



Church of the Good Shepherd
Faith Action
A Just Peace, Whole Earth, Open and Affirming Church

United Church of Christ

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December 2009

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"Happy Holidays"

The Advent/Christmas seasons are a lot like Easter in one way: if a preacher can't think of something for a newsletter column at this time of year, he or she is in sad shape! There's so much that I could say, especially given the fact that I only have to write ONE column for December! Now I know there are a lot of serious things going on in the world, but, then again, there always are. There's a lot to celebrate too, particularly during the holidays. I should just focus on the positive. But I won't, because that's not how I roll!

I want to gripe about something. It's the folks that get all bent out of shape because someone wishes them "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas." Now I know, or at least I think I know, why this bothers some people. A lot of Americans, particularly some committed Christians, are concerned about the holidays of our faith becoming too "secularized" and trivialized. I get that. And some folks think our culture has become too concerned with being "politically correct" and that saying "Happy Holidays" is part of that trend. O.k, fine.

But underlying all of this anti-"Happy Holidays" sentiment is the idea that a number of folk have that America is a "Christian" nation and that in the last several decades, Christians have had to give up a lot of "turf" to adherents of other faiths and those who do not claim any particular faith. However, America is not a Christian nation. It is a de-

mocratic republic which guarantees both freedom of religion and freedom FROM religion. Yes, American culture probably has been more influenced by the Christian faith than any other, I suppose, but we have no state religion in this country, Christian or otherwise. Folks, I understood this basic premise even back when I was a conservative Southern Baptist!

So if someone wishes a friend or a customer or colleague "Happy Holidays," what harm does that do? For some, it's just another form of a greeting or farewell. For others, using that phrase indicates that they know our country is populated by folks from many faith traditions and they don't want to give offense. You know what that's called? That's called being polite, being courteous, another great American trait.

Therefore, wish me "Happy Holidays" all you want. It's a whole lot more pleasant than "a pox on your house," "get lost," or "how 'bout them Gators!" Now I reckon I am partial to "Merry Christmas." I am a Christian, after all. "Merry Christmas" makes me feel warm inside. "Merry Christmas" speaks of presents wrapped in shiny paper, wassail, divinity, bathrobe shepherds, and babes in manglers. But I sure do hope that I have "happy holidays." And I hope you do, too.

Sam Foskey

Good Shepherd News

Happenings

Recurring Events

First Sunday: Communion

Adult Sunday School: 9:30 am

Music Time for Youth: 10:00 am

Worship: 10:30 am

Overeaters Anonymous:
Mondays at 7 pm.

Circle of Peace:
Tuesdays at 5:30 pm. For more information call Wil Davis at 549-4836.

Choir Rehearsal:
Wednesdays at 6 pm. New members welcome.

Cousin Andy's Coffee House:
Fridays at 7:30 pm in Fellowship Hall

December Birthdays

- 1** Diana Shepherd
- 6** Isaiah Gallivan
- 10** Kelley Hessian
- 15** Larry Ellet
- 23** Jessica O'Brien
- 27** Dee Stull
- 29** Peggy Igleheart
- 29** Brad Masterson
- 29** Janet McCready
- 29** Ralph Tate

Upcoming Events

Dec 20th: Advent Night; Children will wrap gifts for their families. Help is needed. Contact Shari Burruss for more information (549-0842 or 203-6249)

Dec 20th: Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross & the Emergency Fund

Dec 24th: Christmas Eve Celebration; Adults in costume will act out the Christmas Eve story as the children narrate. Concludes with communion and candlelight circle.

Green Tip of the Month

Submitted by Bob Tyson



Think you can read a label? A box of cereal is labeled "recycled package." The box is paperboard with a wax paper bag inside holding the cereal. Is the paperboard recycled or is it just the waxed paper? Or both? Deceptive!

Get outdoors! Join one of the next two Sierra Club hikes. Dec 6 Fountain Bluff Roadside trail. Jan 10 North Bluff Line trail in Trail of Tears State Forest. Car pooling for both will commence 1 PM at the Murphysboro ranger station. Any questions contact Bob or Kay Tyson 684-5643. Help yourself to the compost in the black bin behind the church as well as any bags of leaves near the shed.



