



UNITED INTOUCH

Volume No. 35, Issue No. 12

December, 2009

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CAROLING AND CARING

Pipe Organ Concerts at five Somerville churches! Bells, caroling, and refreshments with Santa! The concerts begin on December 5th at 12:30 p.m. with URC and conclude at the First United Methodist Church at 2:45 p.m. The event is sponsored by the Somerville Civic League. Donations are \$5 and children under 12 are free. For tickets and information, please call Ethel Bench at (908) 725-2604 or Shirley Russ at (908) 722-1436.

STARS AND PROMISES

Concert will be enjoyed on December 11th beginning at 7:30 p.m. The concert will benefit URC as well as several other local organizations. Tickets are available at the church office. The cost is \$25 each. For advance tickets, you will receive coupons from 12 area restaurants to use for that evening or up until December 21st.

CHRISTMAS AT THE FARM

Enjoy the beauty of the Farm with a Christmas Party on December 13, 2009 from 12:00 - 4:00pm. Please bring appetizers or drinks to be shared by all. Contact Carol Lane (908) 872-0237 by December 6, 2009 and let her know what you can bring. We are looking forward to seeing you.

CHRISTMAS EVE AT UNITED

Join us on December 24th, Christmas Eve for a special service of candle-lighting and Lessons and Carols. The service will begin at 8:00 p.m. There will be pre-service music beginning at 7:40 p.m. We welcome you to this celebration of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

DEER RIDGE SINGERS

On December 13th beginning at 7 p.m. Deer Ridge Singers will present a holiday concert. A variety of holiday selections from eras past to days present will be enjoyed with choir and soloists. Advanced tickets are \$15 and \$18 at the door. Call 908-757-1151 for tickets. You will receive coupons from 12 area restaurants to use for that evening or up until December 21st.

TRIM A TREE

The Worship Committee has scheduled the trimming of the Christmas trees in the Sanctuary for Wednesday evening, December 16th at 7:30 p.m. Anyone wishing to participate is heartily welcomed!

POINSETTIAS



The Christmas Memorial or Celebration Flower envelope is included in this issue of InTouch. If you would like to participate in this special Christmas remembrance or celebration of a loved one, please have your request to the church office by **December 16th**. PLEASE CLEARLY PRINT ALL YOUR INFORMATION. Following worship on Christmas Eve, the poinsettias will be delivered to those in our church family who are unable to worship with us on a regular basis. Please plan to take one to deliver to a shut-in or take one for you to enjoy at home. Letters to accompany the poinsettia will be available when you pick up the poinsettia. Thank You!

TWELFTH NIGHT ON JANUARY 9TH AND 10TH.

The congregations of United Reformed Church and Bernardsville United Methodist Church will join together to present Twelfth Night Festivals to be held here in Somerville on Saturday, January 9th, at 7:00 p.m. and in Bernardsville on Sunday, January 10th, at 3:00 and 7:00 p.m. Come see and hear a 75-member cast in Elizabethan and Biblical costumes presenting choral and instrumental music celebrating the story of Christmas as might have been done in an Elizabethan manor. The Lord and Lady of the manor will welcome you to share in the festive celebration of the season and hear the message of the Nativity.

DO YOU HAVE A CONCERN?

If you have a concern, please let the Church Administrator, Sharon Thompson know. We want to remember them in our prayers and mention their name in the "In Your Prayers" reminders for the week in our Sunday bulletin

FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN

Dear Members and Friends:

Sometime ago a pastor friend of mine was paying a holiday visit and noticed the figure of a chimney sweep decorating a parishioner's Christmas tree. This was the most unusual ornament he had ever seen – certainly unexpected – so he asked his host for an explanation. Well, it seems that the chimney sweep ornament had been handed down through several generations of that family as a reminder of Advent preparation. Just as a chimney sweep cleans out the chimney of unwanted soot and debris, so are we expected to rid our lives of unwanted debris in preparation for Christ. I've never forgotten that story! Isn't it wonderful how simple symbols can remind us of important spiritual guidelines? A chimney sweep indeed!

As we enter this sacred time of the year let us be sure to remember the importance of Advent – a season of spiritual preparation. Spiritual blessings don't just drop from the sky; they must be prepared for and we have four weeks to do just that! As the old hymn states it:

*Then cleansed be every Christian breast,
And furnished for so great a guest!
Yea, let us each our hearts prepare
for Christ to come and enter there.*

May your Advent preparations be fruitful ones as we join the ranks of the 'spiritual chimney sweeps' and so ready our hearts for the Christ of Christmas!

Your pastor and friend,

PASTOR PAUL

THANK YOU

To my Church Family,

A very sincere thank you for remembering me with the lovely gift of flowers that I received a few weeks ago. I appreciate the thoughtfulness of my church family, so very much.

