



THE NEWS

First Community Church of Dallas, UCC
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Please visit our web site: www.fccdfw.org

February 16, 2017

Inside-Out Church Growth:

When I was a teenager, a missionary came to my church. I don't remember most of what he said, but one thing has stayed with me: "*Churches that are internally focused will always shrink and collapse upon themselves; churches that are externally focused will always grow.*" Sometimes it may seem like we are not growing, because we don't see increased attendance in Sunday worship. From the beginning of my conversations with the search committee, I told them that my approach to church growth may seem backward, but over time, it works. I believe that the more the church (that's you!) becomes invested in the local community, the more you are serving and being the church wherever you are, the more people will want to be part of that kind of movement. And even if we never see traditional church growth (measured by worship & Christian education attendance), we will begin to see a different kind of vitality and engagement happening in and through our church.

Measuring the vitality of a church goes far beyond Sunday morning worship. To understand how God is at work in our church, we also have to look at how many people in our community (and beyond) are impacted by the congregation each year. To that end, I want to share with you some of the ministries that are currently going on and others in development:

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

Foundation Communities will be in our social hall through April 15, offering free income tax assistance to singles and families who make up to \$54,000 per year. If you qualify for this assistance or know someone else who does, please make use of these services! Our site is open Mon - Thurs from 3pm - 8pm and Sat from 10am - 4pm. Go to www.DallasTaxCenters.org for more information and additional Dallas locations. Based on last year's data, over 1500 families will be provided services at our location.

LGBTQ Youth

At our annual meeting in January, the congregation agreed to invest time and energy and resources into creating an Open and Affirming safe space for youth in East Dallas. We are currently seeking partners in this ministry, and my hope is that by the time school starts in August, we will have a core group of youth, leaders, and sponsors ready to begin weekly meetings.

Faith in Texas

Faith in Texas is a multiracial faith movement for social justice. We are part of the PICO National Network. PICO stands for People Improving Communities through Organizing. PICO is the nation's largest network that develops civic leadership in low-and moderate-income faith communities for economic and racial justice.

Over the next several months, we will be working with Faith in Texas to learn what it means to be a Faith in Texas solidarity congregation. That can take a variety of forms, and together the board and congregation will prayerfully decide what we are ready and able to commit to. This is one of many ways we live into our commitment as a "Just Peace" congregation of the UCC.

I have been participating in Faith in Texas' clergy group, which meets monthly for lunch and strategizing. On February 7, I spoke at the Dallas County Commissioners Court in support of the Welcoming Communities Resolution, which passed 4-1. On February 22, I will be out of the office for the day at a retreat with other Faith in Texas clergy. Watch for information on trainings and other ways to get involved. If you would like to be added to their mailing list or to learn more about Faith in Texas, visit www.faithintx.org

Please don't hesitate to contact me with ideas, concerns, or questions.

Manda

Lent: A Season of Reflection

I grew up in a congregation that didn't follow the church year, and as a result, for most of my childhood and college years I thought that Ash Wednesday, Lent, and Holy Week were things Catholics did. After college, I joined a church that did follow the church year, and a whole new world was opened up to me. I found that the rhythm of the Christian year – from Advent, to Christmas, to Epiphany, to Lent, to Pentecost and Ordinary Time – echoed the rhythm of the changing seasons and some of the broader rhythms of our lives.

We've spent Epiphany together, celebrating that Christ has made us the light of the world and exploring the ways we can shine our light. In Lent, we are invited to enter into a season of reflection, which will prepare us for the hope of resurrection and the joy of new life – which will be evident in the signs of spring! On March 1, Ash Wednesday, we remember that we are dust – not an easy thing, sometimes, but important to remember. We are connected to the earth from which we came and to which our bodies will return. We are on this earth for but a moment, and Ash Wednesday is a reminder to make every second count!

I hope you will join us for our many opportunities to get involved in the life of the church – there are lots of places where you can deepen your spiritual life and get to know one another better.

Blessings,

Manda

Our Lenten Schedule

Ash Wednesday: March 1 at 7pm in the Sanctuary

Every Wednesday during Lent, beginning March 8, join Manda from 6:45 - 7:30pm in the Adult Classroom for Lectio Divina, a meditative type of Bible study using the scripture that the sermon will be built on the following Sunday.

Plan to stay after worship for lunch and programming on Sunday March 5 & March 26.

Roof Declared Leak-Free

At long last our roof does not appear to have any leaks. We would like to thank Dave from Mechanical Air and Scott Warnik from Bradley Roofing for being diligent in working to find the leak and get it repaired.

The roof in the narthex will be repaired and painted shortly.

Daylight Savings Time Begins

Don't forget to set your clocks forward on March 12th, when daylight savings time begins this year.

North Texas Association News

A Service of Ordination and Installation for Eve Gorrell—Sunday, February 26, 2017 at 4:00pm

New Church - Chiesa Nuova, UCC
17290 Preston Road, #100
Dallas, Texas 75252

A reception will follow at the church.

Official Call for the Spring Meeting—Saturday, March 18, 2017

Delegates, visitors and friends are invited to the Spring Association Meeting to be held at

St. Paul's United Church of Christ, Gerald
115 Gerald Lane, Elm Mott, Texas 76640
Rev. Jeff Richter, Host Pastor

Registration and Fellowship at 9:30 a.m. Meeting starts at 10:00 a.m.

There is a registration fee of \$8.00 per person for the noon meal.

Please contact stpaulsuccgerald@gmail.com to RSVP.

Reservations are due not later than Monday, March 13, 2017