

FROM THE PASTORS



Kent French

This Advent season, I was having dinner with a couple from our church and one of their longtime friends when the conversation turned to hopes for the New Year.

“Have you chosen your word yet?” they asked one another. “Well, I have been thinking about it.” “I have had the same word for the last several years, but I will be changing it this year.”

I discovered that these three had a tradition of choosing a word or phrase as a guidepost, a touchstone to set the tone and the intention for the next twelve months. I listened as they reflected on how they had lived their words over the past year and where their vocabularies were taking them now.

Unlike New Year’s resolutions, in which we strive to give up or take on specific habits, a word or phrase helps set the direction of the next year. It can be a lens through which we interpret the events and challenges that come our way.

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, the people of Israel spoke of having the law of God written or kept in their hearts (Deuteronomy 6:5-7, 11:18; Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 3:10; Psalm 40:8, 119:11). What does it mean to let God write a word on your heart? It is more than a mental or intellectual exercise. It is a whole-body exercise. Unlike a word you cram into your memory or let steep in your brain, a word on the heart courses through your arteries and veins. It touches every cell of your body.

What would your word or phrase be?

It is a great spiritual exercise for all of us to try. The challenge, of course, is not just to come up with the words, but to find ways to live them. How might we keep such words of intention present? Do we need to write them down and tape them onto our bathroom mirrors, onto the coffee pot, or the dashboard of our cars? Or perhaps, we need to put them on strips of paper or 3x5 cards and drop them into drawers and closets, in the refrigerator and freezer, in corners of the basement or garage, so that we are reminded throughout the year.

As I have reflected about my own life and the life of FCCB over the past year, the word “joy” keeps recurring on my lips, in my mind and heart. One of my continuing observations about our Sunday mornings is that we have been unlocking the door to some latent joy, letting it bubble up and spill over.

In discussing this with others, I have learned that some people think of joy as frivolity, as a false cheerfulness, a lack of seriousness. Nothing could be further from the truth. Joy is different from happiness. It is deeper,

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Thoughts from Tara- January 2011

Happy New Year! 2011- It doesn’t seem possible!



Tara Olsen Allen

2010 was filled with so much transition- for FCCB as a congregation and for me! Personally, I am looking forward to some “normalcy” in 2011; not quite so many BIG life events! I would imagine you, as a church community, are also looking forward to having some normalcy with two settled pastors now filling out your staff. Again, I have to say, it feels so good to be here and to have had such a warm welcome from all of you!

Looking ahead to 2011 and beyond, I would like to share my vision for the ministry I have been called to here at FCCB and invite you to engage in this process with me.

When I initially spoke with Kent and Sharry about what my job description would be like, we divided my time up into three areas- Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Pastoral Care, and Worship. In considering those areas, Kent and I have begun work with the Pastoral visitation team and the Stephen Ministers to gain an understanding of the pastoral care needs of the congregation. I very much look forward to continuing this work in 2011.

Kent and Sharry and I have been working with the Diaconate, the Arts and Worship board, as well as our music staff and lay leaders to put together meaningful worship experiences and I am certain we will continue to tweak worship; figuring out what feels best for this community.

In developing a ministry focused on youth and young adults, I refer to this type of ministry as Family Ministry- focusing on ministering to the variety of families we have here at FCCB. As I envision the future of this ministry, I see a few things continuing: first, the collaboration with the Christian Education board is essential to this type of ministry. Second, continuing development of our youth groups is a key component to a Family Ministry. Third, building on the already established lines of communication between our Youth Coordinators, Youth Advisors, young people, parents, and the church by using postcards, email, Facebook and face-to-face meetings fosters clear communication on many fronts. Fourth, our young people and families already contribute quite a bit to our worship experiences through singing in the Family Choir or performing in other ways, participating in the liturgy and ringing the church bell, as well as being a part of the Joy Jesters here at FCCB. Finally, mission is a strong tradition here that I would love to see continue and serving on the Mission and Social Justice board enables me to see all of the facets of mission that this church supports. Our young people engage in mission

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stronger and more resilient. It knows how tough living can be, but celebrates the gift of life anyway. Joy calls us back to the wellspring of life that exists in all of us. In spite of all of the no's in the world, joy continues to say, "yes!" It continues to dance and sing and laugh, even when the rest of the world tells you to keep a long face.

