

## Mark Your Calendars!

### February

**Feb 1-3:** Youth Retreat at Camp Bernie

**Feb 3:** Congregational Meeting following worship in the Guild Room

**Feb 3, 10, 24:** New Member Inquiry classes after worship

**Feb 3:** "The Gathered Community" - A new worship experience, Sundays at 4:30 in the library (see pg. 6 for more info).

**Feb 5:** IHN volunteering to serve temporarily homeless families.

**Feb 12:** Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper at First Montclair House at 6pm.

**Feb 13:** Ash Wednesday Service, 8pm

**Feb 16:** Men's Breakfast Meeting, 8:30 –

10:00a.m. in the Guild Room.

**Feb 17:** Charles McCollough's artist talk on "The Nonviolent Radical: the Wisdom Sayings of Jesus." 1pm in the sanctuary (pg.6).

### Recurring Events

Labyrinth Walk—Wednesdays 6-8pm in the Sanctuary

"The Gathered Community" - A new worship experience. Sundays at 4:30 in the library

*For more details check our website calendar*



Find out about MMO's quality child care. Visit [www.mmoprograms.org](http://www.mmoprograms.org) and set up a tour.



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Montclair, New Jersey 07042  
(973)744-4856; admin@fccmtc.com

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

[www.firstcongmontclair.org](http://www.firstcongmontclair.org)

*visit our website...and tell a friend*

**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, 2013

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## From the Moderator

### The Importance of a Moment



As an academic librarian, I interact on a daily basis with demanding professors, detail-oriented clinicians and anxious students. So when someone else crosses my path, it gets my attention.

Just last week a woman wandered into the library. She looked confused, and asked for me by name. I led her to my office and asked her to sit down. She was a beautiful and obviously intelligent young woman from India, but it didn't take me long to realize that she was having great difficulty talking, searching for words and stuttering. She walked with a cane. She asked if I remembered meeting her...I told her that she looked familiar, but unfortunately I did not really recall our last interaction.

After some difficulty, she told me that she was a patient in our traumatic brain injury unit. She was trying to get an appointment with social security and was terribly frustrated by the bureaucracy. She wanted me to make a call and set up an appointment for her.

This is really not my "thing", I thought to myself. Social workers are great at this, but this isn't what I do. I don't have time. And I really can't take this on for a variety of reasons, and I have to get ready for a meeting, and I have no idea if I will be able to get in touch with the person she's seeking. The list went on.

But she had the number, and she put it on the desk in front of me. So I decided I would give it one shot. If the case worker was there, then she could speak to him. But what were the odds of my getting through? Was this just going to be another failed attempt at getting her help? And I REALLY had to get ready for that meeting. So I dialed the number. The case worker answered. I gave the phone to my visitor. With just a few stumbles, she told him what she needed. She got the appointment. It all worked out.

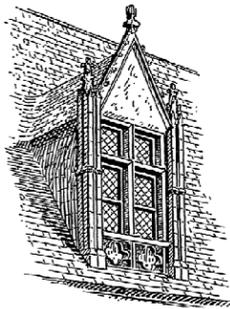
But the questions remained...why did she come to a librarian? Why me? And when DID I meet her before?

And then she told me, in words that were more clear than any she had spoken up to that moment. She said "there was a reason I took two subways to come here today to see you. When I met you before, you were kind to me, and you helped me. I knew you would help me now."

It stopped me cold. What if I had let my impatience, or my rigidity, or my adherence to rules keep me from making that one call? I don't remember how I helped her last time, or why it was so memorable to her. But I do know one thing...God was in that moment. And whatever else happened that day, it could not compare with the feeling I had, that just for that one instant in time, by dialing one number, I had made a difference.

I don't know when my next moment will come, but I do hope that I will be ready. I didn't change the world, but I changed one person's day for the better. And it doesn't get any better than that.

*Elaine Wells*



## From My Study Window

### Blessed Are...

Lent is a season of reflection on our relationship with God through our relationship with others. We are challenged to confront our attitudes, behaviors, and desires and align them with God's dream for us. This can be a difficult experience — facing ourselves honestly is something we often avoid. But Jesus teaches us that it is only through daring to be in right relationship with each other that we can be right with God.

