



# LINK 'N' TOWER

**Collenbrook United Church**

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)      United Church of Christ  
The Rev. Scott L. Barton, Pastor



Volume 109, Number 12

December, 2009

## **MY (PASTORAL) SPACE: ADVENT**

Advent began Sunday, November 29. It's what we call the start of the Christian year. Practically speaking, this means that, for the most part, our Gospel readings will come from Luke for the next year. We've been listening to a lot of Mark this year. So among other things, the church year idea helps us hear a variety of the Bible throughout a three-year cycle. Luke is often fun for people because this is where we find some of our favorite of Jesus' parables.

The four weeks of Advent prior to Christmas is ostensibly a time of watching and waiting. But that's not always easy for us. There seems to be so much to do. Some of us guard ourselves from being too frazzled, and some love it, the busy part of the season. I invite you to look at another value, the one that we're not responsible for everything that happens. We wait for God. We trust that God will break into our lives at moments we don't expect.

Join us in worship each week as we help each other return to that value of trust, in times that are both hectic and anxious.

**Grace and peace, and see you in church,  
Scott**

## **QUESTIONS OF FAITH**



Above, you see about half the people who have been enjoying together meals of pizza and shared salads and desserts, and learning from our video series #2 of *Questions of Faith*. Session 1 explored the question, "Who Is Jesus?" Here are a few snippets from our meeting of November 12th:

*"Jesus is my friend. I think Jesus was a very together person."*      *"Jesus is the one with the intimate relationship with Abba."*  
*"What he was able to do was become the best Jesus he could become."*      *"I don't think of Jesus as perfect; I think of him as whole."*  
*"He is that figure who prevents my falling into despair about the possibilities of the human."*      *"Jesus is for real; he does not give up on anyone, least of all on me."*

If this kind of thing intrigues you, please join us on two Thursdays in December for topics 3 and 4. (Topic 2 on November 17 was *What's the Use of the Bible?*) At 6:30, we sit down to dinner and then watch and discuss the video. We finish by 8:00. Feel free to call in or e-mail what you might bring.

December 3, *Who's Got the Truth?*

December 17, *How Do We Right the Wrong?*

## **STEWARDSHIP, 2010**

Many thanks to everyone who has submitted a pledge card for the work of the church in 2010! As of November 20, 19 individuals or families had pledged a total of \$38,790, of which \$7,620 represents new pledges or increases in 2009 pledges. Of the first 19 pledge units, all either pledged the same as in 2009 or increased their giving.

If you have not returned a card, it will help the Council very much in finalizing a budget at its December meeting if you can do so before the 14<sup>th</sup>.

One important thing we do with the money we all give throughout the year is give towards the wider mission of both the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the United Church of Christ. At a meeting of the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference of the U.C.C. that Scott, Sue Evans and Marge Holcomb attended on November 21, Collenbrook United Church was recognized as one of only 2 churches that in 2009 gave

15% of operating expenses towards "Our Church's Wider Mission." We got the "gold" award! We can be proud of our faithful giving to the wider work of the church both through the U.C.C. and the Presbyterian Church. At that same meeting, an upbeat 5-minute DVD describing "Our Church's Wider Mission" was shown. We have a copy of it in the office for anyone to borrow. But you can also watch it on the web at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTs87wQjT3k&feature=related>

(Be patient. It may take awhile to load.)

## **NEW ADVENTURE**

Gayle and I are getting ready for our trip to Malawi. We still have some shots to get, and anti-malaria pills to start. But mostly we're starting to collect things to take. We've already had generous donations of 8 DVDs, which our friends can sometimes watch after a long, hard day. And we've been to the Head Nut to start to buy items that are hard to get in Malawi. Please let us know if you might be able to donate a rear-facing car seat with simple lap-belt attachment; DVDs (old or new sitcoms, movies); skim milk powder; flax seeds; shelled walnuts. We'll post other needs as we receive them.

You can check out the Hellers' blog at <http://suffer-the-little-children.blogspot.com/> (named for the text from Matthew, "But Jesus said, suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.")

Here's a recent entry by Darlene:

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2009

### Marasmus

I learned about all kinds of things in nursing school that I promptly stored in the darkest recesses of my mind, thinking "I'll never need that." Take marasmus for instance.

