



Message from the Pastor:

OUR LIFE TOGETHER

In this last year, our nation celebrated a hopeful new beginning with the inauguration of the first African-American President. We had great hopes for a bipartisan way of governing that could see and work toward the common good for all. Our hopes had reached the mountain-top only to slide back toward the “pits”. I wonder if the disaster in Haiti can help us realize how much we are all connected, how much the pain of one is shared by another. Whether it is in this country or in the world, nothing happens without impacting another person or nation. “There is no one who is not a Haitian this week”, says Bob Molsberry, the Ohio Conference Minister in the United Church of Christ. He writes in the January 2010 “Connections”, about the on-going work of the church in Haiti. Please see his Connections on page 3.

While tumult is all around us, we live by a HOPE that is on-going. This is the hope that we know and share, the hope that is at the heart of our faith core values, the hope that is beyond our individual likes and dislikes—the hope that is grounded in the knowledge and wisdom that God is in charge—the hope that celebrates that Jesus the Christ is at the center of all relationships and things—the hope that binds us in solidarity with all of God’s creation.

Perhaps as we pray for the Haitians, we will pray for ourselves that we, together with the Haitians, might “abide in God’s future now, where we are,” that we are able to receive God’s future toward the well-being of all. In living in God’s future, we accept the “unimaginable new gifts and the unbelievable grief” that comes with change. The Good News is that God will give us the power through Christ to live there along with others. The Joy Abundant comes in the sharing from what we have. The Good News Shared is both this outlandish hope and the promise of sharing God’s “goods” in our community and the world.

A Vision-Mission Task Force has begun work here. The Task Force is to develop a process that will engage the congregation in: 1-giving expression to the hope that is in us through a vision and mission statement and 2- a proposal for how we address paying our debts and living God’s call to ministry here.

A MISSION STATEMENT: It is comprehensive –It describes the intent for witness or ministry; It is understandable –brief and direct; It recognizes our context for mission and how we are different from other similar organizations; It is consistent with our faith values, teachings and practice—e.g. “to make disciples of Jesus Christ.”

Blessings
Rev. Kay



EARTHQUAKE RELIEF – A reminder that because of YOUR gifts through the church to One Great Hour of Sharing, Disaster Relief, Global Ministries, Tools and Blanket Sunday, etcetera, along with the gifts of other churches and groups, immediate response was able to be sent to Haiti following the recent devastating earthquake there. In addition, the congregation was made aware and encouraged to respond to the UCC emergency appeal for monetary donations **TO BE SENT TO DENOMINATIONAL PARTNERS IN HAITI. A REMINDER THAT CHURCH FRIENDS/MEMBERS MAY MAKE DONATIONS FOR DISASTER RELIEF THROUGHOUT THE YEAR BY NOTING SO ON THEIR GIVING ENVELOPE.** If desired, a specific channel/agency can be requested (i.e. Church World Service, American Red Cross, etc) or the Benevolence will determine where the need is greatest at that time.



BLANKET SUNDAY – The annual Blanket Sunday at First Congregation scheduled for Sunday, February 21 is a time during which our congregation ministers through:

--the giving of funds to the Church World Service Blankets/Tools of Hope program through which blankets (see CWS blanket on display in front of the sanctuary) and tools are given throughout the world to help those in need.

--donations of gently used and clean blankets which will be taken to the northern Summit County Emergency Center. Please note both blankets and monetary gifts will be accepted through Sunday, February 28.

--the display of lap robes by the Knitwitters, a very small example of the hundreds of items including lap robes, baby blankets, sweaters, booties, hats for preemies, bed socks, etcetera made by this dedicated group, which meets at 10 a.m. on the first and third Thursdays of each month.

--the wearing and display of prayer shawls made by our prayer shawl ministry/Seekers—at the time of this article, 419 shawls have been given out through this ministry, which meets at 7 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month.

LENT DEVOTIONAL AND FAST – As has been the custom in recent years, the Benevolence Committee is suggesting persons able to do so, fast one meal a week during Lent and buy non-perishable food items for the northern Summit County Emergency Center with the cost of the fasted meal. In addition, the committee encourages the fasted mealtime be spent in meditation. Fifty copies of the meditation booklet *Where In The World Is God?* are available to those fasting and to others desiring a copy of this meditation booklet designed to help us see how the cross of Christ serves as a compass in our daily life encounters.

