



No matter who  
you are...  
Or where you are  
on life's journey  
**You are welcome here!**

*A ministry in the  
United Church of Christ*

### Our Ministry Staff:

Rev. Bill Klossner, Pastor  
Margo C. Lazzarini,  
Organist and Choir Director

### Office Staff:

Peggy Kapinski, Manager

### Volunteers:

Susan Cheney  
Susann Luckenbach

### Elected Leadership:

Marsha Rutherford, Moderator  
Barbara Fleshman, Clerk  
Robert Naylor, Treasurer

### Office Hours:

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Worship during December will feature a variety of people lighting the Advent candles as we mark the weeks of our faith journey toward Bethlehem. Special carols and other expressions of faith will be part of the service. Join us as we light the candles of **Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love** in this season.

Members are reminded of the **Congregational Meeting to be held after worship on Sunday, December 11**. At that time the 2012 Operating Budget will be recommended and nominees presented to serve on the newly formed Leadership Team. Further information on both items is found on other pages in this issue.

Our sanctuary will once again resound with the joy-filled music of **Marcille Wallis and Friends** during the 12th Annual **"Christmas With the Celts"**

concert of music, dancing and rejoicing. This concert series, now presenting ten shows in eight days throughout Florida was born right here in our building by Marcille Wallis and Greg McGrath, now our very own church members. Tickets (\$10 per person) are available in the church office, before or after worship, or online at [www.marcillewallis.com](http://www.marcillewallis.com).

**Christmas Eve** falls on Saturday this year, and so you are encouraged to bring your family and invite your friends and neighbors to share in the wonder of the Nativity Story and the beauty of God's love for all. We will sing carols, enjoy beautiful music, hear that old, familiar story, light candles, close with "Silent Night" and perhaps have a surprise or two at the service, **which will begin at 7:30**.

Check the stockings you hung by the chimney with care on Christmas morning, have a cup of coffee, and then make sure you get yourself to **worship at 10:30** on this special day as we unite our joy-filled hearts to celebrate God's Greatest Love in worship. *What, you have family or friends visiting and you always open gifts on Christmas morning so you can't come to church?* Bring everybody in your household and let everyone understand if it weren't for God's gift to us, we wouldn't have anything to celebrate!

Looking ahead to January, please note that *we will ring in the new year with worship at 10:30 on January 1st*, and will then offer **two services beginning on January 8**.

## **COME CASUAL TO WORSHIP ON CHRISTMAS MORNING**

Don't let the usual Christmas morning activities stop you from celebrating the reason for the season this year. In fact, as far as we care, you are welcome to come to church just as you are—even if you don't have time to get out of your pajamas!

We will worship in a relaxed spirit, filled with carols and maybe even some surprises!



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR End-of-Year Giving

### *Need a Tax Break?*

*1 - Consider contributing appreciated stocks or mutual fund shares that you've owned for more than one year. Doing so helps the church budget and boosts the savings on your tax return. Your charitable-contribution deduction is the fair-market value of the securities on the date of the gift, not the amount you paid for the asset. So you never have to pay tax on the profit!*

*2 - Required to take an annual minimum withdrawal from your IRA? This year you can direct funds from your IRA distribution to the church. This may also make you eligible for other income-related tax breaks. Talk to your financial advisor for details.*

*And thanks for you consideration.*

**Your Finance Committee**



### WE STILL NEED YOUR HELP...

After only a few weeks we have had more than 80 of you share your email addresses with the office. If you have not yet shared yours with us, **we need your email address** so we might continually improve our communication.

You will find a card that looks like this in the chair pockets in worship—just drop them in the offering plate.

This information will also be helpful for those who travel during parts of the year to keep us connected. We appreciate your participation in this effort.

## GIFT CARD TREE FOR STUDENTS

*The Christmas lights, the sound of jingle bells, the singing of carols. To many these get us into the holiday spirit, but for many teenagers, these are a reminder of all of the things they do not have.*



At Charlotte High School there is a group of students whose families have been hit hardest by the economic recession. **These students are considered homeless.** Some are sleeping in the park, or staying with friends, or even living in their cars. They do not however, have a place that they can call home. For the second year, our congregation is trying to make their season a little brighter.

What started as a holiday outreach program through the Bad Girls Bible Study, has grown and helped so many. The giving tree will be filled with gift cards to **Wal-Mart, McDonalds, Old Navy, and Target.** Please place the gift cards on the small tree in the sanctuary between November 27 - December 11, and they will be delivered to the Social Worker at Charlotte High School to be given to homeless students before the Christmas break.

With the focus of so many organizations on young children, it is important to remember those young adults who are often overlooked, but who need so much everyday.

