

GLAD TIDINGS



THE NEWSLETTER OF CENTRAL ST. MATTHEW UCC

JUNE 2009

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Rev. 21: 5

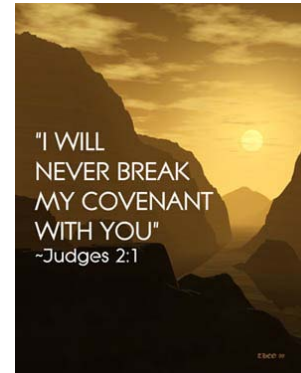
A great deal has happened since the last newsletter. We have held three congregational discussions as planned and the eight neighborhood gatherings met with great success. On the basis of these meetings and all of the other regular church meetings, events and worship services, I presented three proposals to the Transition Team on May 26th. Of the three, the one accepted has two key elements:

1. That we all operate under a New Covenant that will provide for unification at all levels, except;
2. Ownership of property will remain separate in the two congregations.

Why this proposal and not one calling for full, immediate unification or one calling for separation? As to separation, there is really no support for separation of the congregations. Though some may long for the old days, it is clear the great majority realizes that to go back is undesirable, unrealistic, and perhaps impossible.

Why not full and immediate unification? This is more difficult to explain but I hope with time the reasoning will make sense. The New Covenant, if adopted by the congregations, will call for immediate work to begin to unify. There will be a single set of by-laws, a single and simplified committee system, and a single "executive" committee to oversee the work of the church. There will be unified and shared management of the properties and of the church staff. There will be a unified financial system as well: One set of books, one system of accounting, and one committee to deal with the financial life of your new congregation. All of this and more will begin as soon as the New Covenant is adopted. These are major steps towards unification.

The lone exception is ownership of property, particularly the Central Congregational church, parsonage, and buildings on Bienville and the St. Matthew church buildings on Carrollton. The reason for this is that though there is strong support to be together,



there is also history and anxiety that says, "Let's keep the door open a little bit." The work to become truly one congregation still has a long way to go. There is nothing easy ahead. The path ahead is exciting and hope filled, but it will not be easy. To encourage all to join in the effort to become one, it is important to let all know that if something unforeseeable should happen, it is possible to return. Therefore, ownership of each church's property will not change under the life of the New Covenant.

In my heart and I know in the hearts of many others is the hope that once you begin to move forward as a united congregation God will carry you over and through any obstacle you may encounter. God will build in your hearts the trust and love for each other that will make you one in the truest sense. God will do this so that one day people will look up and say, "God has made us one Congregation. The old fear and mistrust is gone. We are a new creation. Thanks be to God."

Over the next few months you will be moving closer to each other. As you do so, I hope you keep these thoughts in mind: What you are attempting you are attempting with God. What you are attempting to do is not easy; it is in fact difficult and extremely rare in our society that insists that Black and White must be separated on Sundays. What you and God will accomplish will be utterly amazing. You will become a joy and a delight.

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight.

Isaiah 65: 17-18

A Proposed New Covenant

The existing Covenant expires on September 16, 2009. It could be continued until a new, stronger covenant is put in place hopefully no later than January 1, 2010. There is strong theological support for moving from the existing "old Covenant" to a "New Covenant." There is no biblical support for separation but there is strong support for a covenantal relationship. There is also strong UCC denominational support ("That They May All Be One") for a transition from our existing covenant to a New Covenant.

The New Covenant will formally unify the two congregations in all significant ways except for ownership of church property. The New Covenant will decrease complexity, add stability, and make the Central-St. Matthew, UCC a very marketable church in the "excellent minister seeking challenge" world. Key provisions would be:

- A clear statement that the St. Matthew church building is the home of a new congregation and that neither of the old congregations possesses or is entitled to a greater right to its use and enjoyment than the other. There is to be no guest and no host congregation. There is to be one congregation taking up residence in God's house.

- A Governing Council consisting of equal representation from both congregations. Perhaps the first Governing Council could come from the present Transition Team with the addition of the current presidents of the Central Governance Board and the St. Matthew Church Council.

