



## ***Pastor's Column: Anniversaries and Milestones***

January is often a slow time of year. Everyone is taking a break from the busyness of Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. It often becomes a time to sit back and think. I've been thinking about anniversaries for 2007, in particular, fiftieth anniversaries. This year we will observe the fiftieth anniversary of the organizing of the United Church of Christ which was organized at the first General Synod, known as the "Uniting General Synod," on June 25-27 at the Music Hall in Cleveland, Ohio. Negotiations with the Evangelical and Reformed Church had been going on for a decade.

In its early years the UCC was involved in the Civil Rights and anti-war movement in the 1960's. Another fiftieth anniversary in particular that I'm thinking of this year is my fiftieth birthday. I'll leave it to you to find out the date. I was born in Meriden, Connecticut, where my parents and younger brother still live. Unlike some, I haven't had a midlife crisis over this. It actually has been interesting to anticipate. I'll qualify for membership in AARP and will be qualified to receive free coffee at McDonalds on Wednesdays. Unfortunately I don't drink coffee. I don't worry too much about getting older. There isn't anything I can do about it so why worry? The only thing I regret is that I didn't know what I know now when I was half this age.

Other fiftieth anniversaries this year include the beginning of the Space Age. As a proxy for the Cold War, the Soviet Union launched the first artificial satellite, Sputnik I on October 4, 1957. It

### ***The Newsleaf January, 2007***

The Newsletter of the Blooming Grove  
United Church of Christ

P.O Box 101

Blooming Grove NY 10914

**[www.bgucc.com](http://www.bgucc.com)**

Tel. 845-496-9311 (office) 845-496-1393  
(parsonage)

Email: [ccowing@frontiernet.net](mailto:ccowing@frontiernet.net)

[bgucc@frontiernet.net](mailto:bgucc@frontiernet.net)

Rev. Craig L. Cowing, Pastor

was about the size of a basketball, weighed only 183 pounds, and took about 98 minutes to orbit the Earth. The launch ushered in new political, military, technological, and scientific developments.

On the morning of September 23, 1957 nine African-American teenagers stood up to an angry crowd protesting integration in front of Little Rock's Central High as they entered the school for the first time. This event, broadcast around the world, made Little Rock the site of the first important test of the U.S. Supreme Court's historic *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision.

After searching for a few minutes for historical events that happened fifty years ago this year I was amazed at the significance of them. I knew about all these events but had never put them together. Less earth-shattering, but still culturally significant is the premier of "Leave It To Beaver" and the opening of "West Side Story" on Broadway.

It's always a valid question to ask if the world has made progress over the span of time. We could argue either way about the world today compared to the world fifty years ago. Back then, it was an international event for African-American children to enter an all-white school. Today, segregation still exists but is more subtle and economic in character. The space age is still in its infancy, if we look at it in view of what the future might bring. Today, a disease that did not exist in 1957,

HIV/AIDS, now erodes the stability of Africa.

The fact that the United Church of Christ still challenges ignorance and prejudice indicates that the Church has a lot of work left to do!

In Christ



## Church Calendar January 2006

Date	Time	Event	Place
Sun. Jan. 14	12:15 PM	Trustees meeting after worship	sanctuary
Sun. Jan. 14	8 PM	Harmonic Healing Concert	Chapel
Tues. Jan. 16	6:30 PM	Growth Committee s	church office.
Tues. Jan. 16	7:30 PM	Church Council	Chapel
Sun. Jan. 28		Due date for annual reports	

### Church News

#### Bring Your Pennies to Church!

Don't forget to bring your pennies and pocket change to church! The "Pennies for People" milk bottle was recently emptied and needs to be refilled! Grants from Pennies for People benefit various organizations in New York State. Linda Bull is the chairperson for Pennies for People for the New York Conference of the UCC.

#### No Bible Study on January 14

On January 14 Craig will be leading worship at the First Presbyterian Church before our service so there will not be a bible study that morning. The new interim pastor at First Presbyterian will start the following Sunday.

