

Newsletter, Week of Jan 18th 2010

Good day my friends. By the time you read this I'll be in Calgary for a meeting of a conference committee. (I currently serve on the Internship and Educational Supervision committee of our conference) I'll be back on Thursday.

My goodness, we never know what a week will bring, do we? As I said at worship yesterday, the world wide response to the need in Haiti has been one blessing amidst such pain there. It's like the miracle at Cana from yesterday's lesson: Human need takes precedence over everything else, even Jesus' own sense of the timing of his life. When there is need, Jesus and His people respond. Period.

I do want to say one more thing about that: Our Mission and Service Fund has emergency funds set aside at the National level, so that our church can respond *immediately* when there is a disaster. We don't have to wait for the next Sunday's offerings, or for people to mobilize and send relief funds, although those are very important and always welcome. The strong and faithful thing about giving regularly and faithfully to this fund is that it's ready at all times. Moreover, help is given to people and situations that do not make the national news as much as this most recent disaster has. It's the United Church of Canada's official way of being the hands and feet of Christ in a hurting world and I thank you for your faithful support.

On another note, last night many of us gathered at the Lutheran church for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity service. Among other blessings of that service was the offering of the Junior Choir from our church. They sang two songs, rocking the place with their final "Joy to the World". It would have done your heart good to hear them – thank you Junior choir, and thank you God, for these young people.

We've been looking at the beatitudes together; trying to see what life might look like through the lens of Jesus' sayings on what makes life blessed. I wonder where that took your heart this past week? We were particularly holding the first beatitude in mind. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". (This is Matthew's version. Luke, notice, says simply "Blessed are the poor." Is there a difference, do you think? Which do you prefer, and why?)

I've included the text of Matthew and Luke at the bottom of this email again for your reference. One textual bit of information: Before the gospels were written, the Christian community gathered Jesus' sayings and stories together and passed them on orally. Scholars have discovered that there were also early written documents. One in particular (they call it "Q") included Jesus' main teachings, easily memorized by people who could not read; Jesus' teachings that were used to introduce new converts to the faith and help them learn the basics. The Q document was used by Luke and Matthew, who each added his own material as well. Both writers gathered main teachings (as they understood them) and put them in a sermon by Jesus. In Matthew it's the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7); in Luke it's the sermon on the plain (chapter 6:17-49)...and they each begin with the beatitudes.

So for this week; “**Blessed are those who mourn; for they will be comforted**”

Carry this with you as you move through the week, noticing what light it may shed on your daily life. Blessings as you do so.

Now, here are some announcements from the life of WUC this week

- 1) **Our elevator** is broken and as of this date, the problem is larger than we anticipated. For now, it is unusable and we do apologize for the inconvenience.
- 2) **Annual Financial General Meeting** will be after church this coming Sunday. It's an important meeting, and please note there will be LASANGA AND GARLIC BREAD for lunch! This meeting is for everyone; not only for members of committees or the board; not only for members of the church, but for our whole community of faith as we consider the budget, and the financial life of our congregation.
- 3) Some people met after church Sunday and chose a book to begin our **book club**. Anyone is most welcome to join us, or simply to read along with us whether or not you attend meetings. The book is **Suite Francaise by Irene Nemirovsky**, and we'll meet to discuss it on the last Wednesday of each month at 6:30. The first meeting will be **Wed, Feb 24th**. At the church, in the upper room. We'll take turns suggesting books, so that we get a broad range of material.
- 4) **Share the Spirit Final Update**: Our church helped 35 children. Thanks to Norma Renwick for her work at coordinating this project for us! The total amount brought in was \$2677.10. After expenses we donated back to Share the Spirit, 1,188.37.
- 5) **Training for Communion** servers: Saturday Jan 30th at 10:30 am at the church, training for adults and youth who are or would like to be servers of Communion. Please let us know if you plan to come.

Call for proposals to be funded by the Herb and Dorreene Wahl Memorial Fund:

There is money available from the Herb and Dorreene Wahl Memorial Fund. Two types of projects are eligible for funding: General Training and Music Training. Both need to show a benefit to Whitehorse United Church or its members.

