

First Church News

January 2013

**Sunday morning
celebration and
classes:
9:30 and 11:30 a.m.**



Email:
church@firstuu.org

Website:
www.firstuu.org

**5200 Fannin Street
Houston, TX 77004
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Massacre of the Innocents

It can be heartwarming to celebrate the birth of baby Jesus – God born as a baby to a poor couple. It can be encouraging to observe the Festival of Lights (Chanukah) and Yuletide at a time of year when days are short and nights are long. Kwanzaa is a time of feasting and gift giving. What's not to like?

But in the Christian story, what happens *after* Christmas is plainly – evil. In the story, Herod – who expanded the Second Temple in Jerusalem – orders the murder of all boys two years old and younger. He had heard that a baby had been born who was prophesied to be King of the Jews, a title Herod preferred for himself.

Herod was brutal enough – he murdered his wife and two of his sons. Bethlehem was a small village, and so the number of male infants might have been fewer than 20, but a massacre of innocents is evil by any standards.

We see evil acts and the resulting destruction played out in endless loops on television and on Internet video if we care too. It is easy to observe the evil in others. We can wonder if evil exists outside of humanity. We can wonder what the relationship between evil and God is, if God is Love.

We religious liberals do not believe in a punishing God. Or that we were born dripping in original sin, deserving only of eternal torment and damnation. We tend to focus more on human progress than on evil.

But much closer to home, it is important to acknowledge our own propensity for evil. This is not a comfortable search. It is easier to point out the evil in others than to acknowledge what lurks in ourselves.

Most of us are thoughtful, intentional, careful people. We assume we would not be duped into being intentionally cruel. We assume we would resist evil influence – that we would be immune to mob or mass evil action. But we are fooling ourselves. We are not immune.

In our series on evil, we will look at how UUs view the problem of evil. And how we as individuals – and as a faith community – can respond to evil, and how we can teach our children to do the same.

Evil isn't pleasant. But it is a reality. We are called to respond. What will we pay attention to? How will we prepare ourselves? And in the end – how do we know Good will triumph over evil?

These are the questions we will consider in our series.

In faith, hope and love – Daniel

Kaleidoscope

From the desk of Rev. Kathleen Ellis, Assistant Minister

The circle of life has brought us to a new calendar year that serves as a silent reminder of the passage of time. It comes one week after the culmination of the longest and most elaborate cultural and religious holiday of the year. A natural pause after that frenetic season lends itself to reflection on another yearly journey around the sun.

There is an underlying rhythm to a year that includes seasonal flows, recurring cycles, and ordinary days. A semester in school has a flow of preparation, instruction, study, and final exams. Recurring cycles include the celebration of birthdays, graduations, and anniversaries; they include the grief of layoffs, divorce, illness and death. It is important to celebrate well and to grieve well, but not to expect them to balance one another.

Most of the year fills with ordinary plans and projects while constantly weighing priorities. When someone asks, "How are you?" the most common answer is "Busy." There is a long list of things to do, but I have seen plenty of idle time, too. A quick nap has become more acceptable so that we can then get busy again.

From time to time the world intrudes in unexpected yet predictable ways. Ordinary days are interrupted by news of natural disasters, public shootings, political battles, warfare; on the positive side are acts of courage that go with every tragedy.

Let's turn a new page, shall we? We have witnessed the best and worst of society. We can live our ordinary days with their special rhyme and reason. But add this to your list: find some courage to change something for the better. A "busy" life needs to mean something to yourself, to your loved ones, and to the world.

SERMON TOPICS FOR JANUARY

January 6 - Circle of Life

As the Wheel of Life turns again and midwinter must eventually yield to spring, we dedicate our children; name new births; new marriages; we honor anniversaries and recall the departed. Please contact the office if you would like your children dedicated in the church and provide us with names, ages and which service you attend.

January 13 - The Problem of Evil

Religious liberals generally don't talk about this much. But sometimes we have to. Most of all, it's important to acknowledge our own propensity to evil.

Rev. Dr. Daniel O'Connell

January 20 - Evil: Racism

We'll look at racism, antiracism, what's next and how to respond.

Rev. Dr. Daniel O'Connell

January 27 - What Happened to Codependence?

In the 90s, the answer to every psychological issues was "codependence." How do we deal with the complex reality that both individuality and community are central to our well-being.

