

# Glad Tidings



September 2008

The Newsletter of Central-St. Matthew UCC

## So What Time Is It Now?



It has been said by someone far wiser than I, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted.” Just as there are weather seasons, there are spiritual seasons as well.

For me the fall is a time of new beginnings. Though the leaves may be dying, in the spiritual life the fall is a time of planting new ideas and reflecting on what we need to hold on to and what we need to let go of. Our annual church Rally Day begins this process. A creative worship service is planned for Rally Day on Sunday, Sept. 21st. The choir will be coming back. Hurray! Helen Green will deliver a children’s sermon. The scripture text will be on I Corinthians 13, and plans include Sloan Letman sharing his thoughts on faith, Norman Robinson speaking on hope, and Gil Wilson reflecting on love – each in six minute presentations. A fellowship of food and games is planned after the service so that we can be fed in spirit and body. Everyone is being asked to bring a favorite board game or a deck of cards to play with some other friends and members of the church. The Christian Education Committee is preparing a spaghetti lunch with salad. Please bring a favorite dessert to share.

With the beginning of the new Sunday School year, we will have two opportunities for adult education. Each Sunday after church, beginning on October 19<sup>th</sup>, there will be a time for adults to gather and look at important issues in today’s faith journey. I did a lot of research over the summer and came upon a very insightful curriculum. Each week we will look at a 20 minute video presentation and follow it with discussion. If you want, you can bring a bag lunch, but we will be out no later than 50 minutes after we start. The video series is called “Living the Questions” if you want to “Google” it.

In addition to Sundays after church, we are going to have a Bible study led by Rev. Tom Lilly every Thursday evening beginning after Rally Day. The Bible study will focus on great themes in the Bible and will run for four weeks. If there is a desire for him to continue it after the first four weeks, then Tom is willing to do it. The Bible study will be meeting at 7:00pm in the library.

We will also be reinstating a children’s message each Sunday beginning with Rally Day. This will follow the anthem. The message will be given by a variety of people, both lay and ordained.

So what time is it? My hope is that this fall will be a time of openness to new ideas and a time of committing ourselves to education as we venture on our personal and communal faith journeys.

Hope to see you soon,

Rev. Fred

## A Message from Your Moderators



This is the fourth in our series of messages to you our members and friends. The transition team has had light duty this past month. We are still receiving and reviewing resumes for the position of “intentional interim.” Our next meeting will involve working on possible interview questions and logistics of the whole hiring process. By then, we should have the guidelines for salary and benefits from the South Central Conference office, so we can also start working on how we will divvy up that expense.

Our primary mission this month (August), though, was to get you to participate in this first workshop. We were anxious for you to experience what the leadership experienced at our retreat in June. We were anxious for you to explore this process with us. We are anxious to support and build on the wisdom of the whole group. We wanted everyone’s voice heard. We wanted you to connect with each other like never before. We also hope you will share your experience with those who were unable to attend. Thank you to all of you who were able to spend that time with us. We promise to work on logistics, such as child care for our next one.

At this time, due to changes in the church schedule, we are in the process of finding the best date for the 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop. We will let you know that time through bulletin announcements and a postcard. The main focus for the 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop will be to expand upon and refine the “Practical Vision” of what we want to see the Central St. Matthew partnership evolve toward during the next 3 years. We will build on the vision statements that were generated in the 1<sup>st</sup> workshop. Please make every effort to attend. These are the opportunities where you can share your thoughts and feelings about our future.

*“As children of God, a Resurrected people, we are all called to listen to the guide of our existence - that is the Holy Spirit.”*

Have you read the *Rabbi’s Gift* yet? It was a special insert in your bulletin. Hold on to it, read it, and think about *what* it means to you, because we will most likely use it at the beginning of workshop session #2.

In the spirit of unity,

Dale and Joan

## GETTING TO KNOW YOUR LEADERS ON THE TRANSITION TEAM

A temporary working group with responsibility for guiding St. Matthew and Central through a transitional time has been appointed by the St. Matthew Council and the Central Governance Board. As we introduce each member of this committee, we hope you will feel comfortable talking and sharing your thoughts with them. In future newsletters we will introduce other members of the committee. Please feel free to talk with any of them: Jim Bonds, John Pecoul, Robert Perry, John Etter, Dale Bonds, Joan Fairbank, Bythelda Davis, Noel Braning, Michele D'Aquin, Andrea Gibson, Sloan Letman and Julie Darby.

