

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST (UCC)

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- Art Walk
- Vacation Bible School
- Camp Mimanagish
- Pipes and Pizza
- Priority List
- Adult Forum

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THE *Congregationalist*

VOLUME 28

NUMBER 5

MAY 1, 2015

From the Moderator: Mic Dawson

Lace up your sneakers, May is always a sprint. Our students finish up their school years with concerts, athletic events, awards ceremonies, graduations, the list goes on.

The visioning dinners will have wrapped up and we will move on to the next step in discerning how we act as a church.

Christian Ed (CE) leads the way with new ministries to be undertaken in May. May 1st will be First Church's first time in the Art Walk. What a great way to showcase our church as part of the downtown community and the talents of our members. Edward Barta will be the featured artist and there will be additional artwork from Ed Gulick and Paula Walters. Quint Essential, featuring our own Julie Solberg, will provide entertainment.

CE is also planning an Oatmeal Ministry to provide a warm breakfast to downtown homeless each Sunday morning. This effort is in the planning phase and they welcome anyone who wants to participate. Contact Virginia Bryan, Kim Harris, Nina Hernandez or Tracy Heilman if you are interested in planning this effort.

This is just to name a few of the exciting things happening at Billings First Church these days. There are many other activities for you to connect with. Be sure to look for them.

Pipes and Pizza Fundraiser for the Youth

Come join us for a traditional event brought back to Billings First Church, "Pipes and Pizza" on May 17th at 6:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. A fundraiser for the Youth Mission Trip to Monterey California. Steve Plaggemeyer will be playing the theatre organ for a silent movie while the youth prepare salad, pizza and cookies for dessert. Tickets will be sold by the Youth on Sundays and will be available at the church offices for \$20.00. Come for a great night of music, laughter, great food and support our youth. For more information contact Kim Harris 855-4317

Thank You: Chiapas Mission Trip

Thanks to all of the people who prayed for us, donated funds, and supported the mission trip Rev. Stewart, Abe and I took to Chiapas, Mexico. As representatives of Billings First Church and the wider Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference, we hope we were able to communicate the depth of love found here to the people and the land in Chiapas. We look forward to sharing this experience with all of you as a way of expressing our profound gratitude.

Time With Teresa

- I want to take a moment to thank-you all for your very generous support during the last seven months as I completed a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education with Tri-Cities Chaplaincy. It was very intense, but I learned valuable skills in caring for others during times of crisis, trauma, or death. Very worthwhile! You can read more about the program at websites: www.acpe.edu or www.tricityschaplaincy.org. Thank-you! We have several new events beginning, so read carefully! I'm very excited about new ways to take our ministry outside of the building- May His Spirit Fall Afresh on you~ Teresa
- NEW NEW NEW! Worship service at West Park Retirement the first Saturday of every month, beginning Saturday MAY 2 at 2:30pm with communion, excluding holiday weekends. If you would like to be a part of this service regularly or even just from time to time helping with music, being a liturgist, doing a solo, or serving communion, just let me know. Lower Level at West Park Retirement.
- NEW NEW NEW! Primetimer's Older Adult Lunchtime! May 21st. If you don't want to drive at night, how about during the day! Monthly on the 3rd Thursday at 11:30am. All Older Adults 50+ are welcome to meet at a local restaurant to share fellowship and lunch! RSVP the church office or me by Wednesday. Beginning May 21, 2015 at Rio Sabinas Mexican (Shiloh Shopping Center across the parking lot from Kohl's).
- NEW NEW NEW! END OF LIFE CARE PLANNING WORKSHOP Sunday, JUNE 14th 12:30pm. Have you completed an Advanced Medical Directive so your loved ones are aware of what medical treatment you would or would NOT want if you were unable to make medical decisions for yourself? Have you appointed someone to be your voice? Have you planned your funeral or memorial service? Do you want some help writing your obituary? Have you considered leaving a financial gift to the church? JOIN US for a frank discussion about medical care, financial planning, and being prepared for your death. JUNE 14th 12:30pm following worship, lunch will be catered. PLEASE RSVP to the church office so we have enough materials and lunch.
- Primetimer's Dinnertime May 21 @ 5:30 pm at Rio Sabinas Mexican (Shiloh Shopping Center across the parking lot from Kohls). All Older Adults 50+ are welcome to meet at a local restaurant to share fellowship and a meal. Come and make some new friends. RSVP by Wed. Invite your neighbor!
- Primetimer's Winetime MAY 28 @ 5:30pm at Katie Blaesus'. Join us for fun and fellowship. Bring a friend! Wine provided, please bring an appetizer to share. Invite your neighbor!
- PRAYER CONCERNS: Please keep the family of Chuck Lundgren in your prayers, Lois Ramsett who is ill with lung cancer, Gladys Stone who took a fall and is in Billings Clinic with a fractured femur. Continued prayers for Bonnie Wamsley whose cancer has spread to her liver, Bill Hawk, Jori Lokken, Noah & Devon, friends of Mark Palmer, who are both going to prison, and need support, and Mary Alice Jaksha. Our Prayer Chain can always use more prayers! Call Bonnie Conn 373-6740 if you would like to be a prayer or to request prayers for someone.
- Home Communion-If you would like to share communion in your home, please let Pastor Teresa or the Rev. Mike know. We'd love to see you!

