

The

Congregator

VOLUME 28, ISSUE 4



Lenten Season

Holy Week

Holy week will begin with our traditional Palm Sunday worship, including the sacrament of Holy Communion. Easter Sunday worship will be a joyful celebration of our Lord's resurrection. Both services will begin at 10:30 AM.

Maundy Thursday will be observed with worship at 7:00 PM. The sacrament of Holy Communion, celebrated by intinction, will be followed by the liturgy for the Office of Tenebrae. This will be a thoughtful, introspective evening, anticipating the events of Good Friday.

Jake says . . . “Mystery!”

Our Roman Catholic friends have a very useful expression in their church language: “a mystery of faith.” When we come to our great annual celebrations in our own tradition, Christmas and Easter, we frequently avoid the *mystery* component in these high holy days. We miss it! *Mystery* seems too spooky, too unknown/insecure, too uncontrolled.

“Mystery,” you ask? Yes, indeed! True enough, we know the stories of each holiday very well. The Bible record behind each day is saved on each of our mental hard drives. Each day is an annual ritual. We know in great detail the events around Jesus’ birth and the days after to Epiphany; Holy Week - cleansing the temple, Passover (upper room), trial, crucifixion, and resurrection - all are fixed in our minds.

We might discover amazing strength if we dared to plunge into mystery. *Mystery* is discovered after the holiday has past. Specifically, right now, April, 2011, Grand Blanc, FCUCC, “What difference will Easter make this year for our church family? What will be the difference for each one of us individually?”

Even in the Biblical record, the difference was discovered after Jesus rose. Differences appeared in the lives of those folks who were so close to Jesus that they met their risen Lord! We will not meet Jesus face-to-face in a few weeks. A piece of the mystery is the special relationship which we discover in a relationship which is not face-to-face! In fact, in some dimensions, the relationship is closer and more dependable than the ones to which we are accustomed. A great difference!

Easter makes a difference for us when we thoroughly invest ourselves in our Lenten pilgrimage, especially daily following Jesus through his Holy Week events, and then coming to our Easter celebration. We prepare ourselves to leave our Easter morning worship with the spirit of those early followers: deeper trust, higher commitment, new purpose and calling, fresh new lives for each of us!

“Easter blessings in 2011!”



EASTER FOOD BASKETS

We will be sponsoring 14 families with Easter Food Baskets this year. The Outreach team is asking the Congregation for both perishable and non-perishable food, as well as cleaning and personal hygiene products. All non-perishable food should be delivered to the church no later than Sunday, April 17th. Perishable food should be delivered to the church no later than Wednesday, April 20th. Food will be delivered on Friday, April 22. The Outreach team needs drivers to deliver these baskets from 11:00 am to noon. For more information, contact Dennis Setera at 810-636-7713.



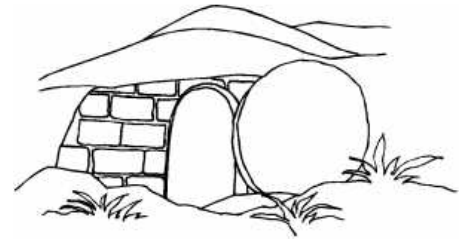
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN COMES TO A CLOSE

The “Reaching Up - Reaching Out” campaign to renovate the sanctuary has come to the end of the three year pledge period. The Board will be reviewing the status of the campaign when all pledges are in, and letting you know where we stand with closing out this campaign. If you have not completed your pledge as yet, please try to do so this month.



WHAT'S IN THE TOMB?

The Spiritual Growth Team is planning a very special Easter event for the Sunday School children this year. The festivities will include a different kind of Easter “Hunt” and the children may be very surprised at what they find at the end of their journey. We will be incorporating a message of giving back to others, just as Jesus has given so much for us. The children will be packaging Camp Kits for Spectrum Child and Family Services to send under-privileged children to summer camp. We need the congregation's help to collect the following items:



CAMP KIT

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| duffel bag | flip flops |
| beach towel | pjs |
| soap/shampoo | underwear/socks |
| toothbrush/paste | T-shirts & shorts |
| deodorant | bug wipes |
| swimsuit | |



MOM 2 MOM

Sister Circle's Spring Mom 2 Mom sale was a huge success! We had our largest shopping crowd in the history of all sales - 584 shoppers came through the doors during the four hour sale. We sold out of the maximum number of renters that could fit in our gym and expanded our profit with a concession stand of donated food items. The sale made a profit of \$1,400 for the church. The Sister Circle had many volunteers that all contributed their time and resources to help make the sale possible. Special thanks to Beth & Lee Eck, Carmen Leschuk, Mary Powers, Stacy Price, Lynette Pruet, Bethany Sly, Paris Stetkiw, Lori Setera, Susan Urogdy, Jessica Whitley, Debbie Wilson and Jamie Zannetti.



THANK YOU!

A big thank you goes to the Scout Troop 368 for their donation of gym equipment. The Troop purchased and donated volley balls, dodge balls and floor hockey sticks.