Love, *Rosanna Wallace*

TOY DRIVE FOR JAIL CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM

United Reformed Church will again participate in the Christmas gift program for children of inmates housed in the Somerset County Jail. This program allows for inmates to give gifts to their children thanks to the generosity of churches and other agencies.

The Jail Chaplaincy is asking for donations of non-violent toys and gifts from \$10 to \$25. If the toy or gift requires batteries, we ask that you include them. The gifts can be suitable for either boys or girls, and for all ages from infants to high school students.

Gifts may be left in the church office during the week or in the Narthex on Sunday morning, and should be UNWRAPPED, no later than December 6th. If you would like to have a member of the Outreach Committee shop for you we can take monetary donations before the end of November. Thanking you again for your generous support, the Outreach Committee.



THE SYMPATHY AND PRAYERS of the United Reformed Church are with the family of Betty Anderson. Betty passed away on November 17th. Betty was a beloved member of United and she will be greatly missed. Betty was Bill Anderson's sister. Our prayers are with the family at this time.

Remember all of life, from its beginning to its end, is in God's hands and through the power of Christ's resurrection, the end becomes a new beginning in God's full promise.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

In Sunday School, we have been talking about how all of us are special children of God. When we were born the lives of our families and the whole world changed. Each of us is like a small pebble that is tossed into a pond. The splash

may be small but the ripple spreads out far in all directions. The same is true for the small splash of acts of kindness that helps those around us feel God's love. Often we may not even be aware of the ripple that is started and the countless people effected.

The Sunday school children made baked goods and assembled them along with fruit and candy into baskets. The baskets were then delivered to our church families whom we keep in our thoughts and prayers throughout the year. On November 22, the Sunday school children also passed out home made Thanksgiving cards to the congregation during worship. We hope our little splash of God's love will spread a ripple throughout the church and our community.

YOUTH GROUP STARVES FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Tara Rose Cassidy, Shannon Cassidy, and Donny Stires joined their mission trip partners from The Colts Neck Reformed Church to participate in a 24 hour famine in order to raise awareness for world hunger. The kids met at the beautiful home of Tom and Kristen Saker near Colts Neck on Friday night, November 19th. Forty five middle and high school students in all participated in a variety of activities. They learned about diseases and every day difficulties that children like themselves endure in countries such as Ethiopia. They competed in challenging group tasks in which the prize was a token piece of food, much like children who need to fight for each meal. The youths also wrote prayers and things they were thank for on rocks which were put together to make a labyrinth. Other fun activities provided on Friday and Saturday included pool tournaments, video games, board games, and movies. After receiving communion on Saturday evening at 6:00 pm the kids "broke the fast" with a large breakfast. Tara Rose, Shannon, and Donny enjoyed reconnecting with their Colts Neck friends and spending time with other Christian youth.

General Synod Council (GSC) Update

I attend my first full GSC meeting in mid October in Grand Rapids, Michigan. GSC serves the General Synod and assemblies of the RCA as the program agent for mission and ministry and as the General Synod's executive committee.

The General Synod Commissions on Christian Unity, History, Christian Action, Theology, Christian Education and Discipleship, Race and Ethnicity, Church Order, and Christian Worship and representatives from the Commission on Nominations also met at this time. Please contact me if you would like to explore becoming a member of any of the RCA commissions. You can check out more about the on the RCA web site www.rca.org

GSC and the commission members met to review the ongoing classes' discussions and the upcoming classes' votes regarding the ratification of the Belhar Confession as a fourth standard of unity for the RCA.

Options were considered for the 2012 General Synod and Church-Wide Missional Immersion Event in San Francisco. A proposal will be presented at the March 2010 GSC meeting.

GSC received and affirmed a report on the consultation on the Office for Women held in September with over 30 participants including Kendra VanHouten. The consultation was held to discern how GSC could best guide, support, and encourage women in all of the ministries of the church. There was a remarkable amount of consensus at the consultation on a model for women's ministries that would focus on "experiential communities" that could offer opportunities around learning, service, and support.

GSC hosted a dinner to honor John Stapert to recognizing the exceptional efforts of the homosexuality dialogue steering committee over the past three years. GSC members thanked John and the team for their successful engagement across much of the RCA in a constructive dialogue regarding homosexuality.

The tireless effort to make the dialogue available for classes was instrumental in encouraging discussion. GSC moderator Carol Bechtel said, "Our sincere appreciation goes to John, and . . . dedicated colleagues for developing this process as a gift to the RCA."

