

*“God’s Work.  
Our Hands”*

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March Light articles  
are due on Monday,  
February 15th.

Morning Star is  
connected to the  
worldwide mission of  
the Church through the  
West Metro Cluster of  
the Nebraska Synod of  
the Evangelical  
Lutheran Church of  
America.

## Lenten Schedule

Our Lenten theme is “The Lord’s Prayer”. All Wednesday evening services begin at 7:00 PM. Dinner will be available in the “Solid Rock Cafe” each week at 5:30 PM.

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| February 17 | Ash Wednesday, Holy Communion, Imposition of Ashes<br>Message - “Our Father, Who Art in Heaven”<br>Music by Organ and Morning Star Adult Choir  |
| February 24 | 1st Wednesday in Lent - Holden Evening Prayer<br>Message - “Hallowed Be Thy Name”<br>Music by Morning Star Praise Team/Choir  |
| March 3     | 2nd Wednesday in Lent - Evening Prayer with Piano<br>Message - “Thy Kingdom Come”<br>Music by Morning Star Children’s Choir   |
| March 10    | 3rd Wednesday in Lent - Spoken Prayer at Darkness<br>Message - “Thy Will Be Done, On Earth as it is in Heaven”<br>Music by Organ and Morning Star Adult Choir                               |
| March 17    | 4th Wednesday in Lent - Evening Prayer with Piano<br>Message - “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread”<br>Music by Morning Star Adult Handbell Choir  |
| March 24    | 5th Wednesday in Lent - Service of the Word<br>Message - “And Forgive Us Our Trespasses as We Forgive<br>Those Who Trespass Against Us”<br>Music by Morning Star Praise Team/Choir          |
| April 1     | Maundy Thursday - Special Maundy Thursday Service<br>with Holy Communion Message - “And Lead Us Not Into<br>Temptation But Deliver Us From Evil”<br>Music by Morning Star Praise Team/Choir |
| April 2     | Good Friday - Service of Darkness<br>Message - “Amen . . . It will be”<br>Music by Organ and Morning Star Adult Choir   |
| April 3     | Holy Saturday - Vigil Service at 5:30 PM  |
| April 4     | Festival Easter Worship with Brass<br>8:30 AM Traditional Festival of Resurrection<br>10:45 AM Praise Festival of Resurrection  |



## River City Renewal

### Lenten Prayer Challenge - An Experience in Prayer



Morning Star, Luther Memorial and First are partnering to host “An Experience in Prayer” on Saturday, February 6th from 8:30 AM (Registration) until 3:00 PM at First Lutheran.

The River City Renewal Experience in Prayer is a day devoted to developing a closer relationship with God. It is a day devoted to providing opportunities to experience and practice several prayer “forms”. At the end of the day participants will have learned some new tools for prayer, along with having created a Lent 2010 “intention” for prayer. Registration cost is \$10 per person and includes lunch. You can pick up a brochure at the church or call the church office and we’ll get one to you. Pastor Tom is going to follow up this conference with the Lenten Sermon Series that will teach meaning and application of the Lord’s Prayer.

## First Communion

These students are preparing for their First Communion by their participation in the Together in Faith Communion Preparation classes: Hope Ervin, Campbell Mooney, Isabelle Schmidt, Sophie Wolfe and Joree Wood. Please pray for them as they take this next step in their faith journey.



## Solid Rock Café

Here is the Solid Rock Café schedule for February. Please join us at 5:30 PM on Wednesdays for great food and fellowship.

- February 3 - Gourmet Golfers  
Fried Chicken
- February 10 - Kawabunga Dudes  
Go Hawaiian
- February 17 - Youth Night for Haiti  
Lasagna Italian Style
- February 24 - Solid Rock ‘n’ Rollers  
50’s Faire

## The Box Score

	<b><u>2009</u></b>	<b><u>2008</u></b>
Average Weekend Attendance for December	227	261
Average Weekend Attendance January - December	252	262
Average Weekly Attendance January – December	286	292
Average Weekly Sunday School Attendance for December	53	42
Average Weekly Sunday School January - December	58	56
Average Adult Christian Education Attendance for December	14	15
Average Adult Christian Education Attendance January - December	18	17
Mission/Ministry Tithes and Offerings for December	\$55,537.45	\$60,878.19
Mission/Ministry Giving Goal for December	\$52,400.00	\$55,600.00
Mission/Ministry Tithes and Offerings January – December	\$477,125.56	\$468,744.35
Mission/Ministry Giving Goal January – December	\$445,000.00	\$467,000.00
Income from all sources January - December	\$524,059.75	\$530,738.01
Mission/Ministry Expenses January – December	\$529,114.39	\$549,866.18
Planned Mission/Ministry Expenses January – December	\$483,100.00	\$517,400.00

## Thank Yous

From Loree Bykerk

Thank you for your prayers and care during my battle with lung cancer. We are optimistic about my continuing recovery.

