

Mark Your Calendars!

February

Feb.5,12,19: Winter New Member Inquiry Class—following worship service.

MMO registration for 2012/2013 school year is in progress.

Feb.12: Children & Youth Ministry Meeting, following worship.

Recurring events

Feb.18: FCC Men's Breakfast Group 8:30-10am in the Guild Room.

- **Wednesdays 6-8pm:** Labyrinth Walk
- **Sunday mornings:** Bible Study 9:30-10:40 in the library.

Feb.21: Shrove Tuesday at First Montclair House, 6pm.

For more details check our website calendar

Feb.22: Ash Wednesday Service of Holy Communion & Imposition of Ashes. 8pm in the FCC Sanctuary.

Feb.27: Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) Service Day. Volunteers needed—see pg.2 for times/schedule.



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(973)744-4856; admin@fccmtc.com

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JOIN US! Sunday mornings at 10:30 for worship

first NEWS



a newsletter of First Congregational Church of Montclair, New Jersey
an Open & Affirming congregation of the
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
"Never place a period where God has put a comma." -Gracie Allen

February, 2012

From the NEW Moderator

This is my first column as FCC Moderator and I am honored, humbled, excited, and yes, a bit intimidated to take on the role. When my husband Bob and I first came to FCC, the entire congregation sat in folding chairs in the front of the sanctuary. No need for pews with a group that small! Now our children can barely fit on the steps for their special time with Mattie! As I've mentioned before, one of the most exciting aspects of our growth is looking at the children and seeing a veritable rainbow, and not knowing who belongs to whom! Same-sex parents, multi-racial families...proof positive that love and commitment come in all shapes, sizes, and colors.

Sometimes, seeing where we were six years ago, and marveling at where we are now, it seems like a miracle. And yes, I think we can be sure that God had a hand in it. But there has certainly been no shortage of "human hands" who have staffed Ministries, decorated and "undecorated" the sanctuary, served meals, cleared branches, and done whatever needed to be done. And I've learned lots since first walking through those beautiful big doors, but top on the list is the fact that none of it happens by accident. There is a process behind everything that we do.

Chairing the Ministry of Spirituality and Worship gave me a first-hand view of the creative forces of our congregation. Watching the spiritual journeys associated with the liturgical year take shape, seeing how ideas are proposed, revised, and take life is truly gratifying. It made me feel excited, and it also made me feel confident that there is lots more creative energy where that came from. The influx of new members and friends, so many of whom have already "hit the ground running" makes me know that we are indeed in good hands.

Many years spent in professional meetings have caused me to grow into a bit of a "process geek". I look forward to helping facilitate the functions that will give life to the incredible creative and spiritual energies of our church family. I thank you in advance for your trust and support. With God's help, and with yours of course, we will have a great year.

Peace, *Elaine Wells*

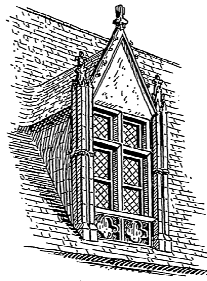
Winter New Member Inquiry Class February 5, 12, 19 after worship

Interested in membership at FCC? Want to know more about the United Church of Christ? This class is for you! Join us for a series of informal (and informational!) conversations about who we are, what we believe and what membership means in this community.

Classes are one hour, immediately after worship, and new members are received during worship on March 11.
See Rev. Ann for details!

Inside

- **Lent Worship Schedule**
- **"Progressive Christianity" Series**
- **Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper**
- **Interfaith Hospitality Network Date**
- **Sunday School Update**
- **Men's Breakfast**



From My Study Window

Journey Through the Table

Five basic gestures — taking, blessing, thanking, breaking and giving — stand at the center of our most essential Christian ritual: the sacrament of Communion. Also called the Eucharist (which means “Thanksgiving”), these actions provide for us a pattern for living beyond Sunday morning. They help shape our lives as followers of Jesus — a sort of a “dress rehearsal” for living in the kin-dom of God. In his book, Leading From the Table, Paul Galbreath reminds us that the practice of sharing the communion meal inspires us to claim certain values: living with thankful hearts, forgiving our neighbors, depending on God’s provision, welcoming strangers, practicing hospitality, sharing our belongings, recognizing Christ’s presence, caring for all creation and giving up power and privilege.

As we approach the season of Lent we are invited to think more deeply about who we are as Christians, and to strip away those superficial layers in our lives that keep us separated from God and one another. Lent is a very special time in our Christian year. Traditionally this has involved the practice of “giving something up” — of letting go to something we have grown dependent upon so that we might place our dependence more appropriately on God. Yet, we can also deepen our relationship with God through adding something to our lives.

