

# THE MUSTARD SEED



Vol. 36, Issue 6, February, 2009, Edition

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## *Coming Up...* *See inside for details*

Feb. 6, 7, 8—Non-  
Violence Workshop  
Feb. 8—Bread for the  
World  
Feb. 5, 12—New  
Member Classes  
Feb. 10—Pilgrim Guild  
Feb. 13-15—Youth  
Event  
Feb. 15—New  
Member Sunday  
Feb. 25—Ash  
Wednesday

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**Lent  
Begins:**

**Ash  
Wednesday  
February 25  
Supper 6 p.m.  
Worship 7 p.m.**

## **From Your Pastor And Teacher**

“Hope is that thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without the words and never stops... at all.” ~Emily Dickinson

“Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come.” ~Anne Lamott

“The road that is built in hope is more pleasant to the traveler than the road built in despair, even though they both lead to the same destination.” ~Marian Zimmer Bradley

I learned something this week from one of our older members. The learning reminded me again that one of the central roles of a faith community is to give people hope. The purpose of a vision of heaven with angels singing away pain, fear, and regret is to provide people with a sense of hope that could drive away despair and darkness. I think this is an important lesson for us to hold on to. In order to live a life of strength, perseverance, and courage, we must start each day with motivation and drive that is contained in our hopes. Without that sense of vision, life becomes controlled by the dull and dreary existence of this world.

So, I want us to help each other place hope at a central place in our faithful journey. I want us to tell others about our hopes for healing and reconciliation. I want us to share the big hopes for peace in the Middle East and the small hopes of getting through the day. I want us to remember that hopes need to be shared, planted, and nourished. If we want our hopes to grow, then we must be ready to let them fly and soar.

Maybe this is our preparation for Lent. Maybe this year, each us can imagine a new way to share our spirit and our doubt. Maybe this year, we can learn that each of us is indeed connected to the other. Our futures are linked, because we share the same planet. Maybe this year our hopes will become the building blocks of a better tomorrow. It is not too late to hope. We can join our hearts with others and build something that no one ever thought possible, if we only start with the hope for what is to come. Join me this month in hoping for our continued growth in spirit and gifts. Together we can make anything happen.

See you in church,  
T. Michael



## February Schedule

**February 1, 2009.** Fourth Sunday after Epiphany. Service at 10:00 A.M. Infant and toddler care available. Bible Adventures for children 3 years through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade 10:15 – 11:15 A.M. Lectionary texts: Deuteronomy 18: 15 – 20; Psalm 111; I Corinthians 8: 1 – 13; Mark 1: 21 – 28.

**February 8, 2009.** Fifth Sunday after Epiphany. Service at 10:00 A.M. Infant and toddler care available. Bible Adventures for children 3 years through 5<sup>th</sup> grade 10:15 – 11:15 A.M. Lectionary texts: Isaiah 40: 21 – 31; Psalm 147: 1 – 11, 20c; I Corinthians 9: 16 – 23; Mark 1: 29 – 39.

**February 15, 2009.** Sixth Sunday after Epiphany. Service at 10:00 A.M. Infant and toddler care available. Bible Adventures for children 3 years through 5<sup>th</sup> grade 10:15 – 11:15 A.M. Lectionary texts: II Kings 5: 1 – 14; Psalm 30; I Corinthians 9: 24 – 27; Mark 1: 40-45.

**February 22, 2009.** Transfiguration Sunday Service at 10:00 A.M. Infant and toddler care available. Bible Adventures for children 3 years through 5<sup>th</sup> grade 10:15 – 11:15 A.M. Lectionary texts: II Kings 2: 1 – 12; Psalm 50: 1 – 6; II Corinthians 4: 3 – 6; Mark 9: 2 – 9.

### Worship at RUCC

This is a long season of Epiphany and it holds some rich and wonderful stories at its center. The Gospel of Mark is full of these stories for healing and being healed. Each week we will find out more and more about the power and grace of God as we are faced with miracles done through the faith of the one being healed. So, the invitation this month is to come to worship with us, increase your faith, grow your relationships and experience the healing.

**February 1<sup>st</sup> – Communion Sunday**  
Scripture: Jonah 3:1-5,10 and Mark 1:21-28  
Sermon: “The Mighty Power of God” – Rev. T. Michael Rock

As we enter this Sunday, be mindful of the fabric at the center of our sanctuary. Be mindful of the music and its beat. Be mindful that this space was built by many hands and hearts for the worship of God. Now open your heart to reality that you are just as important to the story of our faith as the ones who laid the stones and installed the pipes.

