

The Shepherd's Good News

Good Shepherd United Methodist Church

Winter 2007

Rev. Tom's Corner

Good Friends, greetings in the name of Jesus Christ! You've probably heard all the illusions to spring and new life, sprouting leaves and plants, baby animals being born, the waning of winter and death and how they relate to the season of Lent as it inevitably leads to Easter, so I'll not belabor those points again.

But, I am issuing a two edged challenge to everyone who reads this.

Good things happen when the people gather to worship. Sometimes the best are surprises. Of course I hope that a good or helpful sermon isn't surprising. The musicians work hard to make acceptable offerings to God for us. My challenge is not for you to reconsider these obvious, in your face as it were, parts of the experience of gathering for worship, but rather to open your ears, eyes, hearts and souls, that is pay attention with your whole being to all that is going on around and in you. Every Sunday in Lent and on Easter as well there will be some blank space in the Sunday Focus (bulletin) for you to use to record some notes. Think of it a worship diary. Of course for this exercise of the spirit to work well you will have to come expecting something to happen.

Any time is a good time to invite a friend or neighbor to join you in worship, but Lent might be just a little better than most. Why not add to the challenge by resolving to invite someone to share the joy and fellowship of Sunday worship with you?

As always, I remind you that the peace of God is yours, now and forever.

Your pastor, Tom Merrill

[Rev. Tom Merrill - Pastor](#)

[Sara Bruce - Editor](#)

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Finance

by Rick Smart, Chair

At the January 21st meeting of the Administrative Council, a 2007 spending budget of \$71,581 was passed. Though we will not know for a week or so what we can expect in pledged income for the coming year, we anticipate a need for increased fund-raising in 2007. If you have fund-raising ideas, please let Rick Smart or any committee chair know. Thank you in advance for having prayerfully considered your 2007 pledged offerings.

Leadership Changes

Last Sunday the church council elected some new people to leadership opportunities in the congregation.

Sara Bruce, Lay Leader with an emphasis on outreach ministries; Jennifer Van Damm, Staff Parish Committee Chair; Dan Frost, Christian Education Chair and Sunday School Superintendent; Heather Albert, Treasurer; and Rick and Bethany Smart, Church Health Committee. Madelene Taylor was elected earlier to chair the committee for our tenth anniversary.

The Church Health Committee is new to this congregation. Its primary task is to coordinate the Natural Church Development process that we will begin shortly. You will be hearing more about this very soon.

Since nominations are a work in progress, committee members and other officers will be announced shortly. If there is something you're just waiting to be asked to do, please let the pastor know.

Enrichment Opportunities

Lent has become a time for reflection and study as well as prayer and meditation. This Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday, February 21, we will offer at least two opportunities for small group study. If you have interest in either or both please sign up on the sheets near the bulletin board at church or e-mail the pastor (revtrm@aol.com).

Why I am a United Methodist will be led by the Rev. Dr. Jim Young and will explore history, tradition, faith and practice. Jim is a retired United Methodist pastor and has taught United Methodist History and Doctrine at Bangor Theological Seminary. His teaching style uses stories and is certain to draw members of the class into animated discussion of the topic at hand.

Ethical and Moral Issues as Depicted in M*A*S*H, the TV Show, will be led by the Rev. Dr. Tom Merrill. For those too young to remember M*A*S*H was a long running TV show (11 years) about a fictional Mobile Army Surgical Hospital during the Korean War. At a time when our nation is again engaged in a war, many, if not all, the issues raising war itself are appropriate for people of faith to consider and discuss together. Selected episodes from M*A*S*H, will be used as discussion starters for the group.

Later this spring a third opportunity, ***Equipping Lay People for Ministry***, will be led by the Rev. Dr. Dick Sheesley. This will be offered in five three hour sessions beginning shortly after Easter. It has been previously offered as an advanced lay speaker's course. We will apply for this status in order to benefit the lay speakers in the congregation who may want or need such a course. Dick spent most of his ministry as chaplain in hospitals; Maine Medical Center in Portland and most recently Central Maine Medical Center in Lewiston. He is also a certified chaplain supervisor and has trained many clergy and lay persons in the ministry of pastoral care and visitation. Each participant will be expected to pay

to cost of materials which will not exceed \$25. The course will probably be offered on Saturday mornings. You may sign up to indicate your interest on the sheet on the table near the bulletin board at church or email the pastor (revtrm@aol.com).

