



# THE FIRST WORD

News from the First United Methodist Church  
of South Bend, Indiana

In the heart of the city since 1831

January 26, 2011

Issue #427

## NO SUCH THING

John Wesley wrote *“There is no such thing as a solitary Christian.”*

That puzzled me for some time, but let me share with you what I have come up with.

Community is necessary to be fully Christian.

Even the most eremitic of monks and nuns have a community to respond to, to be corrected by, to sorrow and rejoice with. People who know them, people with whom they may share confessions, people to keep them in touch with God. Even the Cistercians, the most silent and introspective, live in community. If they keep a small hermitage, they still come back to community at least once a week, interacting, confessing, eating, touching base – and then back out to solitary prayer and introspection.

We live in a consumer age, where we may treat Church like a big box store. Don't have exactly what you want? Check out another! Switch and shop, compare prices/programs... and hopefully settle in, at least for a little bit. But feelings get hurt, boredom sets in, or inertia – missing one Sunday, then two, then...

How can a church that does not know me, have a history with, have any expectations that I will be around a few Sundays from now – how can that church become a family for me, create a support network for me and my family, call me into accountability, with how I am using my gifts and graces?

It's safer to be a visitor, to wander, to be anonymous... no accountability, no one to take care of me when I need it, and no expectation that I would (oh, shudder) ever have to care for someone else.

No consistent preaching, where one week flows into the next, in topic, in tenor, in the church calendar. No consistent Christian Education, for me or my family. No friends with deep roots, who have known me and mine for years, and care for one another as only long-term relationships can create. No opportunities for service in Christ's name – because no one can depend on me.

The more I think of what community means to me – the miracles I have seen because of the simple love and care our church has for its people, the giving I can do through my church – both in service and in money, when I know it goes straight to where it's been promised – the more I cherish the rich gift of community.

I have come to agree with Father John. There is no such thing as a solitary Christian. So, if you are reading this, and have not worshipped in community for a while – come be a Christian with us!

Mary L. Hubbard

## Worship Schedule

**Worship, Chapel**  
9:00 a.m.

**Sunday School**  
10:00 a.m.

**Worship, Sanctuary**  
11:00 a.m.

### **Church Office Hours**

**Monday - Thursday**

**7:00 a.m. - Noon**

**12:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

**Friday: 7:00 a.m. - Noon**

**Phone: (574) 233-9463**

**Fax: (574) 233-9478**

### **First Staff**

Mary L. Hubbard

Senior Pastor

Marsha Dollar

Administrative Assistant

Wishart Bell

Director of Music

Betty Woodland

Organist

Lou Anne Wilson

Financial Manager

Diana Green

Coord. of Children's Ministries

David Frey

Coordinator of Youth Ministries

Ben Noell

Building Manager

John Jung-Zimmerman

Upper Room Director

**HAVE YOU REMEMBERED  
FIRST CHURCH IN YOUR  
WILL?**

## **GOODBYE DIANA**



Diana Green has submitted her resignation as the Coordinator of Children's Ministries, effective January 30, 2011. She has done an outstanding job with the children and she will be sorely missed.

### **WHY GIVE?**

Before taking the offering, a pastor said, "I would like to remind you of four good reasons for giving.

1. What you are about to give is tax deductible.
2. You cannot take it with you.
3. The Bible says it (love of money) is the root of all evil.
4. If our church doesn't pay its electricity bill, we will be singing in the dark next Sunday night."

But there are far more positive reasons for giving than those four. The Bible does not teach us that the primary reason for generous giving is to balance the church budget. The Bible tells us that we give our money because of our relationship with Jesus Christ. We give as an act of worship. We give as a signal that not only have we said yes to Christ at our baptism; we are continuing to say yes to Christ by seeking His kingdom first.

That is primarily what the offering is all about, not balancing the budget but giving to further God's work in response to the spiritual work God has done in our lives.