### December Birthdays

9 - Jim Kirby	17 - Lillian Pils
10 - Elaine Erickson	John Obermyer
11 - Phil Harnden	18 - Lee Swift
12 - Emily Klossner	22 - Sally Benson
Fran Yoder	John Risdon
14 - Joan Peterson,	23 - Cindy Frazee
Brian Marchant	26 - Shirley Sundberg
15 - Steve Rutherford	29 - Coloma Warner



### December Anniversaries

*10 - Dean and Angie Campbell  
14 - Zoli and Jackie Szeifert  
15 - Don and Myra Nagel  
25 - John and Nita Ruple  
- Bud and Anne Pratt*



## WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES

**CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON** - Friday, December 9 - Noon. All women of the congregation are invited to gather at the Captain's Table at Fisherman's Village for this annual fun event. The cost is \$20 per person, which includes entrée, dessert, beverage and tip. Be sure to sign up at the kiosk and make your selection of Crab Quiche or Mandarin Chicken Salad. The deadline for reservations is December 6. Please bring toiletry items, which will be donated to the Charlotte County Homeless Coalition. If you have any questions, call Betty Cooley at 391-6351.

**BOOK TALK TEA** - Friday, December 16 - 1 p.m. The December Book Talk Tea will be held at the home of Betty Balmer, 26303 Stillwater Circle (Seminole Lakes). If you have any questions, please call Betty at 639-6396.

There will be no lunch out in December. **MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!!**

**JANUARY MONTHLY SOUP AND SANDWICH MEETING** - Friday, January 13 - Noon. The program for our meeting will be from the SE Guide Dogs on puppy raising and training from the Lion's Club. See the article about the Lions Sight and Hearing Screening below.

**JUST A NOTE:** The spring yard sale will not be held this year.



## Sight and Hearing Screening Event—For the Entire Community

The Women's Fellowship and the Punta Gorda Lions Club will jointly host and sponsor a Sight & Hearing Screening event on **Friday, January 13, 2012** at the Church. This event will be **free to the public** and consist of a full range of vision acuity tests, glaucoma screening, diabetes screening and hearing tests administered by the Sight Screening Team of the Punta Gorda Lions Club.

**The event is open to the public and will run from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon in the sanctuary.**

Following registration, each person will be directed to follow the sequence of tests with the last station presenting an evaluation of each test. Should follow-up care be indicated, a source for treatments will be available.

We also expect a visit from local puppy raisers representing Southeastern Guide Dogs, a Lions sponsored facility in Palmetto, Florida.

Bring your friends and neighbors as we continue to minister to our community!

Neoma Remiger, *Women's Fellowship* and Bill Ringelstein, *Lions Club*

## ADULTS....



WHY NOT JOIN US FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL?

## NO EXCUSES NOW....HERE'S HOW TO HELP....

*"Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants."* Deuteronomy 32:2

We are looking for new volunteers to be the "**rain clouds**" for our Sunday School classes. *Lesson plans have already been prepared, you just need to lead the lesson, with easily followed directions.* There are many to choose from, including special holidays, so you can really find something that speaks to you and will help you teach our young ones about our (and your) faith.

After three years of being the main (and often, only) 'teacher' on Sunday mornings, Emily Klossner will **NOT** be leading this ministry after January 1. That means others need to step forward

There is a sign-up at the kiosk. All we are asking of you is for a one-week commitment, but you can sign up for more than one week if you wish.

Will **YOU** be someone who helps our tender plants grow?



## Great Decisions Discussion Group – 2012

Are you looking for an opportunity to go beyond “sound bites” and seek to understand the complexities of some of the world’s issues? This Great Decisions discussion group will provide an opportunity for non-partisan, secular discussion of issues based on background reading of historical context, current U.S. policy, and alternative policy options. Issues for discussion this year include the following: **Middle East realignment, Promoting Democracy, Mexico, Cybersecurity, Exit from Iraq & Afghanistan, State of the Oceans, Indonesia, and Energy geopolitics.** For more information about the Great Decisions program, check online at [www.greatdecisions.org](http://www.greatdecisions.org).

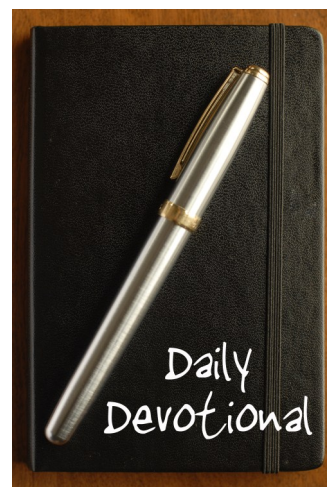
A sign-up sheet will be on the kiosk at the back of the church in January, with discussions beginning in February. The sign-up deadline will be January 22. Books will then be ordered and the 8-session discussion group will begin at the church on Tuesday, February 7, at 1:30 p.m. Book price is projected to be about \$22. *For questions, contact Jerry and Lori Larson at [jerrylorilarsen@netzero.net](mailto:jerrylorilarsen@netzero.net).*

Peace to all people of good will. May this be our hope, our prayer, our daily commitment.