From Josh Feala

Thank you all for your exceptional generosity. Your monetary donation to my seminary tuition has eased some of the financial burden placed upon Rachel and me. I don't think I can thank you all enough.

From Bill Ervin, volunteer Blood Drive coordinator

On behalf of the Red Cross, I want to thank everyone who donated blood at the blood drive in December. Your blood donation supports the healthcare of our community. About every two seconds someone in America needs a blood transfusion, and chances are you or someone you know will need blood at some point in life. Thank you for helping ensure blood is available for all patients in need.

From Leigh Trumble, Project Hope

Thank you for your donation of food, personal care items and bags for Project Hope. What a blessing to receive these gifts during this Christmas season.

From Suzie Klosterman, Field Club

I would like to thank you for once again letting the Field Club families be part of Morning Star's Thanksgiving Basket deliveries. As in past years the families are very appreciative of the donation.

From Ann Carpenter

Thank you so much for donating food for our refugee families at Thanksgiving. This generous gift will remind them that they are loved and thought of during the holidays.

From Pastor Tom and Teresa

Teresa and I wish to thank each of you for your kind words, prayers, gifts and other expressions of love and support during the Christmas Season and upon the birth of our grandson, Owen. We are very blessed to be able to live and serve among you!!

From Pam Lunbeck

Thank you so much for the Christmas gift from the congregation. It was much appreciated. I enjoy doing ministry at Morning Star with all the members and staff. I can't tell you how much I enjoy coming to work. Thank you for your thoughtfulness.

From Beverlee McCollum

Thanks so much for your very generous gift this Christmas. It means a lot to me, and I do feel appreciated. I also want to say that I appreciate you as a congregation. You are not only supportive of my music ministry but you help me to grow through the friendship that you extend to me. May we all have a blessed and happy 2010.

From Lynne Swingen

Thanks to the congregation of Morning Star for the lovely Christmas gift. I really enjoy being a part of your church family!

Thank You cont.

From Marge & Dan Todd

We wish to express our sincere appreciation for the beautiful card and wonderful money gift we received at Christmas time. We are grateful for your generosity and touched by how your gift has encouraged us in our work. There are so many kind and caring people at Morning Star and it is such a privilege to serve the Lord in music ministry.

From Jeff & Mary Sayre

Thank you for your Christmas gift expressing appreciation for our work at Morning Star. It is a pleasure to celebrate God through our dedicated choirs who continue to be a source of joy for both of us. We thank all the families and supporters of the adult and youth choirs at Morning Star! May God bless you all in 2010.

From Susan Snow

Thank you so much for my Christmas bonus. My job here at Morning Star has been so much more than a job. It's an opportunity to fulfill my dream. Right now I have 27 grown daughters and 2 sons. I have about 100 - 120 grandchildren. I will use the Christmas money to purchase incentives for our teachers and students! Words cannot express my thanks. My work could not be done without your support.

From Brian Priesman

Thank you members of Morning Star for your generous Christmas gift as well as your kind wishes and support. Laura, Tessa and I feel blessed to be a part of such a wonderful group of people. Blessings on you all as we journey together through 2010.

## Green Envelope for February - Angels Among Us

Angels Among Us is a non-profit charitable organization that financially assists families with children living with or being treated for cancer in Nebraska hospitals. When a child is diagnosed with cancer, not only is the news emotionally devastating for the parents, it can become financially difficult as well. Often a parent must quit work or reduce their hours to be with the child during cancer treatments. In the case of a single parent, the situation can be even more challenging. By providing financial assistance to those who qualify, parents can focus on their child's recovery. Your donation has an immediate impact as funds are directly paid to creditors. The gift you give today gives families the gift of time. When funds are not available, families are placed on a waiting list until funds are available to provide assistance. Some of the bills that donated money has gone to pay is utility, mortgage/rent payments, auto loan payments, medical bills, phone/cable/internet bills, funeral expenses, daycare and car registrations. This improves the quality of life for these families by reducing financial stress brought on by childhood cancer.

