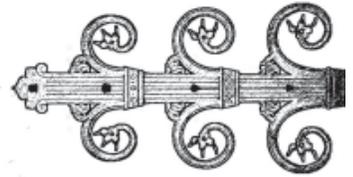


First Church News



First Congregational Church

United Church of Christ • Columbus, Ohio

Volume 157, Number 2
February 21, 2009



Rev. Ahrens' Sermon Series

Albert Nolan's superb book, *Jesus Before Christianity*, teaches us many lessons about Jesus – before Christianity got hold of him. Taking us back to simple principles and understandings of who Jesus was and what he said, Nolan points to a Jesus that we may not be fully aware of.

The first four sermons explore Nolan's lessons on Jesus. The last four sermons look at Jesus in relation to world religions and their inspired leaders and prophets. Come and join us on a journey of faith and exploration.

Ash Wednesday – "Jesus and Catastrophe"

March 1 – "Jesus and Praxis"

March 8 – "Jesus and Good News"

March 15 – "Jesus and Confrontation"

March 22 – "Jesus and Muhammad"

March 29 – "Jesus and Buddha"

April 5 – Palm/Passion Sunday – "Jesus and Judaism"

April 12 – Easter Sunday – "Jesus Beyond Christianity"

Holding Up The Mirror Through Lent

By the Rev. Timothy Ahrens



There are many ways to tell the story of Christ's crucifixion. Most who try are accused of missing pieces by others, who like the onlookers of old, stand at the edge of Calvary and refuse to do anything but watch, shout and critique. Sometimes we take a historical escape route from the cross at Calvary. We blame the Jews, the Romans, Judas and Peter for the murder of Christ. Through the ages, we Christians have found far too many ways to extricate ourselves from the crucifixion and our part in it.

Sons and daughters of God are killed in every generation. They have been killed in holy wars, inquisitions, concentration camps and prison cells. Here in Ohio, we execute them in the name of the state. Shamefully, we are one of the top four states for executions.

In each generation, the charges against the people run the gamut, but treason and blasphemy head the list, as they did for Jesus. *(Continued on Page 2)*

Ash Wednesday Services, Feb. 25
Noon and 7:30 p.m.
in the Sanctuary

Christian Education Offers Resources For the Season

Lenten resources for children, families and adults will be available beginning Sunday, February 22, at the entrance to the worship space and in classrooms.

A Lenten children's activities calendar that is available is perfect to display on a refrigerator or a family bulletin board. "Coming Home to the Lord" is a booklet of family prayers, scriptures and reflections for each day of Lent. *Christ Our Hope*, by Henri Nouwen, is an individual devotion booklet for the days of Lent. Please pick up a copy at either service or in the church office.

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Human Dignity is for Everyone

By the Rev. Barbara R. Cunningham, Pastoral Care Minister



There is not a person on earth who does not want to be treated with dignity. It can start very early in life, and we hope it does for everyone. Yet we know that many children, youth, adults and elderly persons do not experience the treatment with dignity that makes life what it needs to be.

Fred Rogers of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* fame, left a legacy of respect and dignity at a very early age for all of those who watched his television program. Children felt at home with him as he welcomed each one into his life. By his actions, he told all of us what dignity means. Dignity is courtesy, respect and unlimited kindness in relating to those around you.

We are a helping people, wanting to reach out and help others when they are in need. That is a great goal, and as we do reach out, we are called upon to understand other cultures and religions so that we can help persons maintain their dignity while receiving the help. That is what we would want from others.

Sometimes we wonder why others reject our help or don't seem to appreciate us. We can live through rejection by always treating another person with dignity and eventually our kindness and love will win. Just as we try to nourish and strengthen ourselves, so we can do the same for others.

It is more satisfying to live with dignity and recognize that the feelings and hopes of others are basically the same as our own. We may not agree with ideas, but giving the other person honor and respect, whether we agree, or whether they have a different religion or whether or not we feel close to them, is our covenant as Christians.

I am not writing about anything you and I have not heard of before. I am writing to remind us, basically because there are so many deep hurts in the world, in the church and in our own neighborhoods. People are in pain and suffering right now. Love and understanding in the heart creates dignity.

All of us, wherever we live, want dignity, respect and kindness. Children and youth are particularly vulnerable. I am trying to get to know and remember kids and youth names in our congregation, because each one is important. Let's share stories of how we held in our hearts and acted out the dignity of another person.

A Staff of Servant Leaders Needs You!

By the Rev. Timothy Ahrens

I will be clear and forthright. This congregation has a great staff. We are blessed with good people to care for us, lead our worship, manage our programs and care for the business and building operations of our church. I am blessed to be the senior minister of a great staff of people.

We are a staff of servant leaders. We are here to serve others. But every leader needs followers, too. A hymn of our church sings, "Won't you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you?..." Serving one another is crucial in times such as these.

