

ECUmemo

A monthly publication of Columbine United Church

December 2011



A View from Steve's Window. As I gaze from my window today I'm looking at a headstone in a cemetery. Literally, I'm sitting in my car. I've just finished a committal and I'm looking at a headstone thinking, "Man, I do too many of these things." Here it is Christmas and I'm doing funerals. Death doesn't recognize any holidays.

This past year between Joe, Justin and myself we've done over 50 funerals. That's close to one a week. At least once a week we sit and help someone die, sit with a grieving family, and then celebrate their life in a memorial service. At least once a week we sit and watch the video of someone's life as part of the service. Mitch and I always comment how a humbling it is that a person's life can be reduced to a fifteen minute DVD. Here they've lived this long full life, and all that's left are photos and memories.

At every single memorial service I challenge the group that has gathered to remember what a great gift life is. What a blessing it is to breath in the crisp winter air. What a glory it is to watch a snow flake fall. Mitch always adds, "What a marvel it is pick up your phone and have pizza delivered to your door." There's so much in life to celebrate. And yet . . .

We become consumed with the "thick of thin things." Texting, twitter, email, voice mail, FB, people pushing and pulling, demanding time, deadlines to meet, financial goals to strive for, the dreaded wolf howling at the door. This month the tension only ramps up. Christmas shopping, malls, crowds, credit limits, bills, decorating, all of which can be great fun, and it can also consume us and pull us from the profound message of Christmas, and that is the gift of life.

COLUMBINE UNITED CHURCH
www.columbinechurch.org
An Ecumenical Church affiliated with:
Presbyterian Church (USA) • United Church of Christ • United Methodist Church
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Columbine

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... a place where faith and life meet.

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The gift of life, the life of Jesus, this little baby grew to change the world. Amidst the maze of this month we need to find ways to quiet ourselves, come to the edge of the manger and stop and marvel at this gift of life. Look at his tiny hands, hold his tiny feet, contemplate what he was going to become and how he was going to change all of those around him, and how eventually he was going to change you. Has he changed you?

I hope that Jesus has changed you. I hope that his message has sunk into your heart and has opened you up to see that you are the most precious, the most glorious gift to God. God loved the world so much that God sent Jesus to us to change us, to open us up to our divine potential. It is the glorious message of Christmas. God has become incarnate through Jesus and through us. In the same way that God sent Jesus, so God has sent you. Just as the world needed what Jesus had to offer, so does the world need what you have to offer. Your life is a gift.

“Your life is a gift,” it’s our Advent theme this year. Using the traditional Sundays of Advent; hope, peace, joy and love, I invite you to explore just what a gift your life is. Your uniqueness shines like a star on a clear winter night. The glisten that is your being lights the morning like the dawn of the sun. I want to inspire you to wake up and realize the amazing gift that God has given us through you.

I know that many of you are too busy this time of year to visit a cemetery, but it might just be one of the most important stops you can make on your December itinerary. It definitely woke old Scrooge up, it might just do the same for you. When I walk through the cemeteries, I always stop and contemplate those that have left us. I give thanks for their lives and the legacy that they leave. When I’m at Fort Logan National Cemetery, I always make a special stop and visit Greg Rund’s head stone. I remember this fine young man who gave his life during the Iraq war. When I kneel before Greg, and rub my fingers across his name, he reminds me, “Steve, value every day that you’re alive. It’s an amazing gift. I gave my life so that others might have life. You need to do the same.” Greg inspires me to live, to simply live and relish the gift of life. Is there any deeper meaning of Christmas than this? Christ is a gift. You are a gift. Life is a gift. Relish each day as a treasure and share your gift with the world.

Blessings, Steve

Shut-in List –Columbine United Church

Shut-ins are our members who are unable to get out and about. Often they are in assisted living facilities or nursing homes; they always appreciate your prayers and cards. If you know of anyone who should be on this list, please call the church office at 303-798-1845.

