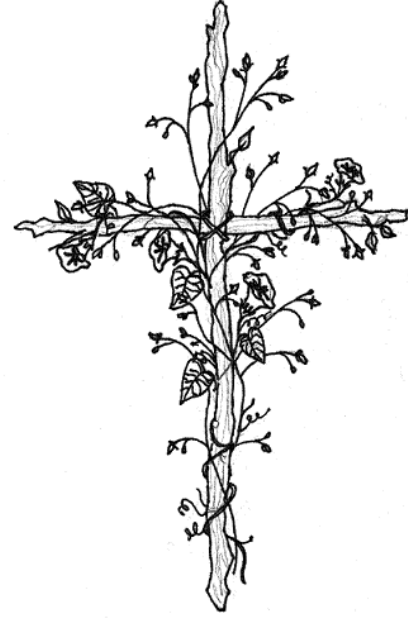


Congregational News
First Congregational Church of Geneva
United Church of Christ
321 Hamilton St.
Geneva, Illinois 60134

December 2010

Return Service Requested

Congregational News



Growing in the
Spirit,
Come Grow With
Us!

December 2010

Church Staff

Rev. Rebecca Clancy, Pastor
Catherine Erwin, Minister of Christian Education
Karen Howard, Music Director
Patricia Alcorn, Organist
Lynnly Buchanan, Church Secretary
Phil Potoczek, In-Care Seminarian
Kyle Tade, In-Care Seminarian
Jillian Lindeen, In-Care Seminarian

Church Officers

Clyde Jones, Moderator
Dave Buchanan, Vice-Moderator
David Fauntleroy, Treasurer
Dan Brand, Financial Secretary
Open, Historian
Sue Cechner & Barb Malone, Clerks

Board Chairs

Barb Malone, Worship
Sharon Jones & Kim Valentine, Deacons Board
Daniele Gibney & Lynnly Buchanan, Christian Education Board
Becca Clancy & Nancy Hannah, Missions Bd.
Lynnly Buchanan, Properties Board
Mike rosier, Stewardship Bd.

*The First Congregational Church of Geneva
United Church of Christ
321 Hamilton St
Geneva, IL 60134
(630) 232-7143
geneva-ucc@sbcglobal.net*

**visit our web site at:
geneva-ucc.org**

On the Morning of Christ's Nativity

by John Milton

THIS is the Month, and this the happy morn
Wherin the Son of Heav'ns eternal King,
Of wedded Maid, and Virgin Mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty,
Wherewith he wont at Heav'ns high Councel-Table,
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside; and here with us to be,
Forsook the Courts of everlasting Day,
And chose with us a darksome House of mortal Clay.

Say Heav'nly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no vers, no hymn, or solemn strain,
To welcome him to this his new abode,
Now while the Heav'n by the Sun's team untrod,
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

See how from far upon the Eastern rode
The Star-led Wisards haste with odours sweet,
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first, thy Lord to greet,
And joyn thy voice unto the Angel Quire,
From out his secret Altar toucht with hallow'd fire.



Sunday Schedule

9:00 am Choir Practice
 10:00 am Morning Worship
 11:00 am Coffee/ Fellowship

Board Meetings & Events

Sunday, Dec 5 10:00 am Holy

Communion

Sunday, Dec 12	11:30 am	Deacons Board Meeting
Sunday, Dec 19	10:00 am	Choir Cantata
	11:30 am	Worship Board Meeting
	2:00 pm	Caroling with the Choir
Friday, Dec 24	7:30 pm	Christmas Eve Service
Saturday, Dec 25		Christmas Day
Sunday, Dec 26	10:00 am	Family Christmas Program <i>The Give Away</i>
	11:30 am	Council Meeting
Sunday, Jan 2	10:00 am	Holy Communion

Birthdays !

12/2	Jeff R	12/11	Patrick B
12/2	Kim T	12/12	Lea R
12/4	Linda M	12/12	Sue C
12/10	Grace O	12/18	Kim V

Anniversaries !

Kim and Dave V	16 Years
Barb and Dick S	25 Years

If your birthday or anniversary isn't listed above, please call the church office to update our records.

Remember In Your Prayers...

- Karen Howard's cousin, Tom (illness);
- Pat Alcorn's friend, Josephine (illness);
- Pat Alcorn's friend, Ericka (illness);
- Pat Alcorn's friend, Buzz (illness);
- Amanda Rodman's brother, Cody (struggles);
- Dave's friend, Laura (illness);
- Catherine Erwin's friend, Lynn (illness);
- Catherine Erwin's husband, Bob (illness);
- Barb Sharp's niece, Amy (surgery, illness);
- Barb Sharp's brother-in-law, Steve (illness)

Additionally, please remember our ill and home-bound members: Emma Gene Buchanan, Betty Deitrich, Nell Graham, Elsie Hogancamp, Leona Johnson, Barb Kryzenecki, Lucille Landberg, and Esther Wessels. Finally, please pray for those serving in the military.

