



# The Meeting House News

An Open and Affirming  
Congregation of The United  
Church of Christ

First Congregational Church of Houston

FEBRUARY 2012



**Men's Lunch**  
February 3

**Chili Cook-Off and Friends of C.E.**  
February 4  
See details on Page 4

**Secret Friend's Party**  
February 12  
See details on Page 4



February 14



**Ash Wednesday Supper and Worship**  
February 22  
See details on Page 6

**Youth Mission Event**  
February 19  
See details on Page 5

**Rob Landes Concert for Parkinson Society**  
February 26  
See details on Page 9

## Inside this issue:

Senior Minister	2
Christian Education	3
Announcements	6
Missions/Outreach	8
Music	9
Birthdays/Prayer Requests/Births	10
Calendar	11

## Coming in March...

<b>Men's Lunch</b> March 2
<b>Youth Spring Fundraiser</b> March 4
<b>Daylight Savings Time</b> March 11
<b>Scrapbooking Day</b> March 17
<b>Fibromyalgia Meeting</b> March 17
<b>Decibells Play</b> March 18
<b>Council Meeting</b> March 19
<b>All Church Retreat Slumber Falls</b> March 23-25



The church season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. Having lived in the New Orleans area for three years of my life, I can tell you that Ash Wednesday usually gets a little overpowered by Mardi Gras the day before. But, in spite of all the celebrating that went on, the churches would faithfully gather on Wednesday, and proclaim the message of repentance.

While most of us don't have quite the same tradition of praying after partying, Ash Wednesday can't be overlooked as one of the very important days in Christianity. As with other ritual days, it is a microcosm of what our lives should be about everyday of the year. This is where the importance of tradition and sacred ritual something in human life to a you are giving your actions a mundane. And in going be-controlled effort, you sometimes much greater than your own it.



We gather on Ash Wednesday how we think and live. The Hebrew ritual of mourning and throughout the Hebrew scrip-frailty of human life (from ashes return). In a way, receiving the way of saying to God, "I weakness of my human life, and precious time and energy in support me in becoming the created to be." That symbolic, us into the season of Lent, the six weeks before Easter. This season of Lent is reflective of Jesus spending 40 days in the wilderness after being baptized, confronting the temptation to succumb to earthly comfort and power. After that time in the wilderness we are told that Jesus emerged "filled with the Holy Spirit." Wouldn't it be wonderful to emerge from the season of Lent "filled with the Spirit!"

to repent, literally to change ashes are symbolic of the repentance that is found tures. The ashes symbolize the we came and to ashes we will ashes on Ash Wednesday is our recognize the brevity and I grieve that I have wasted endeavors that aren't going to whole, loving person I was ritual repentance is what leads

All this is to say that rituals are important, perhaps even more so today than in the past. It used to be that things were more structured and ordered in human life, particularly in western society. Most of us grew up with the knowledge of how the world operated, the give and take of life that kept things civil and somewhat predictable. Because of that, ritual, as related to religion, came to be looked upon as something that was merely a repetitive, going through the motions, type of activity. But, that is not the reality of life today. As custom and familiarity with the past become more remote, as families less and less spend generations in the same community, in touch with each other, people are looking for something to lend a meaning to their lives that is beyond the latest internet scandal or the continuing focus on material wealth that moves farther and farther from younger people each year. Ritual becomes a link to something that does give meaning to life: caring, forgiveness, support and healing. All those things that we used to take for granted, but that are becoming the exception rather than the norm.

The ritual of Ash Wednesday is an invitation to become a part of something that is life giving, rather than life draining. All are welcomed and all are fed. Come and feast upon the Spirit of God that gives life. Come.

Ken



## Christian Education Page

### For Children and Youth

**Rainbow Room, the Gold Stars, and Upper Kidz** will continue using our new, lectionary-based curriculum called Seasons of the Spirit. Our lessons this month will continue to focus on the Season of Epiphany, studying several stories from the Gospel of Mark. Many thanks to our teachers: Chris Watkins, Natalie Byrd, Courtney Carter, and Kristen Kaiser.

**Junior High** will be following a lectionary-based curriculum designed by Shawn Gleason. They will be studying the same scriptures as we are talking about in church. Shawn and Karen Gleason lead the class.

**Senior High** will continue with Akaloo for the remaining semester. They will use the unit on Mark, with a discussion on what the Bible says about Jesus' divinity. Ted Jordan leads this class.