However, without the resources of the members and friends of this church, not even the best staff can keep the operations and functions of First Church going well. We need your support. We need encouragement and trust. We need your presence and hands-on help through volunteering and mission work. We need everyone who reads this to pitch in to keep our church growing and thriving. *(Continued on Page 10)*

(Rev. Ahrens, Continued from Page 1)

Jesus suggested the leaders of his time were not doing their job. This upset the religious and military leaders. He held a mirror up to them so they could see what they were doing and they were appalled by what they saw, so they smashed it. They crushed him in every way they could.

Jesus was brought down by law and order, not by atheists and anarchists. He was brought down by law and order mixed with the religion. This is always a deadly combination. In many ways this is a story that can happen anywhere at any time. We like to point our fingers at Nazi Germany. But, it can happen in our time and place as well, and it does. We see this happen on Main Street, Wall Street and on our own streets. As the economy struggles to regain its feet, we need to hold out a hand rather than point a finger. A hand might help, but a finger won't. It is true that whenever good people stop examining their actions and motivations, the impulse which caused Jesus' death returns.

I invite each one of us to take the mirror Jesus gave us in scriptures so long ago and use the season of Lent to look into the mirror. We will see many things there – some we like and some we don't like. But, each Lent we are given a chance to look again. Let's seize this moment. I commit to looking. How about you?

First Church News

2008 Youth Ministry Team Annual Report

By Janette Hoffman and Mike Petras, Youth Ministry Co-Chairs

The youth ministry team is a team of youth and adults responsible for the planning, oversight, and execution of youth activities. 2008 was a year of transition for the YMT and the youth programming.

In February, the YMT welcomed the pastor for youth and young adults, Rev. Lori Tisher. Then in June, the middle school and high school youth leaders stepped down from their roles with working with the youth. With these changes, Rev. Lori played a key role in organizing, preparing, and planning the youth programming. To help Rev. Lori with the leading and chaperoning, many *Youth Ministry Partners* volunteered their gifts and talents for specific youth events. The YMT thanks Rev. Lori and the many volunteers for their contributions in 2008.

The programming for the youth is centered-around four main themes; fellowship, spirituality, education and service. Rev. Lori developed an online survey for all youth to gather their input for choices of activities in each of these areas. This past year's fellowship activities included a weekend planning retreat for the 8th grade youth, an end of year family picnic, outings at Fort Rapids water park, a lock-in for high school youth, and a kick-off family cookout.

Other activities included the Youth Sunday Service, a special presentation about going green at first church from the Sacred Earth committee, a computer recycling service project, a weekend mission trip retreat, an inner city mission trip to Atlanta, Ga., discussions on faith and politics, religion and art, a 20-hour famine overnight for high school youth and a service project helping with Bethlehem on Broad Street preparations.

This year's major fund raising event, the Cabaret, was a big success. Youth and other First Church members performed various, singing, dancing, and musical numbers to entertain the audience. The youth worked hard as they not only performed but also served and waited on tables. Many parents were behind the scenes and made this successful event possible.

The following have served on the Youth Ministry Team during the past year and deserve many thanks for their selfless gifts of talent, resources and especially time: Janette Hoffman, Mike Petras, Joyce Oyler, Nancy Gilson Braverman, Sarah Leidheiser, Jason Bishop, Cori Rowley, and youth representative Jordan Knerr. Pam Kallner, Minister of Education, served as a guide and support to the committee during the year and the committee appreciates her many contributions. A special thank you goes to Ann and Gerry Hudson for opening their home twice for weekend youth retreats. Appreciation also goes to Mark Williams for assisting with the transition when Rev. Lori arrived and for coordinating the extensive planning for the Youth Sunday service.

Finally, the committee would like to thank the congregation for their support during the year, especially during fundraising and preparation for the youth mission trip to Atlanta. The maintenance and growth of this ministry is important to every member.

2008 CATALYST Annual Report

By Heather Biggers, Team Founder and Chair

CATALYST is the relationship between the residents from various downtown communities of Kingston, Jamaica, the Parents of Inner City Kids (PICK), Grace and Staff, a corporate foundation, and First Congregational Church. CATALYST's primary goal is to help educate youth from these impoverished and violent communities.

CATALYST strives to be a culturally appropriate and competent mission relationship. There are now 36 CATALYST students who receive partial scholarships for secondary school. This is up from 33 in 2007.

All other CATALYST activities, such as SAT coaching and the essay competition, are available to any student who uses the Learning Center of Central Kingston (LICK), the home work center for the CATALYST mission relationship in Jamaica, located in the Southside community of downtown Kingston. Please visit www.catalystworks.org for more information.

(Continued on Page 9)

Sacred Earth Committee Supper is March 2

Please join us for a light supper of spring vegetable or cream of green things soup, bread and desert at 6 p.m. on March 2, prior to the Monday Night Light's movie *An Inconvenient Truth*.



The supper discussion will focus on how we can be more responsible to God's creation.

High-tech items being collected:

Celebrate Earth Day by disposing of high tech equipment in an environmentally responsible way. Bring items to church and the Middle and High School groups will do the unloading as a service project. Lists of collectable items are posted on the Mission and Education bulletin boards. Sorry, we cannot take TVs.

First Church Music

Music Notes

By Marti Rideout, Interim Minister of Music



There are some very special music opportunities to enjoy in the remainder of February and early March. The congregation at First Church is extraordinarily blessed to have these fine offerings. Please consider attending as many as you can and invite your friends as well.