Rev. Michael Mulberry, Sr. Minister

I am very aware that by taking on a major issue within our congregational life, I certainly shortened whatever "romance" the church may have had with me. A pastor's relationship with a congregation is not unlike any relationship. Many congregational studies experts have likened it to a marriage relationship. And much like a marriage, the relationship between congregation and pastor has a lifecycle and markers in that lifecycle.

Inevitably, I will begin to hear, just because I am different and bring a whole other perspective and culture with me, that change is moving too fast. Even among congregations, like our own, where I have heard repeatedly that we must hurry up and change and die. Or, even more so, where I have heard that the congregation has been lying dormant for so long. That is a part of that lifecycle.

Here is the reality. We live in a context of rapid change. Change is continuous. There are no rest periods. Even while the environment shifts quickly, local churches tend to change slowly and sometimes painfully. Change creates pressure. So congregational leaders need to respond to change rather than react to it. Responding means acknowledging the wider change that is happening and deciding who and how we shall be in response.

Our era is a turning point. We are shifting from one historic period to another. Continuity is no longer the norm. If we can find ways to faithfully respond to this reality, blessings do await us.

Continued next Page

The word “weird” derives from the Old English *wyrd*. It has Germanic antecedents, especially in the German verb, *werden*, meaning “to become.” Periods of major transition (“becoming”) are indeed weird and strange. There can be an increase of uncertainty which breeds anxiety, which then can lead to conflict, which furthers discontent, which asks questions about what we are all about, which can lead to an inner exhaustion, a loosening of our ties with one another, and a heightening of mental and emotional stress. Whew! Who really wants “to become” or to be that weird?

Every day I read articles which try to deal with not only the shifts and changes in our wider culture but also seek to get a grip on the major shifts taking places in faith communities. The tough part is that organizations seek stability and coherence. When people find new situations threatening, they act quickly to restore equilibrium. To introduce change is to trigger emotional processes. So even though change might do us some good, that change is sure to challenge our balance and stability as much as problems do. As Kimberly Leeman said, “When you get people off the ground, they’re scared. It’s an unnatural place for humans to be. We’re not squirrels.”

Change is necessary in life. Every cell in our body replicates every seven years. If that didn’t happen, no one would be able to exist. Planned change can potentially be more successful if we incorporate some of the following ideas and actions:

- Change has ramifications for whole systems not just one part.
- Change needs to be rewarded or reinforced, otherwise the system will just revert to the former pattern.
- People affected by change, whenever possible, should be participants in the process.
- Change needs to be concrete, specific. Change in general will mean no change at all.
- Change needs built-in adaptability to achieve goals.
- If leadership is acting in a trustworthy and transparent manner and seeks participation then change has a greater chance of succeeding.
- Conflict can happen at any step. Resistance and sabotage are inevitable. Good leaders focus more on outcomes than trying to change people’s reaction to change.

Too often, a congregation may not change until discomfort or pain is sufficient enough to motivate it to do something else. If not even the discomfort or pain is greater than the fear of change, congregations may want to contemplate how they shall temper expectations so they can deal with decline and maybe even death. American businessman and writer, Max DePree, said, “Change without constancy is chaos. Continuity without change is sloth—and very risky.”