### For Adults

**Bible 101:** Bible 101 class continues to work with *Seasons of the Spirit*. This curriculum is based on the Revised Common Lectionary and will follow the church calendar. Thus, what's talked about in worship will be explored further during Sunday School. This is a great way to introduce us to both scripture and the seasons of the church year.

**Biblical Theology: The Beatitudes.** Ed Dick will lead the Biblical Theology class during the month of February in an attempt to experience the healing nature of Beatitudes as found in several possible translations of the Aramaic version. Source: "The Prayers of the Cosmos" by Neil Douglas-Klotz who says: "There is no question that Jesus and his followers spoke Aramaic."

**SpiritQuest:**

- February 5: Old/New Testament culture and God, guest discussion leader: Prof. Peter Davids, Houston Graduate School of Theology
- February 12: African culture and God, guest discussion leader: Dr. Elias Bongmba, Rice University
- February 19: African American culture and God, led by Paul Byrd
- February 26: Native American culture and God, led by Darlene Jones
- March 3: Chinese culture and God, guest discussion leader: Renshi Zhang, Chinese missionary, Fort Bend Community Church.

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*The Christian Education Page continued...*



### Chili Cook-off and Friends of CE!

Our Annual Chili Cook-off will be on February 4th, from 5:00-7:00 p.m. in the Assembly Room. Prizes will be handed out for "Best Chili," "Mom's Favorite," and "Hottest Chili." On the program for the evening is a chance to talk with our CE leaders about our vision for Christian Education in the coming years. We can't wait to see all of you there!



### It's Time for Secret Friends!

You are invited to join in our annual "getting to know you" intergenerational event! Adults become "Secret Friends" to our FCC children during the weeks leading to Valentine's Day. This year, we'd really like to encourage those FCC members without young children at home to participate, so that our children can get to know you better! Participating in this sweet tradition is a great way to get to know a special child at our church – and share a bond with them for years to come.

#### The 2012 Secret Friends schedule:

**February 5<sup>th</sup> and February 12<sup>th</sup>:** Continue to post and receive messages on the Secret Friends trees in the Assembly Room. During both weeks, you'll leave sweet notes, funny clues, and (if you wish) small, simple tokens or gifts for your Secret Friend to see if he or she can guess your identity.

**February 12:** Reveal yourself to your Secret Friend after church in the Assembly Room during our celebration. Enjoy refreshments, get to know each other, and be part of a fun group photo on Valentine's Day!

Questions? Feel free to contact Courtney Carter at (713) 973-9720 or at [c\\_t\\_carter@yahoo.com](mailto:c_t_carter@yahoo.com) with any questions. We hope you make a special new friend in 2012 with this wonderful FCC tradition.



*The Christian Education Page continued...*



## YOUTH NEWS

### Volunteering

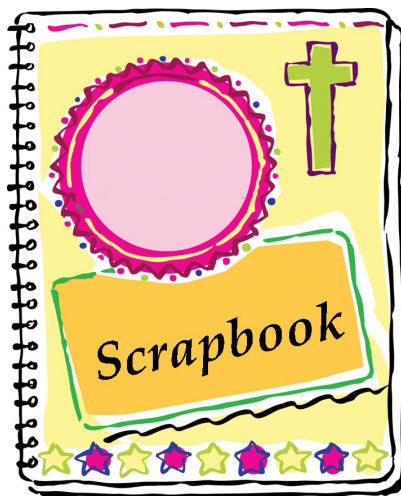
- The youth will be volunteering at Quentin Mease Hospital and Thomas Street AIDS Clinic in the coming months. Quentin Mease is an elderly rehab facility where we will host a Bingo afternoon and visit patients who are unable to leave their rooms. We will also host a clothing drive for Thomas Street AIDS Clinic. The clinic members and their families are in constant need for clothing of all types and sizes. Please look for more information in your bulletins and Sunday announcements.

### Spring Fundraiser

- Our Spring Fundraiser is coming up on March 4<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. in the Assembly Room. Our Fall Dinner Theater was a wild success and a great time was had by all. Plan on this fundraiser being even better! All money raised will go towards sending our youth to the National Youth Event at Purdue University this July.

### Youth Sunday

- Youth Sunday is on February 12<sup>th</sup>! Our youth are working on a service based on the quote by Mahatma Gandhi, "Be the change you want to see in the world."