### Andrea Gibson and Michele D'Aquin

#### About Andrea Gibson

A native of New Orleans, Andrea spent her formative years here in the public schools, but found herself in St. Peter, Minnesota, for college at Gustavus Adolphus, a small residential liberal arts college. Her passion is helping others - especially children, seeing to it that they become all they can be. This is evidenced by over 20 years in the New Orleans Public Schools as a teacher, and the fact that she volunteers, until recently, at Hume Child Development Center almost everyday in many capacities. Andrea also heads up the "Bread Ministry," picking up day old bread, other baked goods, and sometimes fruits and vegetables from Whole Foods Market most Thursday mornings and distributes to everyone in the neighborhood around Hume Center, as well as, to all of us. Andrea currently serves as Treasurer for Central and sings in the choir, which shows that her talents are many.

#### About Michele D'Aquin

I grew up in Metairie, the oldest of 7 children in a Catholic family. After third grade, I started to attend public school because the family could no longer afford the tuition. That's when I learned that plenty of people believed in Jesus but were not Catholic! That's also when I learned that one of my best friends was Jewish, and that Jews had different ideas than I had about Jesus! I always believed Jesus knew me and loved me.

My professional training is in accounting,

as a bookkeeper, staff accountant and auditor. I spent plenty of time working for large, for-profit companies, counting other people's money! Since returning from the hurricane, I have been working at Belle Reve as a program coordinator, helping this non-profit agency to find money. I find it very rewarding to work in the non-profit arena.

Vicki and I joined St. Matthew UCC in 2004. Pastor Fred had invited us to visit. I had never been invited by a pastor to visit a church, and knew very little about UCC. What impressed me most was the welcoming spirit of the congregation, and the open and affirming philosophy. We felt at home right away. We evacuated from New Orleans with 8 of Belle Reve's residents and returned home in December 2005. When we got back to church we saw many wonderful changes and assumed that Central Congregational and St. Matthew had formed one church body.

It is my sincere hope that we will all always worship together and someday become one body. I am humbled to be part of the transition team and pray that God grant us all discernment during our partnership. Here in New Orleans, where many church closures are being mandated, with no input from the congregations, we at Central/St. Matthew are fortunate. We all have an extraordinary opportunity to work together to plan how we will stay together. There is so much good work that we can accomplish together.



Michele D'Aquin

*"It is my sincere hope that we will all always worship together and someday become one body."*



Andrea Gibson

## Bible Study

Meet the leader for Bible study:



Rev. Tom Lilly moved to New Orleans in 2005 from Charleston, West Virginia. He is an ordained minister in the New Orleans Association of the UCC. He currently serves as a full-time staff chaplain with Serenity Hospice Services. A Board-Certified Chaplain with the Association of Professional Chaplains, Tom has served in a variety of clinical settings during the last fifteen years. He is a graduate of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, where he studied as a Walker-Kennedy-Patterson Fellow in New Testament Greek. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Marshall University where he also earned a minor in vocal music.

When asked during his most recent tenure as a local nursing home chaplain to provide interfaith Bible study, Tom happened upon a series of studies called "The Thoughtful Christian," a program about which Tom has become very enthusiastic. Tom finds that this series promotes the study of scripture in a manner that is open and sensitive to a variety of perspectives, and he has experienced first-hand how it has united people from across the spectrum of faith communities. It is from these studies that he will be leading participants from Central St. Matthew in a four-part study called "The Great Themes of the Bible."

So if you're looking for a helpful and memorable framework that might help you in your journey of Biblical studies, please come join us.....

## Living the Questions

People know that at its core, Christianity has something good to offer humanity. At the same time, many have a sense that they are alone in being a "thinking" Christian and that "salvaging" Christianity is a hopeless task. What is needed is a safe environment where people have permission to ask the questions they've always wanted to ask but have been afraid to voice for fear of being thought a heretic.

