



United Church of Christ

“A Global Ministry Church”



Bismarck, North Dakota

April, 2010

The Movable Holiday

I'm often asked: Why does the date of Easter change from year to year? Last year it occurred on April 11th, this year it's April 4th, next year it falls on April 24th. Some years it even occurs in March. Wouldn't it be easier if Easter fell on a fixed date every year, like Christmas?

The dating of Easter goes back to the year 325 when an ecumenical council met in Nicaea, in modern day Turkey. It was decided that Easter would be celebrated on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the coming of spring. Basing Easter on the lunar activity means that its date can vary by over a month on the calendar.

Adding to the perplexity is the fact that the Eastern Orthodox Church often celebrates Easter on a different Sunday than we do. This is because the first full moon of spring must be coordinated with different civil calendars. Our “Gregorian calendar” has been in widespread usage since 1582. The Orthodox Church, however, uses the “Julian calendar” which Julius Caesar introduced in 46 BC. The date on which we celebrate the resurrection of Christ, therefore, depends on the phases of the moon and which civil calendar is being used—confusion indeed!

While it would be easier if Easter fell on the same day every year, something would be lost in the process. In John's gospel, the Pharisee Nicodemus came to Jesus late one night and questioned him about the ways of God. Jesus said that the spirit of God is like the wind—we don't know where it comes from or where it goes to. In other words, there is a mysterious quality to God's work among us.

Easter is a moveable holiday whose date is determined by a combination of astronomers, historians and theologians. The fact that it is not a fixed date is a reminder of the free movement of God's spirit. God works among us at times and in ways that we can never fully comprehend, and that we can't begin to control.

Pastor Jim

News and Notes.....

Planning Process

Last fall, our church began a planning process to consider our commitments and opportunities in the areas of worshipping and praying, giving and sharing, learning and teaching, doing justice and serving, connecting and inviting, and imagining and creating. Jim and I have met with seven different groups to explore these ideas, and we appreciate the input of everyone who has contributed to the process.



We have found overall satisfaction with the activities and direction of the church. There is strong commitment to our message of welcome and to our outreach to others, particularly Charles Hall Youth Services and East Timor. In addition, several themes emerged quite clearly in our discussions – the desire for expanded opportunities for fellowship and education. There is a clear need for more ways for church members to connect with one another. The Christian Education Committee has developed a survey that is included in this newsletter. It invites you to share your interest in new opportunities in these areas – I strongly encourage you to complete the survey and return it to the church so that we may use the results to develop a more concrete plan for moving forward as a congregation.

As we continue the planning process, other ideas are being implemented immediately. There was interest in more lay participation in worship, and there is now a sign-up sheet for those who wish to read scripture during Sunday services. There was a desire for more information about the activities of the church, and Jim and Dawn will be incorporating “did you know...” articles in the monthly newsletter.

As always, please continue to contact Jim, Dawn or I with your thoughts and ideas as we continue the planning process for our church.

Respectfully submitted,
Dana Schaar, Moderator

Bible Study

Every Friday morning at 6:30 a.m., an Adult Bible Study meets in the church library. We pray, fellowship and study the scripture lessons to be used in worship the following Sunday. The hour is early, but there’s coffee, donuts and fine conversation—all are invited!



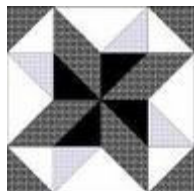
Women’s Fellowship Groups

There are two women’s fellowship groups in the church—Salem Circle and Mayflower Circle. Salem Circle meets the first Thursday of every month at 1:00 p.m. Their meetings include a devotional, program and desert. Mayflower Circle gears its meetings to working women, meeting over brown-bag lunches at noon on the second Tuesday of the month (except April when it meets the 1st Tuesday). Mayflower Circle is geared to projects that meet various kinds of needs in the church. All women are welcome to the circles, for more information contact Pastor Jim or Dawn.



Still Speaking Magazine

The United Church of Christ has discontinued publication of the *United Church News* in favor of a new periodical: *Still Speaking Magazine*. This oversized, full color magazine will include articles and promotional materials for the life of the church. Subscriptions for the quarterly publication can be available for \$29 before July 1 and \$39 after. It can be ordered on the website of the national church at: www.ucc.org/magazine.



Quilter Wanted

The Northern Plains Conference is making quilts using squares provided by conference churches. The hope is to have enough squares in by the end of April to complete another quilt by the time of the Conference Annual Meeting. If you'd like to make a square on behalf of our congregation, see Pastor Jim.



Readers Wanted

During our planning session discussions, it was suggested that we utilize lay readers during Sunday morning worship services to read our scripture lessons. A sign-up sheet has been placed on the secretary's desk for those who would like to participate.

Coming Events.....

Holy Week Services



On Thursday, April 1st there will be a Maundy Thursday Tenebrae (service of Shadows) at 7:30 pm. Led by the choir, this service will recount the final events of the life of Christ. The music for the service was given as a memorial for Pete Peterson. *Soup d'Jim* will be served from 6:00 to 7:00.

On Friday, April 2nd, there will be a Good Friday service at 7:30pm. This service will conclude the Lenten series *Bad Hair Days: Hair in the Bible*.

Easter Sunday Services

On Easter Sunday there will be three worship services. A 7:30 am worship service will be added to our usual 9:00 and 10:30 services. There will be no Sunday School on Easter Sunday.



Welcome

New Members

New Members will be received into the church on Easter Sunday. Those interested in joining should contact Pastor Jim.



Buffalo Supper

Our 5th annual Buffalo Supper will be held on Saturday, April 10th. Tickets and sign-up sheets for helpers are available today. Proceeds from the Buffalo Supper are used for our Building Fund. Two Seatings (1st) 4:30-6:15 pm, (2nd) 6:30-8:00 pm.

Silent Auction

Mayflower Circle is looking for items for its annual Silent Auction which will be held in conjunction with the Buffalo Supper on April 10th. They request that donated items have a value of at least \$20. Donations may be brought to the church at any time.



Sunday School Sleepover

On Friday, April 16th, there will be a sleepover at the church for kids in grades 4 through 6. More information will come out soon!

Rummage Sale

Mayflower Circle is having an **Early Bird Rummage Sale** on April 24th. They would like church members to start bringing items for this event to the church. *Please no clothing except for baby items birth to age 2 years. No exercise equipment.*



Conference Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Northern Plains Conference of the United Church of Christ will be held June 11-13 in Valley City. Those interested in representing our church as delegates should contact Pastor Jim.

Did You Know?

On a Saturday afternoon in August 1806, five students from Williams College in Massachusetts gathered in a field to discuss the spiritual needs of those living in Asian countries. When a thunderstorm arose, they took shelter on the side of a haystack and prayed. This gathering came to be called "the Haystack Prayer Meeting," which led to the formation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission—the first overseas mission agency in America. Today that movement continues on as Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ. Global Ministries currently works in cooperation with over 270 partner church in all corners of the globe.



