

THE MUSTARD SEED



Vol. 37, Issue 4, December, 2009, Edition

Robbinsdale United Church of Christ • 4200 Lake Road • Robbinsdale, Minnesota 55422 • 763-537-6965 • Fax: 763-537-6477
Web site address: <http://www.robbinsdaleucc.org> • E-mail address: office@robbinsdaleucc.org

Coming Up...
*See inside for
details*

Dec. 5-Men's Breakfast
Dec. 7-Quilt Group
Dec. 8-Pilgrim Guild
Potluck
Dec. 13-2nd Sunday
Dec. 13-Caroling
Dec. 17-Homeless
Memorial March
Dec. 20-Christmas
Pageant
Dec. 20-YEP
Dec. 27-Jan. 2-
Families Moving
Forward
Jan. 5-Community Out-
reach Vision Meeting

Christmas Worship

Blue Christmas
Dec. 20, 7 p.m.

Christmas Eve
Dec. 24
4 p.m.
and 10 p.m.
(Prelude music 9:45 p.m.)

Christmas Day
Dec. 25, 10 a.m.



From Your Pastor And Teacher

Advent – The Beginning of Something New

This is my favorite time of the church year and not because I think Christmas is the best thing in the world. It is because of the spiritual wisdom guiding us through this time of birth and new possibilities. The Jewish wisdom writing comments on the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem as a time of Advent. Something was beginning and God was at the center of that time. The timing of Jesus' birth is precise in our history. The world was bent on destroying opposing people and cultures. The boundaries of travel were beginning to shrink and people were finding more efficient ways to destroy each other.

Jesus was born into this violent world so that we would know love rather than hate. His ministry was one of confrontation, not in adversarial tones, but in compassionate ones. The wisdom that we have practiced in the church for centuries invites us into this precious time of Advent and asks us whether love is being born in us. Are we paying attention to God's desire for us to stop trying to manipulate and control others and to start loving them? Are we ready to lay aside our more efficient means of killing so that we can begin to place God at the center of our lives? Are we ready to follow a leader who is humble and kind and who seeks peace rather than war? Are we ready for an ADVENT OF LOVE?

My prayer in this season of Advent is for all of us to open up and notice God dwelling deep within us.

*My God,
As I become more aware of your presence
As I become filled up with love
As I anticipate the birth of something new*

*Grant me the wisdom to know love
Grant me the courage to show love
Grant me the humility to receive love*

*So that all my suffering leads to grace
So that all my weaknesses lead to joy
So that all my dying can lead to new life*

*Usher me into an Advent of Love.
AMEN*

See you in church,
T. Michael



December Schedule

December 6. Second Sunday in Advent. Worship at 10:00 a.m. Holy Communion. Infant and Toddler Care available. Bible Adventures for children 3 year olds through 2nd grade, from 10:15-11:15 a.m. Lectionary texts: Malachi 3:1-4, Luke 1:68-79, Philippians 1:3-11, Luke 3:1-6.

December 13. Third Sunday in Advent. Worship at 10:00 a.m. Infant and Toddler Care available. Bible Adventures for children 3 year olds through 5th grade from 10:15-11:15 a.m. Lectionary texts: Zephaniah 3:14-20, Isaiah 12:2-6, Philippians 4:4-7, Luke 3:7-18.

December 20. Fourth Sunday in Advent. Service at 10:00 a.m. Infant and Toddler Care available. Children's Christmas Pageant. Lectionary texts: Micah 5:2-5a, Luke 1:46b-55, Hebrews 10:5-10, Luke 1:39-45.

December 24. Christmas Eve. Services at 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Lectionary Texts: Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96, Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-20.

December 25. Christmas Day. Service at 10:00 a.m. Lectionary Texts: Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96, Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-20.

December 27. First Sunday After Christmas. Service at 10:00 a.m. Infant and Toddler Care available. NO BIBLE ADVENTURES. Lectionary texts: I Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:21-39.

Worship in December

“Christmas – It’s Not YOUR Birthday”

One of the biggest mistakes the church has made is rushing to Christmas and all the celebration that it entails. For some reason, wise church folks for centuries have returned to the age of 5 during this season. It is tempting for all of us to get quickly to the mystery of angels singing and stars shining without remembering what it takes to get there. It’s important for all of us to remember that it is not our birthday on December 25th. Worship this month will

help us begin this journey and prepare for the message and the birth in God’s time, not ours.

