



NewsNotes

Christ Congregational Church United Church of Christ
A Just Peace and Open and Affirming Church
Becoming an Anti-Racism Church

Volume 63 – Number 13 December 11, 2007



'Tis the Season! ~~ an Advent Message from Susan



When we gathered for worship on the first Sunday in Advent, the sanctuary was adorned with wreaths, candles, red ribbons and sprigs of green all about. Awe, wonder, joy and sprinkles of chaos filled the space. 'Tis the season! At the heart of it all remains the anticipation and celebration of Christ's birth—God with us. It is a gift we receive with hope-filled gratitude and love for our living and a gift we share in ways that seek peace and justice throughout the world.

'Tis the season when we ponder to whom and what we want to give in response to a gift which has been given. Words from John's gospel may be helpful. In Eugene Peterson's The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language, John 1:14a reads, "The Word became... and moved into the neighborhood." This image of neighborhood challenges us to look beyond the familiarity of our own to consider others around us. Through our ministry at Christ Congregational Church, we are provided with several opportunities to look around us and to share gifts within our local and global neighborhoods.

Over the next several weeks, the Mitten Tree will fill with hats, gloves and coats for children at Broad Acres Elementary School and White Oak Middle School. Hygiene kits will be assembled, then given to Progress Place downtown for distribution. To our global neighbors, we will offer financial gifts which will make it possible for us to fill many food hampers for elderly members of the Mbare Church in Harare, Zimbabwe. Our financial gifts will also support neighbors who benefit from the United Church of Christ Annual Christmas Fund Offering (which assists retired clergy and lay leaders with healthcare and living expenses), the Capital Area Food Bank, and projects related to AIDS relief in Africa.

The United Church of Christ's *100,000 for Peace* campaign, offers an additional gift opportunity through the \$100,000 Iraq Humanitarian Appeal which will provide much needed food, water, health care and education for war-affected Iraqi families displaced in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. A gift of \$40 can feed a family of four for two weeks and \$85 can provide warm coats and hats for five children.

We can do much to celebrate the good news of Christ among us!

Throughout the year, as we gather for worship and to share ministry, we seek to be a welcoming and giving church. In the season of Advent, however, we are called to take a look around us and share a little more deeply that which has already been given to us: the hope, peace, justice, joy, and love of Christ's birth—God with us. 'Tis the season, let it be so.

'Twas The Night Before ~~ an Invitation to a Spontaneous Christmas Pageant

Everyone of all ages is invited to share in the re-telling of our familiar Christmas story at the 5 p.m. service on Christmas Eve! The service will be lively and animated. There are a few speaking parts, but memorization is not required. There are no rehearsals. We are inviting families or individuals to participate in the story by coming forward during the service dressed in a particular costume. We need angels and shepherds, animals of all varieties and wise people. (*Cont. on p. 5*)

Deadline for the next *News Notes* is Tuesday, January 15, 2008 at 5:00 PM.
Send copy to Jackie Walters at jjwalters.SilverSpring@verizon.net or place in *News Notes* box in the office.



Spotlight On ~ Shepherd's Table

For nearly two decades CCC members have staffed Shepherd's Table on the second Wednesday of each month, serving wholesome meals to those in need. This volunteer effort is announced in the bulletin and from the pulpit on the Sunday before the date of each commitment. Unfortunately, we were very short of CCC volunteers for our date in November. Until moments before the serving line was to open, and again at the midway point when the last group of volunteers is scheduled to relieve the first team, we were uncertain whether or not we could continue because we were so short-staffed. The bottom line is that we barely made it through the meal. Please consider volunteering your time and energy to help make this commitment a success each and every month. The people served by Shepherd's Table literally depend for their next meal on churches like CCC fulfilling their commitment once a month. *Jim Walters, Board for Social Witness*

Rev. Ellen Jennings Describes CCC's Covenant with UCC Ordained Ministers

Though I've been a member of CCC for many years (since 1997!) and was even on the Board of Deacons at one point, many of you probably don't know me because my work since 2001 as Director of Religious Education for the Interfaith Families Project has kept me away from Christ Congregational most Sunday mornings. However, I've remained deeply connected to CCC as a ministerial candidate "in care" with the Board of Deacons, and, upon being ordained, I entered into a new relationship with Christ Congregational that I'd like to share with you.