Edith Abbott, Ken Biel,
Edythe Corbin,
Trudy Dawson, Lola Edgell,
Dola Forsberg,
Virginia Francis,
Ed Hollingshead,
Trudy Isenberg,
Jean Scheuber, Patti Shoup,
Norma Sturges, Anna Taylor,
And Ann Wippermann.

To contact one or more of our shut-ins or send a card to them, please either call the office for an address, or pick up a “Joys and Concerns” sheet in the Narthex of the church. For security reasons, we no longer print this in a public forum.



Advent & Christmas Schedule

Sunday, November 27th

- First Sunday of Advent
- Regular Worship Schedule

Sunday, December 4th

- Second Sunday of Advent
- One Worship Service at 10:00 a.m.
- Justin's Installation
- Advent Festival
- Hanging of the Greens with lunch following

Sunday, December 11th

- Third Sunday of Advent
- 7:50 a.m. Worship in Fireside Chapel
- 9:30 & 11:00 a.m. Children's Christmas Pageant "Christmas Around the World"

Sunday, December 18th

- Fourth Sunday of Advent
- 7:50 & 9:30 a.m.—Regular Worship Schedule
- 11:00 a.m.—Sounds of Grace Christmas Cantata

Saturday, December 24th—Christmas Eve

- 4:00 p.m.; 6:00 p.m.; 8:00 p.m. & 10:00 p.m. (communion)

Sunday, December 25th

- One service only at 10:00 a.m. (Communion by Intinction)



CARING CHRISTMAS

At CUC, the Caring Christmas program provides an alternative to traditional Christmas gift giving. You can remember your family and friends with a gift of honeybees, a flock of chicks, or a share of rabbits from Heifer International where your gift will help those living in impoverished areas throughout the world achieve food independence and economic security. How about a box of nails, a gallon of paint or a doorknob for Habitat for Humanity's construction of a



family's new home? Or the gift of a blanket to someone struggling to find shelter and warmth through the Church World Service Blankets! Program. Stop by the Mission House on Sunday mornings from November 27th through December 18th to find out more!

CHURCH BUSINESS MANAGEMENT NEWS

I'll admit it.. I have a love/hate relationship with change. I love the newness that change brings, along with progression and learning, but if I experience too much change at once, I find myself wanting to get off of the roller coaster and settle back into the comfort of "the usual." With too much change, we experience too many variables. There is always a need for stability, a constant. CUC has experienced a number of changes in the last year, particularly staff-related, and I'm working to do my part to ensure that the impact to the congregation is kept to a minimum. I see the congregation as the constant amidst the change at CUC. Who we are, as a congregation, is the sum of all of the changes we have experienced - the fun ones, the not-so-fun ones, the large and the small. Change is inevitable. We need change to grow, to learn new things, and to move forward into new opportunities. It moves us along the path to our ultimate goal.

I'm into my third week on the job as CUC's Business Manager, and I am embracing the change. There are daily challenges in learning the ins and outs of my new position, but the joy lies in meeting members of the congregation, listening to their ideas and visions for CUC, and working with the staff to see many of those ideas and visions come to fruition (all within the confines of the budget, of course!). Thank you to those of you that have made me feel so welcome in my new role. It has made the transition a true blessing!



October Financials

I'm a glass-half-full kind of girl, so let's start with the positive. Financials for the month of October were slightly better than we had anticipated in the budget. Total Revenue was \$63,144 for the month, against a budget of \$60,700. And more good news! Expenditures came in slightly below budget, at \$59,955 versus a budget of \$61,000. With October being the midpoint of our fiscal year, Total Revenue for these six months is \$337,294 versus \$343,900 planned. As Dwight mentioned in previous articles, the revenue shortfall is predominantly related to our investment income. While things did improve in this line for October, year to date we're still seeing the effects the stock market roller coaster this past summer.

With a need to offset the losses in our investments, it was good to see expenses more in line with the budget for the month of October. Year to date, our expenses are \$387,651 versus \$380,400 planned. I am working with the staff and committees to pinpoint further opportunities for expense reductions in the coming months, with a balanced budget our focused target.