Sunday, February 22, 4 p.m.

HANDBELLS COLUMBUS

A group of 13 professional handbell ringers will offer a program of lively ringing and fascinating arrangements on six octaves of handbells and five octaves of handchimes, including a newly-commissioned work for handbells and organ. Come and see ringers play two bells in each hand, all ringers working in an extraordinary ensemble, and one ringer playing a bell the size of a trash can! This concert will delight all. The concert will be recorded, so please help your children understand concert etiquette. But by all means, bring them!

TUESDAYS AT FIRST CONCERT SERIES *(Related story on Page 7)*

12:15 Concert

12:45 Lunch in the Parish Hall (\$7 donation)

March 3: **G. Dene Barnard, Organ**
Organist-Choirmaster Emeritus, First Church
and **Stephen Secan, Oboe**
Principal Oboist, Columbus Symphony Orchestra

March 10: **Scott Hayes, Organ**
Organist-Choirmaster, St. Luke's Episcopal Church,
Granville

March 17: **James A. Yeager, Harpsichord**
Professor & Director of Music, Pontifical College
Josephinum

March 24: **Paul Thornock, Organ**
Director of Music, St. Joseph Cathedral

COMPLINE

The next evening service of Compline will be sung by the women of the First Church Choir on **March 15**. During Compline, the church is illuminated by candlelight and the choir sings unaccompanied plainsong chant. The 30-minute service concludes with a quiet organ improvisation.

Compline will be sung by the men on April 19 and the women on May 17. Due to budget restrictions this year, Compline will not be offered during the summer.

ILLUMINATI at FIRST CHURCH

March 29, 11 a.m.

Illuminati, an ensemble of the Gay Men's Chorus, will provide special music and support congregational singing at First Congregational Church on Sunday, March 29, at the 11 a.m. service. **Illuminati** performs sacred music in sacred spaces, such as churches, synagogues, mosques or any location of religious or spiritual significance to its members or congregation.

Illuminati's mission is to increase awareness that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals have spiritual concerns and a place in the religious life of the community. **Illuminati** last performed at First Church during the 2008 Columbus Arts Festival.

Sunday, March 29, 4 p.m.

THE FIRST CHURCH CHORAL SOCIETY

The Choral Society will sing *A Hymn of Praise* by Felix Mendelssohn in honor of the 200th anniversary of his birth, a performance that also will include organ works by Mendelssohn with Jim Gallagher, conductor, and G. Dene Barnard and Marti Rideout, organists.

Sunday, April 5 (Palm Sunday)

7:30 p.m.

THE KING OF KINGS

This Palm Sunday presentation of Cecil B. DeMille's epic movie *The King of Kings* will feature the silent film on a large screen, accompanied on the Kimball Organ by Clark Wilson, highly-regarded theater organist.

This special offering will prepare you for Holy Week, hearing the organ music and witnessing the film tell the greatest story ever told, the events leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Music Reflects the Mood of the Lenten Season

By Marti Rideout, Interim Minister of Music

During the season of Lent we are called to a time of self-examination, repentance, prayer, fasting, self-denial, and by reading and meditating on God's holy word. Musically, we define the season in a number of ways.



First, hymns and anthems will not include *alleluia* or *hallelujah*, words of great rejoicing and praise, so that we can be more tuned to the reflective nature of the season. On February 22, the last Sunday after the Epiphany and the last Sunday before the

beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday, our worship will contain countless *alleluias* and *hallelujahs*, as many as we can possibly include. Second, hymn descants, improvisations or reharmonizations will not be heard at our worship services. Third, as always, hymns, anthems and organ music selected for each worship service will mirror the chosen scriptural texts.

While the choices may appear more somber to some, they provide a chance to be quiet in the depths of our souls and consider the events that will take place in the life of Christ and the impact on us as we journey through Lent. Fourth, organ postludes will be more contemplative, perhaps just the simplicity of a Bach chorale. The congregation at First Church seems accustomed to applauding at the end of the postlude; perhaps during the Lenten season we could offer prayers instead.

Then during the Easter season, which lasts from Easter Day through Pentecost, triumphant organ postludes will be heard again. May your Lenten observances be rich with the blessings and grace given to us by the one who created us, the one who redeemed us, and the one who breathes with us.

Blood Drive to be Held April 26

By Nancy Loy

The Red Cross Blood Mobile will be at First Church on Sunday, April 26, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Donating blood is a good way to support our community as hospitals are in constant need of blood. The blood goes to victims of trauma, cancer patients and people with many other conditions. Church members who have participated in the blood drive on Sundays find that scheduling is convenient (e.g. donate blood while your child in Sunday school or your spouse is in choir).

You can schedule an appointment time by signing up in the church office, or calling the office at 228-1741.



Confirmands to Visit Mosque on March 22

First Church confirmands will be making a trip to the Noor Islamic Cultural Center in Dublin on Sunday, March 22, to learn about Islamic culture and religion.