*Living the Questions* is a source of curriculum and media for both seekers and "church alumni/ae" convinced that Christianity still has relevance in the 21st Century. Providing a variety of flexible resources, *Living the Questions* can help people explore the future of Christianity and what a meaningful faith can look like in today's world. Come join us for the first session after the worship service on Sunday, October 19<sup>th</sup>.

## Retired???

### A message from Pastor Wil

At the age of 13 I began working my first job, setting pins in the bowling alley where neither I nor anyone from my community could go bowling. After more than 53 years of always having a “job,” I looked forward to the day when I could declare, “I’m retired!” Now that that day has finally arrived, I’m not sure what being retired means, but I have a pretty good idea of what it means for me. For one thing, I do not have to think about what’s on my calendar when I wake up. In fact, I can lounge around for as long as I choose, have that extra cup of coffee casually, and listen to NPR without interruption. What a life!

Now all of that sounds good, but the fact remains that God called me to a life of mission and ministry, and it is not possible to just sit and wait on the direct deposit. Moreover, I can play just so much golf on a “fixed income.” So what have I really been up to since Hulen and I ended my pastorate with Central/St Matthew?

After leaving New Orleans, we moved in with our youngest son, Rodney, while I contemplated my next move. I had thought I wanted to enter into “Intentional Interim Ministry” and interviewed with churches in Florida and New York. But it seemed that those doors closed and, of course, I was getting a little anxious, because for the first time since the age of 13, I had nowhere to go and nothing to do. While struggling with this, I awakened one morning and God gave me clarity concerning what I should do. RETIRE! So I put all things in motion towards that end and was relieved to learn that we can actually live comfortably on our combined incomes. Now it was time to secure housing. As we began to search for the “right” place, God blessed us with a beautiful senior retirement community within walking distance of my mother’s home and everything else we need. Now what to do?

Well, our friend Millard Fuller, co-founder of Habitat for Humanity and the Fuller Center for Housing, tracked me down and said, “Hey Wil, I heard from a mutual friend of ours that you have moved to San Antonio. Are you looking for something to do?” My initial thought was, “Heck no!” But when Millard Fuller calls, experience has taught me that something exciting is going on, and so I responded by saying cautiously, “Sure Millard, what do you have in mind?”

“Why don’t you and Hulen start a Fuller Center for Housing Ministry in San Antonio? The two of you know how to do it, and I’m sure you will find this to be an exciting ministry.” So Hulen and I discussed Millard’s proposition and decided to begin a Fuller Center for Housing Affiliate in San Antonio. So far, we’ve met twice with members of Bethany UCC and another church and have formed an organizing board of directors. Those participating have even named the affiliate “The Fuller Center for Housing of Greater San Antonio, Inc.” Our next task is to complete the application to become an official affiliate with the international organization using the “Greater Blessing Program” as our focus. It helps older adults with major and minor repairs on their homes at no profit and no interest. They will pay only for the cost of materials. Their blessing will be to make a contribution, instead of a monthly payment, to the program until the cost of repair is paid back in full. Volunteers will provide most of the labor, which will keep the cost of repair at a minimum. We will be using the same principles that made Habitat for Humanity so successful. We are really excited about this opportunity, which takes us, in some ways, full circle. After deciding to go into full-time Christian ministry in 1982, our very first mission was with Habitat for Humanity with Millard and Linda Fuller. So, here we go again.

Retired? You tell me. All I know is that the Holy Spirit is still nudging me, and now Hulen and I can be in partnership the way we were at the beginning of our decision to leave everything and follow Christ all the way. Furthermore, after observing and listening to many of you, I am beginning to understand what it means to remain in the service of the Lord. Moreover, the peace that surpasses all understanding, has taken root in my heart and soul. My health, both mental and physical has improved greatly. Although I do not know what God has planned for the future, for now, I shall bask in the joy of the Lord’s rest and peace.

And now, may the Lord of heaven and earth, grant each of you an opportunity to experience being at total peace as He has with me.

In Christ’s service,  
Pastor Wil



## CONFERENCE MINISTER'S MUSINGS

Rev. Douglas Anders

### "Be a Spiritual Movement"



I read this from the United Church News blog on the UCC website. Anthony Robinson, a UCC Minister, has a review out titled "Evangelical versus Liberal, the Clash of Christian Cultures in the Pacific Northwest." Robinson writes of his assumption that liberal or progressive churches would be flourishing in the liberal, progressive culture of the Pacific Northwest. He assumed evangelical churches would be having a rougher go of it in the Pacific Northwest. But what he found turned his assumptions upside down.