**Lockup Trustee for the
month of February - Gail Herrilko**

**LENT BEGINS ASH WEDNESDAY,
FEBRUARY 17 WITH WORSHIP
HERE AT 7:00 P.M.**

As I write this, the world is reeling at the level of damage inflicted on the Haitian people by the January 12th earthquake, compounded many times by the poverty and lack of infrastructure of that nation. I find myself feeling powerless as I stare at images of overwhelming suffering on the TV screen. It's a calamity of biblical proportions for those who are trapped on the streets of Port-au-Prince.

But here are some things I know:

God has not abandoned the people of Haiti. God is with the victims as they struggle, bringing them hope. God is with those who grieve the loss of loved ones, bringing them comfort. God is with the rescuers, bringing them persistence and strength. And God is with the givers, bringing them generous hearts. There is no one who is not a Haitian this week. That goes for God, too.

My local news continues to warn people about giving to charities that might be scams. I don't have to worry about that, because I am a member of the United Church of Christ and I have seen with my own eyes the responsible, accountable, transparent flow of money from individuals and local churches, through national settings to far flung places where disasters have happened.

The UCC is not going to descend upon Haiti with foreign personnel. We have a missionary couple in country, working with a medical clinic that's part of the National Spiritual Council of Churches of Haiti (CONASPEH). UCC donations are pooled with Church World Service gifts and coordinated for the greatest possible impact. Already record-setting donations are pouring in from our churches.

I also don't have to worry about what percentage of my giving finds its way to Haiti. Since OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission or "Basic Support") funds already support the infrastructure of church administration, 100% of the donations made to One Great Hour of Sharing International Disaster Relief will be applied to relief efforts. There are provisions for online giving at www.ucc.org.

We are asked not to show up in Haiti as volunteers, thinking we might be useful. At least not yet. We are asked not to send things that WE think people might need. It's only the essentials that are in short supply at the moment – water, food, shelter, medicine. Sometimes being told what NOT to do makes me feel useless.

Which brings me to perhaps the most important, productive thing we can do – PRAY. Pray for the victims, for those working so desperately to find and free and care for survivors, for the few who are so placed by circumstance and training to be able to save lives and make a difference, for the grieving, and for a world struggling to come together in a moment of compassion that transcends conflict and terror.



Within the church library collection of books is a section on Self-Help. Some examples from the collection includes:

--By author Joyce Meyer, three books to help overcome emotional battles with stress, depression, and worry through the power of God's Word.

--*The Healing Path* by Marc Ian Barasch explores the mind-body connection of healing.

--Phillip Berman shares what near-death experiences teach us about the gift of life in *The Journey Home*.

--In *Living the Simple Life*, Elaine St. James writes about making wise choices with our "things."

--*House of Cards* written by Tom Raabe shares that there is hope for those who have loved ones gambling problem.

--Matthew Fox deals helps persons balance their personal life with their work like in *The Reinvention of Work*.

These books and others from the Self-Help section will be featured on the library cart during February.

Thank You!!

Dear Congregation,

Thanks you to everyone for all the cards, prayers and visits during my recovery from hip surgery. Thanks to Rev. Kay for her extraordinary support and prayers. Thanks also to Andrea Bennett and Mary Lou Sheller for their support and kindness.

Sincerely,

Dottie Lippitt

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER

SUBSTITUTES

Would you be willing to fill in for a Sunday School teacher as your schedule allows? A couple of the classes do not have backup teachers and the teachers involved would appreciate having someone to call upon occasionally to fill in. Ample teaching material is always available. Please see Denice Sheehan or leave your name in the church office if you are able to help in this ministry.

I want to thank everyone for their cards, calls and visits when Stan passed away. My family, who live in the Painesville area, all were so impressed with the church service, and my immediate family also said the service helped get us through a very hard time.