On that day, Imam Hany Saqr of the center will be speaking during the First Church Education Hour about Islam as part of our series on world religions. Also on March 22, Rev. Ahrens will be preaching about Jesus and Muhammed in the fifth part of his Lenten sermon series.

Cum Christo Retreat Weekends Coming Up

Interested First Church members are invited to attend a Cum Christo spiritual renewal weekend.

Cum Christo is a lay Catholic renewal movement that brings Christians together in an ecumenical three-day setting, to help them deepen their relationship with Jesus and to motivate them to live authentic Christian lives.

The next weekends will be March 12-15 for men, and April 23-26 for women. If you are interested, contact Paul Flocken at 403-4910.

Rev. Ahrens Recuperating

Rev. Tim Ahrens is recovering at home after surgery. He is doing well, and is hoping to return to work for the start of Lent.

Notes From Christian Education

By Mark S. Williams, Director of Christian Education

Monday Night Lights Movie Series

March 2, 7 p.m.

An Inconvenient Truth



Former Vice President Al Gore presents an eye-opening and compelling view of the future of our planet – and our civilization – in this *must-see* documentary.

This is a wake-up call that cuts through myths and misconceptions to deliver the message that global warming is a real and present danger. *An Inconvenient Truth* brings home Gore's persuasive argument that we

must act now to save the earth. Each and every one of us can make changes in the way in which we live our lives and be a part of the solution.

The Sacred Earth Committee will be providing a free light supper of soup and bread before the movie event starting at 6 p.m. They encourage everyone to attend this meal and movie presentation.

Next Monday Night Lights
April 6 Brokeback Mountain

Rest and Relaxation in Nature's Glory

Join the First Church family as they head toward the hills – Templed Hills that is. Our spring retreat, "Reflections 101," is Friday evening, April 24, through Sunday morning, April 26. Please mark your calendars and plan to bring your whole family or just yourself!

Our weekend will include hiking, nature talks and activities, devotions, basketball, fishing, a folk dance for all ages, a campfire with s'mores, crafts, singing and worship at camp Sunday morning. All First Church children and youth are able to attend at no cost, thanks to an Alma Keeler Grant requested by the Parish Life Committee. Adults are \$90 each, which includes food, lodging and all program costs. All confirmands will be attending and their mentors are encouraged to attend as well.

Templed Hills is one of the United Church of Christ camp and retreat centers. It is an hour north of Columbus, off of I-71 at Bellville. Our accommodations vary and will be assigned according to each individual or families needs. The camp buildings are clean and comfortable, and the food is great! There are acres of woods, meadows, streams, a pond, and a pine forest to hike in or just to sit in and watch the birds. Relaxation and enjoying God's creation will be the major emphasis for the weekend.

Look for the brochure (including a map to Templed Hills) and registration form in the church office or on the Web site after March 8. The deadline for registration is March 29. We have space for 70 people – let's fill it!

Think Spring!

If the Outdoor Ministries summer camp catalog has arrived, can spring be far behind? Everyone is ready to plan some fun in the sun and that's just what camp is. The campers enjoy swimming, hiking, crafts, games, singing and worship. They have camp fires, vespers, rest time, and make friends that last a lifetime. They learn and grow in their faith.

There are camps for kindergarten and first-graders with a grandparent. Weeklong camps are for children who have completed the second grade and older. There are camps for teens and camps with themes. There are camps for adults, and even one for families.



First Congregational Church has always been a strong supporter of the Outdoor Ministries Summer Camp Program by encouraging participation and by offering scholarships for campers. Thanks to the generosity of longtime member Alma Keeler, we are able to offer a 50% camp scholarship on the early registration fee to any First Church child or youth who wants to go to camp.

To take advantage of this scholarship you must do several things: 1) Decide which camp you want to attend; 2) Send in your \$75 deposit as soon as possible with the 2009 camp registration form (found in the back of the catalog) to the church and the attention of Mark S. Williams, and we will forward it to the Ohio Conference; 3) Complete the campership request form found in a folder in the church Office; 4) Send the remaining amount owed to the Ohio Conference at least two weeks prior to your camp; 5) Have a wonderful time! (*Continued on Page 7*)

Youth & Young Adults

Come to the Cabaret on March 28

By Janette Hoffman

Mark your calendar now for Saturday, March 28, from 7 to 9 p.m. because the First Church youth and parents will again be hosting their Cabaret Night fundraiser in the Parish Hall.

The evening will include awesome entertainment by the youth and members of First Church, delicious snacks and desserts, raffle items and wonderful fellowship for all. The proceeds from this event will help support youth activities including the 2009 youth mission trip to the Appalachian South Folk Life Center in Pipestem, W.V.

Tickets for Cabaret Night will be \$12 for adults and \$6 for children. They will be sold on Sundays during fellowship hour on March 8, 15 and 22, and also at the door the evening of the event. We will even reserve a table for your committee or group if they would like to attend together.

In addition to wonderful entertainment and fellowship, your ticket will include popcorn and coffee/lemonade. Snacks and light dinner items will be available for a nominal charge. The doors will open at 6:30 p.m. so plan to come early for great seats, fellowship time and some yummy munchies!