Pick up your copy of the *UPPER ROOM* for November-December, located in the kiosk, and reflect on the messages for the month of December.

Advent devotional booklets are also available in the kiosk. These spiritual meditations will guide you prayerfully through the Advent season.

Have you visited the table that displays the CARE NOTES? You will find that new pamphlets have been added over the summer months. These are free for you to take and use.



## Nominating COMMITTEE

We appreciate the efforts of the members of the Nominating Committee who were asked by Moderator Martha Rutherford to identify those who are called to lead our congregation for the next year.

Neoma Remiger, Susan Cheney, and the Chairperson, Jacob Klossner will recommend the new **Leadership Team** members who will serve in the offices of **Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer**, as well as **three At-large members**. Each of these new roles were outlined in the revisions to our Constitution and By-Laws unanimously approved by our members in November.

Once elected, the Leadership Team will quickly develop a strategy to encourage our members and friends to actively participate in the three Ministry Teams as their mission evolves. The Nominating Committee is perhaps the most difficult job in the church, and so, we thank all three who have accepted this task.

## REACHING OUT TO THOSE WHO SERVED

*At this joyous time of year, our thoughts and our hearts turn toward Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. That bright, shining star that shone over the stable in Bethlehem to lead the shepherds and wise men to the Christ child burns bright in all of us.*

*The fourth and final special offering this year is the Christmas Fund, formerly Veterans of the Cross. For the past 109 years, this fund has been a means by which we, as members of the United Church of Christ, reveal the light of God in the world. The Christmas Fund received annually in the United Church of Christ, is a symbol of light for many who have served, and who continue to serve our church.*



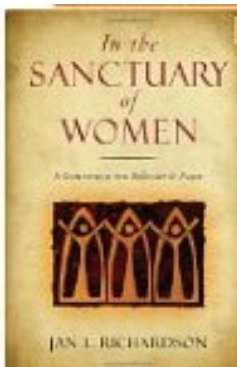
*Your generous gift to the Christmas Fund in 2010 enabled the Pension Boards' Ministerial Assistance program to provide a Christmas "Thank You" gift check to hundreds of clergy and their families. Additionally, donations to the Christmas Fund helped provide a monthly supplement to low-income retired clergy and helped pay the quarterly health premium supplement for many clergy families. This year, the Pension Board was able to provide a one-time Energy Assistance Grant to low-income annuitants and 500 lower-income active clergy.*

*Reflect upon the ways in which your life has been touched by a retired pastor, a former youth leader, a Christian Education director, a church secretary, a custodian, or a minister of music, and honor their ministries in a way that will help them and others like them in these challenging times.*

*The Christmas Fund offering envelope, located in the seat pocket of the chair in front of you and on the back table, is your opportunity to show your appreciation and your support for an estimated 1600 clergy and lay individuals and their families, who will receive some form of Ministerial Assistance in 2012. In this holiday season, this holy season, please be generous in your giving to the 2011 Christmas Fund.*

*Blessings and Merry Christmas,*

Vicki Getz, Outreach Chairperson



## NEW "BAD GIRL" STUDY COMING IN JANUARY

The *Bad Girls Book Study Group* will begin meeting again Thursday, January 5. The new study will use **In the Sanctuary of Women: A Companion for Reflection & Prayer** by Jan L. Richardson. Amazon.com states, "Jan Richardson, a gifted author, poet, and artist, believes it is essential for women to listen to one another and to bring the fullness of their lives, with all their wonders and messiness, into their life of prayer. This book, Richardson writes, is an invitation to enter into a conversation. Here amongst these pages, in the presence of women past and present, is a place to enter into the mysteries that lie at the heart of who we are. Drawing from the often hidden wellsprings of women's wisdom in Jewish and Christian traditions, **In the Sanctuary of Women** gathers together six women from scripture and history whose lives invite us to move more deeply into our own: *Eve*, *St. Brigid of Kildare*, *the Desert Mothers*, *Hildegard of Bingen*, *Harriet Powers*, and *the Woman of the Song of*

*Songs*. Each chapter becomes its own sanctuary, gracing and engaging the reader with the reflections, stories, poetry, prayers, and blessings that Richardson offers.

**Meetings will be held from 3:30 to 5:30 on the first and third Thursdays of January, February, and March** at the home of Marsha Rutherford. If you are interested in attending, please sign up at the kiosk. For further information, please contact Marsha at 575-9419.



A huge **THANK YOU** to Jenna Klossner, Jan Tulk, Susan Cheney, Chris Klossner, Marsha Rutherford, and Emily Klossner for spending their time creating Sunday School lesson plans for 2012. This is an amazing group of ladies, who in one night were able to create almost 6 months of lesson plans for use by volunteers to teach our children each Sunday. Sign up at the kiosk to volunteer to teach one Sunday.