- A single committee and governance system would be formed. This would greatly reduce the complexity of trying to operate under the old Covenant and would simplify operations. It would also reduce the drain and strain on people in both congregations. A fresh look at the current committee system to reduce the number and size of committees is necessary. *

- All finances would be unified. Income and expenses would be combined and the appropriate, unified committee or board would make decisions affecting the financial life of the Central-St. Matthew Congregation.

- Ownership of real property would remain in the separate congregations. Ownership of endowments would remain in the separate congregations. Central's claim to funds from the UCC for work on the Central Sanctuary would remain in tact. Retaining ownership in these important areas assures that some control is retained and that the door remains open to separate and return if that becomes the decision later on.

- Though each congregation retains ownership of its real property, an appropriate committee formed from both congregations will make decisions as to use, maintenance, and support of all property and facilities jointly. Decisions as to the use of endowments consistent with their terms will be made jointly. All gifts, bequests, and grants given after the New Covenant is adopted would be accepted in the name of the Central-St. Matthew Congregation.

- New By-laws will be drafted to reflect conditions under the New Covenant.

- It is expected that all the steps listed above will be taken as soon as possible after both congregations accept the New Covenant. Work would begin immediately to set the new direction of the church and to facilitate the beginning of the search process.

- A search committee will be formed to seek a pastor to serve Central-St. Matthew United Church of Christ.

- The New Covenant will be for a term of seven (7) years. The purpose of this period of time is to assure each congregation that it will retain ownership of its property for at least 7 years. A seven-year term would also assure a new pastor that she/he has ample time to work and grow with a united congregation under the New Covenant. At the end of the New Covenant, the two congregations will have been together for at least ten (10) years and should have sufficient experience under a new pastor to know where God is leading.

Creating a Just Peace, Environmental Justice: Part 1 By Gil Wilson

Remember that Just Peace is an overall framework that includes, among other items, “Open and Affirming” and “Environmental Justice.”

Most environmentalists gave up on the Christian faith to provide a framework for environmentalism. Lots of energy was focused on having “dominion” over the earth which meant an unfettered call to rape, pillage, and loot everything that the earth provided.

We were further hampered by the philosophy that removed God from nature. You could only see God as a dim being in creation. Our church fought against pagans that worshipped everything in nature.

However, there are some other strong roots for environmentalism that should not be ignored. They come from the book *Inspirations for Sustaining Life on Earth* by Calvin Dewitt and center around what he calls “the earth keeping principle.”

In Genesis 2:15 we encounter the Hebrew word *shamar* meaning “to keep.” We were meant to keep the garden in a very special way. We find the word *shamar* used again in Numbers 6:24 with “The Lord bless you and *shamar* you.” It is a dynamic verb that means to keep you in all your basic integrity, not simply “to keep” (*natsar*) as in injecting a bug with alcohol to preserve it.

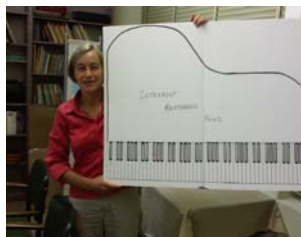
So how do we keep the world working with a basic integrity? Let’s start with air. There is the issue of global warming; carbon dioxide is altering our weather patterns. We need to promote legislation to stop global warming. The devil is, of course, in the details; but the principle of *shamar* demands action from us. This is particularly important in our state of Louisiana where competing interests of oil and gas and the devastation caused by Katrina highlight our problem of approach.

We could list many other environmental items that fall under this principle but this is only a beginning. Support Just Peace! It’s not just a slogan; but a way to define ourselves and what we believe as the Church of Jesus Christ.



Buy a Key! Support our Instruments!

We are blessed to have two fine musical instruments that are well used every week to raise wonderful sounds of praise. However, like all instruments, they occasionally need work to keep them in top condition. The piano in the Carrollton sanctuary is in need of a complete overhaul to address sticking keys, worn felts, and other maintenance activities that are typical for an instrument of its age and use. Also, we recently were able to repair (rather than replace) the blower on the organ that had been rattling and wheezing for some time. These expenses, totaling \$2,750, are outside of normal budgeted levels, so we are holding a “buy a key” event in support of our fine instruments.



