



ECHO

Issue 09-10

September-
October
2010

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The Articles for November-December are due October 31.

You can email them to Eileen Fletcher or put them in the Echo box in the hanging folder mail box.

Email address is on back of this newsletter

From the Pastor's Desk

To paraphrase General James Stockdale; "*Who are we and what are we doing here?*" I believe 2010 has been the most significant year in the life of First St. John United Church of Christ. As we approach the end of the year, I think it's appropriate to have an honest appraisal of where we are and where we are going. Let's take a few minutes to remind ourselves of our long journey.

First St. John, like many mainline churches, has been in a steady decline for at least thirty years. Since the baby boom of the 1950's there are many factors that have contributed to our decline. Fewer and fewer Americans attend church. Those that do attend Church prefer the larger community churches. Hamilton has been experiencing a thirty year exodus of younger people. All anyone has to do is walk through downtown Hamilton to see the decline. Needless to say, some of our problems are self inflicted. As a congregation we have been slow to adapt to the changing times. Efforts to reverse the decline have achieved only modest success.

Over the past three years we had a series of open and honest discussions about our church. In 2009 the congregation was presented with four vision plans for our future. Each plan was difficult, painful and ultimately hopeful. We faced the reality that we could no longer afford the cost of the historic building. Far too much of our financial resources were going to keep up the building. "Is this how God wants us to spend our resources?", we asked ourselves. After prayer and discussion, we voted overwhelmingly to leave the historic building and find a new location.

It's hard to believe that this was less than a year ago. We have been worshiping at Partners in Prime for just over five months. During this time we have had both ups and downs. I'm sure most of us have questioned our decision from time to time. It's our nature to second guess ourselves. So let's take a few minutes to reflect on where we are as a congregation.

Our financial situation is a vast improvement. We will be saving over \$25,000 year. It is true that we are still not meeting our budget. However, our deficient will be much less in 2010. It is important to remember that for the first five months of 2010 we had financial obligations at both Front Street and Partners in Prime. Our 2011 budget will be smaller than our 2010 budget. All of this has been done without a decrease in ministry to the members or our missions to the community. All that has been asked of you is to maintain your 2009 level of giving. We continued to be blessed with money in the bank. **We are not in a financial crisis.**

We no longer live in fear of catastrophic building repair. Neither do we tend to the mundane cleaning and maintenance. We no longer have trustees standing at the back of the building with baskets hoping to collect enough money to pay for a repair. No one has to arrive at church two hours early to make sure the heat and air is working. Connie is no longer asking Zach, Bob, Dan or Roger to cut grass or give up their off day to do a building repair. Church members no longer have to clean the building. We no longer need to buy cleaning supplies (another savings). Yet, we continue to have use of the building for Dojo, the community meal, and after school tutoring.

We have opportunities to grow through our relationship with Partners in Prime. PIP has welcomed us with open arms. The quilters and happy stitchers have made new friends. Denny is teaching a Russian language class. Members volunteer with cafeteria, front desk and occasional clean up jobs. I would love to see more members taking advantage of the opportunities at PIP. Let the members of PIP know that they are welcomed at First St. John UCC.

What can each of us do to support our church? Be *Positive*: Be *realistic*: Be *Grateful*.

No one can be sure what the future holds for First St. John. Only God can see into the future. The law of attraction tells us that positive attitudes attract people while negative attitudes repel people. I think God wants us to live in the present - to be contented with where we are at this moment in time. We have many gifts including people, staff and money. Our only enemy is a negative spirit. We are not in a crisis and we have no need to panic.

It is important to be realistic. We are an older congregation. There is nothing wrong with that. The fastest growing population in Hamilton is 65 and up. Hamilton will continue to have an exodus of young people. Those who remain will probably choose to go to larger community churches that offer programs that meet their needs. We do not need to compete with the larger churches. We can offer a number of programs that meet the needs of folks 65 and above. We can be a warm and welcoming church to the fastest growing population in our city.

We need to be thankful. God has blessed us in many ways. For over 170 years God blessed us with a beautiful building. Now God is blessing us with a more practical building and new opportunities. God has blessed us with people who willingly serve. God has blessed us with a large bank account. Everything we have has been loaned to us by God. Our families, our money, our friends, our health, our physical bodies are the property of God. Every prayer needs to start with these words, "thank-you; thank-you"; "thank-you". If we are truly thankful we will be positive and optimistic. Nothing will kill a church faster than an ungrateful spirit. God has blessed us. Let's stand and shout: **Thank You God For Your Many Blessings.**

Sincerely,

Sam

Adult Bible Study

After taking the summer off, the Adult Bible study class will resume on Sunday, Sept. 12th. We will be studying I Corinthians and II Corinthians this school year. We invite all to join us Sunday mornings at 9:00 in the Health Room. We are a very informal and friendly group and would love to have more participants. See Donna Burnett or any of the other class members for more information.



Important Meeting

Mark your calendar now and be sure to attend Sunday September 19. This will be an information session to explain proposed changes to be addressed at our annual meeting in November. A simpler organizational structure will be the main topic. Information will be mailed out to members in good standing who are unable to attend.

The meeting will immediately follow worship.



