



The Westmorelander

Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Volume 57, No. 1

January 2010

The Season of Epiphany

Before there was E-mail and E-Commerce, there was Epiphany! As a day on the calendar, Epiphany is January 6, and commemorates the visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus, a day that some traditions mark by the giving of presents. As a season, Epiphany is the time between January 6 and the beginning of Lent, which can last anywhere from four to nine weeks, depending on when Easter is. As a word, “epiphany” means “revelation,” that “aha!” moment when the light goes on. And so the Church has traditionally, through the season of Epiphany, marked the unfolding revelation of Jesus to the world – first to the Magi, then at his baptism, then through his teaching, miracles, and gathering of followers, culminating with the story of the Transfiguration, the penultimate revelation (the ultimate being the resurrection).

If Epiphany is really about revelations and “aha!” moments, then we will do our best in our worship and in the gatherings that follow worship to facilitate those. Every Sunday during the season we have something unique planned:

January 10 - Forum with Washington Post columnist and Westmorelander Robert McCartney

January 17 - Annual Budget Hearing (yes, there may be some revelations you won't want to miss!)

January 24 - the Annual Congregational Meeting (Jesus revealed in the work of the Church)

January 31 - Report from the Holy Land Pilgrimage group

February 7 - Forum with NBC newsman Chris Matthews

February 14 - Valentines Day Celebration

As you can see, there are lots of Extraordinary Epiphany Events you won't want to miss!

See you in Church...

Rich

Worship Themes & Topics

Sunday, January 3

“Grace Upon Grace”

John 1:1-14

Communion

Rev. Dr. Bob Maddox

Sunday, January 10

“A Safe Place to be Human”

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Rev. Rich Smith

Sunday, January 17

A Musical Celebration of Moses and Martin
with GospelGrass and Friends

Exodus 3:1-10

Sunday, January 24

“Run With Your Passion”

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Rev. Rich Smith

Sunday, January 31

“What's With Joseph's Son?”

Luke 4:21-30

Rev. Dr. Bob Maddox

**Never place a
period where God has
placed a comma.**

Gracie Allen



Senior Minister.....Rev. Richard L. Smith
Minister of Discipleship....Rev. Dr. Robert L. Maddox
Minister for Children, Youth & Families...Rev. Jessica Petersen
Director of Music....Dr. Alejandro Hernandez Valdez
Newsletter Editor.....Janet Moyer
Office Hours: 9 AM - 5 PM

Weathering the Storm

As I look toward concluding my term as moderator, I am pleased that Westmoreland seems to be weathering the economic storm swirling around us reasonably well. We had a wonderful music service December 13th featuring Vivaldi's *Gloria*, and many members, friends, and visitors came for worship. We've been able to retain all our staff in these past two years, which certainly not all employers have been able to do. Perhaps the recession, like 9/11, makes people realize how much they value a community for worship, fellowship, and social action, and increases commitment to sustaining the church. Bob Musil, our stewardship chair is projecting that we *may* have about the same total of pledge income as last year. That would be very good news, given that our economy is just beginning to show the smallest signs of recovery from the deepest and longest recession we have experienced since the 1930s. We will, however, be challenged to meet our operating costs even with stable pledge income. While official statistics show no or little increase in inflation in the past year, the church's operating costs for repairs, maintenance and utilities have risen, as can continue to be expected with our older building.

Please come to the budget hearing on **January 17** and the annual meeting on **January 24** to learn how the Trustees plan to put our 2010 budget together. We will have some definite revenue and spending decisions to make. Plus, at the annual meeting you get to vote on all the new officers!

Let me take a minute now to update you on the potential capital campaign that has been in the works for the past couple of years. Trustees and the Executive Committee took several specific steps, including commissioning a capital campaign consultant to undertake a feasibility study last spring. As the result of his interviews with a sample of our members, Rev. Peters judged our potential campaign total to be far lower than once estimated, both because of the recession and because we did not at that time have a definite cost estimate for upgrading our HVAC system. Trustees is now getting closer to a solid HVAC cost estimate and the economy seems to be improving, so perhaps church leadership will want to restart the campaign process before too long and sound out the Congregation's views on same. Right now, though, it

continued in next column

Storm continued

is on hold and no activities in that vein are planned for the coming year.

While I'm pleased that Westmoreland as a whole has been able to cope with the recession pretty well, all of us also know members and friends who have lost jobs or recent graduates who cannot find jobs. Those of us who are homeowners have lost assets in our home equity that we thought we had, while others have lost retirement savings or are experiencing much lower investment returns. We are certainly not immune to having to tighten budgets at home and defer plans and dreams for months or years. We also know from our members who work in social services and from all of our Congregation's outreach ministries that service providers are seeing a significant increase in demand. Many people in our area lack jobs, food, clothing, medical care, and shelter. As I think about what I have to be thankful for in this Advent season of patient and hopeful waiting, I know I am most thankful for the work Westmorelanders do to help those in need weather the storm.