In the UCC, a minister is always ordained to a specific "call" (e.g., ministerial position). This position is usually with a UCC church, but sometimes it's with another organization (such as chaplain to a hospital or school). When a minister is called to serve another organization, s/he enters into a "four-way covenant" that includes the minister, the church in which the minister is a member, the UCC (Potomac Association) and the organization the minister will serve. Thus, my call to serve the Interfaith Families Project (IFFP) as its Minister of Religious Education means that, as an

ordained UCC minister, I am in a four-way covenant with IFFP, the UCC, and Christ Congregational!

So what does this mean? It means that IFFP, "an independent community of interfaith families and others committed to sharing, learning about and celebrating their Jewish and Christian heritages," and CCC, "an inclusive, questing community of faith seeking to embody Jesus Christ by doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God," are now covenantally connected with one another. There are wonderful possibilities for shared activities, programs, and events, and I'm excited to explore them with the CCC ministerial and lay leadership!

Finally, mine is not the first CCC relationship with IFFP. Several CCC members are also members of IFFP, and Rev. Julia Jarvis, a former CCC staff person, is IFFP's Spiritual Director. So there are already many connections, and, I hope, many more to be made!

May you all enjoy a Blessed Advent, Happy Hanukkah, and a Very Merry Christmas, *Rev. Ellen Jennings*

Walter Reed Seeks Red Cross Volunteers To Support Patients and Families

At the request of the hospital command, the Red Cross at Walter Reed Army Medical Center is asking local community organizations to help recruit volunteers to provide hospitality and patient support services at the hospital on Georgia Avenue. The command wants to expand and improve support for patients, many of them casualties, and their families. CCC's Board for Social Witness approved a request to make this opportunity available to CCC members and friends.

Volunteers greet and assist patients and visitors at the main entrance, provide comfort supplies (books, cards, toiletries, etc.) on the wards, and support staff and in-patients in a variety of settings. The typical commitment is 4 hours weekly; weekend hours are available. Volunteers receive orientation and training from the Red Cross and the hospital; volunteers must agree to a medical screening and background check. Red Cross staff interview and place volunteers; hospital staff provide on-the-job training and supervision. For more information, contact Jackie Walters (301-565-3197; jjwalters.silverspring@verizon.net) or contact a Red Cross Volunteer Coordinator at Walter Reed at 202-782-6362.

Fair Trade Coffee Program Accomplishes Much in 2007

Stewards of the Earth runs the Fair Trade Coffee program at CCC to provide a market for primarily organic products of small farmers in underdeveloped countries as well as in the U.S. The program offers organic, fair-trade coffee, tea, cocoa, chocolate and almonds for your consumption at a lower-than-retail price. With your participation and donations, CCC's Fair Trade program accomplished the following in 2007:

- Ø Purchased 30 *tons* of fairly traded products in conjunction with other UCC churches participating in the Equal Exchange Fair Trade Program. Equal Exchange donates \$.15 to the UCC Justice and Witness Ministries for every pound of product purchased by consumers, and in 2007, it donated \$8,698.19, part of which went to exploring the formation of a Kona coffee cooperative in Hawaii.
- Ø Donated \$142 (wholesale price) of coffee and tea to Shepherd's Table
- Ø Donated \$229 of coffee to CCC for coffee hours, the Retreat House, and all other functions held at the Church
- Ø Provided \$45 of free samples at CCC's May Environmental Fair and at the Central Atlantic Conference in June so that people could taste these goods and be inspired to expand the market for them
- Ø Purchased \$125 of fans for CCC so the air-conditioning could be turned down, saving electricity and reducing both the Church's carbon footprint and its utility bills

For 2008, funds from the fair trade project have been earmarked for additional environmental purposes, including purchasing more non-disposable glassware, purchasing signs reminding people to turn off lights when they leave a room, and purchasing books and DVDs for CCC's Environmental Library (adjacent to the Adult Library on the second floor).

