



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NEWSLETTER

Volume 51 Number 2

January 24, 2007

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| Sunday School for all ages at 9:30 A.M. | 700 Poyntz Avenue |
| Sunday Worship at 10:45 A.M. | Manhattan, Kansas 66502 |
| Second Helping Dinner at 5:15 P.M. | telephone 785-537-7006 |
| Thursday Evening Taizé at 7:00 P.M. | e-mail ucc@interkan.net |

The work of Christmas is begun

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the sages and the shepherds have found their way home,
The work of Christmas is begun.*

Those words from a song by Jim Strathdee were written in response to a Christmas poem by Howard Thurman. They haunt me this year. As is often the case, Bill and I headed for a few days with his family in Ohio once we thought the work of Christmas (the extra services, extra events, extra music, and extra stress) was done. But the headlines reinforced Thurman’s wisdom that “the work of Christmas is begun” rather than done.

Turning to the TV or the newspaper one was simultaneously confronted with the dignified and measured farewell to former President Gerald Ford and the grainy pictures of a disorganized and barbaric hanging of Saddam Hussein. In the midst of these images, the work of Christmas is begun. [continued page 2]

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As the number of U.S. troops killed in our war in Iraq has topped 3,000, and as two from Fort Riley joined that number on Christmas Day, the work of Christmas is begun. As politicians play word games, sparring over whether increasing the troop numbers is an escalation or an amplification or a surge or an augmentation, the work of Christmas is begun.

Personally, I remain convicted that this is not a “just war” by any historic criteria. It is certainly not a war of last resort nor has it been carried out with any sense of proportionality. The differentiation between soldier and civilian has not been upheld.

What is more, we now know that this war was initiated through misinformation and at times outright deception of the public. The only plausible justification offered—weapons of mass destruction—vanished long ago.

Now, the war has become the third longest in our country’s history—after Vietnam and the War for Independence—and no end is in sight. As in too many wars over the centuries, our leaders believe their course is both just and divinely inspired. Those of us who disagree are labeled unpatriotic. And we may well wonder, is the work of Christmas begun?

There do seem to be signs that real discourse (as opposed to the usual political blah, blah, blah) is gaining a small foothold. I would cite as one example, the address of a well known Southern Baptist at West Point this past November. He was President Lyndon Johnson’s press secretary during the height of the Vietnam War. It was his responsibility to explain to the world what was happening and why the U.S. was doing what it was doing. Bill Moyers was invited by West Point to deliver the Sol Feinstone Lecture on “The Meaning of Freedom.” You can read a lengthy excerpt of this lecture at the tompaine.com website: http://www.tompaine.com/articles/2006/11/29/message_to_west_point.php or you can read a shorter excerpt in the January 23, 2007 issue of *The Christian Century*.

Moyers’ words are as patriotic as any I have read in recent months. They are grounded in historical reality and careful analysis. They pull no punches about this war. That they were

delivered at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point is one more example of the genius of our constitutional democracy. With his thoughtful and thought-provoking words, Moyers is in his own unique way about the work of Christmas.

I am aware that not all readers of this column are glad to find the pastor talking about politics. But the reality is that many of our politicians talk quite freely of their religion and all too often as though their religious take on the question at hand is the only way to go. We need more talk and from a wider spectrum of Christians.

I think the rest of us have something to say that needs to be heard. Yes, you can consider this a not-so subtle plug for our adult Christian education offerings this spring. Come join us for our book study of *Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian* as we consider how our public talk impacts both those of us who talk as well as those around us who listen. After spring break we will shift from practice to content as Craig Weston leads us in a study of Marcus Borg's *The Heart of Christianity*.

So long as there is true discourse and dialogue, politics and religion are a great mix. It is only when one dominates the other that we get in trouble. And so, from the "no comment" department, this final item:

Employees at Grand Canyon National Park are not permitted to give an official estimate of the age of the canyon due to pressure from the current administration. Jeff Ruch, executive director of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, comments, "In order to avoid offending religious fundamentalists, our National Park Service is under orders to suspend its belief in geology." Meanwhile, a book claiming that the Grand Canyon was formed by the flood at the time of Noah remains on sale at the park.