Rev. Bonnie Vegiard

The Big Idea - *Overcome Evil with Love*

Spanning the Ages
Here's to Growth GroUUps 2013!
Natalie Browne, Religious Educator

Happy New Year! Have you made a resolution? Do you have a wish for the coming year? Here is my wish for 2013. It is a wish for you, for our community, for First Unitarian Universalist Church. I wish that everyone will give serious consideration to joining a Growth GroUUp as they restart the week of January 27. I choose this as my wish because of the stories I keep hearing from members who participated in the fall.

One GroUUp member shared that from being in a group with adults of different ages she realized that different generations hear the sermons in different ways. This was an important “aha” moment for her as she realized how having someone there with her own perspective was important in affirming and encouraging her. The sermon Daniel preached on “Make Believe” was one of the best she had heard; the group discussion made it transforming for her.

Another one spoke of how meaningful it was to have a place where memories of blessings could be shared.

In thinking about blessings, I was reminded of all the fire towers that my father and I climbed. The spectacular views were blessings of one sort. That Dad and I did this for each other was a mutual blessing. That neither of us knew that the other was equally afraid of heights is something that still brings sentimental tears.

A group leader shared, “When I first heard about the Growth GroUUps, I could not imagine how they could benefit me any more than the Sunday Discussion Circle and Sunday Meditation Group have. But immediately I was getting to know things about people’s lives that I would never hear about in those other groups, and I have been developing friendships and connections with people I’ve seen around the church but never really connected with, beyond short conversations now and then (and beyond the Sunday discussions and going to lunch afterwards).

I’ve gotten to watch people grow and change, reach out for support and accept support, take risks, and laugh a lot. In fact, before this Growth GroUUp, I had never seen one of the group members laugh, in all the time I’ve seen this person around the church. It’s a wonderful thing to create the safety for more intimate sharing, support and deep laughter. The bonds and connections that have been created in our process of getting to know one another are precious.”

Spiritual growth and nurturing community: what so many of us are seeking. I wish for you a wonderful 2013 and the experience of finding these treasures.

Healthy Congregation Team in Channing Hall on Sundays

Your Healthy Congregation Team is staffing a listening table in Channing Hall between services. Although Rev. Daniel’s door is always open, we are available to listen to concerns that you might have and assist you in finding the best avenues for resolutions. We have a journal where you can write both your compliments and concerns. The team reports the journal entries and conversations to Rev. Daniel on a weekly basis.

The team is comprised of Trish Kolodney, chair, Michael O’Laughlin, William Nelson, Robert Barnett and Sheila Whitford. If you miss us and want to communicate with us outside of Channing Hall, our e-mail address is hct@firstuu.org.

What's Happening at Thoreau UU?

Thoreau UU Congregation has been busy working toward what we hope will be a merger with First UU Church very soon. Thoreau UU has changed the worship order of service to reflect much of First UU's service, and we are sharing the worship themes, sermon worksheets, and Growth GroUUp sessions that are used at First UU. When Rev. Bonnie is not preaching, the sermon is a video of Rev. Daniel's recent sermon. The new format and videos have been very well received. At first, there was concern that a video sermon would feel too much like watching TV, but the experience of embedding the video in the service and having the Thoreau minister lead the service makes the experience much more like a warm, welcoming church morning. We are sharing the Big Idea with our children and youth and collaborating closely with Natalie Brown on Religious Education. We were very pleased to welcome the Copperfield campus band Bad Ethel in October and the First UU choir in November.

Merger preparations require a lot of attention to detail, and this naturally takes time. Our financial people are working to match financial processes. We have also consulted with a lawyer on a letter of intent to merge, managing our corporate dissolution and joining with First UU. Overall, enthusiasm is high and the best gauge are the comments we receive on Sundays. At the Listening Table, the Healthy Congregation Team has heard overwhelmingly positive comments about the worship services and the ministers' sermons. The congregation is impressed with how this model delivers quality services even while they are working with a half-time minister. We think we will all grow - membership, Religious Education, and ministry - in the years to come. The exact date of our vote may change, but right now we are aiming toward mid-March 2013. We cordially invite First UU folks to come visit Thoreau UU!

