

The Bell Rope

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF VERONA
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Volume 52, Issue 1

January – March, 2010



The days of Lent

are an invitation to reflect, to reconsider and discover.

They are an invitation by Jesus

to join him on the journey that calls us

out of the winter of ourselves

to re-image our bond with God.

First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

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Sunday Service are held at 10:00 a.m. Office Hours: Mon-Fri 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

President's Column

According to Barbara's sermon the other week, although Jesus performed the miracle of changing water into wine at the wedding at Cana, the disciples were the ones who did the work of filling the jars and passing them around. It seems to me that sort of thing has been happening around our church, as well.

Members and friends of the church have taken the "water" of old children's books and changed it into several big boxes of resources for needy students in Paterson. We've taken the "water" of a little extra in our grocery shopping orders each week, and changed it into the guarantee of food on the table for a needy family in Bloomfield. We've paid to send emergency bottles of water to Haiti, where surely it was received like the finest Chardonnay. And the van-load of "stuff" that was collected for Awka, Nigeria, has finally arrived there and will be distributed at the end of February to folks who will find our cast-offs to be precious, indeed. As I look around the Founders Room, I'm amazed, not at the number of collection boxes, but at the amount that has been collected from our little group.

Many churches find that a 100-year-old building is a liability that eats money. We've made ours a resource for the community, as well as a source of income for our own ministry. On Boy Scout Sunday, we celebrated the Scouts' role in character-building for youth in Verona, which would not be as large if we did not offer them free use of our building. On each weekday, we enable BASES and Robin's Nest, and now Studio Kids Art to meet the needs of children and youth and their families. And now we're welcoming another congregation into our building, Glory Presbyterian Church, sharing our resources with another Christian family.

Being a church our size is challenging, because others often expect us and we expect ourselves to do everything that larger churches do, but with a lot fewer "do-ers." However, as the Desmonds said in a note at Christmas, "There are no 'small' churches. The endeavors we are involved with are large in import and great in relation to more transient concerns. Right on, good and faithful servants. Our Father has placed us over much. The need is great. ... Rejoice, Give Thanks, and Sing! Praise!"

We may be small, but we are richly blessed with resources to respond to the needs around us. We have already, perhaps unwittingly, been changing water into wine by opening our church and our hearts to others and responding to their needs. Think how much more we can do if we see ourselves as workers in the winery, disciples of Christ filling those water jars and pouring the wine.

See you in church,

Marge Royle

Welcome to Glory Presbyterian Church

In January, our church was approached by a Korean congregation looking for a church where they could rent space, and our Council responded with words of welcome. Glory Presbyterian church is both a new congregation and one with over 20 years of history. It was recently formed from a division of Antioch Presbyterian Church in West Orange. The new congregation presently has about 60 at worship, with a choir of nearly 20. It has several pastors, the Rev. John E. Whang, the Senior Pastor, the Rev. Do Kim, Associate Pastor, and the Rev. John Chi, English Ministry Pastor. The church is affiliated with the New York Eastern Presbytery of the Korean-American Presbyterian Church in America, the largest Korean-American denomination in the country, in which Rev. Whang has served as Moderator.

The congregation will be meeting on Sunday afternoons at 1:30, Wednesday evenings at 8:30, and meet Saturday mornings at 5:30. Worship services are primarily in Korean. Please welcome our new Christian friends.

Ash Wednesday February 17



We will hold a service of Scripture readings, prayers, and meditation in the sanctuary at 7:00 PM. Please plan on attending as we begin our Lenten journey.

Lenten Thursdays will Resume March 11



Come join us as the Lenten Thursday adult study group will begin again. The format for this new series is still under consideration. Details will be available in the Sunday bulletin closer to the date.

Bell Rope Goes Internet

If you are not receiving this issue of the Bell Rope via the internet, you are missing a chance to receive it several days earlier than others. If you would like to switch to internet delivery, please email Heather at fccv@comcast.net and ask to be put on the BellRope email list. For those who choose to receive the Bell Rope in printed form, it will be available in the Founders Room the Sunday after it is issued, and then mailed first-class to those who are not in church. If you choose to receive yours in the mail, a small donation to cover postage would be appreciated.

NJ Association WINTER GATHERING

The Winter Gathering of the New Jersey Association will be held on February 20, right around the corner at the Community Church of Cedar Grove, 65 Bowden Road. The topic for the day is Internet 2.0: Now That You Have a Website, What's Next?



This event is designed for pastors and lay leaders, church secretaries, office managers, and historians, finance and evangelism committee members, workers with youth – everyone who wants to know how using the internet can help them be more effective.