Ash Wednesday Breakfast Planned

by Natalie Blake

The Greater Portland Cluster UMC is planning an Ash Wednesday breakfast on February 21, 6:30 am, at Clark Memorial Church in Portland. We will start with a pot luck breakfast followed by a short worship service with imposition of ashes. All are invited to join in either the breakfast, the service or both. Think of this as a great way to begin the Season of Lent.

The Cluster is also planning a Passion/Palm Sunday service on Palm Sunday, April 1. This will be an afternoon service to be held on one of the islands.

At the last meeting, new officers were also elected for the coming year. Elected as chair was Rev. Meg Queior from Tuttle Road and as secretary/treasurer, Paul Doucette from Cressey Road in Gorham.

Tom Nelson from Peoples UMC was with us and gave a brief presentation about forming a buying cooperative involving churches from the Casco Bay and Greater Portland Clusters. There was much enthusiasm in the group and the consensus was that we should go forward and gather more information. There will be a meeting held in the near future as a first step. If anyone has a special interest in joining the group, please let me know and I will give you Tom's email address.

The mission of the Cluster has always been to do things for churches that they are unable to do themselves. If you have some thoughts on what you would like to see happen in the Cluster, please speak to your new Cluster representative, Sara Bruce.

Music Team Notes

Choir rehearsal continues on Thursday evenings from 7pm-8:45 pm and we have added Sunday mornings starting at 9 am. Anyone Junior High and up is welcome!! The Sunday morning rehearsal is to catch choir members who have conflicts on Thursday evenings so please join us. We also will have our 'guitar man', Tim, once a month and additional special music inserted here and there. We have a few technology notes as well. The speaker in the child care area is working and may be used to listen to the service, just turn it on. Please make sure it is turned off when you leave the room.. We have had the wireless microphone in use for several months and have even found occasion to use the shorty microphone stand for our small special choir guest voices. I also believe there may be 'small bell players' in our spring music layout. Stayed tuned! The music team welcomes suggestions and special requests so seek out any of us at any time! Listen in Faith - Bethany, Dawn, Jody, and Tim

Natural Church Development

Co-Chairs, Bethany and Rick Smart

When we attended our church's annual Charge Conference last fall, led by our District Superintendent, Rev. Davis, he presented a program for about 25 minutes on a program called Natural Church Development. Natural Church Development is a model used to grow healthier churches, in which the church is looked at as an organism capable of growth and change under favorable conditions, rather than simply an organization.

The terminology was initially coined by Christian Schwartz, head of the Institute of Natural Church Development in Germany. Schwartz wanted to know what made churches healthy, and surveyed 2,000 congregations in 32 countries and six continents from 1994-96. He made his church growth data and research findings available to the

Christian community as a tool to help congregations grow holistically.

He found that healthy, growing congregations exhibited eight characteristics:

- Empowering leadership
- Gift-oriented ministry
- Passionate spiritually
- Functional structures
- Inspiring worship
- Holistic small groups
- Need-oriented evangelism
- Loving relationships

Churches of any denomination can use a survey, developed by the Institute of Natural Church Development, to measure their strengths and weaknesses and their "minimum factor" or the least developed of the eight areas. The "minimum factor" identifies the weakest area of the eight, which when improved upon can lead to greater church growth.

Rev. Davis talked about the church working on the eight areas and "preparing the soil" so to speak, and leaving the rest to God, as a plant grows underground on its own, given the right conditions. Our job is to prepare the right "soil", the conditions/context in which our current members and new visitors/future members will be able to thrive in their relationship with God and one another.

This concept really appealed to us and to many others in attendance. Rev. Tom has asked Rick and me to chair this committee through 2007. What this means is that we will be asking the church to take Schwartz's survey, the church will be paying \$150 to his non-profit Institute to interpret our data and identify our "minimum factor" or our greatest potential for growth. Then we will lead a new team (to-be-formed) called the Church Health Team to work with a Natural Church Development coach (free) to help us implement a plan to address our "minimum factor". This, in essence, means fixing our weakest link, so that we may grow to our fullest potential as a church community.