Angels Among Us guidelines are \$5,000 maximum per family, up to \$500 a month per family until the \$5,000 maximum is reached. In some cases, the \$5,000 maximum will not be reached due to death of a child or the end of the cancer treatment. (Angels Among Us will help 3 months after the death of a child.)

If you are interested in sponsoring a family for part or all year or simply doing a donation; know that every penny of the money that is donated will be earmarked for families here in our community that need assistance.

We can not cure cancer but we sure can ease the stress that comes along with the diagnosis. Thank you for all your support.





## Thoughts on Love in the Face of Tragedy

*Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

*-Colossians 3:14*

When I was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, a well-meaning (but slightly clueless) friend of the family introduced me to the musical works of Meat Loaf. Yep, Meat Loaf. That classic rock singer famous for songs like "Wasted Youth" and "Paradise by the Dashboard Light." I only mention it because all morning I've had the lyrics to one of his songs running through my head.

*"What about love? It's defective. It's always breaking in half..."* As I've been trying to get this song OUT of my head, I've been doing a lot of thinking about the power of Love in our world-- specifically, the power of God's Love. God's unrelenting, awesome, powerful Love for the entire world.

It can be hard to imagine that type of Love, especially when we look at the world around us. For instance, we are still in shock from last month's massive earthquake in Haiti.

The images coming back from Haiti are horrifying. This already poor country has been devastated by the earthquake. Survival of the fittest seems to have become the rule as survivors are looting and pillaging, desperate for food, and in the process destroying what little is left. All over the world people are donating time and money to help. But it doesn't appear to be enough. And we are left with the question "Why, God, why?"

Why have some people survived while others perished? Why are innocent children and the helpless elderly caught in this? Why would you let this happen? How can you Love us and still let this occur?

As I've been pondering this, a Youth Pastor with more experience and wisdom than I have reminded me that we don't know the mind of God. We can't know it. God doesn't see things the way we do. Where we see tragedy, God sees opportunity. Where we see the unraveling of a community, God sees the seeds of a new and better tomorrow.

To quote from this Pastor, ***"In the aftermath of the worst devastation God often does his biggest miracles.***

*We have already heard some of the amazing stories of people who saved lives at the risk of their own, of separated families who were reunited and of a toddler who survived for days under the rubble without food or water before being rescued. We are witnessing the miraculous outpouring of prayer and provisions from people all across America.*

*Throughout the pages of Scripture human tragedy is almost always followed by divine miracles. Consider the story of the world-wide flood. When the planet and everyone on it was destroyed by a flood, God brought about a new existence for mankind through Noah and his family. He wiped the slate clean through destruction and gave mankind a fresh start. Every rainbow is a reminder of this. While this may be the biggest example of God's miracles following human tragedy there are many more in the Bible...*

*After the ten plagues in Egypt God delivered his people from slavery.  
After the destruction of Jericho came the birth of a new nation in a promised land.  
After the death of Christ came salvation for all."*

So as we approach Valentine's Day, a holiday about Love, try to remember that God truly does Love us. Not just little "L" love, but capital "L" Love. And when we feel pain and suffering, he feels it as well. And when we feel joy, wonder and amazement at His miracles, remember that we are seeing his Love for us, a Love greater than we can ever imagine.

Yours,  
Brian Priesman  
Director of Education Ministries  
brian@morningstarlutheran.com

*Check it out!*

**We've got a new blog specifically for Morning Star's Youth (7th-12th grade). Calendar information, devotions, questions for youth & parents, and other things to make you think, smile and laugh!**

<http://morningstaryouth.wordpress.com/>

Fundraiser for Haiti

On Ash Wednesday, February 17th, the Youth will be sponsoring a benefit dinner to raise funds for Lutheran World Relief and the Creighton Medical Center's team in Haiti. Join us for Lasagna, salad, garlic bread and dessert. We will be selling "Team Haiti" bracelets and having a special raffle, with all the money from the night going to help support the efforts to aid Haiti after January's devastating earthquake.

If you would like to assist with the dinner, please contact Brian in the Church Office.

Faith Mentors

We are still looking for more Faith Mentors for this year's confirmation class! If you are interested in helping grow the faith of one of our young people while developing your own at the same time, contact Pastor Tom or Brian.