**February 8<sup>th</sup> –**  
Scripture: Mark 1:29-39

Sermon: “Casting Out Our Demons” – Rev. T. Michael Rock

We all have a story to tell. Each of us carries with us the weight and pain of our past. We are proud of some things and not so proud of others. An honest heart is a heart on the way to healing. Bring your story and your open heart on this Sunday as we surround ourselves with the hope for healing.

**February 15<sup>th</sup> – NEW MEMBER SUNDAY**

Scripture: Mark 1: 40-45

Sermon: “Being Chosen and Choosing.”– Frank Bennett

“If you choose, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. In this scripture the leper cries out for healing and Jesus is moved to choose to bring the leper into wholeness. We are also brought into relationship with God, we are all, all of us, chosen. The question is what do we do when someone cries out to us for healing, for wholeness? What is our response?

**February 22<sup>nd</sup> – Transfiguration Sunday**

Scripture:– Mark 9:2-9

Sermon: Men’s Sunday

Talents and gifts abound at RUCC. This Sunday will feature a faithful group of men who have been writing and praying about their call to serve others. The message on this Sunday will reflect on the healing journey of men and their honest struggles.

**Wednesday, February 25<sup>th</sup>—Ash Wednesday**  
Worship

Soup and Bread Dinner – 6:00 – 6:45 p.m. (FREE)

Worship – 7:00 p.m.

It is important to start Lent by acknowledging that we are not alone. We are bound in life and death to each other. There are no solitary practitioners of Christianity. This special Wednesday service reminds us that we are connected. Come and enjoy a meal with your church family and stay for a service that is deep in practice and meaning. If you have any questions about this service or the dinner, see a member of the Worship Ministry.

*Hold open March 1, 8, 22 and 29 for Frank Bennett’s Introduction to Christian Meditation. This is part of our Lenten programming.*

## **Lent at Robbinsdale United Church of Christ**

The season of Lent is time of reflection and renewal for many people. Some people give things up for Lent as a spiritual practice. I like to take things on to grow my faith. The practice of faith is always much easier when we are not alone, so you are invited to be take on a spiritual practice this Lent. There will be sign up sheets after worship, or you can call or e-mail your choice. Each week you will receive an e-mail with encouragement for your new practice.

**Choice 1 – Fasting –** On Mondays during Lent, from sunrise to sunset, you are invited to refrain from eating, while being mindful and aware of both your physical and spiritual hunger. You may choose to fast the whole time or for one meal. Know you have the permission to make this spiritual practice your own.

**Choice 2 – Lectio Divina –** This is a form of Bible Study that asks you to read a short passage from scripture and allow it to become a prayer for your life. Each week you will be given scripture choices, or you can find one of your own.

**Choice 3 – Prayer / Meditation –** Join the prayer chain this month and practice your prayers in a more intentional way.

**Choice 4 – Alms Giving –** This is a fun spiritual practice. This involves a discipline of giving and generosity. One way to practice is to put \$2 in a jar each day during Lent. Just be mindful of setting aside \$2, or any amount of your choice, and watch the jar fill up. At the end of Lent, find a person or place to give the money away. In doing so, you will not just donate money, but you will give a piece of your spirit away. Pray about the recipient and infuse your gift with love. Some folks add a \$1 for every time they swear, or utter unkind words. This is a simple way of staying “on course” during Lent.

It is my hope that folks will take on one or more of these practices for the six weeks of Lent. Remember, when you sign up to take on one of these practices, on Mondays you will receive a special e-mail of encouragement from your pastor and teacher. If you have any other questions, please talk with T. Michael at any time.

## **Mission Accomplished**

By Frank Bennett

I just returned from 12 days of mission work at the Light of Hope School and Orphanage (LOH) in Naivasha, Kenya, with a group of 13 people from Wayzata Community Church, including WCC’s pastor John Ross. During our time at this residential school for 42 girls and young women, ages 3 – 14, we installed and painted a locally-made playground that we had raised money for previously. We also donated 7 of our own computers to the school for the students, teachers and staff to use, and approximately 200 books that were donated by our church members to form a library at LOH. All 3 were successfully completed before we left. It was a fantastic way for all 13 of us to reach out to the wider world and also to reflect within ourselves as we considered our evolving faith journeys.

