

THE SPIRIT IS ALIVE & MIRACLES ARE HAPPENING !

A Message From Your Senior Minister

Pentecost is upon us! It's that day each year when we remember & celebrate God's giving of God's Holy Spirit to the disciples of Jesus, which transformed them from a fearful band of followers, hiding behind locked doors, into a fearless "peace corps" of loving, dedicated, world-changing apostles. On Pentecost, the Spirit came to life in & among them, & miracles began to happen in abundance! Join us to celebrate it on Pentecost Sunday, May 11 (& wear red!)

You know: I have been struck as I've watched our church over the past several months that we are learning a tiny bit more about what the first Pentecost Sunday must have felt like. I've felt like I've been watching the Spirit come alive among us in new & incredible ways -- & miracles are happening in abundance! Our parsonage was totally refurbished & face-lifted (We thank Howard Leatherman & all who worked there over 1000 hours)! *Bible 101* had nearly 70 participants in its 3 sections, & *The Bible As Literature* (thanks to Mike Haines) was also well-attended! Worship attendance is steadily climbing, as is income! We have begun a new Sunday worship service, 8:00am *Chapel Communion*, which draws from 25 to 50 worshippers every week as it provides us with an opportunity for weekly communion. Our Christmas Eve & Holy Week services were quite new & different, but extremely well-received! We have bought & paid for our new office technology upgrade & sanctuary sound system (I thank Don & Rindy Hackler, Eli Rivera, Mike Blair & Walt Shelley for all their help). Our church website is looking great & attracting new folks to our church (We thank Eli Rivera & Scott Madden). We have repaired & restored our candelabras & purchased oil candles throughout our sanctuary & chapel (thanks to the Barrett family). Christ candles now adorn both sanctuary & chapel, along with a beautiful new kneeling bench (thanks to Joe & Stephanie Baute). We have people working on community mission projects who never have before. We've completed our \$15,000 pledge to *Keene State College* Campus Ministry from our capital campaign. We've found the money needed to hire a new, part-time *Assistant Minister: Coordinator of Youth & Family Ministries* & are now interviewing. My installation was a powerful, inspiring service of worship, loved by everyone I've heard from. Our caring ministry is growing & expanding, according to its recipients. And many testify that their faith is becoming more & more relevant in their day-to-day living. Yes, the Spirit is alive & miracles abound at our *United Church of Christ!* And I don't know about you, but I feel blessed to both witness it & be part of it! I commend you for your openness to the Spirit's movements here.

There is one more, somewhat major initiative taking place that I need to tell you about. At the request of our Finance Board, our Church Council is making plans to **change our church's fiscal year** from a January 1 start date to a July 1 start date. Of course, this requires a vote of the entire congregation (which is planned for the fall), but a timetable is being followed in order to accomplish this change. Why do we want to change our fiscal year? First, it's for our boards & committees, so that their members no longer have to change in the middle of a program year. Second, it will help our Stewardship Committee, who had the terrible task this year of running a pledge campaign through the Christmas season. A new fiscal year allows our pledge campaign to happen in the Spring, which is a much better time psychologically. Our proposed budget will also be created prior to our pledge campaign, so we'll know what we're investing in when we pledge.

In order to make the transition to a new fiscal year, we plan to extend our current budget for an additional 6 months, altering it & adding to it only as necessary, such as for fuel, insurance & others costs we cannot control; paying our new Assistant Minister's salary; etc. Then, in order to help us catch our pledges up to our budget & resolve our current pledge deficit, plus cover any budget additions we need to make, all of us will be asked this coming fall to make "outrageous" 6-month pledges (we'll talk more about what that means as we get closer). Then, in early '09, we will create our new July 2009 - June 2010 budget & have a spring '09 full-year pledge drive to fund it. I hope all of this makes sense to you. If not, please ask. I very much want you to feel comfortable asking me questions & sharing with me your joys & concerns, your compliments & criticism.

Yes, friends, I'm seeing it: the Spirit is alive here & miracles are happening! I don't know about you, but I find it both exciting & challenging! Please join in the spiritual renewal of this wonderful congregation! Join us for worship each & every Sunday! You'll be glad you did!