



God is still speaking,

March 1, 2011

From the Pastor's Desk...

Deut 5:33 (NRSV)

³³ You must follow exactly the path that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you are to possess.

There's a new movie coming out in March. *The Adjustment Bureau* is about a man who discovers that we don't have free will; we live according to a plan laid out by others. The drama ensues because the man rejects this plan and insists on living his own choices. I can't be a spoiler since I haven't seen the movie yet, but in the trailer there appears to be a great deal of chasing. While I am not a great fan of chase scenes, I would like to see this movie because the premise of free will is so important to our Christian lives. (This flick arrives March 4, to a cinema near you.)



Of course, the idea of a set plan for our lives flies in the face of our understanding of the free will God gives us. Most of the time this liberty sounds really inviting and full of possibility. Then we realize that with this freedom comes the immense responsibility of making choices everyday which impact not only the path of our lives but the paths of others' lives as well. How do we make good decisions with our free will from God?

The man in *The Adjustment Bureau* is choosing love as the motivation for his rebellion against fate. You have made the choice to call me as your next settled pastor, and I have made the choice to answer your call. Together we travel on the path which our free will determines. Our guide is the same one which Moses brought to the Children of Israel. Jesus gave us the shortcut version of those stone tablets from Mt. Sinai. The cultural name for this is the Golden Rule, but I prefer Jesus' ver-

sion: Matt 22:37-40 (NRSV)

³⁷ He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

The lesson seems to be that we do not live into our best decisions all by ourselves. The weight of responsibility upon our lives for

making choices is lighter and wiser when we are influenced by a diverse group of God's faithful. Oddly enough, the more diverse the thinking in our crew, the deeper our wisdom. This won't surprise you, this confabulation of God's wise Spirit received through all of our diverse forms can lead to complicated disagreements. Using the guide of loving God and loving neighbor can help us keep our heads

when the heat turns up. The path of the Congregational Church of Birmingham, UCC is not already mapped out. We have the privilege and responsibility to work together, pray and discern, try and fail, dream and create the path to which we hear God calling our ministry.

There will be days when seeking to follow the path of God may lead to irritating chase scenes. Yet I still pray for God's guiding love to be our guide. Will you join me as we embark on a common path as pastor and people and willingly take on the challenge of loving God and our neighbors with the decisions we make together?

Pastor Louise

Happenings

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Congregational Church of Birmingham, United Church of Christ
1000 Cranbrook Road, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

Reverend Louise R. Ott, Pastor

Phone: 248•646•4511 Fax: 248•646•9375

Email: ccbchurch1000@sbcglobal.net Website: www.ccbucc.org

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 9am-3:30pm

Happenings Editors: Lisa Franks (lalexie@yahoo.com) & Toni Wilson (tonoi22@yahoo.com)

Rev. Deborah Kohler's Message for March

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven....

This quote from Ecclesiastes (3:1) has been running through my mind as I anticipate both the end of my tenure at CCB and my move to the other side of the state. In modern parlance it is said, "Some things/people come into our lives for a reason, some for a season, and some for a lifetime." My connection here has been for both a reason and a season.


The reasons, as far as I can discern although when one is following the leading of God's spirit there are always reasons we can't discern, are many. You needed a "bridge interim" and I needed a call. You needed a preacher, teacher and pastoral guide and I needed a place and a people who would receive my gifts in those areas. You needed a minister who would understand that you were very close to calling someone else and not be offended or take that personally and I needed a place and a people who understood that I was moving on and not be offended or take it personally.

The fulfillment of these reasons has conspired to make this one of the best winter seasons I've had in Michigan. I often take a vacation in early February. In some ways our whole partnership has felt like a holiday. It's not that I haven't worked; it's that working with all of you has brought much joy, energy and enthusiasm back into my life. In the lives of most ministers it is a luxury to be able to spend hours upon hours in Bible study and sermon preparation. I have enjoyed that gift as I prepared to teach the class on the Gospel of John and the teens in the confirmation process, and as I researched the sermon series based on Matthew's Gospel. Even snow removal has felt less burdensome this winter!

Now our time together has come to an end. You are at the beginning of a wonderful new adventure and so am I. During the first few weeks of March I will prepare my new home in Portage MI – south of Kalamazoo – and move my things over there from Grand Blanc. I will continue to participate in a clergy discernment group with my colleagues and follow the leading of the Spirit in seeking a call. I am excited to see where God will take me. I hope to continue to serve a congregation and I am also open to other forms of ministry such as teaching at one of several institutions of higher education in the area. I expect to continue my close association with the Leaven Center in Lyons, MI by facilitating some workshops for them – check out their website at www.leavencenter.org. The thought of being open to explore many options is thrilling to me.