The Women's Fellowship made such a delicious luncheon for us, thank you all. Lastly, Reverend Kay helped us all get through Stan's hospital stay and the funeral service, our love goes out to her.

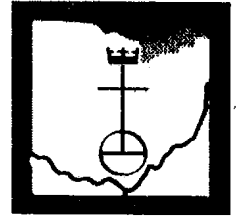
Again, thanks to everyone at the First Congregational Church for all or your time, love and support.

In Christian Love,

Jan Cook

Western Reserve Association

of the Ohio Conference of the United Church of Christ
1375 West Clifton Blvd. • Lakewood, Ohio 44107
Phone (216) 749-3116 • Fax (216) 749-5272



January 15, 2010

Dear colleagues and friends,

The past eight years have been a time of great creativity for us as an Association, and in our wider connections as we have developed an ever closer relationship with the Eastern Ohio Association. At the fall meeting of both Associations, a joint Strategic Planning Task Force was formed to address some key issues. Our moderator will be reporting to you soon on how that work is progressing.

In my work of prayer as well as the careful work and discernment of our EOA/WRA Joint Strategic Planning Task Force, we have come to the common realization that God is inviting both me and the Association to move on to new challenges and opportunities. Following a recommendation offered by the Strategic Planning Team, which I fully support and endorse, the WRA Council has voted to invite me to accept severance and allow the Association to move to a part-time Interim Minister and Executive. My last working day with you will be April 12, 2010.

This is a creative and exciting time. With this action, the Association does not simply solve a (very real) budgetary issue, which was the charge given to the Strategic Planning Team. The action also affords the opportunity for both WRA and EOA to move into a time of exploration of new models for ministry that will continue the ground-breaking work we have done together over these past years. From my perspective, I see this as the culmination of everything I have hoped and dreamed for this Association.

Nancy and I plan to relocate to Arizona in the spring. I plan to pursue interim ministry in the Southwest, and also work with a start-up consulting venture with my wife and another colleague, so we will both have interesting and challenging calls to pursue.

Bob Molsberry, our Conference Minister, is working very closely with our Moderator, Olivia White to support the WRA through the transition period. Bob's gifts in leadership are legion, and he understands thoroughly the gift that this Association is to the church. He will guide the Association in securing interim leadership, and has pledged to work closely with the Association through the search process for the long term as well. I have come to deeply appreciate his visionary understanding of church, and how judicatories can serve the local Congregation ever more effectively.

I have said to many of you that the job I have been privileged to hold as Minister and Executive of the Western Reserve Association is the best one I have ever had in my life. I have grown, and I believe our collective understanding of being Church has grown as well. It has been a true privilege and honor to serve you in this way, and even as I look forward to new opportunities for you and for me, I also rejoice in the wonderful folks I have come to know in these eight years. You will remain ever in my prayers.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Curtis S. Ackley".

Rev. Curtis S. Ackley
Minister and Executive, Western Reserve Association

Connect the guys on the left to their sweethearts on the right.

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. ADAM | A. SARAH |
| 2. JOSEPH | B. NAOMI |
| 3. SAMPSON | C. REBECKAH |
| 4. ABRAHAM | D. RACHEL |
| 5. ZACHARIAS | E. JEZEBEL |
| 6. BOAZ | F. SAPPHIRA |
| 7. URIAHA | G. DRUSILLA |
| 8. NABAL | H. EVE |
| 9. JACOB | I. MARY |
| 10. AHAB | J. DELILAH |
| 11. FELIX | K. ABIGAIL |
| 12. HEBER | L. BATHSHEBA |
| 13. ISAAC | M. RUTH |
| 14. ANANIAS | N. Jael |
| 15. ELIMELECH | O. ELISABETH |

The answers are posted on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall. Test your Bible sweetheart knowledge. Thanks to Marianne Davet for submitting this for the Tower.

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY to everyone.

Women's Fellowship . . .

Evening Women's Fellowship meeting
Monday, February 1, 2010
7:00 p.m.—Fellowship Hall
Denice Sheehan will giving
a baking demonstration.

