

Advent & Christmas 2009

Join Us on Christmas Eve

Congregational UCC will offer two beautiful, music-filled, uplifting Christmas Eve services – let your neighbors and friends know they are welcome!

5:00 pm: Our family-oriented service will include music from our Children's Handbell Choir, Bella a Capella, and a special rendition of Silent Night.

11:00 pm: This service of candle-light and communion will include music from our Handbell Choir and from other members of our congregation.

Meals at the Manger: Bring a canned good for the needy to our Christmas Eve services. Please remember the number of folks that are hungry and in need of our help.

Thank you in advance for your help on this worthy project.



Outdoor Tree

Thank you to the members of the Men's Prayer Breakfast for once again setting up our outdoor tree.



For Your Spiritual Nurture Throughout The Season . . .

We have Advent devotional booklets available for all ages, and we also have an interactive online weekly devotional for all who would like to participate. Go to: www.tinyurl.com/CUCCFacebook and click on "Discussions."



Christmas Sock Tree

Our Christmas Sock Tree is waiting to be covered with socks of all kinds and all sizes for Greensboro Urban Ministry. Last year we gave 495 pairs of socks! The tree will be up December 13, 20 and 27. Fill our tree with socks of all kinds and all sizes to help keep feet dry and warm during these cold winter months.



Christmas Post Office

The Jordan/Wisseman Class Post Office will be in operation through Sunday, December 20. Bring cards that you would normally send to local church members to the "Post Office" in the back of the Fellowship Hall. You can then deposit the money that you would pay for postage with any class member. And, be sure to check with the "Post Office" for cards that may be sent to you!



Greensboro Urban Ministry Honor Cards

Cards to honor family and friends will be available for purchase in the Fellowship Hall after Sunday worship through December 20th.



Congregational
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Worship Schedule

General Assembly: 9:30 a.m.
Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.
Worship: 11:00 a.m.
Refreshments: 12:00 p.m.

Our Mission

As people of Congregational United Church of Christ, we seek to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, accepting God's call to be a true community of love, compassion, and nurture.

Visitors

Congregational United Church of Christ is a warm, welcoming congregation that is always happy to receive visitors. To help you feel as comfortable and at-home as possible when you visit us, we've put together some information on what the Congregational experience is like. For details, check out our Visitor Page at www.congregationalucc.com.

CUCC is on Facebook!

Check us out at the following site: www.tinyurl.com/CUCCFacebook.

Our Next Newsletter

Deadline: Friday, January 1
Publication: Wednesday, January 6

News and events can be sent to office@congregationalucc.com.

Can't wait for news? Check out the Congregational UCC web site at www.congregationalucc.com. It is up-to-date, relevant, interesting, lively, and available 24 hours.

Lectionary Readings

December 20, 2009

Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:46b-55 or Ps. 80:1-7; Heb. 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-55

December 27, 2009

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Ps. 148
Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

January 3, 2010

Jer. 31:7-14 or Sir. 24:1-12;
Ps. 147:12-20 or Wis. of Sol. 10:15-21; Eph. 1:3-14; John 1:(1-9), 10-18



Congregational

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

**400 West Radiance Drive
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Rev. Julie Peeples
Senior Pastor
julie@congregationalucc.com

Rev. William C. Smith
Pastor Emeritus

Rev. Paul Davis
Minister for Christian Education
paul@congregationalucc.com

Mr. Jimmy Buchanan
Choir Director
jrbsoul@aol.com

Ms. Edna Olayiwola
Director of Children's Music &
Bella a Cappella
olayiwe@gcsnc.com

Mr. Bill Herndon
Organist
rbill@triad.rr.com

Ms. Charlotte Evans
Congregational Nurse
opendoornc@aol.com
Drop-In Hours: 4th Sun. of the month,
10:00-11:00 am
Home Visits: Thursdays

Ms. Evelyn Blane
Nursery Director
evelyn.blane@gmail.com

Ms. Judy Page
Office Manager
office@congregationalucc.com
Office Hours: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm
Monday thru Wednesday & Friday

Ministries

- Bible Study
- Children & Adult Choir
- Handbell Choir
- Youth Programs
- Women's Fellowship
- Adult Fun Club

Outreach Programs

- Greensboro Urban Ministry
- Mobile Meals
- Habitat for Humanity
- Potter's House
- Higher Ground
- and many more . . .