So my friends, the reason and the season have been fulfilled but I believe this does not preclude us from a lifetime of loving Christian connection. I expect to see some of you at the Michigan Conference meetings, I hope to come back here perhaps for the Rummage Sale or when the confirmands are received into membership. I invite you to drop me a friendly email or give me a call (my phone number will stay the same) when you are in the Kalamazoo area. I believe that relationship is not necessarily bound by time and space; it is in the heart. I will take all of you and the memories of my special time here at CCB with me in my heart to Portage or wherever I go, and I hope that you will do the same. God's blessings to each of you and to all of you as your journeys continue to unfold.

The Reverend Dr. Deborah Kohler

**The
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Proudly Presents

DANNY SCHMIDT

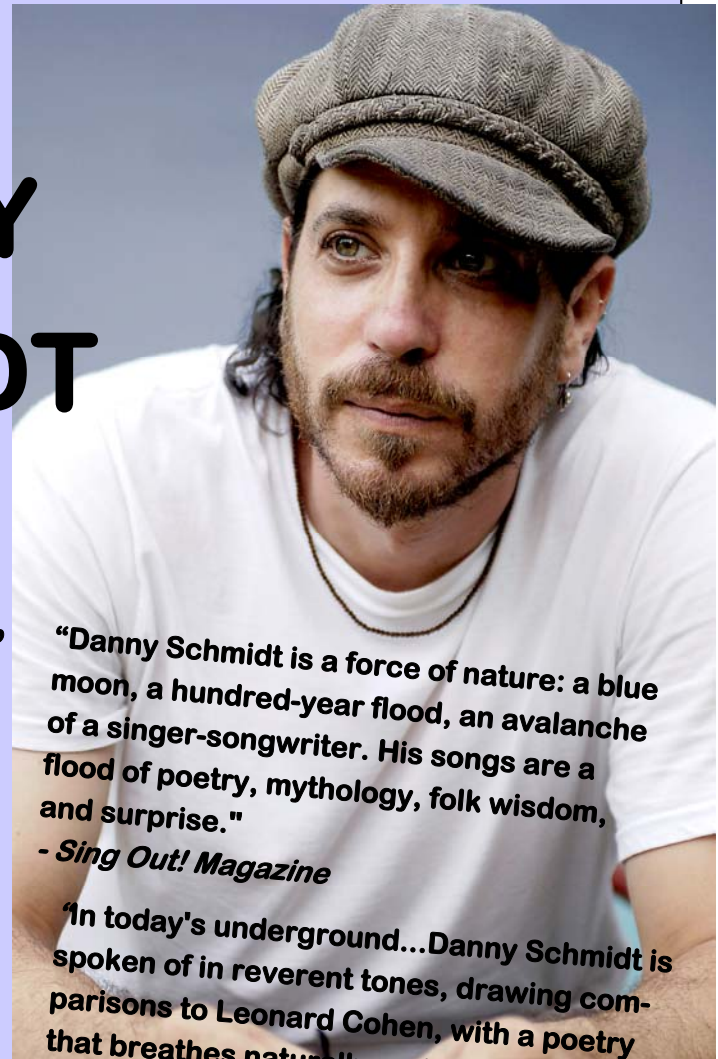
Featuring music
from his new CD,
"Man of Many Moons"



Saturday, March 5

7:30 PM

—ADMISSION \$15.00—



"Danny Schmidt is a force of nature: a blue moon, a hundred-year flood, an avalanche of a singer-songwriter. His songs are a flood of poetry, mythology, folk wisdom, and surprise."

- *Sing Out! Magazine*

"In today's underground...Danny Schmidt is spoken of in reverent tones, drawing comparisons to Leonard Cohen, with a poetry that breathes naturally and without pretension, with results that are both attractive and intense."

- *Austin Chronicle*

Opening

Detroit Poetry Slam artist

AIREA "DEE" MATTHEWS

Dee is a highly acclaimed performance poet and writer who placed on the National Detroit Poetry Slam Team in 2004 and won the 2008 Detroit Grand Slam Champion title besting some of the top performance poets in the city. In May 2008, she won the Midwest Regional Rustbelt Individual Slam Championship. Her work combines

her abiding love for 17th century verse with a modern voice and keen eye on current events. Her style, by turns, has been described as aching, chilling and fierce.

REFRESHMENTS AVAILABLE FOR DONATION—BRING NON-PERISHABLE FOOD OR NEW SCHOOL SUPPLIES AND BE ENTERED IN A DRAWING FOR A *FREE CD!*



Start the Lenten Season at CCB

March 9 with Ash Wednesday service at 7 p.m. (preceded by light supper, see below)

Led by Rev. Louise Ott. Our new senior pastor has some interesting and spirit-filled ideas for the traditional imposition of ashes and starting us on our Lenten journey. The service will focus on how the outward “stuff” of the material world interferes with our relationship with God, and how a focus on the heart will be expressed in relationship with others.

We Need You!

Volunteer cooks are needed to help prepare a light soup-and-bread supper to precede the Ash Wednesday worship service on March 9th. Supper will be

at 6:15 and service at 7 p.m. All are welcome, please **BRING YOUR OWN BOWL AND UTENSILS** to minimize clean-up. If you wish to donate a pot of soup, please contact Galen Fisher or Jacquie Patt.



