

JANUARY 2010

# First Views

FIRST CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

CHICAGO, IL

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## Wednesdays at First Church

When you step inside our building on Wednesday evenings you are greeted with signs pointing you towards three distinct gatherings: Drumming Circle, AA meeting, Faith Issues Discussion.

The smell of coffee from the fellowship room alerts you to the AA meeting of up to 60 people. The sound of drums from the sanctuary announces a new youth event at First Church. Eight to nine youth gather around the

djembe drums and the instructor as they learn new rhythms and how to drum together as an ensemble. Their first performance was at our Christmas program when each drummer had a solo. We are thankful for a partnership with Friendship Church in Park Ridge, which will assist with this program.

The variety of issues the 8-15 adults attack during one and a half hour "Faith Issues Class" reminds us that God is the center of our lives. Re-

cent topics included health care, organ donation, suicide, and what we are waiting for during Advent. The meeting closes with a time of prayer after which a number of people scurry off to choir practice. Wednesday evening is a busy time at First Church!



## Remembering Dr. King

The Sunday preceding Dr. King's birthday is always a special day at First Church as we recall the message of his ministry as well as the months spent in Chicago and his time at First Church.

This year we will again hold a joint morning service (10 AM on January 17) with the two other

congregations that worship in our building: La Roca de Esperanza and Chicago Community Mennonite Church. The preacher will be Brenda Matthews.

At 5 PM First Church will host the Chicago-area Church of the Brethren congregations for a worship service fol-

lowed by a meal provided by the New Church Development Team from Rockford and Douglas Park. The speaker for this service will be Samuel Sarpiya, leading a church plant in Rockford.

*Join us  
for both of these services.*

Of course a prayer precedes the snack.; the only question is will it be the “Pirates Prayer” or the “Superman Prayer” or “Johnny Appleseed Prayer”?



Buckets catching the rain water in the nursery

## Tutoring Tuesdays

At 5:30 on Tuesday evenings 15 youth and 12 adults gather around bread, butter, and fruit which announces the beginning of the tutoring evening.

Of course a prayer precedes the snack.; the only question is will it be the “Pirates Prayer” or the “Superman Prayer” or “Johnny Appleseed

Prayer”? (We do have active table prayers!) Discussion around the table brings the adults up to date on topics of interest to young people.

By 6 PM tutors and students are matched up for homework, drills, test taking strategies, or other tasks the student, parent, or child’s teacher request. By 7 PM the book bags

are packed and promises are made to see one another the next week.

Our tutoring attendance is excellent, no doubt, a result of the nearly one-on-one student-tutor relationship that blossoms between September and May. The Tuesday Tutoring is a joint project of First Church and Chicago Community Mennonite Church.

When the elementary teacher announced that her students would know about 50 Biblical people by the end of the school year, one student asked another, *“Do you think there are 50 names in the Bible?”*

How many ten-year olds can name 50? We hope that ours will know the stories of at least 50 Bible people by the time of Vacation Bible School. That means we have until August to meet the goal.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE

### How will we pay for the roof?

This was the question when the estimate for a new roof and some needed masonry work came to over \$60,000. When people work together a way will be found. The only way to pay for the repair was to borrow from our youth

ministry fund. Consequently, we are invited monthly to participate in a special “roof-for-youth” offering.

In addition we held a rummage sale, a “Raising the Roof for Youth” concert, and a collection of gold jewelry was sold.

The good news is that the new roof is on and it no longer rains inside the church.

Of course there is more work to be done; we haven’t yet reached the halfway mark of paying off what has been completed. The offerings continue and members persevere in expanding the options for raising funds.

## From our pastor

I am grateful for the resuscitation of the church newsletter. It points to a desire to better communicate with each other and share our life and ministry with a wider circle. If possible, we will post it on our website ([www:firstcob.org](http://www:firstcob.org)) to encourage even wider readership—and support.

Sometimes I am amazed at what goes on with First Church and in the building. Our ministries were listed above. Earlier this year we also hosted a Cease Fire unit (a violence reduction effort) for the East Garfield Park neighborhood. We are hoping this effort will restart by the end of the year—the funding is now held up in state government wrangling.

We also generate some good passion every Sunday morning in the adult education class. Traditional in its name and time slot, but not in the intensity of the discussion, we are now

studying the wisdom of Ecclesiasticus (not Ecclesiastes), an extra-canonical book for Protestants.

A new preacher has appeared among us this past year: Heather MacKenzie, who came to First Church via the University of Chicago Divinity School for an intern year, and then stayed on as part of our worshipping life.

As moderator for the Church of the Brethren District of Illinois and Wisconsin (2009-2010), I am now involved in a conflictual issue that afflicts many denominations these days—that of an acceptable stance on sexuality, within the church body and for its leadership. Generally, this discussion veers in the no-win direction. At First Church, however, my position is that God has set no blocks to the full incorporation into the body of Christ for those who confess a basic Christian faith.

~Pastor Orlando

Did you know?

Brethren in Chicago provided temporary housing to released people of Japanese descent interned during the World War II.

## OTHER HAPPENINGS AT FIRST CHURCH

First Church is a host to several other ministries in its building.

*Chicago Community Mennonite Church* is a growing congregation in which many young adults find comfort. CCMC partners with First Church for the Tuesday Tutoring and also sponsors the Mennonite Voluntary Service unit in Chicago. CCMC has called First Church home since 1998.

*La Roca de Esperanza* is a small congregation that fills the sanctuary with vibrant music each Sunday afternoon. This church also has a Bible study on Friday evenings. La Roca will join us for the Dr. King celebration.

*Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection (DOOR)* hosts about 600 young people a year at First Church. DOOR hosts these young adults in order to help

them “see the face of God in the City”. DOOR has hired several First Church youth for the summer staff positions available. Brian Sales, the current DOOR director, grew up at First Church.

DOOR groups often comment, “This is the most used church building I have ever seen.” Indeed, the Spirit is at First Church every day of the week!

**First Church of the Brethren  
425 S Central Park  
Chicago, IL 60624**

Some members will recall a newsletter of years ago. The Worship and Congregational Life Committee of the Church Board pledged to get one off the “press” again.

To begin we plan to “publish” twice a year. As you will read, our small congregation is full of activity. We welcome articles as well as suggestions.

You may visit us at **[www.firstcob.org](http://www.firstcob.org)**,  
or contact us: **[firstcob@gmail.com](mailto:firstcob@gmail.com)**,  
and  
**425 S. Central Park Blvd., Chicago, IL. 60624.**