

THE COVENANT

January 2012

Volume 12, Issue 1

New Year's Reality Check

Another year, another chance
To start our lives anew;
This time we'll leap old barriers
To have a real breakthrough.

We'll take one little step
And then we'll take one more,
Our unlimited potential
We'll totally explore.

We'll show off all our talents
Everyone will be inspired;
(Whew! While I'm writing this,
I'm getting very tired.)

We'll give up all bad habits;

We'll read and learn a lot,
All our goals will be accomplished,
Sigh...or maybe not.

Oh well, Happy New Year anyway!

[Joanna Fuchs]

2011 Pivotal for the Local LGBT Community

2011 was a pivotal one for the area LGBT community, with everything happening from the implementation of civil unions in Illinois to Chicago hosting the largest national conference on HIV/AIDS. Here are some of the interesting items that made the news:

Cook County Jail trans policy: In March, Sheriff Tom Dart announced that Cook County Jail instituted a policy for housing transgender detainees based on their gender identity, rather than birth sex. Combining policies from other jails in the U.S. the Cook County policy was hailed by some advocates as one of the most progressive transgender jail policies in the country.

Veteran lesbian activist Mona Noriega was selected by Mayor Emanuel to head the Chicago Department on Human Relations. Noriega is former head of the Midwest office of Lambda Legal and a key early leader of Amigas Latinas.

Illinois became the sixth state to grant significant partner recognition to same-sex couples when civil unions went into effect June 1st. The city celebrated the historic day with a public ceremony in Millennium Park, during which 36 couples were joined June 2. More than 3,700 same-sex couples tied the knot last year in Illinois.

(continued on page 4)



Pastor's Corner - Rev. Danny Spears



Here We Go Again...

Yep! It's that time of the year again—New Year resolutions time!

Some of you already know I don't do the "official" New Year's resolutions thing. Now I'm not opposed to others making resolutions. Heck, if making a New Year's resolution leads to a healthy, positive life, go for it!

At the same time, the practice has simply never worked for me. See, I tend to put too much pressure on myself to get things "right." And when I drop the ball—as we all do from time to time—I beat myself up. Even worse, sometimes I used to shy away from trying things again.

Notice I said "*used* to shy away from trying things again." Oh, I still have a bit of a "perfectionist" streak in me; it's just that the older I get, the more I learn *over* sweating some of life's details leaves me emotionally—and sometimes physically—wet and stinky. So what if the bread doesn't rise and is hard as a brick? Decorate it and turn it into a fabulous door stop! If the cheesecake cracks, just drizzle caramel or chocolate sauce over the crack. Slightly burned chicken gets an extra shot of spices and becomes "blackened Cajun chicken." A cycling accident becomes "jock points." And all of these things become educational opportunities.

I think we can extend these examples to religion as well. That is, over sweating some of the details can leave us *spiritually* wet and stinky. Those of us who believe in some concept of God—whatever those concepts may be—sincerely want to pay appropriate attention and respect to those concepts. We're thankful for life and its many blessings. In response, we want to give back to our communities to promote love, life, justice, and peace. Some of us enjoy gathering in religious communities to sing, pray, laugh, cry, and learn how to engage life.

The over sweating, I believe, comes when we start questioning if we're doing these things *right*, and living in fear of

God's wrath if we aren't. Are we using the *right* words about God? Are we sure we're teaching the *right* beliefs about Jesus? Is it OK to bring the teachings of other faith traditions into dialogue with our faith, or should we promote our faith as the "best" faith? Can Humanism teach us anything valuable about life? If we can't believe the stories of the Virgin Birth, Resurrection, and Second Coming in literal terms, should we ditch Christianity all together? And if we do, do we risk the wrath of an angry God—even if we continue to work for peace, justice, life, and love in other ways?

Such questioning, while normal, can become exhausting after a while. Then we run the risk of being too tired to do anything—except continue to run on the theological hamster wheel, that is.

So, my prayer for 2012 is that we all continue to engage life, appreciating and giving thanks for its many blessings, grieving its losses, and facing its challenges head on. May we engage the best that is within us—a best many people call "God"—and may we draw on the wisdom of the world's many faiths—including our own—as we care for one another, reach out to others, explore our faiths, and worship the God of our understandings with both our words and our actions.

*Happy New Year,
Pastor Dan*

Winter Parking Restrictions



Like it or not, winter is here and, with it, snow parking restrictions. This year, Brookfield residents will face a Sunday parking ban when snowfall reaches 2 inches. When snowfall is heavy, residents are already restricted from parking on a certain side of the street, depending on the day of the week (including Sundays). The ban is effective immediately, and fines will be imposed by Brookfield police for non-compliance. Please check the street signs before you park near the church!

Religious Education Coming in January

Did you know some of the teachings of the world's great faith traditions actually share some common themes? "Buddha, Lao Tzu, & Jesus Walk Into a Bar: Traditions in Dialogue" is a six-week course developed by Sunshine Cathedral MCC's pastor, Rev. Dr. Durrell Watkins that examines these common themes. The course is free, and so are the materials! So please sign-up online at <http://www.holycovenantmcc.org/Bar.html>; or use the handy-dandy sign-up sheet on the Pastor's office window.

