

THIS WEEK AT THE CREEK

THE WEEKLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER
CROSS CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
February 25, 2010

If you get rid of unfair practices, quit blaming victims, quit gossiping about other people's sins, if you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out, your lives will begin to glow in the darkness, your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight. I will always show you where to go. I'll give you a full life in the emptiest of places - firm muscles, strong bones. You'll be like a well-watered garden, a gurgling spring that never runs dry. You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past. You'll be known as those who can fix anything, restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate, make the community livable again.

-- Isaiah 58: 9b -12



That February day when I first arrived at the house that would become my home in a strange, new town, I was greeted by a mass of yellow flowers pushing up through remnants of a recent snow. Now, when I find places in my life that resemble the frozen ground of February, I visualize that scene and pray, "Source of Life, nurture in this apparently lifeless place astonishing, new life like the winter aconites -- around my mailbox.

-- Photo and Journal entry by Rev. Dr. Janice Kemp
(A Cross Creek Covenant Member)

IN WORSHIP THIS WEEKEND

The sculpture ***Filled with Spirit***, created by local artist/sculptor **Tess Little**, will serve as a focal point throughout the season of Lent. We will be reflecting on God as the Gardner of our Lives and on the garden as a symbol of the original unity of creation from which we came (Genesis 2:4b-9) and of the lush and verdant garden-like place in the New Jerusalem described in the Revelation to John (22:1-2). In both these gardens the Tree of Life grows.



The Lenten theme is **LIKE A WATERED GARDEN: LIVING INTO THE PROMISE OF LENT**. For this second weekend of Lent the prompting, entitled "**Before and After**," will be offered by **Pastor Mike Castle**. **Carrie Newcomer** will be the soloist.



Carrie Newcomer is a rare breed of singer/songwriter: the kind who illuminates life with startling depth, humor and clarity. Songwriting is not about being clever, flashy or fancy — it is about telling a compelling story in language and music with elegance and clarity...and that Carrie does well. Newcomer, a Quaker, cuts across secular and spiritual boundaries. In recent years, she has emerged as an artistic voice for the progressive spiritual community.

Newcomer's latest release, ***Before and After***, invites the listener to slow down and reflect on the experiences that have changed and shaped our lives. It highlights Newcomer's ability to blend her rich alto with a poetic lyricism and reflects Appalachian and classical influences. In 2008, she was listed as one of the Top Most Influential Artists of the past 25 Years by Boston's WUMB. She lives in Bloomington, Indiana.

AND FOR YOUR REFLECTION....

As we are focusing on the reality of our lives lived between the garden of creation and the garden in the New Creation....on the fullness of life intended by God...we thank Janice Kemp for sharing her thoughts with us this week.

THE FROZEN GROUND OF FEBRUARY: A LENTEN REFLECTION

by the Rev. Dr Janice Kemp

I'm never quite so happy as when I have dirt under my fingernails—for I'm a gardener. That's why I was delighted to learn that Cross Creek would have a gardening theme this Lenten season. A lot has been going on in my life lately, and I have been feeling the need to till the garden of my soul. The theme seemed even more appropriate when I realized that Ash Wednesday is on February 17 this year. I personally consider February 17 to be the beginning of my gardening season. This date, nearly 3 months before the official last frost date in our area may seem premature, but I have my reasons. To understand, you have to know something about my mailbox.

My mailbox has been half buried in snow most of this month. In recent days it has sloughed off its white cap, but the snow around it is still about mid-calf. It was just 4 years ago yesterday, on February 17, 2006, that it became MY mailbox. It was a grey, wintery day, about like today, except there was only a dusting of snow on the ground, when I drove over from Indianapolis to attend the closing that would make it my mailbox. That was a scary trip. I was engaged in a somewhat scary process. I was leaving the cocoon of my home in Indianapolis to live and work in Dayton. A new job and ministry were bringing me here. I had been preparing for this for seven years, so the move was cause for celebration. It was scary just the same. I didn't know anyone here. No church, no friends, no family. I was also concerned about the house I was buying. The inspection had revealed problems. Some of these had been resolved, but others would be mine. Yet this house had called to me...and I needed a home. Was I making a good choice? Would I find life here? Would God meet me in this new place?

The closing went smoothly. I drove to my new home in the descending dusk. I hadn't seen it since the inspection at the beginning of the month. Now it was mine, problems and all. As I walked up the front sidewalk, a most astonishing spectacle greeted me. There, in front of my blue house, under the mailbox, was a mass of little yellow flowers welcoming me home. As I absorbed the scene, I was filled with an intuitive knowing that everything would be okay. This wave of yellow flowers affirmed that, indeed, there would be life in this place. And these unexpected blooms that had made their way through the frozen February soil were witnesses that God was already here and greeting me at the door of my new home. Since then I have learned that these are called winter aconites. Every February they show up, proclaiming that winter will give way to spring and that new life WILL come from this frozen ground. In fact, the first one of 2010 has already appeared. I saw it just before the first heavy snow came this month. And I know it is there, along with companion aconites and snowdrops, waiting for the snow to melt so that it might reopen and make its proclamation.