November 29th – 1st SUNDAY in ADVENT – SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Scripture Text: Luke 21:25-36

Sermon: “Getting Ready” – Rev. T. Michael Rock
The waiting begins for the promise of Christmas. In this story, Christmas does not mean familiar songs and presents under the tree. Christmas promises a storm of change, new leaders, new rules, and an end to life as we know it. This is what we prepare for and wait for, and this is how we begin this season of Advent.

December 6th – 2nd SUNDAY IN ADVENT - COMMUNION SUNDAY

Scripture Texts: Malachi 3:1-4, Luke: 68-79

Sermon: “Free to Speak” – Rev. April Davis Campbell

The angel Gabriel, Zechariah and John sort out what to say and when. Join us as we find our place in the story.

December 13th – 3rd SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Scripture Texts: Philippians 4:4-7 and Luke 3:7-18

Sermon: “The Peace of God” – Rev. T. Michael Rock

This Sunday we’ll explore the concept of change and its relationship to Advent. We’ll celebrate traditions and crack open the door to a new way of being in the world. We’ll see what meaning this season has for the way we live our lives. Have you invited a friend to church this month? Now is the time.

December 20th – 4th SUNDAY IN ADVENT – CHILDREN’S PAGEANT

We will be blessed this Sunday with a unique telling of the story by our Bible Adventures children. Our pageant play is inspired by the story of hospitality and written by our own Cheryl Nordquist. This will be a great blessing for us all.

Sunday, December 20th — BLUE CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

7 p.m.

This will be a quiet service of meditation and prayer for those who are feeling lost and alone this holiday season. This season is often one of

Continued on next page

Worship continued

“forced” good cheer. This service reminds us that sometimes this season is difficult for many people. We’ll have some good music and a time to feel the support of our larger church family. There will be child care provided and comfort food following the service.

December 24th – CHRISTMAS EVE

Advent Candle Lighting

4:00 p.m. – Family Celebration with Candlelight

This will be a traditional service of lessons and carols with reflection and stories along the way. Several youth of our congregation will lead, both in story and song.

10:00 p.m. – Service of Lessons and Carols with Candlelight (Prelude music begins at 9:45)

This traditional service will bring forward our gifted choir to continue their telling of the sacred story through music. Prelude music will start the service and our short meditation will bring us all into that state of reverence and remembrance. It may even feel like the a shift is happening as we experience this same story once again.

Tuesday, December 25th – 10:00 a.m. – CHRISTMAS DAY with Communion

Scripture Text – Luke 2:1-20

Sermon: “Joseph – The Forgotten Father”

Christmas morning is a time of chaos for most families and a profoundly lonely time for others. This service welcomes all people who wish to find some meaning and focus on a holy day. We will sing songs, hear stories and remember that the meaning for this season does lie wrapped in tape and plastic, but exists in the warmth of our hearts and smiles. We will even be visited by one of the characters who prepared the way for this event to happen. Come as you are and celebrate this holy day with your wider family.

December 27th – SERVICE OF LIGHT

Scripture: Luke 2:21-39

Sermon: “The Responsibility of Blessing”– Rev. T. Michael Rock

A Sunday to remember our loss, and also our hopes for the future. A new year is on the horizon and we’ll spend some time as a congregation remembering our past year and looking ahead to what lies in front of us. We’ll work together to make this service one full of meaning for each of our lives.

Centering Prayer/Worship Preparation Time

The Worship Ministry invites you to enter the sanctuary between 9:40 and 9:55 for a time of quiet prayer or meditation to prepare for our worship together. All who wish to enter our sacred space prior to worship are welcome. May there be no barriers between you and God within you.

This quiet time prior to the beginning of the service is available to provide separation between our social space and our worship space. There are guidelines for Centering Prayer in a brochure available outside the sanctuary if you would like to use this form of prayer. We hope you benefit from this quiet environment of worship preparation time.

—Marsha Benschopf for the Worship Ministry

Community News

Thank You

These many beautiful days cannot be lived again, but they are compounded in my own flesh and spirit, and I take them in full measure toward whatever lies ahead. – Philip Berrigan
Bless us all on our journeys, and thanks for being with me on mine.