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Good Shepherd News

Thank You...

- Many thanks to the following people who helped put the Christmas tree up and decorated the upstairs on November 29 and for providing sandwiches and drink for the helpers: Rose Bender, Richard Cox, Bryan Crow, Kathleen and Isaiah Gallivan, Terry Moore, George Parker, Margie Parker, Andrew Samm, Bob and Kay Tyson, and Hannah, Laura, Rachel and Ralph Tate.
- Thanks to all those who helped with the annual Bonfire: George and Margie Parker, Kate Baba, Dana Delong, Terry Moore, Lee and Donna Hayden, Richard Cox, and most especially for Kelly Hessian and Jack Raino for volunteering to host the event at their home at the last minute.
- Thanks to Dale and Brent Ritzel and Jack Raino for installing the new and improved church sign. Also a big thank you to Dale for installing the new ceiling tile.
- Thanks to the crew who worked the concession stand at the playoff game on Nov. 28: Gary Shepherd, Rose Bender, Bryan Crow, Chilang Lawless, John Davis, Steve Parmenter, Shari Burruss and the volunteers from Rainbow Café: November

Davidson, Cyndi McGee, Jenifer H., Julie Robinson, and Joey Reed.

- Continuing thanks to the members of the Pastoral Search Committee for their hard work.
- And, thanks to the parent helpers – Erika Peterson and Lori Masterson for bringing crafts for the kids, and to Marisa Winegar for bringing goodies for the kids, and to Joanie Bishop for helping out with the party/Unicef collection. Special thanks to Shari Burruss for organizing the event. COGS broke its record for collections this year, taking in \$141.32. The city total from all six churches was \$853.65.

Congratulations...

- Congratulations and appreciation is extended to the kids who participated in Trick or Treat for UNICEF, including: Christopher, Isaiah, Laura, Hannah, Elizabeth, Carlos, Corinne, Summer, Leland, Hollis, Efreem, LuElla, Cordy, Clark and Liz.

Condolences...

- Condolences to Candy Davis on the death of her father.

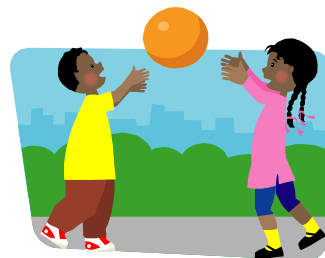
Youth Activities Planned for December

Submitted by Shari Burruss

The church youth have two fun activities planned for the month of December. On Sunday December 6, we will meet at the Unitarian Fellowship for the Alternative Gift Fair. We will help collect money for Heifer International. There are also some craft activities for the kids to do at the fair, as well as some goodies and snacks! As well as other great causes to help support. Please come help support our community Alternative Gift Fair as well as Heifer International. If you have any questions or need a ride, call Shari Burruss at 549-0842/203-6249.

Later in December, on Sunday the 20th we will rehearse for the Christmas Eve program. Marisa

will lead us in preparing for the service. Afterwards we will have an activity for the kids - we hope it will be Advent night. If we aren't able to coordinate an Advent night, we will decorate Christmas cookies with the youth that they can take home to their families. Even if you can't be here on Christmas Eve, we encourage all youth to join us on Sunday December 20th for some singing and fun. Merry Christmas to all!



Good Shepherd News

Youth Advent Help Needed

Submitted by Shari Burruss

On Sunday December 20th, the youth are going to be at church rehearsing for the Christmas Eve service. After rehearsal we'd like to have our annual Advent Night. If you aren't familiar with Advent Night, the kids get a chance to make gifts for their parents, family, etc. Adults volunteer to come and help the kids make a craft or project (like soap, a candle holder, snack mix, etc). After they are finished the kids wrap their gifts and bring them home to surprise their family on Christmas. The kids really enjoy the opportunity to have a special gift that they can give to their parents.