Each Sunday we will explore Jesus' radical call to discipleship and engage his model of counter-cultural teachings. One of Jesus' most provocative teachings are known as "The Beatitudes". Found in both the gospels of Matthew and Luke, these wisdom sayings describe God's priority for the poor, the hungry, the merciful and the peacemakers — those who are most overlooked by the powerful in our society. The Beatitudes remind us that God blesses those who our own world would rather ignore and challenges us to embrace and affirm those on the margins. That is where God dwells, Jesus says. To do this, we must first look in our own hearts.

So this season of Lent, let's journey together from our own hearts to the heart of God. It is there that we will find ourselves "blessed."

Peace,  
**Ann**

## Congregational Meeting Sunday, February 3

All members and friends of First Congregational Church are encouraged to attend our annual congregational meeting held immediately after worship in the Guild Room.



We will approve our slate of Council leadership as well as our 2013 budget and share an update on progress in the church.  
All are welcome!

## Thank You! Thank You!

The New Year began with a flurry of artistic activity, and as always there are many hearts and hands behind it. So we send out a big "thank you" to...

...**Elizabeth Honer, John Sampson, Kyle Chvasta, Mark Ferguson, Peter Wert, Ben and Nikki Rose, Mattie Johnson and the FCC Sunday School kids** for designing and creating such wonderful "Alleluia" banners for the Sanctuary!

...**Kyle Chvasta, Teri Bartolo, Peter Wert, Tracey Stephens, JR Krauza with advice from Barb Prince and Julie Morgan** for working on creating gallery space in the back of the Sanctuary.

... **Roger Sedarat** for his inspiration on the Lenten Poetry series and to **Naima Tryman, Janifer Marsh, Derek Polzer and Rachael Egan** for creating their "beatitude poems" to share with us during Lent.

...to **Matt Podwoski, Barbara Prince, John Ralosky, Rafael Rodriguez and Stephanie Sheerin** for serving as mentors to our confirmands.

...**Mark Graceffo, Tim Holly and Stephanie Sheerin** for bringing a special worship experience to the residents of Broadway House on January 20.

... **Gregg Monsees** for continuing to coordinate our Sanctuary flower donations each Sunday. If you really want to thank Gregg, consider becoming a "flower coordinator" yourself! It's a beautiful way to serve the church!



**New Flower Committee  
Coordinator Needed!**

**We are in need of someone to coordinate our flower donations each Sunday. If you have a green thumb, love to arrange flowers, or just appreciate their beauty in the Sanctuary, please consider serving in this way.**

Please contact Gregg Monsees at [greggpeters2@msn.com](mailto:greggpeters2@msn.com)

## MINISTRY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



### FCC Children's Education Program

Hi FCC Families!

To me, sometimes the church seasons feel like an ongoing stream that ventures to many distinct aspects of our relationship with God. So far we have travelled through the verdant orchards of ordinary time where we discover how we can grow with God to Advent's eager "are we there yet?", where we are continually peering around the bends of the stream to see what is next to finally reach the bright, twinkling joy of Christmas and Epiphany.

This stream of church seasons has finally brought us to Lent. And if the church seasons are a stream, I find Lent to be some of the most challenging and fruitful waters. I especially find Lent an interesting part of the stream to travel with kids.

Some questions I typically hear from kids – "Why is it called Lent? Why do we give something up?"

And to these questions I add my own. How do I explain such difficult Bible stories to kids? How do I talk about our role in this ancient story of sin and forgiveness?

Lent is the season of "letting go," and a season of choices, pilgrimage, and difficult stories en route to the harsh events in Jerusalem. It is a season of challenge and justice, promise and hope, as we hold the stories within our stories. The name "Lent" originally generated from the Latin word for "fortieth", representing the forty days from Ash Wednesday until Easter Eve. People have provided many reasons why it is traditional to "give up" something for Lent, but one that I find helpful is that by giving up one of our faults it allows us to be closer to God.

And as for my own questions, the only answers I can find are when I steep myself in God's grace and love. It is when I remember that I am doing what I can to help the kids grow up into adults with robust faith lives that I can tell the difficult stories with love, care and honesty. It's never easy, but the best way that I can talk about how we are implicit in sin and injustice that breaks God's heart is through reminding myself and the kids of God's never-ending love and mercy. It's helpful for me to remember – God loves me and you and each and every one of us always. And that is why we travel these hard waters to learn how to love God better.