As still the new Senior Minister at Billings First, I am beginning to hear how fearful some people are of the changes that have been made. I think that is inevitable. “He’s moving too fast!” is a characteristic refrain. I do not want to diminish voices that have real concerns about our congregational life together, but I also want to be attentive to the many voices when I first arrived who shared their concern for our congregational dormancy and lack of life. As we move through this stage in our lifecycle, how might we do that faithfully and together?

Youth and Young Adults

April was quite a busy one for the youth again!! We started out the month by helping with Holy Week activities. A few of the older youth helped out with communion and foot washing at the First Church Maundy Thursday service. We also had older youth helping out at their respective churches on Easter Morning with the egg hunts and Easter crafts. We had some Older Youth helping out with the Spud Sunday at Mayflower on April 12, they also helped out with Our Whole Lives service during worship that morning. Thank you to everyone who came out with your families for dinner at Umi's on the 16. The youth group raised \$500 from the restaurant!! We will be doing another fundraiser night at Umi's in September/October. On May 19 we had both younger and older youth and young adults and families helping with Camp Sunday during the worship service at Mayflower. It was a great Sunday to share about camp!

We have a very busy last couple months of the programming year! We are kicking off the month of May with our Conference Youth Retreat, May 1-3 at Mayflower. Cost is \$65 and the theme is Trash to Treasure! Contact Kimmie for more information or go to www.mnwcucc.org/youthevent to register. We will be having a final mission trip meeting on May 7 at Mayflower at 6 pm. The Older Youth will have a Spring Cleaning day at First Church to get the youth room cleaned and organized on May 9 from noon-3. We will be having youth/graduation Sunday at Mayflower on May 10 where the youth are in charge of worship and we will be doing youth/graduation Sunday at First Church along with a youth special offering on May 17. We will also be hosting our last fundraiser for the Mission trip to Monterey, CA the evening of May 17. We will be having Steve Plaggemeyer treating us to a silent movie and other music on the theater organ in the fellowship hall at First Church while the youth make pizzas for dinner. The festivities begin at 6:00 pm and cost is \$20 per ticket. Contact the church or Kimmie to purchase tickets. We will have our combined younger and older youth group year end party at Geysers Park on May 27 at 5:30 pm. Cost is \$20.

We have started up our Older Adult Group again and are meeting on the first Thursday of every month at 8 pm. May 7 gathering will be a BBQ at Kim's house; 531 Burlington. Hope to see you all there!

Vacation Bible School

G-Force 2015: At Cokesbury's G-Force VBS, kids explore how to put their faith into action. In this mission-focused VBS, kids experience God's unstoppable love and discover how to fuel up and move in and through life with God. Watch your church come alive with movement and images of all sorts of kid-friendly transportation, such as skateboards, running shoes, roller blades, and more! Watch the G-Force meter climb illustrating how God is at work around the world and how God's people are on the move.



The overall Bible verse for the program is Acts 17:28a, "In God we live, move, and exist." A life with God is one of movement! Each session's action word sparks a way to show God's unstoppable love: Move! Act! Care! Follow! Share! Go out and serve!

VBS will be held at Mayflower UCC June 15-19 everyday from 9-noon and is offered for kids in grades preschool-6th grade. The cost is \$10/child. Please contact the church office or Kimmie (855-4317 or kim.harris@campmimanagish.org) to register your kids! We are also looking for volunteers to help provide snacks each day! If you are available please contact Kimmie.



Camp Mimanagish Schedule

Important Dates This May

5/1-3 Conference Youth Retreat at Mayflower UCC

5/3 Older Adult Sunday

5/5 Christian Education Meeting 6:00 pm

5/7 Concert by Lee Hancock 7pm

5/12 Diaconate Meeting 7:00 pm Library

5/17 Youth Sunday & Teacher Appreciation

5/17 Pipes and Pizza Youth Fundraiser 6pm

5/19 Council Meeting 7:00 p.m. Library

5/21 Newsletter Deadline

5/21 Primetimer's Dinnertime 5:30pm at Rio Sabinas. Rsvp to the church office or Teresa.

5/25 Memorial Day Office Closed

5/28 Primetimers Winetime 5:30 pm at the home of Katie Blaesius. Bring an appetizer to share, wine provided.

