



# The Meeting House News

An Open and Affirming  
Congregation of The United  
Church of Christ

First Congregational Church of Houston

JANUARY 2012



Church Office Closed  
January 2

Men's Lunch  
January 6

2nd Annual Piano Festival  
January 14  
See details on Page 4

Godly Play  
January 28  
See details on Page 7

Steam Cleaning Carpets  
January 21  
See details on Page 9

Annual Meeting  
January 29  
See details on Page 2

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Christian Education	5-7
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## Coming in February....

Men's Lunch  
February 3

Friends of CE & Chili Cookoff  
February 4

Secret Friends' Party  
February 12

Youth Mission Event  
February 19

Rob Landes Concert for  
Parkinson Society  
February 26



Happy New Year ♥ Happy New Year ♥ Happy New Year



It's been a joyous Christmas for our family, and I hope for yours too. Now we look forward to the beginning of a new year. I think that the lesson of both the birth of Jesus and the changing year are the same: who, or what are we going to give our lives to as we move forward into the future?

In spite of the traditional theme of God's gift of Jesus, over the years, I've come to understand the lesson of Christmas as about giving ourselves, meaning that we put time and preparation into this special gift of who we are. The story of the Wise Men is about giving something to God, searching for an elusive

hope and giving our best to it. To prepare a gift is to intentionally devote time and energy to a special purpose. The real gift of Christmas is the gift of ourselves, given to God. Just as Mary responded to the angel's invitation to bear the Savior with a positive "here I am, servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word" so also we are beckoned to bring to the manger (God) our willingness to be used by the Creator to bring God's love into reality in our own world.

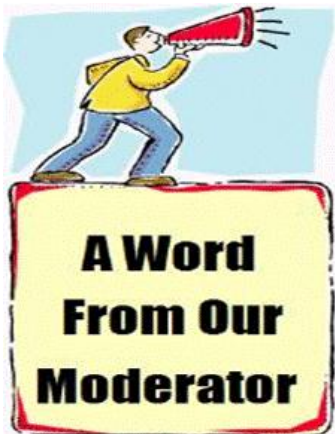
In a similar way, making resolutions for the new year is very much about what we give our lives to. I've tried to do the "resolution thing" quite a few times and have only had mediocre results. Perhaps a real "new year's resolution" has to include something beyond myself in order to make it something that will continue to captivate my willingness. If I know that there is something or someone else to whom I am making this resolution (gift) maybe it would make it more compelling for me to carry out each day.

How do we determine who or what we will give our lives to in 2012? That's a question that we all need to struggle with. It's a lot like making resolutions for the new year and then finding ways to keep them. We have to keep in mind why we are doing this exercise in gift giving and then work to continually prepare ourselves, over and over again.

Ken

## **Annual Congregational Meeting, January 29**

The Annual Meeting of First Congregational Church of Houston will be held on Sunday, January 29, following our regular 10:00 a.m. worship service. All are invited to adjourn to the Assembly Room to share in a light lunch. The meeting itself will begin around 12:30 p.m. As well as elections for Boards and Committees, there will be a report from the Timothy Project and several other items of business to be dealt with. All members of FCC are encouraged to be present.



## *From the Moderator,*

By the time you read this, we will have made it through another Christmas season, a significant campus-changing drought, an even more significant exploration by the Timothy Project of what FCC is all about and what we want to be all about for the next twenty years.

While there are many good things that we have accomplished this past year that I will include in the Moderator's annual report, perhaps the most significant for many of us is the improving economy and the memory of harder times receding into the past. Most of you know that FCC has also experienced some setbacks in the form of air conditioning replacement, tree removal, needed repairs from windstorm, and coupled with the lost revenue from use of our building by the Piney Point municipal court. The latest financial statement shows our 2011 year to date income roughly \$35,000 behind our expenses to date. Please respond to the notices that have recently gone out to fulfill your pledge by the year's end.

A greater concern is that our current income projections for 2012 are behind our challenge budget by about \$50,000. Council will consider necessary cuts in that budget at its December meeting, but I would ask at the same time that each of us who have pledged consider increasing that pledge by as much as 20%, and that those who have not yet pledged please do so before mid-January. The more pledges turned in, the lower the average pledge has to be to meet the challenge. At the current number of pledges, the average pledge would have to be over \$4,000 to fund the programs and mission commitments that we all want, along with the salaries and physical plant costs that make those programs possible.

