



CORNERSTONE

University Baptist Church • 50 West Lane Avenue • Columbus, OH 43201
(614)294-6333 • Email: ubccolumbus@gmail.com

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Many submissions to the newsletter are voluntary contributions from individuals. The ideas expressed do not necessarily reflect the mission or views of University Baptist Church as a whole.

Fear Not! Fear Not! Fear Not! — By Ken Watkins

Christmas Day, I stepped into a dogfight. You might think, “Yeah, I had some pretty heated conversations sitting around our dinner table, too.” But this year, I LITERALLY stepped into a dogfight that left my hand bleeding from a bite and my shoulder aching from a fall. In the process, I learned something about dogfights.

Here is the background story. Granddaughters Sophie and Drew have a dog named Daisy, one of the sweetest dogs I’ve been around. Though she is lanky enough to reach my shoulders when standing on her hind legs, she thinks that she is a lap dog and loves to snuggle up to me on the couch. After lunch on Christmas, we took Daisy down to visit Nina, a dog that my granddaughters were helping to tend while their neighbor was away. On other holiday visits, I had accompanied them to Nina’s house where Daisy and Nina enjoyed a play time in the backyard. That was our plan today.

Entering the backyard, I pulled off my glove, later proven a mistake, to unlatch the gate. All five of us, Helen, Sophie, Drew, Daisy and I, proceeded to the back door to let Nina out. We don’t know which dog growled first, but in a flash the two dogs were locked in mortal combat. I grabbed Daisy’s collar with my glove-less hand to pull her away, Nina turned and bit my hand. I jerked away, tripped over a brick, fell and banged my shoulder. I quickly jumped back up, ordered my

grandchildren to not reach into the fray. Helen ran to the kitchen for a glass of water to throw on the dogs. The water did not phase them. Their jaws were locked on each other, and I feared that one or both would die.

So, I grabbed a plastic snow shovel and attempted to no avail to pry the dogs away from each other. They would not let go. In the corner of my mind, I’m imagining two dead dogs, traumatized granddaughters, and a very unhappy neighbor. In a matter of seconds, I did the only thing that I could do. I BANGED THE DOGS ON THEIR HEADS WITH THE PLASTIC SNOW SHOVEL. This did not seem to hurt them, but it did cause them to loosen their grips long enough for me to drag Daisy, still on her leash, outside the gate. Once I had Daisy outside the fence, she became the same loveable dog that she had been before her encounter with Nina, and Nina just went about her business in the yard. I was surprised that neither dog nor I needed stitches.

Later that day, Helen and I diagnosed the event. I would like to think the root cause for the canine altercation was the protective nature of the two dogs: Nina wanting to guard her house and backyard; Daisy wanting to protect her

people. But, though I am no dog psychologist, I think that fear, somehow connected to the desire for dominance, was at the heart of the conflict. Each dog responded instinctively. Neither dog had the insight to acknowledge her fear and process it. Dogs just can't do that.

You might, at this point in the story, ask, "Rabbi, why have you told us this story? Is it a parable?" (Of course, I am not a Rabbi; I'm just Baptist preacher.)

Yes, for me, the story has become a parable. Over the years, I have observed close up and from afar many religious "dogfights." Lots of "rational" reasons have been given for the conflicts, but deep down, under the pile of reasons, usually is fear on the part of the individuals and factions involved. Sometimes fears are indicators of danger, but often fears are irrational, unexamined and unprocessed, and they leave us outside the fences of opportunity, growth, and joy.

More than a few times in my life fear has caused me to flee, fight, or just stand dumb founded, frozen on spot, reacting to perceived dangers, and the unfamiliar—challenges, opportunities, or pathways. This New Year already contains enough to frighten us all. The road ahead moves out of sight as it goes over and around hills and through tall trees and grasses. My prayer for us as a nation, as a church, and as individuals is that we let the message of Christmas and Epiphany reverberate in our hearts, the message that God is with us, that God loves us, and that God has adventurous trails for us to take. And entering this New Year, I still hear the echoes from the Christmas stories, the words of the angels to Mary, Joseph,

Zechariah, and the shepherds saying to me, saying to us: "Don't be afraid!" And like Mary, I pray that I can face the New Year boldly, whispering "Let it be."