## Scrapbooking Day at FCC!

Do you have unfinished scrapbooking projects? Do you feel like you never have the time to finish your scrapbooks? Are you looking for a great time to hang out with your friends from FCC and do something crafty? Well, Sue Earl and Katelin Warren have just the thing for you!! We are hosting our first ever Scrapbooking Day at FCC on March 17<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m. Bring your supplies and tools to share around. Bring those scrapbooks that you never have time to finish. Bring a sack lunch. And bring a friend! We can't wait to see you there!



## Ash Wednesday Supper and Worship

The church season of Lent begins on February 22 with the celebration of Ash Wednesday. As we have done for many years, there will be a supper to begin the evening at 6:00 p.m. in the Assembly Room. The supper is a way of celebrating our own Fat Tuesday. While it's not parades and revelry, it is a way of coming together to enjoy a fellowship meal (children included) before going into the Meeting House to worship and symbolically offer ourselves as a sacrifice to the journey of Lent through the imposition of ashes. Come, and let us begin the journey, for we are not alone. The Creator has prepared the way and walks with us.

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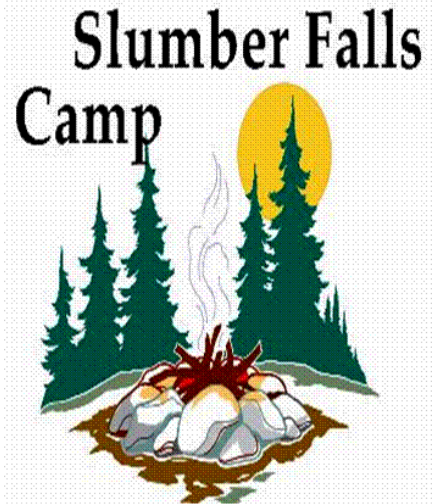
## Annual Church Leadership Workshop February 18

The Annual Church Leadership Workshop will be held on Saturday, February 18, from 8:45 a.m. till 1:00 p.m. in the Assembly Room. Lunch will be included. The workshop is open to any church member, but especially, all members of Boards and Committees are strongly urged to be in attendance. We will have an in-depth report from the Timothy Project co-chairs, and there will be time for questions and discussion. The second part of the workshop will have the Boards and Committees meeting individually and spending time reviewing responsibilities and formulating goals that reflect the recommendations of the Timothy Project. If you have questions about the workshop, contact Tom O'Neill or Rev. Richter.

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## All Church Retreat (Slumber Falls) March 23-25

Be sure to mark off the weekend of March 23—25 for a wonderful retreat at Slumber Falls Camp. Slumber Falls is a UCC camp and retreat center located on the Guadalupe River in New Braunfels. The camp site has a large building that is used for breakfast, lunch, and group activities. Rustic cabins are used for sleeping. You can choose whether you want to sleep in a screened cabin or a fancier air-conditioned one. A cabin might house 4—11 people, and you can pick your roommates.



This retreat is a wonderful opportunity to get to know other church members. Enjoy the outdoors and many activities: tubing, rafting, hiking, shopping, playing games, or just sitting on the bank of the river with a good book. All ages are welcome. We hope you and your family will join us. Sign up at Coffee, Tea, and Conversation soon. For more information, please contact Karen Gleason.



The Seekers are inviting you to join us as we start a new book on February 8<sup>th</sup>. We meet on Wednesday evenings for brown bag supper (6:00 p.m.) and then go to our room for discussion of our current book, sharing of our feelings and concerns, and centering prayer (from about 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.). Our new book is Take This Bread by Sara Miles. It is about a woman's journey from atheism to energetic service in a Christian community. All are welcome. Please call Sylvia at (713) 461-7650 if you would like to become a part of the group.

## SISTERS OF MARY MAGDALENE FEBRUARY 27TH MEETING



Sisters of Mary Magdalene will meet for supper at 6:30 p.m. on February 27th. You may RSVP to Joyce Haftings at <[joyousme@earthlink.net](mailto:joyousme@earthlink.net)> or (713) 984-2585, and let her know what you will bring for the meal.

We intend to begin reading and discussing the Preface and Chapter I in our new study book, John Shelby Spong's "The Sins of the Scripture: Exposing the Bible's Texts of Hate to Reveal the God of Love," so please begin reading. It is available in paperback. If you are interested, now is a good time to join our group.

