

First Congregational United Church of Christ in DC

GABRIEL'S HORN

December 2011

A Just Peace, Open and Affirming, Multiracial and Multicultural Congregation Intentionally Inclusive...Expect the Unexpected

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"Let every heart prepare Christ room!"

From the street, gazing through the expansive windows, you can see that something amazing is about to happen. At 10th and G, a church, a place, a home is being prepared. People point into the building. They wonder what is being made ready: "I wonder what that big glass box thing is?" "The place is filled with light." "Just yesterday, the workers were putting up those railing along the stairs." Curious, people ask, "What kind of building, what kind of church, are they making ready?" Perhaps you are wondering that as well. Together, they and we imagine.



Imagination – a vivid, full-of-possibility holy imagination – is at the heart of our Advent and Christmas journey this year. For many years now, the site committee, architects, light and sound people have imagined this sacred space. They wondered how it might shape this church. Even with hard hats covering their brows, construction workers scratched their heads imagining how to exactly fulfill blueprints and expectations. More than ever, it is now our time to imagine: What is God doing among us as we move into this new place? How do the imaginations of those who designed and worked on this place shape our future? How will our ministry be formed as we look through those expansive windows to those who have been looking in and wondering during the past years?

Advent is the season of making room for the birth of Christ in our lives and world. "Preparation," "repentance," and "wake-up" are words familiar to the season. But so is "imagination." During this time the church imagines "the wolf will live with the lamb" (Isaiah 11:6), the wilderness prophet John declaring "The time is fulfilled and the realm of God has come near" (Mark 1:15), and Mary's making room within her own body for the promise of God (Luke 1:38). We imagine "unto us a child is born" (Isaiah 9:6). And we reimagine the world as a place of God's justice, compassion, healing, and peace.

During this Advent – as architects and construction workers are making ready a place – God calls you to make ready this place as well. Will you imagine and pray about how we will make room for Christ in this new space – and how we'll make room for others through service and compassion? Will you begin to bless this space and those who point through those large windows asking "I wonder what kind of church is this?"

This year, allow the church building to be a metaphor, a spiritual guide, for your own Advent prayers and witness. How is God calling on you to make room in your own heart and home? Join us for worship during this Advent – and on Christmas Eve for our first worship service at 10th and G. Can you imagine Christmas Eve at 10th and G? Building, blessing, and imagination come together in these days of Advent preparation. Prepare Christ room.

May the peace of God be yours.

Sid Fowler

CHURCH COUNCIL CAPSULE

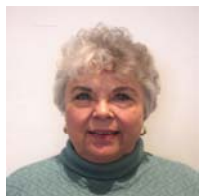
November 8, 2011 meeting.