Corinne Myers

Address Changes

Corinne Myers

6100 Summit Dr. N. #504

Brooklyn Center, MN 55430

764-537-8515

Carlton Myers

The Wellsted of Rogers

20600 S. Diamond Lake Rd.

Rogers, MN 55374

Special Concerns

Please keep these friends and members of RUCC in your thoughts and prayers.

Sylvia Anderson

Jeanne Angel

Ken Barker

Howard Berg

Pat Bobleter

Jane Boggs

Amanda Busch

Lorraine Dysart

Ruthe Hawn

Jan Headley

Will Ihle

Curtis Johnson

Janet Johnson

Antoinena Kuntze

Lois Larsen

Alice MacPherson

Sharon Mallak

Carlton Myers

Ellinor Porter

Barbara Sexton

Janet Vick

Joan Young



Gifts under the tree for the PRISM TOY SHOP: It's that time again. RUCC supports area needy families at the holidays by donating new toys of all sorts to PRISM, for their holiday toy shop. PRISM gives parents a chance to pick gifts for their children and kids a chance to choose gifts for brothers and sisters. It is a wonderful chance to give. How can you help? Bring a new unwrapped toy to church before Sunday, December 13, and place it under the PRISM tree in the narthex. There are tags on the tree with genders and ages of children for you to take to help you shop. PRISM welcomes gifts for children from infants to teens. Among the most needed items are gifts for teens: small MP3 players, gift cards, iTunes gift cards, cameras, photo albums, young adult books, and room decor are some ideas for this hard-to-buy-for age group. The only limitation is that toys should be non-violent. Please be generous with toys this year, as PRISM is serving more families than ever during the recession.

RUCC will be delivering our gifts to the church that hosts the Toy Shop, after church on December 13th. Join RUCC's youth group in delivering the toys and buy your holiday tree while you're over there!

The suggested donation for the month of December is pancake mix and syrup. Let's give to PRISM and help our many neighbors in need!

FAMILIES MOVING FORWARD is coming again to RUCC. We have the honor and privilege to host four or five homeless families at our church from December 27, 2009, to January 2, 2010. We need volunteers to

- **Provide a meal for these families, or**
- **Spend a couple of hours with these amazing kids, or**
- **Spend a night at the church to provide security for the families, or**
- **Donate dollars for purchase of breakfast foods, diapers, formula, or anything else our guests may need, and**
- **Hold your church and these families in your prayers this week.**

In other words, generally pitch in! We definitely need all hands on deck because some of our regular volunteer for FMF will be out of town for the holidays. Even if you have never helped with FMF, please sign up. The work is easy, and it is a wonderful chance to serve and to meet some amazing families in the process. The kids are hilarious, the babies are cuddly and the parents are often inspiring. There will be a sign-up soon in the narthex. Let's make sure there are no blank spots by Christmas Eve!

Come to the COMMUNITY OUTREACH VISION MEETING: RUCC's Community Outreach ministry is responsible for lots of the work our church does in our community. Through this ministry we support and volunteer at projects ranging from Simpson Housing and PRISM to Feed My Starving Children and Families Moving Forward. We also help RUCC participate in parades, including the annual Pride Parade and the Whiz Bang Days Parade. On Tuesday, January 5th, we are having a special meeting to re-imagine what Community Outreach can do for the church and the world. We will consider new projects, discuss which old commitments are working and which might not be. We will discuss how to make more of a commitment to environmentalism and how to get more folks involved in volunteer work. We welcome everyone from the congregation to come to the meeting, eat cookies, drink tea and share your ideas. We will not be conducting any "old business" but just making time to brainstorm, discuss and reflect. Please join us. We will meet at 7:00, gathering in the Narthex and finding an open spot in the church. Please email kate.menendez@gmail.com with any questions.

ALMS BOX

Giving alms (money) to the poor has been a faithful practice for hundreds of years. The Community Outreach Ministry has heard a request from the congregation that we should have such a box set out on Sunday mornings and any time we gather to eat together as a reminder that we need to be mindful of those who have a hard time putting food on their table. Please look for the Alms Box and remember to put a dollar or two in the box anytime you have the chance. It is a wonderful reminder for us all.



Happy Birthday!

Greetings and best wishes to all members and friends of Robbinsdale United Church of Christ who celebrate their birthdays in December.

