

Global Mission Moment

The Year of the Cross

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Matthew 16:24

I arrived in El Salvador nearly a year ago, not knowing what to expect. Just after I arrived, the Salvadoran Lutheran Church, for whom I work, chose their ministry theme for the coming year. They chose, "Take your cross and follow me!" (Matthew 16:24) I had come to El Salvador expecting to learn how God works in a new culture, but I learned about the cross and what it means in El Salvador.

Many recall the floods caused by Hurricane Ida last November, and how they caused so much destruction throughout the country. A rush of aid came right after news of the flooding broke, but as its memory faded, things slowed down. Meanwhile the subsequent long dry summer left many Salvadorans searching for ways to sustain their families. The Salvadorans were carrying the "cross" of the floods and which heat had ruined all the crops intended to feed families for the year. But ecumenical organizations took up the cross and supplied food to several communities, following up with each one. Givers to Week of Compassion and One Great Hour of Sharing took up the cross and helped greatly. But the struggle still continues. The long-awaited rains came this year not as a blessing, but as another round of floods.

The Lutheran Church took up the cross with many agricultural projects in El Salvador which provided much needed food. I realized they hadn't waited until the crisis occurred to start growing. They had already begun these projects long before the floods came. In this way I saw Christians in El Salvador take up their cross. I have seen a church that takes care of the whole person; sowing seeds of hope from tragedy.

Let us pray that we may all aspire to better the lives of those around us by taking up our cross and following Christ.

Nicholas Green serves in El Salvador as a long-term volunteer with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of El Salvador. He supports the National Youth with the Family and Gender Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of El Salvador.

Through your continued support of Our Church's Wider Mission the Calendar of Prayer for the Mission of the United Church of Christ is made possible; thank you!



Mission Moment—We Remember All Those Who Serve

November 7, 2010

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Proper 27)

A Litany for Veterans Day

One: For the men and women who serve in the Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard,

People: We ask your blessing.

One: For the family members who have made great sacrifices in order to make it possible for their service members to be on watch at home or around the world or to go into harm's way,

People: We ask your blessing.

One: For the families who grieve the death of a member who went in harm's way, never to return,

People: We ask your blessing.

One: Jesus tells us that no one has greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. For all those veterans who have been willing to lay down their lives.

People: We ask your blessing.

One: For the veterans of past wars who bear scars in their bodies and spirits,

People: We ask your blessing.

One: For veterans who came home but couldn't "fit in" with their families or communities any more,

People: We ask your blessing.

One: Keep all our veterans in your care today. Grant them the peace they sought to preserve for others. As we honor our veterans, we also pray for peace.

Teach all your people the ways of peace that those who have sacrificed so much for peace and freedom will not have done so in vain. We pray all these things in the name of your son, our savior, Jesus Christ.

People: Amen.

Series 1

Haggai 1:15b – 2:9

Luke 20:27-38

II Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

Psalms 145:1-5, 17-21

Series 2

II Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

Luke 20:27-38

Job 19:23-27a

Psalms 17:1-19

November 8, 2010

Today we pray for the ministry and mission of Zion United Church of Christ, Hagerstown, MD

Our Mission Statement: "The mission of this Congregation is to worship God, to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to celebrate the Sacraments; to share Christian fellowship and unity within the Congregation and the community; to render loving service toward all people; to strive for righteousness; justice and peace; and to grow in spirit and in membership."

Series 1

Haggai 2:10-19
II Peter 1:16-21
Psalm 98

Series 2

Job 21:1, 17-34
II Peter 1:16-21
Psalm 123

November 9, 2010

Today we pray for the ministry and mission of St. John United Church of Christ, St Charles, MO. "Our mission is to nurture spiritual growth and share the message of Jesus Christ by word and deed in our community and beyond. We are here to serve, to welcome, and to love. Our vision is to live God's message of love and compassion in our daily lives. To engage all of our members we will gradually change the worship service to incorporate richer and varied worship styles and music. We will honor the traditions developed at St. John while adapting to meet the interests and needs of all members. We will respond quickly and passionately to people in need and we will engage members of all ages to work together in ministry and mission. We will find ways to make our historic church beautiful to all who visit-through the warmth of our members and the beauty and functionality of our facilities."

