

Mark Your Calendars!

March

Feb.26-Mar.11: FCC Lenten Food Drive. Donations of non-perishable foods for Human Needs Food Pantry (see page 5).

Mar.4: Spirituality & Worship meeting in the library immediately following worship.

Mar.17: FCC Men's Breakfast Group Meeting. 8:30-10:00a.m. in the Guild Room. Please RSVP so we can have enough food.

Mar.18: An Evening For Parents & Youth, 5:30pm. Dinner and discussion about the development of FCC's Youth program. RSVP.

Mar.24: Memorial service for Bob Berry 11:00a.m. in the FCC Sanctuary.

Mar.25: Special Guest Preacher, Dr. Jim Garrison, at FCC.

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

Recurring events

- **Wednesdays 6-8pm:** Labyrinth Walk
- **First & third Sunday mornings of each month:** Bible Study 9:30-10:40 in the library.

For more details check our website calendar



first
NEWS

40 South Fullerton Avenue
Montclair, New Jersey 07042
(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

March, 2012

From the Moderator

I confess to being a political junkie. I watch the debates, I am glued to the conventions, I scrutinize the editorials, and I monitor the polls. I seem to be more mesmerized by those comments that come from those I disagree with than I do from those on "my" side of the aisle. And I marvel at how often the word "Christian" is coming up in our recent political discourse. Who is a Christian, what is a Christian, who is a "moral" person but NOT a Christian, is Mormonism Christianity...a great deal seems to hang on the definitions of these words. Several years ago, our President was harshly criticized because he went to a certain Christian church, now he is looked upon suspiciously because he doesn't!

The gate seems to be getting narrower with each passing political race. As I listen to the various sound bytes that seek to define Christianity, I am reminded of my evangelical background. As a teenager, the message I heard resounding loud and clear from the pulpit was that Christians don't drink, don't smoke, don't dance, and don't go to movies. I had a little trouble with that movie part, as I didn't remember Jesus ever directly prohibiting a trip to the Cineplex!

But when I looked behind the scenes, of that church and so many others, I saw a different message...one of youth groups planning outings to visit the sick and elderly in nursing homes, of people preparing meals for children whose mother was in the hospital, of young people traveling to underprivileged places to work on building projects. And I wondered why THAT wasn't the message that was coming from the pulpit instead! What we "shouldn't do" was coming through loud and clear, what we should do, and in fact were doing, sometimes got lost in the shuffle.

Inside

- **Sunday School Update**
- **Lenten Food Drive**
- **Men's Breakfast**
- **A Parent's Perspective**
- **Spiritual AND Religious**
- **Labyrinth Walks**
- **Special Guest Preacher**
March 25

At FCC, we know that words are important, and it is why we have sought to proclaim our progressive Christianity in ways that people understand. But we also know that actions speak louder than words. And when we gather to make sandwiches for Bridges Outreach to the Homeless, or sing Christmas carols with our brothers and sisters at Broadway House, or serve a meal at IHN, we are doing more to define ourselves than any label ever could. Imagine how much could be accomplished if those who seek leadership would stop fighting over definitions, and start taking action to care for "the least of these." We can only hope and pray.....

Peace, *Elaine Wells*

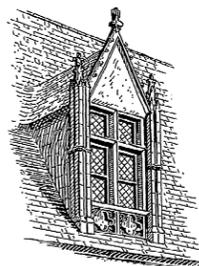


**Special Guest
Preacher
March 25
10:30am**

Dr. Jim Garrison

**Co-Founder of The Gorbachev Foundation
and State of the World Forum will preach
on the confluence of current environmental
and political crises and a rising spiritual
consciousness in a sermon entitled**

"Return to Gaia"



From My Study Window

Spiritual and Religious!

There is no doubt that an enormous spiritual shift is afoot in 21st century America. Statistics* tell us that Americans are changing their institutional religious identities at an unprecedented rate. Roughly 44% of Americans have left the faith they were born into, 35% worship in multiple communities, weekly worship attendance has dropped from 31% in 1970 to 16% in 2009. While many in the traditional church try to explain away these numbers, the polls don't lie. However sobering these stats may be, there is good news. While many of us may be moving away from the church-going habits of our parents and grandparents, we are not moving away from God. Our spiritual hunger still exists — but we are looking for new models and new communities to feed us.

In recent decades religion pollsters in a number of countries asked a simple question: "Do you think of yourself as:

- Spiritual but NOT religious (30%)
- Religious but NOT spiritual (9%)
- Religious AND spiritual (48%)
- NOT religious, NOT spiritual (13%)

The largest movement over the decades was into the third category: religious *and* spiritual. While people were not satisfied with a rigid, doctrine-driven faith, they were also rejecting the idea that they could simply be "seekers" without a set of practices, rituals, traditions and shared stories to help them along the way. What they are looking for is a faith large and generous enough to contain the spiritual questions, yet grounded enough to draw on shared wisdom.