I learned many things while I was in Kenya, but several lessons really struck me about this trip, which was my first true mission trip: (1) mission can be a powerful tool to contribute towards improving a small corner of this world without proselytization or imposition of our cultural values on another society; (2) mission can be a way to build community, both within the group of people that goes on the trip, as well as with people who we don’t usually realize are part of our “family.” - through mission we come to understand how all of us are part of God’s people; and (3) even though mission has been traditionally associated with redemption and salvation for others, it is a way for us to be healed and redeemed with our Creator as Christians. I now understand, and agree with Lesslie Newbigin’s comment that the Pauline notion of mission was designed to bring the missionaries closer to God rather than the people the missionary was sent to work with.

This trip was a transformative experience for me. It gave me hope that a small group of people really could make a difference and that we can bring ourselves closer to God as we become closer to our neighbor. Hope is the foundation of mission, and the conclusion I came to after living with and learning from the people in my group and the girls and young women at LOH is that hope comes out of reaching out to and connecting with others. If you want to know more, please stop me and ask me any time.

**Donations Needed:**

**Packages for our young people who are away**

Faith Formation Ministry will again be assembling packages to send to young people of our church family who are at college or in the Armed Forces. Your donations are needed. Bring individual snacks and school supply type items to fit in a shoe box . A card (think Valentine) or quick note saying you're thinking about them is encouraged. We will add fresh baked cookies to arrive in time for Valentine's Day. **Baking Cookies . . .** Please join us for a cookie baking and box packing, on Second Sunday, February 8. All ages can join us to help bake and decorate cookies and pack up supplies/gifts as an outreach to our youth to let them know RUCC has not forgotten them. We will have a light lunch, make cookies, and write notes to each recipient. Sign up on the Faith Formation Poster so we can plan food accordingly. See our poster with the young people's names and please advise us if anyone is missing or if you know of young person who might appreciate receiving a gift box. Contact the church office or Jan Maiola with their address.



**New Member Sunday – February 15<sup>th</sup>  
Classes are Thursday evenings on Feb 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>  
from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

If you would like to become a member of Robbinsdale United Church of Christ, or know someone who does, please call T. Michael at the church office, so a special invitation can come forward. Thank you.

**Sign Up Now. . .**

**Creating a Culture of Peace:  
Practical Nonviolence for Personal and Social  
Transformation**

Heritage Hall - Robbinsdale United Church  
of Christ

February 6<sup>th</sup> – 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.  
February 7<sup>th</sup> – 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.  
February 8<sup>th</sup> – Noon to 5 p.m.

The cost is \$50 for members of Robbinsdale

United Church of Christ and \$150 for friends and guests. All meals are covered.

What is this training about? This program has been designed to bring out the extraordinary in all people. It offers a journey through experience of violence, a practicum on active nonviolence, a study of social movements and change, and a practical exercise on how to build community. The workshop ends with planning on how to take this experience into our families, our work and into the world.

Please fill out a registration form and turn it into the office as soon as possible.

**When was the last time you checked  
out our website at**

[www.robbinsdaleucc.org](http://www.robbinsdaleucc.org)



Our webmaster, Paul Amundson, has made some great changes to our website, but we are still in need of folks to take pictures of church events and people. If you have ideas about the website or would like to be one of our official photographers, e-mail Paul at [p.amundson@usfamily.net](mailto:p.amundson@usfamily.net) or T. Michael at [tmichael@robbinsdaleucc.org](mailto:tmichael@robbinsdaleucc.org)

**Please keep these RUCC friends in your  
thoughts and prayers.**

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Gert Anderson   | Sylvia Anderson  |
| Jeanne Angel    | Ken Barker       |
| Pat Bobleter    | Jane Boggs       |
| Amanda Busch    | James Dayton     |
| Lorraine Dysart | Karrie Haugen    |
| Ruthe Hawn      | Jan Headley      |
| Curtis Johnson  | Janet Johnson    |
| Lois Larsen     | Alice MacPherson |
| Marilyn O'Brien | Kathy Plumb      |
| Ellinor Porter  | Barbara Sexton   |
| Barbara Webber  | Skip Wills       |
| Joan Young      |                  |

Our sympathies to family and friends of Madge Johnson, who died on January 25. Her service was held January 29.

Our thoughts and prayers also include Carolyn Dunham who father died in January and new member Bill Delano, who mother died recently in North Carolina.



