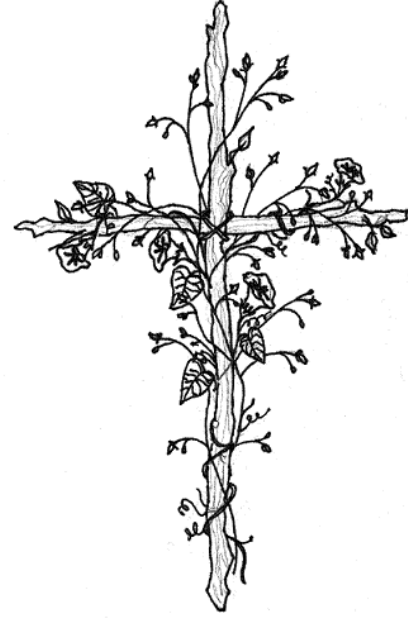


Congregational News
First Congregational Church of Geneva
United Church of Christ
321 Hamilton St.
Geneva, Illinois 60134

January 2011

Return Service Requested

Congregational News



Growing in the
Spirit,
Come Grow With
Us!

January 2011

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

Winter-Time

by Robert Louis Stevenson

Late lies the wintry sun a-bed,
A frosty, fiery sleepy-head;
Blinks but an hour or two; and then,
A blood-red orange, sets again.

Before the stars have left the skies,
At morning in the dark I rise;
And shivering in my nakedness,
By the cold candle, bathe and dress.

Close by the jolly fire I sit
To warm my frozen bones a bit;
Or with a reindeer-sled, explore
The colder countries round the door.

When to go out, my nurse doth wrap
Me in my comforter and cap;
The cold wind burns my face, and blows
Its frosty pepper up my nose.

Black are my steps on silver sod;
Thick blows my frosty breath abroad;
And tree and house, and hill and lake,
Are frosted like a wedding-cake.



From The Pastor

It's the New Year and the time for resolutions - *I'm going to lose a few pounds. I'm going to begin an exercise regime. I'm going to give up that vice. I'm going to stick to a budget. I'm going to find a better job. I'm going to stop procrastinating* – whatever form of self-improvement best applies, because as we all know, resolutions are all about self-improvement.

New Year's resolutions, however, as fun and appealing as we may try to make them, and even if we keep them, are rather trivial things. Sure, self-improvements may give us a kick, may be something of a pick-me-up, but they do little to alter the structure of existence, even our own.

The Bible, for its part, has little to say about self-improvement; little, that is, that is positive. Here is but one sample of the attitude the Bible takes toward self-improvement: "If any plan is a human undertaking, it will fail." Sure, the Bible advocates human improvement; it advocates it vehemently and vociferously - threateningly even. But the Bible realizes that human improvement is not possible or viable without God – without God's word and will and work – without God's Spirit. Absent God, self-improvement has no eternal bearing or purpose. It's not only trivial; it is, in the grand scheme of things, arbitrary and futile.

If all this sounds stern, there is a paradox in the sternness. It is that the human improvement that God sanctions and endows is rooted in one thing; and that is love, the love made manifest in His Son. The Apostle Paul apprehended this when he wrote, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge...but have not love, I am nothing...." The long and short of it is this: God wants our improvement. God wants us to love, and God will help us to love.

So sure, make your resolutions, and keep or break them. I have my own list. Why not? I wear green on St. Patrick's Day and carve pumpkins on Halloween. The holidays are fun to participate in. But

underneath it all, the New Year should remind us that God always provides a fresh chance to love.

With you in His Service,

Becca

From The Moderator

Happy New Year to everyone! Old Year 2010 went out with a bang! The Church has been hopping beginning with the hanging of the greens through the performance of the Youth pageant. The Christmas Cantata went extremely well and was appreciated by a full sanctuary. Special thanks to our fearless leader Karen Howard and the beautiful voices of Katherine Bettinghaus and Mike Rosier. In the afternoon 14 Church members sang carols at The Holmstad in Batavia. We had large audiences at Des Miller's apartment, saw Elsie Hogancamp, Emma Gene Buchanan and Mary Lou Burgess and had a special songfest in the South Hall dining room. Afterwards we all met at Louise and Dave Bettinghaus's home for food and drink. It was a fun day. I say with a modicum of pride that I am privileged to be a part of the choir.

Mission Board was running rampant with many vital jobs. Ruth Marsh made stockings and Carolyn Fabian stuffed them with toys for Open Door and Nancy Hannah had a full collection of hats and mittens for St. John's family Christmas. All of the Angel Tree orders were filled and delivered to the Salvation Army on time. A big "Thank you" to all the generous members of the Church.

