



Message from the Pastor:

Dear Friends,

I was reading through a book of sermons by a theologian named Karl Barth and came across this petition to God in one of his prayers:

“And now let us have a good Christmas: let us look forward beyond its fleeting lights towards the perfect dawning of your eternal light!”
Amen!

Pastor Jim

Holiday Calendar of Events

A PUBLICATION OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The Tower December 2007

December 2: First Sunday in Advent - Hope	Sunday School 9:15 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m. Youth Group 6:00 p.m.
December 9: Second Sunday in Advent - Peace Stewardship Sunday	Family Advent Craft 9:15 a.m. (replaces Sunday School) Worship 10:30 a.m. Birthday Party for Jesus Pot Luck Dinner 5:00 ; Program 6:00 p.m.
December 13: Women’s Fellowship 12:00 Pack Christmas Cookies for shut-ins; Small, firm cookies needed to fill coffee cans	
December 15: Christmas Caroling at the VA Hospital - meet at the church at 8:15 a.m.	
December 16: Third Sunday in Advent - Joy	Sunday School 9:15 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m. Youth Group 6:00 p.m. Live Nativity / Christmas Party
December 23: Fourth Sunday in Advent - Love	Sunday School 9:15 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m.
December 24: Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 7:30 p.m.	
December 25: Christmas Day	Merry Christmas

Bits from Benevolence

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

YOUR gifts to the annual Christmas offering this year will be divided three ways:

UCC Christmas Fund - Formerly called "Veterans of the Cross," this fund helps provide pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retirees, emergency assistance to the families of clergy and lay employees, and Christmas Gift Checks to annuitants.

First Congregational Pastoral Emergency Fund - This will allow our church to respond to special needs within the congregation or to local "friends" of the church where those needs are not covered by other funds such as unexpected medical expenses or help with a utility bill.

Disaster Relief - The need for disaster relief is endless as natural disasters and famine are relentless in affecting people throughout the world. Unless another specific cause arises, Church World Service will be the recipient.

The Christmas Offering envelopes will be in the pew racks beginning Sunday, December 16, through Sunday December 30. Please be aware that if you prefer your Christmas offering gift not be divided but directed to one of the three outreaches, just make a note on the giving envelope.

It is that time of year again!

Just a reminder to all Council Members / Committee Chairs - Your Annual Reports are due to the office by December 28, 2007. They may be emailed to the office or dropped off.

ADVENT FAST - As has been the custom at First Congregational, fasting one meal a week during advent for those who are medically able to do so is suggested with the cost of the fasted meal being set aside for either the Christmas offering or an outreach of your choice. To make the experience more meaningful and if your schedule allows, spend the fasted meal time in meditation and prayer.



**Prayer
Shawl
Ministry**

This ministry serves a two-fold purpose as it continues to reach out to anyone who could use the love and warmth that a prayer shawl brings. The hour together twice a month (the second and fourth Mondays of each month from 7 to 8) is a special time spent in fellowship and prayer for those who participate. During December, Seekers will only be meeting on the 10th and as always, anyone is welcome and encouraged to come. The group were pleased to give a shawl away at the Yankee Bazaar; this year's winner was Marissa Charlton.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU to Marge Roberts for her beautiful gift of Thanksgiving/fall decorations throughout the church and especially in the sanctuary on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Everything looked so nice!

Mary Lou Sheller

NEWS from CHRISTIAN ED

NEWS from Youth Group

Family Advent Craft

The Advent Family Craft will take place on Sunday, December 9th at 9:15 a.m. There will be no Sunday School classes that morning. This is a family event, so everyone is invited to participate.

Birthday Party for Jesus

The Birthday Party for Jesus will be held on Sunday, December 9th at 5:00 p.m. There will be a pot luck dinner starting at 5:00 p.m. Please bring your own table service and a dish to share. Drinks will be provided. The program will follow at approximately 6:00 p.m. The program will be provided by the Sunday School classes and will also include the traditional hymn sing. Cake will be served after the program in Fellowship Hall. Please plan on joining us for this event.

Angel Tree

The Youth Group Angel Tree has been put up in the rear of the Sanctuary. People were invited to take an angel along with gift tags. The organization we are helping again this year is Pregnancy Care in Akron. Gifts are to be returned by Sunday December 2nd. Please do not wrap them. They can be placed under the tree in the Sanctuary, left in the office or the Senior High class room. Thanks to everyone who participated in this worthwhile cause.

December Youth Group Schedule

Sunday, December 2, 6:00 p.m. - Sort and pack Christmas Angel gifts.