Raffle tickets also will be sold at \$1 per ticket or \$5 for six tickets. Raffle items will include gift baskets, hand designed jewelry, gift cards, etc. For those unable to attend, raffle tickets will be sold during Fellowship Hour on March 22. Winners need to be present to win.

Our talent scouts are still in search of additional performers who would like to "let their light shine." If you are interested in performing an act for the cabaret, please contact Janette Hoffman at 740-657-1874. This is a wonderful way for all to share their time and talents and witness how it can be turned into service at the Appalachian South Folk Life Center!

Place the date on your calendar now, and spread the word to friends and family and invite them for a fun, entertaining evening!

Adult Education Spring Quarter Begins with a Flurry!

The spring quarter for adult education is providing many opportunities in our faith journey. The quarter begins March 1 with a five-week series on world religions. Each week, a guest speaker will share his or her beliefs and how they relate to Christianity. This will be an exciting series that you will not want to miss. More detailed information will be coming at the end of February.

The Christian education brochure will be distributed in late February. Later in the quarter, a great series on the environment will be conducted by the Rev. Deana Armstrong, and Dr. Donald Luck will be returning to lead a lecture series on immigrants and Christianity.

There are many opportunities for you to learn and grow in your faith this spring through the adult education program. For more information, contact Mark S. Williams at mwilliams@first-church.org, or call 228-1741, ext. 15.

Tuesdays At First Book Study Begins March 3

Make plans now to join us for a stimulating study of best-selling author Jim Wallis' *The Great Awakening: Seven Ways to Change the World*. The Tuesdays at First book study will be held March 3, 10, 17 and 24 beginning at 11 a.m. and will be led by the Rev. Keene Lebold.

Recognizing that America's faithful have subverted their evangelical Christian ideology into a conservative political ideology, Wallis reminds readers that to follow the spirit of Christianity truly means to go beyond the simple two-party system and understand the greater principles of the faith.

Wallis assesses the wide range of movements and new ideas emerging from Christians and what this new reckoning within their hearts and minds means for the political realm.

With tools and goals that help listeners achieve spirituality over ideology, Wallis reveals the "common ground" upon which faith in America can be rebuilt and opened to a larger group of discontented believers. After each discussion session, members are invited to attend a concert in the sanctuary at 12:15 and a lunch served in the Parish Hall at 12:45. The book is \$13 and can be purchased in the church office.



New Members Class: If you are interested in joining First Church, our next class will be held on Saturday, March 14, from 9 a.m. to noon. To register, fill out the attendance pad, marking "Wanting Membership," sign up in the church office or email Denny Mahoney at dmahoney@first-church.org. Childcare will be provided, but let us know in advance if you need it. The class will join March 22 during either the 9 or 11 a.m. service.

(Summer Camp, continued from Page 6)

Due to the increase in camp registration fee this year, First Church will offer additional scholarships for those families who need extra help. Any child who wants to go to camp should not be prevented from attending because of financial concerns.

There are extra camp catalogs in the office, or you can get one from Mark S. Williams. The deadline for early registration is March 31.

News & Missions

Minister of Music Search Committee Narrows Field

By Neal Brower, Search Committee Chair

The search for First Church's new Minister of Music is progressing very well and according to the timeline adopted last summer.

The search committee has narrowed a strong field of more than 20 candidates to three very qualified and impressive finalists who will visit in March for a two-day series of interviews and auditions. In addition to auditioning on both the Beckerath and Kimball organs, each candidate also will work with the treble and adult choirs in order to demonstrate their teaching and conducting techniques.

The search committee's goal is to present a recommendation to council for consideration at their March 24 meeting. Council, in turn, will extend an offer to the successful candidate soon thereafter. If everything continues according to plan, our new Minister of Music will report for duty this summer.

Once again, I extend my sincere thanks to members of the search committee, to the First Church ministers and staff and to Marti Rideout, our interim minister of music. All have demonstrated their dedication and commitment to this lengthy and very important process.

Faith Mission Servers Looking For Volunteers

By Fran Panek

The first of the 2009 Faith Mission dinner meals was served on Friday, January 23, with a menu of pot roast, vegetables, coleslaw and fudge pudding cake. A total of 210 people were helped.

Thanks to Bill Wirsching, Lukas Irons, Sarah Garbe, Margene Whittenburg and Nancy Burba for helping Bruce Panek to cook. Also to Joe Daniels, David and Karen Carpenter, Robyn Petras, Fran Panek, Jane Leidheiser and Alton and Elaine Fennell for leading worship and serving.

Faith Mission has seen an increase in people seeking food and shelter in recent weeks. The economy has hit many folks who never had to worry about where they would eat or sleep before. We are grateful that God has provided us with the gift of hospitality that allows us to serve in this way.

We serve by the grace of God. Won't you join us in making a difference in the lives of our neighbors? If you are interested in helping with our February lunch, contact Linda Gieseke, Dennis Ginty or Bruce Panek. Peace and blessings to all!