Darren	Schultz	December	2
Kathy	Herrmann	December	3
Eric	Bertossi	December	5
Cathy	Salinger	December	6
Alice	MacPherson	December	7
Donna	Pitmon	December	7
Soren	Bakken-Heck	December	8
Mary Ann	Mead	December	8
Ann	Chisnell	December	10
Jennifer	Master	December	11
Nick	Lauer	December	12
Melanie	Muyres	December	13
Terry	Boelter	December	14
Dan	Haugen	December	15
Emily	Norberg	December	16
Chris	Welton	December	18
Erik	Nordli	December	21
Gordon	Lee	December	22
Cesar	Berra, Jr.	December	23
Sharon	Mallak	December	27
Chantelle	Pelzer	December	27
Jane	Boggs	December	31
Donna	MacDonald	December	31
David	Wogsland	December	31

Pilgrim Guild Activities in December

Tree of Warmth Sponsored by the Pilgrim Guild

Although November was one of the warmest on record, we know that days of sub-zero temperatures may soon be here. With this in mind, the Pilgrim Guild is again sponsoring a Mitten, Scarf, and Hat Tree for children, teenagers, and adults. Items collected will be donated to PRISM for those who need these very basic winter apparel items that we take for granted. The tree will be in the church narthex after Thanksgiving. Please bring hats, scarves, mittens, slippers, and gloves to decorate our TREE OF WARMTH. Together we can make a difference.

Pilgrim Guild Christmas Potluck

Guild members, non-Guild church members, and guests are invited to the Guild's Christmas Potluck Luncheon on Tuesday, December 8. Bring your favorite dish to share and join us at noon. Our hostesses are Kathy Giddings, Jean Hosterman, and Louiva Puffer. Come, eat, and enjoy good company.



Pilgrim Guild Annual Bake Sale

The annual Bake Sale, sponsored by the Pilgrim Guild, is scheduled for Sunday, December 13. The baking season is quickly approaching. We encourage church members and friends to participate by donating and purchasing goodies for the holiday season. Money raised will go to good causes. Last year the Pilgrim Guild purchased new tables for the church and a cart to store them in. See you at the sale!



Stewardship Update

It has been with great joy that we have developed this year's Stewardship theme of "From Jesus' Fullness We Have Received Grace Upon Grace." Our pledges of financial resources as well as time and talent enable Robbinsdale United Church of Christ to grow its ministry among ourselves and in the world around us.

If you have not yet made your pledge, you still have the opportunity to do so by calling our Office Administrator, Gretchen Roesler, or dropping your pledge card in the collection plate on Sunday. Pledge cards are available in the office. We pray that we will hear from each member that you want to contribute to our community with your time, talent and financial gifts as you respond to Jesus' Fullness.

To date, we have received 75 pledges for a total of \$207,112. We thank each of you who have made your prayerful pledge! A letter confirming your pledge will be mailed to your home.

On behalf of the congregation at Robbinsdale United Church of Christ we thank you.

—Julie Manworren and the 2009-2010 Stewardship Committee

LISTENING PROJECT UPDATE – December 2009

Forming Our Vision for the Next Ten Years

For the past several months, interviews have been taking place among the members and friends of Robbinsdale United Church of Christ. Don't worry if you haven't been contacted, you are still loved and we want to hear from you.

The Coordinating Council has received a report of the interviews up to this point, and they are excited about expanding the opportunity to hear from as many church members as possible. In the past week, several new folks have joined the team of interviewers, and we would welcome even more. It is the wisdom of our church leaders that we need to hear from everyone we can before we move into creating this vision. If you would like to be on the Listening Team, please talk with T. Michael or Moderator Dan Haugen.

December Schedule...

INTERFAITH LEISURE AGE

9 AM. SOCIAL HOUR

12 NOON LUNCH AND PROGRAM:

Lunch Reservations Required

Elim Lutheran Church.

3748 West Broadway in Robbinsdale

Dec. 3—John Steiner plays a variety of music on the accordion.

Dec. 10—December Birthday Party. David Cotton will provide gospel and Christmas music.

Dec. 17—Christmas Party with prizes and surprises. Christmas Show presented by Rod Cerar.

Dec. 24—NO LEISURE AGE. Merry Christmas!

Dec. 31—NO LEISURE AGE. Happy New Year!

Thanks for your support during the past year.