These past four years have not been easy. There have been numerous challenges. Sometimes hope has seemed elusive. The winter aconites have become a metaphor for me in such times, reminding me that our amazing God can bring forth life from the "frozen ground" of seemingly impossible situations. I don't know if there is such "frozen ground" in your life--other than this snow-covered, literally frozen, ground of winter. Perhaps we will even encounter some in our life together as we make our Lenten journey and travel through the seasons that follow. We cannot know now the difficulties that lie ahead. Should that happen, in our lives as individuals or in community, I invite you, in the presence and power of God, to visualize this scene and share my prayer: "Source of Life, nurture in this apparently lifeless place astonishing, new life like the winter aconites around the mailbox."

By the way, just let me know if you would like some winter aconites to plant around your home. I'll be thinning them out after they bloom and they'll be looking for a good home.

Janice C. Kemp
January 18, 2010

PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY

Prayers for Roselin Runnels on the unexpected passing of her father this week. Cards and notes can be sent to Roselin at 3026 Willowbrook Way, Beavercreek, Ohio 45431.

UPCOMING EVENTS

REMEMBER: Everyone is encouraged to check out Cross Creek's complete events calendar online at www.crosscreekchurch.org.

PRAYER GROUP THIS WEEK -- March 2 at 6:15 - 7:00 PM

This drop-in adult group meets at the home of Alison Perkins in Washington Twp. Directions can be obtained by calling the church or by sending an e-mail to prayergroup.cccc@gmail.com. Bring a friend.

GODSPELL - A MUSICAL

Godspell, based on the Gospel according to Matthew, will be performed at Greenmont-Oak Park Community Church UCC (1921 Woodman Dr. Kettering, OH 45420) on **Mar 5 at 7:30 PM, Sat, Mar 6 at 7:30 PM, and Sun, Mar 7 at 3:00 PM**. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors, students, and groups of eight or more. You may contact their church office for reservations or information: 252-3251.

EASTER EGGS-STRAVAGANZA 2010 -- Saturday, April 3

Cross Creek's annual Eggs-stravaganza, for infants through second grade children and their families will take place Saturday, April 3, from **10:30 AM to Noon**. Tickets are \$3.00 and friends are welcome. There will be an Easter egg hunt with prizes and entertainment by Jonathan Heart "The Origami Wizard". Tickets on sale now at the events table. Get yours today!

THERE'S NO WHERE TO GO BUT "UP!" on MAY 1, 2010!! What's "UP!?" you ask.

"UP!" is the theme for our **2010 Service Auction**. "UP!" will raise funds for our budget AND our Balloon Payment. "UP!" will be LOTS OF FUN! Mark the date!! Donate a service!! Details available at the Activity Table and at our website <http://www.crosscreekchurch.org>. Plan to be there!!

DREAMING OF SUN AND FUN-FILLED SUMMER DAYS...

You'll notice that the **2010 summer camp** inserts are in the bulletin this weekend. The Ohio Conference of the United Church of Christ offers an amazing selection of summer camps for both adults and kids at our two beautiful outdoor ministry facilities in Ohio! Consider all of the different experiences and opportunities for this summer!! For more information, see the detailed pamphlets in the church hallway. You can register online at www.ocucc.org or call them direct at 1-800-282-0740. Members of our church family (talk to Sue Voisard or Haley and Brice Donegia!) have experienced these camps firsthand and found them to be wonderful, safe, well-organized and inspirational! Check them out for yourself!

EQUALITY OHIO GATHERING FOR GREATER DAYTON -- Friday, March 19 at 7:00 PM

You are invited to join the Boards of Directors for Equality Ohio and Equality Ohio Education Fund for a fun night of learning more about Equality Ohio and supporting its important work in our state. It is at EL MESON Restaurant in West Carrollton with owners Bill Castro and Mark Abbott being our hosts!

We'll be introducing our new executive director, Sue Doerfer. Come meet her and let her meet you!

We'll also be recognizing Miami Valley Ohio House of Representatives who helped pass the Equal Housing and Employment Act (HB 176) this past September. Peggy Lehner (R), Ross McGregor (R), and Roland Winburn (D) have all committed to be present. So please, join us in thanking them for their important support!

Please register by March 16 at http://eqfed.org/equalityohio/events/El_Meson_Registration/details.tcl. \$75.00 (includes food, non-alcoholic beverages plus \$35 membership to Equality Ohio. Cash Bar Available.) If you have any questions, please call Mike Castle at 937-434-4580 x14 or email him at MDCastle@aol.com.

QUESTIONS ABOUT CROSS CREEK CHURCH?