This is where we need help! We are asking for help from people who don't have kids who are in

the youth group. If you could come to church Sunday December 20th and help the kids with crafts and wrapping their gifts that would help us keep this fun tradition alive! Contact Shari Burruss at 549-0842/203-6249 or saumvision@yahoo.com and let her know how you can help. We would welcome anyone who could come and have a project planned and ready for the kids...or if you aren't able to prepare a craft but can come and help the kids with something that is ready for you, that would be a big help. The most helpful thing is to get help from other adults so that the parents can hide out upstairs that evening and not spoil the surprise! The kids really do have a great time 'scheming' a secret gift for their families. We hope you will join the fun and help the kids with a Christmas surprise for their parents.

Sunday School Teacher Needed

Submitted by Shari Burruss



After many dedicated years of working with our Sunday School classes, Terry Samm-Garris is going to take a well-earned break from teaching Sunday School this spring semester. Terry needs the time off to focus on her internship for her college degree. We want to thank Terry for the countless hours she has put in to our Sunday School/Youth Program...THANK YOU TERRY!

That will leave the Sunday School with 3 teachers for the multi-age class (Kindergarten through 4th or 5th grades). This fall, when we had four teachers, it was a really nice rotation. The teachers averaged just one Sunday a month teaching - freeing them up to attend service the other weeks. The old saying "Many hands make light work" really rings true. We are hoping that members and friends of COGS will prayerfully considering joining the ranks of Sunday School Teachers. With four teachers, your commitment is kept to just one Sunday a month. Also, with four teachers, it is easy to find another teacher to 'trade' a Sunday with if you have a conflict with a

scheduled teaching day.

We have a great curriculum which is accessible on-line or we can get you a paper copy. The lesson has several different activities related to the Bible lesson for the week. The teacher is able to pick and choose from several suggestions - or can bring in their own ideas. Teachers are also welcome to stray from the curriculum if there is another topic they'd like to cover (like UNICEF, Heifer International, etc.). We try to have another adult helper with the teacher every week. Most weeks there are around five to seven kids that attend.

We welcome anyone who is interested to contact one of our multi-age elementary Sunday School teachers if you have more questions, or would like to pop in on a Sunday to see what it is all about. Our teachers are Joanie Bishop-Breden, Jana Zetterman and Shari Burruss. Erika works with the older Sunday school class (5th grade and up). This is a great opportunity to get to know the kids of the congregation better and to have a lot of fun. Remember, with four teachers, your commitment is pretty minimal - just one Sunday a month through May! We really hope that everyone will take some time to consider if they feel moved to help with the youth of the congregation. Please call Shari Burruss at 549-0842 or email at saumvision@yahoo.com if you can help.

Good Shepherd News

Christmas Eve Celebration

December 24th

Submitted by Marisa Winegar



A family-friendly, interactive Christmas celebration will be held at COGS on December 24 at 5:00. Music prelude will begin at 4:45. Adults in costume will mime the story as child-oriented narration describes the events of that special night. Children of all ages will sit up front and step in and out of the scene, using bells, puppets, and other props to help tell the story and reflect on what they can give to Jesus on his birthday. Expect special musical performances by the children and lots of traditional carols. The service will conclude with communion and a candle-light circle.

Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross

Submitted by Gary Shepherd

We will be collecting the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund on Dec. 20, to support those who have served and are serving the church. This is the fifth of the 'Five for Five' offerings that we take each year. These funds are used to provide emergency assistance grants, pension supplements and health premium assistance to over 1,600 retired clergy, lay workers, and their families over the course of the year. Twenty of the people who received assistance last year were over 100 years old. Often these were people who worked for the UCC and its predecessor congregations, at a time when pay was low and so they had little chance save for retirement. The current economic downturn has

been particularly hard on those with limited resources or on fixed incomes and has resulted in an unprecedented number of requests for assistance. Because of that, the denomination has set a goal of \$1,650,000, increasing the record \$1,597,490 received last year. Contributing to this fund is a way of honoring and helping those who worked long and hard to serve their congregations over the years, and whose low incomes make it difficult to meet increasing living costs. Your contribution can make a major difference in the lives of many deserving people.

Care Team is Now On Call

Submitted by Kate Baba

The Care Team has decided to have an "On Call" list to meet the needs of the congregation. Please call Sam first. If Sam is unavailable refer to the list of Care Team members and the schedule for the next few months.