Series 1

Haggai 2:20-23
II John 1-13
Psalm 98

Series 2

Job 21:1, 17-34
II John 1-13
Psalm 123

November 10, 2010

Today we pray for the ministry and mission of Westerville Community United Church of Christ, Westerville, Ohio. "Westerville Community Church is an open community of faith, welcoming all who wish to explore with us the meaning of the Christian life. We support the right of others to follow their own path as they are guided by Scripture and by the Holy Spirit. The United Church of Christ has no required doctrinal formula. Among the beliefs commonly agreed to by our members are: We believe in the Creator God, whose love and forgiveness are revealed to us in Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Savior, who is present with us in the Holy Spirit, guiding the church in this day. We are called into the church to serve others in our near community and in places of need in the nation and world. We reach out with good news of God's purpose of peace and justice for all people. We find hope in promise of eternal life."

Series 1

Jeremiah 20:1-18
Luke 18:18-30
Psalm 2

Series 2

II Kings 18:19-25; 19:1-7
Luke 18:18-30
Psalm 101

A Calendar of Prayer for the Mission of the United Church of Christ

November 11, 2010 — Veterans' Day

Veteran's Day is a day to pay tribute to those who have fought to help our country to be safe and secure a place where we can enjoy each other and build a deeper relationship with God. Where do you find a quiet space, a sacred space when the soul is in need of nurture in a world that seems pretty crazy at times? The Rocky Mountain Conference has 500 acres of quiet in the Black Forest near Colorado Springs with vistas of Pikes Peak and the "purple mountains' majesty." La Foret – is a camp and retreat center and is expired by many around the United States and the world. Find a place for yourself today that can offer the richness and beauty of La Foret and thank God for those who have served so that we may have the freedoms we enjoy.

Series 1

Isaiah 57:14-21
Romans 1:18-25
Isaiah 12

Series 2

I Samuel 28:3-19
Romans 1:18-25
Psalm 98

November 12, 2010

Since 1858 New England Congregational Church has served greater Aurora, IL as a "caring church for thinking people." "We take pride in our Pilgrim roots and our affiliation with the UCC. Our church is governed by the members of the congregation, yet we embrace the education resources of the denomination and accept its mission as our own. Over the years we have remained theologically liberal which has informed our commitment to issues of justice. We were at the center of the establishment of Hesed House, providing house, food and clothing for those in need. We were instrumental in the formation of the Fox Valley Hospice, and for several years provided the only support group in Kane County for those living with AIDS. Out of concern for those in other countries living in oppression, we have sponsored families from Laos, Bosnia and Afghanistan, befriending them and assisting in their resettlement."

Series 1

Isaiah 59:1-15a
II Thessalonians 1:3-12
Isaiah 12

Series 2

II Samuel 21:1-14
II Thessalonians 1:3-12
Psalm 98

November 13, 2010

Today we pray for the ministry and mission of Evangelical Reformed, UCC, Frederick, MD "Our Life for Others: We Seek to Help our Neighbors Near and Far * Support for The Alan P. Linton Jr. Cold Weather Shelter * Inter-church service projects supported by our church (homeless shelter, CROP Walk for Hunger, refugee resettlement, Rebuilding Together, Church Women United). * Church facilities used by many community organizations and area mission groups. * Major Support for Our Church's Wider Mission - the work of the United Church of Christ across the nation and around the world. * Support for Lancaster Theological Seminary. * Liberal donations to community ministries (Religious Coalition, Heartly House, Mission of Mercy, Habitat for Humanity, Camp Jamie, Soup Kitchen). * International partnership - work projects with church friends in Honduras."

Series 1

Isaiah 59:15b-21
Luke 17:20-37
Isaiah 12

Series 2

Ezekiel 10:1-19
Luke 17:20-37
Psalm 98

A Calendar of Prayer for the Mission of the United Church of Christ

November 19, 2010

Today we pray for the ministry and mission of Christ Congregational Church, Silver Spring, MD.

Throughout its history, Christ Congregational Church has devoted its ministry and mission to promoting social justice and peace in the local, national and international community, creating opportunities for all generations in music and the arts, and fostering the spiritual development and education of children, youth, and adults.

