizens)?
A. 140 Ross Avenue. It is the historic Murstein Building and some may identify its' location as behind Tom's Cigar store.
- Q. How do I get into the parking lot?
A. There are 3 entrances: 'C' Street, Ross Ave, or 'B' street.
- Q. Where can I park?
A. There is ample parking on 2 sides of the building. You may also park across the alley (toward Tom's) or in the lot toward 'B' street near the small red brick church.
- Q. Is there handicapped parking?
A. Yes. There are many marked spaces in the area of the canopy doors and ramp.
- Q. Which door should I use?
A. We will use ONLY the RAMP door on Sundays. It is easy to find.
- Q. Once inside, where do I go?
A. As you enter from the ramp door into the lobby, you will see the elevator directly ahead. It is self operated. Go to the second floor. Get off the elevator and you'll see the Ballroom across the lobby – You're There!.
- Q. If I come early, is there somewhere to sit and visit with friends?
A. Yes. There is comfortable seating in both the 1st and 2nd floor lobbies.
- Q. I NEED to know where the restrooms are- I can't waste time wandering around and I'm embarrassed to ask.
A. We will have greeters pointing this out so you won't have to ask. Restrooms are located on both floors and easily marked. All are handicapped equipped.
- Q. What will we sit on?
A. There are lightly padded chairs which we will arrange to our liking each week.
- Q. What about an altar? This is a worship service.
A. There will be a simple altar with Bible, Cross, Remembrance Candle and Offering plates atop our seasonal paraments.
- Q. What about the flowers and eternal candle? I've always done this.
A. Please continue to sign up on the charts in the foyer. We will use a small booklet after we move. The altar candle will be a Remembrance Candle. When flowers are designated for someone or a special event (anniversary), there will be an artificial arrangement as we do now. You are welcome to bring in fresh flowers for your special day as well.
- Q. What about adult Sunday school class – do they have a place to meet?
A. The Art room with tables and the lobby with comfortable chairs are both available. We can look around for other spots too.
- Q. What about a nursery or Sunday school for young ones?
A. The building is designed for people over 55. There isn't a nursery or play area. Infants and toddlers can stay with their parents or if needed, be taken to the lobby or Art Room for a break. There will be packets of quiet activities available.



First St. John
United Church of Christ

412 South Front Street
Hamilton OH 45011

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Our Mission:

To use our individual and congregational gifts,
talents and resources to communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ,
and to bring to all His word, His healing, His compassion and
His forgiveness by being a warm accepting and loving faith community.

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Music Director Cully Bell

Office Manage Kathy Ullrich

Sunday Schedule:

Adult Bible Study 9:15 a.m.

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

Sunday School 10:00 a.m

Fellowship Time 11:00-Noon