Moderator's Report: **Nan McConnell** thanked the hosts for the cluster meetings; over 60 people (bearing food) attended and had a wonderful chance to meet **Sid Fowler** informally. The Nominating Committee has identified an Investment Commission to be approved at the Annual Meeting. Since we will receive the first installment of our money from Skanska before the Annual Meeting, the nominees will make a recommendation to Council on how to invest this money. A Public Relations Working Group is beginning discussions with our consultant. **Treasurer's Report:** **Lucille Dickinson** reported on the October 31 budget status. There were no significant changes. **Spiritual Reflection:** **Sid Fowler** led us in reading "There is a Time to Be Born, and It is Now," a poem by Walter Brueggemann. (This was to be the opening on the agenda, but vagaries in parking delayed Sid and a few other members.) **Move Update:** **Meg Maguire** reported a detailed schedule from Skanska. Our Certificate of Occupancy (not including the balcony) is planned for November 24, so we could move in the last part of the first week of December. After discussion about the impact of moving in the middle of Advent, Council voted to delay the move until the first week in January. However, again after much discussion, we voted to have the Christmas Eve service at 10th and G. Christmas Day and New Year's Day services will be at First Trinity. Our first Sunday in the new church will be January 8; the Homecoming Celebration Task Force will be asked about plans for a talent show and pot-luck on January 7. We decided to have a service on December 11 that will express our thanks to First Trinity Lutheran Church and staff (who will be invited) for their support. CommUnity had planned to begin worshipping at 10th and G in early December, and we decided to invite them to join us in worship until we're all in the new building in early January. **New Worship Time:** We need to be sure everyone (included the caregivers) is informed about our changing location, worship time, parking procedure, and web site. People who do not have access to email and online postings need to be informed in other ways. **Pastor's Report:** **Sid Fowler** reported that the transitional plan is not ready yet; he would like to consider it with a small group. We need to form a Pastor/Parish Relations Group; Council decided that the Transitional Pastor should be evaluated after six months, and that the group should be formed at that time. **Staff Evaluations:** The Personnel Committee has evaluated **Barno Murillo**. **Bonnie Hardy's** contract and job description will be extended until we are back at 10th and G and finalized then. **Barno's** job description and **Gary Fitzgerald's** evaluation timing also need to be discussed. **Finance:** **Susan Anderson** reported. The budget hearing will be held on January 15. **Outreach and Membership:** **Anne Mascolino** reported on progress on the new website. An edited Horn will be on the website. We still need a webmaster. O&M is thinking about how we will handle visitors at the new building. Also, they want to have an open house for the MLK Library and Penn Quarter. Monthly meet-ups have been scheduled through June. O&M needs new members for next year; there are only two carryovers. **Care of Parish:** **Nora Marsh** reported they are working with **Byron Adams** to set up the new kitchen. They are focused now on the talent show and potluck. It was decided to have the Christmas day coffee hour be a potluck since there may be a small attendance. **Worship:** **Ellen Bushmiller** reported they are planning special services and the return to 10th and G, including packing for the move and preparing new guides for the service. Several brochures are in preparation. **Christian**

Education: Nancy Withbroe reported that “What gifts can we bring?” will be the overall Advent theme, and “Let every heart prepare Christ room” will be the theme for the December 4 and 11 nurtures. **Social Action and Awareness:** Richard Griffis reported that SA&A is active on many fronts, including the Second Sunday offering for WIN, the UCC’s Mission 1, and letters to Congress to protect programs that support the poor and hungry. **Facilities:** Carolyn Marsh reported they have met with the building manager to address critical issues such as security, parking, and cleaning.

Barbara Hayes



NEWS FROM AROUND THE PARISH

by Joan King

Our Office Manager, **Barno Khadjibaeva Murillo**, has told us that she will be leaving her position at First Church as of December 23. Because of her husband’s work, her family will be moving back to Colombia. We will be very sorry to see her go, but we wish her and her family the very best in the future. She will leave with our gratitude for seven years of good work.

Barbara Hayes reports : “My Thanksgiving was in Yardley, PA, where my nephew and his wife hosted 13 family members, including my great-niece who came all the way from San Diego! Two of my "greats" are talented musicians, and we had a piano and cello concert; they played together and singly. Actually three are talented musicians, but the San Diego great-niece didn't bring her flute.” **Ruth Shinn** spent Thanksgiving with her brother Roger and his family. And **Karen Pence** was in Paris for Thanksgiving where she joined her husband, **Brian Bucks**, who just happened to be there on business. **Anne Griffis** was recently in NYC at the World Day of Prayer Board meeting. Christian women from Malaysia have prepared the 2012 World Day of Prayer worship service, held in over 100 countries on March 2. In early December she will attend the 70th Church Women United celebration.

Byron Adams told us about a wonderful article praising our new church that was published in the *Washington Business Journal* entitled “An Architectural Covenant.” You can see a preview of the article along with a great picture at the link below, but people who are not subscribers will not be able to read the complete article online. <http://www.bizjournals.com/washington/print-edition/2011/11/18/new-mixed-use-building-at-10th-and-g.html>. Byron says, “If you call my former colleague, Camelia, she’ll sell you a copy of the paper with the article for \$2.95. Be sure to mention my name or she’ll charge you \$7. She’ll mail the copy to you unless you want to stop at the Journal’s office and pick it up.” Camelia's phone number is 703-258-0868.