Pub Theology Set for March 10

First Church young adults will gather at the Red Door, 1736 W. 5th Ave. in Grandview, from 7 to 9:30 p.m. on March 10 for an informal evening of dinner, relationship-building and connecting with one another, while also discussing a hot topic issue. In March, the discussion will be about how music has played a role in religious worship through history and today. Joining in will be Marti Rideout, First Church's interim music minister. Come for an exciting evening of fellowship and discussion!

First Church Golf League Ready to Tee Off



The First Church Golf League will be playing again this year at the nine-hole Gahanna Golf Course on Ridenour Road.

The league will play every Thursday at 5 p.m. from April 30 to July 2. Everyone is welcome to participate, from beginners on up. This is a great way to learn the game, have some fun and improve as you play.

Anyone interested in joining in, please sign up in the office or contact Frank Cook at 933-0012 or fhc2@aol.com.

Recent Celebration Gifts to First Church

By Bill Johannes and Jane Werum

Given to the Remembrance Fund in celebration of the life of Paul Swinger by:
John and Betsy Zahn

Your gifts, payable to First Congregational Church, are appreciated. Celebration Gifts may be designated to the Remembrance Fund or an endowment fund and given in honor of a particular moment in the life of a friend or family member. The gold Celebration Gift folders are found in the pews and office.

Fellowship Hour Beverage Sales:

Coffee and tea sales will be available on March 1 and 15 during fellowship hour. This is a UCC coffee project initiative and your participation is greatly appreciated. If you miss the regular sale, call Nancy Burba on Wednesdays in the church office at 614.228.1741, ext. 28.





(CATALYST, Continued from Page 3)

ACTIVITY AND EVENTS FOR 2008

“It’s All About You” Essay Contest: The personal essay is an important part of the college admissions process. In order to give the secondary students some motivation to practice writing such essays, the CATALYST graduate students donated prize money for the top seven essays. Anyone who submitted an essay and did not win a cash prize received a dictionary.

Samuel Pyne, a graduate student judged and said “Compared to last year’s essay, I detect an emerging optimism in these writing although it disappointingly counterpoints a decrease in basic language and grammar skills. Most of these young scholars are beginning to see the glass as being half full and this is evidenced in their bold career, academic and philanthropic goals.”

SAT Study Groups: Taking the PSAT used to be a rare occurrence in Jamaica, left only for the very wealthy. With the PSAT and SAT classes, this has changed. This year 17 CATALYST or LICK students have either taken the PSAT or the SAT. One student took at the SSAT, the exam for boarding school admission. CATALYST covered the costs of tests and study guides.

Photo Club: During 2007 CATALYST provided funds to purchase cameras for the photo club that began in 2006. Grace and Staff’s parent company, Grace Kennedy, provides a staff photographer, who teaches club participants about photography. In 2008, photographer Alfred Muh Yong a very well-known Jamaica photographer, along with the staff photographers judged the entries. Winners received gifts and certificates.

CHALLENGE

The economy in Jamaica is struggling. Grace and Staff is operating on a very small budget with few staff members. In the United States, we need people with email and with Internet access and Internet search knowledge to connect with colleges and other organizations to try to secure funds for our students’ tertiary education.

We also need to find ways to provide post-secondary educational opportunities on the island of Jamaica for our students. Examples include funds for text books, transportation, and for the young women, housing near universities. Unfortunately young female students are targets by the “drug dons” who rule the communities such as Southside, so these young women need to stay outside of their home communities.

Member Happy March Birthdays

3/1:	Jen Riley-Williamson	3/19:	Darla Luebbe
3/1:	Emily Kutschbach	3/19:	Kelvin Murphy
3/2:	Sheldon Taft	3/20:	Tom Worley
3/3:	Gerhard Wolff	3/20:	David Mailer
3/3:	Bruce Panek	3/20:	Erin Johnson
3/4:	Julie Roth-Alexander	3/21:	Dorothy Horn
3/4:	Devon Bastian	3/21:	Eric Euwing
3/5:	Phil Stichter	3/22:	James Howell
3/5:	Anna Jensen	3/22:	Malik Dean
3/6:	Shirley Calhoun	3/22:	Kerry O’Leary
3/6:	Tom Endo	3/23:	Lee Burba
3/7:	Bob Monahan	3/23:	Scott Coy
3/7:	Christina Gladysz	3/24:	Amy Wagner
3/8:	Gretchen Atkinson	3/24:	Paige Rockus
3/9:	Wally Kesler	3/25:	Debbie Bagenstose
3/9:	Doug Buck	3/25:	Ted Endo
3/9:	Michael Weaver	3/26:	Catherine Kennedy
3/9:	Michelle Gloege	3/27:	Jim Drotleff
3/9:	Heather Giffen	3/28:	Judith Hunter
3/10:	Mark Kriynovich	3/28:	Margene Whittenburg
3/11:	Candy Cummings	3/30:	Ruth Allred
3/12:	Jenny Provenzano	3/30:	Bill Brownfield
3/14:	Bob Hadley	3/31:	Jennifer Newhous
3/16:	Beth Kochman-Wilson	3/31:	Donna Coe
3/16:	Rob O’Leary	3/31:	Malini Gnanatheeban
3/17:	Leslie McCann		
3/17:	Ashley Gover		
3/18:	Megan Daniels		
3/19:	Karen Thompson		

Member Happy Anniversaries

3/1:	Ellen and Pete Boriin
3/9:	Cindy Burnell and Quentin Potter
3/11:	Jill and Dana Paulus
3/14:	Janet Stoneking and Eric Boyd
3/16:	Charlie and Mike Knerr
3/16:	Aimee and Tom Cerny
3/18:	Tammy Alexander and Juli Roth-Alexander
3/26:	Anne and Rick Bennett
3/28:	Diane Cole and John Rau

If we miss your birthday or anniversary, contact Denny Mahoney at 228-1741, ext. 17, or dmahoney@first-church.org.