To help us as a congregation step into the Lenten stories, there are a few opportunities in the upcoming season:

**Lenten candle cross** – similar to the idea of an Advent wreath. During the children's sermon we will use a Lenten candle cross to guide us through the Bible stories.

**Stations of the cross** – On two Sundays during Sunday School, the kids will walk through some of the stations of the cross to help them understand the events leading up to Easter.

**At-home Holy Week resources** – to help our parents teach the story of Lent's transition into Easter, we will be providing some at-home resources for Holy Week.

I am looking forward to all that we can learn together along this path of the church season stream. Whether we are in rough waters or dry spells, God will be with us along the journey.

Peace,  
**Mattie**



## Confirmation Update

As I write this the confirmands and youth are getting ready to head to Camp Bernie for the New Jersey Association annual Youth Retreat.

They will join other middle school and high school kids from area UCC churches as they have fun and explore their faith. The theme of this year's retreat is "Faithbook" and will engage the kids with questions on how their online life and social media can help deepen their faith.

We have also added two new travelers to the confirmation journey: Jack Connolly and Francy Egan. Jack is an eighth grader at Glenfield Middle School and Francy is in eighth grade at Mount Hebron Middle School. We welcome them both and look forward to many fun, challenging and enlightening experiences ahead.

Our next confirmation session will be Sunday February 10.

## MINISTRY OF SPIRITUALITY AND WORSHIP

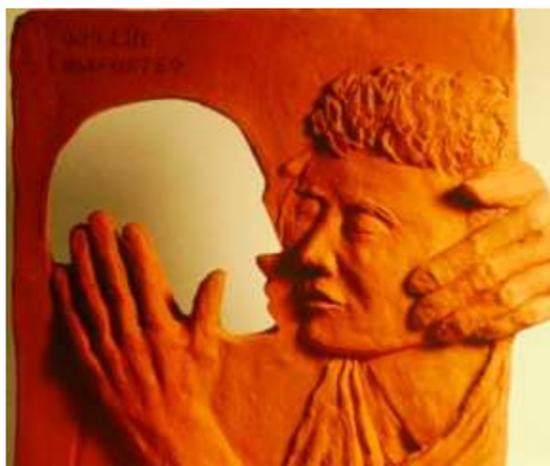
### *Radical Blessings: An Artist's Journey through the Beatitudes*

Special artist's lecture by Charles McCollough, February 17 at 1pm

Beginning on Sunday, February 17, First Congregational Church of Montclair will host a series of sculptures from theologian and artist, the Rev. Charles McCollough, Ph.D. McCollough's works provocatively interpret a variety of biblical stories and themes into clay sculptures, drawing upon both a modern and first century context. His latest project is a book, *The Non-violent Radical*, which interprets the wisdom sayings of Jesus in the gospels in words and images.

McCollough examines Jesus' wisdom in the context of the political and economic world of the Roman Empire and then applies it to our own time for both personal growth and social action. Original works of art by McCollough will be displayed in the church, illustrating some of the texts of the eight sayings known as "The Beatitudes." Found in the gospels of both Matthew and Luke, these sayings create a counter-cultural vision of the realm of God and were at the heart of Jesus' vision for the world.

Dr. McCollough will present a multi-media program and lecture on these works beginning at **1:00 pm on Sunday February 17 in the Sanctuary** of First Congregational Church, 40 South Fullerton, Montclair, NJ. The program is free and open to the public.



"Blessed Are Those Who Mourn" by Charles McCollough

### INTRODUCING "THE GATHERED COMMUNITY" Beginning February 3<sup>rd</sup> at 4:30pm

Have you ever wanted to experience a greater period of sacred silence in worship, or in your life in general? Come and join us! In fulfillment of FCC's mission of welcoming all people at all places along life's journey who are seeking a more abundant life in relationship with God, we are beginning a program called "The Gathered Community". This is another opportunity to experience the living God in community. For those who seek the sacred beyond congregational services this will complement their existing worship experience. It will also be open to the community at large, serving as an alternative for those who are uncomfortable with any level of institutionalized worship or who come from traditions where unstructured silence is the primary component of gathering in sacred community.