For the 35 years that Katherine and I have been members here, the people of FCC have always come though. My hope is that this information will inspire everyone to participate to the extent that they can. None of us wants to have to decide what part of our church life we can live without.

May the New Year bring peace and goodwill to you all,

George Howe, Moderator



## SECOND ANNUAL FCC PIANO FESTIVAL

Featuring music of women  
and  
GLBT composers

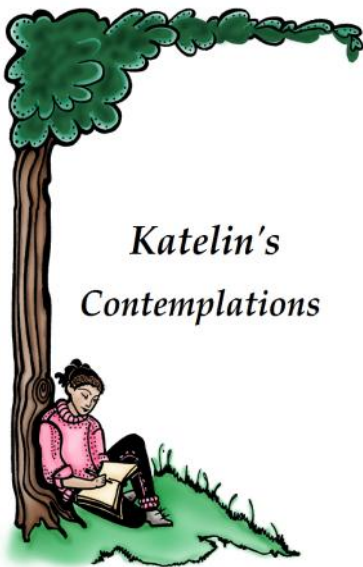


First Congregational Church, Houston, is the place to be on Jan. 14, 2012, 7:30 PM, to hear an exciting and unique range of piano music from classical to contemporary. Performed by our own accomplished pianists on the Betty Olde Family Steinway in the Meeting House. Included will be works by Copland that you will hear for the first time from composers that may not be known to you, including Florence Price (Dances in the Canebrakes - 1953), Eugenie Rocherolle (Impromptu in A Flat - 1995), and Richard Faith (Four Timbres - 2009). Of special interest this year is a piece by our own multi-talented composer and pianist (and graduate architect) Anne Amador entitled Four Anniversaries, which is fashioned after a Leonard Bernstein piece by the same name, which Anne will also play.

In addition to our FCC graduate pianists and teachers who played in the First Annual FCC Piano Festival last January (Anne Amador, Alice Hopkins, Janice Van Derbur, and the always exciting Jay Whatley), we are delighted that Dr. Charlotte Mueller, Chairman of the Music Department at Lee College in Baytown, will play the Florence Price piece which she performed in 2005 at a solo recital in Norway celebrating International Women's Day, and which is available on CD entitled "Woman's Work" issued by MSR Classics. She will also join with Janice Van Derbur in playing the Edvard Grieg duet Norwegian Dances, Op.35. Charlotte will be performing with the Baytown Symphony Orchestra on March 3, 2012, in a program entitled "Romantic Encounters."

Returning this year is our FCC master organist and Lone Star College Associate Professor of piano and aural skills, Jay Whatley, who will be playing a selection entitled Four Timbres, composed in 2009 by Richard Faith, from a prepared recital of the music of GLBT composers. Jay will also be playing a group of Four Impromptus by Franz Schubert (selections from Opus 90 or Opus 142). Come by FCC the night of January 14 to find out which selections Jay chooses.

The FCC Piano Festival is free. It is supported by the Margaret R. Tucker Endowment Fund for Music. The public is welcome - invite your friends. We hope to see you all there.



*Katelin's  
Contemplations*

We have had a truly blessed Advent and Christmas season this year. Our children put on a remarkable Christmas Pageant. We have been learning all about Advent symbols and worship on our classrooms and we have truly felt the Christmas spirit of togetherness and love. I am forever grateful to our Joyful Noise and JNITs leaders, Anne Amador and Elizabeth Hale, for their hard work and dedication towards getting this new and exciting program off to such an exciting start. Our classroom teachers have put in hours of hard work to help our children and youth learn about God's love. And our adult leaders have put on very informative and challenging classes. I am pleased to work with such a wonderful and dedicated group of people.

Thank you to everyone who made Christmas so magical this year. I look forward to spending 2012 with all of you as we challenge ourselves spiritually and as we learn new ways to bring God's presence and grace into our world.

