

The Congregator

VOLUME 28, ISSUE 13



Family Advent Night

Live Nativity Starting Times

Thursday, December 22nd at 6:00 PM

Friday, December 23rd at 6:00 PM

Saturday, December 24th at 5:00 PM

SAVE THIS DATE

Semi Annual Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 5th. More information to follow at a later date.

UPWARDS Basketball is still in need of 10 additional coaches. Please contact Mike Sly for details on (810) 444-1927.

Attention all Confirmation Parents: Mark your calendars, *The Way We're Wired* class begins January 19th - February 23rd. This six week class is for the parents of all confirmation students and will be held Thursdays, 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM. See Tracy Loomis for more details.

Brother-Sister Breakfast Brother Square and Sister Circle are joining forces to host a Sunday morning breakfast. If you have not been to either of these great ministries, now is the time to try it out! All men and women are invited to join us Sunday, January 8th at 9:00 AM for some fun information, a lively discussion, and a great breakfast. Childcare will be provided.



More Family Advent Night Pictures



Thanksgiving Food Baskets

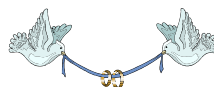
Fourteen "FISH" families, whose children attend Grand Blanc schools, were helped with a turkey, perishables and enough groceries to provide a Thanksgiving dinner and extra food for their families for the next week or two. All of the families told us they were very grateful for this extra help.

We had a large group working to make it all possible. The people who donated a turkey and/or perishables were: Lana Bellah, Norma Burrows, Barb Cunningham, Paul Fuhs, Ladd Goddall, Joy Kozlowski, Ellen Lounds, Amy Mackie, Maggie & Tom McLaren, Beth Miller, Theresa Mooney, Dave Palevich, Stacy Price, David & Kathy Rembowski, Ron Royer, Harold & Phyllis Selesky, Dennis & Lori Setera, Bob Tresedder, Sue VanHollebeke, Jamie Zannetti. The congregation brought in lots of "extra" food and the Senior High Youth delivered all of it to the fourteen FISH" families.

Mary Royer and the Outreach Team

Thank you to Bethany Sly and Joe Schulte for making our granddaughter's wedding such a special day.

Beverly Mervyn



Stewardship Update

A very big THANK YOU goes out to those who have pledged financial support to FCUCC for 2012. Response has been great and the average pledge is up 14%. Your generous support will allow us to continue our many needed ministries. To those who have not yet submitted a pledge, please do so as soon as possible so that we can formulate a balanced church budget for next year.

Pledges for 2012 after 3 weeks	92 for \$239,236
Pledges for 2011 after 3 weeks	90 for \$212,814
Pledges for 2011 final tally	114 for \$250,846

People who pledged in both 2011 and 2012 (82 pledges)

Dollars pledged for 2011: \$196,594

Dollars pledged for 2012: \$224,576

(14.2% increase over 2011 pledge)

No Sister Circle for the Month of December. Our regular book meeting will resume Tuesday, January 24, 2012!



Updating Our Records

To better communicate with church members, please ensure that your most recent email address provided to us. You can send your email address changes to fcucc_admin@sbcglobal.net.

The Net's new basketball team coached by Laryn Butzler. Practice on Sundays, 6:30 - 8:00 PM. First game Thursday, January 26th. Interested players contact Tracy Loomis.

XYZ does not meet in January or February. March 15th is the next meeting with Shirley & Dale Wells and Georgette & Paul Engard as hosts.

Joe's Jottings . . .

As many of you know, when the days get shorter and the quiet darkness of winter falls upon us, I find it a time to reflect -- not only to look back on the last year, but to reflect on a life lived and how I got to be where I am. This year, as I think back, I realize how much I have been able to accomplish that I never thought I would be allowed to do or could do. I often wondered how those things happened. Then I came to understand the answer to the question: I didn't do it alone. It took others (whose journeys intersected with mine) who have been, and continue to be, so important. I was reflecting on the family in which I was reared, and thought about the encouragement I received to at least try to do what I thought I was called to do. They enabled me to go to college, and even in the midst of their surprise they cheered me on as I prepared for, and then entered, ordained ministry. I have always been able to look to my family for support, and that continues with my wife, Beth, who has moved around the northeastern quarter of the country as I have sought to fulfill my calling. She continues to offer her presence and love, and has helped me to increase some of my skills, particularly in the area of writing.

