



FROM THE CHURCH HOUSE

WHO CARES?

Rev. Dr. James E. Roghair, Interim Minister

A number of you took the theological survey, and I got an early peek at the results. You are a church with many opinions: 78% of you disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that “the Bible is without error,” and yet 50% of you agree or strongly agree that “the Bible is the inspired Word of God.” Is there a middle ground?

Your Mission Statement (overwhelmingly endorsed in the survey) says “we are on a spiritual journey.” Now, people on a spiritual journey engage with one another on that journey. But how? By agreeing with everyone? Surely not. The church-splitting argument of the early 20th century is still alive: “Was Jesus born of a virgin?” 28% of you strongly say yes and 28% of you strongly say no. The rest are in the middle somewhere. One asks: “Who cares?”

Well, we may not care about that particular question, but I encourage your care about theology and faith. I encourage you to engage with one another – to share the journey.

If I were writing a survey, I would want to ask about your belief in justice and peace – about our care for the needy and our care for the earth. There are many approaches to a vital Christian faith. In this transition time, as your church is determining who you are and who will lead you, I encourage you to engage one another over the important things of faith.

A resource is the book, *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, by Diana Butler Bass. “For decades the accepted wisdom has been that America's mainline Protestant churches are in decline, eclipsed by evangelical mega-churches. Church and religion expert ... Bass wondered if this was true, and this book is the result of her extensive, three-year study of centrist and progressive churches across the

country. Her surprising findings reveal just the opposite—that many of the churches are flourishing, and they are doing so without resorting to mimicking the mega-church, evangelical style.

“ [This book] describes this phenomenon and offers a how-to approach for Protestants eager to remain faithful to their tradition while becoming a vital spiritual community. As Butler Bass delved into the rich spiritual life of various ... churches, certain consistent practices—such as hospitality, contemplation, diversity, justice, discernment, and worship—emerged as core expressions of congregations seeking to rediscover authentic Christian faith and witness today.

“This hopeful book ... reveals the practical steps that leaders and laypeople alike are taking to proclaim an alternative message about an emerging Christianity that strives for greater spiritual depth and proactively engages the needs of the world (www.amazon.com).” How can you explore First Congregational's place? I would be pleased to assist you in this discussion if you would like to go that way. Let me know. *Jim*

SEARCH TEAM UPDATE

Members of First Congregational Church of Evanston have varying views of faith, but tend agree strongly with the church's mission statement, a recent survey of the congregation shows.

More than half of the congregation responded to the survey, which was developed as part of the ministerial search process.

When asked if they agreed with the statement, “All faiths have valid beliefs,” 72 percent of the congregation said they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. But when asked if they agreed with the statement, “The Bible is the inspired Word of God,” the congregation split fairly evenly

with 39 percent agreeing, 35 percent disagreeing and 25 percent neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

When asked their feelings on First Congregational's mission statement, 87 percent of the respondents said they agreed with it. The mission statement is:

As members of First Congregational Church of Evanston, we are on a spiritual journey. We strive to be an inclusive congregation. We welcome all faith experiences, all family types, and all racial and ethnic backgrounds. We are challenged by the Gospel to grow in our understanding of what the Biblical Word means for Christian life today, to nurture one another, and to be engaged in our community and the world. By God's grace and guided by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves, our resources, and our time to Jesus Christ through the congregation.

Detailed results of the survey will be discussed at the congregational meeting on April 29. "The information gathered in the survey will be very helpful to us and to prospective candidates for the senior minister position as we move forward in the search process," said Alan Cubbage, chair of the minister search committee. "It's important that we find a good match between First Congregational and our new senior minister. The survey results help us define our church better for candidates."

The search committee is in the process of refining the job description for the position of senior minister and creating information packets that will be sent to candidates. The committee plans to post the position opening and advertise it in early May.

WHO ARE WE?

A Series about Congregationalism and the First Congregational Church of Evanston

In the second installment of this series, we have a rare opportunity to look at our church through they eyes of others ~ to "see ourselves as others see us".

The following articles come to us from the website "Ship of Fools". This Internet publication which calls itself a "magazine of Christian unrest" was launched in 1977 as a printed publication. The magazine ceased publication in 1983, but found

new life in the Internet era as a global "webzine".

One feature of Ship of Fools, the "Mystery Worshipper", provides reports by anonymous visitors about worship experiences in selected churches around the world. Mystery Worshipers travel incognito and report on all aspects of the church experience ~ the comfort of the pews, warmth of the welcome, length of the sermon and more.