He found thriving, vital evangelical churches; and liberal, progressive churches not always thriving. What he noticed is that growing, evangelical churches feel like they are part of a movement.

Liberal, progressive churches feel like institutions. While there is nothing wrong with institutions, any institution that is to thrive needs to have the qualities and feel of a movement.

He writes that spiritual movements:

1. ...are on the move and headed somewhere
2. ...have a clear and compelling sense of purpose
3. ...are about change and making a difference in the lives of people

On the opposite side, when a church doesn't possess the qualities of a spiritual movement, "you end up with institutions that feel settled, sometimes stuck and whose main hope seems that they will simply survive."

The question that remains is whether mainline churches can be a movement instead of a religious institution. Robinson writes: "There was a time when liberal Christianity and theology did have a movement feel, when it was catching a wave rather than drawing in one. Can it happen again?"

Diana Butler Bass, author of Christianity for the Rest of Us, argues it can happen. But only if churches remember they are in the business of changing lives, not simply providing services to those in need or providing comfort and care to their members. The bottom line: be a spiritual movement, not a social service institution.

Basic Issues to Consider:

1. Does your church feel like a "movement" or an "institution"?
2. Is your church's ministry more for those outside your doors or inside your doors?
3. Is your church's ministry more about changing lives or maintaining an institution?
4. Does your church talk about and embrace change or work hard to keep things as they are (works for us)?
5. Does your church feel like it is "on the move" or more like "it is stuck" where it is?

6. Does your church talk about change in people (spiritual transformation, growth in discipleship, spiritual maturity) or spend little time talking about these issues?
7. Does your church think about how it can minister to people in new ways, even if it means being the church in new, un-chartered ways or does it do ministry according to the rules and the way we have always done ministry?
8. Is mission in your church more about ministering to people in life-changing and Christ-changing ways or is it more about giving money away?

All of these questions may be simplistic but they give us food for thought.

The basic premise is that growing churches (no matter liberal-moderate-conservative) are more about Spiritual Movement: ministry that is moving, life changing, making a difference, and spiritually transforming people  
**RATHER THAN**

Institutional Ministry: ministry that is "stuck", about "us", that maintains things the way they are and doesn't see the need of spiritual transformation.

Is the mission of your church to be a "spiritual movement"?

It doesn't happen overnight and takes time and conversation but churches that can be self-reflective, be in conversation about its mission and purpose and seek to find new ways to be the church can move towards becoming a spiritual movement.

### PRAYER LIST

Shirley Adams, Marion Berger, Dominick Black, Louis Carambat, Melvin Chaix, the Cordes family, Bythelda Davis, Marlene Duplissey, Nell Gremillion, Becky Hyatt, Phyllis Maloney, Mia Montagnino, Verna Sileci, Fay Wallace, our troops.

### ALTAR FLOWERS DURING SEPTEMBER

September 07 Birthday remembrance for Hazel Many from Noel Braning

September 14 Birthday remembrance for Rev. Roland Pantermuehl from  
Melvin Chaix

September 21 Lloyd H. Smith, III from Helen Smith

September 28 Birthday remembrance for Dorothy K. Kolman from Nancy  
Marks and Ellen Bentz

### RECENT MEMORIALS

For: Birthday remembrance for Jimmy Louis Adams, Sr.  
From: Shirley Adams



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***We're on the Web!***

See us at:  
<http://www.centralstmatthewucc.com/>

**Coming Soon**

September 21st  
Rally Day Sunday

Beginning September 25th  
Great Themes of the Bible  
Thursday Evenings at 7:00pm

Beginning October 19  
Living the Questions  
Sundays after Service

October 5<sup>th</sup>  
Neighbors in Need Special Mission Offering

October 12<sup>th</sup>  
Bake Sale to Benefit CUE Seminaries

Sunday, October 26<sup>th</sup>  
Potluck and Pumpkin Carving

Sunday, November 16<sup>th</sup>  
Silent Auction and Potluck  
Please begin working now on art and craft items  
that you plan to donate.

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