For \$31.25 (per key) you can get your name, or the name of a family member or friend, on one of the 88 keys of our piano. If you want, you can buy a chord or even a whole octave!

Please make your checks out to St. Matthew (which will hold the funds till needed). If you want a particular key, see Carol Etter after church. If you are willing for us to assign your key, just put your check in the offering plate or mail it in and we'll take care of the details.

The choir will be putting on additional events throughout the year to put funds into an “Instrument Maintenance Fund” as a reserve for future instrument repair needs at both campuses.

Thank you,
Beth, the Choir, Governance Board and Council

Uptown Shepherd's Center



The Uptown Shepherd's Center located at 921 South Carrollton Avenue is offering computer classes for senior citizens on Wednesday and Thursday mornings from 10 a.m. to Noon. Seniors can have the opportunity to use the computer with a volunteer tutor assisting them. They can set up an email address, email a friend or relative, search the web for information, play computer games, check the latest news, etc. For information please call (504) 314-0300.

Thanks so much,

Sylvia Warren
Director

Ambassador Andrew Young to preach June 14th

On Sunday, June 14, 2009, Central-St. Matthew is honored to host Ambassador Andrew Young as our guest preacher. Ambassador Young is a native New Orleanian and a former member of Central Congregational UCC. Many Central members have memories of Ambassador Young's time growing up in the city (just ask Dr. Davis about Ambassador Young and his father and mother, and you'll get a ton of stories!).

Ambassador Young is a United Church of Christ minister, former Mayor of Atlanta, three term Congressman from Georgia, and former Ambassador to the United Nations under President Carter. He is a well known diplomat and civil rights leader who worked with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He is Chairman and Board member of numerous institutions, including the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Non-Violence.



Ambassador Young is in New Orleans to speak at and participate in several activities associated with the 60th Anniversary of the closing of Gilbert Academy, being sponsored by the Gilbert Academy's Alumni Association. Ambassador Young is an alumnus of Gilbert Academy (class of '47), which was an African American college preparatory school connected with New Orleans University, a predecessor school of Dillard University. Central has several other connections with Gilbert Alumni, including Myrtle Winbush who arranged for Ambassador Young to speak and Robert Perry's aunt, Elise Cain. Gilbert Academy was located on St. Charles Avenue where De La Salle High School now stands. Ambassador Young also attended Dillard University before graduating from Howard University and then earning his Bachelor of Divinity degree from Hartford Seminary in Connecticut.

This would be a great opportunity for each of us to invite friends and neighbors to join us for worship on that day!

Recognition Sundays

In the last 12 months have you or any member of your family graduated from elementary school? Junior high? High school? College? Graduate school? Has anyone retired, been promoted or received an award of some kind? Your church family would love to share this wonderful event with you. Nothing to do except provide some information to our Worship Committee and it will do the rest.



SOCIAL JUSTICE: "I WAS HUNGRY..." "LOVE ONE ANOTHER..."

If we think about the themes of social justice in Gil Wilson's article in the May newsletter, and love in Rev. Moore's sermon on May 17, we might view social justice as an expression of God's love for the least of these. As God's servants in New Orleans, we can make God's love bear tangible fruit by our continued donations to Belle Reve on the third Sunday of each month. More than that, we can extend our love to our region by supporting our local food bank, Second Harvest Food Bank.



How can you manifest your support? That depends on your time constraints. You can volunteer at the Second Harvest warehouse on Sams Ave. off Jefferson Hwy. You can pick up empty boxes at the warehouse and return those we fill. Most importantly, you can bring to church needed items following the Food Calendar below:

Belle Reve - Every third Sunday Food Bank

June	Peanut butter
July	Canned meat
August	Canned vegetables
September	Rice and pasta
October	Dried and canned beans
November	Canned fruit, including pumpkin and dried fruit
December	Cereals (oatmeal, Cheerios, raisin bran and other whole grain, low sugar cereals)

Beginning in June, look for a Second Harvest box in the lobby.