[Herb Miller]



## DISCERNING GOD'S DIRECTION IN A NEW YEAR

There is nothing really magical about the flip of the calendar, but it does seem that moving from one year into the next affords us a good opportunity to reflect on the past and to anticipate the future. In particular, I find that I am in several meetings in early January where various groups are seeking to discern God's direction in 2011. For example, yesterday I was involved in a day-long retreat with the Directors of our Conference Center staff, along with David V.W. Owen, who is Executive Assistant to the Bishop. While our group realizes that we do not make all of the decisions for the Annual Conference, we are in many ways the "stewards" of the decisions made at Annual Conference and are called to help lead and move the conference forward in the ways it has voted. We spent our time looking at the Jim Collins' book Good to Great and asking ourselves the tough questions that Collins raises. In particular, Collins says that "good is the enemy of great" – when we become satisfied and comfortable with just being a good church, a good person, or a good mission. We are called to continue growing toward excellence or greatness. Other groups are having similar meetings, planning sessions, and retreats to move toward the future. As I reflect upon all of this, I want to offer these thoughts about discerning God's will for this New Year:

1. God's will is usually best discovered in Christian community, not in solo experiences of prayer. Certainly we each need our own devotional time, and every individual Christian can be guided by God's Holy Spirit. But in our Wesleyan tradition, we are reminded that God most often works through "conferencing" with other Christians. When we seek to discern God's will by ourselves, without working together in a Christian community, we can fall into the temptation of believing that what we want is also what God's wants for us. Having to share that discernment with others opens us to the possibility of having those thoughts challenged and expanded.

2. God's will often involves challenge more than comfort. When I struggle to find God's will on a particular issue, I often find that the "comfortable" or the "familiar" is very attractive, but it is not often where I will find God. We live in a world where "comfort" and "preference" most often guide people's decisions. That is understandable, but it is seldom the way to God's will for our lives. As I reflect on my life and ministry, of course I have enjoyed those times when I have been comfortable, but I have grown the most during those times which were challenging. Bishop Reuben Job once put that to me in an even more profound way. We were in the same Covenant Group in the Council of Bishops where I had shared about a decision I needed to make. He said, "Whenever you face a choice of two paths, choose the one where you see the shadow of the Cross."

3. God's presence is intimately and completely joined with God's will. Or to put it another way, when we are obedient to God's will we also discover God's presence to lead us. When we do not sense God's presence, it may be due to our lack of obedience. If we are not being faithful to God's will as we know it now, how in the world will we possibly discover God's new will for us?

To be more blunt: before we look ahead to the New Year and prepare to seek and follow God's will, we may need to look back to the last year and confess those places where we knew God's will but were not obedient. Perhaps only then will God choose to reveal God's will for the New Year.

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This whole business of discerning God's will for the New Year is so much larger than simply making the usual kinds of New Year's resolutions that so often fail. As one writer has said, "Many people look forward to the new year for a new start on old habits." Lest we fall into that trap, we need to take seriously how we discern God's will.

I hope you have a Happy New Year that is filled with God's presence and follows God's direction.

## PRAYER LIST

**Following is a prayer list. Please remember to include these people in your regular prayers:**

Chris Dooley (Dolly Slack's Grandson) - Deployed to Afghanistan	
Elijah Jones - In military service	Liz Reinke - Health concerns
Michael Pershell - In military service	Peggy Soderberg - Health concerns
Stephen Gramza - In military service	Al & Maxine Jones - Health concerns
Jonathan Mayers - In military service	Marilyn Prue - Health concerns
Jeremy Martin - Special needs	Joan Martin - Health concerns
Barbara Dobson - Health concerns	Carol Goodhew - Health concerns
Ron Florey Health concerns	Bruce Slack - Health concerns
Wayne Jackson - Health concerns	David Case - Health concerns
Mary Lou Gordon - Health concerns	Margaret Wickizer - Health concerns
Joe Harnish - Health concerns	Don Perry (Betty Haines Brother) - Health concerns
Bill Easterbrook (David Easterbrook's father) - Health concerns	Dylan Mayers - Health & Family concerns