Visitors from Ship of Fools have come to First Congregational Church of Evanston twice in recent years ~ in 2001 and again in 2006. Below are selections from both of the reports published on their website. (To read the full reports on FCCE and much more, go to <http://ship-of-fools.com>.)

2001:

The church: First Congregational, Grove Street at Hinman, Evanston, Illinois.

Denomination: Technically, none (since it's purely congregational), but they are affiliated with a confederation of like churches called the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches (NACCC), headquartered in suburban Milwaukee....

The building: Lots of people call this style "colonial revival," but as any architect can tell you there wasn't much during pre-revolutionary days to revive. The half-moon transoms suggest Christopher Wren, but there is a Greco-Roman portico, spiced up with Corinthian columns and filials. At first glance, the building looks like the sort of church Andy Hardy and his family would have attended. I'm also told that some of its design elements were borrowed from St Martin's-in-the-Fields, London.

The cast: Thomas Miller, Senior Minister; Christine Meyer, Minister of Spiritual Formation and Christian Education; and (very good) organist David Lornson, Director of Music.

How full was the building? One-third full, roughly. The loft is used by the choir only for its sung benediction. For an amateur choir, they are quite good ~ and they made up one-fifth of the whole congregation!

Did anyone welcome you personally? Smile, handshake and bulletin from one of the ushers. The church's "ritual of greeting" is similar to passing the peace.

Was your pew comfortable? A little more comfortable than the ordinary. Good spacing between pews, and the nave has left, center and right aisles. This gave a nice feeling of spaciousness.

How would you describe the pre-service atmosphere? On a scale of one to 10, with one being the bad part of Hieronymous Bosch's "Garden of Earthly Delights" and 10 being pin-dropping hush, I would rate it about an 8.5 to 9. Greeting, socializing, etc, took place in the narthex.

What musical instruments were played? Organ. The organist was very good, and the choir was quite good for an amateur choir.

Did anything distract you? If anything struck me as unusual, it was possibly that the congregation was too still and unemotional.

Was the worship stiff-upper-lip, happy clappy, or what? The worship was very much mainline Protestant ca. 1975. I don't mean to be catty about that, as there were no dubious modern innovations such as spontaneous witnessing or anemic homemade call-and-response. I noticed that a few of us were singing the second line of the Doxology "Praise God all creatures here below," instead of the traditional "Praise Him all creatures here below." But only a few of us.

Exactly how long was the sermon? 17 minutes, and well worth it.

On a scale of 1-10, how good was the preacher? 7 - Well delivered, in spite of using notes. The first two-thirds was quite good, but I'm deducting a point from the rating because the climax of the service was sort of a mushy "Jesus is calling us to service." Many people believe that this non-controversial sentimentality about the Son of God is partly responsible for the mainline churches' decline over the past 30 years.

Which part of the service was like being in heaven? The interior of the church was magnificent - no stained glass but leaded transom windows,

and painted in subtle (but obviously well thought-out) versions of the color blue: robin's egg blue, Carolina (or "Williamsburg") blue, powder blue. The effect was subtle but quite enchanting, especially as compared to the dull sunshine yellow so many Protestant churches have used to repaint. A mixed blessing: the congregation's tendency to coolness paid off in following the ritual. If you've ever seen all worshipers rise simultaneously to sing the doxology, you know what I mean.

And which part was like being in... er... the other place? Technically, nothing went wrong ... but I found the color-coordinated hymnals and Bible offputting. Is it possible to have too much design? Does it happen that a "status quo" atmosphere could make a sanctuary bland in an almost Hallmarkian way?

What happened when you hung around after the service looking lost? I hung around through the postlude, wandered the sanctuary a bit.... In the narthex, the minister was most welcoming and introduced me to a couple of the members.

How would you describe the after-service coffee? Quite good: Coffee, tea and goodies including pistachio cake.

How would you feel about making this church your regular (where 10 = ecstatic, 0 = terminal)? 6 - The church has a lot to offer, but it may be "not my class, dear." In terms of program, I need to see how much "go" there is besides the "show."

Did the service make you feel glad to be a Christian? Absolutely, and glad to be a Protestant too.

What one thing will you remember about all this in seven days' time? The southern sunshine pouring through the Christopher Wren-type windows.

2006:

The church: First Congregational, Evanston, Illinois, USA.

Denomination: Congregational, a member of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches.