Other Highlights of the meeting:

- Reviewed a progress report on the "Decade Freed from Racism" declared by the General Synod of 2008 to be from 2000 through 2010.
- Discussed initial planning for General Synod 2010, which is set to meet on the campus of Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, next June.
- Approved the recommendation of the GSC care committee for the Rev. Dr. Norman Kansfield to transfer Dr. Kansfield, under suspension, to the Classis of Rockland-Westchester. *Thomas G. Dibble*

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH CELEBRATIONS FOR December

BIRTHDAYS

December 7	Tracey Nagle
December 10	Mildred Moore
December 13	Catherine Gunzelman
December 17	Christine Yohn
December 18	Della Nemes
December 20	William W. Huntley, Jr. Pat McKiernan
December 25	Carol Davis
December 29	Andrew Maggio
December 31	Mike Crisci

ANNIVERSARIES

December 5	Phyllis and John Kennette
December 18	Cindy and Howard Wagner

UNITED INTOUCH DEADLINE

If you have information that you would like included in the January, 2010 issue of INTOUCH, please contact Sharon Thompson at (908) 725-4545, e-mail her at sharon.thom@yahoo.com, or put your article in the INTOUCH cubbie. The "must have" deadline for articles is December 28, 2009



Bible
Readings *for the Month*
Of December, 2009

Sunday, December 6: Second Sunday of Advent

Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

Sunday, December 13: Third Sunday of Advent

Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

Sunday, December 20: Fourth Sunday of Advent

Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:47-55 or Psalm 80:1-7; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

Thursday, December 24: Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

Friday, December 25: Christmas Day

Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-4, (5-12); John 1:1-4a

Sunday, December 27: First Sunday After Christmas

I Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

Room for All National Gathering

At the end of October Room for All held its first national gathering at Central Reformed Church in Grand Rapids Michigan. Registration was about 150 people, more than double the number anticipated. The event drew participants from both coasts and of course the mid-west.

The "Making Room For All" conference was an historic event. Central Reformed Church assumed considerable risk by inviting Room for All to host this conference at their church. It was indeed a ministry of hospitality.

The reception room was rimmed with a display of 100 items from the "Shower of Stoles", a project of the Institute of Welcoming Resources. These colorful liturgical stoles tell the stories of LGBT clergy who are leaders in their respective faith traditions.

In the plenary session on Friday morning Rebecca Voelkel and Vicki Wunsch, presentations on how to build an inclusive church. Rebecca is the director of the Institute for Welcoming Resources located in Minneapolis. Vicki works as a trainer for the IWR and assists in helping lay leaders and clergy develop tools for engaging congregations to become involved in the welcoming process.

Six workshops were available Friday afternoon including: "Out of the Shadows and Into the Light: Confessions of a Former Gay Basher," presented by Miguel De La Torre, "The Christian Case for Gay Marriage" by David Myers, "Christian Education & Youth Ministry that is Welcoming & Affirming" by Adriene Thorne, "Biblical Studies: 'Clobber Texts' & 'Texts of Promise,'" by Bruce Cornwell & Lynn Japinga, "A Reformed Orthodoxy of Inclusion: Theologically Making Room For All" by Norm Kansfield, and "Movement Building Strategies" by Rebecca Voelkel.

The Friday evening program, open to the public, featured the Michigan Gay Men's Choir and a moving presentation by Peggy Compolo. Peggy has become an outspoken advocate for same sex marriage and the need for the church genuinely to welcome LGBT folks. Her speech was encouraging, uplifting and supportive of the cause of LGBT folks and of Room for All.

A culminating worship service was led by Rev. Dan Ramm, Pastor of the Flatbush Reformed Church in Brooklyn. Dan asked aloud why he was investing time and energy as a member of the RFA Board. His answer - John 3.16. The service was concluded by singing "In the Midst of New Dimensions," a powerful hymn with a refrain that sings "God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles soar. We your people, ours the journey now and ever, now and ever, now and ever more."

Please contact me if you are interest in learning more about Room for All and its mission.

Thomas G. Dibble

OUR SUNDAY SERVERS for DECEMBER, 2009

	Ushers* ***	Counters	Fellowship Hour**	Altar Guild
6	Michelle Lane Nigel Lane	Jane Coleman Toni Moore		Millie Moore
13	Gary Spratt Elizabeth Fowler	Dee Davall Eileen Davall		Alice Gunzelman
20	Toni Moore Barbara Schwarz	Tom Dibble Jocelyn Eckardt		Dee Davall
24	Christmas Eve Ruth Reader		No Fellowship Hour	
27	Sandy Dibble Ruth Reader	Pat McKiernan Sam Mendelson	Toni Moore Barbara Schwarz Alice Gunzelman	Ruth Reader