Heidi Hartmann, Moderator

Annual Meeting Up Ahead

Annual Reports

All church officers, board chairs and committee chairs are reminded that annual reports are due in the church office **on or before January 5**. They should be brief and emailed to Sanelma Sutton at ssutton@westmorelanducc.org.

Budget Hearing

The congregation will meet on Sunday, January 17 immediately following the worship service to review the proposed 2010 church budget. Hear what the Trustees envision for the coming year; bring your questions and concerns for discussion.

Annual Meeting

The annual all-church gathering will be held Sunday, January 24 immediately following the worship service. We will review church business and vote on the 2010 budget and the slate of officers and board members. Coffee Hour: Westmorelanders are invited to bring snacks for a "potluck" Coffee Hour to stave off hunger pangs during the meeting.

After-Church Forums Kick Off 2010

“Washington Post’s” Robert McCartney January 10

Robert McCartney, long-time member of Westmoreland, editor and columnist for the **Washington Post**, will conduct an after-church forum on Sunday, January 10. He will kick off the discussion around the theme “Critical Issues of the Metro Area: The Hazards of Complacency.”

For a number of years, Bob was editor of the **Post’s** Metro Section. Recently his assignment shifted. He now writes a regular column underscoring the needs and opportunities of the wide-ranging issues that directly affect the greater Washington, DC area. As a career journalist he has had foreign assignments that have taken him around the world. He traces his Westmoreland roots back to his years growing up in the near-by community. He has taught Sunday school and held other positions in the church.

“Hardball’s” Chris Matthews February 7

Chris Matthews of MSNBC’s “Hardball” will give the morning sermon on February 7 at 10 am. An active Roman Catholic layman as well as a journalist, Mr. Matthews will focus his remarks on the way faith and political life intersect. He will also lead a Forum discussion immediately after the morning worship service.

In the decade he has hosted “Hardball” Mr. Matthews has gained an international reputation for hard-hitting, in-depth conversations with national and world leaders. Whether one agrees with him or not, he aims to get to the core of the issues.

Mr. Matthews served two years with the Peace Corps in Africa. During the Carter presidency he worked as a speechwriter. Mr. Matthews has covered history-making events such as the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the end of apartheid in South Africa, the funeral of John Paul II and presidential campaigns since the 1980’s.

Mr. Matthews’ books include *Hardball, American: Beyond Our Wildest Dreams, Kennedy and Nixon, Now, Let Me Tell You What I Really Think, Life’s a Campaign*.

Mr. Matthews and his wife, Kathleen, herself, for many years a local news anchor, live in Bethesda.

An Evening of Jazz with Lena Seikaly

January 23, 7 pm ▪ Tickets: \$35

The Music and Arts Committee of Westmoreland is presenting a concert featuring Jazz Vocalist Lena Seikaly. Most of you know her as our outstanding Mezzo Soprano soloist and alto section leader. However, she has another life as a jazz singer and has received considerable recognition for her work in this arena. She was selected to participate in the 2009 Betty Carter Jazz residency at the John F. Kennedy Center, a program for jazz performer-composers. She is currently a Strathmore Music Center Artist-in-Residence for the 2009-2010 season. She performs frequently in the Washington area and this fall did several concerts in the Middle East.

Lena has generously donated her time and talent to benefit the Music and Arts Committee and the charities the Music and Arts concert series supports. She is planning to sing jazz hits of the 30’s and 40’s by composers such as Duke Ellington, Hoagy Carmichael, and Cole Porter and perhaps some tunes of the 50’s and 60’s in “jazz fashion.”

In addition to jazz, there will be appetizers and desserts along with wine and soft drinks. Tickets for the concert will be \$35 per person with \$20 tax deductible, going to the Music and Arts Committee. It will be a wonderful, festive evening. We are limiting the audience to 120 so plan now to attend and invite your friends as well.

Annual MLK Prayer Breakfast

The 23rd Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Prayer Breakfast will be held on Saturday, **January 9**, 9 am - 12 Noon at People’s Congregational UCC. This year’s theme “We Still Have Work to Do” features Reverend Dr. Michael C. Murphy, Senior Pastor, People’s Congregational UCC. Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$12 for children under 12 years of age. Order forms are in the Social Hall.

Prayer Group Retreat

Having held a successful Advent prayer retreat, the Deacons are planning a second retreat for Saturday, **January 23**, 9 - Noon at the Carpenter’s House, next door to the former Briggs Church. This Deacon-led group aims to inform and enrich the prayer life of Westmorelanders. All are invited. Feel free to bring a friend.