Questions? Ellen Pecoul (866-8874, epecoul@yahoo.com) or Janice Markland (834-2609, jmarkland16@hotmail.com)

HELLO FROM PORTLAND!

Rev. Ralph Beets sends his greetings from his new home, a retirement center, in Portland, TX, which is near his daughter, Linda, and son-in-law, Jim.

Ralph Beets
410 Northshore Blvd., Apt. 706
Portland, TX 78374
361-643-4739

Support the Gulf Coast Civic Works Act From UCC Justice And Witness Ministries

Nearly 4 years after the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, residents of the Gulf Coast continue to struggle to recover and rebuild their lives. They live in growing fear that they will be left behind, as promises of recovery assistance continue to go unmet. Levees remain vulnerable; tens of thousands of people have not been able to return to their homes. Schools, hospitals and transportation infrastructure remain damaged, and residents continue to struggle for access to affordable housing and living wage jobs.



The current economic crisis is only adding to the challenges faced by Gulf Coast residents, who are now enduring the impact of budget cuts on vital services and recovery efforts.

The Gulf Coast Civic Works Campaign is organizing to bring 400 advocates to Washington, DC at the end of May. This diverse national partnership of community, environmental, faith-based, human rights and student organizations is working to build support for this legislation which will address the needs for rebuilding infrastructure, revitalizing the regional economy and restoring the coastal environment to mitigate the effects of future storms.

Join the advocacy effort to support Gulf Coast Recovery by urging your representative to cosponsor the Gulf Coast Civic Works Act [HR 2269].

This bipartisan bill would create 100,000 green living wage jobs and training opportunities for Gulf Coast residents and displaced people to rebuild critical infrastructure, restore natural flood protection and increase energy efficiency. It funds “green” resident-led recovery to help address the overwhelming unmet needs of communities devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The Gulf Coast Civic Works Act would provide training opportunities for local and displaced workers on projects in the community. By utilizing emerging green building technologies communities can begin reinvesting in infrastructure and restoring the coastal environment. It enables the federal government to partner directly with local leaders and nonprofit organizations to address remaining recovery challenges.

Prayer List

Prayer List for June newsletter:

Shirley Adams, Billie, Adria Buchanan and her children, Marc Carter, the Carter-Reese family, Melvin Chaix, Al and Ethel Creel, family of Calvin Ferran, Michael Green, Warren J. Green, Jesse Jackson, Frankie Levister, Gertrude Miller, Bridget Naegle, Sylvia McCreary Parks, Donald and Andree Reese, Jeannine Richardson, Verna Sileci, family of George Zerr,

Recent Memorials:

For: Melba Weiland
From: Evelyn Pittman

For: James Tilton
From: Evelyn Pittman
Shirley Carambat



Flowers for June:

June 07 In memory of Elva and William Stykes and Thaddeus Winbush from Myrtle Winbush
June 14 In honor of the members of Central-St. Matthew
June 21 In honor of the members of Central-St. Matthew
June 28 In honor of the birthday of Albert Adams from Shirley Adams

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Church Secretary:
Wed. & Fri. 8 am to 12 pm,
Thurs. 8 am to 4 pm

Pastor:
Call anytime, (802) 299-6152
DSmoore66@yahoo.com
Office hours Tues to Thur.
10am to 1 pm

We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.centralstmatthewucc.org

Newsletter Committee

Do you like to write, edit, do layouts, or would you like to learn how? We are forming a Newsletter Committee. If you are interested please contact Sloan Letman (773) 704-4936 or sloanletman@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

Sunday	June 21 st	Men's Day
Sunday	June 28 th	Recognition Sunday
Saturday	July 18 th	Bowling (1:00pm to 5:00pm) See Vicki Weeks
Monday - Friday	August 3 rd - 7 th	Vacation Bible School See Noel Braning & Nancy Marks

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