*** If you can volunteer to usher, please give our Coordinator Gary Spratt at call at 908-252-9392. IF YOU ARE ABLE TO VOLUNTEER, PLEASE COME FORWARD AND GIVE GARY A CALL. ** If you can volunteer to serve coffee during Fellowship Hour, please call the church office or sign up following worship during our Fellowship Hour.**

*****Please consider giving of your time. We are in need of volunteers. You can call Gary Spratt to volunteer to usher or Sharon Thompson to volunteer to serve coffee.**

WASSAIL PARTY LUNCHEON/BASKET AUCTION

All rolled into one . . . on December 6th. Due to the *busyness* of the upcoming holidays, as well as the anticipation and preparation for the Twelfth Night pageant, the Parish Life Committee will hold a Wassail Party Luncheon and the Basket Auction starting after worship on Sunday, December 6th. Parish Life will supply soup, salad, rolls & butter, beverages and desserts. Freewill donations will be received at the luncheon to underwrite food costs.

Members of United's family will have the opportunity to come together to share a meal and have fun bidding on baskets and items which can be an early holiday gift purchase (or two). Proceeds from the auction will go toward purchasing new and much needed tables for Fellowship Hall.

So, mark your calendars, then grab an "old" basket and be creative. If you are not feeling creative, your auction contribution doesn't have to be a basket – it can be a nice gift that you have received, but do not use or will never use.

✂ and return to the church office by December 1st. Thank you.

WASSAIL PARTY LUNCHEON/BASKET AUCTION

December 6th – starting during Fellowship Hour.

- I/We will attend the luncheon/auction.
There will be _____ person(s) attending.
- I/We will contribute a basket or an item for auction.

Name _____

DATES TO REMEMBER IN

Tuesday, December 1	11:00 a.m. Memorial Service for Betty Anderson 7:00 p.m. Deer Ridge Singers Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:30 p.m. Parish Life (Decorate tree in Fellowship Hall)
Wednesday, December 2	7:30 p.m. Worship Committee
Thursday, December 3	6:15 p.m. Reflection Ringers 7:30 p.m. Chancel Choir
Friday, December 4	3:30 p.m. Somerville High School Choirs Concert
Saturday, December 5	12:30 p.m. Civic League Organ Tour (see page 1)
Sunday, December 6	9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 a.m. Worship 11:00 a.m. Luncheon/Basket Auction/Wassail Party (see page 6)
Tuesday, December 8	7:30 p.m. Administration and Finance Committee
Thursday, December 10	6:15 p.m. Reflection Ringers 7:30 p.m. Chancel Choir
Friday, December 11	7:30 p.m. Stars and Promises Concert (see page 1)
Sunday, December 13	9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 a.m. Worship 11:00 a.m. Fellowship Hour 12:00 p.m. Farm Committee Christmas Party (see page 1)
Tuesday, December 15	7:00 p.m. Deer Ridge Singers Concert (see page 1) 7:30 p.m. Consistory Meeting (Lounge) 7:30 p.m. Habitat Board Meeting (Fellowship Hall)
Wednesday, December 16	6:00 p.m. SHIP's Annual Children's Party 7:30 p.m. Worship Committee (see page 1 Trim the Trees)
Thursday, December 17	6:15 p.m. Reflection Ringers 7:30 p.m. Chancel Choir
Friday, December 18	3:30 p.m. Buitrago/Thessfeld Wedding
Sunday, December 20	9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 a.m. Worship with Sunday School Pageant 11:00 a.m. Fellowship Hour
Thursday, December 24	Christmas Eve 8:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service (see page 1)
Friday, December 25	Christmas Day (office closed) 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. SHIP's Annual Christmas Dinner (serving between 12:30 and 2:30 p.m.)
Sunday, December 27	10:00 a.m. Worship 11:00 a.m. Fellowship Hour
Monday, December 28	Intouch Deadline
Thursday, December 31	10:00 a.m. Collate Intouch
Friday, January 1, 2010	New Year's Day (Office closed)

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Fax: (908) 725-1950
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sharon.thom@yahoo.com
www.urcsomervillenj.org
Office Hours: Monday-Friday
9:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Lunch Hour:
12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.**



SWINGIN' IN THE SANCTUARY

On Saturday, November 21st, the *Music at United* concert program presented The Midiri Brothers' Quintet to an enthusiastic crowd in the sanctuary. The 90 minute set was filled with some old favorites and some original Midiri Brothers' arrangements of music from 30's and 40's. Joe Midiri led the group, playing clarinet and saxophone; Paul Midiri played the vibes, trombone, and drums during the evening;

drummer, Jim Lawlor treated the audience with a song; Steve Kramer played the sanctuary piano like it's never been played before; and Jack Hegyi was a treat on the bass. The evening was a treat and enjoyed by all who attended the concert.

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