"We covenant with one another as a community of faith grounded in God, the source of all life. We seek to walk in the ways of God's abiding love, made known or to be made known to us through the Holy Scriptures, the life and teachings of Jesus, and the continuing guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives and worship. Affirming that all persons are created in the image of God, we honor and celebrate people of all races, cultures, ages, abilities, sexual orientations, and gender identities. In our life together we endeavor to support each other on our spiritual journeys with open minds and loving hearts. We hold it to be the mission of the church to embody the good news of God's love for all people by laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of justice, and the reign of peace. We work and pray for the transformation of ourselves and all creation into realms of God's compassion; and in faith we place ourselves in God's hands, in death as in life."

Series 1

Jeremiah 22:1-17
I Peter 1:3-9
Luke 1:68-79

Series 2

Zechariah 11:1-17
I Peter 1:3-9
Psalm 46

November 20, 2010

Today we pray for the ministry and mission of St. Paul United Church of Christ, Belleville, IL

A Place That Offers Life

"A congregation that is truly being 'church' brings people into a loving, life-giving relationship with God and others that is transformational. When a congregation is truly being 'church,' people find hope. They experience belonging. They extend and receive forgiveness. They are valued, even as God values them. This is the basic nature of the kingdom of God, where relationships model the very best aspects of family.

At St. Paul, we don't measure our effectiveness or success by the size of our building, budget or staff. We don't even measure it by how full our pews are on Sunday morning. At the end of the day, we find ourselves responding to a different set of questions. Kingdom-related questions. Questions like:

- What does it mean for us to seriously follow Jesus in the 21st Century?
- What difference are we making in the lives of our members and in our surrounding community?
- How are we responding to the pain, injustice, and suffering around us?"

Series 1

Jeremiah 22:18-30
Luke 18:15-17
Luke 1:68-79

Series 2

Jeremiah 22:18-30
Luke 18:15-17
Psalm 46



Mission Moment — Infinite Possibilities

November 14, 2010

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Stewardship Sunday

Are You Ready to Talk About Money in Church?

Money is pervasive in our lives, yet talking about in church—or even among family and friends—is not so common. Maybe we need to lighten up about it.

Take this quick quiz to find out if you're ready to talk about money in church . . .

- 1) Jesus talked about money a good deal because . . .
 - a. He grew up during the Great Depression.
 - b. He got tired of talking about God all the time.
 - c. He recognized that how we use money says a lot about what we value.
 - d. He wanted a raise.
- 2) When the preacher begins a sermon on stewardship, your first thought is . . .
 - a. "Did I leave the oven on?"
 - b. "I'm so glad my shallow, materialistic neighbor is here to hear this."
 - c. "I wonder what God might have to say to me today about my own finances?"
 - d. "Ok, hit me with your best shot, hot stuff."
- 3) People with healthy attitudes toward money . . .
 - a. Never talk about it.
 - b. Never stop talking about it.
 - c. Talk naturally about money as an integral part of discipleship.
 - d. Are soooo glad this quiz is over.

*If you answered "c" to these questions,
you are ready to talk about money in your church.*

Series 1

Isaiah 65:17-25
II Thessalonians 3:6-13
Luke 21:5-19
Isaiah 12

Series 2

Malachi 4:1-2a
II Thessalonians 3:6-13
Luke 21:5-19
Psalm 98

November 15, 2010

IMA World Health, a Global Ministries partner, has launched a \$26.4 million program in southern Sudan that will help provide basic health services in the Jonglei and Upper Nile regions of Sudan. The goal of the 40-month program is to provide health services to at least 50 percent of the Sudanese people, estimated at between 1.8- and 2.5-million people, as they return home from exile. IMA also hopes to rebuild and strengthen the existing health system that has been decimated by decades of civil war, and to provide consultants for the two Sudanese Ministries of Health. The project will benefit from missionary partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo, who have participated in a similar project. The new project is the first evidence of partners being able to use the experience and skills gleaned from years of work on one program for a program in a different African country.

Series 1
Isaiah 60:17-22
Ephesians 4:25 – 5:2
Psalm 76

Series 2
Ezekiel 11:14-25
Ephesians 4:25 – 5:2
Psalm 141

November 16, 2010

“Trinitarian Congregational Church, Concord, MA is deeply engaged in social action, mission and outreach. Both collectively and as individuals, our congregation displays a passion for community outreach that infuses the church with a spirit of caring and commitment.

Annually, more than 20% of the church's operating budget goes directly to mission projects. The exceptional generosity of the congregation benefits over 50 different organizations, from local agencies and various Boston social service groups, to national and world community NGOs, including UCC and Church World Service efforts.