A very interesting sermon by the Rev. Tom Knoll, pastor of First Trinity Lutheran Church (and our landlord) was published in *The Washington Post* on November 10. It was about stewardship entitled “I shall not want” based on the 23rd Psalm. The piece is worth reading, and can be found at http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/i-shall-not-want/2011/11/10/gIQArDgM9M_story.html.



IN OUR PRAYERS

Jennie Hunt is recovering well from her back surgery; **Joan King** is recovered from removal of a ruptured appendix; and Ruth Shinn is feeling much better since her doctors fixed a problem with her medication. We all thank you for your prayers and well wishes. We continue to hold in our prayers **Jannie Champ, Claricia Cummings, Virginia Gaddis, Polly Gordon, Randy Jones, Brooks Pumphrey, and Regina Saxton, Sandy Sorensen.**



SITE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

All is Calm, All is Bright

Well.....not exactly calm, as workers hasten to complete their tasks, but definitely bright!

As we prepare for our first event in our longed-for new home on Christmas Eve, what can you expect to see? I can only answer in probabilities:

- The space will be clean. For those of you who have walked through the dust and construction mess these many months, you will be surprised by how clean and uncluttered things look.
- The sound and light systems will be in place and, with any luck, a few of us will have been trained in how to operate them.
- The scrims over the organ openings will be installed — and then removed when the organ is delivered on January 16.
- Our new Sanctuary chairs — you will remember the many we tested and evaluated in Goldilocks fashion — will be in place.
- The new communion table and other special pieces will be delivered on December 10 and ready for their debut.
- The office furniture and some of the furnishings for the church living room and social hall will probably be there, though perhaps not all unpacked.

But not all will be finished:

- The frosted glass in the Sanctuary and Chapel light well and the second floor corridor will probably not be installed and you will see heavy plywood barriers.
- The balcony will probably be off limits since railings may not yet be complete.
- The Overlook (parent/infant room) will not be ready for use until the glass is installed.
- The black granite water pool at the entry will not yet have received its special shallow bowl and may look rather odd.
- The sign at the entry will still be in fabrication.
- The church name on the side of the building will not be installed until all permanent signage is fabricated and installed in late January.

Our extraordinary congregation has been exceptionally supportive and patient throughout this process. Now, the end is in sight and soon we will be home.

*Meg Maguire
Site Development Task Force*

ON YOUR CALENDAR

Be sure the following dates are on your calendar:

Wednesday, December 14 at 6:30 p.m. – Special Advent Taize Service at 309 E St, NW
Sunday, December 18 at 1:00 – Christmas Pageant and Cookie Exchange at 309 E Street NW
Saturday, December 24 at 7:00 – Christmas Eve worship at 10th and G Streets NW
Sunday, December 25 at 1:00 – Christmas Day worship at 309 E Street NW
Sunday, January 1 at 1:00 – New Year's Day worship at 309 E Street NW
Saturday, January 7 at 5:30 – Open House and Talent Show at 10th and G Streets NW
Sunday, January 8 at 10:30 a.m. – First Sunday worship at 10th and G Streets NW





Barbara Brown Zikmund reports on three matters that have kept the Outreach and Membership Commission very busy:

First: ALERT: The new First Church Website will be launched the first weekend in December. We need your help.

We know that a website is never done, it is a work in process. However, it is time to go public. We have a new building, we are approaching a new year, and we are embracing a new chapter in our life. It is time to share our excitement with the world. Our new web address is <http://FirstUCCDC.org>.



We want this website to serve our membership, but more than that we want it to invite strangers to check us out, to encourage visitors to return, and to share deeper knowledge about who we are, not merely where we are. We will let you know via email when it is LIVE.

