



West Parish Church

United Church of Christ

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For Immediate Release - January 25, 2010

West Parish Youth Making the World Sweeter

A buffet overflowing with Boston cream pie, éclairs, brownies, chocolate donuts, candies, whoopee pies, fudge, hot cocoa.... No, it's not a vision of heaven. It's the West Parish Church **Chocolate Extravaganza** coming to Andover on Sunday afternoon, January 31 from 2:00 - 4:30 pm at West Parish Church. "We think that kids will especially love the chocolate fountain where they can have fun dipping pretzels, marshmallows, strawberries and banana slices," said Nancy McMillan, one of the coordinators of the event.

Besides the buffet of chocolate desserts and beverages that will be available for sampling, the Chocolate Extravaganza will feature a raffle of gift baskets and other items as well as a sale of take-home fudge Valentine hearts from Winfrey's Chocolates of Rowley.

And there's no guilt in enjoying this delicious buffet of chocolate treats because all proceeds will benefit the West Parish Church youth group summer mission trip to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Associate Pastor Marie Lucca will be taking a group of high school youth and adults to Pine Ridge for a week this summer to build and repair homes for impoverished Lakota Sioux Native Americans who live on the Reservation. "We are hoping to make the world a "sweeter" place for those living at Pine Ridge and the Chocolate Festival will help us do that," explained Rev. Lucca.

Indeed, the conditions on the Reservation are anything but sweet. In fact, they are akin to many third world countries. Often there are 20-25 people living in homes that are 400-800 square feet and have no plumbing or electricity. Unemployment rates on the Reservation are between 80-90%, and quality medical care is scarce in this desert region where the rate of diabetes and tuberculosis is 8x the national average! Life expectancy on Pine Ridge is the lowest in the United States and the second lowest in the Western Hemisphere after Haiti. When Rev. Lucca and others at West Parish learned about statistics like these, they felt moved to action.

In addition to making much needed home repairs, the group of 15 parishioners will be totally immersed in the Lakota culture. "This is definitely a cross-cultural 'learn and serve' trip," said Rev. Lucca. "Besides working side by side with the Native Americans, we will also be learning about the history of the people, attending local cultural events, and visiting Lakota holy sites like the cemetery at Wounded Knee." Wounded Knee is where 146 Lakota men, women and children were slaughtered by the US Cavalry in 1890.

Would you like to indulge your sweet tooth and at the same time help those in need? If so, this is the perfect way for you to spend a Sunday afternoon!

Tickets are \$10 at the door or \$8 in advance. Children under 4 years of age are free. To purchase advance tickets, come to the West Parish Church office, 129 Reservation Road (at Route 133) in Andover or call 978-475-3528. The office is opened Monday through Friday between 8:30 am and 2:30 pm or on Sundays from 8:30-10:00am.

Photo attached "West Parish Church Youth Prepare for Chocolate Extravaganza."

For more information about this press release, contact Rev. Marie J. Lucca, 978-887-0103.