For the Record...



Pulpit Associate volunteers for the coming months:

December	Kara Fenne
January	Dave Buchanan
February	Open

If you are interested in serving as Pulpit Associate or Usher talk with Barb Malone, Worship Board Chairperson.

Food For Thought...

“The aging process has you firmly in its grasp if you never get the urge to throw a snowball.”

Doug Larson

From The Pastor

Waiting. The word does not exactly have positive connotations. We are Americans, after all. Part of our national identity and pride is that we have all but eliminated waiting. We are beacons of efficiency, and it shows in all we do – from drive-up windows to internet shopping to express lanes to ever advancing tele-communicative technology. Conjure in your minds, for instance, the image of a distracted and clueless woman who finds herself in the express lane with extra items, or worse, fumbles in her pocket book for her coin purse to make exact change. It's not a pretty picture. She is one who makes us wait.

I was driving to a conference a few years back with some colleagues. Suddenly traffic came to a halt. I deduced it was an accident, and I was right. Although it was only about 200 yards ahead, it took 20 minutes of crawling to make it to the scene. The ambulances had just arrived. Two individuals were lying in the emergency lane – unconscious, doubtless badly injured. The only reaction of my colleagues though was relief that the traffic jam was over. Yes, waiting is a very bad thing to us Americans – the sign of something gone awry; evidence that someone is blameworthy. Consequently, for Americans, patience is not a virtue, impatience is.

Deep down inside, however, I think most of us sense that this is a fool's game, but I think too that most of us underestimate just how soul destroying it really is, for it does nothing less than occlude the nature of reality. Providence has factored waiting into human existence. It has made it necessary for human-beings. Take for instance, the loss of a loved one or a relationship. A period of mourning and grief that lasts many years ensues. If one refuses in one way or another to "wait it out", one does oneself serious damage. Sorrow is repressed and internalized, but it's there nonetheless, and it eats away. Or take, for instance, the realization that one has gotten into a hole of some sort - addiction, mental illness, a dysfunctional relationship or personality. A period of "digging out" is necessary that will last, again, many years. If one

refuses to take the time required to right the wrong, the outcome will be backsliding or a cycling forward of the same destructive patterns. Things take time. Life takes time. Waiting is indispensable. Patience is a virtue.

And perhaps the greatest benefits of acquiescing to the various waits of life, is that in the end, one receives knowledge that confirms the value and necessity of the wait, knowledge that gives understanding that could not be gleaned during the wait itself. This kind of hindsight knowledge is the stuff of wisdom, but it can also be applied as a paradigm for the very mystery of human existence. All of our life, really, is a period of waiting, at the end of which we will receive knowledge that confirms the wait, knowledge that gives understanding that could not be gleaned during the wait itself.

This is precisely what the Bible teaches, and the reason the Bible exhorts faith. Faith is the unassailable conviction that when the waiting of life is over, the wait will be "fully known." We now wait for the birth of Jesus Christ. We will then wait for his death, resurrection, and the giving of his Holy Spirit. And we will then, by that Holy Spirit and by faith, wait our lives long confident that we see "now in a mirror, dimly; but then face to face." It is Jesus himself who taught us that good things come to those who wait.

With you in His Service,

Becca

From The Moderator

Clyde sends his regards from Oregon after a full and happy Thanksgiving with daughter, Jennifer, and family and cousins. He did download the cantata music on his ipod so he could practice while he was away. He did some serious singing as they were driving through the snowy mountain passes.



I love to tell the story to those who know it best, seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest ...

No, these are not the words of one of our many loved Christmas hymns and carols, but they speak poignantly to the reason for the season, the focus of Advent. This month you will, believer or not, be inundated with opportunities to hear the story. The piped in music in every store will be a mix of the secular and the sacred, *Rudolph* and *Frosty* intermingled with *The First Noel* and *Silent Night*. Do it Yourself *Messiah* concerts are still very popular and you can find one in almost every town and village. Churches everywhere are hurrying through the preparation for Christmas Cantatas and Programs of varying sizes and for every age and level of expertise. Radio stations everywhere begin to mix in seasonal cuts with regular programming until the traditional 24-hour blitz of holiday music that often floods the airwaves on Christmas Eve and Day.

I love to tell the story, 'tis pleasant to repeat. What seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet ...

Our television networks of all ilk, cost points, and functionalities are putting out programming for a holiday, if not holy-day, season. It would be easy to think that decorating your home, or finding lost love, or reuniting with estranged family members were the key concepts of the season. None of the preceding are bad things (I love to decorate for Christmas!). In fact, working on forgiveness in our relationships and nudging our lives on to better courses are indeed hoped for effects of the message of the season, peace on earth and good will for all people.