## PLEASE HELP KEEP OUR CHURCH OFFICE CLEAN

The Church Office has a special request, if you, your committee, or group meet in the Parlor or Church Office, [please leave the area the same as you found it](#). All coffee cups, dishes, etc., need to be washed and returned to its origin and food not be left out or in plates for others to handle.

Your continued cooperation is greatly appreciated!!

Thank You!



## MAM UPDATE

### FCC Nudges Capital Campaign Toward Goal

Howard Strong and David Lewallen presented MAM with a check for \$5,000 from the Endowment for the Capital Campaign. Our gift came at a really good time because MAM has received a matching grant. So we doubled our money and that fits with Jesus' parable of the Good Steward.

### New Parking Lot Nears Completion!

The new parking lot will have temporary striping and portions of it will be available to staff, volunteers, and visitors starting on Tuesday, January 17th. Steelwork starts in two weeks.



Additionally, demolition of the area for the Resale Store expansion begins the same week.

The Resale Store and all services will remain open throughout construction. St. Christopher's Episcopal Church has graciously agreed to offer overflow parking near their thrift store during construction.

### MAM Resale Store Sales Exceed \$1 Million in 2011!

MAM is pleased to announce that the MAM Resale Store produced over \$1 million in sales in 2011! We are not sure exactly when the millionth dollar came in, but

the store staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to meet the goal. Thank you for supporting the Resale Store, for your personal donations to the effort, and willingness to support our commitment to growth.

Director of Resale Operations, Cindy Husb, and the Resale Store staff and volunteers are to be commended for four consecutive years of increased sales. They have taken advantage of new opportunities to increase donations such as parking the truck at member churches on Sundays, working with an appraiser and collecting small quantities of gold and silver "throwaways" for smelting into cash.

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# **ROB LANDES IN CONCERT**

## **Music of World War II**



### **First Congregational Church**

**10840 Beinhorn Road at Brogden  
(One Block West of Voss)**

**3:00 p.m. - Sunday  
February 26, 2012**

**This event is a fundraiser for  
Parkinson Foundation of Harris County.  
Donations are gratefully appreciated.**



Congratulations to Jennifer and Ted Jordan on the birth of their daughter, Aislynn Elizabeth, born on Wednesday, January 4. Aislynn Elizabeth weighed 8 pounds and 4 ounces. Jennifer and Aislynn are doing well. Best wishes for 2012 for the Jordan family!

<b>FEBRUARY</b>	
Phil Hardy .....	February 2
Allison Hill .....	February 2
Bill Taube .....	February 2
Jeff Hopkins.....	February 3
Julie Norton.....	February 6
Susan Billipp .....	February 8
Sam Houston .....	February 8
William F. Rissmuller.....	February 9
Natalie J. McClure.....	February 12
Jay Whatley.....	February 12
Howard Strong .....	February 13
LaVerne Meline.....	February 14
Steve Olson.....	February 14
Farid Khosravi .....	January 16
Naomi Black .....	February 19
Karen Gleason .....	February 19
Carol Young .....	February 20
Tricia Rosencranz.....	February 21
Cori Ryniker.....	February 22
Jane Bawden.....	February 23
Paul A. Byrd.....	February 23
Laura Fraser .....	February 23
Cameron Hill.....	February 23
Jan Wilbur .....	February 25
Ruby A. Reynolds.....	February 26
Matthew Wilson .....	February 26
Tricia Earl .....	February 28



**PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS:**

Pat Damsgaard; Glenda Lam; Edwina Lolley and Ron Lolley; Anne Szopa and partner Sue Wilson; Eleanor and Ric Ricards; Obie Burroughs; The Rev. Paul Dearing; Kenny Gray (co-worker of Jim Earl); Jeff Harper; Bunny Mason; Burton and Ron Bagby-Grose's cousin, Jeff Hill, and friend, Tim Brookover; Darlene Jones' mother, Millie Gurka, and her stepdad, C. D. Gurka; Terry Watkins (brother of Christina Watkins); Naomi Black's brother, Jonathan Hutchison, and her grandson, Charlie Ramquist; and Steven Inglis and family on the passing of his mother.

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Visit **Jeff Harper's** site on Caring Bridge to read status, updates and postings: <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/jeffreyharper>

**Bunny Mason's** new address as of **February 6:**  
 Alice (Bunny) Mason  
 Atria Willow Park  
 3500 South Vine Avenue  
 Tyler, TX 75701  
 Main telephone number (903) 561-4302.