As Dwight mentioned in previous articles, many programs and expenses smooth out with the budget as the year progresses, and I'll continue to monitor this. Overall, at the end of October year to date, we are \$50,358 in the red when we had planned to be \$36,500 down. The month of October was a slight improvement, but there is still more work to do in the next six months to ensure we meet our goal.

LeeAnn Smith





The Bonfils Blood Center, assisted by the Kiwanis Club of Columbine and co-sponsored by Columbine United Church, will be conducting their next **community blood drive**

on Monday, December 12, 2011 from 1:00 to 6:30 p.m. at Columbine United Church Biel Fellowship Hall. Child care will be provided between the hours of 1:30 and 4:30 PM for the children of donors. This church is a co-sponsor of these blood drives and CUC members and friends have been very supportive in the past.

It is appreciated for donors to schedule an appointment in advance of this drive. Your appointment may be scheduled by contacting Dave Grobe either by email or phone (dngrobe@msn.com or 303-973-5279).

Your gift of blood may save or prolong the lives of up to three people. Please give the gift of life to members of your community!

MUSIC

Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir Christmas

CUC and Wellshire (Mitch & Kristin Samu) will join together for a Christmas concert of the new work "Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir Christmas". They welcome all vocalists to come and be a part of this great Christmas concert. Concert dates are Saturday, Dec. 10th at 2:00 p.m. at CUC and Sunday, December 11th at 2:00 p.m. at Wellshire. You can also call Kristin at (720) 670-6733 for more information.

Adult Education

Tuesday Mornings with Steve. On Tuesday mornings, 9:30 – 11:30, this study group meets in the parlor with Rev. Steve Poos-Benson. On the verge of finishing the book *Made for Goodness* by Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu, the class' plans for December include: learning about the trip to Israel, celebrating during our holiday brunch, and preparing for our next study with the book *20 Hot Potatoes Christians are Afraid to Touch* by Tony Campolo. This book explores topics that are controversial within various Christian denominations and should deepen our understanding of "those who believe differently than us". Participants are welcome to join at any time, and you should expect snacks!

Sunday Mornings. The Sunday morning group that usually meets from 9:30 – 10:30 is taking a break for the holidays, after having completed its study of the Beatitudes. Watch the bulletin for announcements on the next topic when it resumes in January.

Our Shared Legacy of Slavery. In conjunction with the Just Faith Program, you are invited to a presentation by Harold Fields exploring issues of race in American culture, on Thursday, December 1, 6:30 – 9:00 p.m. in the Parlor. Mr. Fields is the facilitator for the monthly citywide racial dialogue in Denver that has been sponsored by the Tattered Cover for 13 years. He also participated in the making of the documentary, *Traces of the Trade: A Story of the Deep North*.

Holiday Grief Support Group. The holidays are often extremely difficult when you have experienced a significant loss or death of a loved one. Memories and expectations can create feelings of overwhelming sadness and/or anger. Jayne Spencer leads a 2-session grief support class on Tuesdays, December 6 and December 20, from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. in the church library. If you could benefit from some support and compassion at this time in your life, please join this small group (8-10 people). Sign up by calling Dot at (303) 798-1845.

Planning Ahead for 2012. Join us in January as we continue our exploration of major religions with Judaism. We have invited the Jewish members of the Abrahamic Initiative to share their faith and improve our understanding of this important world religion. The Abrahamic Initiative, headquartered at St. John's Cathedral in Denver, is committed to provide a forum for dialogue among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and to foster understanding and appreciation for the faith perspectives of each tradition. Watch the bulletin for details.

Social Side

Join the Social Side for our annual Denver Brass Concert on Sunday, December 11th at 2:30 p.m. at Bethany Lutheran on Hampden and Colorado Blvd. We'll carpool from CUC, leaving at 1:45 to get our reserved seats. Your check will hold your seat! Sign up at the Information Booth, then put your check in the offering plate on Sunday. Make it out to CUC and be sure to write Denver Brass in the memo line. With our group discount, tickets will be \$21/person. We have only 25 tickets this year and they go fast. For more information, call Marie Schreiber or Jan Clayton.



