

The Messenger



Pastor's Pondering

As a new year begins, I feel it is helpful to take a look back. When I arrived in July of 2009, I heard about and sensed a basic level of frustration from the congregation around not feeling listened to. So for the first 6 months to a year, I listened very carefully and continue to invite conversation. I heard a great deal from the congregation during that time.

I heard about how many in the congregation wanted to grow. I heard about how many wanted something year-round for the children on Sundays. I heard about a need for increased fellowship during the week. I heard about a need to update our worship space by incorporating multi-media and differing worship styles. I heard about a longing within many to see our youth (Jr. & Sr. High) participating in worship regularly. And, I heard from a few that they were happy with how things were.

In addition to listening to the congregation, I spent a great deal of time in prayer seeking to discern God's will and direction. And I did some basic research to discover any trends that have existed for our congregation over the years.

What I discovered is that multiple pastoral appoints soared numerically and topped out in the upper 180s to low 190s during the pastors' tenures. But by the pastors' third year decline began and our worship average would drop to below what it was when the pastor arrived. This revealed a systemic issue within the congregation. Most recently in 2003, our congregation averaged 187 and by 2008 our worship average was 150; and the decline would have continued if a pastoral change had not occurred that July.

Taking all this into consideration, the Ad Council and I have been working toward systemic change. I am 2 ½ years into my appointment as the pastor, our worship average is currently 175, and we will soon discover if the previous pattern will be repeated.

To address many of the felt and real needs mentioned by the congregation the following changes have occurred over the past 2 ½ years: moving the 8 a.m. service to 9 (allowing for 2 viable worship services), year-round Children's Church, Wed. Evening Program, multi-media discreetly installed in the sanctuary, hiring of a Worship Director, and I'm pleased to report that most weeks we have 20 or so Jr. & Sr. Higher students participating in worship!

Our most significant change, however, has been from Preference-Driven to Purpose-Centered. The leadership and I are continuing to listen; and, as you would expect, our primary focus will be discerning God's will and direction and leading faithfully throughout 2012 and beyond. May you all have a safe and happy new year!

--Pastor Renner

Library Update



The following book has been purchased for our library:

Longing by Karen Kingsbury (Bailey Flanigan Series, Book 3)

I will be sending in The Reading Program reports in January, so please get these to me by the first week in January. Thanks to all of you who participated in this program.

Keep on reading, and Happy New Year!

Lois Shuman

United Methodist Women

As I write this it doesn't seem it should be close to Christmas with 2012 not far behind. We have had no snow just some rain and fairly warm days. As the New Year starts we will soon start to think about the making of Easter Eggs and all of our spring meetings. The first thing on the agenda is to get the dishwasher fixed, parts have been ordered so it should be up and running before long. Hopefully I will get my computer/printer fixed and we can finish the 2012 program books.

There is no General meeting in January.

MARTHA CIRCLE

Monday January 16.

Hostess: Cathy Nichols 12 Willow St. Bethany, IL

Co Hostess: Cynda Bonnett

Devotions: Susan Connor

Lesson/Pledge Service: Hyllis Rhoades

Mary Circle - No Meeting

During the winter months be sure to check out the Library. Lois has the new 2012 reading books already for us. Makes for a nice winter day.

Hope you had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.





To My Church Family

Thank you for all the cards, meals, & visits. I would also like to thank Pastor Renner for coming to the hospital and the prayer before my surgery.

Pat Sanders

The Nurture Committee wishes to thank all who participated in the Harvest Dinner, November 19, for helping to make it a success. Terry Warren and his crew served a wonderful meal, and all of you helped by bringing, salads, vegetables, and desserts. Thanks to all who helped set up on Saturday and those who helped to take tables down on Sunday. We are blessed to have such a wonderful faith family.

**All Church Meeting
Sunday, January 8, 2011
following 10:30 a.m. service
Friendship Hall**

In January of 2011, our congregation met to discuss direction. On Sunday, January 8, 2012, we will be meeting in Friendship Hall and hearing from the various committees about the progress that has been made. Everyone is encouraged to attend and participate! We will gather after the 10:30 worship service that day, and lunch will be served.

HONOR OUR CIVIL SERVANTS

On Sunday, January 15, 2012, our congregation will have a reception between the 9 & 10:30 services to honor teachers, firefighters, and the police officers in our community. We will also be thanking them for their service during both worship hours. Please plan on attending and helping us express our gratitude!



The Yellow Bucket for January will go to the Sullivan Ministerial Association.

“Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 124:8)

May the Lord’s comfort and blessings be with the family and friends who mourn the death of Ralph Fuller.

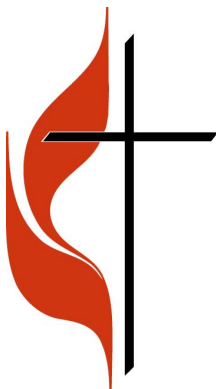


The deadline for the February Newsletter is Tuesday, January 17.



Church Finances

November receipts: \$19,392.17
November Disbursements: \$20,155.57
Campus Balance: \$519.21
Mortgage Balance: \$101,134.44



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