

April 2008

BETHEL MESSENGER

Bethel UCC, W4225 County Line Road, Elkhart Lake, WI 53020
www.bethelucc-ada.org (920) 565-2977



Morse Code

On March 7, 2004, I was installed as Bethel's pastor and teacher. I think another role should be named during the installation process and that is preacher. It is a given that the pastor is expected to preach on Sunday mornings, and for those of you who have led worship before, I do not have to tell you how hard it can be to stand before a congregation to preach a Spirit-filled sermon. So when we expect the pastor to preach, what is it that we expect them to say?

I cannot tell you the number of times I have stared out that window in my office wondering what God expects me to say let alone the congregation that I serve. Do I preach the sermon on stewardship? Do I preach the sermon on accountability? Do I preach the sermon that instills Jesus' love for us all? Do I preach the sermon that may ruffle our feathers including my own? Do I preach the sermon that relates to our current-day living which may have a political edge to it? Do I preach the prophetic? Doing this each week, asking these questions each week can be wearisome if it was not for the grace of God and the scriptures that are presented each week.

Reading our beloved book of scriptures each week can be truly transformational in light of the issues we face each day: rising fuel prices, a war in the Middle East, an economic recession, as well as the concerns felt by our own families to name just a few. When faced with the issues and scriptures, the task of writing a sermon almost seems mute. Why

sit and listen to someone talk for ten to fifteen minutes when we should be doing something? Why sit and listen to someone talk for ten to fifteen minutes when I do not agree with what they are saying? What is it that we expect our preacher to say?

Is the role of preacher to please people or is it to be speakers of truth? I do not take lightly this role of preacher. The message is sometimes difficult to deliver and I need all the courage I can muster to stand before you. I think both you and I expect the truth spoken in love, the all-encompassing love portrayed in the life of Jesus the Christ. This truth may not feel good at the moment; it may even make us angry. This same truth, however, may be what is needed to transform our living and grow our faith.

So I will continue to do what I have been doing week after week. Dear God, help me to speak with the conviction you have called me to speak. Help me do so in love for the other. And may the words of my mouth be acceptable to You. Amen.

Faithfully,

Rev. Sara

Back Bay Mission

As of today there are 9 people from Bethel signed up to go to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi. We will be helping to rebuild homes damaged by Hurricane Katrina in the Biloxi and Gulfport area. If you are interested in joining the group the deadline is June 1. We have spaces for 28 people. Please contact Pastor Sara or any one of the members that are signed up to go. Pastor Sara has put out a call to the churches in the Rural Church Fellowship for anyone who may be interested in joining us.

Your prayers and support are greatly appreciated as we prepare for this journey. We are in the process of planning some fundraisers to help with the cost gas and food. Watch for more information coming soon.



Bridgeway Meal Hosting Reminder

The 8th of every month is Bethel's day for 'Meal Hosting' at Bridgeway House in

Sheboygan. Host's are asked to be at the Home on the southeast corner of 13th Street and Geele Avenue by 4:30 p.m. Duties may include watching children while Mom makes dinner, assisting with dinner preparations, talking to residents before dinner; sharing in food and fellowship during dinner and assisting with cleanup after dinner. Total time commitment is 1.5 to 2 hours. If you have done it before, consider signing up once again. If you haven't done it yet, talk to some people who have done it before and then sign up on the sheet in the narthex. This is a way we can let those in a difficult situation know we care and that we are letting the Holy Spirit work in our lives. If you are unable to make the 4:30 – 6 or 6:30 time frame, consider donating the \$30 we also provide each month to help defray the cost of food at the home.

The Pastoral Relations Committee

The Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) is a standing committee that seeks to support and maintain an open and healthy relationship between our Pastor and the Congregation. Its three primary functions are to be an avenue for healthy communication between the Congregation and the Pastor, to support the Pastor's leadership, and to be an advisory group to the Pastor.

The committee meets at least quarterly, come times more often. At our February 12th meeting we said good-bye and thank you to Diane Rietbrock for her three years of committed service, and welcomed Carol Matzdorf who serves along with Dan Huber and Sandie Kraemer.

Because the specifics of our discussions are discreet, if there is something troubling you about the functioning of our church, or a direction you'd like to see continued, the committee welcomes your input. Our next meeting is scheduled for April 8th.

SCIO Events

May 3rd – SCIO Spring Luncheon – Honoring Women and Mothers

June 9th – Jaycees Golf Outing – Proceeds going to Bridgeway and Beyond Program for SCIO and Rainbow Kids. *We are currently looking for golfers to golf the event in our honor.*

June 29th – SCIO Bike-a-thon
Trisha Bergemann Benefit Brat fry

Please contact SCIO with any questions on any of these events!

Newsletter Update: If you would like to put something in the May edition of the newsletter please submit items to Cindy Meyer (churchsecretary@bethelucc-ada.org) by April 15th. Thank you!