There truly is a week for everyone at Camp Mimanagish! If you've never refreshed your soul along the deep valleys of the Boulder, do yourself a favor and come to camp this year. It could just change your life.....FOREVER!

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| • May 22-25 | Kick Off Camp |
| • May 28-June 1 | Adults Creative Arts Camp |
| • June 4 | Seasoned Adults Camp |
| • June 5-7 | Family Camp |
| • June 4-7 | Geography of Grace |
| • June 19-21 | Young Adults Camp |
| • July 6-8 | Grandparents and Me Camp |
| • July 9-12 | Reunion |
| • July 14-18 | 2, 3,4 Grade Camp |
| • July 19-25 | 5&6 Grade Camp |
| • July 26- Aug 1 | 7,8,9 Grade Camp |
| • Aug 2-8 | 10, 11, 12 Grade Camp |
| • Aug 14-17 | Women's Retreat |
| • Aug 14-17 | Fishing Camp |
| • Sept. 18-20 | Men's Retreat |
| • October 15-17 | Fall Youth Retreat |



Family Promise hosts two families: Lourdes has grandsons Gabrielle (8), Ricardo (7), and George (5) in her charge. The other family is John and Berea (9). We will get to meet them Sunday, May 3, when they come to live in our church for one week as guests.

Without Family Promise, homeless families would not receive the intensive counseling and assistance they need to become self-sustaining. We are fortunate to be part of this effort. Our part is to help with food, shelter, socialization. Like that.

Each Sunday until our host week you may be able to sign up to volunteer to prepare meals, set up or take down sleeping and living quarters, or serve as an evening or overnight host. Those who have volunteered for these jobs almost always want to do so again. Because it is fun! We will train new volunteers!

Sunday when the rest of the choir and I walked upstairs to rehearse our anthem I saw several men in the narthex whom I hadn't met before, so I smiled and looked at one and said, "Hi." However, I was not rewarded with anything back. Nothing. Perhaps he didn't hear me. Perhaps he was exhausted.

The expression on his face didn't change and we were walking, so I just followed the other choir members into the sanctuary. Was the man homeless? He fit my stereotype of a homeless person. He had a large pack and wore a heavy coat.

Probably has a hard life, I thought. Later I saw the man enter the sanctuary. Perhaps he felt welcome!

This sort of open welcome is a tradition of the

United Church of Christ, I think. In fact, that's how I became a member 30 years ago, through the church's hospitality. Actually it started almost 20 years before that.

I wasn't homeless in Missoula in the winter of '67, but my fake hippie university student friends and I had no place to socialize in the winter evenings. At least none that suited us. The Dean of Women, in particular, kept a tight grip on us freshmen. None of us were old enough to go in bars. We didn't want to go in bars!

Oh, we could have watched TV in the dorms with the other men or we could have gone to one of those off-campus religious places with organized activities, such as sitting around in a circle. We had had enough of that. It wasn't cool. We were into more, uh, Eastern religious experiences. You know, like George Harrison. We were against the war! I was afraid of the war!

Cool in Missoula in 1967 was the "Basement Coffee House," open to hippie men and women, fake or real, every evening in the University Congregational Church, about 3 blocks from the campus. In those days my friends and I could go there with no fear of being hassled by religious zealots, and the entrance to the coffee house was in the back of the church, through the playground.

We went there as often as we could. There was music, great-looking chicks who, for a quarter, mixed up coffee, hot chocolate or cider; it had lots of room and homemade tables from wooden cable spools with checkered tablecloths and a chianti bottle with a candle.

Dan Struckman



“Mothers hold their children's hands for a short while, but their hearts forever .”
-Unknown

Happy Mother's Day

“When you're a child she walks before you... to set an example
When you're a teenager she walks behind you....
To catch you should you fall
When you're an adult she walks beside you...
so that as two friends you can enjoy life together!”

Mayflower Circle

Mayflower Circle will meet May 19, 2015 at 1:00 p.m. 2111 Woody Dr. the home of Ruth Lechner. The program will be “Chippas Mission Trip” presented by Rev. Mike Mulberry and Rev. Cheryl Stewart. Call Myrle Theimer (245-3650) if you have questions.