December: Jana Zetterman and Kate Baba

January: Margie Parker and Dale Ritzel

February: Hugh Muldoon and Kelley Hessian

March: Peggy Hayes and Kay Tyson

April: Margie Parker and Hugh Muldoon

Good Shepherd News

Pastor Search Committee Update

Submitted by Peggy Igleheart, Chair

At the time of the last newsletter, we had four candidates under consideration. After further prayer and discussion, we decided to no longer consider one of those candidates, one chose to no longer be under consideration, one interviewed in-person in November, and one interviews in-person in December. It's amazing the additional information that comes to light from two days of in-person time with a candidate. Everything from the candidate's informal interaction style to preparation and actual delivery of a sermon all of a sudden makes our decision crystal clear. As we have diligently prayed, we were able to unanimously discern that the candidate we interviewed in November is no longer under consideration. We excitedly look forward to our in-person interview with the next candidate in December and have faithfully prayed for each of us to once again discern God's guidance regarding our decision about this candidate.

Should our committee and this candidate both feel called to one another, a proposal is made by the committee and hopefully accepted by the candidate. Details will then be worked out and the candidate will be brought to COGS again for our church family to

meet and hear preach before the members of COGS take a formal vote. Should this be the direction our journey takes, our new pastor would likely begin sometime in February 2010. If our committee does not feel a call for this candidate, then our process will continue as we re-open ourselves to receive more candidate profiles from our conference minister, Sheldon Culver.

We ask that you each join us in focused prayer for our committee, the candidate, and our church family. Each committee member continues to be committed to prayerfully listening for God's guidance in making this very important decision for the future of us all. Thank you for sharing that commitment with us.



Community News

PRIVATIZING Water

By Rev Wallace Ryan Kuroiwa, UCC Privatization: A Challenge to the Public Good Adult Course.

Also excerpts from www.wateractivist.org.

Summarized by Bob Tyson

Review the story of Joseph's dream of the seven year food famine in Genesis 41:25-37 and 47:13-21. The strategy advice to the Pharaoh was to buy or store up all the grain as a hedge against famine. Later, the Israelites are forced to come to the Pharaoh for grain. With this leverage he buys up all the land and makes the Israelites slaves. The story shows how power leads to oppression of others. Seen

from this perspective, the commodification of water holds remarkable parallels to the biblical story.

Today control of water in the US is up for grabs. Multinational corporate giants have bought all of the largest water companies. Enron was the third largest water company in the world before it went bankrupt. These companies lobby budget-strapped local governments to privatize public water systems and shift all control from public to private hands. "We can make infrastructure investments and we are also cheaper and more efficient than the public sector."

Bob's note: There are public services that lend themselves to such efficiencies in the private...

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Community News

(*Privatizing Water* continued from Page 6)

... sector where there is true competition of two or more companies to provide services. Three garbage companies serve Murphysboro satisfactorily; however, there is no practical way for my neighbor and I to buy water from two different companies on the same water line.

The track record among privatized municipal systems is not good. Water quality suffers with short-cuts in waste treatment, as well as the inevitable price increases to residents. They also externalize the cost of contaminated waste water back to taxpayers. As we know in third world countries, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have forced those bor-

rowers to privatize water as a condition for loans and debts. Wherever privatization of water has occurred in the US, water is considered separate and discreet from the land on which it is found. The owner can extract it, transport it a great distance, and sell it at a profit far from the place where the water originated (You probably don't own the mineral rights underneath your land). This often results in water shortages in rural areas where the extraction occurs. In summation, the premise suggests there is no common good.

*Recent information indicates that this issue is not dead in Carbondale.

Good Shepherd Covenants

Just Peace, Whole Earth, Open and Affirming

Nonviolent Action at Space Weapons Bazaar

*Based on an article by Frank Cordaro,
Des Moines Catholic Worker, November 4, 2009.
Submitted by Margie Parker*

Note: Father Louie Vitale of Pace e Bene, who spoke in Carbondale last spring on "Loving Your Enemies," was one of the participants in this protest.

On Wednesday, November 4, 2009 the Omaha and Des Moines Catholic Worker communities and friends held our fourth annual protest and 'Die In' at the Qwest Center in Omaha at SRATCom's Space Weapons Bazaar. A group of over 30 people gathered across the street from the Qwest Center, set up our "Space Weapons = Death" banner and read our statement. A number of people laid down on the ground in front of the banner, enacting a "Die-In".