Women's Fellowship luncheon
and meeting
Thursday, February 4, 2010
12:00 Noon Pot Luck luncheon
Bring food to share and table service

Servers—February 2010

Bonnie Williams Stan Jewell
Dave Schilling Aaron Mayer
 Lynn Schmidt
Diane Powell - Bread

**Communion will be
Sunday, February 7th this month
Communion will be served in the
Sanctuary and the library**

Acolyte Schedule - February 2010

February 7— **Andrew Prentice**
 & Rick Mansfield

February 14—**Caitlin Sheehan**
 & Melissa Schilling

February 21—**Sophie Keith**
 & Brianna Pratt

February 28— **Bryan Bensie**
 & Kayla Bensie

The families of the names in **bold** have Acolyte Coordinator Duty and should light the sticks and assist the acolytes. Please see the instruction sheet posted on the wall next to the sticks.

Lay Reader's Schedule

February 2010

February 7— Boy Scouts
February 14—Kathy Lessman
February 21—Donna Sudnick
February 28—Terri Bissell

***If you are unable to serve as
Lay Reader, Children's Sermon,
or Acolyte on
your assigned week,
please find a replacement and
notify the church office of the
change. Thank you!***

Children's Sermon Schedule

February 2010

February 7— Rick Herrilko
February 14—Change Sunday
February 21—Will Adams
February 28—Gayle Davet

Flower Schedule - February 2010

February 7— Louise Jackson
February 14— The Barr family;
 The Davet & Prentice Family
February 21— Wanda Mikula;
 Chloe Wentz
February 28—

Coffee Hour Schedule

February 2010

February 7—Scout Pancake Breakfast
February 14—
February 21—Benevolence
February 28—

Welcomers Schedule - February 2010

February 7—Joyce Harney & Bev Hegedish February 21 - Dave & Diane Powell
February 14—Bonnie Williams & Rich Bissell February 28 - Steve & Carol Doe



Scrap Booking Friday February 19, 2010

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

ATTENDANCE

Sunday School Worship Service

Dec. 27 th	18	55
Jan. 3 rd	N/A	64
Jan. 10 th	N/A	81
Jan. 17 th	31	92
Jan. 24 th	32	84



Youth Group Lock-in February 6, 2010

Bring sleeping bag, pillow
and extra blankets.

Movies, board games, snack to
share, clothes for church.

(yes, bring tooth brushes and deodorant)

Subs will be made, movies will be watched
and games will be played.

Sleep is optional. Subs will be distributed on
Sunday, February 7.

If you have not yet done so, please pay for
them when you pick them up.

Thanks for everyone's support!

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

Happy Birthday to:

Helen Greene

02/5/10

Doris Turnbull

02/6/10

Leslie Prentice

02/6/10

Andrea Bissell

02/7/10

Vivian Weiss

02/7/10

Victoria Holzwarth

02/7/10

Steve Doe

02/7/10

Missy Mansfield

02/9/10

Jeanette Hoyt

02/10/10

Beverly Hegedish

02/11/10

Paul Munn

02/12/10

Kimberly Lacy

02/12/10

Judy Richner

02/13/10

Dan Richner

02/16/10

Betty Tomko

02/20/10

Jim Peel

02/21/10

Todd Downor, Jr.

02/23/10

Walter Sterling

02/24/10

Mikki Pietrantozzi

02/24/10

Brooke Dolfi

02/25/10

Mary Schmidt

02/25/10

Kristen Williams

02/27/10

Gayle Davet

02/28/10



Hello church! I appreciate your vote of confidence in selecting me to be the moderator for 2010. Thank you to Will Adams and the council that carried these jobs for 2009. This is my first opportunity to share my thoughts and ideas with all of you. For many of you, I'm a very familiar face, for others, I hope to become much more familiar and to have your faces become more familiar to me as well. I think the best start is to share with you who I am and where I'm coming from.

I'm home grown in this church- baptized, confirmed and married here. I'll be married 30 years this March to Richard, also a home grown Twinsburg and church product. We have three daughters, all baptized and confirmed into this church. Out in the rest of the world, that kind of long deep roots is a rarity. But the number of deep roots at FCCT gives us a special strength, a strength that is only enhanced by the others who have chosen to anchor their roots here.