Marasmus is the most



serious form of malnutrition; wasting caused by a protein **and** calorie deficiency. This happens in infants when they don't get enough milk. It is always serious, and if it lasts long enough, the infant dies.

I had never actually seen marasmus – until I got here. Now I see it a lot. Just last week we admitted 2 new babies and both have marasmus. Emanuel came to us from a far away village. His mother died after childbirth and dad took the baby home to be cared for by grandma. Grandma and grandpa were willing and appeared able



to look after Emanuel. They owned a small shop and had lots of canned milk powder available. They also had a feeding bottle. Yet when we

arrived at the home, there was Emanuel—starving. He had gained only 4 ounces since his birth the month before. Why??? We don't know.

Chawanangwa arrived yesterday, from the mission hospital in nearby Ekwendeni. She has been at the hospital for the 2 months since her mother died in childbirth. Chawanangwa's elderly aunt was caring for her. During this time she **lost** more than ½ pound. Her aunt was not feeding her enough. Instead, the aunt was diluting the milk she had brought, and even drinking some of it herself. Hospitals here do not provide any food or care – that is up to the family of the patient. Incredible as it sounds, a baby can die of starvation while being a patient in the hospital. Why? God knows.



What we do know is that these heartbreaking events are not uncommon. In fact, they are all too common. Without the Crisis Nursery both Emanuel & Chawanangwa would likely be facing a slow and painful death. Watching little ones like them thrive on the good food and good care provided by our dedicated nannies is the best part of this job.

POSTED BY PAUL AND DARLENE  
HELLER AT [12:36 AM](#)

## **MISSION OF THE MONTH, DECEMBER 2009**

### **SPECIAL COLLECTIONS FOR RETIRED CLERGY**

We have made it our habit over the past few years to dedicate our December Mission of the Month to benefit retired clergy and others assisted through our denominations, *divided equally between the United Church of Christ and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*. We send half of our offering to the Presbyterian “Christmas Joy Offering” and half to the U.C.C. “Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund.” Please use the brown pew envelopes, or the M.O.M. envelope in your giving envelope box, or mark your check M.O.M.

On the Presbyterian side, the Christmas Joy Offering has been going on for 70 years.

<http://www.pcusa.org/cjoffering/>

Examples are:

Ken and Carol Tracy, who, while their salary was too small to accumulate many pension credits, trusted that God and the PC(USA) would provide for them. After Carol contracted lung disease from a mold at one of their churches, the Board of Pensions repeatedly helped them get treatment.

A missionary couple, Charles and Vera Ainley, repeatedly had to rely on prayer when they found themselves facing seemingly unsolvable problems. Since he died in the late '70s she has depended on income and housing supplements from the BOP which are supported by gifts to the CJO.

Last year’s Presbyterian Christmas Joy Offering was \$4,987,577, of which \$2,268,271 was assistance distributed through the Board of Pensions. Basically, the offering supplemented the Board’s work so the following help could be given:

Income supplements (325 households) \$2,753,000;

Nursing Home Care Assistance (2 households), shared grants (164 households), emergency grants (38 households), and housing supplements (239 households), \$5,365,000.

The offering also helped, in the amount of \$2,226,378, racial/ethnic schools and colleges supported by the denomination. Educating racial-ethnic students has been a mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for decades. From Stillman College founded in 1876 to the Presbyterian Pan American School started as Texas-Mexican Institute in 1911, the denomination’s commitment has continued. For more, see <http://www.pcusa.org/resc/>.

The idea of the division of this offering is to help people at both ends of their lives – retirees who have served the church, and people who might not otherwise get a good education; that is, people on both “ends” who might otherwise be neglected.

On the U.C.C. side, the Pension Board has visitors who personally visit every retired pastor in the UCC, all 5,780 of them, on a regular basis in order to stay in touch with these pastors who have served so well in years past and to let them know that “your church has not forgotten you; your ministry is valued; your church cares about you.” Contact is maintained to make sure that no one has unmet social, financial, spiritual, or physical needs. From time to time it is reported that some of our most vulnerable retirees do need extra financial assistance because their pension income is low and they may not have adequate health insurance.