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From the Pastor

The Christmas Moment



The children in the daycare center downstairs are practicing "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" for their party. Here in the office we are putting finishing touches on the Christmas Eve services. The mailman brings the latest weather update when he comes in with the day's cards, bills and packages. Perhaps as you read this you are finishing (starting?) your Christmas shopping. Perhaps you are looking over your calendar or cooking that beloved family recipe that only makes its appearance this time of year.

In the midst of it all there will come a moment when we suddenly know it's Christmas. For some, it's an annual concert or play. Perhaps it's a particular service like Blue Christmas or Christmas Eve. Familiarity, ritual, call it what you will – I suspect it is something more, something expressed in a prayer from a small congregation in Scotland:

*When the promise seems beyond us,
You, O God, are born in us.
And in the birthing of that hope,
The promise comes close,
The vision seems possible,
The hope alive.*

Whenever that moment arrives for you when you really, really know Christmas is here, when it moves from something you've planned for to something pervading your spirit, may you keep your heart open for it. Keep your heart open for the Christ Child, for the hope, peace, joy and love promised throughout Advent.

*May you welcome anew the one
born in a humble manger,
Born not to keep us as we are but
born to change us,*

*To broaden our faith, increase
our vision,
Embolden our courage, to stretch
our hope,
That the lion and lamb find a
place together,
That there is a place at the table
for everyone,
That deserts bloom with flowers.
When the promise seems beyond
us,
You, O God, are born in us.
Be born in us today.*

A merry and blessed Christmas
to all! —Julie Peeples



Open House takes a Hiatus

For the past ten years, we have greatly enjoyed welcoming you into our home at Christmas time for food and fellowship. After much deliberation, we decided to give the Open House a rest for this year, in part due to everyone's busy schedules, in part because, well, let's face it, your ministers aren't spring chickens any more, and with their children not home to do the heavy lifting, it's a bit daunting. But we do hope you'll join us for a special Pastors' Coffee Hour on Sunday, December 27 after worship. No, there won't be certain "spirits," but there will be a good spirit, and lots of goodies! —Paul and Julie



The Neo-Black Society Gospel Choir of UNCG
worshipping with us on December 6th.

Stewardship Update, Year-End Financial Notes



Though Thanksgiving has passed, we should always be thankful. My namesake, the Apostle Paul, almost always began his letters

with an expression of thanks to the people in the church he was writing. In Philippians 1:3-11, he wrote, "I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you..." Our giving is held in confidence. So instead of a personal thank you card, I hope this Holiday Letter will suffice.

Pam Aldridge, our Financial Secretary, reports that thus far around 180 people and couples (we use the term unit) have contributed \$252,714 through December 6th. To all of you, our thanks. God has given us the chance to be part of a vital community, and every gift is used wisely and carefully.

So far, for 2010, 101 individuals and couples have made a pledge to give our church \$242,041. This is an increase of around \$7,500 over last year's pledges. To all of you, thank you for your confidence in our church. We promise to be good stewards of your confidence. Of the 101 pledges, 18 are new pledges. To them, thank you for your willingness to take a chance on this church.



Treasurer Sankey Moore-Painter reviews CUCC finances with the congregation at the Annual Budget Hearing on December 6th.

The past two years have been especially brutal financially for a number of people in our church. It is easier to be in a church when everything is sunny, than when we are struggling personally. Yet we all struggle at times; such is our lot in life. So for those who have particular financial challenges, thank you for allowing the church to be a part of your lives in the rough times. Finally, there are some people who pledged in 2009 and who have not yet turned in pledges. To them, thank you for your generosity this year, and we gently remind you that you can still make a pledge for 2010.

God gives us blessings, and God gives us opportunities to serve. For the many ways you share both with this church, thank you.

—Paul Davis



Sunday School Schedule

There will be no Sunday School for our children on Sunday, December 27th and Sunday, January 3rd.



Technical Difficulties

We sincerely hope that by time you read this our telephones will be fully functioning again. Our present provider is upgrading equipment, and we have suffered connection issues. We are switching providers, and the delay in making this change was unexpected. Thank you for your patience.



Year-End Financial Matters

Please remember that 2009 contributions must be in by December 31 to be counted as a donation for the current year. End of year Giving

Statements will be available in mid-January.