The protesters reenacted their "Die-In" and reread their statement just inside the Qwest Center. Qwest security people told them to leave the building or face arrest. Eight chose to stay and were arrested. Among the eight was 91-year-old Peg Gallagher, "Grand Dame of the Omaha Peace Movement". Peg

was ticketed and released on site. The seven others, including Friar Louis Vitale [and the author of this report], were taken to the Douglas Co Jail, processed by the police and charged with City of Omaha ordinance "20-155 Request to Leave" - a misdemeanor offense with a maximum penalty of six months in jail and/or a five hundred dollar fine. The four Omaha residents were cited and released with a Dec. 9th hearing date.

The next day the rest appeared before Judge Darryl Lowe in what is called "jail court" with sixty other Douglas Co Jail inmates at 1:30 p.m. for what turned out to be the most entertaining and perplexing two hours I have ever spent in a court room.

Jail courts are the places where people who get arrested get to see a judge for the first time and plead guilty or innocent. The vast majority of inmates who appear in these jail courts are poor and people of color. Ninety percent plead guilty, knowing "you get the justice you can afford" in this country and if you're poor, you're better off pleading guilty and doing the time up front than pleading innocent and doing more time awaiting a trial that you would likely end up losing whether you are innocent or not. It's often done without feelings or human concerns for those being judged.

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Good Shepherd Covenants

Just Peace, Whole Earth, Open and Affirming

(Nonviolent Action continued from Page 7)

This time it was different. The officer who talked to the sixty of us before we were led into court told us that Judge Lowe is a very different kind of judge. "He's liable to ask you the strangest of questions." The officer was not wrong. In the two hours we spent before Judge Lowe he made inappropriate comments, asked questions way beyond the scope of his professional obligation as a judge, and delved into people's personal non-legal issues.

Yet Judge Lowe was also one of the most caring and humane judges I have ever seen work from the bench. Beyond his extremely large public, entertaining ego, he showed real concern for the people who stood before him. For those who plead guilty, he went to great efforts to find a sentence that really matched what the inmate needed in order to make right for the crime committed and help them get their lives back together. Judge Lowe meted out justice with a heart.

Before the court session started Judge Lowe made some introductory remarks. Among them was his admonition that people take personal responsibility for their alleged activities. We four protesters, wearing our orange jail-issued outfits, were the last four cases of the day. As Fr Louis approached the bench the prosecutor told the judge that we were all here from the same charge and that the arrest took place at the Qwest Center the day before. Judge Lowe did not even look at any of the paper work. He talked about his being at the Qwest Center on many occasions for concerts and basketball games. That was all he needed to know.

Judge Lowe asked Fr Louis "What do you plead?" "No contest," said Fr Louis. And before Fr Louis could say anything else Judge Lowe said, "Five days!" and pounded his gavel saying, "If you had plead guilty it would have been three days. Next."

Fr Louis was dumbfounded. He tried to explain to the judge that all he wanted to do was make his plea and ask that the sentencing be postponed until the four local Omaha people went to trial. He needed to be on a plane Saturday morning for a speaking engagement and Mass obligations Sunday. Judge Lowe

pounded his gavel and told Fr Louis if he wanted to appeal the sentence he would have to come up with a \$100,000 bond! "Next," shouted the Judge as the guards led Fr Louis out of the court room.

Fr Jim Murphy approached the bench. Judge Lowe asked him "What do you plead?" "No contest" said Fr Jim, and then he immediately changed his plea to "Guilty!" "Three days" said Judge Lowe pounding his gavel. "Next!" shouted Judge Lowe as Fr Jim was lead out of the court room.

Steve Clemens approached the bench. By this time everyone had a chance to catch their breath. Judge Lowe finally asked Steve, "What were you guys doing at the Qwest Center in the first place?" He had assumed the four of us were arrested for intoxication. Steve said, "Your honor, we were there to protest the Strategic Space Symposium. We were there to protest the selling of space weapons technology to STRATCom!"