From Justin's End of the Hallway

Why Church?

Have you stopped to consider lately the reason you participate in church life here at Columbine United? One common reason I hear from parents is that they want their children to grow up with good values. Another reason that I hear, especially here at CUC, is that parents want their children to be in a church that appreciates critical thinking, as well as, other faiths and religions. These are very important factors and reasons.

Nevertheless, one I rarely hear from parents in all of the congregations I've served is this, "I want my children to experience the grace and love of God." This is a very important idea. As great as it is to have an open, critical understanding of religion, faith and spirituality, it is important to keep in mind that the kind of faith that gets us through the rough times in life and helps us to truly navigate the plethora of hurdles that we encounter is one that is open to the experience and emotion of encountering God's love and grace.

As children grow, it is a wonderful thing for them to participate in a progressive, theologically open community. However, it is far greater for them to have a faith that is integrated with events and circumstances of life. When children encounter pain, suffering, death, bullying, oppression, and tough choices, it's not just a matter of good values or critical thinking, it's whether they can feel God's touch and know that God is with them.

Christmas & Your Family

With all of the hype and hoopla around Santa and presents, you may be finding it a bit difficult to incorporate the story of Jesus and your faith into your family's life. Here are some ideas to help your family out:

- Build or buy a Nativity set to put in a key spot in your home – better yet, add pieces to it over the weeks and tell the story of each piece to your children
- Read the Christmas story (its in Luke 2:1-20)
- Create a religious Advent Wreath or Advent Calendar (search www.ehow.com for some instructions)

- Buy some children's story books of the Nativity story
- Light Advent Candles at home
- Sing some Christmas Carols
- Attend a Christmas Eve worship service
- Music & Mission

Our children will be starting a very unique and incredible music project on Wednesday, January 11. For 10 weeks they will be directed by Barry Brown to sing original songs with choreographed movements. During this time, our children will also be participating in a few service projects. This very unique approach led by Barry will combine the music and the mission over these weeks. Plan on bringing your children to the first rehearsal on Wednesday, January 11 to find out more!

Getting to Know You

Over the past five months, I have learned many of your names, had coffee or a meal with some of you, and have even been in a few of your homes. What I want to do is to get to know even more of you! Please send me an email, give me a call or pull me aside sometime so we can plan a time for me to get to know your family better!

Women's Retreat at LaForet February 3, 4 and 5, 2012

If you are interested in relaxation, fellowship, spirituality and good food, consider joining us for a women's retreat in the Black Forest at Camp LaForet. Approximate cost is \$80.00 for 2 nights lodging and food. We will be cooking our own meals which will keep the cost down. There will be a guest speaker joining us with a variety of topics which is still TBD. Please call or email Jody Randall at (720) 530-6283 or jody.lynn1213@hotmail.com by January 2nd if you are interested. We have space available for 18 women. More information to follow soon!

PART-TIME CHURCH FACILITIES COORDINATOR

This position reports to the Business Manager.

If interested please forward resumes to CUC Human Resources Committee c/o Dot at dot@columbinechurch.org or dropped off at the Church, attn. CUC HRC in c/o of Dot no later than Dec 1, 2011.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS AND DUTIES

- Coordinate the third party services provider/subcontractor relationships. This position is responsible in finding and developing good working relationships with appropriate subcontractors for HVAC, cleaning, plumbing, electrical, plowing, roofing, etc. to ensure that work is done on time, effectively, and within budget. Actual contract rates will be approved by the Business Manager. This will include handling after hour emergencies.
- Working in conjunction with the Volunteer Coordinator, develop an effective organization of volunteers who can perform more routine maintenance such as mowing, painting, some interior remodeling, gardening, etc.
- Analyzing church needs in terms of maintenance or improvements to the facilities, getting cost estimates, and developing budgets around these activities to assist the Business Manager in overall church budgeting.
- Maintain church tools and equipment, ordering janitorial and similar supplies, and ensuring that installed security and safety devices operate as required by various codes.