Mission Offerings Schedule

In March, the undesignated loose offerings will benefit the following missions that First Church supports:

- March 1 - Good Samaritan**
- March 8 - Student camp scholarships**
- March 15 - Church World Service**
- March 22 - One Great Hour of Sharing**
- March 29 - Re-Member**

Church Calendar

Sunday, February 22

9 am - Early Worship - PH
9 am - Treble Choir - Choir Rm
10 am - First Church Choir - Gallery
10 am - Education Hour
11 am - Worship Service - San
12 pm - Fellowship Hour - PH
4 pm - Congregational Concert - San
5:15 pm - Concert Reception - PH
6 pm - Youth Group - Middle School room

Wednesday, February 25, Ash Wednesday

12 pm - Worship service - San
7:30 pm - Worship Service - San

Thursday, February 26

6 pm: First Church Ringers - Bell Rm
7:15 pm - Choral Society - PH
8:30 pm: First Church Choir - Choir Rm

Saturday, February 28

9 am - Faith Mission Family Shelter Lunches

Sunday, March 1

9 am: Early Worship Service - PH
9 am: Treble Choir - Choir Rm
10 am: Education Hour
10 am: First Church Choir - Choir Rm
11 am: Worship Service - San
12 pm: Fellowship Hour - PH
12:30 pm - Confirmation class - Rm D

Monday, March 2

7 pm - Art of Positive Parenting - Rm C
7 pm - Monday Night Lights - PH & LC

Tuesday, March 3

11 am - Tuesdays at First Book Study - LC
12:15 pm - Tuesdays at First Concert - San
12:45 pm - Tuesdays at First Lunch - PH
6:30 pm - Children's Ed - Ed Wg Rm C
7 pm - Church Growth - PR

Wednesday, March 4

9 am: Staff Meeting - LC
11 am: Book Study - PR

Thursday, March 5

3 pm - Music Search Committee - LC
6 pm: First Church Ringers - Bell Rm
7:15 pm - Choral Society - PH
8:30 pm - First Church Choir - Choir Room

Saturday, March 7

6:30 pm - Young Adult Dinner Group - Black Creek Bistro

Sunday, March 8

9 am - Early Worship Service - PH
9 am - Treble Choir - Choir Rm
10 am - Education Hour
11 am - Worship Service - San
12 pm - Fellowship Hour - PH

Tuesday, March 10

11 am - Tuesdays at First Book Study - LC
12:15 pm - Tuesdays at First Concert - San
12:45 pm - Tuesdays at First Lunch - PH
6 pm - Music Committee - PR
7 pm - Trustees - PR

Wednesday, March 11

9 am - Staff Meeting - PR

Thursday, March 12

3 pm - Music Search Committee - LC
6 pm - First Church Ringers - Bell Rm
7:15 pm - Choral Society - PH
8:30 pm - First Church Choir - Choir Rm

Friday, March 13

3:45 pm - Parents for Others - Toddler Room

Saturday, March 14

10 am - Quilters at First Church - LC

Sunday, March 15

9 am - Early Worship Service - PH
9 am - Treble Choir - Choir Rm
10 am - Education Hour
10 am - First Church Choir - Choir Rm
11 am - Worship Service - San
12 pm - Fellowship Hour - PH
9 pm - Compline - San

Monday, March 16

6 pm - Stephen Ministers - Adult Library

Tuesday, March 17

11 am - Tuesdays at First Book Study - LC
12:15 pm - Tuesdays at First Concert - San
12:45 pm - Tuesdays at First Lunch - PH
7 pm - Council - LC

Wednesday, March 18

9 am - Newsletter folding - LC
9 am - Staff Meeting - PR
11 am - Book Study - PR

Thursday, March 19

3 pm - Music Search Committee - LC
6 pm - First Church Handbells - Bell Rm
7:15 pm - Choral Society - PH
8:30 pm - First Church Choir - Choir Rm

Friday, March 20

Winter Retreat - Templed Hills

Saturday, March 21

10 am - House and Grounds - LC

Sunday, March 22

9 am - Early Worship Service - PH
9 am - Treble Choir - Choir Rm
10 am - Education Hour
10 am - First Church Choir - Choir Rm
11 am - Worship Service - San
12 pm - Fellowship Hour - PH
Winter Retreat - Templed Hills

(Rev. Ahrens, Continued from Page 2)

These are difficult days for all of us and everyone needs to see the best in the other. We need to bring out the best in ourselves and all 1,200 men, women, teens and children in this congregation.