Summer Camp

Camp Carol Joy Holling is now accepting registration for their 2010 Summer Camps! With a theme of "A New Creation" from 2 Corinthians 5:17, the camps look to be lots of fun! Registration forms and camp brochures are available in the Narthex. Camps are available for students in 1st grade through 12th grade, as well as their "Family Camp" for the entire family. For more information, visit them online at <http://www.caroljoyholling.org>

God and Sex Retreat

Saturday, January 23rd, the Confirmation students attended a "God and Sex" retreat led by Toni Clarke from the AAA Center for Pregnancy Counseling. Not only was this an eye-opening and educational time for both students and parents, it was also a wonderful example of the work that the center does for the community. They are a completely non-profit organization that relies on the generosity of the community to keep their doors open. Please keep them in mind as you look to share your gifts of time and money with the community.

2010 Youth Mission Trip

Youth! If you are interested in providing service while sharing your faith and having fun, join us on the NE Synod Youth Mission Trip from June 26th-July 2. We'll be travelling to Minneapolis, Minnesota and participating in worship and service throughout the week. The final date to get your registration materials to Brian is March 15th! For registration materials, cost, and other questions contact Brian at Morning Star.

All About Love

The February Theme for Sunday School (preschool-6th Grade) is Love! We'll be focusing on Old and New Testament examples of God's amazing Love for us and how we can share our love with the world.

**Quotables**

*"When a man begins to reason, he ceases to feel."  
-French Proverb*

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## Preschool News

**Who is my community?** Morning Star preschool children are going to find out. Guest speakers from the Omaha Public Library, Bookworm, Blooms and Hy-Vee will discuss how their business represents the community. Pastor Tom and Pam will discuss their roles in the church. Hopefully Sam & Louie's will come toss some pizza dough for us. To top this week off, the Orange Stars will visit our neighbor, Swanson Elementary School, for a tour.

**Who can help me?** A representative from the Omaha Police Department's G.R.E.A.T. program, an elementary educator, a Children's Life Specialist from Children's Hospital, and a dental hygienist will be part of the line up the week of February 22nd - 26th. What a wonderful opportunity for our children to learn about their community.

Many hats and mittens were collected in January as our service project. Hopefully this will help keep some children warm the rest of the winter. Look for more information in March for a book collecting service project. A book swap and trade is planned as well as collecting books for those in need.

## Semi-Annual Meeting Summary

About 75 people gathered on Sunday, January 24th for the Morning Star semi-annual meeting. During the meeting those assembled took these actions:

1. Ratified the Morning Star Constitution as presented at the May 2009 semi-annual meeting. Several new additions (available in the church office) were distributed which will be approved at the May 2010 meeting.
2. Nominated Bob Sweetwood and Ric Miller as the 2010 Nominating Committee.
3. Engaged in a lively discussion regarding the 2010 budget, which was ultimately approved. Please see Phil Howland's comments below.
4. Received and approved the booklet of reports.
5. Passed a motion directing the council to consider the desire of congregation members to address the ELCA statement on sexuality at its next council meeting and report its plans back to the congregation.

Copies of the book of reports is available in the church office.

The May 2010 semi-annual meeting is called for May 2, 2010 at approximately 9:45 AM.

## Financial Notes from the Semi-Annual Meeting

Several financial issues came before the congregation at the annual meeting. We will address these issues in the next couple months.

1. The congregation approved a budget that reduced our benevolence contribution from 10% to 8%. The discussion was animated on both sides. The Finance Committee and Council will be reviewing this issue. One possibility we may consider is to allow members to designate their funds to a NE Synod project rather than to their general fund.
2. We also approved a budget that is not balanced. The projected deficit is \$28,600. We will continue to monitor our expenses and attempt to reduce them as much as possible. In addition to providing you with monthly status reports, we will give you information regarding our cash position. Obviously, if we spend more than we take in, eventually we will have problems.
3. The budget provided a small increase for our staff. In 2009 there was no increase.
4. Two expenses that increased this year's deficit are budgeting for sabbatical expenses and interest. Looking forward to 2011 we will eliminate the sabbatical amount and hopefully reduce the interest expense by \$10,000.

Should you have any questions please contact me or any member of the Finance Committee. We need your input as we go through these next few years.