Leisure Age meets on Thursday from 9:00-2:00. Lunch costs \$9.00. It is now necessary to make reservations if you plan to attend. If you're present one week, you can sign the reservation book that is passed at the table to attend the following week. If you are not present, you can make reservations Monday 9 a.m. to noon by calling Jean Lindstrom at 763-537-1171. You may also use this number to cancel a reservation.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Jan Paulsen, 763-529-1986

or Keith Smith, 612-588-1401 or 763-588-4356



NEW Quilting News!!!

Quilting Night has moved back to the **first Monday** evening of the month starting in December. We also have **two new sewing machines** and some easy sewing to do at the meeting or kits to take home with you. A flannel design wall provides a place to play with your creative side!! Come for **any** amount of time between 5 and 9 – it's always a good way to meet new people while doing an outreach activity. Please join us **Dec. 7, Jan. 4, Feb. 1, March 1, April 5 and May 3**. Mark your calendars now! Questions? Can't make it and want a kit? Call Nancy Bossert (763-463-0714) or Dawn Conn (763-424-6525).

Coordinating Council

November 17, 2009

*Treasurer: While pledge income is down from budgeted, expenses are down more, so we are

currently in the black for 2009. Current stewardship drive: 75 pledges (as of Nov. 17) equaling \$207,112.

*Thanks to Pam Conner who has been doing the pledge statements for 9 years.

*Fruit of the Spirit raised approximately \$7500. Thanks to the organizers for a wonderful event.

*Listening Project will continue; hope to complete by the Annual Meeting.

*Families Moving Forward: We will host again December 27-January 3.

*We have been given the go-ahead to submit a grant proposal for Worship Renewal.

*Nominating Committee will be beginning its work, recruiting new officers and members for ministries.

*Thanks to Cheryl Nordquist for putting together the Children's Christmas Pageant for December 20.

*Community Outreach will soon be putting up the seasonal gift tree for PRISM. Guild will also be sponsoring the Tree of Warmth again this year.

**Mark your calendar for the Annual Meeting
Sunday, January 24, 2010**

Men's Breakfast Coming Up!

Mark Your Calendars for

Saturday, December 5

Coffee: 7:00 a.m.

Breakfast: 7:30 a.m.

Discussion: 8:00 a.m.

Our discussion will focus on Advent and family traditions during the holiday season. What does Advent mean to you? What is special to you at this time of year? We will continue our planning for the Men's Service in February.

Second Sunday: Remember Our Shut-ins

Join Faith Formation for a Second Sunday event on Dec. 13th. We will be decorating cookies and making cards for our church members who are on the special concerns list. We will meet after church in Fellowship Hall and feast on pizza and then get to work. The products will then be delivered by group of RUCC carolers later that day. This is for all ages. Join us for a little jump start on your Christmas spirit!



Tuesdays w/T

A Bible Study for Beginners

6 p.m. Every Tuesday (except Dec. 29)

The Story of Jesus



Note: We're back on Tuesday nights! The Bible is this wonderful living text if we can learn to tell the stories and how they relate to us. This month we will both read the Advent and Christmas stories and practice telling the tale for ourselves. So, come and explore, come and listen, come and discover, come and experience the Bible come alive.

Special Satellite Bible Study

**Thursday, December 17th, at Waterford –
Noontime (bring your own lunch)**

**Are You Considering a
Year-end Gift to RUCC?**

One of the ways to give is to do so in honor of someone you know and love by giving to something they believe in. If you believe in the ministry and mission here at RUCC, then it would make a perfect gift under the tree to make a donation in someone else's name. You could even celebrate the gift of music the choir brings each week or our commitment to the families at PRISM and FMF. Gifts in excess of your pledge are always appreciated and graciously received. We even have an easy way for you to transfer stock, and it's a great way to receive an extra tax deduction for 2009. If you would like to transfer stock, please call the church office or T. Michael to ask for details. Our ministry will be multiplied when we all use our gifts to their fullest.

IRA gift options extended by Congress

The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 includes a two-year extension of the IRA charitable rollover. Originally enacted as part of the Pension Protection Act of 2006, this provision permits IRA owners starting at age 70½ to make charitable gifts totaling up to \$100,000 per year from their IRAs tax-free if made directly to qualified entities such as Robbinsdale United Church of Christ. This is probably the last time this will be extended.