NEWS FROM THE PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE

A lot has happened since the last Congregator update! The team has met with the Associate Conference Minister Thom Webster and finalized our church profile. The conference has published our search on their website allowing us to now start receiving profiles from the interested candidates. Currently, the team is reviewing 18 pastor profiles. The review process is one that is done prayerfully and with God’s guidance. The plan is to have completed these reviews before Easter, selecting candidates that we want to continue with by setting up interview dates.

Please continue to pray for this team, asking God to be with us, guiding us to find the person he is calling to be our next senior pastor.

Thank you!
~*The PSC Team*



Whether it’s a friend, a family member, or the neighbor down the street, we all know someone who has been touched by cancer. Many of us are concerned about this disease and want to do something to make a difference. That’s why the Outreach Team has decided once again to take part in the American Cancer Society Relay for Life. It’s an event that brings together the whole community and helps raise funds for the fight against this disease. I know you care about cancer, too, and I’d love for you to join me as part of our Relay team.

This year the Relay is scheduled for June 4-5 at the Grand Blanc High School. It runs from 10 am Saturday through 10 am Sunday. At the event, we’ll camp out overnight, walk around the track, and meet lots of new people. There is an

incredible tribute to cancer survivors and caregivers that starts off the night and a moving ceremony honoring those who have fought the disease. I can truly say Relay is unlike anything else you’ll ever do. It’s a night full of fun, hope, and remembrance. Our team is looking to fill 1-hour time slots throughout the event. We have a sign up sheet in the Fellowship Hall where you can choose the time that best fits your schedule. You can also sign up online at:

<http://main.acsevents.org/goto/firstcongregational>

Just select the “Join Our Team” link. If you can’t join us, will you please visit the site and make a donation to support our efforts? Either way, you will make a real difference in the lives of people facing cancer – and in the lives of the people who love

WELCOME

The Administrative Board would like to welcome Tom McLaren to the church staff as our new maintenance/custodial person.



FEBRUARY FINANCIALS

	February	Year-to-Date
Operating Fund (less Learning House)		
Revenue	33,394	78,060
Expenses	44,543	81,581
Total	-11,361	-3,521
Learning House		
Revenue	41,526	72,740
Expenses	24,822	48,569
Total	16,740	24,171
Grand Total	5,591	20,650

RELAY FOR LIFE

them. An online donation can be made by selecting “Donate to Our Team” or by choosing a team member to sponsor. Most major credit cards are accepted online. If you don’t feel comfortable making an online donation but are still interested in supporting us, the Outreach Team will have a table set up in the Fellowship Hall for the next several Sundays. We can take donations or sign up new team members there as well.

Please feel free to call Dennis Setera at 810-636-7713 or Kristin Ragsdale at 248-885-7521 if you have any questions about the event.

With much gratitude,

*Dennis Setera & Kristin Ragsdale
Relay for Life Team Co-Captains*

Upward Season 2011

March 16th concluded our 4th season of Upward Basketball & Cheerleading. It was another fantastic year introducing kids to Jesus Christ through sports. This season's participation increased 20% giving us a total of 360 participants (300 Basketball, 60 Cheerleading – 85% non FCUCC members). Games took place in both the CLC and Fellowship hall, Jan 22nd – Mar 12th on Saturdays, starting at 8 am ending at 6pm.

Upward Team's Outreach Efforts:

Donated 4,200 items to the Eastern Food Bank (34 teams)

Congregation members provided 11 children with scholarships to enable them to participate this season.

As volunteers we take great pride in adopting the Upward philosophy. We make every attempt to not turn down kids from participating. We wanted to share one parent's comments after letting their son practice with a team after the season started.

Volunteers:

1 Director, 7 Commissioners, 2 Announcers, 60+ Head/Assist Coaches, 20 Referees, 30 Game-day Ops Personnel, 25 Youth Group-Concessions, Photographer, Videographer



"Dear Coach,

Kirk and I would like to take a moment to thank you both for what you have done for Robert. By letting him practice with the team last week you have made him feel more confident and comfortable enough to participate in Team Sports. We have been trying to get him interested for several years. He is so focused on being perfect even though we just want him to have fun. He is so proud of this! I have to make him take the uniform off at night. And God help you if you touch one of his stars. He's currently angry with his dad because he thinks his Dad lost his 2nd devotional card.

Thank you again for everything. Please know that you have made a positive impact in the life of a child, and his parents."

*Sincerely,
Kristen and Kirk*



Thank you to everyone who participated, supported and sponsored the 2011 Upward Program!

BABIES, BABIES AND MORE BABIES

Congratulations to Bill & Bev Mervyn on the birth of their great-granddaughter Charlotte Grace Lausman, on March 17th to proud parents Kirk & Tracy Lausman.

Congratulations also goes out to Owen & Teresa Mooney on the birth of their triplet grandsons Everett Owen, Finley Joseph and Carter Paige Miller on March 29th. Proud parents are Chris and Jessica Miller and big brother Collin.