At the monthly sales, there is excellent literature that explains what fair trade means. Thank you to the Board for Social Witness, our co-sponsor, and to all of you for helping us to accomplish all these great deeds with your fantastic support of the program. And thanks also to all the church members who help out monthly, but especially to Sonja and Samantha Fisher and Jim Walters, who staff the sale almost every month. *Winifred Roberts for Stewards of the Earth*

Potential Tax Benefit for CCC Gift Expires December 31

A special tax provision that benefits mostly higher income taxpayers is scheduled to expire December 31, 2007. The provision allows gifts of up to \$100,000 to be made *directly* from IRAs to charitable organizations such as CCC. When done in this manner, the distribution does not count as income, and the deduction is not taken as a charitable deduction. Donors must be 70½ years or older and the transaction must be completed by December 31. If a portion of your social security benefits is subject to income taxes or your itemized deductions are subject to the higher income reduction, you may want to discuss this provision with your tax adviser or IRA fund manager. *Planned Giving Committee*

Opportunities

Training for Couples Communication: Would you like to communication skills to help you communicate more effectively significant other and in a setting where you'll be supported by a group of people? Training sessions will be offered Sunday afternoons from 4:30 to 6 pm on 27th and Feb. 3. (No meeting on the Martin Luther King long weekend in January.) After sessions you may decide to join the Couples Communication group or choose practice on your own. Contact Terry Strand: 301-942-8883 or terrys@greenacres.org. All are welcome. (P.S. Let me know if you need child care.)



learn some with your like-minded Jan.6, 13th and the training



Big Band's Valentine Cotillion – Saturday, February 9, 8-11 p.m.: Just in time for Valentine's Day, the Social Hall will ring with sounds of the 30s, 40s and beyond. Terry Strand and Jerry Calderone will share the vocals as Chuck O'Connor leads CCC's Big Band through a varied program of familiar tunes. This annual event is co-sponsored by the Board for Church Life. Free-will donations benefit the Building Fund.

Contemporary Theology Class: Start the New Year with a resolution to join the class starting in Jan. The new book is When Jesus Became God: The Struggle to Define Christianity during the Last Days of Rome by Richard Rubenstein, a professor of Conflict Resolution and Public Affairs at George Mason University, who specializes in religious conflict. "Early church history has never been so fascinating...The author breathes life into the personalities that dominate this era in history."—Dallas Morning News. Contact Lynn White (301-519-3934 or tsw123@comcast.net) by 12/16/07 if you want a book ordered for you. Price--\$10.20. You may pay when the book arrives. **New members always welcome!**

For and About Members

On behalf of my dad, Lee Luft, my brother, Mark and myself I want to thank you for all the support our church family gave us during the stressful time after my mom's death. From the moment the news reached the church we felt the love and prayers reach out to support and console us. The cards and prayers and meals eased our way as we traveled through those early, dark days. How truly blessed we are to have such caring friends. In peace, *Terry Strand*

Now that I am well along the road to recovery from my recent back surgery, I want to take this opportunity to thank members of the congregation for the many cards, calls, prayers, and good wishes directed my way. During my extended time of limited mobility, I found much comfort in my connection to CCC. My deep appreciation for that blessing. *Clarence Stone*