In his poem "The Changed Man," Robert Phillips writes of a love that causes him to be "a warrior for joy." (*Speech Days*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.) I love that phrase and wonder what it means to be a "warrior for joy"? It suggests a posture, a stance, a strength and purpose. Does it mean that you fight despair when it tries to take over? Does it mean that even in the midst of deep and necessary grief, you believe that there can still be more dancing and singing to happen? Does it mean that we refuse to be beaten down and will empower others to rise up as well? I have pondered this phrase for several years and wonder if 2011 is the year for me to take it on.

What about a word or phrase for our church community? There is already work going on among our leadership to discern a purpose statement for our congregation, words and phrases that will help us define how God sees us. What are we about? How does God see us in the world around us and how is God calling us to function in that world?

As part of this work we have begun the all-church read of *Transforming Congregational Culture*, by Anthony Robinson, in order to begin thinking about our own congregation's purpose as it relates to the current climate of changes in church life. This is an exciting conversation that is just getting started and will continue through discussion groups (see page 7).

I invite all of us to first consider the words or phrases that we want to embody for the next year, to take some time to find that word and to share it with our family and friends. Explore the meaning of the words, perhaps even consult a dictionary for their etymology and usage, and then ask God to help us live those words. Say them each morning when we get up and before we go to bed. Find ways to creatively incorporate them into our daily lives.

Next, I invite all of us to listen for the words and phrases for our church --to pray about this purpose-defining process and to join the conversation with others. What is the word that God wants to write into the heart of our community? How will we let God write it?

In faith,
Kent

SHALOM CIRCLE

What are you doing Monday mornings from 9 am – 10 am? Would you like to participate in a circle of prayer? Each Monday, Shalom Circle gathers in the Fireplace Room for one hour of sharing, caring and prayer. You are welcome to join this circle any time. For further information call Cheryl Blair (733-0966).

trips once a year, serve at the local community meal, as well as do fundraisers to support the local food bank. This church also has a history of running inter-generational mission trips and I would definitely like to explore ways to increase intergenerational activities at FCCB.

We already have great church school programs for our middle school and high school! However, I would like to increase the opportunities our young people have to engage their faith. One of the major ways I would like to encourage our young people to encounter their faith is by introducing the Our Whole Lives curriculum to this church. O.W.L is a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum designed to give young people an opportunity to talk openly with other young people and caring adults about issues of importance to them: dating, decision-making, peer pressure, role of the media and many other topics related to sexuality. Developed in 1983, this curriculum has been used for years with great success in many UCC and UU churches. The purpose of *Our Whole Lives* is to help participants make informed, responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. It equips them with accurate, age-appropriate information in six subject areas: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture. Grounded in a holistic view of sexuality, *Our Whole Lives* provides not only facts about anatomy and human development, but also uses a faith-based approach to help participants clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, social, and political aspects of sexuality. Unlike the sex education offered in school, *Our Whole Lives* takes place in a church setting with trained leaders who provide a safe space for youth to explore these challenging issues and develop strategies for healthy decision-making.

There will be several opportunities for the congregation to learn more about Our Whole Lives in the beginning part of 2011- **Sunday, January 30** there will be an open discussion about Our Whole Lives with Robert Guthrie and me. There will also be a Parent Information night about this curriculum on **Wednesday, February 2 at 7:00 pm**. Please join us!

I would still like to have feedback and meetings with those of you who desire some one- on-one time with me I am also open to meeting with groups of people who would like to engage in discussion around similar topics. Please, send me an email or give a call to set up a time we can get together!

Wishing you a happy and healthy new year!

Peace & Blessings,

Tara



Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministry is a program part of this congregation that speaks to it's name. It is a ministry for people in need of empathy, compassion, confidentiality and being heard. It is provided by people who have been specifically trained to honestly share those qualities. If you, or someone you know, are in this kind of need, at this particularly emotional time of the year, please speak to a Stephen Leader.

