

THE COVENANT

June 2011

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Faith and Focus in Stewardship - Jill Walls

I hold dear the scriptures of stewardship and in particular those on tithing. 2 Corinthians 9:7 states "each person should give what he/she has decided to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Deep down in my heart I know this to be true. God has entrusted me to plant the money seeds that I have been given and God too will cheerfully make those seeds grow.



So, how can something I know to be true through faithful belief be so far off from what my own behaviors have been known to demonstrate? Some months I have faithfully given first and other months I didn't give at all. For me, tithing is about faith AND focus. I allowed life's distractions to shift my focus away from planting the money seeds. It took me slowing down a few minutes to write this and perhaps you slowing down a minute to read this to do a quick evaluation of whether our behaviors focus on our faith.....not only in tithing but in all aspects of our core values.

As I team up with the 2012 stewardship team, I hope you will join me in setting an atmosphere of cheer as we work to faithfully focus on how we gather and give our time, talents and money seeds.

Equality Illinois Civil Union Forum

Please join us for a community forum about how Illinois' new civil union bill (*SB 1716—the Illinois Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act*) will impact our community. Speakers from Equality Illinois will discuss what the bill entails, what happens next and address any specific questions that YOU might have.



The forum is presented by Equality Illinois and will be hosted by Holy Covenant MCC.

Date: Tuesday, June 7th, 2011

Time: from 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Location: Holy Covenant MCC

RSVP: Caroline at estaerk@eqil.org or 773-477-7173

For more information, please call the church office at 708-387-1611.

Ride for AIDS 2011

Did you know that this year Holy Covenant MCC will again be represented in the Ride for AIDS? Rev. Danny Spears, Lay Delegate Charles Brignall and friend of HC Jake Lewis will make up team "MCC's Hammers," the team that's too legit to quit. The team has pledged to ride their bikes 200 miles in two days and raise \$4,000 for Test Positive Awareness Network. (TPAN) and other community partners). TPAN is an organization which works with the community on education, prevention and support programs on AIDS/HIV.

There are three ways YOU can help in this important cause:

1-Ride with us! Grab your bike, your helmet and join MCC Hammers - register at: www.rideforaids.org

2-Be a Crew member for the event! Crew is critical in supporting the riders with route support, first aid, sleeping/luggage logistics.

3-Donate! Donations can be made online at: <http://bit.ly/DannysAIDSride>; <http://bit.ly/TeamMCChammers> and <http://bit.ly/JakesAIDSride>.



Pastor's Corner - Rev. Danny Spears



Christian Atheists?!?

Got your attention, yet?

Last month I wrote an article where I stated, "The reality, I believe, is Holy Covenant—like MCC in general—represents a broad spectrum of theological beliefs and spiritual practices." At the end of that article I suggested people get together with friends and discuss some of their spiritual beliefs and practices. Hopefully you found time to do that; if not, however, I thought I would get the ball rolling by writing a bit about Christian atheists.

The term itself sounds like an oxymoron, doesn't it? I mean, Christians believe in God, right? So how can a Christian be an atheist? Well, it is all in how we define the word "atheist." One way of defining atheist, of course, is a person who does not believe in any god at all. There is, however, at least one other way of defining this term. An alternative way of defining atheist is a person who does not define God in a theistic manner, or a person who is not a theist. So perhaps a better term than atheist is "non-theist."

So what in the world is theism? What is a theist? Theism, in this specific sense, conceives of God as personal, present and active in the governance and organization of the world and the universe. John Shelby Spong refers to a theistic God as "a personal being with expanded supernatural, human, and parental qualities, which has shaped every religious idea of the Western world." A theist, then, is a person who experiences God in theistic terms.

So, is it possible to "see" God any other way than in theistic terms and still be a Christian? I think so.

Christian theologian Paul Tillich referred to God as "the ground of all being." Spong refers to God as the "source of life, love, and being." That is, God is not separate from us; God is within us and we are within God. Progressive Christian

scholar and author Marcus Borg paints a beautiful picture of God as the ocean, and all of creation as part of that ocean much like all the life that lives and moves and has its being within that ocean.

There is also biblical support for such a non-theist or interconnected view of God. In the Gospel of John chapters 14 and 15, Jesus speaks of God being in him, his being in God, his disciples being in him and his being in his disciples. Now *that* is some serious interconnection!

Of course there are theist views of God presented in the Bible as well. John, as the final gospel in the canon (written around 100 C.E.), however, could very well present an evolving view of the Divine for that time period.

Does this information mean theistic views of God are somehow wrong? Not at all. Many people experience God as a supernatural or parental-like being who controls the elements and so forth; and I assume there are several people in our community of faith who experience God in this manner—and that is fine. Personally, I tend to experience God more like Tillich, Spong, and Borg. So I guess you could say I am a Christian non-theist—and that is fine, too.