**Happy Birthday!**  
**Greetings and best wishes to all members and friends of Robbinsdale United Church of Christ who celebrate their birthdays in February.**

Tracey	Fluegel	February	1
Toni	Pangborn	February	1
Ken	Barker	February	3
Jim	Greenwood	February	3
Gretchen	Goede	February	6
Jennifer	Stoos	February	7
Cameron	Gardner	February	12
Corinne	Myers	February	13
Bill	Wolfe	February	13
John	Pyne Mendolia	February	15
Rose	Finnemore	February	16
Wendy	Lukaszewski	February	17
Gert	Wehking	February	17
Alexander	Roelofs	February	21
Christopher	Roelofs	February	21
Steve	Quesnel	February	26
Kira	Braun	February	27

**Bread for the World's 2009 Offering of Letters**  
**Join us February 8<sup>th</sup>**

*"Taking the five loaves and the two fish, Jesus looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And all ate and were filled."* Mark 6:41-42

**Bread for the World** is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad.

In 2009, a new U.S. president and Congress present a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make U.S. foreign assistance more effective in reducing hunger and poverty.

While U.S. assistance today is making a difference in millions of lives around the world, the way we deliver that long-term foreign assistance could be made far more effective.

The increasing hunger around the world is a "silent tsunami" that threatens the lives of millions of people. This should be a wake-up call for the United States to rethink foreign assistance and elevate global development as a national priority.

At home in the U.S., Bread for the World wants the new economic recovery package to include:

- Temporary increases for food assistance programs, including SNAP (formerly food stamps), WIC and food banks;
- Extension of unemployment insurance benefits through 2009;
- Assistance to states for the cost of health coverage through Medicaid; and
- Job creation and worker training.

"Food assistance alone will immediately stimulate the economy," says Rev. Beckmann. "Every dollar invested in food stamps translates into \$1.73 in additional economic activity."

With five loaves and two fish offered in faith, Jesus fed thousands. When we turn our faith into action, God uses our voices. Our actions are multiplied.

[www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)

National and Global Mission Ministries

**Join Pilgrim Guild! Next Meeting is February 10.**

The Pilgrim Guild wants new members! We know you are out there. We want adults of all ages to join with us on the second Tuesday at noon. Come get to know others in the church better. Come for good meals or desserts. Come for fun and informative programs. Come to help with the good works in the church. We have something for just about everybody. Already a member? Consider bringing a friend or two.

Our next meeting is Tuesday, February 10. Social time begins at noon with dessert served at 12:30. Stan Atkinson and Keith Smith are our hosts. A short business meeting will be followed by game time. We will be playing a dice game called Left, Right, Center. If you know your left from your right then you have the skills necessary for this game!

If you are not on the calling list and would like to give Pilgrim Guild a try, just talk to Stan, Keith or Jan Paulsen. We would love to see you!

### **February Schedule...**

**INTERFAITH LEISURE AGE  
9 AM. SOCIAL HOUR  
12 NOON LUNCH AND PROGRAM:  
Lunch Reservations Required  
Elim Lutheran Church.  
3748 West Broadway in Robbinsdale**

Feb. 5—Kalogerson Duo singing the old favorites.

Feb. 12—Valentine Party. Program: Allan Lotsberg and his gang of singing seniors with music from the 30s, 40s, and 50s.

Feb. 19—Blood pressures taken 9:30-11:30 a.m. Program: Rod Cerar plays a variety of music on many instruments .

Feb. 26—February Birthday Party. Program: Song Masters Jerry and Ginger Dahlin.

Leisure Age meets on Thursday from 9:00-2:00. Lunch costs \$9.00. It is now necessary to make reservations if you plan to attend. If you're present one week, you can sign the reservation book that is passed at the table to attend the following week. If you are not present, you can make reservations Monday 9 a.m. to noon by calling Jean Lindstrom at 763-537-1171. You may also use this number to cancel a reservation.

*Leisure Age.* . . Many thanks to Leonard Sidle for his years of work with the Leisure Age Board at Elim Lutheran Church. And a big thank you to Jan Paulsen for joining the Leisure Age Board. We are looking forward to a wonderful year.

T. Michael will be leading chapel on February 5. Everyone is welcome to join him for lunch and entertainment. Please review the agenda on the rack by the steps in our narthex for coming programs.

RUCC will be serving at Leisure Age on March 5 and 12. A schedule will be posted on the notice board by the office. This is your opportunity to help keep this wonderful program going. We need 8 people each week to help serve and clean up.