CCB-UCC Enters 21st Century!

Due to an initiative by the Growth Committee, we now have a new Flat Screen Television installed in Fellowship Hall where we will soon be able to post announcements and show pictures and short video clips relating to our church's life and mission. Watch for more detailed information in Happenings in the near future about whom to notify with your requests for posts of upcoming events, pictures and videos of your church family activities. For now, send electronic photos to Teresa Newman at tweed1991@msn.com.



Better Balance Workshop Rescheduled

The workshop and lunch that was originally scheduled for February 25th, has been postponed to Friday, April 1st. Cost is \$10. Come and learn a 6 step approach to reduce the risk of falling by increasing your self-confidence and greatly improving your balance. This workshop is open to men and women of all ages. Pre-registration is required. See the sign-up sheet at church or contact Anne Rupp. Brought to you by your Conscious Living Ministry.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED...

for Two Teller Positions to process the Sunday offerings. One is an immediate opening and the other is needed in May. Tellers work in teams of two each Sunday on a rotating basis so that each team works one Sunday a month. If a teller cannot make it on an assigned Sunday, that teller can swap with another, so the schedule is really quite flexible. Duties include counting cash, recording contributions by check toward pledges and other offerings, and balancing the figures from the Sunday offering for the bank deposit. It should take no more than 30 minutes to process after receiving the collection plates. Training will be provided. Please contact Harry Bjorkman at 248-853-6379 or hbjorkman@comcast.net if you can help.

Flower Donations

Flowers for Sunday services can be donated in the following ways:

- 1) Purchase flowers and bring in for Kenn Dennison to arrange by Saturday afternoon;
- 2) Donate \$35 in the collection plate in an envelope marked "Flowers". We will soon have envelopes dedicated to this purpose available near the flower sign-up list; or
- 3) Give a check to the church secretary for \$35 with the word "Flowers" in the memo line.

A Message from your Board of Worship...

WORSHIP is not a spectator sport. While every congregant is participating in praise and prayer, we do need a few more people to help make the activity of worship happen smoothly and soulfully for all. The Board of Worship is one member shy of a full contingent, so if you're interested contact chairman Galen Fisher or vice chair Kevin Wilson. Even if you'd rather not add another monthly meeting to your life, we could also use a few more ushers and liturgists to assist on Sunday mornings. We'll run a training session to help people make the most of those roles in a few weeks. Kevin Wilson will be identifying those interested, so if that's you, please contact him to be included as an usher or liturgist.

CCB Goals and Commitments 2007-2010

- 1. We intend to become more intentional about living out our faith by reaching out to each other and through our mission in the region, nation and world.**
 - 2. We intend to become more inclusive, open and affirming in our approach to ALL people regardless of age, gender, race, nationality, ethnic background and sexual orientation.**
 - 3. We intend to become better stewards of the environmental and economic resources which are a vital part of God's creation.**
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March, 2011

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS for our Congregation—For more detailed calendar information including meeting rooms and outside groups using CCB, please visit the website ccbucc.org/calendar

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
27 February 9AM Adult Choir 9:30AM Youth Choir 10:30AM Worship 11:30AM Brunch Bash	28	1 March Happenings Printing March Issue	2 6PM Finance Committee Mtg. Happenings Mailing March Issue	3	4	5 1PM CE/MAT Retreat 7:30 PM Red Comma Café Danny Schmidt & Dee Matthews
6 9AM Adult Choir 9:30AM Youth Choir 10:30AM Worship/w Communion	7 7:30 PM Council	8	9 Ash Wednesday 5PM Confirmation Class 6:15PM Supper 7 PM Worship	10 12 Noon Staff Mtg.	11 Building an Inclusive Church Workshop (All Day)	12 Building an Inclusive Church Workshop (All Day)
13 Inclusive Church Workshop (to 3PM) 9 AM Adult Choir 9:15 CE Meeting 9:30AM Youth Choir 10:30AM Worship 11:30AM Equal Exchange Sale	14 7:30 PM Pastor Support Ministry	15	16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19
20 9 AM Adult Choir 9:30AM Youth Choir 10:30 AM Worship 11:30PM Community Garden Team Mtg. 11:45 RCC Team Mtg.	21 7PM Boards & Committees	22	23 5PM Confirmation Class 7PM Green Screen Film: "Dirty Business"	24	25 Happenings Deadline-April Issue	26
27 9 AM Adult Choir 9:30AM Youth Choir 10:30AM Worship 11:30AM Brunch Bash	28	29 Happenings Printing-April Issue	30 Happenings Mailing-April Issue 12PM DMA Covenant Team	31 5PM Better Balance Event Prep	1 April 11AM Better Balance Workshop & Lunch	2

Daylight Savings Time

The Congregational Church of Birmingham,
United Church of Christ
1000 Cranbrook Rd.
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304-2725

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Scripture: Luke 4: 1-4

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone’.”

from the New Revised Standard Version