In addition, hands-on projects for helping others are an integral exercise of our faith. Each month, we prepare and serve a meal for over 100 men at the United Homes Shelter in Dorchester. Our members are organizers and participants in the annual CropWalk, raising money for local food banks and community suppers. We have a strong connection to the Concord Prison Ministry, the Alternatives to Violence effort and the Domestic Violence Abuse Prevention program.”

Series 1
Isaiah 66:1-13
I Corinthians 10:23 – 11:1
Psalm 76

Series 2
Ezekiel 39:21 – 40:4
I Corinthians 10:23 – 11:1
Psalm 141

A Calendar of Prayer for the Mission of the United Church of Christ

November 17, 2010

Today we pray for the ministry and mission of First Congregational Church of Western Springs, IL.

“*Following Christ into the Needs of the World:* Our Outreach Program is divided into three ministry teams: Neighborhood Ministries; Urban Ministries; and Global Ministries. Our shared mission is to follow Christ into the needs of the world while engaging Every Member in Mission. We do this through committing our resources (time, talent, money) towards organizations which provide hope, dignity and tools for the future for those most vulnerable in our human family.”

Prayer:

*O God,
in Christ you give us hope
for a new heaven and a new earth.
Grant us wisdom to interpret the signs of our times,
courage to stand in the time of trial,
and faith to witness to your truth and love. Amen.*

Series 1
Isaiah 66:14-24
Matthew 23:37 – 24:14
Psalm 76

Series 2
Ezekiel 43:1-12
Matthew 23:37 – 24:14
Psalm 141

November 18, 2010

Today we pray for the ministry and mission of First Congregational Church of Glen Ellyn, IL.

“First Congregational Church is an open, diverse, intergenerational congregation of Christian people engaged in continuing spiritual journey. We believe that there are many ways to experience and understand God, and we invite everyone to join us in this search. First Congregational Church is deeply committed to the safety and spiritual well-being of its children and youth. We are therefore proud to offer a comprehensive Sunday school program, sophisticated Confirmation classes, and three distinct youth groups that cater to children and young people of all ages. In addition to a host of children's ministries and educational programs, First Congregational Church provides an array of spiritual and educational forums, classes, guest lecturers, social justice opportunities, small study groups, and Bible studies that can help you to develop your Christian identity.”

Series 1
Jeremiah 21:1-14
Hebrews 9:23-28
Luke 1:68-79

Series 2
II Chronicles 18:12-22
Hebrews 9:23-28
Psalm 46

A Calendar of Prayer for the Mission of the United Church of Christ

November 26, 2010

Today we pray for the ministry and mission of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Billings, MT.

"Theologically progressive, radically inclusive, dedicated to mission! Welcome to First! ...a faith community characterized by caring and compassion, filled with faith and joyful in our fellowship; a people sustained by supportive staff and energetic, resourceful lay leaders. Welcome to a church that displays a unity of spirit, yet holds a deep appreciation for the differences among us—a church that nurtures people's minds as well as their hearts.

§ As a Christian community from diverse religious traditions, we respect each individual's faith journey. We take seriously Christ's call to welcome and treat all persons as the daughters and sons of God—irrespective of the journey that may have brought them to our doors.

§ We encourage critical thinking and an open exchange of ideas. And because we are a "covenant" rather than a "creedal" community, there is never the usual demand that we all believe the same things, or desire the same outcome from a life with God.

§ We take the Bible seriously, but not literally—though we are certain that Christ calls all of us to a place in our lives where faith is practiced, peace is sought, and grace is joyfully celebrated."

Genesis 6:1-10

Hebrews 11:1-7

Psalms 122

November 27, 2010

Today we pray for the ministry and mission of Winnetka Congregational Church, Winnetka, IL. "Imagine a place where people from a rich variety of faith traditions, creeds, and religions have found common ground and share with one another a supportive community working to make a difference in the world. A place where you will not find a dogmatic creed or even a list of beliefs that must be followed. It is a place you will find a diverse group of people learning together and growing in a faith that follows the way of Jesus Christ, yet honors other religious traditions and paths.

Worship is central to our life together. It rejuvenates and centers us for our work during the week; it binds us in a common expression of thanksgiving for all God's gifts. It reminds us of the unique path that Jesus walked, one of gratitude and compassion for all God's people and creation. It passes on to our children and our youth the elements of a rich life: faith, thanksgiving, compassion, respect, and generosity. It sends us forth a different people ready to work for the common good.