*If you have any questions, please contact:  
Jan Paulsen, 763-529-1986  
or Keith Smith, 612-588-1401 or 763-588-4356*

### **Women's Group**

*Sunday, Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>*, will be the next Woman's Group meeting after church. Jan Walker will be our Grand Poobah and will be bringing a German woman and her mother who lived through the atrocities of the war in Germany and the stress of moving from her home country to the USA and not speaking the language. Find out how hard it was for your ancestors who settled our country. It is potluck so please bring a dish to share. There is always plenty, so please join us even if you forget.

Mark *March 15<sup>th</sup>* on your calendar and join us for Erma Andrews as Grand Poobah and her guest who will speak about sharing your story, the legacy you want to leave. Her focus is on the written word, but the content is far reaching to other mediums.

**Advance notice:** The third Sunday of April has been designated as our Women's Group book discussion meeting. We will be using *A Walk on the Beach* by Joan Anderson. It is a memoir which chronicles a short time in the life of the author and her relationship with an older woman, Joan Erikson, whose creative and generous spirit made her a role model for Anderson as she learned to accept the changes in her own life. It is in paperback and available at bookstores. Mark your calendar for April 19 and join the meeting whether you've read the book or not!

### **Long Range Planning—Listening to You**

We will have an exciting year at Robbinsdale United Church of Christ as we are in the midst of a long range planning process. We will take time to listen to every member of our congregation.

Each of you will be asked three simple questions by one of our listening team. Please take the time to think about these questions ahead of time and know that someone will be asking you to talk either in person, on the phone or after worship.

- 1.) Who or what is God to you? How would you like that relationship to be?
- 2.) What is your relationship to Robbinsdale United Church of Christ? How would you like it to be?
- 3.) If you could change anything you want about Robbinsdale United Church of Christ, what would it be?

## Poverty

What is life like if you are poor? What is it like to be surrounded by so much excess, knowing that you and your child cannot afford medical insurance even though you work 50 hours a week? How does it feel to go Christmas gift shopping knowing that your retirement saving value has dropped by half and you have no idea what you will do when it runs out in a couple of years? What is it like to have mental and emotional challenges and no job, no housing and no family to help? How patient would you be with your noisy children if you were getting several calls a week from collection agencies for money you owe but your job just covers the rent and groceries? How optimistic would you be when employers say they could give you a better job if you had more education but you don't have enough income to eat and go to school? Most of us can only guess.

Before the recent financial melt-down, there were already 482,000 men, women and children in poverty in Minnesota alone. How can one get into poverty? Ask the mother with one child working 50 hours every week at the highest minimum wage. That's 50 hours X 52 weeks X \$6.15/ hour = \$15,990 a year. Subtract \$600/month for apartment rent, if you can find one near a bus line for that price, and you have \$8,790 left. That comes to \$732 per month to cover, taxes, food, utilities, clothing, child care, health insurance and transportation: no movies, fast-food, vacation, video rentals or savings.

So what is this all about? Well, on Wednesday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, the Legislative Commission on Ending Poverty in Minnesota by 2020 released its recommendations. This report was the outcome of a challenge started by the Lutherans, picked up the Minnesota Council of Churches and lobbied by the Joint Religious Legislative Council that resulted in the legislature calling a bi-partisan Commission to study poverty in Minnesota and make recommendations back to the legislature.

The Commission's recommendations are:

- Restore work as a way out of poverty
  - Refocus public assistance to streamline services and support everyone's capacity and potential
  - Help Minnesotans build and maintain financial assets
  - Revitalize our communities through infrastructure and person-to-person support
  - Modernize our system of education to build the best workforce in the nation
- Develop an ongoing structure to monitor Minnesota's

effort to end poverty.

But what about the economy? How can we do this now? My view is: How can we abandon our brothers and sisters now when times are the toughest. They have no one else to fall back on for support and representation. The theme of the A Minnesota Without Poverty state organizing team is: If not we - then who? If not now - then when?

There is much more to this story, but that will come later. For now let me leave you with this thought: We have the resources in Minnesota today to eliminate poverty. We just need to choose to do it, and our Legislature has now recognized their role in helping us to reach this goal.