#### The Christmas Fund

[http://www.pbucc.org/interior\\_art\\_special.asp?id=CHRISTMAS\\_FUND\\_OFFERING](http://www.pbucc.org/interior_art_special.asp?id=CHRISTMAS_FUND_OFFERING) provides financial aid to retired and active ministers and their surviving spouses and children who face overwhelming financial demands, a ministry carried out by the Pension Boards. The generous gifts of UCC congregations and individuals to the Christmas Fund enabled the Pension Boards' Ministerial Assistance program to provide the following gifts:

Some form of Ministerial Assistance will be provided to approximately 1,600 persons during 2009. Christmas Gift checks will be sent to approximately 900 persons in 2009. Of those who will receive checks, 20 are over 100 years of age. The oldest person is 107. One person has received Christmas checks continuously since 1976. The 900 gifts total \$270,000.

Monthly pension supplementation is provided to 449 persons. These gifts total \$101,344 per month. A significant part of annual total of \$1,216,128 comes from the Christmas Fund. Quarterly health premium supplementation is provided to 294 families, totaling \$164,736 per quarter. All of the funding for health premium supplementation is derived from the Christmas Fund.

Emergency Grants have been provided to 57 individuals and families during the first ten months of 2009, which totaled \$85,807.

#### *In addition to our Mission of the Month:*

- *At our Christmas Eve service we will have our annual special collection for the Deacon's Fund, used for emergency needs either within the congregation or that come to our attention from outside.*
- Toys (unwrapped, please) for Hope Prison Ministries: There is a box at the back of the sanctuary for toys for a Christmas party for children of prisoners. The party is for several hundred children. Donations must be in the box no later than Sunday 12/13. Caryl Jones will deliver them. Anything you might bring in would certainly be appreciated
- Ongoing -- Organ Fund, and food/seasonal clothing donations for Chester Eastside Ministries.

## RECENT MISSIONS OF THE MONTH UPDATE

Our November Mission of the Month was The United Church of Christ's "Neighbors in Need." Total gifts as of November 22 have been \$505. Thank you for your support!

*Once again, please indulge the pastor's writing of this little ditty:*

*At Collenbrook, we give with cheer  
Each month; and surely all the year  
We help each other, and embrace  
The news of God's unending grace!*

## DECEMBER MEMBER OF THE MONTH

*To read about December's Member of the Month, please e-mail the church, [info@collenbrook.org](mailto:info@collenbrook.org).*

## AGAPE MEAL, DECEMBER 27

Ordinarily held on the Sunday after Christmas, this is our casual post-Christmas meal and worship, together held in Fellowship Hall. We'll have breakfast fixings, such as bagels, cream cheese, Danish, cereal and milk, fruit, juice, coffee, tea, and whatever else we get inspired to have between now and then. We'll begin at our usual worship time, 10:30, and will "sandwich" worship around the meal. After the first of the month we'll have a sign-up sheet for what people can volunteer to bring to share.

## CALENDAR

- 10:30 Each Sunday, worship –
- Church decorating, Dec. 5, 10 a.m.
- Caroling after worship, Dec. 13.
- Council, Dec. 14, 7:30
- Questions of Faith, Dec. 3 & 17, 6:30.
- Christmas Eve service, 8:00 p.m.
- Worship and Annual Agape meal, Dec. 27, Fellowship Hall, 10:30

## BIRTHDAYS

|    |                 |
|----|-----------------|
| 01 | Kai Jones       |
| 07 | Kathy Watts     |
| 09 | Dottie Jones    |
| 12 | Denese Bloom    |
| 12 | Carolyn Johnson |
| 18 | Sean McElwee    |
| 30 | Betsy Fillmore  |

|       | <b>1<sup>st</sup> Elder</b> |
|-------|-----------------------------|
| 11/29 | G. Coper                    |
| 12/6  | M. Dolton                   |
| 12/13 | J. Curtis                   |
| 12/20 | E. Petrylak                 |
| 12/24 | K. Rolison                  |

|  | <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Elder</b> |
|--|-----------------------------|
|  | J. Noce                     |
|  | E. Petrylak                 |
|  | P. Szabo                    |
|  | C. Johnson                  |

### Advent candles

|                         |
|-------------------------|
| B. & T. Beiner          |
| M. Holcomb & C. Johnson |
| A. & J. Mazzoni         |

### Coffee host

|                  |
|------------------|
| M. & J. Piquion  |
| L. & R. Westcott |
| B. & M. Dolton   |
| G. & S. Barton   |