

Mark Your Calendars!

September

Sept. 5: Labyrinth re-opens! On-going Wednesdays Sept.5-May 22, from 6 to 8pm in the sanctuary.

Sept.8: Soul Circle—Monthly on the 2nd Saturday 9-11a.m. until June 8 (series of 7).

Sept. 9: New Members Inquiry Class (Sept. 9, 16 &30) following worship service.

Sept. 15: FCC Men's Breakfast Group Meeting 8:30 to 10:00 a.m. in the Guild Rm. Breakfast foods provided. Please RSVP.

Sept. 23: FCC Fall Picnic.

Sept. 29 & 30: Jesus Has Left the Building ...And We Followed weekend.

October

Oct. 6: Family Communion Workshop 10am-12 noon in the Guild Room.

Oct. 7: Blessing of the animals.

Oct. 13: Fall Family Potluck (rain date Oct.20).

Oct. 20: FCC Men's Breakfast Meeting.

Oct. 27: NJ Association gathering OFFSITE in Short Hills.

For more details check our website calendar



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first NEWS



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

September, 2012

From the Moderator



"As you are able.." We hear that every Sunday in various parts of our worship experience. And how easy it is to ignore those words when we in fact ARE able. But when we're not, they resonate in a very different way.

As you probably all know, recently, my husband Bob took a nasty fall. Five hours in the emergency room, several X-rays, and one cat scan later, we learned that he had fractured a bone in his heel, and that it meant six weeks of staying completely off his feet. In other words, we were about to enter a whole new world...one of crutches, wheel chairs, walkers, footwraps, and gauze pads. So blissfully accustomed to unfettered mobility, we both felt overwhelmed. My mind raced during the ride home from the emergency room at 2AM. How would he get up the stairs as we live in a second floor condo? (An insomniac neighbor taking a 2AM constitutional was a big help on that one!) How would he take a shower? How could he make his own lunch when the dishes were in a cabinet out of reach? How would he get to doctor's appointments?

Once the panic subsided...we made plans and solved the problems. And there were so many people from this wonderful church family who stepped up to help with wheelchairs, rides, grocery deliveries, phone calls, visits, and prayers that I won't even try to name them all. And there were other good friends outside the church who, when I looked like I couldn't do one more chore, came over with dinner and an order to "just relax tonight."

Both of us have learned that "being able" is a gift never to be taken for granted, and how lucky we are that this

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- **Men's Breakfast**

"disability", inconvenient thought it may be, will go away. And we learned some other important lessons. One has to do with walking in darkened movie theatres, but I won't dwell on the obvious! Another is that we are all so vulnerable. Walking out of the house on two healthy legs does not guarantee that we will walk back in that way. Another lesson is that when you ask for help, you will most likely get more than you ever imagined; an important take-away for someone who always so adamantly insisted on doing things myself!

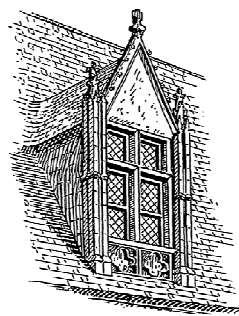
The disability, the inconvenience, the fatigue and the grouchiness are temporary. The lessons learned? They are forever.

Peace, *Elaine Wells*

New Members' Inquiry Class ***September 9, 16, 30th***

Are you a visitor who has been attending FCC and feel like you may have found your spiritual home? Are you interested in learning more about who we are and how we believe? Then this class is for you!

Beginning September 9 immediately after worship, the three classes will explore who we are, how we believe and why we say "the members of this church are the ministers of this church." They are also a great way to get to know the other special people who are interested in becoming members as well! See Rev. Ann for details.



From My Study Window

What's Politics Got To Do With It?

With the Presidential conventions upon us we are neck deep in political debate. As each side makes its case for why they should govern, we voters have important issues to weigh. None of us cast a ballot in a vacuum; we bring our values, hopes and fears with us. So how do we approach this season as Progressive Christians? How do we see the issues through the lens of our faith? Would it surprise you to know that Jesus himself had a political vision at the heart of his gospel? This fall we will be launching a sermon series entitled "Exploring the Politics of the Kin-dom of God." From Sunday September 16 through October 28 we will be engaging Jesus' parables, sermons, and teachings to understand better what his political priorities are.

On each following Wednesday evening, we will gather to go deeper into the scripture and sermon as we wrestle with what these values mean for us today. We will not be using the term "politics" as we understand it today —as the art of manipulating and amassing power for our own self-serving ends — but in its original sense: the art of creating a community that lives out its highest values. For that is what "politics" is: the expression of how we can best live together so that every person can thrive. There is a spiritual dimension to politics. Jesus had a lot to say about that, and I hope, so will we.