My daughters begin with Andrea, a Kent State graduate in her third year of teaching high school math in a suburb of Baltimore, Maryland. The middle child is Ashley, a third year special education major at Ashland University who is also busy working on wedding plans for July 2011. Her younger sister Ariel has now joined her at Ashland with plans to study middle school education in English and Social Studies.

I am a Buckeye, having received my degree in occupational therapy from Ohio State. A few years ago, I added a MS from Bowling Green. I have been the occupational therapist for Twinsburg City Schools since 1991 and have spent my entire professional career working with special needs children. As a person, I enjoy running, walking and exercise in general. I also enjoy reading, cooking and travelling anywhere I can go. I am probably the biggest sports fan in the house.

For the rest of my church resume, I have worn a variety of hats over the years. I most recently served as a Trustee after many years on Christian Ed, some of these as the chairperson. I have taught Sunday school longer than I can honestly remember and been a youth leader since 1995 if my math is right. I've sung in choir since I was a freshman in high school besides a few breaks to go to college and have babies. I've played softball, I've served communion, given children's sermons, helped lead the service and helped in multiple roles in VBS. I pray the sum of all this experience will help give this church the kind of leadership it needs.

As for where I'm coming from, I've begun by trying to paint a picture of the road I've taken to this point. I do believe strongly in traditions, because in this crazy world, I think people often look to traditions for a sense for comfort and security. Having said that, I also believe that there is room in traditions for adjustments, having seen how family traditions have grown and found room for new family members to share an important part. But I still think it is important to preserve those parts of the traditions that make them such an important part of who we are. I believe there are new possibilities that can enhance what we have. I believe in thoughtful growth- in logical ways to enhance the needs of the congregation and the community. I also believe in our congregational roots and the voice of the people. That means I believe that when we ask for the thoughts of the congregation, it is important to respect them, even as I acknowledge that reality is that opinions on any given subject often are in contradiction.

(Continued from Page 10)

Through the coming year, I will appreciate your support and prayers and promise to give this important responsibility all I can. We have much on the table to consider and manage. Please pray for strength and knowledge for all the people that join me in leading FCCT for 2010.

Faithfully yours,
Terri Bissell

Sunday, February 7 is Scout Sunday.

The scouts will be participating in the service. They will also be hosting a Pancake Breakfast starting at 8:30 a.m. and will resume after worship. The scouts are celebrating 100 years of service. They hold their meetings at the church on Tuesday evenings. Please remember to thank the scouts for their outstanding service.

**Pancake
Breakfast
February 7, 2010**



**Serving will begin at 8:30 am
until worship begins,
then will resume again after
worship until 1:00 pm**

**Sponsored by the Boy Scouts
In appreciation of the church.**

**There is no charge for this
breakfast, however, donations
will be cheerfully accepted.**

January 4, 2010

Dear Christmas Supporter,

Thank you so much for your generous donations for our Christmas Giving program. We are appreciative of our supporters, and we know that we could not do what we do for our clients and their children without that support.

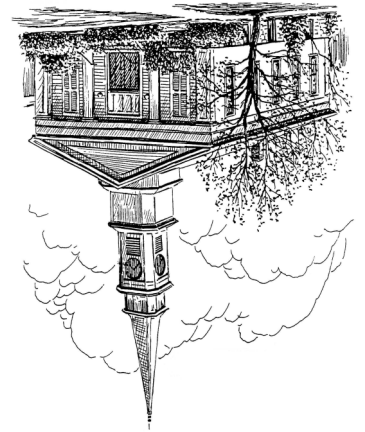
Given the difficult economic conditions, our clients relied on us more than ever before to help them provide for their infants and young children for Christmas. It is our goal and commitment to meet the increasing needs of our clients, and we are very grateful that we were able to do so for Christmas. Thank you for your part in that - your efforts are not only appreciated by us but also by our clients and their children who received the lovely items that you donated.

Please let us know if there is ever anything we can do for you! I wish you a blessed 2010!

Sincerely,
Shannon Wolf, Volunteer Coordinator

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9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Monday through Friday

Office Hours:

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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.