Please ask yourself, how may I serve God at First Church in the coming months? How might I use my skills and professional gifts to help my neighbor and my fellow church members in trying times? Begin with prayer. See everyone around you as a miracle and a blessing from God.

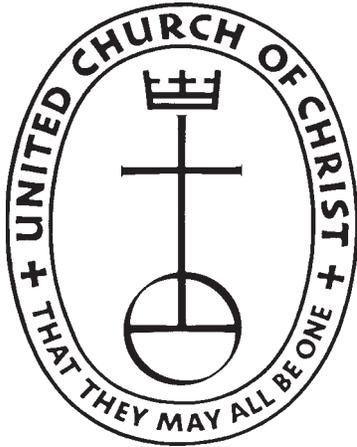
As 2009 unfolds, I hope we find ways to help each other, to lift each other up, to laugh together, cry together, get through these times together. Holding onto one another, great things will happen in God's name. Here at First Church we can a difference in one another's lives and in our community.

Please join me in thanking our staff members for their spirit and hard work. Take time to support them in any way you can.

Prayers

Prayer Request: Please let us know of a prayer concern for yourself, a family member or other church member by calling the Rev. Barbara Cunningham at 614.228.1741, ext. 21, by using Prayer Request Cards found in each pew or by emailing bcunningham@first-church.org.

Please pray for those who continue to walk through grief and loss, for those battling illness and addictions in their families, for all serving in Iraq and elsewhere and for others in need. Please offer prayers for those who are lonely, lost and hurting. Pray for our nation as we face all too much anxiety, fear and uncertainty with faith, hope and love. May God bless you in your giving and in your living in Christ's love and grace. Amen.



**~ REMEMBER YOUR LOVED ONES ~
WITH A DEDICATION OF FLOWERS**
Contact Marty Worth at 614.228.1741, ext. 12,
mworth@first-church.org

March Fellowship Hour

March 1: Deuteronomy - Cindy Deliman
March 8: Ephesians - Nancy Fields
March 15: Galatians - Dennis Ginty
March 22: Haggai - Greg Halbe
March 29: Hosea - Anne Hudson

March Acolyte Schedule

March 1: Jaden Martin-Wynia & Reel Chaudhri
March 8: Alex Heer & Michael Warrick
March 15: Katie Gies & Meri Roach
March 22: Kyle Fulford & Katie Wagner
March 29: Nick Warrick & Emma Welsh-Huggins
(Complete schedules online @ www.first-church.org)

Next Newsletter Deadline

Articles Due: Monday, March 9 by noon
Email: dmahoney@first-church.org
Folding Team: Wed., March 18, 9 a.m.

Worship CDs Available: We are now able to provide you with copies of worship services on CDs. The CDs are available in the literature rack outside the church office after the worship service is finished. A \$1 donation for the CD can be left in a container on the church office counter.

Church Staff

Timothy C. Ahrens.....*Senior Minister*
Barbara R. Cunningham.....*Minister for Pastoral Care*
Marti Rideout.....*Interim Minister of Music*
Mark S. Williams.....*Director of Christian Education*
G. Dene Barnard.....*Organist Choirmaster Emeritus*
Sharon Leidheiser.....*Business Administrator*
Martha Worth.....*Program Manager*
Stan Parron.....*Building Manager*
Denny Mahoney.....*Office Manager*
Kelvin Murphy.....*Custodian*
Eric Trepkoski.....*Custodian*
Caroline Sansbury.....*Nursery Staff*
Jessica Yaeger.....*Nursery Staff*
Kelsey Weber.....*Nursery Staff*
Linda Mumford.....*Wedding Coordinator*
Jane Leidheiser.....*Wedding Coordinator*
Fran Panek.....*Wedding Coordinator*

Church Council

Melody Leidheiser.....*Moderator*
Sarah Reed.....*Vice-Moderator*
Carol Gallagher.....*Secretary*
David Holt.....*Treasurer*
Phil Stichter.....*Trustee Chair*
Frank Cook.....*Administration Commissioner*
Pavan Peter.....*Church Growth Commissioner*
Diana Kutschbach.....*Education Commissioner*
Bill Rhoads.....*House & Grounds Commissioner*
Anne Hudson, Fran Panek.....*Mission Commissioners*
Julia Myers, Amy Fulton.....*Parish Life Commissioners*
Charlie Weaver.....*Deacon*
Jerome Dailey.....*Deacon*
Kim Kutschbach.....*Member-at-large*

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
United Church of Christ
444 E. Broad St.
Columbus, Ohio 43215-3885

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*Please Deliver: **Monday, February 23, 2009***

TO:

[Empty dashed box for recipient address]



The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
444 E. Broad St. Col., OH 43215
Phone: 614.228.1741 FAX: 614.461.1741
Email: home@first-church.org Web site: www.first-church.org
Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Closed Major Holidays

“An Open & Affirming Faith Community”

SUNDAY WORSHIP HOURS

Worship at 9 a.m. ~ Parish Hall
Worship at 11 a.m. ~ Sanctuary