Our shared ministries include hands-on support to help people move out of poverty, work together in a soup kitchen, commit to holiday outings to serve meals to the homeless, work for environmental causes in the forest preserve, and invest in trips to Guatemala to build a community for some of the world's poorest people."

Genesis 6:11-22

Matthew 24:1-22

Psalms 122



Mission Moment — United Black Christians Anniversary

November 21, 2010
Reign of Christ

Thanksgiving Sunday

On the third Sunday of November, we celebrate the founding of United Black Christians (UBC), an officially recognized special interest group of the United Church of Christ, providing voice and vision for more than 70,000 African Americans.

UBC represents lay and clergy persons who faithfully minister in more than 278 predominately African American congregations of the United Church of Christ and those African American members in congregations that are not predominately African American.

United Black Christians seeks to provide voice for the African American members of the United Church of Christ, strengthen Black churches in the UCC, train and nurture leaders of our churches for Gospel - inspired service to the Black community, and enhance clergy-lay ministry partnership. In addition, UBC advocates for liberation and racial justice at home and abroad, monitors affirmative action within the UCC, and focuses on youth and young adult ministry.

UBC seeks to preserve the African American Christian tradition as a people of faith and hope, and affirms that "it is the Black Church that has meant survival for African Americans on these shores. . . [and] . . . it is the Black Church that will assure our continued growth, development, endurance and ultimate liberation."

Series 1

Jeremiah 23:1-6
Colossians 1:11-20
Luke 23:33-43
Luke 1:68-79

Series 2

Jeremiah 23:1-6
Colossians 1:11-20
Luke 23:33-43
Psalms 46

November 22, 2010

Today we pray for the ministry and mission of Wellesley Hills First Congregational Church, Wellesley Hill, MA.

"The Hills Church offers many opportunities to participate in weekly, monthly and yearly service.

Some examples:

- Building a new home with Habitat for Humanity;
- Preparing and serving meals in soup kitchens, or homeless shelters;
- Helping a needy community in Honduras;
- Supporting efforts to release children in India from slavery;
- Working with Miami students in an after-school program;

No matter what your interest or availability, we have a wide variety of service programs for all ages."

Series 1
Jeremiah 30:1-17
Revelation 21:5-27
Psalms 117

Series 2
Jeremiah 46:18-28
Revelation 21:5-27
Psalms 24

November 23, 2010

Today we pray for the ministry and mission of Pass-A-Grille Beach Community Church, United Church of Christ, St. Pete Beach, FL.

"Experience the joy of worship. Grow in the experience of faith. Live through a life of Service.

Whether you are a permanent or seasonal resident; vacationer or student; young adult or retiree, you are welcome at Pass-A-Grille. Here, you will discover a contagious commitment to spiritual growth, personal nurture, and community service. Here, you will find fellowship to feed your soul and a message that will challenge, as well as stimulate your mind. Here, you will experience a call to discipleship that is inviting, involving, and rewarding. Here, you will find a people of faith who serve in the present, living into the future, with hope, joy, and love!

We are progressive. We are active. We are inclusive. We seek to be faithful!

A Local Church with a Global Vision..."

Series 1
Jeremiah 30:18-24
Revelation 22:8-21
Psalms 117

Series 2
Isaiah 33:17-22
Revelation 22:8-21
Psalms 24

A Calendar of Prayer for the Mission of the United Church of Christ

November 24, 2010

Today we pray for the mission and ministry of The First Congregational Church of Darien, Darien, CT.

"Welcome home, and come on in! There's so much going on.

Our church family shares a long and storied history, yet we continue to grow and serve our spiritual needs while deepening our relationships with each other and the community.

Here you will find the quiet serenity of a thoughtful sermon, the laughter of children, the boisterous fellowship of friends, the spirituality of music. Here you may worship God, sharing a common heritage yet finding wisdom in the differing viewpoints of others. If you're serious about a spiritual journey, you'll find good company here.

We are many things to many people, but we all come together in our search for meaning and in our caring outreach to the wider world.

Please, join us this Sunday and make yourself at home. So much is waiting for you. At 275 years and counting, there are still many great hours for all of us to experience. Together."