Christian Education

The Christian Education Committee is excited to announce that Billings First Church is now a venue for one of the great downtown events, ArtWalk! We pursued being a part of ArtWalk for three reasons. We want Billings First Church to be an active participant in the Downtown community. We want to open our doors to people who may not know that they are welcome here. We want to support local artists as they help us to see the world around us through new eyes.

We hope that you will come to ArtWalk on Friday, May 1, to support our show: The Artists of First Church, featuring the work of Edward Barta. Ed Gulick will also be showing his figure drawing studies and Paula Walter will show her oil and acrylic paintings. Julie Solberg's String Quintet-the Quint Essentials, will provide music. Good food and drink will be available as well. We hope that you will come down to ArtWalk, and enjoy the show.

News from Faith Formation

We feel that our Sunday morning change in schedule has been a huge success! Our children and youth now gather for breakfast at 9:15. Faith Formation classes are from 9:45 till 10:30, although our youth class often runs a bit longer as they continue to discuss and explore their topic. We have two adult teachers for each of our three classes (Prek-2nd grade, 3rd-6th grade, and 7th-12th grade).

During our worship service, children are welcome to gather in the rear of the sanctuary. We have created a comfortable space with books, crayons and quiet toys. Many of our older youth enjoy being helpers for the younger children. Not only do parents get to fully participate in the worship service, but some wonderful relationships are forming between our children and youth! On Sunday, May 17th, we will honor our teachers during the worship service. Our Faith Formation classes will continue through the end of May.

Prairie Tower Play Date May 27th

Is there a child in your heart that would like to get out and play? Here is your chance. The Outreach Board is supporting a “play date” with the residents of Prairie Tower every last Wednesday of the month at 2:00. We will play board games, watch movies, have a sing along, be entertained...whatever the folks want to do. If you would like to join this group, just show up at Prairie Tower, 725 N. 27th St. at 2:00 every or any last Wednesday of the month. If you have a question, call Myrle Theimer 245-3650.

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 Elizabeth Lay
3 Richard Barry Alice Lyon Jade Smith	4 Jim Deverinero Jack Hall Barbara Krieg Marilyn Richardson	5 Wayne Gustafson Matthew Konen Bill Ruff	6 Ryan Duffy	7 Pamela Gustafson	8 Leslie Krieg	9 Chris Hingle
10 Trevor Berg	11 Weston Smith	12 Nick Eliason	13 Guthrie Brown Emily Hanson	14 Philip Diede Hillary McLeod	15 Hayley Kemmick Evelyn Lile	16
17	18	19 Mason Moodie Marlee Moodie	20 Dillon Mitchell Gladys Stone Matt Tobin	21	22 Mitch Eliason Pat Hagan Jerry Howland	23 Jeanice Cousins Barbara Tipton
24	25 Tyler Reitz	26 Mira Murphy	27 Lorraine Yates Barbara Heiser Jennifer Tolton	28	29 Clair Howard	30
31 Saphire Barry Brynn Bellingham Perry Guthridge Pari Kemmick						

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and get important information online and updated daily!

Billings First Church

First Congregational United Church of Christ (UCC)

*Theologically progressive, radically inclusive,
committed to justice!*

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**An "Open & Affirming/Peace with
Justice" Church**

Our Staff

Rev. Michael Mulberry, Senior Minister
Teresa Kennedy, Pastoral Care Associate
Kimmie Harris, Youth/Young Adults
Laura Blodgett, Chancel Choir
Jo Lokken, Melody Choir
Barbara Dobesh, Organist/Pianist
Steve Plaggemeyer, Assistant Organ/Piano
Susan Ogden, Parish Nurse
Jan Duffy, Bookkeeping
Breanna Rolandson, Administrative Assistant
Barbara Gulick, Spiritual Director-In-Residence

Our Ministers

Every member of the congregation!



Your May Congregationalist is here!