If you or someone you know has need of this ministry call one of the Leaders: Libby Weiss (756-2062); Donna Romjue (752-1747); Kathleen McGuinness (733-1251); Bob and Pat Styer (676-2585)

NEW BOOKS IN THE FCCB LIBRARY

On display on the book cart

Adeney, Miriam. *Kingdom Without Borders: The Untold Story of Global Christianity*. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2009.

Albom, Mitch. *Have a Little Faith: A True Story*. New York: Hyperion, 2009.

Annan, Kent. *Following Jesus Through the Eye of the Needle: Living Fully, Loving Dangerously*. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2009.

Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1991.

Crossan, John D. *The Greatest Prayer: Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of the Lord's Prayer*. New York: HarperOne, 2010.

Eiesland, Nancy L. *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

Feiler, Bruce S. *America's Prophet: Moses and the American Story*. New York: William Morrow, 2009.

Griswold, Eliza. *The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line between Christianity and Islam*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010.

Heinz, Donald. *Christmas: Festival of Incarnation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Hoffman, Joel M. *And God Said: How Translations Conceal the Bible's Original Meaning*. Thomas Dunne Bks: St. Martin's, 2010.

Knitter, Paul F. *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2009.

POINSETTIAS

Given by... In Memory of...

Linda Allen & Scott Slaba...Tom Hunter
Cheryll & David Blair... our parents, Doug Blair, Marie Blair,
Alex Murray, June Murray and sister, Sherry Fagerness
Herb & Marion Brown...our son, Steven Brown
Norm & Gina Colon...our parents
Kelly Follis...Kelly Knight Ballinger, Frank & LaVon Knight
Carol & Dominic Garguile... Margaret & Lawrence Brewster &
Todd Curran
Joyce Gienger... Elias Gienger, Stan Erickson & Warner
Erickson
Maryan & George Gleason...Glenn & Ila Breakley, John &
Dorena Gleason
Julie Gorrell...Warren Wheeler Philbrick
Marly Hogan...John Hogan, Mabel & Bill Shore
Mike & Etta Kirk...our parents
Gloria McDonald...Bill McDonald
Mike & Linda Rawls...Dad, Al Rawls who died Dec. 20, 1979
Bob & Sharon Reike...Bob's father, Robert V. & Sharon's father,
Charles
The Scodeller Family... Calvin Failor, Ruth Failor, & Larry
Scodeller
Judy Wahlborg... Quentin Wahlborg
Amy Wolsdorf...Esther Crane
Judy Vanderhoef...Rick Muir
Dick & Cherie Little...Dick & Katie Little, Eileen & Ernie Sparks

Given by.... In Recognition of...

Cheryll & David Blair...Kent and Tara
Barabara Crissey...in celebration of my children & grandchildren
Julie Gorrell...Marvin & Doris Olmstead
Bob & Kathi Matthes...Hannah, Lizzie & Evan Matthes
Amy Wolsdorf...Mr. & Mrs. Lad Anderson

Purchased as a gift to the church...

Julie Gorrell
Irwin & Frances LeCogq
Chuck & Alice Lee
The Scribners
Richard & Bonnie Wilson



ALL IN THE FAMILY

This section has been sent via email to those that receive the newsletter by email.

If you would like to receive the Full Circle by email please contact the office at 734-3720 or at office@fccb.net and let us know!

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU

To the wonderful members of First Congregational Church, we'd like to thank you so very, very much for all of the love and support both before and after the birth of baby Wesley, or Our Little Ninja, as we refer to the little guy.

Wesley had some ups and downs after he came into this world, but all of you were there helping us stand strong and supporting us in the most harrowing time of our lives. Nothing compares to the scare we had with Wesley, but all of you supported us with prayers and love; with giving Kathryn maternity leave to stay home with Wesley, with help in the office while she was away; with meals once we came home and so much more. We also greatly appreciate the wonderful volunteers who have watched Wesley during the week so that he has been able to remain close to mommy during his early months.

Thank you all again from the entire family. It meant more than you can ever know. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

-- Sam, Kathryn and Wesley.

MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS

On Celebration Sunday, October 24th, we gratefully received 19 new members into the life of our congregation. We shared 12 bios last month and five more in this issue.

Tara Olsen Allen was born in Boylston, Massachusetts and has lived in Portland, Maine for the past 8+ years. Tara enjoys live performance of many kinds- music in particular. She is an avid photographer, enjoys reading, hiking, swimming-especially in the ocean, ZUMBA classes, and watching New England sports teams- especially the Red Sox and Patriots. Tara is recently married to Daemian Allen and they just relocated to the Northwest in October. Tara is the youngest in her immediate family- with two older brothers and an older sister. She has 8 nieces and nephews in Maine, Connecticut, and California. Her Mom and Dad live in the house Tara grew up in in Boylston, MA. She loves spending time with her family and can't wait until they come visit!!!

Daemian C. Allen was born in Portland, Maine. He attended Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA. He enjoys playing his saxophone and piano and is currently looking for opportunities to teach sax or piano. He is also looking for musicians to connect with in the Bellingham area with the hopes of re-creating the music life he had on the East coast. Daemian loves watching sports- especially New England teams! He also enjoys riding his bike and taking pictures. Daemian is enjoying getting to know Bellingham and the people here have been very welcoming! Thank you! Daemian is the oldest of three boys, his two brothers, their partners and his parents live in Maine. He hopes they will come visit soon.

Mary Louise O'Neil and her husband Tom are parents of adult offspring Kerry Maureen and Michael Thomas, and 4 yr. old grandparents to Thomas. Mary Louise calls parenting/grandparenting the best experiencing of her life. While raising her children she volunteered in PTSO's, served as a Pop Warner team mom, started a Brownie troop, helped with school reading programs and volunteered with a Chamber of Commerce. She loves sewing and baking, reading and walking, and hopes to start a breast cancer survivor group here at FCCB and hopes to work on service to homeless people with others. She sees that FCCB growth has huge opportunity gathering in more young people with families and magnetizing youth. Her religious affiliation since infancy had been Catholic until

she began to look elsewhere for nurture and found FCCB! She works full-time at Macy's here in Bellingham.

Larissa Rieke works in customer Service Health Care. She enjoys knitting, painting, reading, playing video games, playing cello, playing cards and games, crocheting, singing and creating bulletin boards. She also enjoys cooking.

She has lived in Wisconsin, Alabama, Tennessee and Washington. Larissa is interested in continuing her education in nursing. Her community service includes fundraising activities for Junior Achievement. She is interested in the church nursery and the worship committee.

Nathan Reike is married to Larissa and he works as a cashier at a convenience store. His interests include reading, watching TV, playing video games, hanging out with friends and family, seeing good movies and meeting new people. He has lived in Eau Claire, Roberts, and Sauk City, Wisconsin and in Bellingham.

Nathan's father retired from the ministry in June 2010 and Nathan organized a retirement party for him. As a pastor's kid he has done a lot of church-run community outreach. He likes to serve on church boards. He enjoys working with all ages in coordinating groups to accomplish a task. He and his wife, Larissa, both come to us from Blaine UCC (Congregational).

Drumming Circle

Our Drumming Circle continues to be a rousing, spirit-filled, contemplative time together.

Please join us to experience the ancient ritual of drumming again on Thursday evening, January 13 at 7 pm.

You don't need any experience, you don't even need a drum. You just need the curiosity, and the courage to try!

We meet the second Thursday of each month.

If you are interested please contact Tara at tara@fccb.net or call 734-3720.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SERVE ON A CHURCH BOARD?

The good news is that our Boards are 91% complete for next year. Thanks to all those who responded by saying "yes" when a member of the nominating committee contacted you.