We'll meet on Sunday afternoons at 4:30 in the church library and begin with a brief reading and the posing of a question for contemplation. Then we'll share a half hour of silence that individuals can treat as meditation, respite, or worshipful waiting in the tradition of Friends (Quakers). That time will be followed by shared conversation over tea. All readings will be of sacred texts with an emphasis on (but not limited to) the New Testament and the extra-canonical teachings of Jesus.

Eventually, participants will have the opportunity to be led in Centering Prayer, Christian meditation in the tradition of John Main, Quaker silent worship, and lectio divina. These would be once a month instructives that would be announced in advance.

Come and enrich your journey of faith and your relationship with God and one another!

*The Gathered Community will be led by Reverend Jack Cuffari, an Interspiritual Minister and spiritual counselor ordained by the One Spirit Interfaith Seminary. Born into a family of radical Catholics, Jack was ordained as an Elder in the Presbyterian Church USA in 1995, and entered the Quaker community in 2001, where he has been active in the areas of Conflict Transformation and Compassionate Listening. Jack is a certified Disaster Relief Chaplain and serves as Vice President of the Montclair, NJ Clergy Association. His path focuses on the mystic traditions of the three Abrahamic faiths.*

## MINISTRY OF SPIRITUALITY AND WORSHIP



### Ministry Update

If you have been in worship lately you will have seen the beautiful "Alleluia Banners" adorning our sanctuary. The "banner elves" have been hard at work and their enthusiasm for this project is infectious. In addition, another group has been busy helping Jay Richardson ready the sanctuary for the arrival of the newest set of sculptures from Charles McCollough coming on February 17th. Many thanks to all who have worked so hard on these projects.

Some may ask why go to all this trouble. Well the Spirituality and Worship Ministry, with guidance from Rev Ann, are always looking for ways to enhance, to expand, to give you another way to worship and to experience the living God in all her many ways of coming to us. Just as we experience "God" as "Creator", "Redeemer", and "Sustainer", so too we experience God in our lives in various ways. Our goal is to open as many doors as we can to make worship meaningful for all of us.

On February 13 we will have our annual Ash Wednesday Service to begin the period of time we call Lent. Lent is a time of worship, meditation, looking at where we are with God in our personal lives. We hope you will join us for this service. During our Sunday Lenten services, members of FCC will be sharing something of their lives in poetry, helped by Roger Sedarat.

Grace and Peace, *Heather Cherrey*

### Light Your Candles

Rev. Ann's Epiphany sermon series, "Fear-Less", has been inspiring on so many levels. In addition to her wise and thoughtful words, we have been provided with tools for our spiritual tool kit. One Sunday, Ali Campbell led us in holy breathing exercise, and this past week Rev. Ann led us in *Lectio Divina* – an exercise in holy reading. I would like to add another simple tool to our spiritual tool kits – candles, and the blessing of holy fire.

We began Epiphany by lighting candles as a symbol of bringing light into our darkness. It is a symbol that needs to become manifest in our daily lives as well. Taking just a few minutes each evening to light a candle is an act of faith and hope. It is a practice that affirms how God does not leave us to dwell in darkness. Lighting a candle is also an act of gratitude. So often these days it seems that, as a culture, we are very focused on what we don't have, on what we are lacking, on what we feel entitled to have. When we can refocus our thoughts to include our blessings of life and light, something always shifts in our souls.

So much can be set in motion by the simple act of lighting a candle in the darkness of each night – so easy and yet so profound in impact. So get out those candles, and fire them up!



*Rev. Barb*  
Minister of Spiritual Direction

### Ash Wednesday Service Feb. 13 at 8pm in the Sanctuary



Begin the season of Lent with a special worship service with Holy Communion and anointing with ashes. This ancient practice signifies an awareness of our own mortality and prepares our hearts for the challenging journey of Lent.

## MINISTRY OF CONGREGATIONAL CARE



### SEND A LINE. CONNECT WITH JOSEPH.

Long standing member Joseph Shepstone has been transferred to Burlington Woods Nursing Home. It's quite a distance, but we are able to communicate via phone & mail.

Joseph's assigned nurse, John, seems very sensitive and willing to assist with communication by bringing the phone to Joseph's ear to hear greetings (around 11:00 a.m. is a good time).

If you would like to participate in this long distance ministry please feel free to call ("We are thinking of you.") or send a card, children's drawing, etc.