Offering envelopes for 2010 may be picked up in the Fellowship Hall. As we try to trim where we can, envelopes have been ordered only for those who have indicated that they desire them. Quite a few people have indicated that because they enjoy online bill-pay, electronic transfer of funds, annual giving, etc., they do not use the weekly envelopes. Anyone who gives will continue to have an account number, and giving statements will be available for all.

If you find that you weren't assigned a box and would like one, please see Pam Aldridge.



CUCC Business

Volunteers

December 20

Lay Reader: Alice Franks
Nursery: K. & T. Kohlphenson
Coffee Hour: S. Shoaf & T. Sutter

December 27

Lay Reader: TBA
Nursery: T. Sutter
Coffee Hour: T. Raines & S. Via

Ushers

E. Driver, C. Hertlein, F. Kuester, M. Shaw



Financial Reports

| Weekly Income | 11/29/09 | 12/06/09 |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| Pledged Offering | \$2,459.99 | \$16,076.00 |
| Unpledged Offering | 865.00 | 1,609.81 |
| Supper Study | 120.00 | --- |
| Poinsettias | 256.00 | 288.00 |
| Santa's Elves | 20.00 | 250.00 |
| Use of Church | --- | 950.00 |
| Total | \$3,720.99 | \$19,173.81 |

Budget Income/Expense Summary

| | 12/01-13/09 | YTD |
|-------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Income | \$23,487.43 | \$313,890.47 |
| Expense | 3,084.04 | 304,997.64 |
| Surplus/(Deficit) | \$20,403.39 | \$8,892.83 |

Special Christmas Worship, Notes of Appreciation

The Montagnard Grace Community Church has invited our congregation to join them for their annual Christmas Celebration, Sat., Dec. 26. The festivities begin at 2:30, with dinner at 5:00.



Notes of Appreciation

Marie Williams and her niece, Judy Palmer, would like to thank Marie's church family for their love, support, calls, cards and prayers during her ongoing illness this past fall. It has meant very much to her.

The Prairie Family would like to thank everyone for the prayers, cards, food and love shared with them during the past four months of Camille's illness. We are so very blessed to be part of this church family.



A Thank you From Santa

Dear Elves,

You have outdone yourselves! I am once again amazed at your outpouring of generosity and willingness to help these very special families. This year we were able to help 23 families with a total of 72 children, making this the most we have ever helped in a single year!

Thank you! Each family received gifts for the children, seven bags of groceries, and a holiday basket with fruit and holiday treats. All the items have been picked up and delivered to the families or are in the process of being delivered.

I have heard from the delivery/contact people that the responses from the families have been absolutely wonderful. Each has been so grateful and overwhelmed that their joy cannot be hidden. I would like to share with you the reaction of one of these families . . .

"I knocked on the door and the mother came out to help me unload. As I began unloading their items her eyes filled with tears. 'Is this all for us?' she asked. When I told her it was, the tears just flowed uncontrollably. She told me how they were very low on money and she really needed to go to the store, but had been putting it off as the heat bill had been more than she had anticipated. She then continued on to tell me that her two children had asked if Santa was going to come this year. 'I didn't know what to tell them, I just told them we would have to wait and see. That was so hard they just looked so sad. Now I can tell them Santa is definitely coming and we are going to have a special dinner tonight. They will be so happy! Thank you so much!' At that point I told her that I really had nothing to do with it — that it was Santa's Elves that did it. Her response was 'God bless them. They are an answer to a prayer. Please tell them how grateful I am for them and all they have done.'

So once again, thank you sorting elves, child elves, grocery elves, shopping elves, gift card and money elves, loading elves, and basket elves — I couldn't have done this without you. You have given a very special gift the value of which can-

not be measured other than by the heart of the one who gave and the heart of the one who received.

On behalf of myself, and those faces whom you will never know, but whose lives you have so deeply touched, Merry Christmas! —*Santa*



Christmas Greetings from Our Pastor Emeritus

Dear Family in Christ,

For us, this greeting is not just a metaphor; rather, it is the reality of our feelings, grounded in what we began to share in the eighties when Bill was Pastor here, and continuing to this day. During those pastoral years, three of our parents died, both of our children married, and four of our five grandchildren were born. On all of those occasions we were supported and treasured by the membership in loving, faith sustaining ways. Although we were away from the church for about fifteen years while Bill was serving interim pastorates, we still felt the warmth and caring spirit of Congregational Church. We give thanks to God for our Pastor and for our brothers and sisters here and we wish for each of you a blessed Christmas.

