

January 16, 2009

The Coconut Grove, FL Plymouth Congregational Church UCC members show their care and concern for the men, women and children afflicted with HIV/AIDS by volunteering at the Food for Life food pantry, participating in the Miami AIDS Walk, and working with the Community AIDS Care Resource. About 30 people from Plymouth and St. Stephen's Episcopal formed the "Churches in the Grove" team and raised \$12,100 in support of Care Resource, Miami-Dade and Broward counties AIDS support agency that provides testing, medical treatment, medication studies, education, financial aid, counseling and support for those living with HIV/AIDS and their care givers helping them to know they are known and loved.

Judges 2: 16-23 God calls forth the judges

Acts 13: 16-25 Leaders prior to Christ's coming

Psalms 139: 1-6, 13-18 You have searched me out

January 17, 2009

First Church in East Hartford, CT is a mission oriented church. We financially support the wider mission of the United Church of Christ as well as over a dozen local Christian services. We partner with the YMCA to provide a School Readiness Pre-School program in our facility, giving children of low income families an opportunity to prepare for public education. The oldest Boy Scout Troop under continuing sponsorship in America, Troop 1, is sponsored by First Church. The congregation organizes and staffs a week day Food Bank for neighborhood residents in need. The Human Needs Fund, a town wide resource providing monetary supplements toward rent, medical, and utility expenses for low income families is given an office here and is staffed by a volunteer from the church. The Glastonbury Pastoral Counseling Center is given a satellite office allowing the clients to be met on a sliding fee scale. Further showing our community that they are known and loved; a beginning Hispanic congregation meets for worship in our chapel.

1 Samuel 2: 21-25 Elif's sons sin

Matthew 25: 1-13 Wise and foolish bridesmaids

Psalms 139: 1-6, 13-18 You have searched me out

Defining Moments

January 11, 2009 - The Baptism of Jesus



The youth group of Congregational UCC in Ames, IA wanted to make a difference in their community, particularly for those dealing with hunger. They wanted to broaden their understanding of what it means to be baptized in Jesus' name. They had no idea, just how big an impact they would make.

They decided to join the national Souper Bowl of Carving. This youth-led, grassroots movement uses Super Bowl weekend to mobilize the fight against hunger and poverty in local communities. As youth group member Mackenzie Dickson found in her research, since 1990, more than \$6.3 million has been collected by youth for charities across the country through this event.

With hopes of raising money for Mid-Iowa Community Action Food Pantry and Bethesda Food Pantry in Ames, the Congregational UCC youth group went about promoting this project with skits and signage. Then, when it came time to count the contributions in the soup pot, there was an amazing discovery.

In addition to many regular cash donations, there was a gold coin -- a one-ounce 1985, Canada Gold Maple Leaf, .99999% pure gold. Reports to Souper Bowl nationals were delayed as the treasure was assessed and the coin sold for cash. The coin, with a face value of \$50 was worth \$650! In total, the youth raised \$1025.28 or \$512.64 for each local food pantry.

Genesis 1:1-5 God creates light

Psalms 29 The voice of God upon the waters

Acts 19:1-7 Baptized in the name of Jesus

Mark 1:4-11 Jesus revealed as God's servant

JANUARY 12, 2009

For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat (Matthew 25:35). This passage from scripture tells us what kind of response Jesus is looking for from each of us when faced with the needs of others. The New Hampshire Conference responded in Christ-like fashion to the Zimbabwe Emergency Hunger Appeal with more than \$15,000 in donations. The contributions were sent to Christian Care, an ecumenical relief agency that has been a long-time partner with Global Ministries and with the New Hampshire Conference's Ukama/Partnership in Zimbabwe. It is this kind of compassionate response that helps define what it means to be a Christian in the world. In these defining moments, we are molded in the image of God and stamped with the love for humanity which Christ exemplified.

Genesis: 17: 1-13 Circumcision a covenant sign
Romans 4: 1-12 God makes righteous apart from works
Psalm 69: 1-5, 30-36 God will save through water

CENTERING PRAYER (January 8-14, 2009)

Creator God, our soul's delight, your voice thunders over the waters, liberating the future from the past. In the Spirit's power and the waters of rebirth, Jesus was declared your blessed and beloved Son; may we recall our baptism, and be disciples of the Anointed One. Amen.

JANUARY 13, 2009

Ministry comes in many different forms, and Wayzata Community Church in Wayzata, MN feels strongly about a youth ministry based on the building of interpersonal relationships. Youth want people in their lives that care about who they are, and want to know them as individuals. They want the students in the Youth Ministry Program to feel comfortable talking with them, and not only about matters of faith. They hope that the youth might feel comfortable and safe entrusting them with any issues that are faced by these youth on a daily basis. But, it takes time to develop relationships. It takes time to develop a program that meets high school students where they are – at school for lunch, at their extracurricular events, or in fun activities like the Super Bowl Party or movie night. The relationships they build truly become defining moments in the daily lives of these young people.

Exodus 30: 22-28 Anointing a sign of holiness
Acts 22: 2-16 Paul describes his own baptism
Psalm 69: 1-5, 30-36 God will save through water

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2009 A Calendar of Prayer for the United Church of Christ

JANUARY 14, 2009

The Loving Hands Shawl Ministry at St. Mary's United Church of Christ in Westminster, MD was started several years ago after some of our church members were inspired during a few defining moments at an annual gathering of the Central Atlantic Conference. We are also inspired by the work done through the www.shawlministry.com efforts. Our group began to meet on Saturday mornings. We use our time together to knit, or crochet, as a group and to reflect and pray upon what this ministry means to us. After completion of a shawl they are blessed by the group and given with love to many different people. To date we estimate that we have given out over 80 shawls to - new members of our church, our graduating confirmation class, members and friends who are experiencing health challenges in their life, as support to those who are in need of warmth of love, and even to very special people in our lives who inspire us individually to create a shawl.

Isaiah 41: 14-20 God gives water in the desert
John 1: 29-34 John's account of Jesus' baptism
Psalm 69: 1-5, 30-36 God saves through water

CENTERING PRAYER (January 15-21, 2009)

Insistent God, by night and day you summon your slumbering people. So stir us with your voice and enlighten our lives with your grace that we give ourselves fully to Christ's call to mission and ministry. Amen.

JANUARY 15, 2009

The Foggy Bottom Food Pantry is a mission of the United Church established in 1981 as a community service where people are known and loved. Money and food from the church, individual members, FEMA, student groups of the George Washington University, and others provide the basic support. Funds are used to purchase food and supplies, principally salvage food from the Capital Area Community Food Bank. There are no overhead charges because the program is run by volunteers utilizing the church's facilities. Food is bagged and distributed twice per month to individuals and families that can demonstrate need. Special bags containing ready-to-eat foods are prepared for those who are homeless. The Pantry is currently distributing about 800 bags of food each month (approximately 10,000 pounds) at a cost of about \$1,500 per month.

Judges 2: 6-15 Uncertain times after Joshua's death
2 Corinthians 10: 1-11 Corinthian behavior during Paul's absence
Psalm 139: 13-18 You have searched me out

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