Blessings to you all,  
Rev. Katelin Warren



**Make a new friend in the new year:  
It's time for "Secret Friends" at FCC!**

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:**

- ◆ **January 8, 15, and 22:** Sign up to be a Secret Friend during Coffee, Tea and Conversation.
- ◆ **Week of January 22:** Secret Friends assignments are sent to adults via e-mail or phone.
- ◆ **January 29, February 5, and February 12:** 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.



## 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 focus on the Season of Epiphany. 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:** "Christians in Texas and around the country" face a myriad of issues in trying to live the Jesus Way in American culture today—issues that have sparked a new generation of writers and thinkers concerned with the assumptions and premises that gave rise to Christianity as we think we know it. Les Switzer will direct attention to two of these writers—both of them from the South and both convinced that Christianity to survive must be transformed, as one of them put it, from a religion about Jesus to a religion of Jesus. Les Switzer leads in mid-January, 2012.

#### January in SpiritQuest:

Jan 1: Rev. Ken Richter will lead a discussion

Jan 8: Near-Death Experiences, led by Burton Bagby-Grose, chaplain at Thomas Street AIDS Clinic

Jan 15: Angels, led by Paul Byrd

Jan 22: Spiritual Yoga, guest discussion leader: Scott Newsom, Yoga Instructor

Jan 29: No class due to Annual Meeting

In February, we begin a series looking at how our culture influences our view of God.





*The Christian Education Page continued...*

## Godly Play Training

On January 27-28, the Rev. Christine Ng will be joining the Board of Christian Education to do training in Godly Play, a Biblical story telling curriculum that we will be using in the children's program this spring. This training is open to all adults and youth who would like to learn more about Godly Play and how to use it to teach our children about God's love. Please contact Rev. Katelin Warren for more information. Rev. Ng will be joining us from Central Congregational Church in Dallas, Texas.

## What is Godly Play?

Godly Play teaches children the art of using Christian language - parable, sacred story, silence and liturgical action - helping them become more fully aware of the mystery of God's presence in their lives.

When Christian language is learned by the Godly Play approach, it is learned as a means to know God and to make meaning of our lives. This approach is quite different from the traditional model in which the teacher tells the children what they need to know. Godly Play is not about things that are that simple. It is not just about learning lessons or keeping children entertained. It is about locating each lesson in the whole system of Christian language and involving the creative process to discover the depths of meaning in them. It's about understanding how each of the stories of God's people connects with the child's own experience and relationship with God. Godly Play respects the innate spirituality of children and encourages curiosity and imagination in experiencing the mystery and joy of God.

The goal of Godly Play is to show how to be open to the Holy Spirit, The Creator, and the Redeemer all at once and all the time in every place. To achieve this goal is to help children become deeply rooted as Christians and yet at the same time use this powerful language and community to be open and creative.

Godly Play is a creative and imaginative approach to Christian nurture.

Godly Play is based on long established, tried and tested approaches.

Godly Play encourages participants to make meaning for themselves by inviting them into stories and providing the opportunity for them to connect the stories with their personal experience.

Godly Play is a non-coercive way to encourage people to move into larger dimensions of belief and faith through wondering questions and open-ended response time.

Godly Play values process, openness, and discovery.

Godly Play is a way of preparing children to join in the worship and life of their congregations as they develop a deeper understanding of stories, symbols and rites.



## Immigration Matters!

The bible speaks to God's love and compassion for the stranger. It is written, *"When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself. For you were aliens in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."* (Lev 19:33-34)

As a nation, we need to build upon the foundations of freedom and respect for human rights. We should advocate for an earned path to legalization for undocumented persons of goodwill living in the U.S.

United Church of Christ's advocacy and stance:

1. **Resist Enforcement-Only Legislation:** In the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress there will be more enforcement only type legislation. This devastates the immigrant families that are hoping to come out of the shadows and earn a path to legalization. We should resist these and work towards a comprehensive immigration reform that does not split families but offers them a way to become fully functional legal citizens of this country.
2. **DREAM Act:** DREAM Act would allow undocumented youths who entered the U.S. as children to enter a path to legal status through higher education or military service. Many DREAM students came out of the shadows to advocate vocally on behalf of an estimated 65,000 undocumented young people who graduate from high school each year without the right to a driver's license, a job, participation in the military, or access to college scholarships.