During this season of Lent we will seek to deepen our relationship with God by embracing more fully the practice of Communion. Each Sunday we will explore one of the five actions and connect them more deeply to our lives outside of church. How do we receive the gifts of God? How do we share them? How do we experience brokenness and where do we find gratitude in the midst of it? Together we will share the sacrament each week as part of worship. And we will be invited to create our own “communion” rituals at home as we eat with our family and friends. We will cultivate the Eucharist as a way of life so that we may live more deeply as children of God in every aspect of our lives. I look forward to journeying with you through the table!

Peace,

Ann

Thank you! Thank you!

This new year has ushered in a new season of service and there are many folks to thank. A special “thank you” goes out to all the people who served at our different venues for “Jesus Has Left the Building...And We Followed” weekend January 28 & 29:

Habitat for Humanity

Brendan Bevensee, Dick Thomas, Karen Shinevar, Tom Shinevar, Maria Circillo

Community Foodbank

Steve Cutaia, Nancy & Luis Pi-Sunyer, Anne Garty, Ali Campbell, Kristina Mastellone, Cate Heisler

Broadway House for Continuing Care

Mark, Simona & Loretta Graceffo, Liz Donald, Heather Cherrey, Vivianne Potter, Steve Groom, Jackie Stearns, Mark Jackson, Barry Moore

Interfaith Hospitality Network Service Day February 27

On Monday, February 27, FCC will support the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) (<http://inhessexnj.org>) by providing meals, companionship and overnight supervision to local families who are temporarily homeless. They are housed at the First Seventh Day Adventist Church on Elmwood Avenue in Montclair. Volunteer shifts are as following:

5:30-7pm: Dinner—Cook, serve and share a meal with the families.

7:00-8:30pm Evening Activities — share companionship for the adults and homework and activities for the children.

8:30pm—7:00am Overnight Supervision — spend the night in the house to provide help to the families if needed.

A sign-up sheet is in the Guild Room, or contact Brendan Bevensee for more details - brendan_elwood@yahoo.com .

MINISTRY OF HOSPITALITY



Men’s Group – February Breakfast

Saturday February 18, 2012 – Men of FCC are encouraged to attend the FCC Men’s Breakfast group to be held in the Guild Room from 8:30 to 10:00 a.m. on Saturday 2-18-12. All you need to do is bring yourself. Breakfast food, coffee and juices will be provided.

Please email **John Ralosky** at JohnRalosky@msn.com if you plan to attend so we can provide enough for everyone. There were six in attendance at the January meeting, even with the snow.

MINISTRY OF CONGREGATIONAL CARE

The Swap Shop Board is Ready For You! The Swap Shop Board provides an opportunity to communicate with the FCC community for different types of casual needs, and/or to identify a resource or service you may have to offer. Postings can include a desired exchange of services, free or low cost items you have available, and resources you want to share with others. Examples of postings for the board can include things like:



We hope the board will foster helpful connections, meet needs for items and services, and promote the creative use of resources. The board is located outside the Guild Room, and ready

for use. If you are having a more serious and/or personal need, please continue to bring to Reverend Ann. Please remember the Swap Shop Board as you clean out those closets for the New Year! Any questions or concerns can be directed to Angela Graceffo, agraceffo@afhsnj.org. Thanks.

“Looking for an apartment...”

“House sitter needed...”

“Coffee table available...”

“Wanting to swap computer repair for housecleaning...”

Angela

February birthdays!

<i>Diana Telischak</i>	<i>Feb.2</i>
<i>Darin Hueston</i>	<i>Feb.5</i>
<i>Stephanie Powell</i>	<i>Feb.6</i>
<i>Dan Wall</i>	<i>Feb.6</i>
<i>Arabella Egan</i>	<i>Feb.7</i>
<i>Rachael Egan</i>	<i>Feb.16</i>
<i>Joy Endo</i>	<i>Feb.17</i>
<i>Lisa Carabee</i>	<i>Feb.19</i>
<i>Vivianne Potter</i>	<i>Feb.26</i>
<i>Karen Stewart</i>	<i>Feb.29</i>

We’re collecting birthdates to publish in each upcoming newsletter! These are the ones we have on file. Please make sure to email yours to Rena at admin@fccmtc.com .



Safe Church Update

In order to become a safe community for all, FCC is beginning the process of developing a safe church policy. What is a safe church policy? A safe church policy is a commitment to create a church environment free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation, particularly sexual exploitation. It is a set of guidelines and response tools to ensure that everyone, including our most vulnerable members, our children, can feel at home at FCC and not experience any injustice.

There are some valuable ways that setting up a safe church policy will change FCC. For one, it will set up some behavior guidelines, particularly in environments with children, so respect is always a priority when interacting with others at church. Secondly, it will set up clear ground rules about what types of harmful behavior are not accepted at FCC. Thirdly, if someone were ever to have a hurtful experience at church, FCC will have a clear means of responding to ensure we support her/him through that troubling time.