NSI Needs

NSI needs help every Monday with a food Pick up from Whole foods on W Dublin Granville road.

Please look at your schedule and see if you may be able to regularly assist with this. Joe Jackson has more information.

UBC is also collecting DIAPERS for NSI. Please bring your donations to the church and we will deliver them for you!

Newsletter Submissions

Newsletter items are due the third Friday of the month.

Also, it is UBC policy that all references to God be inclusive. We will edit to reflect this.

Please contact the office if you have any questions.



Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

- 4 Beverly Holmes
- 6 Libby Newberry
- 7 Jonathan Riley
- 11 Natalie Turner
- 14 Meredith Hughes
- 14 Sarah Turner
- 16 John Besch
- 19 Helen Spengler
- 21 Frank Benline
- 27 Nathan Cheesman

Anniversaries

None in January

Please contact the office with any additions or corrections to the Birthday and Anniversary list.



& POTLUCK

Join us January 27 after worship for this very important meeting.

Bring a dish to share and then join in the discussion of the year 2018 and the challenges and opportunities that 2019 will bring. There will be an important discussion and vote on UBC's relationship with Move United. Questions? Please contact Barbara Bullock.

Why is Mary Not Pregnant? — By Kerry Cheesman

Over the years Maryann and I have collected quite a few nativity sets. Many are from countries that we have travelled to; others are from the native southwest where we minister during the summer months; a few are family heirlooms. Some are simple; some are complex. They are made from wood, ceramic, metal, clay, and glass. They all have in common the elements of Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus. Beyond that some contain shepherds and sheep, some contain an angel, and some contain magi and camels. A few have a stable as a backdrop. The characters in each one portray the culture that they represent, reminding us that Jesus came for ALL of God's children everywhere.

When we visited our grandchildren last month each of the two oldest grandsons (6 and 4), in turn, brought us their nativity set (one piece construction so pieces could not become lost) and explained each part of it in their own understanding; baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the angel, and the "wise men". They relayed the story of Jesus' birth through their eyes. They also wanted to hear the story again from us, in our words.

One weekend while we were there we took these two grandsons for an overnight trip to Santa Barbara (staying at my brother and sister-in-law's house). There we visited the historic Santa Barbara Mission, a church built by the Spanish padres (Catholic priests) in 1786. For more than 50 years the Mission has placed a life-size nativity set on their grounds, complete with live donkey, camel, and sometimes sheep. The boys pon-

dered the display, then posed various questions (of course) to us.

"Why is baby Jesus missing?" This was a week before Christmas, and we explained to them that some people do not put baby Jesus in the nativity scene until Christmas eve or Christmas Day. That seemed to settle OK, but then came the question about "why the shepherds and the wise men were there if baby Jesus wasn't born yet". Good ques-



Mission Santa Barbara

tion, and one that has no logical answer. Since the angels only announced the Messiah's birth to the shepherds *after* Jesus was born, they, too, should not be at the manger until Christmas morning. The magi are even harder to explain, since historical scholars tell us that they were never at the manger in Bethlehem, only visiting the child Jesus at some later point, up to two years after his birth.

But the strangest question remained. If Jesus isn't born yet (not until Christmas eve or Christmas day), then "why is Mary not still pregnant?" You see, these two boys have a new baby brother, born just three weeks earlier, and another brother who is just two years old. They are very familiar with having a pregnant mother right up to the time of the baby's arrival. This paradox was obvious to them because pregnancy and birth were fresh in

their minds. And once again, their question was right on target, with no logical answer. Mary *should* be pregnant if baby Jesus is not yet shown in the manger. Hmmm, what we learn from the mouths and minds of children!