The building: This is a lovely neo-colonial edifice designed by the noted Chicago firm of Tallmadge and Watson and completed in 1927, the third church (two previous were destroyed by fires) on the same site. The whole building is brick and limestone and has a very satisfying solid feel, more like a Wren church than American colonial, which I usually find more creaky and clapboard-ish. The interior, of white and pale blue-gray plaster and millwork, is similarly beautiful, with nothing jarring. The clear arched windows look out onto trees and are set high enough to limit distraction while making the place suitably luminous. An attractive wood paneled chapel is reached from doors on either side of the sanctuary. A social hall fills most of the basement.

The church: The Congregational Church, as a denomination, is a bastion of mainline Protestant liberalism, and this congregation is solidly in that company. People are welcomed and affirmed regardless of religious background, age, ability, race, sexual orientation or national origin. There is no formal statement of belief. Each member church is governed autonomously by its own council. First Congregational of Evanston sponsors many volunteer and outreach programs.

The neighborhood: The church's columned portico and steeple face onto a real village green. In the immediate neighborhood are two other churches and a former church converted into a performing arts venue, in the leafy idyll that is Evanston. Northwestern University sits a few blocks north, and Lake Michigan a couple of blocks to the east. Even with snow on the ground, the aura is one of goodness and well-being, with just the right scale and mix of commercial, residential and green space. This is the sort of place where you dream of living.

The cast: The Rev. Thomas ES "Ted" Miller, senior minister and preacher; David Lornson, director of music.

Did anyone welcome you personally? Yes, ushers said good morning and handed me a very nice service sheet with inserts detailing special Christmas seasonal services and social events. There was a handshake of peace, but it was polite, and not over-eager.

Was your pew comfortable? Yes, very nice wood

pews, white painted, trimmed with dark wood matching the colonial revival interior.

How would you describe the pre-service atmosphere? The atmosphere was as quiet and controlled as could be expected with a number of smaller children present.

What musical instruments were played? First Congregational's three-manual 1927 EM Skinner pipe organ, well maintained, and suited to the pleasant but not overly live acoustics. The adult choir seemed to have some paid section leaders. The sound of the choir was really quite good for a smallish congregation...

Was the worship stiff-upper-lip, happy clappy, or what? Heartfelt Protestantism. It wasn't a liturgical service, but pretty traditional in its format and music. Like Presbyterians, they wait to stand for a hymn until just before they have to sing, and sit for pretty much everything else.

Exactly how long was the sermon? The children's sermon (which was better than some I have heard) was 5 minutes and the adult sermon was 20 minutes.

Which part of the service was like being in heaven? I would have to say the beauty of the setting took first place, even though the music, sermon and welcoming feeling were just fine.

And which part was like being in... er... the other place? An awkward moment came at the start of the children's sermon, when the pastor invited children to come forward and no one budged. Finally, with a little prodding from their parents, four or so pre-schoolers made their way to sit in the front pew...

How would you feel about making this church your regular (where 10 = ecstatic, 0 = terminal)? 6 - This church has all the ingredients to please, provided you like a sort of mainline Protestant (non-Eucharistic) worship and live in the Evanston (or North side of Chicago) area. Still, as the airlines always say at the end of a flight, "we know you have many choices..."

Did the service make you feel glad to be a Christian? Sure. I understand that mega-churches

and places with more modern worship forms may be causing membership in churches like this one to languish. I hope that isn't true or that it reverses itself.

What one thing will you remember about all this in seven days' time? Enjoying the nice Advent hymns in this beautiful setting with the soft winter daylight streaming in through the large windows.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP TEAM

One of the things revealed through the transition team report is that we want to be a more welcoming and inclusive church. To this end, the Membership Committee invites you to develop the following habits of hospitality:

- **Talk to one person you don't know at church each week.** Not only is it wonderful to meet and greet old friends, but it is equally wonderful to meet new people and open your own world to new friendship possibilities.
- **Wear a nametag.** This sends the message that you want people to know who you are and you expect to meet someone you don't know. Additionally, many of us are not good at remembering names and wearing a name tag promotes friendship and conviviality for everyone. Please pick up your nametag on your way in, and encourage your friends and family to do so as well.
- **Please sign the Friendship Pads and look at them as they come back to you.** Make sure if there is a visitor in your row that you seek him/her out for a special welcome.

ANNOUNCING THE 2007 FIRST CONGREGATIONAL ART SHOW



Our church is planning an art show featuring our talented church members from Friday, June 22 through Sunday, June 24. The exhibit will be in the Cora Brown Parlor in the church house. A reception on Friday evening, featuring food and drink, will open the exhibit. Members and guests can view the art Friday evening, all day

Saturday, and Sunday following church.