Keep talking. Please.



Sharing and Caring

Prayers and Concerns

These items are not viewable on this website. Please call the church office for further information.

Please Note

- Melissa Jones' new address
- The Second Helping would welcome some donations of canned tuna.

Thank You

- To **Leo Schell** who has won the snow lottery two weeks in a row! A big thank you to Leo and others who have helped clear the recent snow and ice from our walks. Thank you also to the folks from Bayer Construction who clear our parking lot. Despite two weekend storms, we have been ready for worship each week.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

We are preparing to publish the 2007 phone directory for the members and friends of First Congregational, and we need your help to make the directory as up to date and accurate as possible. If you want to be accurately listed in the 2007 directory, please fill out this form and return it to the church office. Even if you think we already have your updated information, fill out the form. If nothing has changed from the 2006 directory, all you need to do is check that box. Take a minute before you forget to fill out the form and send it to the office. You may also call the office at 537-7006 between the hours of 9:00 and 2:30 and update by phone.

Names: _____

Address: _____

_____ **Zip** _____

Home # _____

Work # _____

Cell # _____

E-mail: _____

Addition Info: (birthdays, anniversaries, etc.)

No changes from 2006 information

NOTICE: The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held this Sunday, January 28, 2007, following the worship service.

The meeting will include action on the 2007 budget. Child Care will be provided during the meeting.



Organ & Friends

A Musical Valentine

Sunday, February 11 at 2:30 P.M.

Area Organists and their friends share a program of music for organ, voices, and other instruments at First Congregational UCC. Mark your calendar—Invite your sweetheart. A freewill offering will be received that will support future enhancement of our organ.

Ash Wednesday Service

7:00 P.M. February 21 in the Sanctuary

With water to remind us of our baptism, ashes to remind us of the frailty of our lives, and the sharing of the peace to remind us of our forgiveness and reconciliation, we will begin our Lenten journey. Join us as we begin our annual journey from ashes to fire – from Lent to Easter to Pentecost.



CrossRoads of ECM is a cooperative campus ministry for K-State students supported by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Church of Christ, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). All are welcome!

Spring 2007 Activities

Sundays, 5:30-7:15 P.M.-Table Fellowship and Bible Study/Current Issues Discussion, at CrossRoads on Sundays (every other week – check the website for dates), 7:30-9:00 P.M.

Fair Trade Advocates, at CrossRoads

Mondays, 6:30-7:30 P.M.-Yoga and Meditation, at CrossRoads

Mondays, 7:30-9:30 P.M.-Fun Night (games, crafts, movies, massages, snacks), at CrossRoads

Wednesdays, 8:00-9:00 P.M.-Rob Bell's Nooma Video and Discussion, at Union 209

Plus, community service, worship outreach teams, and a spring break mission trip to Mexico!

***CrossRoads of ECM
1021 Denison Avenue
(across from Fiedler Hall)***

www.ksu.edu/ecm 539-4281 ecm@ksu.edu

David Jones, Campus Pastor

New Adult Forum Class Has Begun

Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian

That's the title of a book by renowned teacher and preacher Thomas G. Long, and it's the topic for our Adult Forum through mid-March. Join us Sundays at 9:30 A.M. in Pioneer Hall.

Christianity is not just about belief; it's also about practice. Our focus will be on the practice of talking about our faith. That's not always easy for any of us, but it's one of the best ways we have of telling our good news story as followers of Jesus. Long's book will help us think about how we can thoughtfully, considerately, and effectively talk about what our faith and our church mean to us. We will also practice what we are studying with activities designed to get us talking faithfully and having fun while we're at it! The class is being lead by Pastor Kent and is part of our Church Vitality initiative.

Copies of the book *Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian* can be ordered by calling the church office (537-7006). The cost is \$16 for each book. You don't have to read the book to participate, but it's any easy and thoughtful read.