To make a qualified charitable rollover to RUCC, you should contact your IRA custodian. Ask for the IRA Charitable Rollover transfer forms. And to qualify for a charitable distribution, your IRA custodian must transfer the funds directly to RUCC rather than processing a withdrawal by you for later

gifting. Otherwise, the IRA withdrawal will be taxed if you receive it. Remember: For the transfer to qualify for exclusion in 2009 the distribution must be postmarked no later than December 31, 2009.

2009 Homeless Memorial March and Service

To honor and remember those who have died while homeless in Minnesota. The Homeless Memorial March is a silent march. We ask all in attendance to respect the spirit of the event and the memory of those who have died.

Thursday, December 17, 2009

5 p.m. March & Silent Vigil

Hennepin County Government Center

3rd Ave. S. & 5th St. S., Minneapolis

The march will follow 5th St. S. westward to

Nicollet Ave. and proceed south to 28th St.

6:30 p.m. Service of Remembrance

Simpson United Methodist Church

2740 1st Ave. S., Minneapolis

Speaker: Monica Nilsson, Director of Outreach - St. Stephen's Human Services, president of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless and longtime advocate for the homeless community.

7:30 p.m. Community Meal

Simpson Shelter

lower level of Simpson UMC

All are welcome.

Rides available from T. Michael, leaving RUCC at 4:00 p.m.

Shuttles to the march will depart from K-Mart, Lake St. & 1st Ave., Mpls., at 4:20 p.m.

Financial Corner at RUCC

Through October 31, 2009

	Year to Date	Budget	Difference (-)
Income:	\$206,321.51	\$219,287.17	-\$12,965.66
Expenses:	\$217,394.61	\$231,250.85	-\$13,856.24
TOTAL:			-\$ 890.58

This month's report does not include the Fruit of the Spirit Auction, nor does it tell the tale of generosity of your time and talent during the year. What it does tell us is that most pledges are coming in as expected, that we are being careful about our expenses, and that we are being led by a wonderful Treasurer and group of Trustees.

YEP - 2
YOUTH at RUCC
Middle School YEP 2

December 13th – Christmas Caroling to church members - 3 p.m.–6 p.m.

December 20th - Movie, Yankee Swap (\$7 limit) - Noon–3 p.m.

High School YEP 2

December 13th – Christmas Caroling to church members - 3 p.m.–6 p.m.

December 20th – Rehearsal for Christmas Eve Service - 3 p.m.-5 p.m.

Get your Christmas Tree at Valley Presbyterian

One of the great ways to support our youth program is to get your live Christmas Tree in the lot at Valley Community Presbyterian Church at 3100 Lilac Drive N., Golden Valley, MN. Just mention that you are from RUCC and all the profit will go to our youth program.



January Issue. . .

Mustard Seed



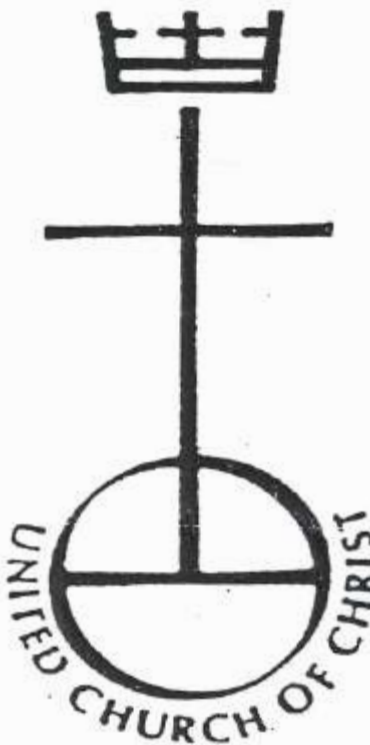
Please place all articles for the next issue of the Mustard Seed in the box marked "Mustard Seed" on the shelf inside the door to the workroom in the church office, *e-mail* to thewillses@aol.com (preferred) or mail them to Barbara Wills, 6214 Upland Lane No., Maple Grove 55311, so that they are received by the deadline.

JANUARY ISSUE DEADLINE

Sunday, Dec. 27, 11 a.m.

No exceptions please.

(January issue will be mailed by Tues., January 5.)



Robbinsdale United Church of Christ
4200 Lake Road
Robbinsdale, MN 55422

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage

PAID

Minneapolis, MN
Permit No. 1163