#### Harmonic Healing Concert Sunday, January 14 at 8 PM

The next Harmonic Healing Concert is January 14 at 8 PM in the chapel. Come and spend an hour in meditation and relaxation as you absorb the healing sounds of Tibetan singing bowls. This event is free and open to the public. These events are informal--come as you are. Bring a pillow or cushion to sit on. Dates for upcoming concerts are February 11, March 11, April 1, May 13, 2007. Dates for later in the year will be released soon.

#### Change in Office Hours Beginning January 16

Beginning on January 16 through May 1 Craig will not have office hours on Tuesdays. He will be teaching a class in Fishkill during that time. Regular office hours will be Wednesday through Friday, 9:30 to 11:30 AM.

#### Annual Meeting Sunday February 18 after Worship

The Annual meeting date has been changed to Sunday, February 18 after the worship service. We will meet in the Fellowship Hall for a potluck lunch followed by the meeting. Annual reports for the annual meeting booklet should be to Arlene Roberts by Sunday, January 28. Her email address is: [Villgal0501@aol.com](mailto:Villgal0501@aol.com).

#### The Newsleaf Goes Online!

Beginning in January the Newsleaf will be going out by email to everyone on the email list. If you don't want to receive it please let Craig know. It will be in PDF format and will also be available on the website at [www.bgucc.com](http://www.bgucc.com). If you want to receive it in PDF format it will not be mailed to you unless you specifically ask for it.

Another benefit is that in the PDF version the hyperlinks should work—the references to websites and the links for the texts for the Revised

Common Lectionary. Have fun and let Craig know how it looks!

### **Caps for Kids Tops \$27,000**

The Caps for Kids project is in full swing with winter here, such as it is. Please consider giving a cap as a reminder that sometimes it's cold. Each hand-knit cap costs \$10 and all proceeds benefit Church World Service projects to help children in Africa who have been adversely affected by HIV/AIDS. Please contact Janet Steeves at 496-3329 for more information.

### **The Mary Merriam Flower Calendar**

The Blooming Grove UCC has established a flower calendar to provide altar flowers for Sunday Worship. The calendar is named in honor of Mary Merriam who lovingly and gracefully cared for the altar and flowers for many years and is warmly remembered by members of the congregation. Sharen Casazza will maintain the physical calendar and will seek donations from members of the congregation to cover the \$50.00 cost. On the first and third Sundays of the month fresh flowers from Flowers By Joan will be placed in the church's brass vases and placed on the altar in memory of or in honor of whoever placed the donation. Please contact Sharen Casazza at Box 8, Blooming Grove, NY 10914 or at home 845-496-5222 to place a donation. Please specify clearly for whom the flowers are donated and include a check to Blooming Grove UCC for \$50.00

### **Sanctuary Flowers for December and January**

12/03/06 – by Jeff & Hilarie Moore in memory of Robert S. Clark, VMD

12/17/06 – Poinsettias for Advent and Christmas:

In Memory of LYDIA & CARLOS ORTIZ, SR. and DAVID C. KINGSTROM by Gloria & Dave Kingstrom

In Honor of ZACHARY, JEFFREY, STEVE & TIM by Steve & Susan Chewens

In Honor of ANTHONY & BEVERLY RUGGIERO and MELANIE LANC & DON ROBERTS, SR. by Don & Arlene Roberts

In Memory of MARIAN HUNTER by Sears & Phyllis Hunter

In Honor of RAY & JANET STEEVES by Margaret & David Casazza

In Memory of EARLE R. & ELIZABETH STEEVES by James Casazza

In Memory of ROBERT & BERYL TINCKNELL and ALAN TINCKNELL and ALBERT BULL & MILDRED BULL

HULZENGA by Al & Linda Bull

In Memory of LOUIS & RUBY MILNER Ray & Janet Steeves

In Honor of The GOLL Family and The MEISSNER Family by John & Anita Meissner

01/07/07 – by Jeff & Hilarie Moore in memory of Mary Lou Moore)

01/21/07 – by Margaret, James & David Casazza in honor of Janet Steeves

### **Church World Service News**

#### **Water for life in East Africa December 20, 2006**

"Together we changing the lives of men and women in this part of the world, through leadership and water programs," says Amos Muniera, managing director of long-time CWS partner Farming Systems Kenya (FSK). Based in Nakuru, FSK is marking its 25th year of service.