At this point, we need only 9 more people to complete our Boards for next year. If you are interested in filling one of the following spots, please contact Etta Kirk on the Nominating Committee (733-6745). This is what we need:

Adult Ministries - 2 more people

Stewardship - 3 more people

Personnel Committee - one more person

Diaconate - 2 more people

Trustees - one more person

**BIBLE STUDY– WINTER-SPRING 2011:
THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE– THE BIG STORY**

You are invited to join Neal Nicolay for Bible Study that focuses on the “big story” of the Bible- the one story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. For most of us the Bible has been presented in bits and pieces- a story here, a parable there. However, the Bible has “a unity like that of a great drama”. We will be using a study guide, “The Unfolding Drama of the Bible”, by Bernhard W. Anderson. Dr. Anderson was a Professor of Old Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary and a President of the Society of Biblical Literature. The book, now in its 4th edition, is a classic. Participants will be asked to purchase the book (\$12).

Two classes are offered: **Wednesday, 1-3 pm, and Thursday, 7-9 pm. Classes begin the 1st week in February.** Meetings will be once per week for ten weeks.

Sign up: **Please contact Neal by e-mail (clear.brook@comcast.net) by January 12,** so the books can be ordered in time for the class. Indicate which class you will attend.

CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

PENNIES FOR PEACE: The church school community is continuing to collect pennies for Pennies for Peace this year. We thank you for your support as with each penny we make a difference in the lives of school children in Pakistan and Afghanistan!

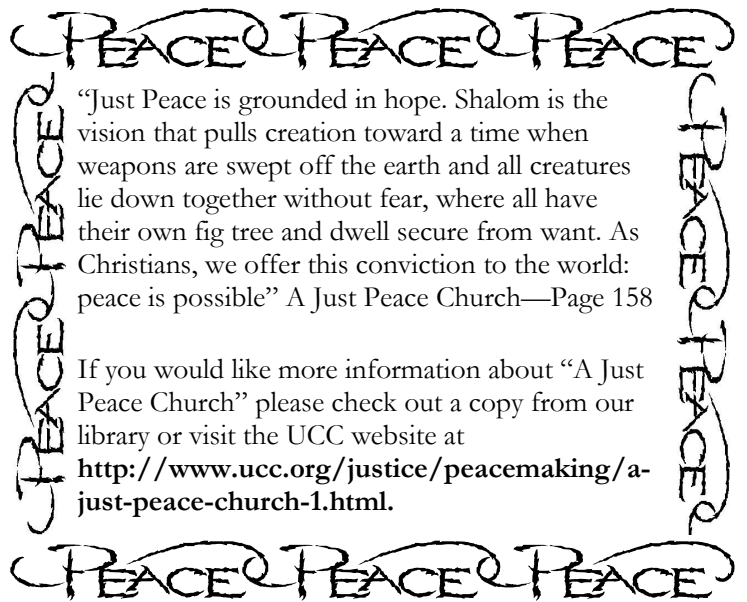
CHURCH SCHOOL GATHERS: On **Sunday, January 9,** the church school children will gather in the Social Hall before worship to dress as shepherds, angels and wise ones and prepare to collect our Epiphany gifts of food for the Bellingham Food Bank. Please bring donations of non perishable food. We will then gather in the Social Hall for a time of story and then return to join our families in the Sanctuary for communion.

CHRISTMAS PRESENCE: Once again this year we celebrated the beginning of Advent by sharing a meal, singing carols and building the most amazing gingerbread creations. A big **“THANK YOU”** to the Board of Christian Education for all their planning and hard work and to our middle school and high school youth and others for their assistance. The meal was delicious and a good time was had by all!

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT: On Sunday, December 19 the church school children and adults from our church community participated in a creative retelling of the Christmas story. Much gratitude to all the readers, singers and musicians, those who helped with costumes and all who attended and helped to create this wonderful worship service.

HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS: The Church Office will close at noon on **December 24 and 31st and be closed on December 27, 28 and January 3rd** for the holidays. **December 29 and 30** will be by appointment only.

STAFF SCHEDULES: Kathryn will be out of the office **December 24th to January 3rd.** Kent



“Just Peace is grounded in hope. Shalom is the vision that pulls creation toward a time when weapons are swept off the earth and all creatures lie down together without fear, where all have their own fig tree and dwell secure from want. As Christians, we offer this conviction to the world: peace is possible” A Just Peace Church—Page 158

If you would like more information about “A Just Peace Church” please check out a copy from our library or visit the UCC website at <http://www.ucc.org/justice/peacemaking/a-just-peace-church-1.html>.