Jim Puffer

UCC Member of the State Wide Organizing Team for a Minnesota Without Poverty by 2020

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**YEP – High School Event**  
**Mythbusters: High School Youth Event**  
**February 13-15, 2009**  
**United Theological Seminary, New Brighton**

**Registration January 17-February 6, 2009**  
**\$35/youth**

**Registration deadline: February 6, 2009**

At this CYE we will be hearing from several guest speakers from the seminary community as we work our way through Biblical myths and big questions. Previous theological training not required!

Please bring musical instruments, toys for snow (including sleds), bathing suits, towels, and a ready spirit for lots of fun!

See T. Michael for registration form and other details. All are invited.

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**Coordinating Council**  
**January 6, 2009**

\*Treasurer: End of year—expenses were down but so was income. Ending the year with a \$4000-\$6000 shortfall.

\*Stewardship: Currently we have 109 pledges for a total of \$226,242. Projected total: 133 pledges for \$242,972.

\*Bylaw change: Eliminate the Communications and Evangelism Ministry. Tasks of the ministry not yet assigned; we will live into the changes through the next year.

\*Discernment/Long Range Planning to begin in 2009 (see article elsewhere in this issue).

*One of the purposes of RUCC's Faith Community Nursing group is to provide health education.*

## TEENS AND ALCOHOL

This article is geared to parents and guardians of young people ages 10 to 14. This is the age when some children begin experimenting with alcohol. Even if your child is not yet drinking alcohol, he or she may be receiving pressure to drink. Keeping quiet about how you feel about your child's alcohol use may give him or her the impression that alcohol use is OK for kids. It's not easy. As children approach adolescence, friends exert a lot of influence. Fitting in is a chief priority for teens, and parents often feel shoved aside. Kids will listen, however. Study after study shows that even during the teen years, parents have enormous influence on their children's behavior. The bottom line is that most young teens don't yet drink. And parents' disapproval of youthful alcohol use is the key reason children choose not to drink. **So make no mistake: You can make a difference.**

Early adolescence is a time of immense and often confusing changes for your son or daughter, which makes it a challenging time for both your youngster and you. Understanding what it's like to be a teen can help you stay closer to your child and have more influence on the choices he or she makes—including decisions about using alcohol.

Research shows that as a child matures, his or her brain continues to develop too. In fact, the brain's final, adult wiring may not even be complete until well into the twenties. Furthermore, in some ways, the adolescent brain may be specifically "wired" to help youth navigate adolescence and to take some of the risks necessary to achieve independence from their parents. This may help explain why teens often seek out new and thrilling—sometimes dangerous—situations, including drinking alcohol. It also offers a possible reason for why young teens act so impulsively, often not recognizing that their actions—such as drinking—can lead to serious problems. As children approach adolescence, "fitting in" becomes extremely important. They begin to feel more self-conscious about their bodies than they did when they were younger and begin to wonder whether they are "good enough"—tall enough, slender enough, attractive enough—compared with others. They look to friends and the media for clues on how they measure up, and they begin to question adults' values and rules. It's not

surprising that this is the time when parents often experience conflict with their kids. Respecting your child's growing independence, while still providing support and setting limits, is a key challenge during this time.

The fact is, the best way to influence your child to avoid drinking is to have a strong, trusting relationship with him or her. Research shows that teens are much more likely to delay drinking when they feel they have a close, supportive tie with a parent or guardian. Moreover, if your son or daughter eventually does begin to drink, a good relationship with you will help protect him or her from developing alcohol-related problems. The opposite also is true: When the relationship between a parent and teen is full of conflict or is very distant, the teen is more likely to use alcohol and to develop drinking-related problems.

This connection between the parent-child relationship and a child's drinking habits makes a lot of sense when you think about it. First, when children have a strong bond with a parent, they are apt to feel good about themselves and, therefore, be less likely to give in to peer pressure to use alcohol. Second, a good relationship with you is likely to encourage your children to try to live up to your expectations, because they want to maintain their close tie with you. Here are some ways to build a strong, supportive bond with your child: **Establish open communication.** Make it easy for your teen to talk honestly with you. **Show you care.** Even though young teens may not always show it, they still need to know that they are important to their parents. Make it a point to regularly spend one-on-one time with your child—time when you can give him or her your loving, undivided attention. **Draw the line.** Set clear, realistic expectations for your child's behavior. Establish appropriate consequences for breaking rules and consistently enforce them. **Offer acceptance.** Make sure your teen knows that you appreciate his or her efforts as well as accomplishments. Avoid hurtful teasing or criticism. **Understand that your child is growing up.** This doesn't mean a hands-off attitude. But as you guide your child's behavior, also make an effort to respect his or her growing need for independence and privacy.