**Also remember to pray for our members in long-term care, assisted living, and independent living:**

Martha Abernethy	Betty Byers	Mary Jo Beemer	Mary Etta Rees
Ruth Garen	Virginia O'Hair	Rich Daniels	JoAnn Ballard
Clem Gramza	Clarence Dickey	Jo Perkey	Betty Barnes
Hugh & Lois Warren	Marian Wilson	Jim Borden	Thair Best
Freda Mossman	Melvena Stenger	Betty Fisk	Al & Maxine Jones
Hannah Messersmith	Margaret Wickizer		

**Additionally pray for:**

Our Bishop Mike	Our Church	Our Pastor Mary
Our District Superintendent, Cindy	Our Church Staff	

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### **A Very, Very Belated Thank You**

I am sorry it took so long to thank you for your support and concern over the months or so in 2010. Your prayers, visits, calls, cards, and flowers meant so much to me. Also to the United Methodist Knitters Group, who made the lovely shawl, I thank you and appreciate it. It was lovely work. I'm still trying to get back on my feet, but you all have helped so far.

God Bless!

Sincerely,

Barb Dobson

## A WORK IN PROGRESS

When you made your New Year's resolutions recently, did you think about how you might develop your Christian life this year? May we suggest that you consider becoming a member of a Covenant Group. Members of these groups are Christian disciples who are a "work in progress".

Here's what we do: We meet weekly for an hour only. Time is spent in sharing what is going on in our lives and our church. When difficulties occur for one of our group, we discuss how each of us can help. In addition we talk about how we can further serve God as His disciples. We also read scriptures and share our understanding of the passages as well as how each relates to our lives. From time to time we discuss our role as Christians in local, national and world situations.

We would like to invite you, our church members and church family, to attend some of the sessions. The daytime group meets on Monday at 11:30 a.m. in the Covenant Bible Room on the second floor. Pauline Medhurst is the convener for the group. Sue and Stew Church are the leaders for the Monday evening group, which meets at 7:30 p.m. Please call these leaders if you have questions. Pauline can be reached at (574) 277-2726 and Sue or Stew can be reached at (574) 247-0959.

As you acquaint yourself with the two groups, you may wish to join one of them. We would also like to develop other groups that may meet at more convenient times. This is a wonderful way to grow and share the love of God.

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**" The welcoming Committee is in the planning stages for future activities. A Singspiration/Hymn Sing is being considered, but we need to pull together a mini-hymnal, would you please help us by each submitting a list of five favorite hymns? More is fine. They might be remembered from childhood and don't need to be in the hymnal currently (we will try to look them up). Also add a note if you might be willing to do a special hymn or instrumental, a group is good too, let's share our talents! Thanks!**

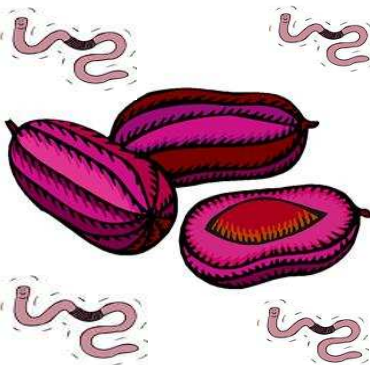
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## DESPERATION

Submitted by Winslow Phillips

Desperation often leads to things that don't minister life to us.

I once heard a story about a desert nomad who awoke in his tent one night feeling extremely hungry. He sat up starved, turned on the light, looked around his tent, and saw a bag of dates in the corner. He reached into the bag, took one out, and bit into it, only to discover there was a worm in it. He spit it out and took a second one, but he found another worm. He tried one more time and all he had in his mouth was a worm. Because his hunger was so intense, he pondered a moment on what he should do. He turned off the light, reached into the bag, and proceeded to eat all the dates.