From the inmate sitting area, I shouted out to the judge, "And you just sentenced two Catholic priests to jail!" "Catholic priest! Protest!" exclaimed Judge Lowe as the blood went out of his face. "Bring those two priests back before me. Give me their files." The judge asked us all to the bench. We explained to him what our nonviolent protest was all about. He congratulated us for our witness. He said he believed in nonviolent civil disobedience and more of it needed to be done. He told us his father was active in the civil rights movement in the south.

We were all sentenced to time served, given a pat on the back and in essence told 'Job well done good and faithful servants! He ended the session by saying "I hope you all come back again next year!" I have never ever been treated so well. Justice, not necessarily the Law, was served that day in the Douglas County Jail.

Good Shepherd Covenants

Just Peace, Whole Earth, Open and Affirming

Our Kiva Loan Now Goes To Work in Ecuador

Submitted by Margie Parker

The \$50 Kiva loan from the Adult Class and the Justice and Witness Committee that we wrote about last March has now been repaid. That loan helped Grace Kwartemaa, a 41 year old married Ghanaian woman with seven children to expand her stock as a food vendor and earn more to pay for her children's education.

Kiva is a person-to-person micro-lending website that empowers individuals to lend directly to real individuals in the developing world. The recipients achieve greater economic independence, improving life for themselves, their family, and their community.

We have now chosen to pass the \$50 on to the Vegaspamba Communal Bank in Cuenca, Ecuador. The residents of Cuenca engage in agriculture, primarily the cultivation of corn and vegetables. The area is well-known for its colorful festivals, traditional music, local customs (such as climbing the grease pole), fireworks, and numerous attractions that bring in domestic and foreign tourists. The Communal Bank consists of members who are related to one another. They are looking for new ways to be productive and generate income so that their families can have a better quality of life.

Our loan is part of \$4,750 lent to the group by 148 individuals and teams from Canada and all over Europe. In a group loan, each member of the group receives an individual loan but is part of a group of individuals bound by a group guarantee. Under this arrangement, each member of the group supports one another and is responsible for paying back the loans of their fellow group members if someone is delinquent or defaults.

Here are the stories of just two of the group recipients:

Sra. Flor Fajardo Deleg is a member of the Vegaspamba Communal Bank. She lives in the San Joaquin Parrish located on the outskirts of Cuenca. She is 32 years old and has been separated from her husband for four years as a result of misunderstandings and a lack of communication. Flor is the mother of seven children ranging in age from 3 to 17. Her oldest daughter works as a housekeeper in order to help with the household expenses. The other children are students in either elementary or secondary school. Her nine year old son lives with his grandmother in the community of Vegaspamba.

Flor's house is made only of boards and sheets of zinc.

Flor is engaged in agriculture, planting all types of vegetables so that she can sell them at the open fair and in the markets of Cuenca. She has been farming for many years since she learned the trade from her parents. Her work begins every day at 4 am. On Wednesdays and Saturdays, she travels to the fair.

This is her fourth cycle working with the Institution. She used her previous loans to purchase seeds for planting crops. Flor also received training on how to save money. With this new loan from Fundación ESPOIR, she will purchase seeds for growing lettuce, tomatoes, spinach, carrots, broccoli, and other vegetables. Part of the money will be used to buy school supplies for her children. Her goal is to increase her crop output and improve her financial situation so that her children can have a better future.

Sra. Rosa Deleg is also a member of the Vegaspamba Communal Bank and lives in the community of the same name. She is 57 years old and has been separated for 18 years when her husband abandoned the family. Rosa has six children, all of whom are married. Her home is a result of all the hard work she has performed since she was a young woman. Rosa currently lives with her grandson, who attends school in Vegaspamba. He is the only person who provides her company.

Rosa produces handmade sweaters. She took up weaving six years ago when friends from the neighborhood taught her this skill. Rosa now instructs other women how to start this type of business in their own communities. The women she teaches produce mainly nylon bags.

Rosa is participating in her fourth cycle with the Foundation. She says that her previous loans were a great help because they enabled her to maintain her business. With this new loan from Fundación ESPOIR, she will purchase bags for her business and some food for household consumption. Rosa hopes to remain financially stable.

Church of the Good Shepherd
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<http://www.goodshepherd-ucc.org/>



December 8, 2009

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