## Moderator's Message - Marsha Rutherford

Greetings,

With the unanimous support of those attending the Special Congregational Meeting in November, the structure of our congregation will be changing on January 1. With this vote, the question has then been asked by most of us, "OK, now what?" What will this mean to our ministries, and how will we make sure those events, activities and responsibilities that are important to us will continue? And who will be 'in charge'?

The short answer is that we will still do what we do best. We will worship joyfully, we will deepen relationships in fellowship and study, we will reach out to our community and beyond with our gifts and support, and we will keep our building and staff in the best shape possible.

The long answer involves every one of us. This structure de-centralizes much of the leadership. It invites and encourages members and friends to create, lead, and participate in ministries of interest to them

The Leadership Team, which replaces the Executive Board, will develop a method to help our folks know where their talents, skills, and passions may be put to work for our church. That will occur after the Leadership Team is elected in December and will be offered as rapidly as possible. It may take the form of a "talent inventory" to be completed by all, or it may be in some other form. Please be assured that everyone who wishes to be engaged in faithful discipleship will have an opportunity to participate.

Advent is "a time of expectant waiting and preparation" according to Wikipedia. It is appropriate that it begins our transition to this new leadership organization.

As we move forward, please pray for all who are called to lead, encourage one another in our continuing ministries, and have confidence that God will be with us in every step we take into this coming year.



*Merry Christmas, Marsha*



## The Last Word

from Rev. Bill Klossner

My friends,

Just this week, and too late for this season, I finally paid attention to the newest Advent devotional created by the same group of UCC writers that produce the daily devotional I read each morning. I can't be nudged by these creative authors, but I *was* nudged by the title of their collection of reflections. That title, "**This Year Will Be Different,**" seemed like a sign from God to me. Not just a reminder that all too often I (we) get into such glorious traditions, as families and as church, that we don't allow ourselves to see what new-ness might break into our lives - or our faith. We put the tree in the same spot in the house, the lights have to look like last year, and we have to sing the same carols, read the same scripture on the right Sunday, and maintain the same schedule that won't allow us to attend Christmas Eve (or this year, Christmas Day) worship.

But traditions, as marvelous as they are, and as habit-forming as they become, also induce us into a kind of tunnel vision. They can obscure the unexpected, they can block the creativity, they can conceal the vision of what lies ahead. Imagine if the shepherds chose not to investigate that which was told to them, "*because we've never done that before!*"



In this Advent season, embrace the phrase, "**this year will be different,**" in the knowledge that God has a plan for you and our congregation that will emerge as we faithfully listen for the voice of God. Even as we grow into living in the new leadership and ministry team structure you have embraced, we will learn new things. We will walk together, confidently that God has called us to this special journey.

I not only believe that **this year will be different**, I know that with the presence of the Holy One, we will accomplish even more than we can ask or imagine!  
May you and yours have a Blessed Christmas!

*Rev. Bill*

# December 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 8:00am Eyeopeners AA	2 8:00am Eyeopeners AA	3 8:00am Eyeopeners AA
4 10:30am Worship 6:30pm FAA	5 8:00am Eyeopeners AA	6 8:00am Eyeopeners AA 8:00am Mens Breakfast 8:00pm Peace River AA	7 8:00am Eyeopeners AA 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	8 8:00am Eyeopeners AA	9 8:00am Eyeopeners AA 12:00pm WF Christmas Lunch	10 8:00am Eyeopeners AA
11 10:30am Worship 12:00pm Budget Meeting following worship 6:30pm FAA	12 8:00am Eyeopeners AA	13 8:00am Eyeopeners AA 8:00am Mens Breakfast 8:00pm Peace River AA	14 8:00am Eyeopeners AA 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	15 8:00am Eyeopeners AA 7:00pm Christmas with the Celts	16 8:00am Eyeopeners AA 1:00pm WF Book Talk Tea	17 8:00am Eyeopeners AA
18 10:30am Worship 6:30pm FAA	19 8:00am Eyeopeners AA	20 8:00am Mens Breakfast 8:00am Eyeopeners AA 8:00pm Peace River AA	21 8:00am Eyeopeners AA 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	22 8:00am Eyeopeners AA	23 8:00am Eyeopeners AA	24 8:00am Eyeopeners AA 7:30pm CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLE-LIGHT SERVICE
25 10:30am Worship 6:30pm FAA	26 8:00am Eyeopeners AA	27 8:00am Mens Breakfast 8:00am Eyeopeners AA 8:00pm Peace River AA	28 8:00am Eyeopeners AA 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	29 8:00am Eyeopeners AA	30 8:00am Eyeopeners AA	31 8:00am Eyeopeners AA