Sunday, December 16, 6:00 p.m. - Live Nativity and Christmas Party. Details will be forthcoming.

From the Church Library...

To make the library more "user friendly," the check-out procedure involving signing out items is being eliminated. As a reminder to return items, labels are being placed on the front (when possible) of all church library materials requesting return to the church library. Help with the labeling will be welcome as it is in process during the next few months—please see Mary Lou Sheller or Nancy Tyson if you have time to assist.



Featured on the library cart during December will be the delightful collection of Christmas books and other materials. All ages will enjoy the stories and illustrations in the books which include:

For the young and young at heart—*The Crippled Lamb, Memories of the Manger, Dan and the King, One Wintery Night, The Singing Shepard.*

For adults – *Christmas Stories* by Charles Dickens (a very old edition), *An Angel's Story*, and *Christmas in All Seasons.*

December Schedules



December 2, 2007

Justin Doe
Kayla Bensie

December 16, 2007

David Schilling
Jared Doe

December 9, 2007

Melissa Schilling
Emma Link

December 23, 2007

Sophie Keith
Gwen Richner

December 30, 2007

Doug Verbic
Jared Verbic

The families of the names in **bold** have Acolyte Coordinator Duty and should light the sticks and assist the acolytes.

If you are unable to serve on your assigned week, please find a replacement and notify the church office of the change. Thank you!

December Servers

- Mike Muir
- Will Adams
- Kenny Prentice
- Dan Richner
- Judy Turk - Bread
- Bonnie Williams - Greeters
- Ken Prentice - Lay Readers



Communion will be

December 2nd this month

Lockup Trustee for the month of December - Bob Heston



Scrap Booking Friday

December 21, 2007

6:00 p.m.—midnight
in the Fellowship Hall

ATTENDANCE

Sunday School Worship Service		
Oct. 28 th	47	93
Nov. 5 th	41	99
Nov. 12 th	58	97
Nov. 19 st	72	133
Nov. 26 th	51	93

Dear Knitwitters,

Thank you so much for the beautiful lap blanket that I received on my most recent stay on M50. It was a wonderful surprise. My three girls love it too. We fight over it all the time. Please know that you all are very much appreciated.

God Bless!
Kristin Timko

Dear Knitwitters,

Thank you for all the time it takes to knit the beautiful blankets used at Hospice. Not only was it used to keep my mother warm on her journey home, it keeps my niece and nephew warm every night as well as heart felt dreams and memories of their grandma. Thank you and God bless all of you.

The Grassie, Shuslek, & Goan families

Member News

Happy Birthday to:

Kathy Lessman

12/01

Steve Lessman

12/01



Kayla Siladi

12/16

Marie Felixson

12/16



Caryn Keffer

12/02

Lyndsey Bowers

12/03

Michelle Cook

12/05

Nichole Cook Wunderle

12/05

Roni Roberson

12/05

Jeffrey Conway

12/06

Doug Verbic

12/07

Jared Doe

12/10

Carol Zenisek

12/11

Russ Terrill

12/12

Madelyn Sokolowski

12/15

Anthony Pietrantozzi

12/17

Cody Roberts

12/18

Gwen Richner

12/19

Giz Roddie

12/19

Matthew Miller

12/21

Bonnie Mayfield

12/22

Jason Williams

12/22

Sophie Keith

12/22

George Richner

12/24

Millie Frieling

12/27

Dave Murch

12/29

Happy
Anniversary to:

Tom & Karen Holzwarth
12/19/1987

Jenny & C J Romano
12/13/1997

If we missed your birthday or anniversary,
please call the church office so we can update
our records.



**An invaluable step in
character training is to
put the responsibility
on the individual.**

Robert Baden-Powell

**All Committee Chairs should begin to pre-
pare your budgets for the 2008 year. Have
them ready for the next council meeting
which will be on Wednesday, December 19
at 7:30 p.m.**

Women's Fellowship News . . .

Women's Fellowship luncheon and meeting

Thursday, December 13, 2007

12:00 Noon Pot Luck luncheon

Bring food to share and table service

We will be packing cookies for shut-ins after the meeting. Donations of cookies are welcome. The cookies should be small and firm. They may be dropped off at the church on Wednesday or Thursday morning by noon. Also, if you know of anyone who would enjoy one of the containers of cookies, please give the name to the office and more importantly, if you are willing to deliver the container, please notify the office also.