We have three requests:

a) Look at the website and tell us what you like and what you don't like. We are going to add many more pictures and lots of information, but we are not going to do any major revisions until after the Dedication Celebration on February 26. Live with it for a while and then give us feedback. Use it. Figure out what works and what doesn't work for you. But remember -- the website is not for us, it is for those who don't know us.

b) We invite any church member to be part of a website maintenance team, taking responsibility to keep the content up to date. There is nothing as sad as an out-of-date website. Therefore we plan to ask each Commission to have a "WEBSITE REPORTER" to send the Website Editors news and information several times a month. We anticipate that new sub-pages will be created as we go. New pictures will be added as we live in our new place. If you are interested in being a website editor (no tech skills required) or want to learn how to work with the web software, please indicate your desire on the email form found when you click on CONTACT US at the top of the home page, or call the church office and tell Barno to put you on the list.

c) We will be holding several webmaster training sessions offered by our web designer in the next several months. If you are interested please let us know so that we can alert you to when the "training sessions" will be held. (beeze@verizon.net). Not everyone who contributes information needs to know the technical stuff, but some of us do. Tell us how you want to be involved. We will announce the training dates and times as soon as we can work them out with the web designer.

Second: Get Ready for our PEOPLE OF WELCOME WORKSHOP



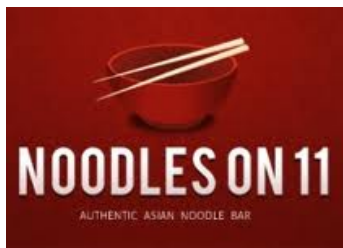
We say that no matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome at First Church. During the coming months, therefore, all of us need to sharpen our welcoming skills. This cannot wait. Outreach and Membership will hold an informal PEOPLE OF WELCOME WORKSHOP immediately after the Cookie Exchange from 2:30 to 3:30 pm on Sunday, December 18. Sid Fowler will help us all become more intentional welcoming people. We have no choice. We cannot delegate this to others, we are the church. And as we move into our new building we have a new calling and many tasks. We need people at the doors, in the garage, outside on the sidewalk, and during fellowship hour. We need people following up on

visitors. Being a welcoming church is not something a few people sign up for, it is something we all must embrace and internalize. Consider December 18 one of the most important Adult Nurture programs of the year. Together we must refine our skills to welcome the world to First Congregational United Church of Christ in Washington, DC. Our first task is to be ready to welcome people to our Christmas Eve Service. Gail Sonnemann is recruiting people to be in the garage, at the doors, etc. It means coming a bit early, but it is important. When people come, we need to be ready.

Third: December 15, at 6 pm, Meet-Up Conversations to Nourish Body and Spirit

First Church is continuing to sponsor informal conversations over a “noodle supper” on the third Thursday of each month. We thought about cancelling December because we are all so busy, but decided that maybe this is exactly the season when we ought to carve out a bit of time to nourish, rather than drain our bodies and spirits.

At our session we will reflect about holidays. Many people in our society spend December -- celebrating holy days, sustaining end year and new year rituals, giving to those in need, singing to people who enjoy music, listening to special music, focusing upon making children happy, decorating trees and homes, entertaining relatives, sending greetings to people we rarely see, eating special foods, going shopping, baking cookies, and doing self-examination to improve life-style, enhance prayer life, lower stress, lose weight, exercise, etc. December is wonderful, but December "attacks" the well-being of our bodies and spirits. Come for conversation about how you survive December, what you want December to be, and what you cherish about December.



We meet monthly at NOODLES ON 11 (an Asian Noodle Shop at 11th and I St/New York Ave NW) at 6 pm. Please sign up, even if you cannot come very often. Go to <http://www.meetup.com/Washington-Meetup-Conversations-to-Nourish-Body-and-Spirit//> Click on “join us” in the upper right corner and it will prompt you for your name, your email address and a password you create. The global MeetUp website is an amazing window into the many groups that exist in the DC area. Check it out. It is easy to get out of the list at any time.

Jamie Moore reports on behalf of the Social Action and Awareness Commission:

The First Steppers raised \$600 in the AIDS Walk. Also we were 14 strong at the Super Prayer Vigil in Lafayette Park.





*““We spend so much time wanting things to be better
that we fail to see our real gifts.”*

Joan Chittister

Each year before Christmas I am fascinated to hear that there are so many ways we can improve upon our annual celebration. Television and the newspapers report new ways to cook turkeys, display brighter color schemes for decorating the home, while concocting exotic fancy drinks with Santa shaped ice cubes for a better New Years.