**Have you ever felt that kind of desperation?**

## COMMITTEE TRAINING

Saturday, February 5, 2011 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon is our District-wide training for a number of committees. If you have not previously attended one of these, be sure to go – this is the only training you will be getting!

The training covers: Missions, Youth, Staff-Parish Relations, Trustees, and Finance. Each class will be led by an experienced person.

The Committee Training will be held at Mishawaka First United Methodist Church on Saturday, February 5, from 9:00 a.m. till 12:00 Noon.

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## LEADERSHIP RETREAT

**Saturday, February 12**

9:00 a.m. in our Parlor,  
our own District Superintendent Cindy Reynolds,  
will be leading us in a four-hour retreat –  
to talk about the future of our church.

All are welcome, and  
each of us has a vested interest!  
Come and dream, come and plan;  
together we build the Realm of Heaven!

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## UPCOMING YOUTH EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

<b>Sunday, February 6</b>	<b>Saturday, February 12</b>	<b>Sunday, February 13</b>	<b>Sunday, February 20</b>	<b>Sunday, February 27</b>
6:00-11:30 p.m. Super Bowl Party & making cookies for the Soup kitchen	9:00-11:00 p.m. Bowling, Chippewa Bowl, Parents vs. Youth	<b>NO YOUTH GROUP</b>	Jeopardy Night	Guest Speaker

## IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL

by Carl R. Henkel

Submitted to our newsletter by Gene Stroes

One song has become extremely important and meaningful to me. It begins:

*When peace like a river attended my way,  
When Sorrows like sea billows roll -  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
It is well it is well with my soul.*

I didn't realize until reading an article in Cameroon that the hymn came about through immense heartache and pain and after a river of bitter tears. Horatio (Horace) Spafford, who enjoyed a happy and peaceful life until his world fell apart, wrote it in 1873.

Spafford, a sincere Christian and father of five, had been a successful Chicago Attorney. But then tragedy struck. Not once, but several times. First there was the sudden death of his only son. Soon after, his extensive real estate investments were wiped out in the great fire that destroyed most of Chicago.

Spafford then believed it was the Lord's will that he take his family to Europe, not only to lift their spirits, but also to share God's Word with others. Important business prevented him from leaving with his family, so he sent them ahead. He would join them as soon as he could.

Sadly, the ship carrying his loved ones, the *S.S. Ville du Harve*, went down in a storm. The vessel sank in 12 minutes. Among the 226 that drowned were Tanetta, Maggie, Annie, and Bessie Spafford, Horatio's four young and beautiful daughters. To lose one child is extremely painful, but to lose them all must be devastating.

As Spafford spent many lonely and tear-filled hours on the deck of the ship carrying him to Wales to join his grieving wife, and as he passed over the spot where his dearly loved daughters had died, he wrote the words of the now famous hymn. "When sorrows like sea billows roll...It is well, it is well with my soul."

How is it possible for one to suffer such a tragic loss, yet display such tremendous confidence? Only through a living faith in a living Savior. Spafford knew that because his children believed in their Savior, their souls had gone to heaven to be with Jesus. He knew they were safe in the arms of their loving heavenly Father.

Furthermore, he knew he would see them again. This did not take away the emptiness he felt in his loss. It did not take away the pain or erase the suffering. It did not dry the tears. But it did allow him to put his loss into a different perspective - it is well, it is well with my soul. Today, many people are comforted by this tender hymn. Isn't it amazing how God can take the immense and almost unbearable heartache of one and turn it into the comfort and peace of another?

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## **A GREETING FROM THE CELTIC MUSICIANS**



*May you never forget what is worth remembering,  
Or remember what is best forgotten.*

**Please join us for Worship in the Chapel Sundays at  
9:00 a.m. and hear the Celtic Musicians play.**

## **The People of The United Methodist Church**

- Help people in their community
- Accept you for who you are
- Offer a place to belong
- Care for and support each other
- Show respect for other religions
- Support people facing difficulty
- Welcome diverse opinions and beliefs
- Guide others to find deeper meaning

