

February Newsletter 2008

*The First Congregational Church of Georgetown
United Church of Christ
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Office Hours: Monday – Thursday 10:00 – 2:00PM*

Dear Friends,

As we move from the season of Epiphany into the season of Lent, we move into a very different mood. Epiphany is the season of light, a season of celebration and joy. It is the season of the three Kings, and of Christ's baptism. The Lenten season which follows is quite different in its somber mood, and its emphasis on reflection, prayer, preparation, and introspection.

It wasn't until my last year at Divinity School that the meaning of Lent and the holiday that begins it, Ash Wednesday, started to have personal significance for me. At Harvard Divinity School where I was a student, there was an ecumenical, community worship service every Wednesday at noon. This particular Wednesday a professor named Ellen Aitken, who was also an Episcopal priest, was officiating an Ash Wednesday service. The first part of the service was a regular order with some unison prayers, a few readings, a short homily. After this sort of generic Protestant worship it was announced that there would be an Episcopal liturgy with the ritual of the placing of the ashes. People were invited to stay or leave as they felt comfortable. Several left, including many of my friends, and I was on the verge of leaving when on a whim I decided to stay. Immediately, the service took on a very different, and much more formal, tone. There were calls and responses that I didn't know, things like collects and a welcome that described the history of Ash Wednesday. And then we began to read this liturgy of repentance which was so totally foreign to me, from a different tradition, with a different history and different rituals. Yet I found that it spoke to me and for me.

What it did and what I saw brought me to a new place and a new understanding. For here in this small chapel, with my fellow students and my professors, together we were bringing ourselves, our hurts, our faults, our sins out into the open. In these moments I realized that there were few times in my life when I was given the opportunity to say, "I have sinned. Forgive me." There were few moments when I could say this without the fear of retribution, without the worry of what other people might think, without the need to defend myself. I realized that so often we are pushed into a kind of hiding, given a choice between two unsatisfactory options, finding ourselves forced either to admit our fault and accept the judgment and condemnation of others, or to deny all responsibility, keeping all the guilt and regret that we do have locked away. And so, though we know our sins and live with them at all times, we rarely name them. To name them with others, to speak them out loud, freed me, and I believe the whole community, from the unnamed guilt that we carried around with us, from the burden of unspoken regret that we bore on our shoulders every day.

The wonder of this Lenten season is that we cannot participate in Christ's Easter resurrection until we liberate ourselves from our own unspoken anguish, our unnamed sorrows, our stifled cries. We cannot free others until we free ourselves to say who we are, to reveal our wonderful, beautiful, pain-filled and broken selves. This Lenten season I invite you into a spirit of prayer, a spirit of reconciliation, with ourselves, with each other, with our God. As individuals and as a community may our Lenten journeys bring us all to a place of peace and wonder so that on Easter morning we all might sing with the angels "Alleluia Christ is Risen!"

Blessings,

Pastor Sara

THE SEASON OF LENT

Lent is a sacred time in which we begin a forty-day journey toward Easter. We enter the Lenten season to prepare ourselves to welcome the risen Christ with lives renewed by the breath of the Holy Spirit. We assume a discipline of self-examination, confession and penitence. We dedicate ourselves to meditate upon the scriptures and to converse with God in prayer. We seek to be more faithful disciples of Jesus our Christ, to allow our lives to be shaped by his words and teaching. To this end let us worship God.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from the love of God and neighbor. Repentance, fasting, prayer, study, and works of love help us return to that love. Let us, therefore, commit ourselves to love God and neighbor by confessing our sins and by asking God for strength. Let us pray:

All: Most holy and merciful God: We confess to you and to one another that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

One: We have not loved you with all our heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

All: Have mercy on us, O God.

One: We have been deaf to your call to serve as Jesus Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

All: Have mercy on us, O God.

One: We confess to you, O God, all our past unfaithfulness. The pride, hypocrisy, and impatience in our lives,

All: We confess to you, O God.

One: Our self-indulgent appetites and ways and our exploitation of other people,

All: We confess to you, O God.

One: Our anger at our own frustration and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,

All: We confess to you, O God.

One: Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts and our dishonesty in our daily life and work,

All: We confess to you, O God.

One: Our negligence in prayer and worship and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,

All: We confess to you, O God.

One: Accept our repentance, O God, for the wrongs we have done. For our neglect of human need and suffering and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,

All: Accept our repentance, O God.

One: For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,

All: Accept our repentance, O God.

One: For our waste and pollution of your creation and our lack of concern for those who come after us,

All: Accept our repentance, O God.

One: Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.

