

THE OPEN DOOR

A Publication of
FAITH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
“Our mission is to delight God”



Never put a period
 where God has
 placed a comma.



Our doors are
 open to all
 regardless of
 race, creed,
 gender identity,
 sexual orientation,
 cultural back-
 ground or
 socio-economic
 status.

**DECEMBER
 2011**

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This month's Open Door
 is kindly sponsored by
Momma Liz Simmons
 in celebration of her
 being 80 years young!

SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN!



He's planning on making a special stop at the Sea Us Grow Christmas party on December 2nd at Faith Church! Please plan on coming if you want to see him—and bring some cookies along to make the event even more special!

There will be lots of special activities too—all to make the children's Christmas special. Festivities start at 11:00 a.m. and will wind down by around 2:00!

Come join the fun!



O Come, O Come, Emmanuel



CHALLENGES!



This, believe it or not, is my last contribution to the Open Door as your moderator! In thinking about just what to say, I've been reminiscing over the past three years, and the most prevailing thought that comes to mind is that my tenure has been one challenge after another! It's a good thing I like to be challenged!

Three years ago I was coerced (and I do mean coerced!) by Anton DeWet to take on the job! I had absolutely no idea what I was getting into! I won't list all of the problems we've faced. We'd probably just as soon forget every one of them! But as I look back, there is no denying that I have been so fortunate to have led such a resilient congregation. We have faced challenges together that I'm sure would have broken most church families. But we have landed on our feet, stronger for having faced each stumbling block together.

Perhaps you will think me silly when I say that I believe God felt we had been through enough! He sent us Robert Palin and his wife Carol! What a blessing they have been! Then He pointed us to our new home, and I, for one, think it is lovely! We have a little nest egg invested too!

But we cannot rest on our laurels now! We face a future with an unknown pastor for openers! I have faith that our search committee will bring us someone exciting and innovative. We face the challenge of adjusting to new leadership, and our new pastor faces the challenge of getting to know us! I'm sure there will be changes in the way we do things—some we will like and some—maybe not so much! Please be patient and flexible! It's another challenge for all of us.

Lastly, I want to caution you all that we still face financial challenges! In today's economy, the moneys we have invested simply will not grow enough to support our expenses. If we do not grow in membership and pledges over the next several years; if we don't identify ways to augment our income, budget projections indicate that despite owning our new home, we will have used up our funds in about twelve years. Yes, we have time to overcome the challenge, but we cannot sit back and do nothing to assure that Faith will be here in perpetuity. That's what I want for us! Faith is a special gift in our lives. Let's work to keep the flame burning for future generations!

Thanks to all of you for your support over the years! It has been a privilege indeed to be a part of such an exciting journey!

Peace and love, Mollie



Pray You ENOUGH:

Recently, I overheard a mother and daughter in their last moments together at the airport. They had announced the departure. Standing near the security gate, they hugged, and the mother said, 'I love you, and I pray you enough.'

The daughter replied, 'Mom, our life together has been more than enough. Your love is all I ever needed. I pray you enough, too, Mom.'

They kissed, and the daughter left. The mother walked over to the window where I was seated. Standing there, I could see she wanted and needed to cry. I tried not to intrude on her privacy, but she welcomed me in by asking, 'Did you ever say good-bye to someone knowing it would be forever?'

Yes, I have,' I replied. 'Forgive me for asking, but why is this a forever good-bye?'

'Well...I'm not as young as I once was, she lives so far away & has her own busy life. I have some challenges ahead, and the reality is - her next trip back will be for my funeral,' she said..

When you were saying good-bye, I heard you say, 'I pray you enough.' May I ask what that means?'

She began to smile. 'That's a prayer that has been handed down from other generations. My parents used to say it to everyone.' She paused a moment and looked up as if trying to remember it in detail, and she smiled even more. 'When we said, 'I pray you enough,' we wanted the other person to have a life filled with just enough good things to sustain them.'

Then, turning toward me, she shared the following as if she were reciting it from memory.

I pray you enough sun to keep your attitude bright no matter how gray the day may appear.