We will be working to get reports together for the annual meeting that is scheduled for Sunday, January 23, 2011. If you have any question beforehand, please let me know.

Remember to bring a friend to Church and preferably one who likes to sing! See you there. God bless!

W. Clyde Jones III



The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing like half submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who stand in the line and haul in their places,
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.
.... Marge Piercy *To Be of Use*

January used to be a sort of sacred space for me and many people I know. It was a new year. Things were resetting. Things slowed down a bit in January. The seemingly ever increasing activity and energy drain, often for very worthy and significant activities, of

Christmas came, if not to a screeching halt, down to something more reminiscent of neighborhood speeds of 25-30, rather than highway speeds of 55, or more. However in recent years that literal respite, that decline in activity due to bad travel conditions and just general exhaustion in the population, seems to be disappearing. Anchored in faith and a fabulous community of God's people, I find that I am exploring new ways to contemplate the great gift of another year on my life's doorstep.

A few other people I spoke with had the opposite issue – boredom. They had found little to fill their days, or their souls, during Advent time, indeed perhaps life as a whole. Christmas in the modern age looked to them a bit like a hollow shell, and a few wondered whether Christmas, or New Years, was worth “celebrating”. Too much or too little, either state can be a drain on ones energy, spiritual, emotional, and physical.

As society around us continues, as it always has, to change and evolve, we need to keep our eyes open for the opportunities to serve that feed our souls, and by default our energy levels. We may not, especially in these challenging economic times, have a job, our source of income, be an activity that meets our dreams, but satisfaction comes from having work to do and a source of income. Things will not always be this way. As funding for *everything* seems to be drying up, every organization out there needs help. Perhaps a few days a month as a volunteer will help feed our souls and help the wonderful, unexpected people we will meet in the process.

Another New Year is here. These are days of much need, as much with-in us, as with out. How is God calling you, challenging you to grow this year? What gifts are out in the world waiting for you to discover? Where is God waiting for you to dive in, heart first? We are each created from the dust. The Potter of the Universe formed us into vessels, vessels to carry the love of God to a world in need. Where will God find your vessel this year?

Blessings,
Catherine

Prayer Team



The FCCG Prayer Team's focus for the month of January will be to spend 5 minutes in prayer for the entire population of earth to have peace, joy, and happiness in the coming New Year.

What's Up With the Missions Board?

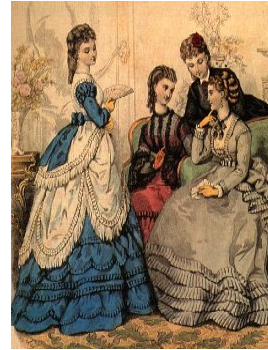
Diaper Collection – The Open Door Clinic has put in an urgent request for diapers of all sizes. They have many clients with small children who cannot afford food for their tables, let alone diapers. They can be any brand and any size. Bring donations to the church and leave them at the entrance to the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

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, and watch the clipboard in the sanctuary for sign up sheets.



MEN'S BREAKFAST

The men's group, Society of the Sons of God (SoSoGo), will have their next breakfast meeting on Saturday, January 15th, 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 occasionally light chores.



JULIET Meeting

The JULIETs group will meet in the Friendship Room at the Ekstam building at the Holmstad, on Friday, January 21st, from 1pm to 3pm, for a New Year's party. Join us for lots of fun conversation! Please call Ruth Marsh (xxx-xxxx), or Nancy Hannah (xxx-xxxx) if you need a ride in order to come – we will be happy to pick you up!

Thanks from the Bottom of our Hearts

We would like to thank everyone in the congregation who contributed to the staff Christmas gift this year. We appreciate being remembered, and hope everyone had a warm and safe holiday season.

Becca, Catherine, Pat, Karen, and Lynnly



Check out our website for up to the minute-ish information about what's going on at church!

You can also find the newsletter online as well, often before you could get it in the mail or at church. If you would like to switch to electronic newsletters, talk to Lynnly!



NOTES FROM THE LOFT...

The Christmas tree is out on the deck, a feeding tree and shelter for the birds and squirrels. The decorations are back in the boxes and safely put away. There are still a few Christmas cookies and some turkey in the fridge but for the most part, in my house, Christmas is done for another year. Some folks like to hang onto the physical reminders of Christmas for a while longer but I am all about looking ahead and moving on to the next task. However, don't stop by and look at the music office at church just yet it is still as we left it Christmas Eve.