# February 2012

February 2012

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29			

March 2012

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Jan 29	30	31	Feb 1	2	3	4
10:00am Worship Service 11:30am Confirmation Classes 11:30am C.E. Classes	9:00am Staff Retreat (St. Peter's UCC) 7:00pm Deacons	7:00am Non-FCC-Girl Scout Cookie Delivery (Pkg Lot Used Only) (confirm Rm) 10:00am P/CP (Spirit Quest) 11:30am Staff Meeting 7:00pm Evangelism (Ken's office)	6:00pm Seekers 7:00pm CoDA (SrH) 7:30pm Decibells (Choir Room)	Groundhog Day (United States) 9:15am Bible Study Group (Not FCC) (Parking Lot Use Only) 7:30pm MH Choir (Choir Room)	12:00pm Men's Lunch (A/R) 7:00pm AA	8:00am AFS Intern'l Exchange Students (Non-FCC) (A/R, SH/JH, SpiritQuest) 9:30am Terry Thomas Testing 5:00pm Friends of CE & Child Cookoff
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
10:00am Birthdays (United Youth Sunday) 10:00am Worship Service 11:00am Secret Friends Party 11:30am C.E. Classes 12:30pm C.E. Board 3:00pm H.A. Council Mtg	8:30am Girl Scouts Service Unit (A/R) 11:30am Staff Meeting 6:00pm CIS 7:30pm Trustees (A/R)	Valentine's Day (United States) 12:00pm Staff/Church Relations (SrH) 7:00pm Activities	6:00pm Seekers 7:00pm CoDA (SrH) 7:30pm Decibells (Choir Room)	9:15am Bible Study Group (Not FCC) (Parking Lot Use Only) 7:30pm MH Choir (Choir Room)	7:00pm AA	10:00am Terry Thomas Testing 5:00pm Youth Lock-ins (A/R)
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
10:00am Worship Service - Decibells Play 11:30am C.E. Classes 12:30pm Youth Mission Event	Presidents' Day (United States) 11:30am Staff Meeting 7:00pm Council	10:00am P/CP (Spirit Quest Rm) 7:00pm Missions (Parlor)	Ash Wednesday 6:00pm Ash Wednesday Service (A/R) 6:00pm Seekers 7:00pm CoDA (SrH) 7:30pm Worship Service	9:15am Bible Study Group (Not FCC) (Parking Lot Use Only) 12:00pm H.A. Clergy (A/R) 7:30pm MH Choir (Choir Room)	7:00pm AA	8:45am Leadership Workshop (w/childcare) (A/R)
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
10:00am Worship Service 11:30am C.E. Classes 3:00pm Rob Landes Concert for Parkinson Society (MH)	11:30am Staff Meeting 6:30pm Sisters of Mary Magdalene	Katelin - vac	6:00pm Seekers 7:00pm CoDA (SrH) 7:30pm Decibells (Choir Room)	Mar 1	7:00pm Bridge 7:00pm AA	9:00am Soup Kitchen 10:00am Terry Thomas Testing
26	27	28	29	Mar 1	2	3

Jan 29 - Feb 4

Feb 5 - 11

Feb 12 - 18

Feb 19 - 25

Feb 26 - Mar 3

# First Congregational Church of Houston

10840 Beinhorn Road  
Houston, Texas 77024

Phone: 713 468-9543

Fax: 713 468-5951

E-mail: [office@fcc-houston.org](mailto:office@fcc-houston.org)

*Where Heart and Mind Meet*

## Sunday Morning Schedule

10:00 am

Morning Worship

11:00 a.m.

Coffee, Tea, and Conversation

11:30 a.m.

Educational Programs

For Children, Youth, and Adults

## The Mission of First Congregational Church

Seek to Follow Christ's way through worship and service;  
Welcome all into an inclusive community;  
Search for more light and truth from God's Word;  
Support one another on our faith journeys; and  
Strive for peace and justice in the world.

## Church Staff

The Rev. Ken Richter, Senior Minister

The Rev. Katelin Warren, Director of Christian Education

Tracy Jacob Shirk, Director of Music Ministries

Jay Whatley, Organist

Dr. Sylvia Richards, Commissioned Minister of Counseling and Community Life

Jane Bradbery, Office Administrator