There is much at stake in how we cast our vote. It can effect what kind of world we share with our neighbors and what kind of future we leave for our children. I look forward to sharing this essential conversation with each of you this fall.

Peace,

Ann

Thank You! Thank You!

While August tends to be a quiet month around here, there were still many hearts and hands that helped keep things humming. So we say.... "Thank You" to...

...Sarah Pomerantz and Rev. Barb Prince for being guest preachers while Rev. Ann was away on vacation.

...Dick Thomas and Del Pentecost for serving as Sunday Sextons while Michael Harney was away.

...Liz Donald who served as a "camp counselor" for the FCC Sunday Church Camp this summer.

...Dick Thomas and Steve Cutaia for providing chairs and tables to the Seventh Day Adventist Church Health Fair on August 11.

...Angela Graceffo, Del Pentecost, Tim & Maureen Holly, Mark Egan, Greg McGhee, Stephanie Sheerin, Anne Garty, Stella Wilkins and ALL who are working to care for our member Joseph Shepstone who is temporarily home-bound.

...Angela Graceffo and Dick Thomas who are faithful drivers for our older members who cannot drive to church.

...Kim Robinson, Jeanne LoCicero, Anne Garty, Liz Donald and Del Pentecost who hosted the wonderful New Members Welcome Party on August 26.

Shopping list for Brown Bag lunches for Bridges Outreach for the Homeless



As part of our "Jesus Has Left the Building...And We Followed" mission project on Saturday & Sunday September 29 & 30, we will be assembling 300 lunches to take to our homeless neighbors in Irvington, NJ through the Bridges Outreach for the Homeless. We need the following items:

- Fruit cups
- Napkins
- Juice boxes
- Plastic spoons
- Small bottled water
- Granola bars
- Individually packaged chips or cookies
- Large size brown lunch bags
- Packets of mustard & mayo

Please bring your donations to FCC through Sunday, September 23 & put them in the orange box in the narthex. Cash donations are also welcome!

MINISTRY OF HOSPITALITY



Men's Group – September Breakfast

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 September 15**. 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.



Church Fall Picnic – September 23

Sunday **September 23, 2012** – Right after service we'll have our Church Fall Picnic. We will provide the burgers, hot dogs and the fixings and drinks. Please sign up to bring a tasty side dish – perhaps show off your culinary skill.

We would also like to provide a bit of shade, so if you have a tent that can be put up easily, please speak with Del Pentecost or email at D_MPentecost@msn.com for more details.

Assigned Coffee Hour & Ushering List



Our Fall/Winter assigned Coffee Hour and Usher list has been emailed. Please check your assigned date and indicate via email if you can fulfill that time. If you know you can't, please reach out to someone within the email list and try and switch dates.

Always keep Rena (FCC administrative assistant) copied in the emails at admin@fccmtc.com, as well as Del Pentecost at D_MPentecost@msn.com. This new list covers **September 2, 2012** through **January 27, 2013**.

Worship Leader Training for Ushers and Liturgists Saturday, September 8, 11:15am

A special training in the Sanctuary for worship leaders. All who serve on Sunday mornings are encouraged to attend.

For ushers we will cover the "basics" of greeting, handling the offertory and addressing emergencies during worship as well as provide a tour of the building. For liturgists we will address "performance" as well as "technical" aspects of the role. Please see Del Pentecost or Rev. Ann for more details.



September birthdays!

Mark Egan	Sept.16	Lydia York	Sept.21
Trevor Morales	Sept.17	David Crowell	Sept.23
William Tsang	Sept.17	Margo Atwell	Sept.25
Gregg Monsees	Sept.19	Larry Weiss	Sept.27
Chris Longano	Sept.21	MaryKate Noonan	Sept.30

We're collecting birthdates to publish in each upcoming newsletter! These are the ones we have for this month. Be sure to email yours to Rena at admin@fccmtc.com.

MINISTRY OF SPIRITUALITY AND WORSHIP

Sculpture Exhibit in Sanctuary Featuring the work of Charles McCollough



This fall our sanctuary will be graced by the work of sculptor and UCC minister, Rev. Charles McCollough. While finishing his PhD. in theology, Charles McCollough began formally studying art. He was ordained as a minister in the United Church of Christ and worked as a teacher, editor, writer, and popular speaker throughout the country. His unique style of sculpting in clay, bronze, wood, and stone combines his progressive theology with profound and humorous images both sacred and profane. Since 2000 he works full time as a sculptor at his studio in a 19th century barn and house in Hopewell, New Jersey. The focus of the works we will enjoy are the “Parables of Jesus”, selected to enhance our sermon series on the politics of the kin-dom of God.