I wish to express my thanks to Christ Congregational Church for its support of my recent Ordination to Ministry on November 18, 2007. Rev. Susan Henderson, Rev. Sandy Dodson, Nae Pearson, Rev. Julia Jarvis and Rev. Gordon Forbes participated in the service, and Sue Dollins, Bob Brown and Jeanne Young helped out with ushering and serving communion. Carl and Elsa Brandt took some fabulous photos (please see the bulletin board in the upstairs hallway), and Susan Gray and Dianne Abraham helped out with logistics. Last, but not least, Bud Dennie and Cory Gray helped with the sound system and recording, and the Sanctuary Committee shared their wonderful decorations from the Thanksgiving service. I am so grateful for all this support! *Rev. Ellen Jennings*

Social Witness

Thanks from Shaw Community Ministry, which provided 170 Thanksgiving baskets to residents of Lincoln-Westmoreland Housing and the surrounding Shaw neighborhood, thanks to the generosity of CCCers, the Cub Scouts Pack 275,* and 6 other UCC congregations in the Potomac Association. SCM received those CCC-donated and Cub Scout-collected canned and boxed goods traditionally included in Thanksgiving dinners (we Northerners learned that rice is often served in the South). Monetary donations paid for the turkeys. According to the new executive director of SCM, the Rev. Robbie Morganfield, "It was truly a generous display of giving and caring about others, and the families receiving the baskets were quite grateful. I worked with about eight volunteers from the [LWH] complex who came to help us pack the baskets. It was truly a love fest. . . . I derived a great deal of pleasure from being able to greet those who came to get baskets and to hear them offer thanks for receiving them. Please let your churches know . . . that the drive was a major success and that many lives were touched. Thanks for all the support." *Anne Weissenborn, Board for Social Witness; Board Member for SCM*

*As reported in the November 28 issue of the *Gazette*, Cub Scout Pack 275 collected 1,900 pounds of canned goods during the Pack's "Scouting Food Drive" on November 10. CCC volunteers distributed the Pack's collection and its own collection to Shepherd's Table and Shaw Community Ministry. *Chris Lewis, CCC Liaison to Pack 275*

Junior Highs Seek Donations for Health Kits for Church World Service: CCC's Junior High Youth are collecting hand towels, wash cloths, wide-tooth combs, nail clippers, bars of wrapped bath size soaps, packaged toothbrushes, and band-aids during Social Hour in December and January. Church World Service distributes health kits which contain personal necessities for daily living to refugees, displaced people and victims of natural disasters, such as the tsunami in 2006. On their annual winter retreat, the Junior High youth will assemble and transport the kits to the Church World Service center in New Windsor, Maryland. Thank you for all your gifts of kindness! *Junior High Youth*

The Gandhi Brigade youth media project is looking for space for a temporary youth media center in Silver Spring. Minimum requirements are 400-600 SF, a bathroom, & handicap accessibility. Rough space is fine. We prefer fulltime space but would consider shared space that was available on Saturdays and after-school if there were a secure place to store our media equipment. Donated space is ideal, but we could pay a modest rent.

The Gandhi Brigade is a youth-directed community media project that works out of the Long Branch community in Silver Spring. This year forty young adults, 75% of them minority, immigrant, or disabled youth, worked with a dozen media professionals to produce five video projects. Through video creation, our teens gain a deeper understanding of their community and the importance of youth voice. With the help of local partners we are unfolding a plan to establish a full service community media arts center in the heart of downtown Silver Spring in 2009.

For more information: Richard Jaeggi, Director, www.gandhibrigade.org; 301-957-0159

Advent 2007



Third Sunday in Advent -- December 16 -- Christmas Sunday

Identical Services at 9 & 11 in the Sanctuary

The Chancel Choir, accompanied by harpist Robin Roys, presents Benjamin Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*. The special holiday coffee hour will be in the Social Hall at 10:00, between the 9:00 and 11:00 services. Fair Trade Coffee Sale will be on this Sunday.



Christmas caroling for all ages - Gather at 6 p.m. in the lobby. We'll sing for 1 ½ hours, then return to the church for hot cider and cookies. Families and children are particularly welcome for this annual tradition of outreach to CCC's seniors, shut-ins, and the surrounding neighborhood. Call Sandy Dodson for more information.