So, wherever you are on the "God Spectrum" —from Orthodox Theist to Christian non-theist and beyond—know that you are not alone. Continue to think, to read, and to discuss your beliefs with one another. You just might be surprised how much we have in common.

On the Journey with You, **Pastor Dan**

Games Night Anyone?



Are you interested in playing games? If so, Jackie Thurston is hoping to restart Holy Covenant's monthly Friday night Game Night very soon. If you are interested in participating, please contact Jackie or the church office at your earliest convenience.

Kool Kats and Jazzy Hounds Benefit - June 12th

Holy Covenant's Administrative Assistant Ian Tiele is the founder and President of the very successful Brookfield Jazz Society. Ian and the Society will take on their first major charity project, when they present the *Kool Kats and Jazzy Hounds Benefit* on Sunday, June 12th to help provide a safe home for stray and unwanted animals, until they are adopted from the Anderson Animal Shelter (www.andersonanimalshelter.org). All monies raised will go to the animal shelter.



The event will feature seven hours of non-stop jazz from 1:00 to 8:00 p.m., with seven different jazz bands providing the music. There will be silent auctions, a raffle, and a split-the-pot raffle. This fundraiser will be held in the West Banquet Room at Sawa's Old Warsaw, 9200 W. Cermak Road, Broadview (corner of Cermak and 17th). There will be non-stop jazz from 1:00 to 8:00 p.m.

All-day tickets are just \$25 (\$20 if bought in advance). The jazz features some of Chicagoland's best musician's, who have all generously donated their time to this event. Advance tickets are available by calling Ian at 708-268-7873 or via his email bjs@brookfieldjazz.org.

The Society is still looking for raffle and suitable silent auction items, and for people who would like to sponsor a band. Please contact Ian (details above) if you are interested in donating/sponsoring.

For full details and for a program of the live music, please go to www.bjscharity.org. Hope to see you there!

July 2011 Directory Update



Ian Tiele will shortly commence putting together the updated July 2011 Directory. If your address, telephone number(s), or email address(s) have changed since the last one was published in January 2011, then please send in your updated information. You can submit your amendments by email to Ian@holycovenantmcc.org or by normal mail, marked for Ian's attention. Alternatively, you can leave a note in the Office Administrator's mail slot in the church office. Please make sure that all information is received at the church no later than Monday, July 4th.

June 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5		7	8	9	10	11
Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00		Equality Illinois Civil Union Forum 7:00			<i>Holly Blonde's birthday</i>	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00		Yoga 7:00		BOD Meeting 7:00 p.m.		<i>Cherie Long-Sutter's birthday</i>
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00		Yoga 7:00		Night Ministry Outreach: Pilsen 7:00		
26	27	28	29	30	31	
Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00		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



**We Accept
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Use email address
donations@holycovenantmcc.org

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

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Danny Spears

Board of Directors:

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Jackie Thurston
Audrey Chmura

Church Musician:

Greg Petit

Social Action Ministry:

Karen Baribeault
Ross Lee

Covenant Editor/Admin Assistant:

Ian Tiele

June Prayer

Asatho Maa Sad Gamaya.
Thamaso Maa Jyothir Gamaya.
Mrithyur Maa Amritham Gamaya.
Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

From untruth lead us to Truth.
From darkness lead us to Light.
From death lead us to Immortality.
Om Peace, Peace, Peace.

[ancient vedic prayer]

Joy Fills Millennium Park as Couples Celebrate

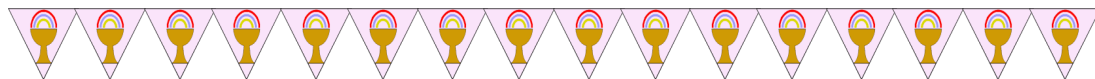
Hundreds of family members, friends and supporters filled Chicago's Millennium Park on June 2nd as 32 couples celebrated civil unions on the first day the new Illinois civil unions law made that possible. "I think it's a wonderful day for the state of Illinois," said state Rep. Greg Harris (D -Chicago), who was chief sponsor of the civil unions bill and guided it to passage last December. "Just look around at how joyous this is for all the families. If anyone had any doubt about what this is all about, just look around at all the happy faces."



Indeed, extended families and groups of friends crowded around the couples as, one by one, they were officially declared "spouses forever" by a host of Cook County Circuit Court judges, including Chief Judge Timothy Evans and the court's gay and lesbian judges.

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 July 2011 COVENANT DEADLINE for any articles is NO LATER THAN Monday, June 27th, 2011. Late submissions will be made on an "available space basis."