Phil Howland, Treasurer

## “Acts of God”

The term “act of God” is uniformly used in the insurance industry to stand for hurricanes, floods, fires, tornados and the like. I don’t think this use is some sort of an anti-God conspiracy. But in days like these, or any time there has been a natural disaster, God could sure use a great agent to rehab his angry image.

I’m intrigued by the approach the “Salvation Army” is taking. Someone has come up with a great slogan for their fund raising projects for several recent natural disasters: “We fight natural disasters with acts of God”. Their appeal goes something like this: “combat a natural disaster with an act of God. Pray and act on behalf of the suffering people in ... .”

You know, whether or not you agree with the Salvation Army’s theology, they’re on to something cool with this slogan. Like all faith based organizations they are on the scene of these of disasters early and they are the last to leave. Lutheran World Relief and the Salvation Army, among others, are always still hanging around long after the crisis is past and other agencies have gone home. They’re there to pick up the long-term pieces of grief, displacement and rebuilding. And they are there to be the instruments of God. They are there to carry in their hands God’s miraculous actions for hurting, traumatized people.

I read the story of Dan Woolley who works with Compassion International in Haiti. He and a friend were in a hotel lobby in Port-au-Prince when the killer earthquake struck. His friend appears to have died and not been found. Woolley was seriously injured but rescued some 60 hours after being trapped in the rubble. Knowing he might not see his family again, he wrote this note on a tablet stained with his blood: "I was in a big accident, an earthquake. Don't be upset at God. He always provides for his children even in hard times. I'm still praying that God will get me out, but he may not. But even so he will always take care of you."

This is just one of the stories that witnesses to the "acts of God" which through the miraculous world wide outpouring of prayer, action and provisions which in turn fight the grief, loss, injury and tragedy of a natural disaster.

You see, the truth is in the aftermath of the worst devastations God always works the biggest miracles. The Bible is filled with the stories of human tragedy followed by divine miracles. They include the aftermath of a world-wide flood (a new existence for humankind through Noah and his family); ten plagues in Egypt followed by God’s people being delivered from slavery; after Jericho was destroyed there was the birth of a new nation in a promised land; and most important of all, after Jesus died, God acted with resurrection for new life and salvation for all believers.

To take this a step further, we don’t have to wait for a “breaking news” disaster to be an “act of God.” Every moment of every day we encounter people who are hurting, bearing grief, wondering if God has deserted them or carrying the disasters of their own lives. Every day, we have the opportunity to reach out with an authentic act of God. We can be the demonstration of what a “real” act of God looks like – not a disaster, but a sustaining and real presence in a time of crisis.

## Prayer Concerns

### Members of Morning Star

Ruby Ciciulla	Chuck Ciciulla	Peggy Canfield	Dianna Howland	Tom Wood
Bill Kennedy	Harriet Johnson	Anna Klock	Loretta Duff	Jamie Jones
Kelli Sender	Josh Feala & Susan Westland during their seminary studies			
Vicar Mark Ekstrom as he serves at St. John's in Otoe, NE and Beautiful Savior in Palmyra, NE				

### Rejoicing with

John & Leslie Nelson on the birth of their son, Jackson. Lee & Judy Hollander are the grandparents.  
David & Kendra Schneider on the birth of their daughter, Macy.

### Friends of Morning Star

Dillon, nephew Missy Throckmorton, & his family	Lisa, sister of Laura Kapustka
Leon, brother-in-law of Daryl & JoAnn Wollenburg	Wayne, brother-in-law of Lynn & Royann Hedell
Kim, sister of Kathy Stevens Welsh	Velda & Sharon, sisters of Betty Goehring
Gloria Snow, mother of Susan Snow	Teresa, daughter-in-law of Tom & Gloria Miller
Jerry, brother-in-law of Dianna Howland	Allison, granddaughter of Maxine Winje
Diane, sister of Phil Howland	Tom & Janet, nephew of Barb Cotton & his wife
Gene, brother-in-law of Maxine Winje	Jackson, grandson of Lee & Judy Hollander
Velma, Amy & Kasey, friends of Shelli German	Lynn, friend of Karen & Ande Hawkins
Nancy, friend of Sandy Byer	Ron & Albert, friends of Tom & Gloria Miller
Shelly & family, friends of Gary & Christi Wood	Ivan, father of a friend of Chris Hedican
Thelma & Alice, friends of Wayne & Carol Betts	Paul, friend of Barb Cotton
Dennis, friend of Tom Wood	Geri, friend of Ric, Pam & Ryan Miller
Jack, friend of Harlan & Marg Rohrberg	Ava, friend of Jude Konvalina
Ken & Mary Lou, friends of Pam Lunbeck	Crystal, sister of Marge Todd

## Easter Lily Order Form

Easter lilies are needed for the chancel for Easter services on Sunday, April 4th. If you wish to order a plant, please complete this form and place it in the offering plate, turn it in to the church office or mail it to the church.

