



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
NEWSLETTER**

Volume 53 Number 3

February 11, 2009

Sunday School 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.	www.uccmanhattan.org

Let me keep Lent

By the time the next newsletter mails, it will be Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. I imagine I am not alone in wondering just what to do with that. When I was growing up, the observance of Lent in the church I attended was regarded with a certain amount of suspicion. As far as I could tell, it was something new introduced by a new pastor fresh out of seminary. That was enough to make some regard it with suspicion.

Little did I know Lent's ancient origins as a time of final and intense preparation of candidates for Christian initiation—those who would be baptized at Easter. I was not familiar with the unique liturgies of the season—Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil. These things I would come to appreciate only by participating in them.

So, I suppose, only by participating does one appreciate the role of the “personal” keeping of Lent. There is an old prayer in verse (anonymous, as far as I can tell) that gets right to the heart of the matter. *[continued page 2]*

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Let me keep Lent:
Let me not kneel and pray,
Forgo some trifle every day,
Fast and take sacrament, and then
Lend tongue to slander,
Hold ancient grudge, deny
The very Lord whom I would glorify.

Let me keep Lent:
Let my heart grow in grace
Let thy light shine
Till my illumined face
Shall be a testament, read by all,
That hate is buried
Self-crucified – new born
The spirit that shall rise
On Easter morn.

Jesus asks us to take up our cross daily and follow him in paths of helpfulness and love. Rather than give up things for Lent, there may be things we can add. It can be a time when we find ways to support others to make a more loving world. It can be a time to find new habits that will enrich our own lives and the lives of others.

Need ideas? Lent can be a time to pick something in your life that contradicts your best intentions and ask God for help to change. Lent can be a time to resolve to try out the old adage: “Gentle words fall lightly, but they have great weight.” Lent can be a time to drop a note of encouragement to an old friend.

Lent can be a time for a devotional practice—prayer, reading scripture, or meditation. Lent can be a time to make an extra effort to be in worship—not just because you might get something, but because the body of Christ is enriched by your presence. Lent can be a time of making or renewing a habit of Thursday evening Bible study, Taizé worship, or the Noon community services. I invite you to consider what new habits might enrich your life and the lives of others.

Grace & Peace,

Sharing and Caring

Prayers and Concerns

Please call the church office 537-7006 for further information.

E-MAIL PRAYER CHAIN

If you wish to be added to the First Congregational e-mail prayer chain, please contact marianfuller@gmail.com.



Thank You

- Thank you First Congregational Church for donating to the homeless Shelter Animals. Due to your generosity many animals have a second chance for a new life.

Animal Shelter Staff

- Thank you to William “Nick” and Caren Knicklebine for their generous donation of a ladder to the chime loft, and to Nick for building an additional ladder for use on the chime rack.

Helping

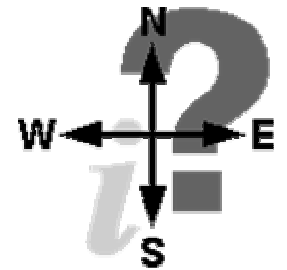
- **Need a ride to church?** Contact one of our transportation volunteers: Jim & Carolyn Hodgson, Bill Pallett, or Jeff Keller.
- **Want to help Chasity and the boys?** Please contact volunteer coordinator Virginia Bigbee if you are willing to volunteer your time to helping out our administrative assistant Chasity Seibert with her and Howie’s soon to be here twins. Let Virginia know how you would like to help and when you are available.

Inquirer's Lunch February 15

Join us for lunch and learn more about First Congregational UCC.

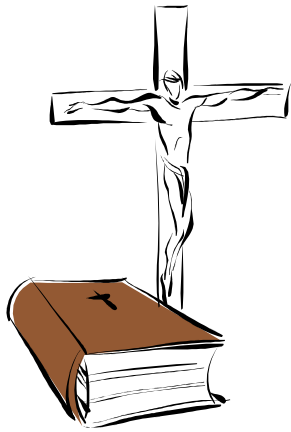
We will conclude at about 2:00 P.M.

The Board of Deacons will sponsor an **Inquirer’s Lunch** event following worship on **February 15**. If you want to learn more about this congregation, explore membership in this church, or are just curious and want to meet others on a more personal basis, we hope you will attend. Lunch is on us. The event will begin at about 12:15 with lunch in Pioneer Hall and continue until about 2:00 P.M. We hope you can attend.



Thursday Evening Bible Study

We took a break during the coldest months of winter, but **beginning February 26**, the Thursday Evening Bible Study makes its return. Join us at 5:30 P.M. in Blachly Hall. You are welcome to bring a brown bag supper or snack. We conclude at 6:45 P.M., just in time for Taizé worship.



Ecumenical Lenten Worship & Luncheons

Once again, the Manhattan Ministerial Association is sponsoring Community Lenten worship services at **Noon on Wednesdays** during Lent. Each service lasts about one half hour and is followed by a simple lunch. These events will be held at First Christian Church, Courthouse Plaza. Come as you are to share in worship and fellowship.

This year's series of services begins **Ash Wednesday, February 25, at Noon**. The Ash Wednesday service will be led by the Rev. R. Kent Cormack and members of First Congregational United Church of Christ. Please join us if you are able.