Rev. Bonnie Vegiard, Campus Minister, Thoreau UU Congregation

Thoreau UU Congregation is searching for a new, part-time Director of Faith Development. This person would work closely with Rev. Bonnie, Natalie Browne, and the Thoreau Religious Education committee to:

1. Encourage and support growth in Thoreau's Religious Education program
2. Prepare 1st UU's Religious Education curriculum for use at Thoreau
3. Support Thoreau's teachers as they lead the curriculum
4. Attend Creative Team meetings as possible (Team meetings are where worship and RE themes are developed.)
5. Maintain Thoreau Religious Education supplies

Salary and hours will be negotiated with Rev. Daniel and Rev. Bonnie. Interested persons should contact Rev. Bonnie at bonnie@firstuu.org.

Exciting Times at Northwest Community UU Church

On January 13, 2013, Northwest Community UU Church in Copperfield will vote on whether to dissolve and become members of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston. If so, they will become the first satellite branch of First Unitarian. In August, they began the transition process, so that members could experience this new way of doing church, bringing on quarter-time minister, Rev. Joanna Crawford, moving to a new worship liturgy using video, and using religious education and growth group curricula that integrated with the theme-based worship. "Collaboration" has taken on fresh meaning, as the NWCUUC minister, DRE, and music director meet regularly with the First UU creative team, which also includes the minister and DRE of Thoreau. Response to these changes has been very positive, with members expressing appreciation for the professional leadership and opportunity to be part of a larger UU presence in Houston.

Rev. Joanna Fontaine Crawford, Campus Minister, Northwest Community UU Church in Copperfield

Social Justice Report

Here's what's happening with Social Justice at First Church this month and more:

SHORT-TERM PROJECTS:



Our short-term project for December was collecting gifts for the Houston Area Women's Center and helping to staff their Holiday Store. Megan Evans and Dann Robb signed up 40 volunteers to work shifts from December 13 through 16. They assisted HAWC client mothers and children to choose gifts for each other from among hundreds of items donated by individuals and businesses from all over Houston. For the third year in a row First Church members contributed several thousand dollars worth of items and cash to stock the store.



Our January project, Trees for Houston, has a full complement of volunteers, and they are ready to get planting!



We have a replacement S.J. project for February since Workshop Houston changed its dates. Through our old friends at EAC (the Emergency Aid Coalition) we will fill seven shifts, two volunteers per shift, at the Emergency Food Pantry at the Houston Food Bank. Volunteers will help clients shop and stock pantry shelves.

LONG-TERM (SIGNATURE) PROJECT:



Healthy Parenting, the Church's signature project, has established a good working relationship with the staff at Project Row Houses (PRH) and has begun working with their single mothers on a regular basis. This past week volunteers provided childcare and academic tutoring. Tuesday night they offered childcare while other volunteers engaged in academic tutoring to support the mothers in the midst of college final exams, and on Thursday night we provided more childcare while the mothers participated in mandatory workshops about life skills. We look forward to the beginning of the year when we will start tutoring 30 neighborhood children in the PRH after-school academic program.

Social Justice has also delivered at least six boxes of children's books to help start a children's library at PRH and to support a book give-away at their Kwanzaa celebration on December 27, to which we are all invited.

A little footnote about a Healthy Parenting event that took place in the evening of November 29: About 20 church members from First UU participated in a potluck and literacy toy-making workshop at Project Row Houses with five mothers and their pre-schoolers. It was a great success because everyone eagerly created brightly-colored books, puppets and other toys as they all got acquainted.

Excerpts From the Treasurer's Report Evan Michaelides, Treasurer

November 2012 results

The biggest budget variance this month was in pledge income. Attentive readers of this monthly missive will recall that October's pledge income came in significantly above budget (by about \$12,000. Perhaps you will not be surprised, then, to learn that November's pledge income was well below budget. The shortfall totaled \$21,000, of which \$4,000 was from Inspiration Sunday payments coming in later than expected and \$16,500 represented a shortfall in regular pledges.

Why these large variances from month to month? The answer lies in the way we come up with our monthly budget figures for pledge income. We take the annual budget for pledges, and then allocate it across the months of the year proportionately to the way pledges came in last year. This is far from perfect as a predictor of how the funds will actually come in, but it's probably the best yardstick we have, and much better than just allocating an equal amount to each month, since we do see pledge income wax and wane more or less predictably at certain times of year.

So to understand what happened, I referred back to last year's results. Last year, October was a weak month for pledge income, and November was strong. This year's October results looked strong (compared to the budget figure, which is based on last year's weak showing), whereas this year's November results appeared correspondingly disappointing compared to last year's. But all that really happened is that last year, we zigged in October and zagged in November, and we did the opposite this year.