VOLUNTEER’S NEEDED FOR WHATCOM HOSPICE

Hospice is seeking top-quality, caring volunteers to provide assistance such as respite sitting, light chores, transportation, comfort, and friendship to those facing life-threatening illness. There are also other volunteer opportunities that do not provide direct patient care, like deliveries, yard work, office help, knitting, or sewing. If you are interested you are invited to attend an informational meeting **Thursday, January 13 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm** at the Hospice Administration Building, Lower Level, 2800 Douglas Ave. Bellingham. At this meeting the training programs will be explained. If you have any questions please call the Hospice Volunteer Coordinator Dianne Gillespie at 788-6892. There is also information about this on the Mission and Justice bulletin board in the Narthex.

YOUTH NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

January 2nd: We will be having a *Ring In the New Year* gathering, a time to honor the year before, set goals for the year to come, and assemble a time capsule for ourselves a year from now.

January 9th: We are starting a monthly discussion series called “Faith Explorations” for talking about our faith journeys and the various faiths of our county, country, and world. We will also specifically explore what the UCC is all about.

January 14th: In lieu of having Youth Group on Sunday, we will go Cosmic Bowling on **Friday evening, January 12.**

January 23rd: Bring a friend to join us for Game Night in the FCCB basement, including ping-pong, foosball, and air hockey!

January 30th: We will gather in the Youth Room for a Movie Night with fresh-made movie theatre-style popcorn.

BOARD REPORTS! To all Board Chairs: if you haven’t turned in your board report please do so as soon as possible! Thank you!

HEALING PRAYER: On the first Sunday of each month, we hold a healing prayer service in the Chapel directly after the worship service. You are welcome to enter this time of quiet and music to pray silently or to write a prayer. A pastor will be available to pray with you and, if you wish, offer an anointing with oil. The next Healing Service will be **January 2.**

AROUND THE CHURCH

EPIPHANY FOOD DONATIONS: January 9 is Epiphany Sunday. Epiphany celebrates the visit of the Wise Ones' who came bearing gifts for the infant Jesus. Our own younger Wise Ones, Angels and Shepherds will collect gifts for the Bellingham Food Bank from the congregation during worship. So, come with donations to support our local food bank!

EPIPHANY SUNDAY LABYRINTH WALK: Please join us our next facilitated Labyrinth Walk in the Sanctuary on **January 6 from 6:30 to 8:00 pm.** We will begin with a short worship service followed by walking the labyrinth. Our theme will be "Leading the Way".

BOOK CLUB: All who enjoy reading are invited to join the Daytime Book Club which meets the first Tuesday of each month at **9:30 am** (Sept. – May) in the Fireplace Room for fellowship and refreshments, followed by a discussion of the book for the month. The next meeting will be **Tuesday, January 4** when the book topic will be **Border Songs** by Jim Lynch. Please plan to join the group and pick up a list of current book selections for the year in the office book club mailbox.

BOARDS MEET January 10
CHURCH COUNCIL MEETS January 19.

AROUND THE COMMUNITY

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY IN WHATCOM COUNTY will break ground on an Apostle's Build project this spring. Local churches will be working together to fund and build a home for a low-income family. If you are interested in helping with this project, or if you if you would like to learn more, please contact Emily Wagnitz-Tracy at emily_wagnitz@hotmail.com, or 360.380.0473.

INTERFAITH COALITION'S ANNUAL MEETING marks 30 years of service; please plan to attend. You're invited to join friends of Interfaith Coalition in honoring 30 years of collaborative service on behalf of local people in need at the coalition's annual meeting on **Tuesday, January 25 at 7 pm.** This year, 2011, marks three decades since Interfaith Coalition of Whatcom County was created from a founding group of 29 congregations to address needs in our community. Today, Interfaith Coalition comprises 44 congregations, plus St. Joseph Medical Center. Please plan to attend the meeting and bring a friend with you to hear first-hand accounts of how the coalition's programs are making a difference in the lives of some of our most vulnerable neighbors. The meeting begins at 7 pm at the First Congregational Church, 2401 Cornwall Ave., in Bellingham. Following the meeting, enjoy refreshments and fellowship.