Kiel Community Pantry is in need of the following items:

Cake/Brownie Mixes
Coffee
Tea
Lotion
Floor Cleaners



The Division on Local Church of the Northeast Association is sponsoring *A Calling For Your Life's Work: A Workshop on Vocation and Leadership* on Saturday, April 26 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Lakeland College. Do you feel God's call to service – but not as a pastor, preacher, chaplain, or other role that ordained persons play? Do you desire to find ministry in administrative work or other roles not ordinary seen as “the church's work?” Do you wish you could do worthwhile labor for the cause of Christ's church? Do you find yourself afraid of doing this alone? Do you wish you could meet a national church leader who finds joy in ministry as a layperson, who has dealt effectively with these questions, and speaks of her experience with eloquence, wit, and compassion? Explore these questions of *Leadership and Vocation* with Edith Guffey, Associate General Minister of the United Church of Christ and other sojourners who wrestle with questions like the ones you are asking. For more information on this event contact Rev. Sara.

Ms. Edith Guffey, Associate General Minister of the United Church of Christ will be joining us for worship on Sunday, April 27th. After worship, there will be a time of fellowship. Please join us on this last Sunday in April.

You are cordially invited to attend the 46th Annual Meeting of the Northeast Association on Saturday, April 19, 2008 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Peace UCC in Shawano. The program will consider what the challenges and opportunities for ministry will be, and how the UCC's distinctive voice can help us continue to be a place of hope and healing for all creation. Join our Wisconsin Conference Minister, the Rev. David Moyer, as we think together about the next 50 years and beyond. In addition to the program, we will consider the business of the association including the annual reports of our divisions and committees, the proposed budget for 2009, and the election of new officers and committee members. If you are interested in attending this event, contact Rev. Sara.

Mark your calendars! The 46th Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ will be held at the Green Lake Conference Center in Green Lake, Wisconsin commencing at 1:00 p.m., Friday, June 6 and concluding at noon on Sunday, June 8, 2008. Registration packets will be mailed the first week in April. Bethel can have up to two voting delegates at this meeting. Visitors from our church are always welcome! If you are interested in this event please see Rev. Sara

Youth Fellowship Brat Fry at Bill's Pig Wiggly in Howards Grove
Saturday, April 26th from
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.



The next Mission Trip meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 23 at 7:00 p.m. We will be discussing fundraising ideas.

Community News!

Sister Parish Pancake Breakfast, Bake Sale & Raffle with a New Orleans style...



**Sunday, April 6, 2008
8:00 am to 1:00pm**

***Held at Immaculate Conception
Gymnasium
2722 Henry Street***

Breakfast cost is a free will offering –
proceeds to benefit St. Alphonsus Parish,
our Sister Parish in New Orleans.

Checks can be made payable to
Redemptorist Hurricane Relief Fund.

Volunteers from our Sheboygan Sister
Parishes will be making a second trip to New
Orleans on May 3 - 11 and working with
Habitat for Humanity to help rebuild lives and
homes. While there, they will deliver your
prayers, best wishes and donations.

Transportation Program

SCIO'S Transportation Program is looking for
Volunteers to help provide transportation to
people who need rides within Sheboygan
County as well as outside the county. We
have two volunteers that are currently unable
to help, and have had over 20 requests
already for the month of February. Please
contact Judy at 457-7272 ext. 11 if you are
interested.

Winter Farmers Market

Sheboygan County Interfaith Organization is
excited to be introducing a Winter Farmer's
Market being held at First Congregational
Church UCC in Sheboygan, 310 Bluff
Avenue. You will be able to purchase such
items as wholesome meats, honey, jams and
jellies, soaps, and various other items.

The next winter market will be held from
9:00am – 2:00pm, March 29th

Building Bridges Childcare Center

Building Bridges Childcare Center is looking
to hire a Daycare Director. We are also
looking for an assistant teacher. Please
contact Kristin at 920-457-7272 ext. 12 for
further information.

Team Blue Ribbon, Plymouth Jr. Women's Club & the Family Resource Center of Sheboygan County Present

Free Family Concert Featuring
KG & The Ranger
Thursday, April 24, 2008,
6:30 p.m.

Plymouth High School
Auditorium
125 Highland Avenue, Plymouth



If you have fond memories of cowboy movie
stars, or if you just like to daydream about the
wide-open spaces and riding horses, you won't
want to miss this show! Audiences of all ages are
guaranteed a good time!

Some of the Highlights: Classic cowboy songs,
Yodeling, Trick Rope-Spinning, Corny humor

For more information, call the Family Resource
Center 920-892-6706

ACCESS MORE INCOME FOR YOUR

FAMILY AND YOU

Important Tax Refund Information

From Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Inc.

1. One-Time Federal Rebate Check Requires Filing Federal Income Tax Forms (Economic Stimulus Package Rules)

A federal income tax return must be filed to receive consumer spending rebate check. The President recently signed legislation to send tax rebate checks to 130 million individuals. **To get a rebate check, worth hundreds of dollars, you must file federal tax forms before April 15, 2008.** If you don't file an annual federal income tax return, you must file one if you want to be eligible to receive a check from the United States government in 2008. Information on your filed tax return will be used to calculate the one-time rebate payment amount you are eligible to receive. Tax forms are available in public libraries, other government offices, and on-line at www.irs.ustreas.gov/formspubs/index.html (federal) and www.dor.state.wi.us/html/formpub.html (state).