All this is to say why I don't worry too much about pledge income being above or below budget at any point in time and certainly not within a single month. By the way, if you look at the year-to-date variance on pledges, you will note that we are within about \$4,000 of budget, or about 1.5%. So it's all coming out in the wash.

The only truly unusual and substantive item this month is that we received the \$15,000 UUA grant, which bolstered our total monthly income figure.

There are a couple of other variances that I wanted to mention, but don't expect to last:

- Collections from the Fall Fundraiser are coming in more quickly than anticipated.
- Expenses came in below budget this month. Most of this was in payroll; we paid our pension contributions after the end of the month, and there were some variances in a couple of accounts that are expected to zero out by the end of the year.

SIGNATURE SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT

HEALTHY PARENTING – Helping Neighbors Strengthen Families

“Baby birds need nurturing, and bigger birds can help.

Will you help build the nest?”

For our signature project in the coming years, we at First UU Church have chosen to step up and assist young mothers in our neighborhood as they struggle to rear young children and become self-supporting.

We call our long-term project **“Healthy Parenting.”** As good neighbors in Houston’s historic Third Ward, we want to assist young mothers as they endeavor to bring up healthy and well-nurtured children. Our volunteer efforts will assist visionary programs that are already well established to support young mothers at Project Row Houses, Madge Bush Transitional Housing Center, and other sites.

We can lend our hands and hearts to help build the nest for the next generation of Houston youth. There’s something for EVERYONE to do from after school and weekend care to moving furniture, and from knitting to providing snacks. How would you enjoy helping?

Watch the Social Justice pages of our church website (www.firstuu.org) for forthcoming details on specific opportunities to pitch in and lend a hand!

All New First UU Stewardship Campaign Step Out, Step Up!

Change has arrived at First Unitarian Universalist Church and you will see it in our brand new Stewardship Campaign beginning in February. We’re asking all of our members to Step Out and Step Up – **Step Out** to make a specific pledge to the church and **Step Up** to a new level of giving!

First: Step Out – talk about what the church means to you, why helping our church thrive is important to the community, and be proud of the financial support you provide.

Next: Step Up – put yourself on a path to increasing your support from donor to sustaining supporter, from sustaining donor to leading donor and someday an extravagant donor!

Mark your calendars now. Invitations will be mailed soon for our canvass kick-off on February 16 with the Leading Donor Dinner, followed by a Sustaining Donor Evening on February 23. Our campaign will culminate with Celebration Sunday on March 3, 2013. Everyone is invited to turn in their pledge cards and celebrate our commitment to this community!

When you make your pledge this year, know every dollar is needed and appreciated. First UU Church is a beacon of liberal religion in a very conservative state. We’re about Deeds, not Creeds. We’re the place that welcomes all, regardless of religious affiliation or sexual orientation. Your generous pledge helps us achieve our mission of transforming ourselves, Houston and the world.



Step Out–Step Up

Step Out and Step Up in 2013!

Child Dedications Sunday, January 6, 2013

We will have child dedications as part of our Circle of Life Service on January 6. If you are interested in having your infant, toddler, or child (we've even had teens who wanted this wonderful experience) dedicated, read on!

This is a beautiful ritual which includes the name and claiming of the child, blessing with earth, air, fire and water, and a certificate for you to keep. If you would like to know more, speak with Natalie.

To be included, we must have your child's full name, date and place of birth, and full names of parents. Please send this information to natalie@firstuu.org.



Thinking about Membership?

Membership Day Is Sunday, January 6, 2013

To join First Church, we ask that you complete a few forms: New Member Information, Talents and Interests, make a financial commitment, Pledge Card and Skills Inventory. These forms are available in the office or from a Sunday Morning Welcoming Team member. New members can join on the first Sunday of each month at the Welcome Table in Channing Hall after church.



New U Class

Saturday, February 2, 2013

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



While the New U Class is primarily a pathway to membership, everyone is welcome, both the curious and those who have already decided to join us. We will explore how your spiritual journey led you to us and how UUs talk about religion. You'll have a short tour of the building, find out how things run here at First Church and meet several church leaders and staff. The day includes a complimentary lunch, giving everybody an opportunity to get better acquainted. Facilitated by Rev. Daniel O'Connell and others. be available. E-mail names and ages to childcare@firstuu.org by noon on Wednesday, January 30. Registration is required, so please sign up at the information table or call the church office.