**WE ARE CHRIST'S HANDS:
STEWARDSHIP UPDATE**

Thanks to the generosity of our church members and friends, we have collected a total of 219 pledges for \$472,483 so far for 2011. Thank you to all who have pledged to support FCCB's programs, mission and outreach so that together, we can be Christ's hands to each other and to our community at large.

If you'd still like to pledge your support for next year, you may return your pledge card to the office or in the offering plate during an upcoming worship service. If you need a new pledge card, please contact the church office at 734-3720 or office@fccb.net.

2010 PLEDGE UPDATES: If you need an update on your 2010 Pledge, contact our accountant, Denise Hoffman, ext. 4, or email: accountant@fccb.net. Remember to give your pledge and giving number.

ALL BOARDS & COMMITTEES: All 2010 expenditures need to be submitted to Denise at accountant@fccb.net ASAP!

FULL CIRCLE SCHEDULE

Deadline:	Mailing Date:
January 19	January 26

UPCOMING WORSHIP SERVICES

December 26

Intergenerational Service, 10:00 am

This is a child-friendly service as we worship together in community. We will sing songs and tell stories in a relaxed and worshipful way. No church school today. Nursery care for those under three years will be available.

January 2

Welcome Home Service, 10:00 am

Our college youth and young adults who are home for the holidays will be sharing reflections, special music and leading the worship service.

January 9

Epiphany Service, 10 a.m.

Epiphany celebrates the visit of the Wise Ones' who came bearing gifts for the infant Jesus. Our own younger Wise Ones, Angels and Shepherds will collect gifts for the Bellingham Food Bank from the congregation during worship. So, come with donations to support our local food bank!

Budget News...We're nearly there!

As we move through this waiting time of Advent, we are also looking forward to a new and exciting year. We have been encouraged to dream extravagantly. We would love to have the problem of deciding how to allocate money from the dream budget. At this moment we are very close to achieving our basic budget goal. At this writing we have received 217 pledges totaling \$472,483. With our other budget income we have a shortage of just under \$11,000.

At our budget up-date meeting we asked all to help us with some priority decisions. We need your input on priorities for dispersing amounts we might gather beyond the basic budget.

Just think how we could make use of a van to transport youth or our members who no longer drive. What if we could double our giving to local mission?

With a minister of music, our outreach to all to whom music speaks would grow. Please take a look at the 'wish list' and help us determine which things are most important to help us accomplish our missions at this time.

We also welcome your thoughts about how to make cuts if we do not reach our basic budget

You can e-mail or call us directly: Barb Storms, stormyandbarb@comcast.net, 384-0093; or Heather Shepherd, hcshepherd@comcast.net, 920-6417. You can also leave us a note with Kathryn in the Church Office or you can talk to us before or after church. We truly do want to hear from you. Let us keep dreaming and praying for the work God is doing among us.

In Faith, Heather Shepherd and Barb Storms

DIAPER MINISTRY UPDATE

Thank you, thank you to Larry Green for building new storage shelves for the diaper ministry! We are now set up in our new space in the basement near the E Street entrance and things are very well-organized. Great repurposing of the old ping pong tables, Larry!

In the last month, we participated in the Multi-Faith Alternative Holiday Market and also benefitted from diaper drives at Kids Central Preschool, the BTC parenting program, and The Muljat Group Realtors. We continue to collect diapers at regular donation sites around town and have been delighted to receive both diaper and monetary donations from members of the FCCB community. **These generous donations have gone straight to families in need this holiday season** - and we have heard from our partner agencies and directly from some families that they are even more appreciative than usual to have the burden of diaper need ameliorated.

In the new year, we will welcome new volunteers to the diaper ministry - both from inside and outside the FCCB community. Several people have stepped forward to help deliver and pick up diapers (thank you!) and others have offered to hold diaper drives at their offices, schools and other organizations. If you'd like to host a diaper drive somewhere in the community, we have all the materials you need to get one up & running. Please contact Stacey Nordtvedt (714-8387 or bellinghamdiaperbank@gmail.com) if you'd like to help our efforts. You may also check out our website: www.bellinghamdiaperbank.org for more information.