Sunday Sermon Series “Exploring the Politics of the Kin-dom of God”

Beginning on Sunday September 16, through October 28, we will be engaging Jesus’ parables, sermons, and teachings to understand better what his political priorities are. We will not be using the term “politics” as we understand it today —as the art of manipulating and amassing power for our own self-serving ends — but in its original sense: the art of creating a community that lives out its highest values. For that is what “politics” is: the expression of how we can best live together so that every person can thrive. Jesus had a lot to say about that, and I hope, so will we.

Wednesday Eve Sermon “Talk Back” Begins September 19, 8:15pm

On each following Wednesday evening, we will gather to go deeper into the scripture and sermon as we wrestle with what these values mean for us today. We will challenge the text and our own assumptions about how we can express Jesus’ values as Progressive Christians. As always we will engage more questions than answers and ALL viewpoints are welcome! Questions? See Rev. Ann

MINISTRY OF CONGREGATIONAL CARE

Joseph Shepstone is a member of our community who has always attended faithfully despite confronting many challenges. Joseph is impacted by Cerebral Palsy which interferes with his ability to walk and communicate. Over the summer months Joseph’s medical status has become frail and he has been in and out of the hospital. His desire to join us on Sundays has not faltered, but the reality of his coming has for the time being. A group of us, met last Sunday to discuss how we might bring the “church” to Joseph. **We are currently seeking volunteers to commit to visiting Joseph on individual Sundays after church for 30 minutes** (one time or more if you’d like). His group home is about 5 minutes from FCC in Bloomfield.

Please email or call Angela Graceffo at agraceffo@afhsnj.org / (862) 262-9619 if you can give 30 minutes of your time to visit Joseph. We can also pair up volunteers if you’d like. THANKS FOR CONSIDERING SERVING THE FCC COMMUNITY IN THIS WAY!

Bringing The Church To Joseph:

Simple ways to care for Joe:

- Read a book.
- Prayer
- Chat through use of a communication board and/or yes/no questions
- Listen to and/or playing music
- Watch the Giants
- Hand massage
- Or any other activity which promotes contact and extends a sense of care

MINISTRY OF SPIRITUALITY AND WORSHIP

The Whole Truth

During my study in France this summer, one question was continually asked? “Is this the whole truth?” We were challenged to ask ourselves this question whenever we made a decision or a response. Because, here’s the thing – a Whole Truth is truth for the Whole. If something is not true for the whole, then it is only a partial truth. If something is true in the Bible then it must be true in a flower, in other people, in all aspects of the cosmos, to be a whole truth.

As we face the onslaught of election campaigning, with its spin doctoring and hyperbolic intensity, it is a good question to ask: Is what I am hearing a Whole Truth, or only true for a slice of the population? Everything from health care to energy to tax breaks needs to be considered in the light of being true (fair, just) for the whole, or is only a benefit to a few? Just as we are asked to do when we testify in court (I have jury duty this week, so that is why this pledge is on my mind) we need to search out “the truth, the Whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help us God.”

Rev. Barbara Prince

Minister of Spiritual Direction



Ministry Update

WOW! as I write this article, summer is almost over and I don’t know where it went, but “go” it did. In part this might be because at FCC there is no “stopping” of “church” for the summer, so there is no “starting up” again.

Although there were programs that cut back a bit for the summer, FCC was busy all summer. Worship continued and we were treated to a sermon from one of our in-care students, Sarah Pomerantz and from our Minister of Spiritual Direction, Barb Prince. Sunday School became camp and seemed to be well attended.

The Future Church Task force was busy all summer and the Safe Church Program is going forward so that Sunday School teachers can go over the material before camp becomes Sunday School.

We met with our in-care students to offer support on their journey of discernment for their futures. We celebrated everyone’s birthdays and a good time was had by all-eating and making new friends - both of which congregationalists do very well.

The Wednesday evening study group was a great success as we read the Bible again for the first time. Rev. Ann has been busy putting together our fall sermon series on “politics” from a Christian viewpoint and picking out sculptures for the sanctuary (you don’t want to miss this).

The Labyrinth will be open once again and Soul circle will become active as well, and a new Wednesday evening discussion group is being announced. You see, here at FCC just as God doesn’t close down for the summer, neither do we, and September just brings folks back from various vacations to continue worshipping the One God, and finding ways to care for the people God loves. So put away the suitcases and the bathing suits; get the kids back to school and come join us as we continue to worship and serve in Christ’s name.

Grace and peace,

Heather Cherrey

Labyrinth re-opens on September 5!

On-going Wednesdays Sept.5-May 22
from 6 to 8pm. in the Sanctuary.



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

A Parent's Perspective: An Exciting Year Ahead!

By Lynley Jones, Chair, Ministry of Children and Youth

Each month, we invite parents to use this space to share their thoughts about parenting, childhood, or life in general, from the perspective of their own current location on their spiritual journey. This month, I'm instead using this space to let you know of some great activities and ideas we have percolating for the coming year in the Children & Youth Ministry at FCC.