As we move from being a growing church to a thriving church, we hope to be a place that meets the spiritual needs of a new generation. Firmly rooted in the traditions, stories and practices that make us Christian, we also hope to move into a faith where experience of God is central to our identity; where worship feeds both heart and head, and where we emerged as changed people, prepared to meet the needs of the world, as Jesus inspires us to do. The road ahead is unknown, but filled with promise and hope. And isn't that the essence of faith?

Peace,

Ann

*Christianity After Religion by Dianna Bulter Bass, 2012

Thank you! Thank you!

To all who made the following events possible:

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
February 22 at First Montclair House

Anne Garty, Nancy & Luis Pi-Sunyer, Dick Thomas, Liz & Jim Donald, Karen Shinevar, Brendan Bevensee, Del & Missy Pentecost, Stella Wilkins, Stephanie Sheerin and the MANY others who joined in the fun!

FCC Clean-Up Day
February 25

Dick Thomas, Jay Richardson, Del Pentecost, Elizabeth Honer, Jim Donald, Karen Shinevar, Nancy & Luis Pi-Sunyer, John Ralosky

Interfaith Hospitality Network
February 22 at Seventh Day Adventist Church

Brendan Bevensee, Naima Tryman, Ali Campbell, Megan Ruzala, Loretta, Simona & Mark Graceffo, Jim Racine, Dick Thomas & Heather Cherrrey

We Say Goodbye to Bob Berry 1933-2012 Memorial Service March 24, 11am

On February 8 Bob Berry passed away from lung cancer at his home in Florida. His wife, Fay, and daughter, Pat were at his side. As a public man, Bob accomplished much: a graduate of Dartmouth College, paratrooper in West Berlin during WWII, 40 year executive with the electrical firm Thomas & Betts Corp where he presided over the growth of the Canadian and European branches and set up operations in Asia and Australia. He retired in 1995.

But here at FCC, we remember Bob best as a large man with the even larger heart, a cheerful and loving presence each Sunday morning. His optimism and belief in this community was constant. His hugs and words of encouragement touched many of us. While he would not define himself as a spiritual man, Bob embodied the grace, joy and trust in God that lay at the heart of our faith. He was constantly looking for ways to serve others, to lend a word of advice, to support the needs of this church and its members. We truly mourn his loss among us but are blessed for having known him.

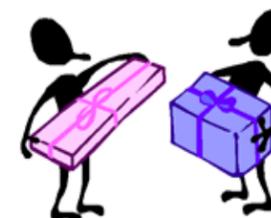
MINISTRY OF HOSPITALITY



Men's Group – March Breakfast

Saturday **March 17, 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 3-17-12. 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.

Shop at iGive and Earn Money for FCC!



Using iGive is very simple, and the potential donations for FCC are huge. iGive members can generate donations for the cause of their choice by shopping online at any of the 900+ participating iGive stores. Each store will donate a percentage of your online purchase to the cause of your choice – at no cost to you. Start at the www.igive.com website, follow the simple one-time instructions to register as an iGive shopper (selecting First Congregational Church of Montclair NJ as your designated cause), select a store, and shop online as usual. The church will receive 100% of the donation amount advertised by each participating store on the iGive website.

If you're making an online purchase, check to see if your store participates; new stores are joining iGive all the time. Some of those participating include Clinique, Drugstore.com, Petco, Barnes & Noble, J.C.Penney, Macy's, Staples, Expedia, Target, Home Depot, L.L.Bean, Orbitz, Hanes, Oshkosh B'Gosh, Nordstroms, Travelocity, VisionDirect, 1-800-PetMeds, and hundreds of others.

iGive sends regular emails updating you about the contributions you have earned for FCC, and you can also track the total amount of gifts made to FCC on the iGive website. Every purchase helps, and every new iGive shopper receives a \$5.00 bonus donation to their cause so far almost \$600 has been donated to FCC through iGive!

Want to know more about how it works? Ask Wendy Westock or Anne Garty.

Anne Garty

March birthdays!

Doris Burn	Mar.2
Bob Sillery	Mar.6
Wendy Westock	Mar.6
Frederick Maggio	Mar.14
Karen Shinevar	Mar.16
John Sampson	Mar.17
Heather Krauza	Mar.18
David Baird	Mar.26
J.R. Krauza	Mar.28

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.



MINISTRY OF CHILDREN & YOUTH

A Parent's Perspective: Reflections On Lent

"Remember that you came from dust, and to dust you shall return." Pastor Ann spoke these words as she imposed ashes on the back of my right hand at last month's Ash Wednesday service, the first I've ever attended.