So does it really matter what Mary and Joseph and Jesus look like in the nativity sets we display? Yes, in some ways I think it does. In the same way that it is important for the

Bible to be available in the language that people read and understand, so too is it important that the representation of the Holy Family be in the likeness of the people. To see the family with foreign faces and bodies, especially those of a conquering people (even if long ago), makes it harder for people to relate and to trust, and to see themselves as created in the image of God. Missionaries have known this for centuries, and as our own culture becomes increasingly diverse (ie: non-European), we need to take note of how we portray Christ and others in the teaching of children. That's why we appreciate the nativity sets we have that portray the Holy Family within a local cultural context.

Thank you, Joshua and Colton, for teaching me more about Jesus. Jesus loved the little children, and so do I!

From the INCH Program — By Maryann Cheesman

As we celebrate a New Year with INCH it seems like a good time to reflect on the past year. Throughout our nation and world we saw a year filled with violence, prejudice, hatred, lack of respect for diversity, and fear of many kinds – the very things that push people out of their home countries. Instead of open borders and open arms we as a nation have tried to close our borders. It's such a horrible injustice and clearly not what our forefathers intended and fought for all those years ago.

Fortunately at INCH we always have open arms and open hearts (and occasional hugs as well!) toward all people. We understand that ALL of us are immigrants or children of immigrants. We ALL came from other countries, and as immigrants we are what has made this nation great! INCH is a diverse group of tutors and learners, and a place where violence, prejudice, hatred, and fear are NOT accepted.

Thank you University Baptist Church for following Christ's commandments and opening your doors to INCH so many years ago. Thank you for continuing to welcome all immigrants to our program, no matter where they are from!

Welcome New Members!

UBC has two new members, **Arri Allen and Caleb Morris**.

We welcome them to our progressive, welcoming, and affirming community.

Is Your Little White Light On? God is Watching — By Julius Mayo

While on my way to work a few weeks ago, I noticed a blinking white light and a buzzing sound coming from one of the newer classroom buildings on campus. As I moved closer, and then stood still to figure out what was going on, I realized that the light and the buzzer were part of a new fire detection system on some campus structures. Within a few moments the loud fire alarm tone that I was more familiar with kicked in, and I was sure I knew what was going on then. As I thought about it, our Christian journey can sometimes be like that little white light and buzzing sound phase of the fire system I witnessed. There are times in our lives when we know in the back of our minds that something is wrong, but we don't want to make too big of a deal about it. We might suggest to a close friend or loved one, that we feel out of sorts, but we never let them know how bad things really are going. That is until it gets to be too much. When we become overwhelmed or too unsure to function, we often wail out into the darkness hoping for anything or anyone to come to bring us assistance.

How many times I wonder, has the Creator been standing by watching out "white light" just waiting for us to share our burdens with the great Counselor and Healer? We cry out or hide away because we forget that what we need is always already there. In the case of the fire alarm I witnessed on campus, I soon realized that it was just a drill used to make sure the university structure

was ready for a real crisis. As a Christian, we should all remember that we can always be prepared to receive help even before our white lights come on in the midst of uncertainty.

Give all praises to the Creator,
Christ, and Holy Spirit.



Many thanks to all who contributed to this year's staff gift. Your support and generosity make coming to work a delight!

Ken, Kerry, David & Mollie



Inclement Weather and Church Services

If the weather looks bad on Sunday morning, check your preferred local news source for weather alerts. If at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday there is a Level 2 or 3 snow emergency, worship will be cancelled.

Moderator's Letter to the Beloved Community of University Baptist Church

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

You may have heard conversations about the possibility of joining in ministry with Move United, a United Church of Christ congregation whom we have shared in worship and fellowship. This relationship building has been an intentional effort of the UBC Council of Ministries. The COM supports the future merger of UBC and Move United. A motion will be brought to the congregation at the Annual Meeting on January 27, 2019. It is important that our members are informed and prepared for that very important vote about our future as a congregation.

In April of 2018, Ken Watkins shared with the COM ongoing conversations he had been having with Adam Long (Move United) over the past few years. He shared a spiritual insight that perhaps our two progressive congregations had much in common. He posed the question to the COM to explore what God might call us to do together. In April, we were a church without a pastor, they were a congregation without a true home. The Council was open to Ken's insight and made a motion to form an exploratory team to reach out to Move United. A team was formed with Beth Short, Isaac Robinson, and Ken Watkins. They met with a similar Move United team.

