



January 2010

SPIRIT IN THE PARK

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MORGAN PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

ON HIDING ONE'S LIGHT UNDER A BASKET

...OR...

ON LETTING IT SHINE UNTIL IT

ILLUMINES THE WORLD

Submitted by Kerm Krueger

We are a friendly congregation. We welcome everyone who comes into our building. Friendliness is not just a word of our mouths, it is the way of our life as a people of God. So why, some wonder, do we need to go through the long process to become a Reconciling Congregation? Isn't it just asking for trouble? The short answer is Jesus once said,

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to God, your Creator, in heaven." (Matthew 5:15-16 NRSV, inclusive language added.)

A longer answer begins: It's true, we could rely on word of mouth to let the world know it is welcome here on Longwood. And about as many people will find us as have in the past half-century. Becoming a Reconciling Congregation, however, is akin to letting our light shine, especially to a very significant portion of God's children and our neighbors who historically have been, and presently are, abused and rejected by organized religion. To add the name, Reconciling Congregation, to our own name, Morgan Park Church, and to our denominational name, United Methodist, is to say to ourselves and our denomination as well as the whole world,

- "We love and welcome any and all of God's children.
- Never mind whether you are: rich or poor; happy or sad; abled or limited; healthy or broken; gay or straight; young or old; famous or unknown; Christian or of any / no faith; good or bad; conservative or liberal; of expected or unexpected gender identity; of African, Asian, European, Native American, or hodge-podge ancestry; or...

- You are welcome here. You are safe here. God's love is practiced here without qualification or limitation. We are a Reconciling Congregation!" *

So let us not hide our light. Let us not live in the shadows but let us accept and share what God has given us. The process is long to help any still uncertain of the light to have the time and opportunity to test out God's light entrusted to us. It is long so that those who are already willing to share God's light entrusted to us, can hone the skills of sharing our faith. It is long so that all will know this is not a rash decision nor a snap judgment by a few but enforced on all, but that it is something carefully considered and proudly lived.

There will always be some who will choose darkness over light, but Jesus calls us to be a proud people of the light. As a Reconciling Congregation we will welcome even those who choose darkness over light because we want all people to find God, and we believe anyone may find God within our company. That's why I hope by the fall of 2010, the world will know Morgan Park United Methodist Church is a Reconciling Congregation!

*The Christian rationale for reconciling and for reconciliation:


(1) For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you keep the Law, Christ will be of no benefit to you. You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus... the only thing that counts is faith working through love. ...

(2) ...the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away;

see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to God's own self through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to God's self, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making this appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

(1) Excerpts from Galatians 5.1-6 NRSV, inclusive language added

(2) 2 Corinthians 5.14-21 NRSV, inclusive language added



Martin Luther King Jr. Day

**Celebrating The
Life & Ministry
Of
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Sunday January 17, 2010
Special Music

Special Conference Offering
Human Relations Sunday

JANUARY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

JANUARY 3, 2010
Epiphany Sunday
Holy Communion
"Not Jerusalem but Bethlehem"
Isaiah 60:1-6 and Matthew 2:1-12

JANUARY 10, 2010
Youth Mission Trip Witness Sunday
Youth Pastor Micah Briggs will preach.

JANUARY 17, 2010
Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday
"A New Name"
Isaiah 62:1-5 and John 2:1-11

JANUARY 24, 2010
"Blessed Who Hear"
Nehemiah 8:1-10 and Luke 4:14-21

JANUARY 31, 2010
Lay Leader Lucious Moore will preach.

Thanks to the Drama Group
Submitted by Shirley Butler, Director

Many thanks to the Drama Group for generously donating their time and talent to present the Advent play, "The Long Awaited Messiah".

The Drama Group members for this production were: Philip Baker, Christopher Baker Micah Briggs, JeRome Brown, Lisa Butler, Sydney Cerrentano, Eugene Echols, Stanford Noble Carinne Parker, Edward Parker, Pierre Parker.

Special Thanks to soloist Teniya Farnandis, to Irene Harvey and Eileen Fay for costumes, and to Eugene Echols and Donna Gruenberg for props.

God bless you all for your gift of service to the church.

Editor's Note...Especial thanks to Shirley Butler for writing and directing the drama and for her dedication to this ministry.

"SOUPER BOWL" SUNDAY

When you hear the words "Super Bowl" you think of football. But for congregations across the United States thoughts turn to "Souper Bowl" to raise money in support of hunger ministries. In Morgan Park we support the Maple/Morgan Park Community Food Pantry. Each person attending church on Sunday, February 7th is asked to give at least \$1.00 to the "Souper Bowl" collection.