Request Your Giving Envelopes

Many people like to use pre-printed envelopes when they make their offering to the church. For people who make cash contributions, the envelopes are especially helpful because they allow the church to keep track of your offering and send you a statement at the end of the year that can be used for tax purposes. This year, in order to be better stewards of our resources, giving envelopes will only be made for those who request them. If you would like a set of envelopes, please either indicate this desire on the back of your worship attendance card or contact the church office to make your request. Alternatively, you can speak to our Treasurer, Joanie Baird.



New Directory Available Mid-January



The new July 2011 Directory will soon be printed and copies will be available in Fellowship Hall by mid-July. If you know of anyone who may need a copy of the new Directory mailed to them, please contact Ian Tiele in the church office on 708-387-1611 or via his email ian@holycovenantmcc.org.

January 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Worship 10:00 AA Meeting 6:00	2 AA Meeting 12:30 Crazy Crafters 7:00 <i>Tony Thieman's birthday</i>	3 AA Meeting 12:30 Yoga 7:00	4 AA Meeting 12:30	5 AA Meeting 12:30	6 AA Meetings 12:30 & 8:00	7 Youth Group 4:00
8 Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00	9 AA Meeting 12:30 Crazy Crafters 7:00 Religious Ed. 7:00	10 AA Meeting 12:30	11 AA Meeting 12:30	12 AA Meeting 12:30	13 AA Meetings 12:30 & 8:00	14
15 Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00	16 AA Meeting 12:30 Crazy Crafters 7:00 Religious Ed. 7:00	17 AA Meeting 12:30 Yoga 7:00 Pilsen 7:00	18 AA Meeting 12:30	19 AA Meeting 12:30 BOD Meeting 7:00 <i>Steve Amella's birthday</i>	20 AA Meetings 12:30 & 8:00	21 Youth Group 4:00
22 Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00	23 AA Meeting 12:30 Crazy Crafters 7:00 Religious Ed. 7:00	24 AA Meeting 12:30 Yoga 7:00	25 AA Meeting 12:30 <i>Bruce Myers and Jerry Rickert's anniversary</i>	26 AA Meeting 12:30	27 AA Meetings 12:30 & 8:00	28
29 Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00	30 AA Meeting 12:30 Crazy Crafters 7:00 Religious Ed. 7:00	31 AA Meeting 12:30 Yoga 7:00				

**HOLY
COVENANT MCC
CHURCH
BROOKFIELD, IL**

9145 Grant Ave.
Brookfield, IL 60513
708-387-1611

Email: office@holycovenantmcc.org
www.holycovenantmcc.org



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*We celebrate Christ's call to:
Care for one another
Reach out to others
Explore our faith
Worship God*

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Danny Spears

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Greg Petit

Social Action Ministry:

TBA

Covenant Editor/Admin Assistant:

Ian Tiele

Lord's Prayer

O Breathing Life, your Name shines everywhere!
Release a space to plant your Presence here.
Imagine your possibilities now.
Embody your desire in every light and form.
Grow through us this moment's bread and wisdom.
Untie the knots of failure binding us, as we release the strands we hold of others' faults.
Help us not forget our Source,
Yet free us from not being in the Present.
From you arises every Vision, Power and Song from gathering to gathering.
Amen - May our future actions grow from here!

[Mark Berry - Emergency Church Movement]

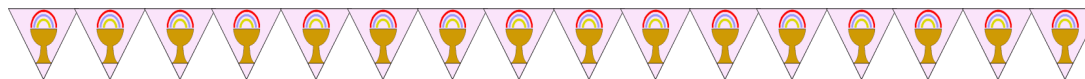
2011 Pivotal for the Local LGBT Community (continued)

Chicago's 42nd annual Pride Parade saw unprecedented turnout and unprecedented chaos as an estimated 750,000 sardined into Boystown. Organizers woke to discover that the tires on 51 floats had been slashed, and matters got worse when crowds that were packed in at Belmont and Halsted exploded onto the route blocking parade traffic. So severe were the problems in 2011 that months after the event, organizers announced a new route for 2012.

International Mr. Leather (IML) drew the scorn of some activists when the annual event continued at the Hyatt Regency downtown, despite a workers boycott on the hotel. IML organizers said its contract could not be broken and that an alternate location could not accommodate the thousands who flock to the annual event.

Church Mice

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Covenant Publications

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The Covenant welcomes new items, articles, poetry, and of course suggestions. Written contributions may be submitted to the Editor of the Covenant at the address herein or by email to ian@holycovenantmcc.org Contributions will be published at the discretion of the editor and may be subject to revision and space limitations.

The February 2012 COVENANT DEADLINE for any articles is NO LATER THAN Thursday, January 26th, 2012. Late submissions will be made on an "available space basis."