



LINK 'N' TOWER

Collenbrook United Church

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



Volume 110, Number 1

January, 2010

MY (PASTORAL) SPACE

By the time you get this issue of the Link 'n' Tower, Gayle and I will be seven time zones to the east in Malawi, Africa. We will have flown from Washington D.C.; stopped in Rome; changed planes in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; stopped in Lubumbashi, Congo; arrived in Llongwe, Malawi; and then been driven five hours by our friends, Paul and Darlene Heller, to Mzuzu, in the northern part of the country. The Hellers are commissioned Presbyterian mission workers who are running a crisis nursery for newborn orphans. They have served there a year and a half, and they are excited by our visit as well. We are taking many items. The big ones such as a computer and printer (which were destroyed by a lightning strike) are essentially being paid for from funds that we at Collenbrook sent to the Presbytery of Northern New York's Malawi Fund in August. Many of you have also donated items on the Hellers' wish list such as DVD's, walnuts, and plastic bags, which we'll take along with other items in our checked up-to-200-pounds of luggage. Parents of children at Ancona School here donated an infant car seat. For all that, we all thank you.

Yes, it will be a tiring trip, nineteen hours scheduled on the plane alone. But we're excited at the prospect of being back in Africa, having been there once when our oldest daughter was in the Peace Corps in Tanzania. Just to be able to catch a glimpse of how people in the third world live is a real privilege! People of faith are especially called to remember that all people are children of God. God's love is the standard, not whether they are black or white, rich or poor, skilled at the things important to us or not, drivers of cars, or walkers. That is one thing we remember from our previous trip – everyone walks! How good it will be to escape the driving trials of suburban Philadelphia! And there will be incredible need. We have no illusions about that. But we trust that our friends will put us to work so we can be a little useful as well as bring a welcome bit of home to people who miss their family and friends and ways most of us have gotten used to all our lives. The trip will remind us in very tangible ways, I'm sure, of the wideness of God's mercy.

Our intention is to keep up a blog so people can check on the computer to see how and what we're doing. Go to www.bartons-malawi-trip.blogspot.com any time. And as I've told you before, you can read about and see pictures relating to the work the Hellers do at www.suffer-the-little-children.blogspot.com. Keep in mind that we are all partners in the good news of God, the gospel that we proclaim not only on Sundays, but throughout the week, as we all look for new ways to show the love we have, and have to give. Theoretically, the shepherds, and even more the wise men, and, come to think of it, Mary and Joseph themselves, took long trips to be part of the event we now see as the beginning of the story of Jesus. We continue to tell and to demonstrate the story. May we all find creative ways to do it in 2010!

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

WORSHIP IN JANUARY

January 3: Suzanne Spaulding, who preached in October, will preach again and lead worship. Many people said they enjoyed having Suzanne here, so we were glad she could come again. She has been approved for ordination in the United Church of Christ and is seeking a call. I hope you can come and hear her sermon and wish a happy new year to all your friends at Collenbrook.

January 10: The Rev. J. Barrie Shepherd will preach. Before being pastor at First Presbyterian Church, New York City, Barrie was pastor at Swarthmore Presbyterian. He is a prolific writer of poems and prayers, and you can see many of his books in the bookstore or online. He comes complete with his Scottish brogue, with the edges smoothed after years in this country! In fact, he will have just returned from a trip back “home” in Scotland, so we’re lucky he agreed to come. Please don’t miss this chance!

January 17: Scott will be back from Malawi and will no doubt have some things to say about the trip. If he is not quite as bright-eyed and bushy-tailed as usual, it’s because he will have gotten home the day before (see previous column!) But he wants you to hear about the trip.

January 24 and 31: Please join us on these other Sundays, affectionately called “Ordinary Time” on the church calendar. But of course, it’s no ordinary thing that God’s grace is for us to savor, enjoy, and pass on. We remind each other of that privilege each week.

ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Basic questions of belief and meaning come to us again and again in our lives. Sometimes we think that we have them answered. Other times we think we’ve gone beyond them or even lost interest. But, God gave us minds to use, with which we can grow in faith when we dare to ask questions.

In January we will watch the last two tapes in our “*Questions of Faith*” series #2. If you are searching, striving to grow in faith, and to relate belief to life, the contemporary thinkers on the videos will stimulate you! They are Protestant, Jewish, and Roman Catholic, including priest, psychotherapist, Original Testament scholar, evangelist, preacher, sociologist and writers. We start at 6:30 with a meal of pizza and salads and desserts that people can bring to share.