Message from the Moderator:

Rev 21 ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." ⁵He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

I visited my father in a long term care facility the day after Thanksgiving. It was not an uplifting visit – not by a long shot. He turned 83 in November and, on the Pietrantozzi family tree, he has lived beyond his life expectation. Indeed, while I was writing this article I received a call informing me that his sister died on Thanksgiving day at the age of 78. Out of 9 children, only a younger brother is still alive.

My father cannot get himself around anymore, his legs withered from a lack of blood supply and use over the past few years. So there he lays, frustrated in having to deal with one health condition after another – frustrated that he cannot go home. It is an unpleasant situation - to say the least - and I am sure that he never imagined that he would spend this final act in his life in such a predicament. A World War II veteran and a devout husband and father – this feeling of helplessness and dependency is unfamiliar territory for him.

During my visit I would find him staring at the wall, tears welling up in his eyes, seemingly unable or unwilling to express the thoughts that grieved him. When I tried to speak to him about it, he would try to dismiss the sadness and worry that he was feeling. He lies in his bed as a man without hope for his future and without assurance of what lies ahead for him beyond this time of his earthly existence.

My father is a Jehovah's Witness and has been one for over 40 years. I would categorize his involvement as soft participation as he was never the leading the charge to participate in this false religion. Like many contemporary families, it was my mother that made sure that we attended the local Kingdom Hall and bought into the 'party line' of this religious sect. Still, my father (along with the rest of my immediate family) was fully indoctrinated with the edicts of this false religion. A false religion that offers little hope for individuals that find themselves in my father's current state.

While the Witness doctrine offers the hope of a resurrection, it doesn't recognize the deity of Christ nor His work on the cross as the payment for our sins. The Witness religion is based on personal works and not the Grace of God. As with most false religions, the status of 'am I good enough to please God' changes frequently and, even if attained, can be removed if your current activities no longer match up to what is currently required to be in good standing with God. It is not hard to imagine why my father finds little or no comfort at this time.

When I was getting ready to leave, I kissed my father on his forehead, told him that I loved him and would see him again soon. Then, I looked him in the eye and asked him if he prayed. Tears welled up in his eyes again and he said, "every morning, afternoon and evening". I told him that God loved him and was there for him and would be with him. This is the message that I will have for my father on my future visits. While there are no words of my own that will bring him any lasting comfort, I can share the Word of God with him. I want my father to know about the Grace of God, His love for us and the hope that we all have through His Son, Jesus Christ. That some day he will find himself renewed in the presence of God, as a child of God. Not because of what he did or didn't do but because of what God did for him. I am not bringing this message to my father because I fear for his salvation because I don't believe that God punishes people who have been misled by others. I am bringing this message of truth and grace to my father because it is the only thing that will give him some comfort and hope for his future and the future of his family.

Eventually, we will all find ourselves in my father's condition. It is inevitable. This is why we need to continually remind ourselves of what God has done for us through His Son, Jesus Christ. This message of God's love and grace is what we need to share with others as well. This is why I serve at the First Congregational Church of Twinsburg. Our church is a part of Christ's Church and this is the Good News of God's Grace that we are called to share to the ends of the earth.

This is a message that people need to hear.

In Christ,

Joel S. Pietrantozzi

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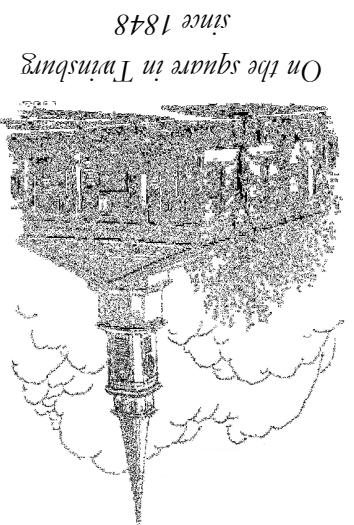
Come worship with us
and bring a friend!
Sunday School 9:15 a.m.
Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

Tower Submissions

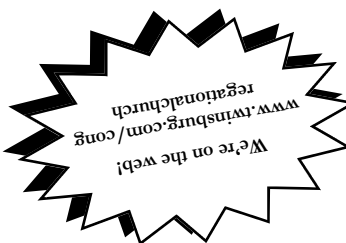
Articles for the *Tower* may sent via e-mail directly to the church at firstcongregational.church@windstream.net. Hard copies, CD's, or diskettes may be dropped off at the office.

Tower deadlines are posted on the monthly calendar and in the Sunday worship bulletin. For questions, or to be added to or taken off the mailing list, please send an e-mail or call the church office at 330-425-2181.

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Please Rush!



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