I was raised in an evangelical Protestant church in Arizona, where I heard of Lent for the first time in college (along with many other obscure and interesting practices...). My non-denominational church hadn't observed a liturgical calendar. There was no Advent, no Epiphany, no Lent. We were constantly encouraged to fill our hearts with hope, joy, love and faith. Easter fit right in. But, Lent?

As a parent, I've decided to raise my children with a progressive Christian faith, and one of the things I am grateful for is that FCC also exposes them, perhaps paradoxically, to more traditional rites and rituals than those with which I was raised. These practices connect us not only with our Christian ancestors, but also with humanity at large. Many of these observances have incorporated ancient seasonal rites, and others, such as fasting, candle-lighting and giving to the poor, have obvious parallels in other faith traditions.

This year, for the first time, my family is observing Lent. We had already adopted many of the cozier traditions like lighting Advent candles. But the season of Lent presents some clear challenges for parents, and we were a little slower to acquire this one. For we modern American parents, who work so hard to build happy, confident kids filled with boundless optimism and great plans for the future, Lent can feel a little like a splash of ice water in the face. How could I possibly bring my small children wholly into a season that starts things off with stark reminders of our own shortcomings and mortality?

The more time I spend with this season, however, the more I really like it. As a family, we've decided to give up butter for these Lenten days. Generations of Christians before us went without this same ingredient during Lent, and it's nice to feel that we are fellow-travelers with people of many other faiths who practice some sort of fasting.

The best thing about it, though, is that it provides us with a tangible way to experience solidarity with people in need. This has really resonated with my kids. As that sad, dawning realization settles on them that they can't have some delicious buttery thing they had set their hearts on, I let them know I feel the same way. Then I remind them that when we are feeling that sense of want, it helps us remember all the people who don't have enough money for any food at all. I watch their faces as they internalize that notion, and – they get it! So far (fingers crossed), we haven't had a single episode of crying or begging for something with butter.

We've also incorporated prayer into our mealtimes for Lent. My daughter's wonderful suggestion was that at dinnertime each night we should all hold hands and give each person a turn, going from youngest to oldest, to say a short prayer. Given their young ages, the prayers have ranged from the comical ("I wish I could fly") to the desperate ("I hope I master my subtraction facts"), but every one of them has been in earnest, and has provided new insight into these fascinating, changing little people. (I'm sure that hearing Mom and Dad pray out loud has had the same effect on the kids.) This is probably one of those things we should have been doing all along, but Lent has paved the way, giving us the frame of mind to actually start.

Spirituality is deeply personal, and sharing a spiritual practice with one's children can feel awkward. While I often feel the baggage from my own upbringing, and am not always confident I have fully thought out the best answers and approaches for my children, I find that whenever I invite them to participate in these practices with me, I am always glad I did. They are always strengthened in their own developing notions of faith, and our family emerges more securely bound together for the experience.

These early experiences are helping to form our children's spiritual foundation. Adding the practices of Lent may help ensure that foundation is infused not only with confidence and optimism, but also with humility, discipline and patience. By paring away the extras, Lent is freeing us to focus on the barest essentials, those few things that are truly important in this short life. Because we all did come from dust. And to dust we shall return. Lent helps us see what really matters.

Lynley Jones

An Evening For Parents and Youth: March 18, 5:30pm

Middle Schoolers, High Schoolers and their parents are invited to a dinner and discussion about the development of FCC's Youth program. Help us shape a program that meets your needs. RSVP to Rena at admin@fccmtc.com / 973-744-4856, and let us know if you will need childcare for younger children.

Your Help Needed!

Weekend volunteers needed to help organize Sunday School supplies and equipment. Please contact Lynley Jones at lynleyj@comcast.net or 973-746-1216 to arrange a convenient 1-2 hour time to help.

MINISTRY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Sunday School News



Hello FCC!

It seems we have jetted through February to find ourselves in March and already in the midst of Lent!

Lent is God's invitation towards grace. Lent is a journey where we can get a realistic look at our lives, where God is working and where we have felt a lack of God's presence. As we reflect on our resilience and weaknesses, God is journeying alongside us offering us grace – comfort and encouragement.

When we begin the journey of Lent, we do not know our destination. When we first commit to give up something or take on a spiritual practice, we do not know all of the wisdom and questions we can earn through that change. But by taking that step, we invite God to work in our lives in unexpected ways.

For children (as for all of us), Lent can be difficult to wrap our minds around. In the Children's Education Program, we are excited about creating a meaningful experience for the children where they can begin to understand their own journeys with God.

This Lent, during Sunday School we have expanded the "children's church" gathering worship service so more children can participate through reading new prayers and singing new songs. Additionally, to help the children understand Lent as a journey, Nancy Pi-Sunyer has created rainbow cobble stone steps into the Sunday School room.