January 21: “What Gives You Faith?”

January 28: “What Happens After Death?”

These are a couple of very good questions!!! Please join us as we explore some possible ways of answering them.



CHRISTMAS at COLLENBROOK

WINTER THING

Pot Luck Supper with Music - Saturday, January 30, 2010 5:30pm

Since you all enjoyed Spring Thing so much (it WAS a great party wasn't it?) I decided to go ahead and schedule another one. I got in touch with a special friend of mine, John Flynn, a well-known singer/songwriter who lives in the area. He is available January 30, 2010. Following is a quote from a friend of John's that, I think, describes him perfectly:

"John Flynn has committed himself to a life of service and songs for and about 'the lost and the lonely, the shackled and scarred.' His work in prisons, rehabs, and half-way houses is distilled into the truth and the beauty of these heartfelt and heartwarming slices of life. *America's Waiting* is a great album, distinguished by its courage and sincerity. 'The Prodigal Father' is a perfect song. And I recited 'Without You with Me' in the eulogy at Stephen Bruton's funeral. This is an important album by an important artist." -- *Kris Kristofferson*



Go to www.JohnFlynn.net for more information about John.

I am organizing this event with my friends in the Fortissimo group — John and JohnnySue McGlinchey, Jack and Janet Bryson, and Marcy and Tom McGee. Bill and I formed this group many years ago at Philly Folk Fest. Our aim is to promote the musicians in the area through “house concerts,” which we organize a few times each year.

The format will be the same as “Spring Thing” — bring food (there will be a sign-up sheet at Church) and good friends, and sit back and enjoy some really good original music. We will also be inviting John's fans in the area through the Philadelphia Folksong Society. I think there will be a good-sized crowd at this one.

John is a paid professional musician, but he has agreed to accept a freewill donation as payment. That means we will be passing a box around asking each attendee to donate money for the musician. \$15.00 per person is the suggested donation. All that is collected goes to John. John will also have CD's for sale. You will want to buy one or two for yourself after you hear him sing. So come on out for a great night of good food and wonderful music. If you have any questions, call me at (610) 353-6716, or write to me at mariedolton@gmail.com.

Marie Dolton

BIRTHDAYS FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY

01 Ted Varney
04 Marie Dolton
04 Lisa Watts
05 Bill Dolton
05 Joe Fabiani
10 Courtney Smith
14 Emily Journey
14 Louise Varney
15 Tom Gambino



A NOTE FROM OUR TREASURER

December's Mission of the Month was to benefit retired clergy and others assisted through our denominations. We are about to 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." The total offering for December was \$645.00. Thank you so much for your continued generosity.

- Marie Dolton

LOST TRENCH COAT

Last chance to reclaim a tan trench coat has been hanging up in the choir room now for several months. It's a size 40, with plaid lining. If it's yours and you've been looking for it, search no more! Otherwise, we're giving it away.

PAINTING

At its December meeting, the Council decided to have the lower hallway and bathroom, choir room and kitchen painted. The work has been done, and these areas look far less dingy than they have in a long time! Thanks to Gunnar Coper for finding the right painter for the job which is being paid for out of the Building Fund. We trust this sprucing up will be appreciated by everyone who uses these rooms.

JANUARY MISSION OF THE MONTH

The Mission of the Month for January is the **Winter Shelter at Old First Reformed Church** in Philadelphia. Old First has been part of the fabric of the city for nearly three centuries. The church does this in partnership with the Bethesda Project which began in 1979 as a response to the increasing homelessness and abandonment of the poor in the Delaware Valley.

This will be the 27th year that Old First has opened its doors to provide shelter, food and community for up to 30 homeless men during the winter. Given critically hard economic times, the number of homeless individuals and families has increased at a frightening rate. Some of those who Jesus called the “least of these” are our Veterans.

Financial contributions enable the church to continue offering two meals a day (dinner and breakfast), sleeping accommodations, overnight supervision, and the essentials of heat and light that we so easily take for granted. Most importantly, however, is the true sense of community offered. Members of Old First and other volunteers share meals and conversations with their guests, showing respect for their dignity as fellow human beings.

Please put donations in Mission of the Month envelopes, or use the brown pew envelopes. Checks should be written to Collenbrook United Church with Mission of the Month in the Memo section.

Thank you for your support of our Mission of the Month, every month!