I pray you enough rain to appreciate the sun even more.

I pray you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive and everlasting.

I pray you enough pain so that even the smallest of joys in life may appear bigger.

I pray you enough gain to satisfy your wanting.

I pray you enough loss to appreciate all that you possess.

I pray you enough hellos to get you through the final good-bye.

Then, she began to cry, and walked away.

They say, it takes a minute to find a special person, an hour to appreciate them, a day to love them, but an entire life to forget them.

** Only if you pray, send this to the people you will never forget, and remember to send it back to the person who sent it to you. If you don't send it to anyone, it may mean that you are in such a hurry that you have forgotten your friends.*


TAKE TIME TO LIVE....

To all my friends and loved ones, **I PRAY YOU ENOUGH**

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear



WORSHIP SCHEDULE FOR DECEMBER

	DECEMBER 4	DECEMBER 11	DECEMBER 18	DECEMBER 24 <i>CHRISTMAS EVE</i>	DECEMBER 25 <i>CHRISTMAS DAY</i>
WORSHIP READER	Donna Ketteringham	Ivan Liss	Fran Mitchell	TBA	Chuck Stiers
HOSPITALITY	Trevesta Edwards	Carol Palin	Joan LeSage Ginny Van Scoyoc	Carol Kriebel	Carol Kriebel Will Kriebel
GREETERS/ USHERS	Bev Greaf Janice & John Spicer <u>COMMUNION</u> Donna Reed JoAnne Reed Barbara Wise	Bev Greaf Donna Lund Ginni Pressgrove	Bev Greaf Jan Palazini Al Palazini	Bev Greaf Jan Palazini Al Palazini	Bev Greaf Jaci Salisbury Don Salisbury

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Judy Baumgartner	1st
Dorothy Truemner	5th
Don Salisbury	6th
Sandy Edwards	13th
John Hancock	13th
Garrett Rodriguez	13th
Helen Meyer	15th
Liz Simmons	22nd
Bob Delay	24th
Doris Edwards	26th
Fred Snook	28th

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Gary & Debbie Kaleskas	13th
Howard & Joanne Reed	14th
John & Mollie Hancock	20th



Pastors Jottings December 2011

“Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it,” said Jesus (Mark 10:15). Speaking to his serious, stern-speaking students, Jesus’ words may have seemed like good news to kids and their parents but not to the disciples of the kingdom, the “insiders” at “Santaland”. Merry Christmas, indeed. Bah humbug. As I age (think Vermont Cheddar) I harden into phrases and ways that substitute for surprises and playfulness, into ritualizing what was once full of wonder.

Children to me are all about being curious, playful, quick to respond to the life around them. Christmas, the celebration of God’s incarnation in baby Jesus, is filled with the awe of angels brightening the starry sky. Shepherds rush around, animals provide warmth (and aroma) in less than a hospital-like enclosure. The crèche comes alive in the imagination however fanciful the reality. And we welcome the projection of a loving God in celestial splendor gracing cold, harsh reality of vulnerabilities. We pull out signs and symbols of a season which in fact is tough on those with SAD* and with conflicting memories of promised joy and experienced emptiness.

But consider, each year both ends (according to the calendar) and begins (according to the Church’s longstanding tradition) with Advent/Christmas. Pregnant, awaiting birth—the season of Advent is about getting ready for God to come “home” here in our hearts. Anyone struggling with limited cash flow and insistent commands for giving knows this will be a hard pregnancy and a difficult labor of love.

Birth. Baptism. Becoming human by the light of God. Smelly old Caesar and horrid Herod with all their power and might and Glade can’t hide the image of God that creeps into Joseph’s dream identifying the mystery child as God-with-us, Emmanuel (Mt 1: 23). That child will connect us with God as with a truly loving Father right through crucifixion and the mystery of resurrection—never leaving, still with us.