We look forward to working with you in this process and building excitement around this opportunity for growth and change in 2007.

G.S.U.M.C. 10th ANNIVERSARY

by Madelene Taylor, Chair

Exciting news! Good Shepherd United Methodist Church is 10 years old this year! To celebrate we are planning an all day Celebration Gala for Saturday, May 19, 2007 (rain date Sunday, May 20) at our Good Shepherd U. M. Church, 151 West Gray Road (U.S. 202), Gray.

We've had our first committee meeting and have some wonderful things planned. The day will start with a BBQ, followed by some fun activities for the kids. Ideas we are looking into are pony rides, a bounce house and face painting. A pot luck will be held in the evening followed by music from local bands.

We will also be holding a Time & Talent Auction. We have a lot of talented people in our congregation and are expecting *everyone* to donate to this.

Do you have any memorabilia or photos of church days or events, especially of our earlier days? Please contact Nancy Sawyer, Rev. Tom, Natalie Blake or Madelene Taylor.

This event is open to the community. If you have names and addresses of early church members who are no longer active or may have moved away, please get them to us that we may invite them to the celebration.

If you would like to help with any part of the celebration, or have any suggestions, please contact me at 207-657-7201.

We hope You and everyone will attend to help make this a very memorable, happy & successful day.

Knitting/Crochet Ministry

by Sara Bruce

For those of you that don't already know it, I am obsessed with knitting. I have decided to turn my obsession into a knitting ministry. Such ministries include Prayer Shawl Ministries, Project Linus, Warm Up America, etc., etc., etc. Those interested in joining me in this

ministry can contact me at 428-3630, email me at sasalyn@maine.rr.com, or just catch me before/after worship service on Sunday. Basic knitting techniques will be taught for those who would like to become involved but do not know the skill. A meeting will be planned to set up a time/meeting day and which ministry we shall focus on once I know others are interested.

Youth Group

by Doug Kerr

Hi Everyone,
The Youth Group has added two new members this year. We are happy to welcome in Jacob Deroche and Avery Topel. New members and old have hit the ground running deciding what our focus will be on in the coming year. We have been brainstorming fundraisers that will back the group in our community involvement. We are going to be looking for some local mission work that we could attack with love and faith. To help us reach this goal we will be selling Easter Baskets in the coming months. Stay tuned for your chance to sign up for one. We will also be having an ongoing media swap that Renee Warrow has written about in this issue as well.

We are all excited about what is to come and what we will be able to accomplish. On behalf of the entire Youth Group, thank you for your continued support.

Media Swap

by Renee Warrow

The youth group is starting a media swap to be put out monthly at the church. We are looking for donations of novels, children's books, CD's, DVD's, videos and any other kind of media you may have lying around that you no longer use. Please use your own discretion in making sure the media is appropriate (PG13 rating or below). After we have enough donations, the media will go on sale for a very low cost around 2 - 3 dollars. Thank you for your support.

Book Review

by ***Bethany Smart***

In Our Image: God's First Creatures by Nancy Sohn Swartz, Illustrated by Melanie Hall

In Our Image is a wonderfully illustrated version of the creation story for ages 3-7. It is a nondenominational retelling of the creation story that focuses on the period before man and woman were created. Here is an excerpt from the story when God is speaking to the animals:

“Man and woman shall be a part of nature, like each of you. And nature shall also be a part of them.

Let Us give Our gifts to woman and to man, for in Our image will I make them.

The sun and the moon and the stars sparkled with excitement.

The waters shimmered and the earth quivered with anticipation. The birth of humankind!”

Then each of the animals comes up with one quality that it wants the humans to have: bravery, from the tiger; gentleness, from the lamb; speed, from the cheetah; slowness, from the snail; and so on. In the end, humans receive all their qualities from what has come before them, thus making them a true part of the larger natural world. The text is readily accessible to preschoolers, who will enjoy hearing all the animals declare and offer their special qualities. Children will also instinctively receive Swartz's message about the world's interconnectedness.