In conclusion, please consider the following text from the bible. In Mathew 25:35 Jesus is at one with the stranger, *"For I was a stranger and you welcomed me."* Do the current laws being proposed welcome the stranger and welcome Christ, or do these proposals turn them away and bring judgment upon us as a nation?



## Advent Festival Thanks

Thanks to all the members and friends who helped make the Advent Festival held on December 4th, successful. Thanks first, to the members of the CE Board who brought greens and delicious food. They also supervised the children's crafts and helped with set-up and clean-up. Special thanks to Susan Menzel and Kristen Kaiser who brought greens, as well as helping with every part of the event. Thanks also to Audrey Anastasia for her assistance with the children's crafts; Paul Menzel and Shawn Gleason for set-up; and Omar Torres for his invaluable help with clean-up. Without the generous spirit of all who contributed, this event would not have happened.



# FCC STEAM CLEANERS TO STRIKE AGAIN

Saturday, January 21~ 9:00 a.m.

We hope to finish up the rooms this time: Spirit Quest, Jr. High, Christian Thought, Sanctuary room in education building and Sylvia's Counseling office. The MIGHTY FEW who have been doing this over the year can't do it all - SO, we need your help.

We have access to six (6) steam cleaners, but can use more. If you cannot help, but can loan your cleaner, that works. If you can help but don't have a cleaner, we can do that too. Please come help and remember we are saving the church lots of money by doing it ourselves. Lunch is provided by Trustees.

THEN....we start all over again in April.



## FROM THE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

The Activities Committee appreciates all the donated items that periodically show up in the kitchen, but we then end up with an issue; a hodge-podge of things. If you have items you would like to contribute to the kitchen, please run it past the committee before donating. We are trying to keep some sort of order to the kitchen so we can keep track of what we have and what we need.

One thing we are looking for at this time are card tables. The ones we have, have become very rickety. These tables are in use quite a bit and we need some that are sturdy. If you have card tables you would like to donate, please notify Jim or Sue Earl.



## WELCOME 2012

The first meeting of the New Year will find Sisters of Mary Magdalene meeting on Monday, January 30, at the home of Shirley Titus at 6:30 p.m. Shirley lives at 4606 Gaelic Court. Call Shirley at (281) 463-0617 to let her know if you will be coming and, if so, what you will bring for the meal. She can also furnish driving instructions, if you have not been to her home before.

We hope to finish discussing our current study book at this meeting. This means reading the final chapters (Ruth, Anne, Miriam, and Mary Magdalene) and the Epilogue of "The Friendship of Women: The Hidden Traditions of the Bible." If we succeed in this effort, we will begin reading "The Sins of Scripture: Exposing the Bible's Texts of Hate to Reveal the God of Love" by John Shelby Spong. Now is the time to purchase this book, if you have not already done so.




## 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, to 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 cooperation is greatly appreciated!!

Thank You from  
the  
 Church  
Office Staff

## January's Birthdays

Jeff harper .....	January 3
Tom Carson .....	January 5
Warren Jaeger .....	January 5
Joe Norton.....	January 5
Jen Jordan.....	January 6
Megan Aileen O'Sullivan.....	January 6
Emily Rosencranz-Bryan.....	January 8
Doug Bernarad .....	January 9
Meghan Brannon-Reese .....	January 12
William Kaiser.....	January 12
John Wickey .....	January 13
Catherine Reynolds.....	January 14
Kip Murray.....	January 16
Ronald C. Farris .....	January 17
Drexel R. Martin.....	January 18
Kim Richter.....	January 18
Mary Frazee.....	January 20
William Earle Blan.....	January 21
Grant Woodard .....	January 21
Mona J. Rhines.....	January 22
Charlotte Owen McClure .....	January 23
Julia Rodriguez.....	January 23
Robert O. Wilbur .....	January 28
Katherine S. Howe .....	January 31



**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; family of Jere Langworthy; Jeff Harper; Bunny Mason; and Burton and Ron Bagby-Grose's cousin, Jeff Hill, and friend, Tim Brookover; Gay Colletti, friend of Darlene Jones; and Darlene Jones' mother and step-dad; and family of Tony Atkinson (was a co-worker of Stephen Inglis).