September

- 3 Sally Ortolf
- 4 Mike Mooris
- 5 Tom Weber
- 6 Don Jackson
- 7 Charlotte Hermann
- 12 Dorothy Hartleb
- 15 Roseann Westall
- 17 Bill Hismier
- 18 Ruth Brown
- 20 Mark Brandenburger
- Craig Boell
- 22 Audri Hilsmier
- 23 Susan Hoppe
- 24 Carrie Hann
- 26 Jonathan Grimes
- 27 Beth Hartleb
- 30 NaDeen Hartleb

October

- 8 Betty Gregory
- Eloise Andrews
- Annette Sullivan
- 13 Harvey Seeger
- 14 Judy McCalley
- Ken Proffitt
- 15 Irma Oaklets
- Jeff Sullivan
- 17 Debbie Evans
- 20 Samantha Freels
- 23 Herb Bennett
- Lucas Robertson
- 25 Kathy Vizedom

September Prayer Circle



- Eloise Andrews
- Ada Mae Begley
- Harold Betz
- Sherry Brannon
- Payton Cauchran
- Pat Davis
- Jack DuVall
- Mindy Elliott
- Norma Foster
- Sara Foster
- Fred Gaw
- LaDonna Gerhart
- Rachel Gonde
- Betty Gregory
- Barbara Hammon
- Vicki Howard

- Caroline Kerby
- Alex Kip
- Jackie McKinney
- Deloes Pollock
- Kim Proeschel
- Michelle Schoonover
- Joe Selkirk
- Seana Shepard
- Marsha Smart
- Marie Wurzbach
- U.S Armed Forces &
 Families
- Robert Weber
- Charlotte Wrackmen

The Family of

- Roselyn Lively
- Bill Ingram
- Carl Sippel
- Judy Phoeschel
- Corey Bradley
- Jovante Woods
- Hayden Vizedom

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

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

Becoming a Part of Partners in Prime

You'll notice some familiar faces at Partners in Prime during the week. You may see someone at the front desk, in a classroom, in the Art Studio or lunch room. Linda Kaeding is helping at the Fairfield Prime Club with blood pressure checks.



WHERE IS THE CHURCH?

The church of Jesus Christ is where a child brings a balloon...
 is where old women come to dance...
 is where young men see visions and old men dream dreams.

The church of Jesus Christ is where daisies bloom out of barren land...
 is where children lead and wise men follow...
 is where mountains are moved and walls come tumbling down.

The church of Jesus Christ
 is where loaves of bread are stacked in the sanctuary to feed the hungry...
 is where coats are taken off and put on the backs of the naked...
 is where shackles are discarded and kings and shepherds sit down to life together...

The church of Jesus Christ is where barefoot children run giggling in procession...
 is where the minister is ministered to...
 is where the anthem is the laughter of the congregation and the offering plates are full
 of people.

The church of Jesus Christ is where people go when they skin their knees or their hearts...
 is where frogs become princes and Cinderella dances beyond midnight...
 is where judges don't judge and each child of God is beautiful and precious.

The church of Jesus Christ is where the sea divides for the exiles...
 is where the ark floats and the lamb lies down with the lion...
 is where people can disagree and hold hands at the same time.

The church of Jesus Christ is where night is day...
 is where trumpets and drums and tambourines declare God's goodness...
 is where lost lambs are found.

The church of Jesus Christ is where people write thank-you notes to God...
 is where work is a holiday...
 is where seeds are scattered and miracles grown.

The church of Jesus Christ is where home is...
 Is where heaven is...
 Is where a picnic is communion and people break bread together on their knees.

The church of Jesus Christ is where we live responsively to God's coming ...
 even on Monday morning the world will hear ... an abundance of alleluias!

-Ann Weems

Reaching for Rainbows, 1980

Liturgists, Hospitality and Refreshment Helpers

Need: Liturgist, hospitality and refreshments helps. We have a small group of committed people who each week read scripture, greet us and make sure that we have refreshments to enjoy after worship. We are in need of additional volunteers for each of areas. The more of us that volunteer the less often someone has to serve in that area. Please see Eileen Fletcher or Connie Wyatt to sign up. Thank you in advance for stepping forward. There is also a sign up sheet on the hospitality table just add your name to the bottom of the list if you would like to take a turn at these all important jobs.

Community Dinner Menu

In case everyone doesn't know, the Community Dinner that takes place on the last Monday of the month is going on. We are still at our old site at 412 So. Front St. With the economy still in bad shape we have had about 100 to 175 each month. We are printing the menus for the next several months in the hope that we can keep the meals going each month. If you would like to contribute food for these meals please see LaVada Fletcher or call her at 738-1677. We can also use cash so we can purchase some things that we need for each of these menus. You can also help by volunteering your services to help as servers or to just visit with those that eat in.

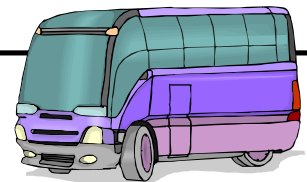
September
Ham Stew
Bread & Butter
Dessert

October
Pork & Sauerkraut
Mashed Potatoes
Green Beans
Applesauce

November
Turkey & Noodles Casserole
Green Beans & Corn

December
Baked Spaghetti
Salad
Garlic Bread

Transportation Available on Sunday



Help spread the word! First St. John gets special treatment from Prime Transportation Services for those 60 and over. Just call 867-9195 during the week to schedule a ride to Sunday services. Shelley will pick you up and offer 'through the door' service. This means you or a loved one will be safe back inside not just dropped at the curb. All types of vehicles are available to meet any physical need.

Prime Transportation: 867-9195



140 Ross Ave.
Hamilton, Ohio 45013

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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e mail rev.samwyatt@fuse.net

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Office Manage Kathy Ullrich

Sunday Schedule:

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

Ballroom Second Floor

Fellowship Time 11:00-Noon