The Billings Congregationalist (USPS) 056-160
Published Monthly
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST (UCC)
310 North 27th Street
Billings, MT 59101-1292
Periodicals Postage: Paid at Billings, MT
POSTMASTER: Send changes to above address



Highlights of Worship in May

- Every Wednesday at 12:00 p.m.~ Tolling of the Bell
Chapel, 12:10-12:40 p.m.~ “Rest” worship with *lectio divina* and communion
- Sunday, May 3, Fifth Sunday of Easter, 11:00 a.m.~ White
Communion
Older Adult Sunday
Teresa Kennedy preaching
Mission Sunday: Jesus has left the building! Oatmeal served to people outside our church building.
- Sunday, May 10, Sixth Sunday of Easter, 11:00 a.m.~ White
Mother’s Day
Rev. Cheryl Stewart and Rev. Mike Mulberry present on their delegation to Chiapas.
Baptism of Lukas Page
- Sunday, May 17, Seventh Sunday of Easter, 11:00 a.m.~ White
Youth Sunday
Teacher Appreciation Sunday
Pipes and Pizza Fundraiser for Youth at 6:00 pm in Fellowship Hall
- Sunday, May 24, Pentecost Sunday, 11:00 a.m.~ Red
Memorial Weekend.
- Sunday, May 31, Trinity Sunday, 11:00 a.m.~ White

Make a note: On Sunday, June 7, we will begin our summer schedule with worship start changing to begin at 10:00 a.m.!

Adult Forum Schedule

May 3 Intergenerational Outreach: serving oatmeal and making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the HUB.

May 10 Report on the Montana Legislative session: Sheena Rice of MOP and Margie MacDonald (not yet confirmed) plus perhaps one other legislator will reflect on what the legislature did and did not accomplish the past three months.

May 17 Walt and Barbara Gulick will tell their stories as part of their 50th wedding celebration.

May 24 No Forum (Memorial Day weekend)

Gratitude from Rev. Michael Mulberry

Thanks to all who made Holy Week at Billings First truly meaningful and memorable. For Palm Sunday, thanks to Henry Crist for his trumpet playing before and during worship and to all of those who took part in the Trial of Christ: to Ed Gulick, Ezra Stewart, and Jessi Courier for their dramatic readings; to Emma Kerr-Carpenter for leading us prayerfully and slowly, carry the cross; to Dan Struckman who called us to worship from the street corner. Thanks to Webster Crist and his colleagues for the beautiful vocal, *a capella* piece during worship. Thanks to Dan Cohn for an inspiring reading of Scripture. For Maundy Thursday, thanks to those Diaconate members who helped lead us through the movements of that holy day. I am so grateful for the ways they provided structure and assistance to three young people who led us out in amazing ways. Wyatt Standing Water, Jori Lokken, and Sophia Heilman, with a sense of the sober and sacred nature of the evening, led us all out in worship and reverence. Thanks to all of those who read and participated in the Good Friday Stations of the Cross. I am so appreciative of the staff and ordained clergy who were willing to lead us in prayer. I am so grateful to those who were willing to read the meaningful reflections of Sister Joan Chittister. Almost everyone was unanimous in their want and will to expand our pilgrimage next year. For Easter Sunday, thanks to Jenny Moodie for her inspired reading of Scripture. Thanks to all of our musicians for a glorious and resplendent celebration of the Resurrection of Christ! Barbara Dobesh, Steve Plaggemeyer, Laura Blodgett, and our tremendous Chancel Choir. Thanks so much to the special instrumentalists which included our own Gerry Rhoades, Dave Shearer, Aaron Roberts, Tony Hammond, Jon Hill, Leo Steiner .

As the Senior Minister, so much of my worship celebration is found in the preparation and work it takes to bring everything together. Our Holy Week presented a time when I was also able to experience worship with our congregation due in large part to the hard work and participation of so many people.

Priority List

The next step is for “Champions” to emerge in the church who will champion certain items or projects, develop a plan, and seek out funding for their item or project. Church Council asks that “Champions” (an individual, group, board, or committee) attach themselves to the most likely board or committee and regularly report to Church Council and the board or committee their progress, their plans, and how they are negotiating the funding.

This is a great opportunity to see our money at work!

In no particular order, here are the TOP TEN PRIORITIES! Read ‘em and rejoice!

- ⊕ Van/mini-bus for seniors and youth
- ⊕ Green Energy Building
- ⊕ Light for the grand piano
- ⊕ A new sound/video system for sanctuary and beyond
- ⊕ Outside church sign
- ⊕ Church signage within our building
- ⊕ Shelves for the sacristy
- ⊕ Recruitment/Welcome campaign
- ⊕ Powerpoint possibilities for sanctuary