Although I have put away the physical pieces of Christmas, the spirit will linger and the memories will last forever. The choir, after months of hard work, brought a wonderful cantata, "The Promised Hope", to the congregation early in December. That afternoon we spent several hours Christmas caroling for some of our shut-ins. I don't know who enjoys that more those that are listening or those who are singing. At the end of the day Dave and Louise Bettinghaus hosted the whole group and their families to a time of fellowship and refreshment; a long but wonderful day. Then, despite snow, coughs and colds the choir returned to bring beautiful music to Christmas Eve worship. We were blessed with both Katherine Bettinghaus and Hannah Clancy in the choir on Christmas Eve; Josh Norman and my granddaughter Katherine Albano opened the service with a duet of "What Child is this?"

The New Year lies ahead of us with countless possibilities, challenges and opportunities. After January 2nd the choir will begin a new season of music and turn our eyes towards Lent and Easter. The sample music and CD's have already arrived. Life in the church, like nature itself, begins to change once you turn the calendar to the new year; after all, there are already seed catalogs arriving in the mail! If any of you happened to watch the TV

program Sing Off, which aired in the last few months, you saw some great acapella music performed as groups competed for the prize. I am going to be looking at some acapella arrangements for the choir to work on in the weeks ahead. Whether or not they include beatboxing will remain to be seen; Mike is working on it already. If you are not sure what "beatboxing" is, it is making the sound of background and rhythmic instruments with your voice/mouth. Look for it on u-tube to hear a sampling.

The choir is always open to anyone who would like to join us in song. It is not necessary to read music just love to sing. If you are interested stop by on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 and give it a try.

Lastly, as the old year passes I want to thank the congregation for the very generous Christmas gift that I received on Christmas Eve. I hope each of you had a wonderful Christmas and I send my wishes for a very Happy New Year.

Karen

EAPPI Service and Visit

On Sunday, February 6th John and Faye Buttrick will join us for a presentation during service which will highlight their experiences in Palestine and Israel.

EAPPI-US and Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) sent Faye and John Buttrick to Palestine from July through October 2010 as Ecumenical Accompaniers serving the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).

The mission of EAPPI is to accompany Palestinians and Israelis in their non-violent actions and concerted advocacy efforts to end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Ecumenical

Accompaniment teams of 26 – 28 internationals have been placed in Jerusalem and the West Bank for three month terms since 2002. Teams are present with local communities to:

- accompany farmers cut off from regular access to their fields,
- provide a protective presence by monitoring checkpoints,
- assist Israeli and Palestinian human rights, peace and ecumenical NGO's,
- ensure that children safely travel to and from school, and
- accompany health teams and ambulances crossing military checkpoints.

The teams also engage in advocacy efforts to end the occupation and support a just peace. They share their experience and knowledge of the situation with their communities back home.

The Rev. Faye and the Rev. John Buttrick both served UCC churches in the Connecticut Conference before their retirement. They live now in Peoria, Illinois.

Join us for this engaging presentation during our communion Sunday service.

Passage of Low Power FM legislation led by UCC media advocates

Written by Gregg Brekke

December 22, 2010

The U.S. House and Senate have both approved, and President Obama is expected to sign, legislation that clears the way for community radio broadcasts on the Low Power FM (LPFM) broadcast spectrum. The [Local Community Radio Act](#) has long been seen by advocates as a way for localized communities to connect and communicate using the public airwaves.

Former UCC communications director and past executive of the [UCC's Office of Communication, Inc.](#), the Rev. Robert Chase, expressed his appreciation for those who struggled over the last decade to see this legislation come to a conclusion.

"This legislation is a great testament to countless individuals who toiled behind the scenes for a decade to help give voice to local communities that have become increasingly marginalized by the consolidation of power within the mainstream media," said Chase. "Once again, the United Church of Christ took the lead, not only in the faith-based community, but in the civic arena as well, standing firmly on the side of the public interest in broadcasting."

He especially lifted up the work of OC Inc. policy director Cheryl Leanza and board members Andrea Cano and Brian Lapis - among others - to whom "a debt of gratitude" is owed for their work on behalf of many constituents.

For her part Cano, current chair of the OC Inc. board, celebrated the victory with gratitude for the many partners who worked with the UCC in crafting this legislation.

"We honor the extensive collaboration of efforts among LPFM advocates throughout the country that bridged media justice with social justice, and from us the historic legacy of the work of Everett Parker and the United Church of Christ," said Cano. "OC Inc. invites our UCC congregations and conferences, and our ecumenical and interfaith partners to continue being a part of LPFM stations now on the air, and to encourage and welcome new initiatives in their communities."

Are you interested in getting timely updates about UCC news and information in a compact e-mail? If so, sign up for KYeP updates (Keeping You 'e' Posted) on the UCC webpage:

<http://www.ucc.org/news/keeping-you-eposted/>