Oui Oui an Evening in Paris

The First Congregational UCC Chancel Choir held their Second Annual French Dinner, “*Oui Oui an Evening in Paris.*” Directed by Chef Brandon Sanders, the choir assisted in shopping, prepping and cooking over a two day period. The group transformed the Christian Life Center into a beautiful dining room complete with soft lighting, candles and flowers. The gourmet meal consisted of Hor d’oeuvres, French onion soup, raspberry salad, Fromage Piaf, Emflamme’ Chateau and giant stuffed cream puffs with raspberries. Those in attendance were entertained by the vocal styling’s of Jill Richardson, accompanied by Joe Powers on piano. Guest vocalists included Ron Pruett, Mandy Weiss and Ladd Goodall. A total of 95 tickets were sold for the event. Thank you to Brandon Sanders, the entire Chancel Choir and everyone who helped make this event a success.



APPLYING BIBLE PRINCIPLES

Dr. M.R. DeHaan, physician and founder of the Radio Bible Class, had a small sign on his desk. The sign had only two words: "Perhaps Today." Those who knew Dr. DeHaan and worked closely with him recall that hardly a day passed that he did not consider those words. Each day as he entered his office, that little sign, "Perhaps Today," provided a fresh reminder to him that the Lord Jesus Christ could come that very day.

That sense of heightened expectation certainly characterized believers in New Testament times. They were looking for Jesus to return at any moment, something that might be described as the "imminent return of Christ." Like Abraham, they viewed themselves as strangers and pilgrims, those who "...looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10). As a result, their interest in things of this world took second place to spiritual priorities. They saw money and material possessions primarily as instruments by which they could advance the kingdom of God and through which they could fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

Sad to say, most Christians today do not share their expectation concerning Christ's return.

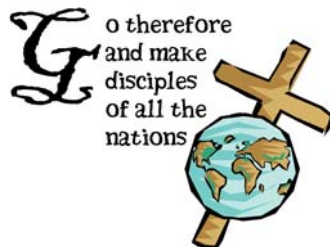
Certainly most Christians would not have a sign on their desk as did Dr. DeHaan: "Perhaps Today." Let's face it - most present-day Christians are not anticipating or looking for Christ's return.

And this has affected how people view money and material possessions. Instead of seeing them as the means to fulfilling the Great Commission and as tools to further the kingdom of God, they see them as goods to be hoarded or spent on passing pleasures. Instead of "laying up treasures in heaven" through giving here on earth as the Lord Jesus instructed, most people lay up treasures only in mutual funds, CDs or money market accounts.

John Piper wrote these thought-provoking words:

God is not glorified when we keep for ourselves (no matter how thankfully) what we ought to be using to

alleviate the misery of unevangelized, uneducated, unmedicated and unfed millions. The evidence that many professing Christians



have been deceived by this doctrine is how little they give and how much they own. God has prospered them.

And by an almost irresistible law of consumer culture (baptized by a doctrine of health, wealth and prosperity), they have bought bigger (and more) houses, news (and more) cars, fancier (and more) clothes, better (and more) meat, and all manner of trinkets and gadgets and containers and devices and equipment to make life more fun. They will object: Does not the Old Testament promise that God will prosper His people? Indeed! God increases our yield so that by giving, we can provide our yield is not our god... God prospers a business so that... unreached peoples can be reached with the Gospel.

Dr. DeHaan was right, you know. Jesus is coming again, "Perhaps Today." In light of His return, will you live and give here at First Congregational United Church of Christ, so that others may hear the good news of salvation, so that others may experience the life-changing grace of the Gospel?



KROGER COMMUNITY REWARDS

For the church to continue earning Kroger Community Rewards for the May 1st 2011 to April 30th 2012 in this program, ALL MEMBERS (currently enrolled in the program) MUST re-enroll at krogercommunityrewards.com beginning April 1, 2011. You will not receive any communication from Kroger relative to enrollment expiring. Each year beginning on April 1st, anyone who shops using their Kroger Community Rewards card will need to register their card for the Church to receive their Community Rewards.

You will need to re-enter the information including the church's number (NPO 82729). This will ensure that the church receives the benefits of your shopping each week.

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CHURCH OFFICE MANAGER
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CARLA MEIER

PARISH VISITOR
BARBARA BENSON

LEARNING HOUSE DIRECTOR
SUSAN M. ARNOULD

MAINTENANCE/CUSTODIAN
TOM McLAREN

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT
CONGREGATOR IS
FRIDAY, APRIL 22, 2011**

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No XYZ Meeting in April

XYZ is cancelling their April dinner meeting given the fact that it falls on Maundy Thursday.

May's meeting will be held on the 19th with Tom & Sharon Shpakow and Bob & Gloria Throop as hosts. Dr. Michael Heberling, president of Baker College Center for Graduate Studies, will be the guest speaker. Gathering will be at 5:00 and dinner at 5:30. Please bring a dish to pass and your own table service.

**Hawaiian Luau, Saturday May 14th
in the Christian Life Center**

- Pig Roast Dinner
- DJ/Cocktails/Dancing
- Hawaiian attire requested
- Tickets are \$20/person
- Ticket sales begin April 17th

For more information contact Kristin Ragsdale 248-885-7521