2. Earned Income Tax Credit: Income for Low-Income Families

The Earned Income Credit (EIC) provides tax refunds for working people who earn low or moderate incomes. You must file an EIC form with your federal tax return. For information call the Internal Revenue Service at 1-800-829-1040; the Wisconsin Department of Revenue at 608-266-2772 or visit www.dor.state.wi.us/faqs/ise/eic.html.

Free Tax Form Preparation Assistance Available

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program and the Taxpayer Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program provide free tax information. Trained volunteers help prepare federal and Wisconsin income tax returns for elderly, low-income and disabled individuals. For VITA site information, please call 1-800-829-1040; for TCE sites call 1-888-227-7669. You also can call your local "211" or visit www.revenue.wi.gov/faqs/pacs/vita.html.

Living With Grief: Children and Adolescents Teleconference



We've Lost a Friend

Wednesday, April 16, 2008, 12:15 – 3:30 pm at University of Wisconsin Sheboygan Campus
cost: \$5.00 advance registration

Mental Health America is offering a **Living With Grief: Children and Adolescents Teleconference** through Hospice Foundation of America. The teleconference will focus on the experience of grieving children and adolescents and the ways that they can best be supported as they cope with loss and grief.

For more information contact MHA at 458-3951.

Small Group Leaders Training with the Rev. Ron Farr

Saturday, April 5th, 2008 – from 9 am-3:30 pm
at First Congregational Church, UCC, Sheboygan, Wisconsin



This LEP Small Group Program is a nurturing, dual track training process based on mutual empowerment principles, equipping both Small Group Leaders and Small Group Coaches

FEE: Small Group Leader or Small Group Coach... \$25

Information: Call 920-457-4818
Email office@fccsheboygan.org
Suzy Meves, Registrar – First Cong. Church UCC, 310 Bluff Ave., Sheboygan, WI 53081
Registration required by March 31, 2008!

Ron Farr, Retreat Leader, is a UCC co-pastor (with his wife Patty), an experienced retreat leader, a small group trainer, church consultant, and writer. He is director of the Laity Empowerment Project which has successfully activated over 400 UCC congregations throughout the country of different sizes, denominations, racial origin, and urban and rural settings. For more information, see www.laityempowerment.com.

Lay Academy Offerings for September 2008

Faith Formation – the first year in a two-year course of study (5 weekends/year) for people who are curious and eager to explore faith and theology.

Lay Leadership Skills – 5 weekends/year program for those interested in building leadership skills for serving the church. Topics include: ministry, mission, stewardship, evangelism and transformative leadership.

A Mission Trip To Honduras

Housing continues to be a huge concern for the people of Honduras after the devastation left by Hurricane Mitch in 1998. Come spend a rewarding, eye-opening, unforgettable ten days giving your time and energy to Honduran families in need. Included in our Forward in Faith commitment was affirming our neighbors in Latin America. Here is your opportunity to join our Wisconsin Conference UCC Work Team to Honduras July 8 – July 20, 2008, in our efforts to accomplish this goal. Mike Krabath has led several mission trips to Honduras and will continue as the main leader on this trip.



The cost is approximately \$1,000. A non-refundable \$100 deposit is due by April 1. The additional \$900 is due May 1, 2008.

If you are interested, please see Rev. Sara for an application.

Chiapas, Mexico

A Lay/Clergy School, an opportunity for Learning and Transformation. As part of this trip, you will learn directly about life in Mexico, see their work places, homes, markets and churches as you never would in the resort cities or on a tour. Be prepared to have an awakening of your faith as you experience programs that work with single mothers, schools, training centers, NAFTA's

impact, ancient cities, and how churches help the poor (or not). Experience how life is lived in Chiapas. This will be a trip you will remember and talk about for the rest of your life.

The dates for the trip are July 12-20, 2008 and February 9-18, 2009. The cost is \$1,500 that covers airfare from Chicago O'Hare Airport, lodging, food, instruction and donations to several groups included in your visit.

If you are interested in attending, please see Rev. Sara for the registration form.

“How-To” Skills To Help Your Church Grow Bring ‘Em In! 2008



Church Growth Skills Training Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ 2008 Evangelism Event

November 14-15, 2008, Holiday Inn Convention Center, Stevens Point, Wisconsin

Are you looking for practical ideas to help your church grow?

You will have the opportunity to attend four different workshops on “road-tested” evangelism skills, all led by experienced local church leaders.

You will learn *a lot* about what's going on in other congregations around the state, and go home filled with fresh ideas for your own church to try.

Enjoy the unique fellowship of Wisconsin UCC-ers while being inspired by **Rev. Michael Piazza**. A dynamic speaker, Mike has led Cathedral of Hope UCC of Dallas, Texas to inspiring growth in numbers and vitality.

Registration Fee (Includes program, Friday dinner, Saturday breakfast, lunch, and snack.)

Best Early Discount \$75.00

Deadline: May 14

Second Best Discount \$85.00 *Deadline: October 10*

Full Fee through November 3 \$95.00