We encourage both adults and young people to display their works, which can be paintings, photographs, prints, sculpture, fiber art, jewelry, and other art and crafts. Church artists may invite a friend to exhibit as well. Artists may display more than one work and works in more than one medium. Application forms for artists are available in the Sanctuary Narthex or can be obtained from a committee member listed below.

Although the application states that hanging works should be framed, this is not necessary; however, these works should be "gallery ready," which means that screw hooks and wire should be attached on the back. If you need help with this, contact one of the committee members.

Artists displaying sculptures and other non-hanging works of art (such as jewelry) can specify how they wish their work to be displayed.

Artists can sell their work or not. If a work is sold, we ask that the artist donate at least 15% of the sale to the church. This percentage is far below the amount galleries charge.

We ask that artists submit original work and that the work be suitable for viewing by children. The liability agreement in the application is necessary because we do not have insurance to cover the unlikely loss of a work. However, during the exhibit hours, one or more committee members will be present to keep an eye on things.

We are very excited about this show because we know our church has an abundance of talented members. We hope you will consider exhibiting your work and attending the show! We also welcome you to help set up the show, publicize the show, assist with the reception, or participate in any other way.

Please contact any of the following for more information:

Peggy Tinzmann, Betty Phillips, Juliet Rago, Eric Erickson, Sheran Fiedler, Joyce Phelps, Lucy Weil Ogbolumani, Laura Wilson, Georgia

Evans, or Deb Shamlin

RUMMAGE/TREASURE SALE SEPTEMBER 22, 2007



The following is a list of all the personnel (who have volunteered to date) who will be working for the Rummage/Treasure Sale:

Artwork: Eric Erickson and Richard Cook

Books: D.J. Johnson and Joe Page

China and Glass: Barbara Lee, Peggy Tinzman, Jennifer French and Barbara Ferguson

Christmas: Joyce and Bob Phelps

Clothing: Cherie Weil and Ann Vikner

Electronics: Jeff Roseberry

Home Office: Andrew Plasz

Furniture: Bernice Roseberry

Jewelry: LaRae Ackerson

Kitchen: Sandy Whitely and Margaret Cothrine

Linens: Shirley Cook, Louise Moore and Joan Lindsey

Toys: Lacey Ogbolumani

Treasures: Mary Ellen Buell and Jane Baker

LUNCH: Patty Sprague and family

Head Waiter: Tom Lindsey

Handy-man: Tom Lindsey

You can see all the departments need help, please let me know where you would like to work.

- With Labor Day the 3rd of September, **Casual Sunday will be September 9th.** Please mark your calendar .
- There will then be just two weeks before the sale and just one Saturday free, so guys, please plan on working that Saturday the 15th. Many of us will be there every day.
- Current News: there are three perfect condition file cabinets, two with five drawers and one with four drawers. We would like to sell them now or give them to a charitable organization that needs them. They are stored at the outside back door.

Donations: keep them coming! Joyce Phelps 847 733 9972

HILDA'S PLACE VOLUNTEERS

On the first Saturday night of each month, our church is responsible for providing dinner for the

30 or so residents of Hilda's Place, a homeless shelter located in the basement of the Lake Street Church. This is a rewarding and fun activity, and much appreciated by the residents. It's a great service opportunity for a family or two or three people who might like to work together. Many thanks to the following people who have volunteered since last July:

Laura and Steve Wilson

Sharyn Julcher

Ann Vikner

Georgia Evans

The Sprague family

The Page family

Jean Cleland

Michaela Cudahy and Paul Lawless

Brian Connors and Jennifer French

The McFadden family

Betty Phillips

Barb Ferguson

Anne Trompeter and Paul Janicki and family

Please call Elaine Frangedakis at 847-332-2618 if you are interested in volunteering, or for more information.

OUTREACH TEAM NEWS

The Outreach Team is launching two new opportunities for church members to be involved with the outreach activities of the Church.

1. The Faith and Public Issues committee is going electronic! We will be asking for members to sign up to participate in this 'virtual' committee where they will be informed of important issues for which we need to advocate by writing letters, making phone calls or sending emails to our elected officials. As we initiate this program, we would like input on the issues that most concern church members. To accomplish this, there is a survey posted on the Church website, www.firstchurchevanston.org under Teams that we strongly urge members to fill out. We will be communicating our progress on the website as well.