The deadline for *First Church News* is the 15th of the month; for the weekly *First Church Now*, the deadline is noon on Wednesday of each week. Email your news for consideration to news@firstuu.org.

Mini-Wish List

Dear First Church Family:

Last December a long-time church leader asked if we had a *Holiday Campaign*. He explained that at this time of year he gets plenty of solicitations from various organizations he has financially supported over the years. He was surprised he hadn't gotten anything like that from First Church. He said he makes financial gifts to the causes he supports at year end, and he and his spouse would be open to receiving such a request from First Church – provided we had cause to ask for such a gift.

The staff and I looked at the various church needs. We saw some things that weren't in the regular budget but that also weren't large enough to consider for a capital campaign. An AED would be a great thing in case of a heart attack, and most churches our size and larger already have one. We also saw we needed new tables and chairs for Channing Hall – that's our fellowship space after the service. And finally, our Internet connection had become painfully slow after we opened up the WiFi capability beyond the paid staff to everyone.

So! A year ago, we set a goal of \$10,000 to pay for those things. And in a matter of weeks, *people like you* made sufficient financial gifts that we successfully accomplished that financial goal.

The result is, **we now (1) have an AED** (across from the front doors), **(2) new chairs & tables** for Channing Hall (padded maroon!), and **(3) the fastest Internet** connection Comcast offers(!). All of these items help long-time members and newcomers feel welcomed, cared for and supported.

Now, it's a year later. The staff & I have reviewed our extra-budget needs again, and whittled the list down to just three things we would like you to consider supporting with a Holiday Gift:

1. New tables and chairs, this time for our teachers and children upstairs! (\$3,500)
2. Replace the dishwasher (\$5,000)
3. A front desk volunteer computer (\$800)

We might also add a lobby TV that could provide a stream of information about our church and ministry opportunities. So, as you do your holiday shopping, would you consider a financial gift to your church?

Donations may also be made via our website, <http://www.firstuu.org/firstchurchpay.php>.

Thanks for reading this, and thanks for your consideration,

Daniel

Wheel of
Life



Rives and Lilla Smith have recently had a run of bad luck. Rives fell and broke a vertebra. Soon after that accident, Lilla fell and broke an ankle. Both are in the Hamptons Post Oak skilled care facility. We wish them both a speedy recovery.

Karl Rorabacher and Deb Rorabacher were married on December 1 in the front courtyard of First UU Church. Rev. Daniel officiated at the ceremony.

Our sympathy goes out to **Connie Acosta** in the loss of her god daughter/cousin, **Cynthia Cheslock**, who recently died from complications of cancer. Connie was with her at the time of her death in Detroit.



**Saint Valentine's Concert
and Dance
featuring
The Texas Southern
University Jazz Experience
Big Band**



Saturday, February 9, 2013 6:00 p.m.

In a repeat engagement following last year's highly successful and enjoyable event, the **TSU Jazz Experience Big Band** will be featured at our annual Valentine's Concert. Our own Jason Oby will be featured in performances of some of the most memorable love songs as recorded by Nat King Cole, Tony Bennett and the Duke Ellington Orchestra to name but a few. The band is led by Horace Alexander Young, who has enjoyed a distinguished performing career throughout the United States and abroad as a woodwind artist and composer/arranger. Mr. Young has a long-standing affiliation with First Church dating back to 1972 when he played the first jazz service held in our sanctuary.

Audience members will be encouraged to dance and enjoy a relaxed evening with a wide variety of music evocative of the spirit of love. Desserts and champagne will be served.

Tickets purchased prior to **January 20** will be **\$25.00** each After that date, **tickets will be \$30**. They can be purchased in Channing Hall on Sundays, in the church office during the week, or via our website,

<http://www.firstuu.org/firstchurchpay.php>.



Enrichment Opportunities

Each week we publish an *Enrichment Guide* along with the new, improved *First Church Now* (formerly known as the *Blast*).

Activities: Common Threads, Tai Chi, Yoga, Young Adults Sunday Lunches and Brunches

Discussion: Discussion Circle (the weekly topic will be included in the Enrichment Opportunities page each week), Early Morning Book Group, Great Ideas Group, Houston Women's Group, Parents Group & Poetry Group

Spiritual: Changing Women, Meditations and Mindfulness Practices, Monday Meditations, Rhythm of Life

Group descriptions and contact information can be found in the Enrichment Guide on the information rack across from the church office. Additional opportunities for enriching your experiences at First Church, some seasonal and some once a year, are also in the Guide.