So what do we do? Of course we’ll sing and laugh and dream (and drink) with as much scenery as possible. Will we also shift the axis of our familiar chaos to the attitude of irresistible caring? Our love isn’t buried under lead, just under paper wrappings and florid phrases. We can pull passion from dying embers and let the Spirit blow upon the fire of compassion. That compassion is not the pale, weak concession to human frailty but the disciplined determination to bless as we are blessed, voluntarily to bear and share the suffering of the involuntarily suffering (and refuse to idolize the powers-that-be that oppress us with our complicity).

So, my loving contemporaries, let’s be good kids for a real Santa that can be observed at 1650 Pinehurst Road, Dunedin. Let’s enter that kingdom that’s not open to old fogeys, stern with outworn traditions. So what that it’ll be kiddish. Let it be imaginative, hopeful, fun and surprisingly useful. Let us prepare a memory worth treasuring.

Merry Christmas, with love from *Pastor Robert and Carol Palin*

*SAD is Seasonal Affective Disorder, a response some of us have to the shorter hours of daylight.





FAST (Faith and Action for Strength Together) Update

FAST is a faith-based social justice ministry based in Pinellas County. Faith UCC is one of the 31 congregational members.

The FAST year has three phases: **Listening** (September/October); **Research to Action** (November through March); and **Celebration and Investment** (May through the summer). During the Listening phase, house meetings are held throughout the member congregations to determine the issues of most concern to our members. At the October 17th Annual Assembly, representatives of all the member congregations voted on the issues which FAST will concentrate on this year. They are: education, jobs, and drugs and crime. We have just entered in to the Research to Action phase of FAST activities.

There are several ways you can become involved in FAST. The most important is to attend the **Nehemiah Action on Monday, March 19, 2012**. (Mark your calendars NOW!). Our goal is to have 75 people from FAITH at the Action.

You can also volunteer to sit quietly (no speaking role required) during meetings with local officials during the Research to Action phase. The lesson of the Nehemiah Action, that there is strength in numbers, is true for these meetings as well. Virtually all of the meetings are held during the day. If you are interested in taking part, please contact Fran Mitchell (fransnowbail@aol.com 540-808-9013).

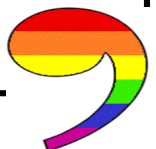
If you want to know more about FAST, contact one of our leadership team: Ellery Albrecht-Subia, Bob & Helen Tulenko, Chuck & Pam Stiers and Fran Mitchell.

Prayer Shawl ministry

The prayer Shawl ministry was created in Hartford CT about 10 years ago and has been spreading through many churches in New England and the rest of the country. Weaving healing prayers into the fabric of a shawl resulted in a new ministry that reaches out to those in need of comfort. Shawls are usually given to people during illness and recovery. All our recipients have expressed how the soft texture seems to wrap them in the love of the church members and give comfort during difficult times. We have had a Prayer Shawl Group of knitters here at Faith Church for about 5 years and have given at least 42 shawls to comfort our Friends. Currently we have some on hand so be sure to let me know if one is needed. If you would like to join our group of knitters (there are also directions for crocheting) I will give you the directions. A new supply of yarn has just been purchased and is in the Narthex cabinet. See me and you can choose the color you like. Priscilla

Faith Friends Activities

Sunday Dec 4th – Annie at Wilson Playhouse 2:00 p, matinee followed by dinner at Alfano's Restaurant
 Wednesday Dec 7th – Breakfast at First Watch. Time is 9:30 am this season
 Wednesday Dec 21st – Breakfast at First Watch
 Wednesday Jan 4th – Breakfast at First Watch
 Monday Jan 16th – MOSI on Fowler Ave, Tampa. For the \$19 admission you get IMAX movie, Planetarium, the Museum of Science and a special Chocolate Show





THOUGHTS WRITTEN ON CHRISTMAS EVE

Sitting side by side, families neighbors friends,
 Candles flickering against window panes,
 Red poinsettias casting star shadows,
 Christmas carols, children's voices, the treasured Bible verses,
 "And a decree went out from Caesar Augustus
 that all the world should be taxed."
 A tightness in the throat, swallowed tears and memories
 Of other times and places, people loved.....
 All gone now, yet near in this place.
 Hands touching in prayer, hearts opening to hear the words,
 "And she brought forth her first-born son
 and wrapped him in swaddling cloths."
 So much joy! An overflowing heart.
 People streaming toward the darkness beyond the doors.
 Shining faces, exchanging greetings, embracing.
 Love filling all the corners.
 "For unto you this day a child is born,
 A Savior which is Christ the Lord."