KNOWLEDGE, SPECIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

- General knowledge and experience of building and grounds maintenance and management.
- Be a self-starter, good at multi-tasking and prioritizing work and projects.
- Ability to communicate with audiences of all levels.
- Able to work independently and require little supervision.
- Experience in third party vendor management.

HOURS

Part-time- approx. 20 hours per week

COMPENSATION

Dependent upon experience



Youth

At 4:29 each day, my phone quacks at me. The cool part is that there are other CUC youth and adults who have similar ringtones sounding at that same time each day. In my mind, it's like a little chorus ringing all over metro Denver at 4:29 every afternoon. It's an alarm that I've set to remind myself to say a specific prayer for youth at CUC. This fall, we've spent our weekly high school youth group devotion time exploring what it means to be part of a Christian community— It gets really easy to fall into a pattern of just living and forget to be mindful about why we are a community, what connects us, how to journey together and how to handle the challenges. One of the texts that we reflected on is Ephesians 4:29. This little lesson reminds us to use our words for building each other up. We decided to use our words in prayer for one another to live out this text. For many of us, it's just so easy to watch others and comment on what we like or dislike about what they're doing or not doing. We use our words to demonstrate wit and prove how clever we can be. I think of it as living life as a color commentator for the game of life. The Ephesians verse is just a simple reminder to side step the quips and sound bites temptation and be intentional in prayerful words of support and encouragement. Our CUC youth have taken the challenge to live out the lesson and embrace mindful community living. How would the whole of CUC look if we all took the challenge? Try setting your phone alarm to quack or tweet or whatever sound

you like at 4:29 each afternoon. Remember the message of Ephesians 4:29, offer a prayer for someone at CUC and use your words for building up our church family. Join our chorus!

Joyfully, Carla



Join the CGs for Great Fun

It's a great ministry—our Chronologically Gifted meet once a month in Biel Hall for a dinner and educational program. We also have field trips throughout the year. The cost is minimal, but everyone gets so much out of it. We'd love to have you join us! If you're interested, call Josie at (303) 241-8797. Rev. Joe Woodson offers our spiritual guidance and Phyllis Baker works non-stop planning menus and programs with Josie Hamlen. Check out our last month's activities—The Wildlife Experience and a spaghetti dinner and bingo (with great prizes).



December 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 6:30 p.m. Just Faith in the Parlor	2	3
4 Communion Sunday 7:50, 9:30 & 11:00 a.m. Services With Hanging of the Greens and Advent Festival and Justin's Installation	5 5:45 p.m. Dinner before Services 6:00 p.m. In the Light Service	6 7:00 Grief Support in Library 7:00 p.m. Prayer Shawl in Adult Ed Room	7 6:15 p.m. Bells 6:30 p.m. The Band 7:30 p.m. Sounds of Grace	8 6:30 p.m. Just Faith in the Parlor	9	10 2:00 p.m. Brooklyn Tabernacle Christmas Concert
11 7:50 a.m. Service in Fireside Chapel 9:30 & 11:00 a.m. Children's Pageant 1:45 p.m. Social Side	12 1:00 p.m. Blood Drive 5:45 p.m. Dinner before Services 6:00 p.m. In the Light Service	13 9:30 a.m. Adult Ed in Parlor	14 6:15 p.m. Bells 6:30 p.m. The Band 7:30 p.m. Sounds of Grace	15 6:30 p.m. Just Faith in the Parlor	16	17
18 7:50 & 9:30 a.m. Services 11:00 a.m. Christmas Cantata	19 5:45 p.m. Dinner before Services 6:00 p.m. In the Light Service 6:30 p.m. Council in the Parlor	20 7:00 p.m. Grief Support in Library	21 6:15 p.m. Bells 6:30 p.m. The Band 7:30 p.m. Sounds of Grace	22	23	24 4:00, 6:00; 8:00 & 10:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Services (communion)
25 10:00 a.m. Christmas Day Service (Communion by Intinction)	26 5:45 p.m. Dinner before Services 6:00 p.m. In the Light Service	27	28 6:30 p.m. Sounds of Grace	29	30	31