Farmers of small holdings make up 80% of Kenya's farms. The group operates with what it calls a "Curriculum Based Extension" approach, emphasizing the growth of skills and structures, with emphasis on credit management, business advocacy, and the marketing of products through the Farmers Marketing Federation. The work models are exchanged through collaborative field days, training seminars, national shows, and exchange tours with similar groups. In addition, the group emphasizes tree planting, because its area of Kenya has been known for the destruction of the environment.

Out in the community, the CWS partner is the Rural Water and Sanitation Enhancement Project. Two main rivers within seven kilometers are the resource for a population of 1.2 million. Following the country's independence in 1963, farming cooperatives bought British estate lands, but were then left without finances for seeds and tools.

Farming Systems Kenya was created to supply agricultural and technical support, but still farming production was low, because of the shortage of water. Church World Service helped to provide improvement.

"The affiliation with the church helps in getting into communities. That has really helped," notes FSK's Amos Muniera. At the same time, "we respect values and cultures and don't change what we don't need to change," he said, about entering the variety of communities in the Nakuru region, which is home to a large number of traditional Kikuyu.

At Gichobo, a borehole was made by the government, with each community family then buying pipe for a trench for water to their area. Most homes do not as yet have running water within the house, but the pipe's proximity saves family members a walk of 12 miles. When it came to providing repairs and upkeep for the system, the community found it needed to be responsible, and not depend on the national government. With input from FSK and CWS, it formed a steering committee for the project, and named their group Gichobo Water Project Self-Help Group. They mapped their community and the needed outlets and support, including the provision of labor for three water kiosks, including one 20,000 gallon storage tank. The project serves five locations, with a population of 1,000 families. By selling the water for a modest fee, the community receives revenue to maintain the system.

"Our lifestyle has been changed" by this project, said Mr. Mushiari, the chairman of the steering committee, as he welcomed visitors and thanked them for the "very, very strong human touch to this community."

A woman who is a member of the steering committee spoke on behalf of the group's women. "We appreciate the great support," she said, pointing out on the map the long distances people used to travel to find water. "In the morning when we left we couldn't cook for the children. The fathers had bicycles so they too would go looking for water. So to see the pipes laid underground ... we have never had that in this region." She spread her arms wide, outlining a large circle: "Whoever has given of their own, God bless you all." The current phase of the project seeks to lay out an 18-mile distribution system.

A younger man, named Joe Moni, is the secretary of the group. "Water is life," he said. "Having a tap is like a mirror for you" – you can see that you are alive. "I come five kilometers (about three miles) from here, and the pipes are there, too. We are grateful. Our people get water at the kiosks, and sell it at an affordable price. With that some can pay for electricity."

"God willing, we can ensure that everyone has a connection to the water," explained the chairman. He noted that some community members were not there; their own crops had failed due to drought, and they were at a food relief program. "Our main problem is water; our people are looking for maize at the food distribution."

Collins, an environmentalist with FSK, noted that he was working with the community to see that trees were planted, but that lack of rain is a problem. He teaches how to build "storey gardens" – a sort of layered square terrace structure – out of stones, sand, and charcoal. This then provides a sustainable food supply. "The environment is protected, and everyone has food," he says.

In Njokerio, another district community, the chairman explains that the water project was inaugurated last year by the Kenya government's Minister for Water, a woman, he noted, saying, "We are gender-sensitive," to the nods of the females seated in the audience. He explains that the members of the community are the owners of the plot of land housing the well, where they can access water. "We used to travel four kilometers

(about 2½ miles) to the river to get water – a river that is polluted. Now, water-borne diseases are uncommon."

Steering committee member Ruth Kuniga shared that, "We are now able to do other things. And we are happy because we have clean water. Where we used to go, it was dirty, and we had to use this water. Our next phase is to take the water closer to our homes, to take piped water."

Ruth recollected how they all trenched and lay pipeline as their contribution to the system, with only one skilled laborer among them.

Remarked the chairman, "And this is not diplomacy? This project has brought us all together!"