If you have an idea which might be able to use this money please get in touch with Bev or the following people:

For General Training: Mark McCullough and/or Vanessa Thorson

For Music Training: Jennifer Moorlag, Sue Edelman, Derek Yap, or Carl Rumscheidt

\$7600 is available now and it is likely that another \$5,700 will be available shortly. Please start thinking about how we could use this money and run your ideas past these people.

A LETTER FROM OUR MODERATOR

Moderator Prepares to Deliver Climate Change Message to Canadians

Toronto: On Sunday, January 17, 2010, Mardi Tindal, the Moderator of The United Church of Canada, will be issuing an open letter to all Canadians regarding the issue of climate change.

This letter arises from the Moderator's recent travel to Denmark to attend the United Nations Climate Change Conference, which took place in Copenhagen December 7-18, 2009. Tindal attended the conference as part of a World Council of Churches delegation, and was the only North American denominational church leader present.

As such, she says she feels a compelling obligation to bear witness to what she describes as "one of the most urgent moral challenges in human history." Tindal will first read her letter, "Where Is the Hope after Copenhagen," during the Sunday morning worship service at Sydenham Street United Church in Brantford, Ontario, on January 17. Sydenham Street is Tindal's home congregation, and the place she sought comfort immediately following her return to Canada from Denmark. "The day after I returned home from the climate change talks, I needed a place to go where I could safely cry tears of lament," says Tindal. "I needed somewhere where I would be supported as I wrestled with the bitter disappointment I felt with the result of the Copenhagen talks."

She says it is fitting to return to Sydenham Street United Church this Sunday to deliver a message that she hopes will be a source of inspiration and hope for those who, like her, were heartbroken by the missed opportunity of Copenhagen.

In addition, the Moderator will also be inviting former Moderators and many others to read her open letter in United Church congregations in communities from coast to coast.

On Monday, January 18, 2010, Tindal will travel to Ottawa to personally deliver the letter to the Governor General, the Prime Minister, and other party leaders. The letter will also be mailed to all Parliamentarians. Tindal will be accompanied in Ottawa by the Hon. David MacDonald. MacDonald is a United Church minister and a former Member of Parliament who chaired the House of Commons Committee on the Environment from 1989 to 1993. He also travelled to Copenhagen as part of the World Council of Churches delegation.

The timing for the release of the Moderator's letter was chosen for two reasons. First, January 18 is the one-month anniversary of the conclusion of the Copenhagen talks, and secondly, it is also Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in the United States. Tindal explains that King served as a primary source of inspiration for her when she was writing this letter, which is addressed not only to the people

of the United Church, but to all Canadians. In particular, King's 1963 letter from a Birmingham jail galvanized Tindal's sense of purpose when she returned to Canada from Copenhagen.

The Moderator says her motivation for writing the letter also arises from her long-standing involvement in addressing environmental issues from the perspective of faith. This initiative is also in keeping with the commitment Tindal made when she was elected Moderator in August 2009 to focus much of her time and energy on matters related to the care of creation.

The text of Tindal's letter will be posted on The United Church of Canada's website (www.united-church.ca) on Sunday, January 17, 2010.

For more information, or to arrange media interviews, please contact:
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KEEPING THOSE CLIMATE CHANGE BELLS RINGING

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* A video of the Moderator reading the letter at Sydenham Street United Church will be posted on YouTube as soon as possible after January 17, 2010.

Backgrounder: Moderator's Letter from Copenhagen

The Moderator's letter is written to be read aloud in community. It is titled "Where Is the Hope after Copenhagen?" The letter is a passionate plea for all Canadians to dig deep down inside themselves to find the courage to tackle what Tindal describes as "one of the most urgent moral challenges in human history."

The letter runs approximately 1400 words and draws heavily on the inspiration Tindal experienced re-reading Martin Luther King, Jr.'s letter from a Birmingham jail while she was in Copenhagen. She says King's powerful witness when faced with those who criticized him for his actions in fighting racial segregation, inspired her to write this letter after returning from Copenhagen, bitterly disappointed with the result of the climate change talks. The timing for the release of the letter is linked both to the one-month anniversary of the end of the climate change talks and to the celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Day in the United States on January 18.

Matthew 5: 1-12 – The Beatitudes

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:
Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God/
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Luke 6: 20-26 – The Beatitudes

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:
Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.
Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh..
Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you and defame you on account of the Son of Man.
Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.
But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.
Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.
Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep
Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.