During the children's message each Sunday, the children's sermon will become an episodic story about a boy named Avery and his journey with God. Complete with cliffhangers, it is an interactive experience where the children decide where we go next. Who knows what we will discover about God!

We have developed a Lenten prayer wall on the bulletin board outside the mailroom. If you or your child has a prayer or concern on your heart, please feel free to add it to the board so we can pray about it as a community.

In the church Narthex and Sunday School creation room, you can find Lent at home materials so your family can celebrate Lent together.

Finally, to help the children understand that drawing close to God often means caring for others, we are doing a Lenten food drive. Inspired by the theme of communion - of entering into relationships with others by gathering together with food - the children of FCC are organizing a food drive. When next at the grocery store, please pick up some extra food. Food drop off will be in the Narthex. On March 11, 2012, the children will present our food drive offering during the worship service.

Lent is a powerful opportunity to journey with God to discover where God is in our lives and where else we can invite God in. Through these experiences as a Sunday school, there are many ways for us to grow stronger as children of God.

Peace, *Mattie*

Needed - Sunday School Teachers!

We are in need of Sunday School teachers for Sessions 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

PLEASE, PLEASE COME!

Guest preacher **Dr. Jim Garrison, March 25**

On Sunday, March 25 we will have a guest preacher, Dr. Jim Garrison. Jim is currently the president of Wisdom University, an amazing global learning think tank dedicated to creating leaders with a depth of wisdom, trained in leading resilient communities in these chaotic days.

Jim is a man of great energy and wisdom himself. He received his MTS from Harvard Divinity School, his PhD in Philosophical Theology from Cambridge U. In 1992 Jim partnered with Mikail Gorbachev in the creation of The Gorbachev Foundation and in 1995 he partnered with Mikail Gorbachev and Sen. Alan Cranston in creating the State of the World Forum, of which he was president. He was also a founding partner with Sec. George Schultz and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnaze of the International Foreign Policy Institute.

Jim is devoted to finding paths of peace and cooperation through education and ethical/spiritual development. On this Sunday he will be speaking to our care and stewardship of the environment and why it matters so much, on so many levels.

It is my great privilege to be a PhD student at Wisdom University, the brain child that morphed out of Matthew Fox's Center for Creation Spirituality in 2004. My studies have taken me from the great cathedral in Chartres, to the Caves of Lascaux and Font de Gaume, to the Tor of Glastonbury and a riverbank in The Bronx. Each intensive has been a huge stretch for me spiritually and intellectually. Plus, it's really cool to meet and be taught by the authors of books I have been reading for the last 20 years – Rupert Sheldrake, Jean Houston, Caroline Myss, Jeremy Taylor, Rabbi Rami Shapiro, and my beloved thesis advisor Dr. Apela Colorado, president of The Worldwide Indigenous Science Network, to name only a few.

So I hope you will make time on March 25 to come to church and hear Jim speak. Thank you!!!

Where is the information in the data?
Where is the knowledge in the information?
Where is the wisdom in the knowledge?
T.S. Eliot

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

Spirituality and Worship Ministry Update

Our meeting for the end of February continued our discussion with regard to the events around our Lenten worship. Ash Wednesday starts this introspective season of the church and we hope all will have had the chance to worship with us. Rev. Ann is busy fine tuning our deepening understanding of communion which is the theme for our Lenten journey this year. She will be taking the different parts of the communion ritual (taking, blessing, thanking, breaking, and sharing) and looking at the ways they fit into our daily living. For example, we as a congregation will be partnering with the Sunday School for a food drive as a part of the "sharing" aspect of the ritual. We are also looking at ways during Holy Week to widen the concept of FCC being a "community of prayer". Our next meeting on March 4th will continue with our making plans for Holy Week and Easter. We don't "go to church"- we are the church! Join us if you have ideas and are willing to share them with us.

Peace & Grace,

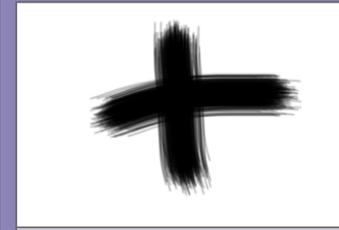
Heather Cherrey

Chair of Spirituality & Worship

**Spirituality & Worship Meeting
Sunday, March 4 after worship**

Please join us in the library!

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

FCC Lenten Food Drive

February 26 – March 11



Please bring donations of non-perishable foods and canned goods for the collection box in the Narthex through March 11.

All contributions will be donated to the Human Needs Food Pantry in Montclair.

We need: *pasta, canned sauce, cereal, canned vegetables & fruit, soup, peanut butter, mac & cheese, oatmeal, etc.*



Organized by the Children & Youth of FCC