Inventive watercolors, dappled with sunlight and cloistered by moonlight, capture the feeling of life that is the essence of the story.

After being told that humankind will have dominion over them, the animals are frightened but God reassures them that people will care for the world and its inhabitants. Even the youngest hearer of this tale of creation may be engaged in a conversation about whether we are living up to this expectation. (parts of this review were excerpted and adapted from Amazon.com, where, as of the newsletter deadline, there are a couple of NEW copies of this book available for a very reasonable price.) Enjoy!

The Marriage Course

The Marriage Course is designed to help married couples learn practical tools to build a strong and healthy marriage.

The course will begin on Sunday February 18th at 5pm at Cressey Road UMC in Gorham. Dinner and childcare will be provided at that time. The course will run for seven consecutive Sundays. The fee for everything is \$70 per couple which can be paid on the first night. This breaks down to only \$10 per night!

If you have any questions please feel free to contact Frank or Lisa Bird at 839-5919. For more information on the Marriage Course please visit. www.marriagecourseusa.org. We are looking forward to seeing you at the Marriage Course!

Response to Central Florida Storms

Central Florida was struck early Friday morning by violent thunderstorms that spawned tornadoes causing sufficient damage for a state of emergency to be declared in four counties. The storms killed at least 14 and sent many more to hospitals seeking treatment. UMCOR is in contact with the Storm Recovery Center for the Florida Annual (regional) Conference as they assess the situation. UMCOR is sending emergency grants to the area to help with recovery efforts.

The Florida Annual Conference website notes that offers of assistance for survivors are already pouring in from areas surrounding those affected. Cash gifts will help provide for recovery. Checks can be mailed to UMCOR, PO Box 9068, New York, NY 10087. Write “UMCOR Advance #901670, Domestic Disaster Response - Florida Tornadoes,” on the memo line of your check. One hundred percent of every donation to any appeal, including appeals for Florida recovery, goes to support the designated program.

Let's Celebrate!***February***Birthdays

02/03 - Jacob DeRoche
 02/03 - Matthew Peary
 02/08 - David Collins III
 02/08 - Lisa Mertz
 02/15 - Judi Shoberg
 02/18 - Bethany Smart
 02/18 - Joyce Peterson

MarchBirthdays

03/04 - Dot Albert
 03/09 - Cary Cox
 03/11 - Michele DeRoche
 03/15 - Rachel Frost
 03/17 - Ryan Peary
 03/19 - Doug Kerr
 03/26 - Shannon Mertz

AprilBirthdays

04/01 - Caleb DeRoche
 04/10 - Troy Bauder
 04/11 - Sara Bruce
 04/12 - Sue Tauber
 04/14 - Libby Topel
 04/24 - Mike Tauber
 04/26 - Beth Acker
 04/27 - Linda Cox

Anniversaries

04/10 - Mike & Sue Tauber
 04/21 - Ken & Joyce Peterson

Upcoming events

- Feb 8-Apr 1 The Marriage Course, Cressey Road UMC, Gorham. Seven consecutive Sundays. 839-5919
- Feb 8 - 11 Women's Tres Dias weekend.
- Feb 10 Children's Clothing Swap 8am to noon.
- Feb 21 Women's group meeting at Casa Novello in Windham at 6:30 pm
- April 1 Passion/Palm Sunday Service. Place TBA.
- May 19 10th Anniversary Celebration.

On Going

Women's Group Every 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7 pm (6:30 pm when eating out). Contact Julie Frost.

Choir Rehearsal Thursday at 7 pm and Sunday at 9:00 am. Contact Dawn Sample.

Sunday School 8:45am Preschool through high school. Contact Dan Frost.

Administrative Council 3rd Sunday of the month following service. Contact Vinal Doody.

Youth Group every other Sunday evening. Contact Doug Kerr.

Lent begins on February 21

You will find Lenten study material at the following websites:

Society of St. Andrew <http://www.endhunger.org/lent.htm>

The Upper Room <http://www.upperroom.org/devotional/lent/>