Ash Wednesday Worship

at **First Congregational UCC**

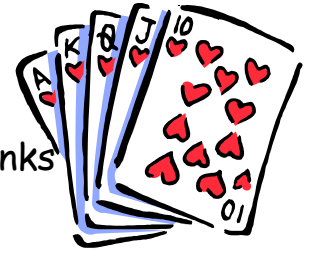
7:00 P.M. February 25 in the Sanctuary

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 the ancient pilgrimage of seasons at the heart of the Christian tradition, a journey from ashes to fire—from Lent to Easter to Pentecost. Nursery care will be provided

All-Church Poker Night Saturday, February 28th at 7:00

The youth are hosting a church-wide Texas Hold'em poker tournament in Blachly Hall. All ages are invited. Drinks and snacks will be provided.



God is still speaking...



A reflection by Tina Villa,
Minister for Stewardship Resources,
Stewardship and Church Finances,
Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ.

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying "My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory. No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. This book of law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:1-9)

“The Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” This passage ends with reassurance, but not only reassurance. Before the comfort comes a command: “Be strong and courageous.” God’s reassurances, God’s “I will not fail you or forsake you,” are paired with the words, “I hereby command you.”

“God is still speaking” is another expression of reassurance, another way to say that God is still there, for anyone who wonders if God has abandoned them, or the world. Since life is full of things that make us wonder whether God is really with us—or whether God is really anywhere at all, what makes this piece of scripture believable? And when we say “God is still speaking,” what makes that more than a slogan?

Before the reassurance, God gives instructions to Joshua on what the people must do in order to be strong and courageous in the certainty of God’s presence. If the people do not want to live in the fear and dismay of a life without God, they must be “careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you... This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it.”

In other words, we know God is with us when we live by what we learn in church. This scripture tells us that we can’t just make up how to live on our own. It tells us that God’s presence is not found in a private or personal relationship with God. We get the strength and courage of knowing God is with us only in the midst of life with others. “Law,” after all, is what enables people to live together.

God is still speaking—but don’t expect a personalized message that you can get without leaving home. You take the message home from church. The message is in Scripture; heard and learned in church, where it’s publicly acknowledged as authority by all present. In church, no matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you hear the same Word. It’s an equal opportunity, always available.

Youth Group Activities for February

February 15 Sunday

7:00-9:00 P.M. Movie at Church

February 22 Sunday

3:30-6:30 P.M. Youth are Second Helping Volunteers

February 28 Sunday

7:00 P.M. Texas Hold'em Tournament

9:30 Sunday Adult Forum Schedule

February 15

We are entering another window of opportunity for transforming U.S. health care. Are we ready to make that happen? What would a health care future that includes all of us and works well for everyone look like? How can people of faith take the lead in promoting values-based reform? Our series began January 25 and concludes this Sunday.

- What has to change?
- What is the role of the faith community?
- What can individual people of faith do?

February 22 & Beyond

Beginning Sunday, February 22, Victor Force will lead a series of three classes in the Adult Forum. The thought-provoking topics include:

- Gender and Sexuality
- Race, Gender, Class, and the Bible
- A Theology of Food

Worship & Church Volunteers

February 15, 2009

Greeters Dan Clark, Carolyn Hodgson
Flowers Burke & Margery Bayer
Scripture Reader Sue Zschoche
Word for Children .. Angela Hubler
Fellowship Hour The Weston Family
Snow Removal Brad Logan (*through February 21*)

February 22, 2009

Greeters Burke & Margery Bayer, Jim Mock
Flowers Jeff, Kerri, & Nicki Keller
Scripture Reader Sean Weston
Word for Children .. Atina Hanna
Fellowship Hour Mary Ellen Barkley
Snow Removal Jeff Keller (*through February 28*)

March 1, 2009

Greeters Dan Clark, Marsha Tannehill
Scripture Reader Jim Lewis
Word for Children .. Kerri Keller
Fellowship Hour Kathy Bleam
Snow Removal The Westons (*through March 7*)

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 Mandy Strawn at 537-7006.



February 15, 2009

Chief Cook Steve Staker
Volunteers Ann Gleason, Manhattan Mennonite Church
Dessert Bill Pugh

February 22, 2009

Chief Cook Ann Smit
Volunteers First Congregational Youth Group
Dessert Ann Smit

March 1, 2009

Chief Cook Brent Maner
Volunteers Ann Gleason, Brent Maner's Crew
Dessert *Volunteer Needed*

March 8, 2009

Chief Cook Gretchen Lewis
Volunteers Ann Gleason, Phi Eta Sigma
Dessert *Volunteer Needed*

Community News

From Loss to New Life Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:00 to 6:30 P.M. in the Homecare & Hospice conference room. Homecare & Hospice will be conducting a closed grief support and education group called "From Loss to New Life." The goal of the group is to provide support and education to individuals moving through the grieving process due to the loss of a loved one in the recent or distant past. Our group is designed to be a safe and confidential environment to share one's thoughts and feelings regarding loss and to work together to understand the grieving process. The group meets twice a week. The first meeting will take place on February 17 and meetings continue until March 19. If you are interested in attending or would just like more information please contact Dan Clayton at 537-0688 or 1-800-748-7474

Manhattan Area Garden Show Saturday February 28, 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. and Sunday March 1, Noon to 4:00 P.M. at Pottorf Hall presented by the K-State Research and Extension and the Riley County Extension Office. There will be hourly seminars and a silent auction. FREE Admission!

Interested in Learning more about Foster Care or Adoption? Make a real difference in 2009! This is the start of a new year and a great time to help children in need in our community by giving them a loving home for a moment or a lifetime. Saint Francis Community Services is currently searching for families who are interested in learning more about foster care on Monday, March 9th, from 6:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. in the Manhattan Public Library Auditorium. For more information please contact 410-0433 or 1-866-999-1599.

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