Often, when I was physically separated from my family, there were friends to fill the void. They adopted me into their families and made me feel part of a community. Like my family, they have put up with my quirks and loved me, at times in spite of me. They have provided me with unconditional acceptance. That is why, even though I knew no one in Maine when I moved there, I now have "family" to visit when Beth and I return there.

The church has provided me with much. It was in the church that I was empowered to discover and test my call as a teacher. It has been those in church leadership positions who have advocated for me in the various settings of my ministry in the United Church of Christ. They have mentored, challenged, and counseled me. Teachers and professors have done the same.

All of these people have helped to shape me and helped me along the way. If not for their willingness to walk with me, I would not have been able to fulfill my calling. It is my sense that we all need others in our lives to be with us.

I think of this as we near Christmas because I believe that relationships are what Christmas is all about. Although I get tied up in meals, decorating and shopping, these things are not the reason for the season. No, it is a time to remember that we celebrate on Christmas that God was willing to come among us in the person of Jesus and share our common lot; to walk side by side with us and let us know that we are loved and accepted by the one who creates and empowers us. This is what the incarnation, the word become flesh, means. It reminds us that we are all called to be a community -- supporting, empowering, and challenging one another. It is a celebration that we are all created in the image of God and are valuable. That is the light that shines in the darkness. It makes the short days and long nights much more tolerable. It lifts me up. This Christmas let us celebrate that God is with us, and so are others.



Thank you to all those who sent notes, cards, & well wishes after my knee surgery. It was so kind of you, & it gave me much encouragement to keep pushing through the recovery period.

God bless you all.

Sincerely,
Sharon Ballreich

We sincerely appreciate all the prayers and love over the past couple of months for our family. My father was a great man with integrity and compassion. He will be greatly missed. It is so comforting to have such an awesome church family. See you in church soon.

Thank you.

Love, Nancy Docter, Gary, Jill,
Paul & Carol Ranspach too

First Congregational Church:
I greatly appreciate the cards, support & best wishes from XYZ, Lana & others of the church family.

Earl R. Wiseman



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

6494 SOUTH BELSAY ROAD
GRAND BLANC, MICHIGAN 48439
PHONE: (810) 695-0550 • FAX: (810) 695-5117
EMAIL: FCUCC_ADMIN@SBCGLOBAL.NET
WWW.UCCGRANDBLANC.ORG

SENIOR PASTOR
REV. JOE SCHULTE

**DIRECTOR YOUTH &
EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES**
TRACY LOOMIS

CHURCH SECRETARY
WANDA KITCHEN

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC
BRANDON SANDERS

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
CARLA MEIER

PARISH VISITOR
BARBARA BENSON

LEARNING HOUSE DIRECTOR
SUSAN M. ARNOULD

MAINTENANCE/CUSTODIAN
TOM McLAREN

ORGANIST
LAVONNE BOMELI

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GRAND BLANC
MI 48439
PERMIT NO. 19



Book of the Month

When the Game is Over it All Goes Back in the Box by John Ortberg

Remember the thrill of winning at Checkers or Parcheesi? You become the Master of the Board - the victor over everyone else. But what happens after that, asks bestselling author John Ortberg. You know the answer: It all goes back in the box. You don't get to keep one token, one chip, one game card. In the end, the spoils of the game add up to nothing. Using popular games as a metaphor for our temporal lives, this book neatly sorts out what's fleeting and what's permanent in God's kingdom. Being Master of the Board is not the point; being rich toward God is. Winning the game of life on Earth is a temporary victory; loving God and other people with all our hearts is an eternal one. Using humor, terrific stories, and a focus on winning "the right trophies," Ortberg paints a vivid picture of the priorities that all Christians will want to embrace.



The Outreach Team would like to thank everyone who participated in making the holidays that much brighter for so many. There are 125 children from a few months old

to 17 years of age who are all opening Christmas gifts purchased just for them through the Angel Tag Christmas gifts. The coat drive held in November collected 7 big boxes of coats and have been given to the Spectrum Orphanage and the North End Soup Kitchen. The congregation donated 115 filled shoe boxes to Operation Christmas Child! It is truly a blessing to be able to share God's love with so many. None of these things could have happened without the help of many generous volunteers.

The **Nartel Family Foundation** donated \$5000 to the Upward Basketball/Cheerleading sports ministry this past November. Their generosity will make an immediate difference in the lives of thousands of youth for years to come. The funds will be allocated toward new advanced basketball hoops, bleachers, and scholarships for those parents needing assistance. A special thanks to board member, Kathy Rembowski of the Nartel Family Foundation for her awareness and initiation efforts to make this possible.