Cost per plant is \$9. Your plant may be picked up after the last service on Easter Sunday. Orders will be accepted through Sunday, March 28th. Please make your check payable to Morning Star Lutheran Church.



Given by \_\_\_\_\_

Dedicated to

\_\_\_\_\_ The Glory of God

\_\_\_\_\_ In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_

In lieu of an Easter lily, I prefer to donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to:

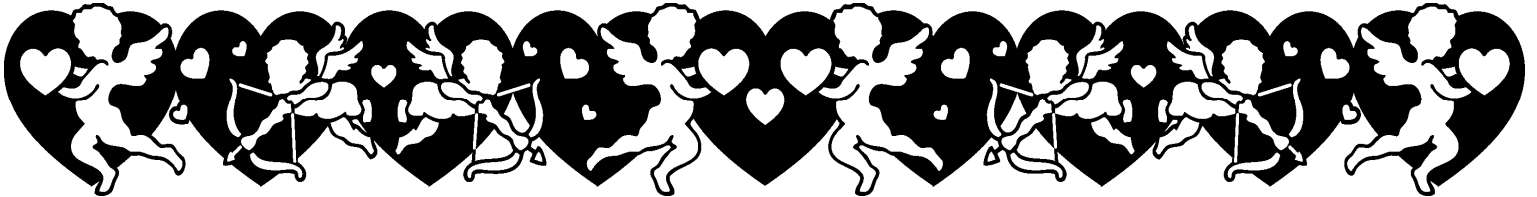
\_\_\_\_\_ Cristo Rey \_\_\_\_\_ First Lutheran



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February 2010



#### How to Reach Us

Phone: 402-393-5553  
 Fax: 402-393-6708  
 E-mail: [office@morningstarlutheran.com](mailto:office@morningstarlutheran.com)  
 Website: [www.morningstarlutheran.com](http://www.morningstarlutheran.com)  
 Preschool: 402-393-8215

#### Weekend Schedule

**Saturday** 5:30 PM Informal Worship  
**Sunday** 8:30 AM Traditional Worship  
 9:40 AM Sunday School & Fellowship  
 10:45 AM Contemporary Worship

#### Ministry Team

Lead Pastor	Rev. Tom Miller
Managing Secretary	Pam Lunbeck
Director of Educational Ministries	Brian Priesman
Director of Preschool Center	Susan Snow
Praise Team/Praise Choir Director	Marge Todd
Organist/Adult Bell Choir Director	Bev McCollum
Adult Choir Director	Mary Sayre
Youth Choir Director	Jeff Sayre
Children's Choir Director	Brian Priesman
Saturday Pianist	Lynne Swingen

#### Education (Sept.- May schedule)

Sundays at 9:45 AM  
 Sunday School for children ages 4 years—12th  
 grade & Adult & Couple Bible Studies  
 Wednesday evening  
 Dinner, Confirmation, Music Rehearsals

#### 2009 - 2010 Council

**Council President** – Karen Hawkins  
**Council Vice-President** – Donna Walter  
**Council Secretary** - Marguerite McGill  
**Council Treasurer** – Phil Howland  
**Christian Education** – Rick Jacobsen, Shari Page  
**eMinistry** - Gary Wood, Steve Bross  
**Evangelism** – Stan Kapustka, Gary Wood, Ric Miller  
**Finance** – Donna Walter, Phil Howland, Chris Hedican,  
 Rick Jacobsen  
**Hospitality** - Steve Bross, Marguerite McGill,  
 Karen Hawkins  
**Personnel** - Shari Page  
**Property** – Steve Krohn, Ric Miller  
**Social Ministry** - Lonnie Newkirk, Ric Miller  
**Stewardship** – Bob, Sweetwood, Chris Hedican  
**Worship** – Marguerite McGill, Mary Marrero,  
 Karen Hawkins  
**Youth** - Meredith Colombo, Alec Stevens