Series 1
Jeremiah 31:1-6
Luke 1:1-4
Psalms 117

Series 2
Isaiah 60:8-16
Luke 1:1-4
Psalms 24

November 25, 2010 — Thanksgiving Day

Today we give thanks for the ministry and mission of First Church Fairfield, Fairfield, CT.

"One of many mission projects is the Growing God's Gifts Community Garden.

For the last several years First Church has tilled the soil, planted seeds, weeded, watered, and harvested vegetables for the local Food Pantry. Sandy and Karen Wakeman have been hugely responsible for this venture. The Wakemans, with the help of volunteers, care for the garden on Warde Terrace from early spring through late fall. Many fresh vegetables, including squash, cucumber, lettuce, etc. are brought to the local food pantry throughout the summer. Volunteers take a week long assignment of weeding and watering. It requires just a few hours during that week (even less if it rains!). This meditative gardening experience is a wonderful experience of Growing God's Gifts for our neighbors that are less fortunate than us."

On this national day of prayer may we unite not only in our thoughts of family, food and prayer but with a renewed commitment to be a people of God for the peoples of God.

Thanksgiving Day Scripture:

Deuteronomy 26:1-11
Philippians 4:4-9
John 6:2-35
Psalms 100

A Calendar of Prayer for the Mission of the United Church of Christ

December 3, 2010

Today we pray for the ministry and mission of Hancock Church, Lexington, MA.

"Beliefs: Building on foundations that are more than two centuries old, Hancock United Church of Christ is today a vibrant community gathered to worship God, who we believe still speaks, and who calls us engage in:

- Worship that is authentic, relevant and thoughtful
- Community that welcomes all regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, economic status or physical and mental ability
- Compassion for the poor and powerless, peacemaking for those in conflict, caring for the natural world, and advocating justice for all of God's people.
- Life-long Learning about our faith, our world, cultures and traditions different from our own, learning based in mutual respect, reason, and curiosity.

As a congregation of the United Church of Christ, we honor the freedom and responsibility of the individual and the congregation to search and to believe in harmony with conscience, as well as the obligation to remain in respectful relationship with other individuals within our congregation and our partner congregations within the United Church of Christ and the wider ecumenical community. We welcome seekers and searchers of all ages, backgrounds and traditions, inviting all to join us along the path of faithfulness to God."

Isaiah 30:19-26

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

Acts 13:16-25

December 4, 2010

Today we pray for the mission and ministry of Christ Church, Chicago.

"Christ Church of Chicago is committed to being a beacon of faith and hope in the world. As a community of faith, we are deeply involved in the world making a difference through acts of kindness and solidarity. Here are a few of the mission projects and organizations supported and sponsored by Christ Church:

Heartland Alliance, a not-for-profit organization that helps and supports refugees, immigrants and other displaced people in the Chicago area and throughout the world.

The Night Ministry, a Chicago nonprofit organization that provides basic resources, free healthcare, housing, and supportive services for youth in a welcoming and nonjudgmental environment.

The Japanese American Service Committee, every Wednesday a group of seniors gathers at Christ Church to socialize, to exercise their bodies and minds, to nurture a healthy relationship with their friends and families and to enjoy field trips and delicious meals. Tomadachi (friendship in Japanese) is a program sponsored by JASC and supported by Christ Church of Chicago."

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

John 1:19-28



Mission Moment — The Gifting

**November 28, 2010
First Sunday of Advent**

After the first sin and the first curses which would mark what we call the Fall of humanity,

Adam and Eve received the first gifts from God: clothing to keep them warm. God's gifts always address a need, but not always the need the recipients think they have.

Adam and Eve had no clue that they needed those clothes. The people of Israel wandering in the wilderness thought that a shiny golden calf and a great party met their needs better than ten laws written on pieces of stone. Some of Jesus' followers thought what God should have sent was a great military leader to defeat the Roman oppressors, not an itinerant preacher and healer.

When we are able to look beyond our definition of need to see the possibility of gifts that meet needs we may not know we have, that's when we are able to see ourselves as gifted by God and not merely needy recipients of God's benevolence. We are also then able to get beyond the disappointment that the gift we received was, perhaps, not what we thought we needed or wanted and discover the delightful surprises God has in store for us when we let go of control and receive what God wants to give.

What gifts have you or your congregation received that may not have looked like gifts at the time?