Joseph Shepstone  
E-Wing  
Burlington Woods  
115 Sunset Road  
Burlington, NJ 08016  
(609) 387-3620

Blessings,  
*Angela Graceffo*



### 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>Rich Gilfert</i>	<i>Feb.10</i>
<i>Nick Duhamel</i>	<i>Feb.13</i>
<i>Mark Ferguson</i>	<i>Feb.15</i>
<i>Rachael Egan</i>	<i>Feb.16</i>
<i>Joy Endo</i>	<i>Feb.17</i>
<i>Gavin Boodhoo</i>	<i>Feb.20</i>
<i>Vivianne Potter</i>	<i>Feb.26</i>
<i>Kate Chardavoyne</i>	<i>Feb.27</i>
<i>Samuel Ferguson</i>	<i>Feb.27</i>

Make sure to email us your birthday for upcoming newsletters! Email Rena at [admin@fccmtc.com](mailto:admin@fccmtc.com).

## MINISTRY OF HOSPITALITY



### FCC Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner Tuesday, February 12 @6pm at First Montclair House 56 Walnut Street, Montclair

Join us for "breakfast for dinner" with the residents of First Montclair House. The evening will include:

-  Silly aprons!
-  Pancake-flipping skillet races!
-  Fun and fellowship!

**Bring an apron and a frying pan – and your appetite – and join in the fun and festivities**

**First Montclair House**  
56 Walnut Street, Montclair  
(corner of Walnut and Grove Streets,  
right behind Grove Pharmacy)

*First Montclair House is a subsidized senior citizens' residence, started by FCC in the 1970's to provide affordable housing for Montclair's elderly.*

Please RSVP to Rena at [admin@fccmtc.com](mailto:admin@fccmtc.com) or by phone 973-744-4856

For more information, contact Maureen Holly at [tandmholly@aol.com](mailto:tandmholly@aol.com)

## MINISTRY OF PEACE & JUSTICE

### Interfaith Hospitality Network, February 5



On Tuesday, February 5, members and friends of FCC will be providing a meal, companionship and overnight supervision to temporarily homeless families through the Interfaith Hospitality Network. The families will be staying at Union Congregational Church in Upper Montclair for the week. First Cong will be one of three congregations to help care for the families while they are there.

If you are interested in the ministry for our next service date, please contact:

Sarah Feliciano [sfeliciano1@gmail.com](mailto:sfeliciano1@gmail.com) or  
Naima Tryman [ntryman08@aol.com](mailto:ntryman08@aol.com)

### What's Next for "ONA"?

FCC first became an "Open & Affirming" (ONA) church in 2004 and since then our big rainbow flag and wide-open doors have been welcoming LGBT folks into our community. We are proud that we have become a radically inclusive congregation, but 9 years later we are wondering "what's next?"

Seminary intern Tom Walton and FCC member John Sampson are inviting ALL members of FCC, straight and gay, to join in a conversation about how we can live into our identity as an ONA congregation. It's great to affirm all who come through our doors, but do we also have a responsibility to be a prophetic voice outside of this church? To a world that often sees "Christian" and "gay" as mutually exclusive, do we have a responsibility to challenge that idea? Our conversation is just beginning, but if you want to be a part of it, please contact Tom Walton [twalvis@comcast.net](mailto:twalvis@comcast.net) and John Sampson [jc\\_sampson@yahoo.com](mailto:jc_sampson@yahoo.com) for more information.

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### Men's Group – February Breakfast Meeting

#### Saturday February 16

Men of FCC are warmly invited 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 February 16**. All you need to do is bring yourself. Breakfast foods, coffee and juices will be provided.

Please email **John Ralosky** at [JohnRalosky@msn.com](mailto:JohnRalosky@msn.com) if you plan to attend, so we can provide enough for everyone.

### New Members' Inquiry Class February 3, 10, 24

Have you been attending FCC for a while and think you may have found your spiritual home? Then join us for our winter New Members' Inquiry Class! It's a great way to learn more about who we are, how we believe and what it means to be a member of First Congregational Church.

The classes are conducted after worship for one hour in the library. We will share a bit about our faith stories, learn the history and theology of the United Church of Christ, discuss how we worship here and what we stand for, as well as learn the "ins and outs" of membership. Child care is provided upon request.

We will receive members into the congregation during worship on Sunday, March 10. If you would like to attend or have any questions, please see Rev. Ann.

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