Happy Holidays from the Southwestern District of the UUA!



Chalice Lighter Program Fall 2012 Call

The Southwestern Unitarian Universalist District is composed of churches in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas for the most part.

The Chalice Lighter Program is one way the Conference promotes the growth of Unitarian Universalism in the Southwest District. **We are delighted to announce that First Church is the recipient of the current “Chalice Call.”**

Chalice calls go out three times each year and ask that each participant donates at least \$10 per call. All of your contributions (100%) go to the Chalice Lighter recipient. To become a Chalice Lighter, you simply sign up and agree to give a minimum of \$10 in response to each of the three yearly calls.

We are grateful for this support of our creating a Multisite Church, which plans to combine First Church, Northwest Community UU Church and the Thoreau UU Congregation. This plan ensures high quality programming and administrative support. A wonderful opportunity is underway in Houston for Unitarian Universalism and we hope you will join us in our enthusiastic support of this Chalice Lighter Call.

Yes, I want to become a Southwestern UU Conference Chalice Lighter! I will give at least \$10 per call, up to three times a year, to assist Southwestern UU Conference congregations. (Please print clearly.)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

Congregation: (if other than First UU Church of Houston) _____

I prefer to receive Chalice Lighter call mailings by:

- US Postal Mail
- Email (please double check your email address entered above)

Checks may be dropped in the Sunday collection basket or at the front desk or sent to:
First UU Church, 5200 Fannin Street, Houston, TX 77004 **with “Chalice Lighters” in the memo field.**

Donations may also be made via our website, <http://www.firstuu.org/firstchurchpay.php>.

HERE'S A LATE ADDITION FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTES

“You are not obliged to complete the work but neither are you free to abandon it.

Do not be daunted
by the enormity of the world's grief.
Do justly, now,
Love mercy, now.
Walk humbly, now.” -- Rabbi Tarfon

Evan Michaelides, the First Church Treasurer brought this reading to open our December meeting which was held at Senior Minister O'Connell's house (for all the work that Evan does – hip hip hooray). After feasting on an assortment of goodies, we got down to business.

January will be a busy time for the Board. On January 10, 2013 the First Church Board and the Board of the Thoreau Congregation will meet together over dinner and create a shared understanding about systemic issues (budget, pledges, and attendance, etc) and to get to know each other better.

For the last two years, the Board has held a “mini-retreat” in order to plan linkage and move into the next year. We will meet for 4 hours on Jan. 12, 2013 and hope to accomplish the following: clarify the grievance process – how do the Healthy Congregation Team and the Board work together, refine the annual survey, and create a plan to listen to the

We are excited about the January 13, 2013 vote at the Northwest Community Unitarian Universalist Church to join our church. We plan on attending the service and vote on that day in support of this event. In anticipation, the First Church Board resolved the following in regards to the assets that NCUUC: The board of trustees of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston, TX commits to using assets transferred to First Church from the Northwest Community UU Church of Houston to benefit Northwest Community UU for a minimum of 3 years upon transfer.

At our December meeting we also:

- Approved Bylaw Article 1H: The Board will use a variation of Policy Governance as the model by which it operates.
- Approved three changes to the constitution regarding and will create a consistent quorum of 60 voting members or 25% of the voting membership – regardless of the reason for the meeting. The changes will eliminate confusion and loopholes in our process by which we get work done in the church. We will vote the change during the annual meeting in May.
- Approved the following change to the constitution regarding the nomination process, which will be voted on during the May meeting: “Members in good standing who would like to self-nominate or nominate another member in good standing may add their names to the slate of nominees by submitting their names and biographies to the front office no later than fourteen days prior to the annual meeting. All nominees' biographies shall be distributed in church publications at least two times prior to the General Meeting.”

During our January meeting we will interpret limitation 2.3 regarding treatment of staff, get updates on the work that the Endowment Committee is doing, consider whether or not to move forward with a project to lessen our electricity usage, and consider how fiscal reporting will happen as we enlarge our congregation to multiple campuses.

During this holiday season I am grateful for the friends that I have made on the Board, the fellowship and camaraderie as we argue, proclaim, and gesticulate wildly. We make a difference as we work together. I leave you with a quote from Jewish author Elie Wiesel:

“The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference.”

Lucy Anderson, President, Board of Trustees