(Excerpted from "The Gifting God," by Rochelle Stackhouse, a biblical reflection on giving available from UCC Resources, 800- 325-7061 or from UnitedChurchPress.com)

Isaiah 2:1-5

Romans 13:11-14

Matthew 24:36-44

Psalm 122

November 29, 2010

Remember the Y2K scare in 1999? People stocked home pantries with bottled water, canned foods and bought generators to power their homes. Thankfully, the anticipated computer disaster didn't materialize. But what about having a disaster plan for local churches in case of an emergency?

Here are a few ideas for local churches to follow: gather personal data from church members; name, address, phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Once collected, be sure to have a back-up of the data off church grounds and that more than one person has access to it. It's also a good idea to have the church's financial information – the kind of data that will keep the church running – backed up and stored off-site. Make sure insurance policies are current. Put someone in charge of securing the building and grounds; storing items like trash cans or other things that could become airborne, and shuttering windows and doors before the disaster strikes. Congregations should decide how a disaster plan is implemented and who makes decisions like whether classes, service or activities at the church are canceled.

How will church members be notified? A disaster plan should also include alternatives for where the work of the church can take place if the building or equipment is damaged. In the event of a disaster, who are the most vulnerable in your congregation and what can be done to help keep them safe? If your church does not have a disaster team or coordinator in place, why not take these first steps to prepare for the unexpected? Start the conversation!

Genesis 8:1-19

Psalms 124

Romans 6:1-11

November 30, 2010

Ready and waiting is the congregation of Edward's Congregational United Church of Christ, Davenport, IA. They launched a new ministry program this fall in order to be more responsible neighbors. In response to cottage meetings that were held, they approached the local elementary school about mentoring some of the students on a one-on-one basis. The principal was ecstatic over their offer and their interest in the students. Members of the church were paired with students who needed a strong adult role model in their lives. All that it takes is the willingness of the church to open its doors and the mentors to give about one hour per week to the activity. How is your congregation ready and waiting to participate in your community?

Prayer:

*Unexpected God,
your advent alarms us.
Wake us from drowsy worship,
from the sleep that neglects love,
and the sedative of misdirected frenzy.
Awaken us now to your coming,
and bend our angers into your peace. Amen.*

Genesis 9:1-17

Psalms 124

Hebrews 11:32-40

A Calendar of Prayer for the Mission of the United Church of Christ

December 1, 2010 — World AIDS Day

In June of 2009, the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) signed a letter initiated by the World AIDS Campaign Global Steering Committee and presented to Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations. The letter urges continued advocacy for "increased health and human rights protections for people living with HIV" and for the United Nations to use their influence in "efforts to achieve universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support."

The letter requested a meeting at the end of 2010 to assess what has and has not been accomplished in the goal for universal access and that an opportunity for additional emergency donations to the Global Fund be established. These funds are needed to counteract the weakened commitment of governments to fund HIV services during the global financial recession, prompting the World AIDS Campaign to be concerned that "the fragile health gains made over the last decade will evaporate".

Isaiah 54:1-10

Psalms 124

Matthew 24:23-35

December 2, 2010

Today we pray for the ministry and mission of First Congregational United Church of Christ, Appleton, WI

"First Congregational UCC currently has seven Primary Mission Partners. Our mission efforts encompass local, national, and international communities. (Back Bay Mission {Biloxi, Mississippi}, Emergency Shelter of the Fox Valley, ESTHER, Habitat for Humanity, Kenya Partnership, LEAVEN, and Samaritan Counseling Center of the Fox Valley) In addition to financial support of these Covenant Mission Partners, our members also provide them with leadership and hands-on mission support. In addition, many other agencies and programs are supported by our members' volunteer efforts and financial contributions. Alternative Christmas Market; Conference Church Camps: Moon Beach and Pilgrim Center; the United Church of Christ Disaster Response Ministry; Mexico Mission Partnership; Our Church's Wider Mission; Association and Conference delegates. Globally: Members participate in a national women's or youth event; are delegates for General Synod, link up to one of the e-mail networks of our national UCC (e.g. Justice and Peace), support global mission work as a member of FOCUS, be a short or long term volunteer -- nationally or globally, volunteer at UCC disaster work sites. Plant-a-Row for the Hungry; Prayer Shawl Ministry; Youth Missions; Prison Ministry and the Fox Valley Warming Shelter are still more viable ministries.

Isaiah 4:2-6

Psalms 72:1-7, 18-19

Acts 1:12-17, 21-26

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