(Barbara Gray Campbell, 1972)

A Note from Gary

I want to thank everyone for your prayers, cards, visits and the Prayer Shawl which I have already used. A special thanks to Pastor Robert for his many trips to visit me. Everyone's love and support made my recovery an easier one.

God Bless You All!

Gary Hart

If you would like a CD of a particular Sunday morning service, please let the sound booth operator know and a copy will be made for you.



HOLIDAY SUGGESTION

We know the holidays are close and we're thinking about our Christmas lists and those relatives or friends for whom no gift ever seems exactly right or appropriate.

How about a *donation* in their name(s) to our wonderful pre-school, "*Sea Us Grow*". With a full roster of kids and an endless list of needs, your gift(s) would be put to immediate use, and the ever need will only thanks you'll be the grateful hug you'll receive from Dawn, their director. Please give this your prayerful consideration as the holidays roll around.



Thank you so much,
 Barb Campbell





Bible Basics and Making Friends of Enemies
10:30 am –Noon

Session 2: November 30th — Some basic passages of Scriptures approached in 3 ways. Opening up texts.

Session 3: December 7th — Making Friends of Enemies—examples of teaching of Jesus (Book is by Jim Forest, *Making friends of Enemies: Reflections on the Teachings of Jesus —*Crossroad Books 1988)

Format: short presentation of material, group participation, conversation about implications for our lives, our church, our community. If interested Pastor Robert would continue during Advent.

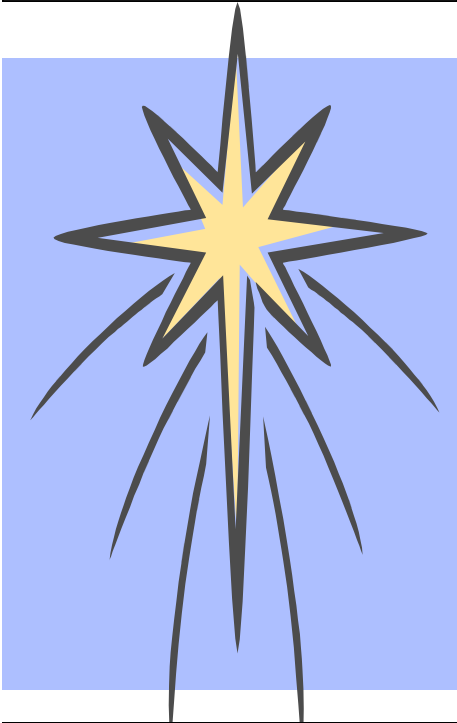


Good News from our Union Street friends

On Monday, November 21, Pastor Nancy Mayeux of Union Street United Methodist Church shared the news that 80 Micronesians from the island of Pohnpei have found a church home at USUMC. They are eager for Bibles written in their own language. Seems that there is only one translation and that the United Church of Christ carries it. Pastor Mayeux wondered if Pastor Robert could help to find where the Bibles could be obtained. With a few requests sent out to relevant offices in the national/international offices of the UCC, Pastor Mayeux was able to correspond with the UCC Conference Minister in Hawaii who put her in touch with a minister who wrote to her about the cost of purchasing and shipping a box of Bibles in Pohnpeian to her church (16 @ \$320.00)! She had all this information in less than 36 hours after reaching out for it! What a tribute to our interfaith cooperation and intrafaith collaboration. Good things really do happen! It makes for goodwill between USUMC and Faith UCC and delights the brothers and sisters in Christ from Micronesia.



They looked up and saw a star,
Shining in the East, beyond them far,
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and night.



Noel, noel, noel, noel,
Born in a manger, Emmanuel.

THE OPEN DOOR

*We are an open and affirming - peace with
justice people who believe that
God is Still Speaking*

DECEMBER 2011

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