...SAVE THIS DATE...
February 27, 2010
INTERNATIONAL FAMILY NIGHT
Great Hall - 5:00 p.m.



The dictionary defines **GENEROUS** as “willing to share with others; unselfish; characterized by munificence”, abundant, ample; full of spirit or strength; rich; openhanded”. The MPUMC Outreach Team defines **GENEROUS** as “the people of Morgan Park United Methodist Church!”

Through your mission giving and your support of our money-raising projects MPUMC became a Rainbow Covenant church again in 2009. We supported the following:

BURGUNDY BAND-GLOBAL	\$600
Street Children Ministry – Cambodia Individual Volunteer – Jonathan McCurley Poverty Alleviation in Ghana	
RED BAND-UNITED STATES	\$200
Tree of Life Ministry – Pierre, South Dakota	
ORANGE BAND-UMCOR	\$400
Disaster Response International & National	
YELLOW BAND	\$200
Children’s Fund	
GREEN BAND-CONFERENCE	\$800
Grace Halfway House Marcy Newberry Association Methodist Youth Services Camping Scholarships Chua Church Construction – Bolivia	
BLUE BAND-DISTRICT	\$400
Humboldt Park UMC Homeless Program AIDSCARE, Inc Evergreen Care & Counseling Ministry	
INDIGO BAND-MISSIONARY PERSONNEL	\$800
Clara Mridula Biswas	
PURPLE BAND-LOCAL	\$2542
Maple/Morgan Park Community Food Pantry New Neighbors UNICEF CROP Walk Esmond School	

Shiva (Nepal Orphanage)
Other local Mission Projects
*(Individuals from our congregation also donate directly to these local projects.)

WHITE BAND – SISTER CONNECTION **\$100**
Community Partners for the Common Good

SPECIAL SUNDAYS **\$1105**
Native American
Human Relations Day
One Great Hour of Sharing
Student Day
Peace with Justice Sunday
World Communion Sunday
Golden Cross Sunday
United Voices for Children

GRAND TOTAL**\$7147!!!**

In addition to these cash donations many items were given to disaster relief, Childserv, Marcy Newberry Association, Esmond School and prison ministry. Through your generosity the lives of many, many people across the globe have been touched. As God has blessed you, you have shared your blessings with others. THANK YOU and may you continue to share God’s rich blessings with others.

Thank You!

THANK YOU – these words seem so simple when what we want to express is so-o-o huge. Your sharing during the Christmas season was so heart warming to experience. Your donations of gifts and money provided 25 children in the programs of ChildServ a wonderful Christmas. They helped enable Marcy Newberry give a gift to every person who participates in their programs (children and senior citizens alike). They provided many women in prison with a gift of toiletries, which let them know that they are not forgotten. They helped the Maple Morgan Park Community Food Pantry provide Christmas baskets for those in need, making their Christmas a more joyful one.

**Southern District
LEADERSHIP TRAINING EVENT**

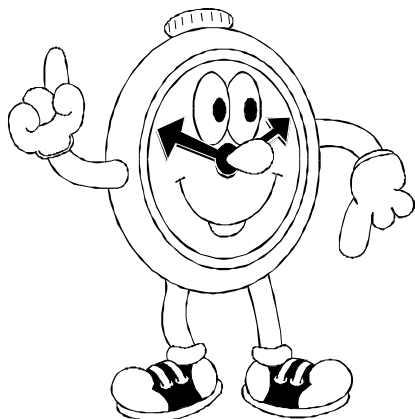
JANUARY 23, 2010
8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
18420 Burnham Avenue, Lansing, IL 60438

The training event will feature Administrative Committees in the morning and Program Committees in the afternoon. There will be a table from Cokesbury. The cost is \$6.00 per person for lunch.

Coordinator: Connie Williams
(312)346-9766 ext.132 or cwilliams@umcnic.org

...IT'S TIME FOR THE...



**WINTER
RUMMAGE SALE**

**Friday & Saturday
January 29 & 30
Wesley Hall
9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

WE REALLY NEED YOUR HELP!

Submitted by Sue Delves

Anne Genter and Elaine Reynolds have taken on the responsibility for rummage sales. Please begin immediately to set aside whatever you can share. SO – as your household wardrobes change seasons, please put aside sweaters, slacks, etc. and toys you no longer need. Then put them in boxes or bags tagged “Winter Rummage”. If you are discarding summer things, it saves valuable sorting time if you pack them in separate containers marked “Summer Rummage”. Then bring it all to church.