All: Favorably hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

One: Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,

All: That we may show forth your glory. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The Holy One of Heaven, the source of our life and salvation, pardons and absolves all those who truly repent. Therefore O God, we ask that you grant us true repentance and the presence of the Holy Spirit, that the things we do today may be pleasing to you, and that the rest of our lives may be lived faithfully, so that at the last we may come into your eternal joy; through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

THANK YOU

Prayers

Please keep in our prayers:

the family and friends of Don Gordon, who passed away on February 9th. A memorial service was held at First Congregational Church on February 9th. Don was a dear friend in this church and the Georgetown community.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



****OFFICE HOURS****



Monday - Thursday 10:00 - 2:00

REMEMBER TO CHECK THE MONTHLY CALANDER

Youth Group

Church Office

Hello all,

It's me again. Please send me your email addresses so that I can create a church wide mailing distribution list. I will keep you updated on the happenings in our church family. My email is www.churchoffice@georgetowncongregational.org.

Michelle Brock

Book Club

The meeting of the book club will take place on Pam Sheehan's, 13 Prospect St, Georgetown at 7:00pm, Thursday, February 14th. The book of the month is *Selling The Lite of Heaven* by Suzanne Strempek. All are welcome to attend.

The Giving Tree Is Up!

Our giving tree has been placed in the church narthex with many envelopes hanging from its branches. These envelopes are filled with the names of items that the church needs to run throughout the year. Please take one and contribute to help our church make all its costs. The envelopes can be returned to the church office or placed in the offering plate during the service. And, thank you for all that you do to keep our church alive and growing!



Light the Church Fund



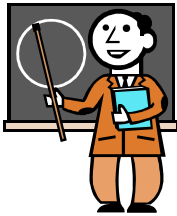
Contributions for lighting the church edifice can be made on a monthly or weekly basis, either in memory of loved ones, or in honor of someone special. Contributor and names of loved ones will be listed each week in the bulletins and also in the Monthly Newsletter. For one month's listing, the suggested donation is \$100. You may send contributions to the church (P.O. Box 200) and to the attention of our Collector.

The Woman's Guild

The Women's Guild will be meeting on Thursday, February 28th at 11:30 at Church. This is a work party to make baby quilts. Please bring your own sandwich. Dessert will be provided.

The Women's Guild has also been working hard to renovate the room off the long room. The Trustees have painted it a muted yellow and put up a new border. Furnishings have been chosen and will be delivered soon. When this room is done, it will be for use by any and all groups who wish to enjoy it. Your patience is appreciated while we wait for the Grand Reopening to occur.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS



TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES!

We have several openings in our teaching roster for the Spring Semester. We need people to work in teams to help teach the following students:

1. 3, 4, 5 Year Old Class
2. First through Fourth Grade Class
3. Fifth through Eighth Grade Class

If you have been a member or friend of First church for at least one year, would like to learn more about the Bible and our faith in a fun environment, and can dedicate a few hours a month to support our children and youth, team teaching church school may be a good fit for you!

Classes are generally 20 to 30 minutes long and run concurrently with worship. Teachers are provided curriculum which includes a detailed lesson plan for each session. The Christian Education Committee sponsors monthly teachers' meetings led by Pastor Eric to offer support for your lessons and he is available to meet with you at other times to answer questions and provide assistance. With a full roster of

teachers, this will be a one to two Sunday a month commitment until our classes conclude on Children's Sunday on June 1st.

Please contact Pastor Eric to discuss this opportunity to learn and grow with our students.

Church School Class Schedule with Lesson Topics

Sunday, February 3 STUDENTS BEGIN IN CLASS

Focus Scripture: Matthew 17:1-9 **Holy Encounter**

In this story, Jesus takes James, Peter and John to a mountain top. Like Moses before him, Jesus has an encounter with God. He was "transfigured" (Greek—*metamorphoo*) before his disciples' eyes. "

His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white." Just like at his baptism, God declared, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased." God then added this for the disciples to hear, "listen to him!"

Sunday, February 10 STUDENTS BEGIN IN THE SANCTUARY

Focus Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11 **Wilderness Encounter**

This is the first Sunday in the season of Lent (see Pastor Sara's article). In this lesson, Jesus was led into the wilderness where he fasted for forty days and forty nights. Then he was tempted by the devil with offers of food, miraculous rescue, and power. In each case, Jesus resisted the temptation and remained faithful to God. He offered these quotes from the book of Deuteronomy. "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." "Do not put the Holy One your God to the test." "Worship the Holy One your God, and serve only God."

Sunday, February 17 STUDENTS BEGIN IN THE SANCTUARY

Focus Scripture: John 3:1-17 **Respect and Challenge**

In this passage, a religious teacher named Nicodemus has a conversation with Jesus. Jesus told him that in order to be transformed by God's love (enter the kingdom of God), he must be born from above, or born anew. Nicodemus misunderstood what this meant and, through further conversation, learned that we experience God's love through Jesus.