Fourth Sunday in Advent -- December 23 - Regular Worship Schedule (9 & 10:30)

Christmas Eve -- Monday, December 24

5:00 p.m. -- *'Twas the Night Before* -- an almost-spontaneous Christmas pageant for all ages

9:00 p.m. -- Service of Lessons & Carols with choir and strings

10:00 p.m. -- Reception served by the Board of Deacons

Sunday, December 30 -- 10:30 Worship (no 9 a.m. service or Church School)

Mementos bearing the image of the recently sold Virgil Williams painting will be available for purchase during Social Hour during the Advent Season. They will make great stocking stuffers!

Other Advent Activities

Men's Christmas Toast, Tuesday, December 18th at 7:30 PM at McGinty's Public House on Ellsworth Drive in downtown Silver Spring in the downstairs room. As is usual, the toast master will be chosen at random, so be prepared to give a toast. For information, call Bruce Strand @ 301-942-8883

Senior Adult Christmas Tea, Wednesday, Dec. 19th 2:00 - 4:00 in the Social Hall -- featuring caroling led by Nae Pearson and an open mike for sharing Christmas stories



Mitten Tree Collection for children of Broad Acres Elementary School and White Oak Middle School concludes December 16. Bring new or gently used mittens, hats, scarves, gloves and coats.

Spontaneous Christmas Pageant (*Cont. from p. 1*) Nae Pearson, Director of Music, is coordinating children and youth music ensembles and solo musicians. Please contact Nae directly if you are interested in contributing your musical talents. There will also be plenty of congregational singing highlighting familiar Christmas hymns.

There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board for you to declare which character(s) your family will represent. We have some costumes available for shepherds and wise ones and angels. You may create your own or come to room 208 prior to the service at 4:30 and borrow a Christmas pageant costume. *Sandy Dodson*

Christ Congregational Church
9525 Colesville Road
Silver Spring, MD 20901

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Mailed December 11, 2007

HAPPENINGS IN December & January

Sun., Dec. 16 ~ Christmas Sunday ~ Identical Services of Worship at 9 & 11

Sun., Dec. 16 ~ All-Church Caroling ~ 6-8:30 p.m. – Meet in Church lobby

Tues., Dec. 18 ~ Men's Christmas Toast ~ 7:30 p.m. – McGinty's Public House, Ellsworth Drive, downtown Silver Spring

Wed., Dec. 19 ~ Senior Adult Christmas Tea ~ 2-4 p.m. – Social Hall

Mon., Dec. 24 ~ Christmas Eve Services at 5 and 9 p.m. ; Reception – 10 p.m.

Tues., Dec. 25 – Merry Christmas! [Church is closed on Dec. 25 & Dec. 26]

Sun., Dec. 30 – One Service of Worship at 10:30 a.m.

Sun., Jan. 6 ~ Monthly Potluck Lunch ~ Noon

Fri., Jan. 11 – Sat., Jan. 12 ~ Chancel Choir Retreat – at the Church – all singers welcome! Contact Nae Pearson for information

Sat., Jan. 12 ~ Women's Second Saturday ~ 8:30-10 a.m. – Panera in Silver Spring

Sun., Jan. 13 ~ Ecclesiastical Council for Vicki Kemper ~ 3 p.m.

Sun., Jan. 20 ~ CCC Book Group ~ 7 p.m. – *Team of Rivals* by Doris Kearns Goodwin at the home of Joanne Lynn. All are welcome.

CHRIST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UCC

Phone:
301-585-8010

Event Line:
301-585-4640, ext. 333

Email:
cccoffice@christ-ucc.org

Rev. Susan A. Henderson,
Interim Senior Minister;
Rev. Sandra K. Dodson,
Associate Minister; Nae
Pearson, Director of Music;
Sarah Anders, Director of
Senior Adult Programming;
Dianne Abraham, Church
Administrator

At CCC, we honor and celebrate
people of all races, cultures,
ages, abilities, sexual orientation,
and gender identity.

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