It is important to understand that the COM reached out to Move United because we recognized that our congregation was at a turning point. We average less than 30 in attendance each Sunday and for several years, we are losing active members faster than we are attracting new members. As a Council, we needed to determine if we were going to call a new search committee. The COM recognized the hard truth that we have been a congregation in slow decline, even as we celebrated our amazingly devoted members and history. The COM was not prepared to sell the church property, feeling connected to our mission as a progressive congregation on campus and in Columbus. Nor did the COM feel that the congregation realistically had the membership energy to relocate with a church plant in the suburbs. Our average membership-age and small numbers would not make that a successful endeavor.

Here are the most important issues that we have addressed:

- Issues of theology have been examined, explored and acknowledged. They are a diverse congregation with thoughtful members. We found them to be a lot like us, biblically based, willing to ask hard questions, and encouraging spiritual freedom in issues of faith.
- We would be a dually-aligned ABC/UCC congregation. There are other ABC-UCC congregations in existence, including the ABC Rochester Genesee Region. United Church of Granville is local example.
- We would dissolve both congregations so that we can merge into a new incorporated identity. Legal expertise we be sought to guide us in these matters.
- Pastoral leadership would be Adam Long and Ken Watkins. Ken has expressed his desire to remain part-time with a goal for true retirement at the end of 2019.
- We have not yet determined a worship pattern (one service or two?).
- We have not yet determined a name.
- The COM is encouraging members to visit and get to know Move United. Please attend their worship service on January 20, 2019 at 10:30 AM in the Gateway Film Center. UBC will have not services on that day to encourage our membership to join Move United.
- The COM will be bringing a motion for merger to the UBC Congregation at the Annual Meeting on January 27, 2019. This will start a transition process towards a new shared future.

I cannot express to you how many hours have been devoted to discerning God's will for our two congregations. A biblical comparison might Jacob wrestling with the Angel. Beth, Isaac and Ken have struggled for many hours as they tried to get to the heart of the matter. In the end, they have helped the Council members come to a place of hope that our two congregations could merge. As Ken put in a sermon recently, we can be "more Jesus" together than apart. We are moving from fear of change to a sense of hope and excitement. We believe that God is calling us to something new, to transform ourselves. Move United is equally excited and they have felt the love and gritty-tenacity of our congregation to fulfill its mission. They are ready and willing to join us in a new future together.

May God bless us all with open hearts and hands to do the work before us.

Barbara Bullock,
Moderator

University Baptist Church — *Progressive • Welcoming • Inclusive*

We will be joining Move United for worship on **January 20, 2019 at 10:30 am.** There will be no service at UBC that Sunday so that we can worship together. Come join us as we worship with our Move United brothers and sisters! Move United has services at the Gateway Film Center, 1550 North High Street, Columbus, OH 43201. A parking garage is available with access from either 11th or 9th Avenues. More information: <http://www.moveunited.org/guests/>

UBC Annual Meeting will be January 27 after worship. As always, we will be having a potluck. So bring your favorite dish and

Snack Sign Up for 2019. The sign-up sheet is posted in the Narthex near the kitchenette. Please volunteer to share snacks in 2019.

2019 UBC Directory. Please notify the office with any changes to your contact information. We know several members have moved this year and have gotten their new addresses, if you have other changes, please email or call the office.

NSI Needs Diapers! Please bring diapers for the NSI barrel. As always, thank you for your generosity to our neighbors.



50 West Lane Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43201

Phone: 614.294.6333

E-mail: ubccolumbus@gmail.com

Website: www.ubccolumbus.org

Return Service Requested 1/31/19

Interim Pastor—Ken Watkins
Moderator—Barbara Bullock
(2018)

Choir Director—David Tomasacci
Pianist—Mollie Rausch
Office Manager—Kerry Taylor

Worship—10:30 a.m.

**Children's Sunday School—2nd
and 4th Sundays—10:30 a.m.**

Office Hours

Tues.-Fri. 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.