Weekday Study Begins in January

Do you have a flexible work schedule? Work from home? Are retired? You're invited and encouraged to attend Dr. Bob Maddox's Weekday Study sessions. These sessions enhance your knowledge of theology and always include thoughtful discussion of faith issues. This is a place to ask the "hard" questions and talk about what you believe -- or don't.

The first Weekday Study session of 2010, led by Dr. Maddox, will begin on Wednesday, **January 13**, 12 noon -1:15 pm in the Carpenter's House, next door to the former Briggs Church, 5148 Massachusetts Avenue. The study will focus on a new book by Lloyd Geering, an eminent world-class theologian and thinker, entitled **Coming Back to Earth: From gods, to God to Gaia**. In this book, Geering calls upon us to complete the work of the "Second Axial Age" the era of Reformation and Enlightenment in Western Europe, by bringing the sacred -- banished to an imaginary heavenly realm in the wake of the First Axial Age -- back to earth.

The book costs \$18. Please pick up a copy in the church office and leave a check. Additional copies, if needed, can be ordered quickly.

Outreach Ministries

Ten Thousand Villages came to Coffee Hour on December 13th. They offered us an opportunity to use our purchasing power to help the poor in over 38 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. They came to us through the good efforts of Caryn Musil, and I took the opportunity this year to talk with some of the employees about how they purchase their products. I asked whether the money from the crèche I bought went directly to the family in Beit Sahour, Palestine who made it. They said that the money had already been paid to that family or to the art community there. The artisans received up to 50% when the order was placed and payment in full when the item was shipped. TTV thus financed these purchases to provide an immediate cash flow to the artisans.

TTV enables artisans, often women, to earn a fair wage and have a better quality of life. Our purchases help make this possible -- a good use of money. Want to know more? Visit www.tenthousandvillages.com.

Gary McDavid

Embroidery Sale Wraps Up

The happy results of our Palestinian embroidery sale were that even in difficult economic times unusual, attractive work whose sale benefits a worthwhile effort still does very well and is highly appreciated. And the sale quite depleted our inventory. We sold approximately \$10,000 of handwork, which was exceptional since this time round we did not have our more expensive pieces such as capes, tablecloths and silk pillow cases. The sale was mainly of many small gift items that, in fact, added up to a very successful sum.

The Palestinian Embroidery Project wishes to thank the Westmoreland Church Community and the Middle East Committee for the strong and encouraging support that has been given through the 9 years of our project. We could not have been as helpful and able to sustain so many refugee families, but for the encouragement and generosity of all at Westmoreland.

Now we will move on to trying to market directly to retail concerns taking ourselves out of the ordering and selling role. As we develop contacts and promote direct purchases from the refugee camp coops I'll keep the Middle East Committee informed of our progress and where Palestinian embroidery may be obtained. Many thanks.

Pamela Mertz

Community Care: Caring for You

There is a long tradition at Westmoreland of our members and friends caring for one another. That tradition is embodied in Westmoreland Community Care -- Westmorelanders caring for one another as part of our ministry in this congregation. The mission of CC is to provide **short-term, logistical support in times of crisis or joy**. A group of dedicated monthly coordinators make arrangements when you need help, perhaps to provide meals for a few weeks, emergency childcare, transportation to and from doctors' appointments or to set up and serve a memorial reception.

If you find yourself in need of this kind of support, don't hesitate to ask for it. Contact one of the ministers or chief coordinator, Mary Grossnick, who will alert the monthly coordinator to your need. And if you've not yet volunteered to help other Westmorelanders, contact Mary to let her know you want to help: grossnick@verizon.net or 301-986-7933.

Why We Don't Have Bishops

For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. *Excerpt from Titus 1:1-9*

Maybe this is why, in the United Church of Christ, we don't have bishops. After all, have you ever met anyone who could fill this job description that Paul left behind for Titus? Who is blameless?

Now, certainly that long list of attributes is a solid one. Of course, we want our spiritual leaders to be devout and self-controlled. But blameless? That is a slippery slope.

One reason our church has avoided hierarchies is that we do not believe a church official can be blameless. We do not believe the Pope is infallible, not because we have anything against the Pope, but because no leader is perfect.

We put more faith in the workings of the Holy Spirit in community. When two are three are gathered in Christ's name, we have a much better shot at getting it right. Based on the law of averages, there will be more spiritual wisdom in the group than in any one isolated individual.

Sometimes, when people from other traditions join our churches, they are surprised at the lack of hierarchy. They want to know what we all believe, as if it is a message handed down from headquarters. But if they stay, they come to appreciate a church where the minister is not up on a pedestal, and where we don't even have any bishops.