Indeed, a brochure distributed by FSK underscores the rippled ramifications of such a project: "The community is drinking the much-desired accessible, clean and safe water and their excitement cannot be hidden. This will not only address their current need but also flow ever to other areas of socio-economic importance. The time previously used by the community to search for water can be channeled to other productive purposes, such as agricultural production; the money spent on medication as a result of water-borne diseases will be redeemed for other investments; school-going children who have always used their time in search of water can thus concentrate more on their education, and hence improve their academic performance."

FSK has now been nominated to support other water projects in the country, such as the Rift Valley Water Service Board. This exchange of experience and accomplishment is a piece of the FSK approach to water project sustainability: "linkages, networkings and collaborations ... With

this," their brochure says, "the community constantly receives support from diverse interested parties." This peer support and empowerment, as well as the water flow, is what is truly exciting to see.

**CWS Hotline for the week of January 8, 2007 -  
also at [www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org)**

*Pakistani family fights the cold in a tent camp to  
improve their lives*

Pakistan--In tent number 71, the Hussain family huddles together to fight the cold. For one week Arshad Hussain, his two wives Saeeda and Farzana, 5-year-old son Hassnain and daughter Rimshah Bibi (14 months) have been living in Kashtera Camp, near Balakot. Their house in the Kaghan Valley was destroyed by last year's earthquake, and the tent they've been living in near their devastated village has since collapsed under heavy snow, so they were forced to take refuge in the Kashtera tent camp.

"The snow blocked the roads and there was nothing left to eat," Saeeda says. "We did not want to migrate, but we had no choice."

On their arrival, Church World Service provided the Hussains with a food package consisting of flour, rice, beans, cooking oil, sugar, tea, salt, matches, and soap. The Camp Management asked CWS to provide 200 shelter and food packages, which are being distributed in the camp to newly-arriving families. Up to 200 extra plastic sheets (beyond what are included in the shelter kits) will be provided to the camp for people living in leaking tents.

CWS is also providing a Basic Health Unit with five staff, and is responsible for water and sanitation, and garbage and waste disposal management for the earthquake survivors in Kashtera Camp.

**Blooming Grove United Church of Christ**  
**PO Box 101**  
**Blooming Grove NY 10914-0101**

**Address Service Requested**



*In this issue of The Newsleaf:  
 Lots of Church News  
 Church World Service in Africa and  
 Pakistan  
 . . . and more!*

**Revised Common  
 Lectionary Readings  
 for January &  
 February 2007**

**7 January 2007:**  
**Baptism of the Lord**  
[Isaiah 43:1-7](#)  
[Psalm 29](#)  
[Acts 8:14-17](#)  
[Luke 3:15-17, 21-22](#)

**14 January 2007:**  
**Martin Luther King, Jr.**  
[Isaiah 62:1-5](#)  
[Psalm 36:5-10](#)  
[1 Corinthians 12:1-11](#)  
[John 2:1-11](#)

**21 January 2007:**  
[Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10](#)  
[Psalm 19](#)  
[1 Corinthians 12:12-31a](#)  
[Luke 4:14-21](#)

**28 January 2007:**  
[Jeremiah 1:4-10](#)  
[Psalm 71:1-6](#)  
[1 Corinthians 13:1-13](#)  
[Luke 4:21-30](#)

**4 February 2007:**  
[Isaiah 6:1-8, \(9-13\)](#)  
[Psalm 138](#)  
[1 Corinthians 15:1-11](#)  
[Luke 5:1-11](#)

**11 February 2007:**  
[Jeremiah 17:5-10](#)  
[Psalm 1](#)  
[1 Corinthians 15:12-20](#)  
[Luke 6:17-26](#)

**18 February 2007:**  
**Transfiguration Sunday**  
[Exodus 34:29-35](#)  
[Psalm 99](#)  
[2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2](#)  
[Luke 9:28-36, \(37-43\)](#)

**25 February 2007:**  
**1st Sunday in Lent**  
[Deuteronomy 26:1-11](#)  
[Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16](#)  
[Romans 10:8b-13](#)  
[Luke 4:1-13](#)