

Dear Church Family and Friends,

HAPPY 2012! I spent a quiet New Year's Eve at home. Russ was up in DuQuoin and Rachel was invited to bring in the New Year here in Murray with some friends. So it was just our cat Oliver and me curling up on the couch, waiting for the New Year to begin. Earlier that day I had performed two New Year's rituals. One is that I always thoroughly clean my stove top and oven on the last day of the year. Don't ask me why, because I really don't know how that tradition got started. The other is that I looked through my 2011 calendar to get an overview of the previous 365 days. I was amazed to see just how much has transpired. I saw that we as a congregation have journeyed together through times of both sadness and joy. We have said good-bye to some loved ones as they have been taken from us through death, moving from Murray, or deciding to worship at other churches. We have also rejoiced as babies have been born, young couples gotten married, people have accepted Christ and been baptized, people have joined our church, and people have grown in their faith and reached out in ministry to others. We have worshipped, studied, fellowshiped, worked, and done a considerable amount of outreach.

Among other activities in 2011 at the church, we have been a pilot program (one of the very first in the world) in launching "Charter for Compassion" reading groups in an attempt to help move the city of Murray toward becoming a City of Compassion. It is because of our church's reading groups that there is now also a reading group facilitated by a group of professors at Murray State University, who are very interested in bringing this to the university community as a whole.

The "Charter for Compassion" reading groups are a direct offshoot of the "Surfing the Edge" ministry that we have been involved in. It is one of the "experiments" that emerged from it. Other experiments that have been launched are the ministry of our faith community nurse, Judy Lyle, and our "Longest Night – Service of Light." You may remember that "Surfing the Edge" starts with the premise that rather than importing some program from the outside which is then imposed on our church, God is calling us to listen to God's Spirit as we have conversations with one another within our congregation and discern both the gifts of our unique congregation

as well as see where there are needs and opportunities for ministry within our community. To reach out to the community, however, we really need to have a sense of where there are needs that we might reach. This is precisely where the "Charter for Compassion" reading groups are so incredibly helpful and important because a number of its steps call upon us to look carefully at our own neighborhood and community. I am certain that as we have conversations about these, many ideas and opportunities for outreach and ministry will emerge, some of which can be undertaken by our congregation.

Another premise of "Surfing the Edge" is that we need to have the freedom to "experiment" and to hold things lightly, knowing that we may fail in some of our efforts but be successful in others. As we look forward to gathering together as a congregation in February to discuss the early worship celebration from 9:00 to 9:45 AM, let us take that same open spirit of "experimentation" with us. Rather than studying what other churches have done that have been successful, let's rather begin by looking at the unique gifts that God has placed within our congregation and the particular neighborhood we live in as we listen to each other, throw around lots of ideas, and trust that as we do so consensus will begin to emerge as God's Spirit works through us. Let us go into these conversations with a sense of excitement and faithful trust that God's Holy Spirit will be with us and that we may be surprised by ideas that may emerge that we never would have thought of before.

Experimenting is good! We can never have too many experiments going on at once. If you have a dream for our congregation, if you have an idea you would like to try, don't wait for it to be brought up by some committee. Come and tell me about it and let's see what we can do to try and realize it. The two words that I would like to be our congregation's motto for 2012 are EXPERIMENT! and YES!

In Christian Love and Service,

Pastor Ruth

## CHARTER FOR COMPASSION READING GROUPS IN JANUARY

### STEP FOUR: "DEVELOPING EMPATHY"

Sunday, January 1st from 7:00-8:30 PM, parlor of First Christian Church

Tuesday, January 17th from 7:00-8:30 PM, parlor of First Christian Church, Step Four

Wednesday, January 18th from 12:30-1:30 PM at the Women's Center of MSU (*Please note that this group is one step behind the others, and will be discussing Step Three: "Compassion For Yourself."*)

Monday, January 23rd from 7:00-8:30 PM, parlor of First Christian Church

*NOTE: Please feel free to attend whatever group best meets your January schedule and to invite others to attend.*



## West Area Youth Ski-Thing 2012 January 27-28

Don't miss out on the fun of skiing and being with youth from all over the West Area! All youth are invited to attend the "West Area Ski-Thing," from Friday, January 27th to Saturday, January, 28th. Matt and Brittney Falwell will be chaperoning this youth trip, along with our youth director Samuel Underwood. We will spend the night at First Christian Church, Owensboro, and enjoy fellowship, games and worship together on Friday night. There will be an offering collected during worship and t-shirts for sale to help benefit camp. Saturday morning following breakfast we will head to the slopes.

Schedule: Friday ~ Arrive between 7 and 7:30 p.m.  
Recreation & Pizza: 8:30 p.m.  
Camp & Worship: 10 p.m.  
Saturday: Breakfast & Clean Up 7 a.m.  
Leave for Slopes by 8:30 a.m.



*Registration forms are in the church office. Financial aid is available for any youth who would like to attend.*