Rummage sales, like the Village Fair and the Community Service Awards Banquet, are substantial items in the church budget, and need the cooperation of the congregation -- both as Givers and as Workers.

It all benefits people who need them, whether they are homeless or the working poor or just thrifty neighbors and church members.

When the sale is over, we share what's left with PADS, a neighborhood St. Vincent DePaul group, Neat Repeats and other support agencies.

All-church events are always a time of great fun and fellowship. Please see Anne or Elaine and let them know how and when you can help. “Many hands make light work.”

KIDS ACROSS AMERICA CAMPS

Submitted by Micah Briggs

January 17th Youth Pastor Micah will host a video viewing and informational session on Kids Across America Camps! Kids Across America Camps is an extraordinary inner city Christian sports camp that utilizes the dynamics of contemporary youth culture, sports, and the love of Jesus Christ to give youth and adult youth leaders a phenomenal experience beyond measure.

It offers parents and youth a glimpse of the combination of arts, athletics, high adventure ropes/obstacle courses, character development and music while most importantly imparting foundational principles of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I never knew Christians could have this much FUN!!!!

The viewing and Q&A period will not last longer than 45 minutes. There will be refreshments provided.

You Are Invited!

**Celebrating Kwanzaa
The New Year
Bring-A-Friend Sunday**

Sunday, January 10, 2010

**Everyone is invited to join us &
bring a friend!**

**Let's Fellowship...Share Food
Have Fun Together!**

As the year ends, we look back with pride, forward with hope, and join hands to celebrate all we can be together.

Please bring a dish for our potluck luncheon.

Let's Celebrate!

"Prayers for the New Year"

*"This is the day
that the Lord has
made; let us rejoice
and be glad in it."*



Submitted By
"We Are the Branches"
The Prayer Ministry

*The spirit of the Lord God...has sent me to bring
good news...to proclaim the year of the Lord's
favor. Isaiah 61:1-2*

God, a new year brings a sense of freshness, of possibilities for the future, and of discoveries yet to be made. I look forward to stepping into the days ahead, knowing that you will guide me into the good purposes you have planned for my life. I ask you for an extra measure of courage, strength, optimism, and faith to meet every challenge along the way.

*For with you is the fountain of life; in your light
we see light. Psalm 36:9*

God, you have blessed me with yet another year during which to grow. You have also blessed me with the opportunity to realize the potential you have placed within my life. Thank you for each of the past years, for in them you have taught me more and more how to embrace truth and nurture love. I can't count the number of times I've returned to your wellspring of wisdom to gain insight and understanding for my life. Thank you for your guidance. Please, lead me into today with an open heart and mind, ready to learn still more. Amen.

VESSA

Submitted by Laura Parker

*Here is some important information that I learned
about recently. It is important information that may
prove to be a life-saver for someone we know.*

The Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act ("VESSA") provides an employee who is a victim of domestic or sexual violence, or who has a family or household member

who is a victim of domestic or sexual violence, with up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave per any twelve (12) month period to address issues arising from domestic or sexual violence.

VESSA provides that an employee working for an employer with at least 15, but not more than 49 employees, shall be entitled to a total of 8 workweeks of leave during any 12-month period. Employees working for an employer with at least 50 employees are entitled to a total of 12 workweeks of leave during any 12-month period. The total number of workweeks to which an employee is entitled shall not decrease during the relevant 12-month period.

AN EMPLOYEE MAY TAKE VESSA LEAVE TO:

1. Seek medical attention for, or recovery from, physical or psychological injuries caused by domestic or sexual violence to the employee or employee's family or household member;
2. Obtain victim services for the employee or employee's family or household member;
3. Obtain psychological or other counseling for the employee or the employee's family or household member;
4. Participate in safety planning, including temporary or permanent relocation or other actions to increase the safety of the victim from future domestic or sexual violence; or
5. Seek legal assistance to ensure the health and safety of the victim, including participating in court proceedings related to the violence.

Taken from the Illinois Department of Labor:

<http://www.state.il.us/agency/idol/forms/PDFS/vessaout.pdf>

Church and Society to Hear Laura Leon Speak on Health Care Reform

Submitted by Eileen Fay, Church & Society Chair

**Friday, January 17, 2010
6:30 p.m. – Parlor**

The Church & Society Committee will welcome Laura Leon from the Campaign for Better Health Care (CBHC) to speak to our community on Health Care Reform legislation.