Sunday, February 24 STUDENTS BEGIN IN THE SANCTUARY

Focus Scripture: John 4:5-42 **Water, Word, Witness**

In this lesson, Jesus, a Jewish man, travels through Samaria and encounters a woman at a well. It is important to remember that the Samaritans and Jews did not get along. Jesus engaged this woman in a theological discussion about water. Through this conversation, the woman came to believe that Jesus was the "Living Water," that

he was the Messiah, the chosen one of God. She shared this discovery ("witnessed") with her friends and neighbors and many came to believe in him.

To learn more about our church school and sign your children up for classes, please speak with Pastor Eric.

NEXT TEACHERS' MEETING: Sunday, February 10, 9:30 a.m.



The Music Committee



The next meeting is on Tuesday, February 5th at 7:00pm at Church.



Happy Birthday Wishes **February**



Brett Davis-February 2nd

Helen Snow-February 16th

Carol Kalfin- February 27th

Holy Week Events



Special Notes



Don't forget to support Kate DeSisto who is participating in
the Relay for Life!!

Kate DeSisto is participating in the American Cancer Society Relay for life at Syracuse University. The event will take place on March 29-30, 2008 at the Carrier Dome. Kate is heading up her own team this year and is looking for support. To make a donation, checks can be made payable to:

American Cancer Society
and mailed to Donna DeSisto, 15 School St, Georgetown, MA 01833
If you prefer, you can contact Donna via email:
Dgdesisto@verizon.net and she will forward Kate's website info to
you for online donations.

Thanks

Belleville Church of Newburyport presents:

KEN MEDEMA who will be in concert at Belleville Church, Newburyport, on Sunday April 13 at 4:00pm. His music moves the feet and touches the soul! For those who do not know him, take a quick peek at kenmedema.com. Blind from birth, he started his career as a music therapist, has sung for audiences as diverse as the Crystal Cathedral and Sojourners justice events, and is simply an amazingly gifted and faithful musician. The theme of the concert will be "SONGS OF HEALING AND HOPE", and it is meant for a diverse community. In every concert, Ken composes songs on the spot about stories he has just heard from the audience. It is truly an unforgettable experience! Join us as we celebrate our Bicentennial Year with this beautiful, amazing servant of God.

Ross Varney, Pastor, Belleville Church,

**One Great Hour of Sharing takes place on
Sunday, March 2nd.**

Your contribution to One Great Hour of Sharing carry God's message of love and hope to the people in more than eighty countries! The United Church of Christ works with international partners to provide sources of clean water and food, education and healthcare, small business, micro-credit, emergency relief, and advocacy/resettlement for refugees and displaced persons. Your gifts also support domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response.

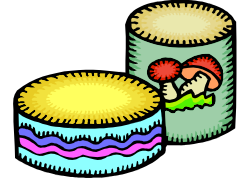
Read about transformed lives at www.ucc.org/oghs
Together we can make a world of difference!

Lost and Found

Several items in the pantry area of the kitchen area have accumulated over the last few months, some as small as a measuring cup and others as large as a picnic cooler. These items can be located on the top shelf of the food shelving. (No, the cooler will not be on the top shelf 😊) Please go claim anything that might belong to you



Pantry In Need



The Pantry is always in need of extra items to help keep our pantry stocked for those who are having a difficult time. Grocery gift cards are a great way to support the pantry or next time you are shopping, consider picking up an extra item or two to add to the pantry. Spaghetti, pasta sauce, canned soups and stews with meat are always favorite things and anything that is nonperishable such as paper goods are welcome. Please place them on the shelves in the pantry when you bring them in. At this time, we do not need tea but are in need of coffee.

BOARDS, COMMITTEES, OFFICERS AND STAFF

2008

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Peggy Smith

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JoEllen Fielding

ASST. COLLECTOR

Vivian Rasmussen

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Dwight Southwick & Jeff Moore

FINANCE COMMITTEE

George Desrochers, Robert Knapp and Tim Clift

SAFE CHURCH ADVOCATE

Pam Sheehan

DIACONATE

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Gladys Kneeland

Brett Davis

Chuck Davis

*Jeff Fitzpatrick

Tracy Southwick

Barry Games

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Kristen Davis & Janice Murphy

UCC DELEGATES

Nancy Aberman

FLOWERS

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*Denotes Chairperson

STAFF

Co Pastor/Co-Directors of Christian Education

Rev. Sara E. Marean

Rev. Eric M. Marean

Acting Office Manager

Michelle Brock

Director of Music

Robert Knapp

Organist

Emily Knapp

Junior and Bell Choir Director

Evelyn Boose

Sexton

Rachel Edwards

Pastor's e-mail: eric@georgetowncongregational.org , sara@georgetowncongregational.org

Office Open: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 10:00-2:00