First, we are officially and excitedly launching our new Youth Group! For kids in middle school and older, the Youth Group offers a chance hang out with friends, do important social justice work, and learn how to apply Progressive Christianity to their own complicated lives in the real world. Instead of the Sunday School classrooms, these kids will have their own new room, complete with a couch, coffee table, and often, snacks!

In addition to Sunday mornings, there will be many opportunities for Youth to get engaged with their church and their faith. We are planning to organize (with parents' help) monthly youth events, including social gatherings and social justice projects. Also, during our upcoming Jesus Has Left the Building weekend, the Youth will be working with our Bridges Outreach for the Homeless venue to make and deliver lunches for our homeless sisters and brothers. In early November, those in 8th grade and higher will be invited to attend a Mystic's Eve overnight lock-in in our sanctuary. In early February, our Youth are invited to attend the Camp Bernie Retreat, an annual UCC weekend retreat for youth. And this winter and spring, many of our Youth in 8th grade and higher will be attending Confirmation classes, culminating in their confirmation in June.

Youth parents: look for more information coming soon on the exciting new activities for our Youth, and all the ways your help can make this a success.

Also, I am delighted to tell you about our New Parents Room, officially opening soon. This room will provide nursing moms and all parents of babies with a comfortable place near the sanctuary to feed and care for their babies as needed during worship. Thank you to Melissa Ragan who had this great idea and worked to make it happen! Look for more information soon.

Beyond our new Youth Group, many other activities are planned for the year as well. This fall, we will be holding a Communion Workshop on October 6 for children of all ages and their families to learn more about the sacrament of Communion at FCC. In early November, we'll be planting bulbs in our Children's Garden. And in December, we'll continue the tradition of helping the children make Advent wreaths during Sunday School, and will provide Advent-at-Home packets to guide families as they light candles and observe Advent at home.

Finally, please save the date for our Fall Family Potluck to be held in my backyard on Saturday, October 13 (rain date Oct 20)! Our newest families will be our guests as the rest of us each bring a dish and enjoy a fun BBQ, playtime for the younger kids, and social time for everyone.

Look for a yearlong Children & Youth Ministry calendar to be distributed shortly with all of these activities and more. And most importantly, thank you to all, parents and non-parents alike, whose caring and thoughtful volunteer efforts are making it possible for a whole new generation to be, as our FCC Who We Are brochure says, "Unabashedly Christian, Unapologetically Progressive." This church provides an important voice in our society today, and I'm proud and grateful to be a part of it with you.

The new year of Sunday School begins September 16!

*An exciting
new year
planned for
children
and youth
alike.*

*Don't miss
it!*



MINISTRY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



FCC Children's Education Program

"Dad! We meditated for five whole minutes!" – Soon-to-be-first-grader at FCC

After six minutes, they are finally ready. They have contorted their bodies to various positions: versions of sitting cross-legged with their palms pressed together in reverence or their arms lifted high and their fingers poised for meditation or their hands folded in their lap, or their fingers tangled in a fistful of grass...

Following a few minutes of "oooooooooooooooooooo", shushing and giggling they are ready. "Breathe in deeply. Breathe out," I say in my calmest voice. "Be strong in God."

After minutes of meditation, I call them back to the grass and sunlight around them and ask how they felt. "Calm," one soon-to-be-second grader tells me. The other children's smiles and nods of agreement confirm – they did feel filled with God's power and surrounded by God's love.

This September I am eager for more moments where the children will encounter the living God each week at FCC. Some new developments are:

Youth Group – With every Friday in the 20s, children in sixth grade or older are invited to monthly bonding and social justice opportunities. Building their church community outside of just Sunday morning, the children will get to explore their identities in Christ through fun and service.

Confirmation – For the first time in over five years, FCC will confirm our first group of young adults as they step into a new phase in their spiritual lives. Through a mystic's eve church lock-in, weekend retreat and bi-weekly gatherings with pizza and subs, the confirmands will take their next steps journeying with God.

Social Justice – For children of all ages, this year will be full of service opportunities grounded in progressive Christianity. Through the Crop Walk, fair trade and justice in farm labor initiatives, the children will focus on hunger, explore ways to meet the needs of others and build justice into their Christian identity.

I am looking forward to how the children will grow through the encouragement, support and excitement in FCC's Children's Education Program. I look forward to this new year with you all! Peace, *Mattie*

Mark Your Calendars! Family Communion Workshop Saturday October 6, 10am-12noon



All children and their families are welcome to share a special morning exploring the sacrament of Holy Communion. We will bake bread, tell stories, and enact our own communion meal. All are welcome! See Mattie Johnson or Rev. Ann for more information.



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