2. Several families have asked for some Hands-on-Mission projects to do with their whole family. The first project took place at the YWCA @ Church & Ridge. We worked outside on a blustery afternoon cleaning up the grounds, raking leaves, removing trash and doing some pruning. The next project is

similar, but at the Church House preparing an area for the Peace Pole Garden in front of the Church House. In June we'll participate in a 2.5 walk for hunger sponsored by the *Greater Chicago Food Depository*. The Walk takes place on June 16th at Montrose Harbor, registration at 8 a.m.- step off at 9:30 a.m. Our contributions will credit *The Night Ministry's* account at the Food Depository.

Registration and pledge sheets will be available in the Narthex and the Church Office starting in mid-May. Questions?? Call Betty Phillips: 847/256-0245.

SAVE THE DATE! SATURDAY JUNE 9, 2007

Please join us for the 2007 First Congregational Church of Evanston Golf Outing at the Peter Jans Community Golf Course. We will play a friendly 4-person "scramble" to benefit the ministries of our Church. Plan to stay for a picnic supper immediately following the golf-or



join us if you don't want to play.

LOOK FORWARD TO SOME EARLY SUMMER FUN!

TELL YOUR FRIENDS!

NOVICE OR PRO, ALL ARE WELCOME!

Questions? Contact Bob Krause at 847-328-5563 or bob.krause@bcbsa.com

BIG CHANGE FOR THE SENIOR CLUB

There is change in the season (and in the church) and with the Senior Club, formerly known as "Nearer My God to Thee". The group will soon have a new name to go with new membership limits. Due to attrition, we are now welcoming



members 65 and older. Previously, the age minimum was 75. Now, all you young ones are welcomed to our senior group where we chat and chew and have fun and fellowship. Call Melia, DJ Johnson or Eric Erickson for further details. Our next meeting will be on May 7th in the Guild Room at noon. Bring a sandwich and a joke and **join the fun.**



MAY

1	Luke Perkins
2	Jackie Chill
4	Brittany Barran
5	Kingsley Day
7	Pam Daniels
10	Tom Ferguson
10	Charles Krause
12	Paul Lawless
14	Mary Ellen Buell
17	Emma Lehman
18	Claire McFadden
19	Kelly Rorke
20	Lacey Ogbolumani
21	Garrett Fonda
24	Sandy Whiteley
25	John Arnold
25	Adam Doty
30	Emily Connors
30	Polly Hawkins
31	Franklin Snyder

SUNDAY AFTERNOON BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

The Sunday Afternoon Book Discussion Group will meet on Sunday, May 20th at 4:00 pm in the Brown Parlor at the Church House. Cherie Weil will lead the discussion about the book: *RESURRECTION* by Tucker Malarkey. This novel draws on actual events surrounding the discovery of the Lost Gospels of Nag Hammadi. Cherie Weil will lead the discussion. Everyone is invited to attend and we hope you will come.

PIANO RECITAL BY KINGSLEY DAY

May 6th at 3:00 p.m. in the Guild Room of the Church House. Please join us for a wonderful program of piano music by Schumann, Chopin, and Scriabin performed by church member/Chancel Choir member/and Music & Worship Team Chairman Kingsley Day. This

Robinson Recital is being presented as a benefit concert with proceeds supporting the music ministry of First Congregational Church.

CHANCEL CHOIR MUSIC FOR MAY

May 6

Wilberg "Peace Like a River"

May 13

Rutter "For the Beauty of the Earth"

May 20

Parker/Shaw "Come, We That Love the Lord"

Parker/Shaw "Hark! I Hear the Harps Eternal"

May 27

Dirksen "Praise the Spirit in Creation"

Saylor "In the Spirit"



JUST EATING?

PRACTICING OUR FAITH AT THE TABLE

When: Sundays (May 20 to June 24)

Time: 11:30 to 12:15 p.m.

This curriculum aims to shape a way of life with food that flows out of a deep understanding of how food connects us with God and all Creation. Food is a basic need, but it is also the stuff of reconciliation, healing, transformation, comfort, courage, and justice. Using the Christian practice of the Eucharist as our starting point, we will explore what it means to eat well in relationship to our own bodies, other people, and the earth.

Jim and Deb sit on the advisory board of the Just Eating? curriculum committee. Please join us. Contact Jim if you have any questions. To reserve your spot contact Deb at 847 864-8332 or dshamlin@mcleodusa.net.

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