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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** current address:

Bunny Mason (listed as "Alice Mason")  
 Park Manor on Richmond  
 11910 Richmond Avenue, Room #401  
 Houston, TX 77082

Main telephone number (281) 497-2838



# January 2012

January 2012

February 2012

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	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				

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			

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Jan 1, 12</b> 10:00am New Year's Day (United States) 10:00am Worship Service 11:30am C.E. Classes	<b>2</b> Church Office Closed New Year's Day Observed 7:00pm Deacons	<b>3</b> 10:00am PCP Spirit Quest Run 11:30am Staff Meeting	<b>4</b> 6:00pm Seekers 7:00pm CoDA (SH) 7:30pm Deoballs (Choir Room)	<b>5</b> 9:15am Bible Study Grp (Not FCC) (Parking Lot Use Only) 7:30pm MH Choir (Choir Room)	<b>6</b> 12:00pm Men's Lunch 7:00pm AA	<b>7</b> 11:00am Memorial Services for - Jera Langworthy (MH/AA)
<b>8</b> Start Promoting Secret Friends 10:00am Worship Service 11:30am Confirmation Class 11:30am C.E. Classes 12:30pm C.E. Board	<b>9</b> 8:30am Girl Scouts Service Unit (A/R) 11:30am Staff Meeting 6:00pm CS 7:30pm Trustees (A/R)	<b>10</b> 12:00pm ST/Church Relations (SH) 7:00pm Activities	<b>11</b> 6:00pm Seekers 7:00pm Timothy Project (A/R) 7:00pm CoDA (SH) 7:30pm Deoballs (Choir Room)	<b>12</b> 9:15am Bible Study Grp (Not FCC) (Parking Lot Use Only) 7:30pm MH Choir (Choir Room)	<b>13</b> 7:00pm AA	<b>14</b> Ken-Wedding at other location (not FCC) 10:00am Terry Thomas Testing 7:30pm 2nd Annual FCC Piano Festival (MH)
<b>15</b> 10:00am Worship Service 11:30am C.E. Classes 12:30pm Youth Mission Event (CONFIRMATION)	<b>16</b> Martin Luther King Day (United States) 11:30am Staff Meeting 7:00pm Council	<b>17</b> 10:00am PCP Spirit Quest Run 7:00pm Missions (Parlor)	<b>18</b> 6:00pm Seekers 7:00pm CoDA (SH) 7:30pm Deoballs (Choir Room)	<b>19</b> 9:15am Bible Study Grp (Not FCC) (Parking Lot Use Only) 7:30pm MH Choir (Choir Room)	<b>20</b> 7:00pm AA	<b>21</b> 9:00am FCC Steam Cleaning (SQ, JH, Christ Thought; Sanctuary; Sylvia's Office)
<b>22</b> 10:00am Worship Service 11:30am Confirmation Church Year (Ken's Office) 11:30am C.E. Classes	<b>23</b> 11:30am Staff Meeting	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> 6:00pm Seekers 7:00pm Timothy Project (A/R) 7:00pm CoDA (SH) 7:30pm Deoballs (Choir Room)	<b>26</b> 9:15am Bible Study Grp (Not FCC) (Parking Lot Use Only) 12:00pm H.A. Clergy (A/R) 7:30pm MH Choir (Choir Room)	<b>27</b> 6:00pm Gody Play Training (confirm w/Kate) (Children's Room) 7:00pm Bridge 7:00pm AA	<b>28</b> 9:00am Gody Play (confirm w/Kate) (Children's Room) 9:00am Soup Kitchen 2:00pm Baby Shower-Sue Earl's Daughter-in-law (A/R/Godden)
<b>29</b> Annual Meeting 10:00am Worship Service 11:30am C.E. Classes	<b>30</b> 11:30am Staff Meeting 6:30pm Sisias of Mary Magdalene (Mary Titus Home)	<b>31</b>	<b>Feb 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

Jan 1 - 7

Jan 8 - 14

Jan 15 - 21

Jan 22 - 28

Jan 29 - Feb 4

# First Congregational Church of Houston

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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