One friend of mine called to tell me she is, “Tearing her hair out,” making pillow cases with holiday motifs for each family member and her guests this Christmas. Another friend claims he is, “Going broke,” wrapping pretend gifts in two foil colors to put under his tree for his annual Christmas photo. “I want everyone to wish they lived at our house,” he proudly pronounced and then laughed at the absurdity of his idea. I even have family members who are so anxious about making a mistake, their entire gift giving process is about buying plastic cards allowing each receiver to redeem their own gift the day after Christmas.

Anxiety rather than joy fills the air as we step closer and closer to December 25th. Anxiety over what I ask myself, as I am standing in line to buy a hand full of plastic cards myself. How can Christmas possibly go wrong? One way or another, it will come and it will go, and it will show up again next year.

Benedictine Joan Chittister suggests the antidote to this seasonal anxiety lies in our practice of gratitude. She reminds the reader in her book, *Songs of the Heart*, that if we stop and thank God consciously, we may relax long enough to see that the “banquet” is already available today. If we stop striving for perfection, seeking newer and better ways to heighten our experiences, by controlling the perfect schedule, buying the perfect gift, displaying the perfect home decorations, we can realize that joy is a state of mind available to every gracious heart.

According to Sr. Joan, as we give thanks to God, our spirits naturally lighten. We attract other people who are also grateful, we come to experience God in a contemplative open attitude which grows a place of steady dependable joy during the season of Christmas.



So may I say? I am grateful to all of you today. I am fortunate to be a part of the believing community of First Congregational and I wish you joy dear church family!

May God’s gifts fill all of us this year with a sense of wonder and peace, as we step away from our anxiety and praise the One who brings new life in the celebration of the glorious impossible birth of Jesus Christ.

*Grace and Peace,
Bonnie Hardy*

CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER

Sunday, December 4

1:00pm - Worship Service & Communion.

Preaching – Sid Fowler

2:00pm - Fellowship Hour

2:30pm - Advent Nurture: What gift can you bring?

Monday, December 5

7:00pm - Social Action & Awareness

Thursday, December 8

7:30pm - Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, December 11

1:00pm - Worship Service

Preaching – John Deckenback

2:00pm - Fellowship Hour

Tuesday 2:30pm - Advent Nurture: What gift can I bring?

Tuesday, December 13

6:30pm – Council

Wednesday, December 14

6:30pm - Taize Service

Thursday, December 15

6:00pm - Facilities Commission

6:00pm – MeetUp Conversations

7:30pm - Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, December 18

1:00pm - Worship Service

Christmas Pageant

2:00pm - Fellowship Hour. Cookie Exchange.

Tuesday, December 20

6:30pm - Worship Commission

Wednesday, December 21

7:00pm - Homecoming Celebration Task Force

Thursday, December 22

7:30pm - Choir Rehearsal

Saturday, December 24

7:00pm - Christmas Eve Service at 10th & G

Sunday, December 25

Christmas Day

1:00pm - Worship Service

Preaching – Sid Fowler

2:00pm - Fellowship Hour



January edition of Gabriels's Horn will be published on December 23rd. Please submit your articles before December 19th. Thanks!



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Larry Minear, Bonnie Ponwith, Joe Zikmund, Grace Bassler, Diana Gomez de Molina, Emily Marsh, David Hayes, Bob Crossley, Mari Castellanos, Dwight Marsh, Susan Anderson, Joselyn Bassler, Brian Bucks, Yolanda Ross, Graham Marsh, Jasper & Cory Evans-Klock

COFFEE HOUR HOSTS FOR DECEMBER

- 4 Marie Reitmann, Cindy Mazur, Joe Alfred, Peter Byrne
- 11 Dale Ostrander, Meg Maguire, Amy & Lloyd Dugan
- 18 Fredda Sparks, Karen Pence, Peter Tracey, Sandy Sorenson
- 25 Anne Bushmiller, Stacey Pace, Nora Marsh



309 E Street, NW, Washington DC 20001
Website: www.fccuccdc.org; Email: fcc@fccuccdc.org
Phone Office: 202-628-4317
Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00 am – 2:00 pm