—*Winnie & Bill*

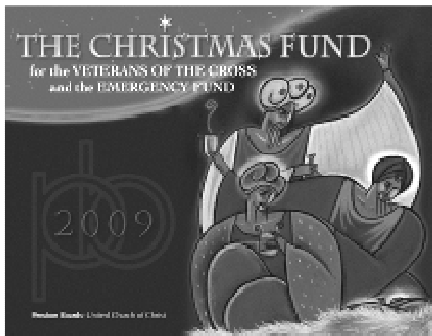
Luminaries, Used Bikes Needed, Christmas Fund

On Christmas Eve, it is a tradition here at CUCC to place luminaries along our church sidewalks. If you would like to help make and place them, we will gather at 3:00 pm on Christmas Eve. Join us for this beautiful way of bringing light into the world.



Looking for Used Bikes!

The church is searching for two used bikes, in good shape, for a couple of older children who could really use a wonderful Christmas surprise. If you have one you could give, let us know!



2009 Christmas Fund

Our joy at Christmas is a response to God's promise of new life through the birth of Jesus. It is a joy we are called to share widely, through our witness and gifts, both to loved ones and to distant neighbors.

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund, one of four Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ (UCC), is an important way of sharing our joy at God's renewing and life-giving

grace. The Offering is an expression of joy and gratitude to, and for, those who serve the church.

Gifts to the Christmas Fund help provide pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retirees, emergency assistance to the families of clergy and lay employees and Christmas Gift Checks to hundreds of annuitants.

The Christmas Fund celebrates 107 years of continuous ministry. A 1953 publication indicates that: "In 1902, a little money was collected and special Christmas gifts were sent to ten older ministers." It also reports that \$121,054 was received for the Christmas Fund in 1952.

A little more than 50 years later, in 2008 the Christmas Fund received \$1,600,000 and nearly 1,500 families were assisted. Our goal is to be able to provide at least \$1,650,000 in assistance from the 2009 appeal.

This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care. CUCC will receive this offering at our Christmas Eve services and at other times if the checks are made out to CUCC and marked "Christmas Fund."



Human Services Survey

Holiday Greetings to all,

I am working with a task force of the United Way of Greater Greensboro who is partnering with local foundations to conduct a human services study called "Voices. Choices." This study is the first in over five years, and is designed to identify and assess the most urgent human services needs in our com-

munity today. Results from this study, which will be completed by year end, will be used to help local human service organizations, including United Way, determine their investment priorities for the next several years.

I am asking you and members of your congregation, family, or agency you work with to participate in a brief on-line survey that will help our community and the United Way and other agencies set priorities for serving our Greensboro residents. Please go to www.unitedwaygso.org and click on "Voices Choices" to take the online survey. It takes less than five minutes and this will be your way of participating in helping to make a better community. The survey must be completed by December 28th, so please take it as soon as possible.

Thanks in advance,

*Rev. Dr. Diane Givens
Moffett, Senior Pastor
Saint James Presbyterian Church*



Keep in Your Prayers ...

In order to protect the privacy of the individuals on our Prayer List, this information is not available in the online version of our newsletter.



Congregational

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Congregational United Church of Christ
400 West Radiance Drive
Greensboro, NC 27403

December 16, 2009

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GREENSBORO, NC
PERMIT NO. 44



MAY YOUR HEARTS
BE FILLED WITH THE
EVERLASTING
PEACE, LOVE AND
JOY OF JESUS.

Edna *TH*
Judy *Jimmy* *Renee*
Bill *charlotte*
Julie *Paul*

January Birthdays

- 1 Tandy Brown
- 5 Bill Pressmann
- 7 Virginia Bright
- 7 Sadie Covington
- 8 Harold Ashworth
- 9 Marie Williams
- 10 Matina Kalconnis-Rueppell
- 11 Grace Barber
- 13 Mac Mackenzie
- 14 Susan Shroyer
- 16 William Scarborough
- 19 Jonathon Hertlein
- 19 Faith Pressman
- 20 Rick Bardolph
- 22 Alana Patterson
- 22 Katherine Williams
- 23 Jamie Anderson
- 26 Sankey Moore-Painter
- 27 Meredith Moore-Painter
- 29 Jon Patrick Nance