Christian Education for Kids

We are finishing the unit focusing on the Samaritan woman at the well. Atina Hanna will lead a presentation during the Word for Children this Sunday so that we can all better understand Christ's concern for those rejected and neglected by society. February's unit will examine the story of Zacchaeus and his transformation after meeting Christ. This story also reminds us how so many of us let "things" take precedence in our lives over what is really important--love of people and love of God. For those of you who have the time and energy this spring, we would so appreciate your contribution as a teacher for a Sunday school unit.

Stay warm and happy!

— Cheryl Poister, Christian Education Director

Youth Corner

We are still looking for one more person/household who would be willing to host and provide an appetizer for the youth's 3rd Annual Progressive Dinner. The date will be Saturday, February 17.

Souper Bowl Sunday is February 4. We are close to reaching our goal of 144 (number of food items and dollars) combined. All money will be donated to the Flint Hills Community Clinic, and food will support The Second Helping and the Flint Hills Breadbasket. Thank you for your support.

— Tracey Weston, Youth Ministry Coordinator

The Second Helping

The Second Helping is a local mission of First Congregational UCC. It serves a hot meal every Sunday evening and provides sack breakfast and lunch items to each guest. To volunteer, contact Marian Fuller 537-7006.



January 28, 2007

Chief Cook Ann Smit
Volunteers Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Ann Gleason
Dessert Ann Smit

February 04, 2007

Chief Cook Bill Hargrove
Volunteers Paula Ford, Paul Hargrove, Ann Gleason
Dessert Kay Sinnott

February 11, 2007

Chief Cook Brent Maner
Volunteers Delta Sigma Theta Sorority,
Christine Davis, Ann Gleason
Dessert Youth Group

Worship & Church Volunteers

January 28, 2007

Sanctuary Flowers... Atina Hanna
Greeters 4th, 5th, & 6th Graders;
Susan Scott & Lilly Marshall
Scripture Reader Jim Hodgson
Acolyte Jack Dayton
Word for Children .. Atina Hanna
Fellowship Hour Christy Crenshaw
Snow Removal Jim Hodgson (*through February 3*)

February 4, 2007

Sanctuary Flowers... Marla Bugbee
Greeters Chantel Vogel; Don Cannon & Jim Flak
Scripture Reader Chantel Vogel
Acolyte Sina Hanna and Nicki Keller
Word for Children .. Cheryl Poister
Fellowship Hour Brent Maner
Snow Removal Jeff Keller (*through February 10*)

February 11, 2007

Sanctuary Flowers... Christy Crenshaw
Greeters Eldon Epp
Scripture Reader Mary Ray
Acolyte Vincent Hanna and Kyle Weston
Word for Children .. Cheryl Poister
Fellowship Hour Judy Ahrens
Snow Removal Brad Logan (*through February 17*)

Community News

OUT FRONT – Building LGBT Faith Alliances

February 9-11 at Country Club Congregational UCC

205 West 65th Street, Kansas City, Missouri

Keynote speaker Jimmy Creech is Executive Director of Faith in America. A former Methodist minister, he was censured for performing same-sex union ceremonies. He is former chairperson of Soulforce, Inc.

Registration:

\$45 by February 2, \$55 after February 2, \$20 for low income
www.clgs.org/4/events.cfm?Display=Full&EventID=209

For more information, go to www.uccoalition.org or call 816-523-4813.

Becoming an Instrument of Peace

Problem Solving Workshop for Congregations & Families

College Avenue United Methodist Church, 1609 College Avenue
February 10, 2007, 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

Each of us, as well as the congregations and families of which we are part, has experienced the tension and challenge of managing interpersonal disagreements.

This workshop is designed to encourage a re-thinking of biblical foundations for handling conflict, and to learn and practice cooperative problem-solving tools for interpersonal and group interactions.



You Belong to Us The cast and crew have been busy rehearsing for the upcoming P-FLAG production of the original play, *You Belong to Us*. Performances are scheduled at the Manhattan Arts Center:

Friday, March 9 at 7:00 P.M.

Saturday, March 10 at 2:00 P.M. and 7:00 P.M.

Sunday, March 11 at 2:00 P.M.