

The Herald

November 2011

First and St. Stephen's United Church of Christ

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Baltimore, Maryland 21212

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Director of Music, Jeffery Beyers
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Rev. Terry Fitzgerald, Pastor

A Message From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

At the Service of Installation, I offered the blessings below for the many ministries and mission efforts of First and St. Stephen's United Church of Christ. I write them for this newsletter for 4 reasons: 1. I want to thank you for the many ways you serve God through your ministry to one another and through your outreach to those who need your help. 2. I want to tell you that the congregation supports you as you embody the presence of Christ through your efforts in this place and out in the community. 3. I want to encourage those of you who might be busy or shy or reluctant to "jump in" to join with your brothers and sisters here in living the gospel message the best way you can. 4. I want to ask you to consider prayerfully what you are willing to give financially so that these important ministries and mission efforts can continue.

In these hard economic times, I know that it's difficult to increase giving and to be confident that you can honor the pledge you make to the church. Notwithstanding that uncertainty, I still encourage you to make a pledge, whatever the amount, because the pledges provide church leaders with the information they need to make plans and spend wisely. I pray for you and with you as you consider how generously you can give to the church so we can sustain and expand ministry and mission. And I offer again these blessings for the holy work that you do on God's behalf.

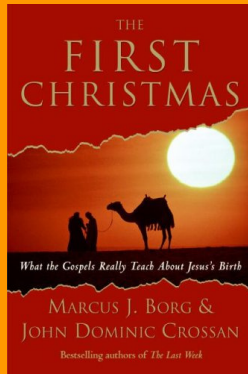
With these symbols – the cup, the Bible, and music - we celebrate the ministry of Word and Sacrament, prayer and song, as we gather in community to give thanks and praise to the living Christ. With these symbols – cd player and craft supplies - we care for, include, and encourage our children; nurturing God's Spirit in them as they share their gifts, energy and enthusiasm in this blessed community. With these symbols – curriculum and study books – we celebrate the ministry of teaching and learning at all levels, so that all ages might grow to understand better and be in closer relationship to the God who longs to be part of our lives. With these symbols – paint brush, offering envelopes, and calculator – we celebrate the ministry of faithful stewardship of the building and finances, so that all who enter here might find a beautiful, hospitable place, and all who need help may know our radical generosity. With these symbols – hammer, hot dogs, and sauce – we celebrate our mission efforts as this congregation helps provide shelter for the displaced through Habitat for Humanity and food for the hungry through Supper Club. With these symbols – food and petitions for marriage equality – we celebrate mission efforts of compassionate service and powerful advocacy so that all of God's children will have bodies and hearts filled with love; and minds and souls filled with mercy and justice. With these symbols – Joshua, Jeremiah, and other puppets – we celebrate laughter, fun, and the joy that God desires for us.

Praise be to God for you and this blessed congregation!!

Terry

Adult Sunday School

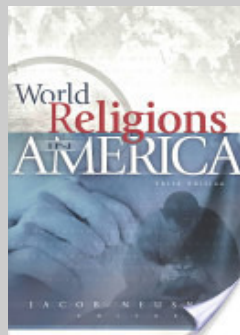
The adult Sunday School class will be reading and discussing Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan's book ***The First Christmas*** beginning November 27. This is our Advent/Christmas Study. The book is available through amazon.com and other book dealers. Please join us for great fellowship and lively discussions.



Please join us for
Greening of the Church
 Monday, Nov. 28, 6 p.m.

The Eighth Day Group

Will be taking a short hiatus during the holiday season. We will resume on January 13, 2012, and begin a study of World Religions in America. Because we live in a religiously diverse nation, this should be an informative study of the faith practices of many of our neighbors. We will be reading World Religions in America: An Introduction edited by Jacob Neusner. It is also available through amazon.com and other online dealers. New and used copies of both of these titles are available through amazon marketplace at a reduced rate plus shipping.



Please note that *The Eighth Day Group* will be gathering at **11:30 on Friday mornings**. Bring your lunch and join us for fellowship, fun and learning.

I wish you all a blessed and happy Thanksgiving. I pray that you may be filled with gratitude and thanks for all God has given you. And I pray, in the words of Ted Loder, that we "may so live as to give others cause to be thankful for us."

Here is an excerpt from his prayer:

*...Lord, grant me grace, then,
 and a portion of your Spirit
 that I may so live
 as to give others cause
 to be thankful for me,
 thankful because I have not forgotten
 how to hope,
 how to laugh,
 how to say "I am sorry,"
 how to forgive,
 how to bind up wounds,
 how to dream,
 how to cry,
 how to pray,
 how to love when it is hard,
 and how to dare when it is dangerous....*

*Praise be to you, Lord, for life;
 praise be to you for another chance to live.
Guerillas of Grace, Ted Loder, p. 35*



Happy Birthday

Nov. 2	Mary Smith
Nov. 3	Katherina Cox
Nov. 27	David Brinker

Consistory Person of the Month
Ruth Ann Seubert