But I'll tell you what. Being a good ecumenist, I'm willing to revisit our denomination's stance on all these issues. Just as soon as I meet someone who meets that job description. Until then, let's keep it real.

Prayer

God, you alone are blameless. Bless all our leaders. Be with our ministers, with our lay leaders and all those who step up to serve, lead and teach. Keep holding them to a high standard, not because they are perfect, but because you are. Amen.

Lillian Daniel is the senior minister of the First Congregational Church, UCC, Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

Ed. note: Reprinted from the UCC Daily Devotional, May 26, 2009. Subscribe at www.ucc.org.

Parish Notes

God bless **Robert "Robbie" Joseph Carmichael**, son of **Betsy** and **Rob Carmichael**, and nephew of **Joe Williams**, who was baptized at Westmoreland on November 15, 2009.

Our deepest sympathy is extended to their families on the recent deaths of the following Westmorelanders:

Jane Saegmuller Ames, 93, died on December 8 in Irvington, Virginia. Jane had been a member of Westmoreland for 60 years. She was very active in the Women's Guild and chaired the committee that created the Memorial Garden. She and her husband Harry (deceased) moved to a retirement community in Virginia in 2002. A memorial service will be held at Westmoreland at a date to be announced.

David Noss, 57, a resident of DC, died on December 10 while visiting his son in Boston. David had been a member of Westmoreland for 15 years and taught Church School several years ago. Arrangements are pending.

Jeanetta "Jennie" Wilson Black, 89, died on December 10. Jennie joined Westmoreland in 2008 and attended worship services and occasional gatherings of the Prime Timers. Interment will be private.

Dorothy "Dottie" Clarke Compton Farrall, 86, a member of Briggs Church for 54 years and a member of Westmoreland since 2006, died on December 12 in Gaithersburg. Dottie was an active member of Briggs Church, serving as the Clerk for 37 years, and an active volunteer at Asbury Methodist Village where she lived for 17 years. Her life was celebrated in a memorial service at Asbury on December 18.

Middle East Pilgrims To Share the Journey

The group of Westmorelanders who visited the Holy Land in November will share their experience with the congregation at a visual/narrative presentation on Sunday, **January 31** during the Coffee Hour.

Many of us read Maryn Goodson's daily Westmorelandet postings that gave us a flavor of the trip. Now we have the opportunity to hear the full narrative and enjoy the photos taken along the way.

For those of you who missed the postings, and would like to read them, they are printed out in two binders you will find on the What's Happening Table in the Social Hall.

The Westmorelander
Westmoreland Congregational UCC
1 Westmoreland Circle
Bethesda, MD 20816
301-229-7766
www.westmorelanducc.org



February Westmorelander
deadline: January 18

January 2010

January 1 & January 18: Office closed
New Year's & Martin Luther King Day

Monday, January 18

Board meetings: Trustees, Deacons, Christian Education 7:30 pm

Wednesday, January 20

Prime Timers 12 Noon

Friday, January 22

High School Youth Night 7 pm

Saturday, January 23

Prayer Retreat (Carpenter's House) 9 am
An Evening of Jazz with Lena Seikaly 7 pm

Sunday, January 24

Bible Study, Child. Choir (Grd. 1-8), Nursery 9 am
Worship, Church School 10 am
Confirmation 4 pm

Tuesday, January 26

Sandwich making 10:30 am

Friday, January 29 – Sunday, January 31

Volunteer Corps Retreat

Sunday, January 31

Bible Study, Child. Choir (Grd. 1-8), Nursery 9 am
Worship, Church School 10 am
Mid-East Pilgrimage Presentation 11:30 am

Looking ahead....

Sunday, February 7

Chris Matthews 10 am

Sunday, January 3

Fellowship Breakfast 8:30 am
Nursery, Child. Choir (Grds 1-8) 9 am
Worship, Church School 10 am

Thursdays, January 7, 14, 21, 28

Chancel Choir 8 pm

Friday, January 8

Middle School Youth Group 7 pm

Saturday, January 9

Choir Retreat 9 am

Sunday, January 10

Volunteer Corps Board 8:30 am
9 am
Bible Study, Child. Choir (Grd 1-8), Nursery 10 am
Worship, Church School 11:30 am
Forum: Robert McCartney 11:30 am
High School Youth Pizza & Discussion 4 pm
Confirmation Class

Wednesday, January 13, 20, 27

Weekday Study (Carpenter's House) 12 Noon

Sunday, January 17

Tech. Committee, Outreach Ministries 8:30 am
Bible Study, Child. Choir (Grd 1-8), Nursery 9 am
Worship with GospelGrass, Church School 10 am
Budget hearing 11:30 am