For further information contact the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism at [niaaa.nih.gov](http://niaaa.nih.gov).

## **TEST THE WATERS!**

### **Take a class at United Theological Seminary**

Listed below are some of the Spring Term classes open to new students at United Theological Seminary. Enrollment as a non-degree or auditing student is easy, and the classroom experience can be enriching. If you are ready to test the waters, or have questions about enrolling, please contact the Admissions Office at United (651-255-6107). Admission and registration information can also be found on-line at [unitedseminary.edu](http://unitedseminary.edu)

#### **NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGION COURSE**

*Zen Buddhism* course (TR720)

#### **CHURCH LEADERSHIP**

*Music in Worship: Hymns, Psalms  
and Spiritual Songs* (CL329)

*Conflict and the Congregation: Restora-  
tion and Resilience* (CL891)

*Ministry to Persons with Mental Ill-  
ness and Their Families* (CL630)

#### **WEEKEND ON-CAMPUS COURSE**

Courses will each meet on four week-  
ends (Friday evening and all day Sat-  
urday) during the term.

*New Testament Texts in Context*  
(CH261)

#### **DULUTH COURSES**

##### **Monday Evenings**

*Making Peace, Transforming Conflict*  
(TR515)

#### **DULUTH COURSES**

##### **Weekends**

Course will each meet on four weekends  
(Friday evening and all day Saturday)  
during the term.

*New Testament Texts in Context* (CH261)

#### **THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN HERITAGE**

*Topics in Black Christianity* (CH416)

*Christology* (TR608)

*Poetry in Search of the Holy* (TR223)

#### **COURSES WHICH WOULD TRANSFER AS REQUIRED COURSES TOWARD MDIV OR MARL DEGREES**

*American Religious Histories* (CH462) -  
Monday evenings

*New Testament Texts in Context* (CH261) –  
Tuesday afternoons or Weekends

*Introduction to Pastoral Care* (CL670)  
Thursday afternoons

**Tuesdays w/T. – A Bible Study for Beginners  
6:00 p.m.**

This will be a wonderful time to explore and learn from each other about the scripture. This Bible Study is designed in a way that folk are welcome to drop in from time to time, or attend every week.



No homework is required, and all questions are welcome. Bible Study will last one hour. This month we will be getting into the depth of Paul's letter to the Romans. This is the most important book in Biblical Theology. Come and explore what it says about God and what it says to us. I believe it is both important to read the Bible and also to read it in community. This is the invitation to you to come. All levels are welcome and there is child care provided. If you have any questions, please talk with T. Michael.

**Special Satellite Bible Study**

February 24<sup>th</sup> at Waterford – Noontime  
(bring your own lunch)

**March Issue. . .**

**Mustard Seed**



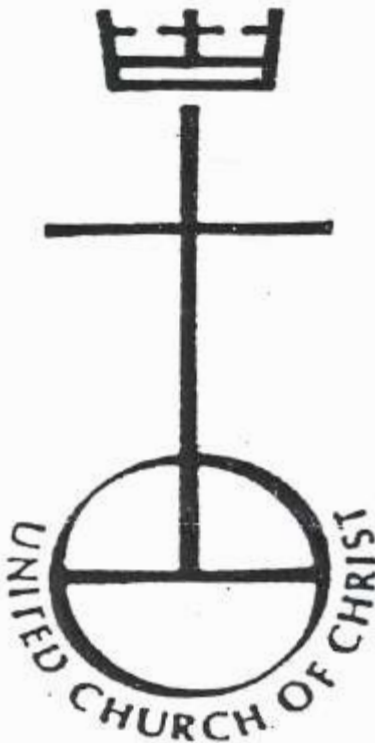
Please place all articles for the next issue of the Mustard Seed in the box marked "Mustard Seed" on the shelf inside the door to the workroom in the church office, *e-mail* to [thewillses@aol.com](mailto:thewillses@aol.com) (preferred) or mail them to Barbara Wills, 6214 Upland Lane No., Maple Grove 55311, so that they are received by the deadline.

**MARCH ISSUE DEADLINE**

**Sunday, February 22 , 11 a.m.**

No exceptions please.

(March issue will be mailed Friday, Feb. 27.)



**Robbinsdale United Church of Christ  
4200 Lake Road  
Robbinsdale, MN 55422**

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