However, we want to be clear about the ways a safe church policy will not change FCC. The safe church policy is not intended to police all of our actions and extinguish warmth from FCC. The safe church policy would not change FCC's goals of providing a vibrant church community and place for spiritual renewal in each of our lives. Rather, the safe church policy will be one tool that reaffirms our dedication to facilitating caring and supportive relationships.

We will be developing the safe church policy over the next five months or so. Our process includes working with established UCC national guidelines as well as the safe church policies of local UCC churches. We will look at the type of ministry programming that we run at FCC to make sure that any suggestions we have for FCC work for us as a community. We will review our suggested safe church policy with the church council for their endorsement. Finally, we will provide an open forum for any FCC members and visitors to find out more about the suggested safe church policy before presenting it at a congregational meeting for the community's approval.

If you have any questions or concerns about the policy or this process, please feel free to be in contact with us. We look forward to working with you more in the future on this important step for FCC.

Angela Graceffo, Madeline Johnson, Lynley Jones, Rev. Ann Ralosky and Wendy Westock

Time To Get Organized - and we need your help!

Please join us on Saturdays or Sunday afternoons in February to help sort and organize supplies and equipment for our Sunday School classrooms.

If you are interested, please see Lynley Jones (lynleyj@comcast.net or 973-746-1216) to arrange a time.

Children & Youth Ministry Meeting February 12 following worship

Please join us in the Sunday School Classroom for at review of recent happenings & plans for the new year!

Sunday School News



Hello FCC!

It feels as if the year has just started and yet February and the beginning of Lent is upon us!

This past month, the children jumped into the new year with valuable lessons about God's call to us as Christians and as children of God.

The Epiphany celebration was a particular highlight for the children. During the children's sermon, they received special visitors who traveled all of the way from the East to celebrate and give gifts for Jesus' birth. This year, the children received small packets of gold (covered chocolate), frankincense and myrrh so they could really get a handle on these special gifts – what they were and what they signified. The Epiphany celebration was an exciting jumping off point for the children to think about the value of gifts and what gifts they can give to Jesus as they follow God. The vibrant costumes, the unique gifts as well as the wisdom of the Magi were an exciting way for a part of the Christmas story to come alive for the children. Thank you to John Sampson and our three Magi who made this celebration a success!

This January as the church began to venture through the eight points of progressive Christianity, the children also dove into these important messages. For example, as a Sunday School we learned about the importance of religious tolerance. We learned that one way to express our faith as Christians is to show a deep respect for the diversity of religions and beliefs. Through an activity where the children physically journeyed through different paths to the mountaintop, they learned that there are many, many ways to live a just and loving life.

In February, we begin the journey of Lent. Like a journey, Lent and Easter is a time of allowing ourselves to be guided towards new insight and transformation. Following the lead of our stories of faith in the Bible and in the modern world, we are free to open ourselves to promises particular to us as individuals and communities of faith. By grace, may we emerge on Pentecost empowered and renewed, a People of the Way.

In the FCC Children's Education Program, we will

make Lent come alive! Through a serial story told during the children's sermons and activities that demonstrate the journey of Lent, the children can come to see themselves as pilgrims on God's path.

This February is an exciting opportunity for growth and excitement in the FCC Children's Education Program. See you there! Peace, Mattie

Needed - Sunday School Teachers!

We are in need of Sunday School teachers for Sessions 4, 5 and 6.

If you are interested, please see Lynley Jones (lynleyj@comcast.net or 973-746-1216) or Mattie Johnson for more details.



Registration for 2012/2013 school year is underway!

Quality child care for infants between 6 weeks and 17 months of age. My Morning Out for 18 months through 30 months. Nursery years, Pre K and Summer Programs for 2 through 6 years olds.

Hours: 7:30 A.M. to 6:30 P.M. Monday through Friday. Calendar available upon request.

Scheduling Options are full and part time with part time/drop off available.

If you would like more information and/or a tour please call: 973-744-6521 or email: info@mmoprograms.org www.mmoprograms.org

MINISTRY OF SPIRITUALITY AND WORSHIP

Ministry Update

I know that FCC is noted for its prayer ministry, and I am a big believer in the power of prayer. Those of you at the recent congregational meeting saw that prayer power in action when I innocently asked what an “acting chair” was and heard myself volunteer to be chair of the S&W ministry. So here I am--a “newbie” to FCC, but not to ministry--eager to continue the great working of the S&W ministry led by Elaine last year, but needing some guidance from those of you who know what goes on here at FCC on a yearly basis.