I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love. I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true. It satisfies my longing, as nothing else can do.

I've quoted from this lovely old hymn in almost reverse order, and there may be a clue in there to my thought process and my observation as I look out into a world that is this year perhaps more troubled than many. This is not the bleakest time in our history as a nation, nor as humanity. Not by a long shot, but it is a time where we are globally aware of the resources of our planet and the great disparity of their dispersal. It is an age where we have the science to understand what our technology, and yes, sometimes greed, are doing to our planet and to the other living things we inhabit this beautiful globe with, including the rest of humanity. As Christians we decorate our homes and yards, listen to the carols "ringing loud and long", watch the TV programs, and prepare the Cantatas and Christmas Pageants because we believe. Because we have heard the story and our hearts have been touched by the Spirit, by God come to us in the words and deeds of this baby who will grow to be Jesus, the Christ. Let that be the driving force of our efforts this month. *It is the reason, not the season, that we celebrate!*

May the peace of God, found in a baby in a manger, which indeed passes all human understanding, be in your hearts and minds all this Advent season, as we wait and watch to celebrate this most wonderful of Birthdays. Amen.

Blessings,
Catherine

Prayer Team

The FCCG Prayer Team's focus for the month of December will be to spend 5 minutes a day in prayer thanking God for sending us His Son, Jesus our Lord Emmanuel, who came to save us from our sins.

What's Up With the Missions Board?

Diaper Collection – The Open Door Clinic has put in an urgent request for diapers of all sizes. They have many clients with small children who cannot afford food for their tables, let alone diapers. They can be any brand and any size. Bring donations to the church and leave them at the entrance to the sanctuary and we will see that they get delivered. Thanks for your help!



Hat and Mitten Drive – Our Hat and Mitten drive will continue through Sunday, December 12th. We are well stocked with hats (thank you), but could use some gloves, mittens and scarves. Items can be left in the bin at the entrance to the church. We are supplying items to both Cameron School (as always), and to the children affiliated with the Open Door Clinics in Aurora and Elgin.

Angel Tree – Our Angel Tree is once again up in the entrance to the church. The Open Door Clinic, which the Missions Board supports throughout the year, provides more than just free medical care to its patients throughout the year. As you know, they maintain a food pantry for their patient's families year round, and



they collect hats, scarves and mittens in the fall. This year, they have a list of 79 children from their patient's families who, like the Salvation Army children, will go without Christmas gifts but for the help of others. The Missions Board has agreed to take on all 79 children, so

that none will have to miss out. There are 37 tags on our Angel Tree at the front of the church; 28 tags have already been taken, and the Missions Board is supplying gift cards for the older/teen age children. We are hopeful that those remaining 37 angel

wishes can be filled by the congregation. Each tag comes in two parts, one for you to attach to the gifts you are supplying, and one to keep for your records. Your donations should be returned to the church by Sunday, December 12th for delivery to the clinic early that week. Please do not wrap your gifts, as that is something the parents enjoy doing, but feel free to include gift wrap for them if you like. Thank you again for all you do to help folks who need help.

Lazarus House Dinner Service – The next Lazarus House dinner on January 29, 2011. Call Kim Valentine or someone else on the missions board if you would like to help cook or serve.

Stand up for the common good this Advent – At this time of year, as we gather to give prayerful thanks for the abundance of gifts in our lives, please take some time to reflect on those among us who continue to struggle. As people of faith we are called to promote the common good. **Do so now by urging congress to extend tax cuts for the families who need them most, but end them for the wealthiest taxpayers.**

Take Action: During the Bush administration Congress passed two sets of enormous tax cuts that were skewed to benefit people with the highest incomes. The cuts reduced tax revenues, increased the size of the federal government deficit and reduced funds that could have been used to strengthen the safety net and help the economy. Now some members of Congress are proposing to extend the Bush tax cuts for lower- and middle-income tax payers while ending the cuts for married tax payers with incomes over \$250,000 and singles with income over \$200,000. This would affect just 2% of tax payers while bringing in \$40 billion in 2011 and nearly \$700 billion over 10 years. But other members of Congress prefer to extend all the tax cuts including those for people with the highest incomes. Struggling families should not be asked to pay higher taxes at this time but the wealthiest among us could pay more. **Tell Congress to extend the tax cuts for lower- and middle-income Americans but end them for the wealthiest taxpayers.**