The Campaign for Better Health Care according to their vision statement, "...envisions a society where quality health care is both affordable and accessible to every person in Illinois and the United States and where health care needs of all people are met."

Ms. Laura Leon is the Director of Faith Initiatives for CBHC's Chicago office. www.cbhconline.org

We will hold this event on Friday, January 15th at 6:30 p.m. in the parlor with soup and salad prior to Ms. Leon's speech. We would like to invite our community neighbors to this thought provoking evening.

“Laughter with Lucious”

Submitted by Lucious Moore

“The proper way for a man to pray,”
Said Deacon Lemuel Keyes,
“And the only proper attitude
Is down upon his knees.”

“No, I should say the way to pray,”
Said Reverend Doctor Wise,
“Is standing straight with outstretched arms
And rapt and unturned eyes.”

“Oh, no, no, no,” said Elder Slow,
“Such a posture is too proud.
A man should pray with eyes fast-closed
And head contritely bowed.”

“It seems to me his hands should be
Austerely clasped in front
With both thumbs pointing toward the ground,”
Said Reverend Doctor Blunt.

“Last year I fell in Hidgekin’s well
headfirst,” said Cyrus Brown,
“With both my heels a-stickin’ up
And my head a pointin’ down.”

“I made a prayer right then and there.
Best prayer I ever said,
Body posin’ up side down
And standing on my head.”

McCurley is opening his home for several gatherings throughout Advent to share what the Scripture teaches about Christmas and the love of God. He will also be busy at the local church, helping with the Christmas Eve service. On Christmas day, ARI will have a community dinner and Christmas celebration. This is open to all in the surrounding area and will be a time to share the Good News.

JANUARY WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

GREETERS

Jan. 3...Keil Morek and Owen Skelly

Jan. 10... Chante Waters and Dorothy Wiggins

Jan. 17... Susan McDonald and Wanda Williamson-Johnson

Jan. 24...Yves-Myr Desruisseaux and
Michel-Ange Desruisseaux

Jan. 31...Tom & Ana Hall

ACOLYTES

Jan. 3...Sydney Cerrrentano and Carinne Parker

Jan. 10... Kaline Langley and Denise Parker

Jan. 17... Christopher Parker and Will Zopp

Jan. 24...Sydney Cerrrentano and Kaline Langley

January 31...Carinne Parker and Denise Parker

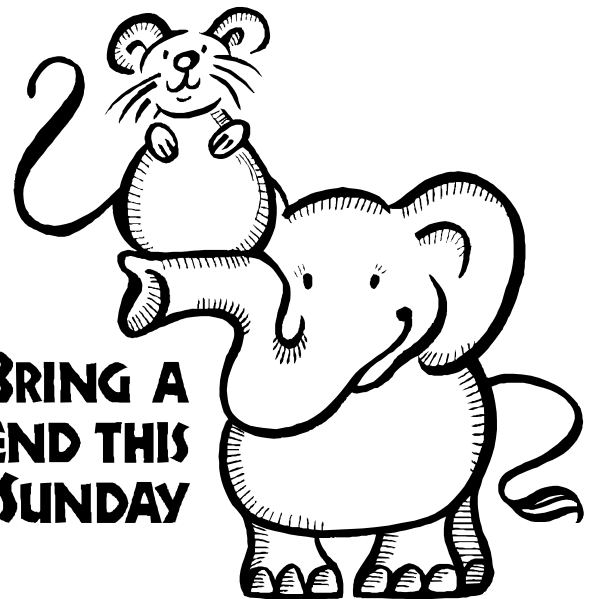
FROM “ADVANCING HOPE”

December 2009

Newly Commissioned Missionaries Prepare For Christmas

For many people, Christmas is a holiday observed with set customs. For three Global Ministries’ missionaries who were commissioned in October, Christmas will be a holiday to celebrate the birth of Christ by blending old customs in new surroundings.

...Jon McCurley is serving at the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) in northern Japan. He says of the season: “While Christmas is popular in Japan with many stores decorating, Christmas trees and lights aplenty, and Christmas music running from November through Christmas day everywhere you go, there seems to be a lot of misunderstanding about what Christmas is.” He learned from a friend that Christmas is a normal workday in Japan. Christmas Eve is observed as a night for a romantic date.



**BRING A
FRIEND THIS
SUNDAY**

Sunday, January 10th