So the first order of business is to find out who I’m working with apart from the staff members. Elaine sent me a long list of folks who have helped out in the past--if you want to remain on S&W please let me know by e-mailing me (revcherrey@verizon.net) or calling me (973-890-1691) to let me know (I know that sometimes you can’t make every meeting and that’s all good--we want you any way we can get you). As well, if you feel you’d like to give S&W a shot, please contact me the same ways. We can always use good ideas and need many hands at times.

It feels like we just took down the greens (and we did) and now we’re talking about Lent and Easter, but that’s the way the church calendar goes. Ash Wednesday is February 22 and Rev. Ann and the ministry are looking at a communion theme for Lent this year, delving deeper into what communion is and how does it mesh with our lives outside of Sunday services. Watch for information and journey with us during this important time in the life of our church and our lives as followers of Jesus.

Peace & Grace,

Heather Cherrey

New Chair of Spirituality & Worship

Our Church

While I was leafing through old magazines during one of my occasional purge-and-recycle spurts, I came across an article in Spirituality and Health magazine by Thomas Moore. I am a big fan of Thomas Moore’s books – Care of the Soul and The Re-Enchantment of Every Day Life, so I make it a point to never miss his regular column “Care of the Soul” in the magazine.

It was an older publication, from 2008, but it struck me as completely up-to-date in its focus. The article was titled, “Leaving the Church?” and detailed his bio from his decision to leave monastic life, to get a doctorate, to marry. But after 40 years he came to the conclusion that he never really left church. He writes, “On the contrary, I have been moving farther into it. Today, I lecture and give sermons in churches of every denomination. The Church is not a building, not a creed, not a membership, not an authority, not even a community, unless it is the community of all beings. It’s a vision, expressed in values and action, shared with the entire world.”

How is that for a definition of church for the 21st century? The church is a Vision, expressed in values and actions, shared with the entire world. That is who we are. That is why we gather together, to manifest our vision as we proclaim it on the banner at the back of our church: it is our commission as we leave each week to go forth into the world in the name of Christ to bring peace into broken relationships, healing to alienated persons and justice into oppressive structures. This is our Church.

Rev. Barbara Prince

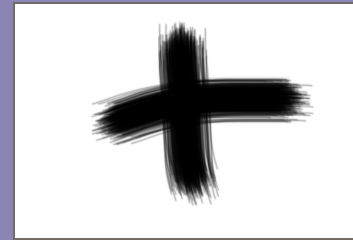
Minister of Spiritual Direction

Open Labyrinth Walks
Every Wednesday
from 6:00-8:00pm in the Sanctuary.



Our new labyrinth in the FCC Sanctuary
Photo by Sarah Day-Boodhoo

Lenten Worship & Practice



Lent is a time when we dare to change our priorities that we may better live God’s priorities. That change may involve the discipline of letting go of a habit or pattern or indulgence, or it might mean adding something to our lives that we might live them more meaningfully and intentionally. This season you are invited to share in the many ways of worship, practice and prayer here at FCC:

Shrove Tuesday
Pancake Supper and Fellowship at
First Montclair House senior citizens’ residence
Ash Wednesday Service of Holy Communion and
Imposition of Ashes
February 22, 8pm in the Sanctuary

Sundays in Lent
Each Sunday will feature the
Sacrament of Communion

February 26
Taking: Receiving the Gifts of God
Mark 1:9-15

March 4
Blessing: Naming God’s Presence
Mark 8:27-38

March 11
Thanking: Grateful Living
John 3:14-21

March 18
Breaking: The Way to Wholeness
John 2:13-25

March 25
Sharing: Living Abundantly
Isaiah 55:6-13



Mark Your Calendars for Shrove Tuesday - February 21

Join the residents at First Montclair House as we have “breakfast for dinner” at our annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on February 21 at 6:00 p.m. We will anticipate the beginning of Lent with a traditional pancake supper and share in fellowship and fun with the senior citizen residents of First Montclair House.

This tradition has its origins in medieval England. Shrove Tuesday was often known simply as “Pancake Day”, originally because making pancakes the night before Ash Wednesday allowed folks to use up rich ingredients (butter, sugar, eggs, etc.) that were often not consumed as people fasted or gave up treats during the 40 days of Lent. Over time, the event came to include special games and races. FCC’s version of the pancake supper at First Montclair House includes wearing of silly aprons, and pancake-flipping skillet races!

First Montclair House is a subsidized senior citizens’ residence which was started by FCC in the 1970’s to provide affordable housing for Montclair’s elderly. Today it still thrives at 54 Walnut Street at the corner of Walnut and Grove Streets (right behind Grove Pharmacy). For more information, contact Anne Garty (agarty14@comcast.net) or Del Pentecost (d_mpentecost@msn.com). So bring an apron and a frying pan – and, of course, your appetite – and come join in the fun and festivities!

Peace, **Liz Donald**