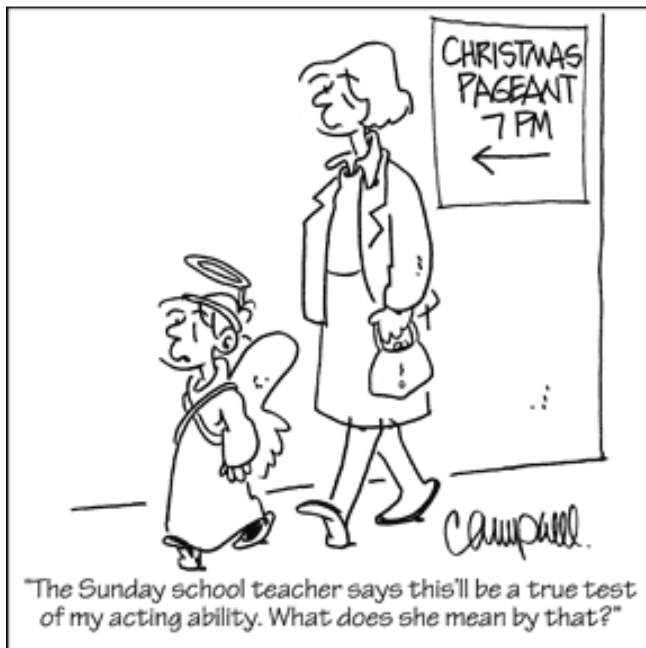


MEN'S BREAKFAST

The men's group, Society of the Sons of God (SoSoGo), will have their next breakfast meeting on Saturday, January 22nd, at 8:30am in Fellowship Hall. All men and boys are welcome. The group meets on the third Saturday of each month for breakfast and light chores.

Family Christmas Program

We will have a family Christmas program on Sunday, December 26th, in which the children will present a play based on the book, *The Give Away*, by Ray Buckley. Come help celebrate the season with our theatrical children.



"The Promised Hope...starts with a baby's first cry"

Tom Fettke and Russell Mauldin



Sunday, December 19th at 10 a.m.

From the cantata's prologue: *"I have heard Christmas referred to as the season of hope. But sometimes I wonder if we have reduced it to what we hope for rather than what our hope is. The difference may seem subtle, yet is significant.*

As we are bombarded daily with reminders that times are difficult and futures are uncertain, it would be easy to think that hope is nowhere to be found. That is why we love to hear it told...the story of a baby born in a manger, come to redeem a world without hope is timeless and forever relevant.

"Though you are small, Bethlehem... out of you will come One who will be ruler over Israel."

The choir will bring you the timeless story wrapped in a number of beautiful songs and meaningful readings on Sunday morning, **December 19th**. *"It was the night before Christmas, and all through the world. Everything looked like business as usual.".... "Born where the shadows lie to answer every cry of man; this Child who formed all life now breathes our breath"*. Each year the choir puts in many extra rehearsal hours preparing our annual Christmas cantata. Be sure that you plan on being in worship on the 19th and plan to bring your friends and neighbors so that our sanctuary is overflowing for this special service.

"Hope...hope long awaited,

Hope of the ages

would break with the dawn.

And the song that all of creation was anticipating would start with a baby's first cry".

Steven Curtis Chapman



Our Christmas Eve service will be held
Friday, December 24th at 7:30pm.

House of Hope Report

November 19, 2010



In the months leading up to the earthquake on January 12, 2010, House of Hope was hard at work providing alternatives to Haitian children so they do not have to work as domestic servants, enabling them to take control of their own lives, and teaching young people to be

honorable citizens and live with dignity as children of God. The earthquake did not change House of Hope's commitment to young people in the impoverished neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince but did provide many more challenges.

In the months since the earthquake, House of Hope has acquired a new locale, as their previous rented location was too heavily damaged in the earthquake. They have increased the number of beneficiaries of the House of Hope Program. In 2009, there were 100 beneficiaries and in 2010 there are 250 adolescents that frequent the center every day where they learn to read, write, and sew. This year, 20 students have taken the state academic exams and 16 have passed. More than 175 youth are learning a

profession from the eight career options that House of Hope offers to youth.

House of Hope has many success stories like Auguste Linese who is a thirteen year-old who has been participating for three years. She is from the city of Leogane in the western part of Haiti. After the death of her parents, she had no one to take care of her. In 2007, a resident of Leogane took her to Port-au-Prince where she was given to another person who lived in Carrefour-Feuilles, after which she became a domestic servant.



The first time she visited the House of Hope Program, she was very sad and withdrawn, and she could not read or write. She did not have any confidence since she had been mistreated for so long. Now, with the patience and the constant attention that House of Hope has devoted to her, Linese is a very happy teenager who makes good grades in her classes, is the best dancer at House of Hope, and participates in all of House of Hope's activities.

Gifts received from Global Ministries in late 2009 were used for salaries, support of programs, and exam fees in December and were instrumental in supporting House of Hope's care for earthquake victims in early 2010. House of Hope provided meals, trauma support and counseling, and staff salaries while also paying for clean-up and transporting materials from damaged buildings in the aftermath of the earthquake.



Read more about House of Hope and their programs here:

<http://globalministries.org/lac/projects/house-of-hope-haiti.html>