As the year comes to a close, we are feeling especially grateful for the opportunity to serve the most vulnerable in our community - babies and toddlers in need. Thank you all for the support you have given our ministry this year. We look forward to your continuing our service in 2011.

FROM OUR MODERATOR — JANET OTT

This winter, our congregation is participating in another all-church read: Tony Robinson's *Transforming Congregational Culture*. In this book, Tony describes a transformation that is taking place throughout mainline Protestantism - a shift from board-centered to ministry-centered congregations. Tony provides an analysis of how and why this shift is occurring and offers guidelines for how individual churches can become more dynamic and centered around their faith.

You may be wondering: **Hasn't First Congregational Church experienced enough change in the past several years? Why are we reading and talking about transforming our congregational culture now?** There are several reasons why we're having this conversation now:

The process that Tony describes - moving from a board-centered to a ministry-centered culture - is one that has already begun on its own at FCCB. New ministries such as the Green Team and the Diaper Ministry have joined more established ministries such as Women at the Well and the Jesus Seminar, Men's Breakfast and the Prayer Shawl Ministry. Reading and discussing Tony's book as a congregation will help us make this transition more intentionally.

A ministry-centered culture will allow more people to become involved in the life and work of FCCB. Many of you proposed ideas for new ministries at our July congregational meeting, demonstrating a hunger for the kinds of opportunities a ministry-centered congregation would offer. Within a ministry-centered culture, members of our congregation will be able to follow God's call and their own passions to begin and sustain ministries.

The board-centered model is showing signs of strain within our congregation. For the past several years, the Nominating Committee has

struggled to fill our boards to their constitutionally-mandated levels. Serving the church by engaging in administration (the work of many boards) is not something that everyone in our congregation feels called to do.

You may also be wondering: **If FCCB moves to a ministry-centered culture, what will happen to our boards? How will the work of the church get done? If I do feel called to serve on a board, will there be a place for me in a ministry-centered congregation?**

There will always be administrative work to do at FCCB. This will not change as we shift more intentionally to a ministry-centered culture. The *way* in which administrative work gets done will likely be different, however, and this is something we will explore as a congregation.

Tony also makes the point that each church needs to answer the question: Why do we exist? What is our specific purpose? What work is God calling us to do?

At the February, 2011 Leadership retreat we will be attempting to address these questions. The congregation will have opportunities, starting in January, to answer these questions, both in discussion groups and on a vision board in the social hall.

Reading this book will inform these discussions.

This book is an easy, enjoyable read that will be a great stimulus for juicy, deep discussions.

Books will be on sale through early January on Sundays in the Narthex. Price is \$17 payable by cash or check.

If you have any questions, email Janet Ott at coach@janetott.com or call 758-7247.

Happy Holidays
from the Staff!



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Date: January 2010

CHURCH CALENDAR

December 26

December 27
Office Closed

December 28
Office Closed

December 29
By Appointment

December 30
By Appointment

December 31
Half Day

January 1, 2011

January 2
10:00 AM *Worship*
11:00 AM *Healing Service*
6:30 PM *High School & Middle School YG*

January 3
Office Closed

January 4
9:30 AM *Book Club*
7:00 PM *Pilgrim Circle*

January 5

4:00 PM *Exercise Group*
5:00 PM *Prayer Shawl*
7:00 PM *Stephen Ministers*

January 6

6:30 PM *Labyrinth Walk*
7:00 PM *Jesus Seminar 2*

January 7

10:00 AM *In Stitches*
4:00 PM *Exercise Group*

January 9

10:00AM *High School CS*
10:00 AM *Worship/Church School*
11:00 AM *Blood Pressure Clinic*
11:15 AM *Inquirers Class*
6:30 PM *High School & Middle School YG*

January 10

9:00 AM *Shalom Circle*
4:00 PM *Exercise Group*
7:00 PM *Board Meetings*

January 11

7:00 PM *Lettered Streets*
Potluck — Social Hall