Those interested in investigating covenant membership at Cross Creek Community Church, as well as those interested in learning more about the church's statement of faith; its vision, mission and distinctive values; its decision making processes and its varied ministries, as well as its affiliation with the United Church of Christ and the Alliance of Baptists are invited to attend the **Exploring Covenant Membership Class on Saturday, March 13 from 9 AM to 2 PM**. You can sign up in the church hallway or contact Pastor Mike Castle. Childcare is available upon request with advance notice.

CENTERVILLE WASHINGTON DIVERSITY COUNCIL PRESENTS.....

CHALLENGES TO PEACE AND PROSPERITY: IRAN -- Forum on **March 25, 7-8:30 PM**

Our guest speaker, Melody Moezzi, grew up mostly in Dayton, Ohio (graduated from Centerville High School) amid a strong and vibrant Iranian-American Diaspora. She is a writer, speaker, activist, author and attorney. Her first book, *War on Error: Real Stories of American Muslims*, earned her a Georgia Author of the Year Award and a Gustavus Myers Center for Bigotry and Human Rights Honorable Mention. Moezzi is a commentator for National Public Radio's All Things Considered and for Georgia Public Broadcasting's Georgia Gazette. At this Forum, Moezzi will relate general background information about Iran and about their culture. She will also relate her experiences growing up here as an Arab-American. The forum will be held at Miami Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 8690 Yankee Street, Centerville

CHALLENGES TO PEACE AND PROSPERITY: AFGHANISTAN -- Forum on **April 22, 7-8:30 PM**

Our guest speaker, Jaro Bilocerkowycz, is an author and professor of political science specializing in national security and global politics at The University of Dayton. He has written numerous articles for the World Book Encyclopedia and is author of the book *Soviet Ukrainian Dissent*. He covers Afghanistan in courses on international relations, global politics, nationalism and ethno politics, and US national security. The forum will be held at Miami Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 8690 Yankee Street, Centerville.

SUMMER TRIP TO KENYA OPENS TO ALL SONKA ADULTS

This summer's trip to the Rubate Teachers College and Health Centre in Kenya, the annual sojourn sponsored by SONKA's Global Partnership Team, is now open to all adults in the association. The trip, scheduled for June 21 through July 9, had previously been planned for persons in the medical and educational fields, but is now open to everyone of age. Trip Leader Lollie Kasulones reports that the next Rubate trip for adults will not come around again until 2013. There are a number of openings for this year's trip, and she hopes to have participants signed on by the first Travelers Group meeting on Mar 21.

The change in the theme for the trip was brought about by the news that the clinic would not be able to get the necessary equipment on site for planned eye and dental exams. "The good news is the trip has opened up to include many more adults with a much wider range of gifts and talents to share, not just medical," Lollie comments. "This is an opportunity to immerse yourself in the Kenya spirit, share your faith with families in Rubate, visit schools, meet the college students, interact with church organizations, participate in prayer and Bible study groups, and see the clinic in action." Those interested in joining the traveling team should call Lollie at 513/931-2205 (church) or 513/583-1809 (home) or Karen Specter at 513/232-0652.

Lent: 2010

LIKE A WATERED GARDEN: LIVING INTO THE PROMISE OF LENT

March 6-7 Third Sunday in Lent: *Put Manure on It!* Luke 13:1-9
***Communion served at all weekend services.*

March 13-14 Fourth Sunday in Lent: *Feasting from the Garden* Joshua 5:9-12; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32
Artist Testimony: Tess Little, *FILLED BY SPIRIT*
***One Great Hour of Sharing Mission Offering.*

March 20-21 Fifth Sunday in Lent: *Carrying the Seed* Psalm 126; Isaiah 43:16-21; John 12:1-8
Guest Pianist: **Zach Ruppel** *****Cross Creek Choir Sings.***

March 27-28 Sixth Sunday in Lent (Palm Sunday): *Out of the Garden and Into the Streets*
Ps. 118:1-2, 19-29; Lk 19:28-40

April 1 Maundy Thursday – 7:00 PM *Agony in the Garden*
****Childcare provided for Children who are pre-Kindergarten.***

April 2 Good Friday – 7:00 PM *A Garden of Horrors*
****Childcare provided for Children who are pre-Kindergarten.***

April 3-4 EASTER: *Now the Green Blade Rises*
****Cross Creek Choir Sings.***
**** *Communion Served at all weekend worship services.***

Liturgy Planning Team for Lent: Barbara Battin, Kathy Swenson, Tom Harry

THANK OFFERING FOR TESS LITTLE

As we move through the season of Lent we will be collecting a free-will love offering for Tess Little as a way of thanking her for sharing her art with us this season. She has not asked us for anything and she is thrilled to be able to share her art with us. However, we want to respond in gratitude and deep appreciation. She and her husband, Jim, spent about 5 hours installing this sculpture this past Monday, even while the snow was coming down, let alone all of the time, expense and expertise it took to create such a grand work of art. You can give by marking your giving envelop "Tess Little Offering" or place your offerings in the container located on the Usher Table. All gifts are tax deductible.