Let keynote speaker Jessica Steytler take you on a guided tour of some of the net's latest and greatest tech-tools and web-gadgets, with an eye toward resourcing your members, connecting the congregation and gathering visitors. Then, in workshops, learn how to use Facebook and social networking to do ministry; or what records a church should save, or how to give your weekly offering on-line, or how to improve your website.

Registration begins at 8:30 AM, with the program starting at 9:30 and ending by 2:00 PM. The cost is \$6. Please let Marge Royle know by Feb. 10 if you plan to attend, so we can make reservations.



Souper Bowl Sunday

On Sunday, February 7, the First Congregational Church will celebrate Souper Bowl Sunday with a soup and bread luncheon, as well as a collection of food for the family in Bloomfield and funds to help support the Human Needs Food Pantry in Montclair. The luncheon will take place immediately after church during the usual coffee hour time. Although the meal is free, donations will be received.

The Souper Bowl of Caring began in 1990, when a Super Bowl Sunday prayer inspired a group of young people to do something more than celebrate a football game. They created the Souper Bowl of Caring, and have mobilized youth across the country to raise more than \$51 million for people in need. In 2009, over 14,500 groups, including our congregation and several others in Verona, participated in the Souper Bowl of Caring, generating over \$10 million. All of the money collected is donated to a charity selected by the participant. None of the money is sent to Souper Bowl headquarters.

Annual Financial Statements

It's tax time again, and individual statements that summarize your giving to the church during calendar year 2009 have been prepared. You should receive yours at church or through the mail soon. Please check it carefully for errors, and let Heather know if you see anything that does not agree with your records.

Haiti Earthquake Relief



The United Church of Christ and our local congregation both have been part of the huge outpouring of aid for Haitian earthquake victims. According to UCC national offices, "Within six days of the disaster, a total of \$250,603 has been received from 2,366 online donors. That far exceeds a previous online giving record set in early 2005 when \$112,000 was raised at ucc.org over 23 days from a little more than 1,000 donors to aid victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami." Deliveries of hygiene kits, blankets, food, and water began within 24 hours.

The denomination has been working both through our missionaries there and through Church World Service (CWS) and the larger Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance to construct temporary water systems, provide water purification materials, tents, medicine boxes and food packages. Three trauma counselors and psychosocial care specialists are providing assistance for individuals, especially children, in Port-au-Prince, and others are working with aid workers to help them cope with their horrific experiences.

In addition, funds to rebuild the country will continue to be needed for a long time. To make a donation on line, or to read an account from our missionaries in Haiti, go to www.ucc.org/haiti/. You can also make a donation through our church – just make a notation marked "Haiti Relief" on your check or on an envelope with cash and put it in the collection plate. Also our Bridge of Faith project conducted a benefit African Crafts sale at Wayne Valley High School on January 31, with Haitian as well as African crafts. All profits will go to Haitian Relief.

Church World Service Hygiene Kits and Layette Kits are urgently needed. **Hygiene Kits** include the following items (and only these items) in a 1 gallon zip-loc bag: one hand towel (approx 16"x28" - no fingertip or bath towels), one washcloth, one wide tooth comb, one nail clipper (no metal files or emery boards), one bar of bath size soap in the wrapper, six band aids. **Layette Kits** include: 6 cloth diapers, 2 T-shirts or undershirts (no onesies), 2 washcloths, 2 gowns or sleepers, 1 sweater or

sweatshirt, 2 receiving blankets. Items must be new and under 12 months in size. Wrap items inside one of the receiving blankets and secure with two diaper pins. You may bring the kits to the church at any time. If you would be willing to organize the collection and assembly of hygiene or layette kits, or if you would like patterns for baby gowns or blankets, please speak to Marge Royle or Barbara Ewton.

Boy Scout Sunday



On Sunday, January 31, the Boy Scouts of Troop 2 and their families observed Scout Sunday by worshipping with us. Scouts served as liturgists and ushers, and long-time Scout leader Ray Smith brought remarks. Our church provides a home for two Scout troops as well as Cub Scouts, and a Venture Crew of older Scouts, and is often the site of adult meetings and training events, as well. Although many organizations such as the schools now charge groups such as the Scouts for building use, our church provides our space free of charge because we believe that helping support youth-serving organizations such as the Scouts is one way we share God's love for the children and youth in our community.

Christmas Poinsettias

Thank you to all those members and friends who contributed money to beautify our sanctuary with poinsettias this Christmas season. Thanks, too, to the Cub Scouts who donated the lovely wreaths for our front doors.



<u>Plants donated by:</u>	<u>In Honor of:</u>
Hillcrest Nursery	Andrea Smith
Anne George	Loved Ones
Ann Husing	Wesley Leo Schmeling
The Park Family	Matilda & John Perry
Tom & Nancy Senior	Senior Family
Louise Stewart	Loved Ones
Gladys Singewald	Loved Ones

