

SOUTH CHINA COMMUNITY CHURCH



Rev. James W. Ferrone, Pastor

November 2009

THANKSGIVING SCHEDULE

This year on Sunday, November 22, we will have a Thanksgiving/Advent Koinonia after church at ~11:45AM. Bring a covered dish to share if you choose; cold cut platters, rolls, dessert and beverages will be supplied. If you want to add something special to eat, it will be welcomed. There will be no regular Fellowship time that day.

What will we do? Since Koinonia means "fellowship, teaching, learning and food," that's what will happen:

- 1) We will give thanks to God.
- 2) We will learn advent traditions that can be used at home and church.
- 3) We will introduce the Jesse Tree, color and learn about the symbols.
- 4) We will learn about the Gifts that God has given us and perhaps discover some that we didn't know we had.



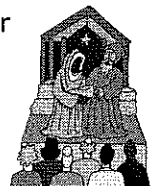
Several of these activities will be going on at the same time, so everyone will have the opportunity to learn something and you will only participate in what you choose. I hope you will come [you won't have to make dinner that day!].



NOVEMBER

- † Wed, Nov 25 - Thanksgiving Eve Service @7PM. Worship & Communion...a great way to prepare for Thanksgiving.
- † Fri, Nov 27 - Hanging of the Greens @6PM. Come help decorate the church for Christmas! There will be plenty to do; pizza will be provided. Let's have a big crowd this year.
- † Sun, Nov 29 - Advent I

- † Three New Years...three?! The most obvious is New Year 2010, when we all mark the change of the year and make resolutions that we end up breaking.
- † The second is Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. The Jews are our spiritual ancestors and this event is part of our history. Rosh Hashanah comes in September and marks the creation of Adam and Eve, i.e., the creation of Mankind. Because of our first parents' sin, this holiday begins a 10-day period of repentance that ends on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.
- † The third New Year is The First Sunday in Advent, this year on November 29. Yes, the Advent season is the beginning of the Christian year. Because the whole Christian year centers on the earthly life of our Lord, Advent (which means "coming"), is the time when we prepare for the coming of Christ 2000 years ago, in our hearts today, and for His promised future return to take us to be with Him forever. The color of Advent is purple, a royal color because we are preparing for the King of Kings. Advent lasts for four Sundays and rather than a time to make resolutions or repent, it is a time of great joy. The Promised Savior has come, "Thanks be to God!"
- † Sun, Dec 6 - One highlight of Advent this year will be the reception of four new members on December 6.
- † Sunday, Dec 20 - @6PM, we will have our annual Christmas play, this year written by Carl Schroeder, our Church President. Following the play will be a soup supper with Guest Chef, Janet Preston. This promises to be a great evening.



- † Thurs, Dec 24 - Christmas Eve Service @7PM. This is the most beautiful celebration of the year & Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without this wonderful candlelight service.
- † Sun, Jan 3 - Epiphany is the season following the Christmas season. Yes, there are 12 days in the Christmas season; the events didn't all happen in one day. Epiphany is January 6, but we will celebrate it on January 3. This holiday is called by some "Little Christmas" or "The Feast of the Magi." On Epiphany, we celebrate the arrival of the Wise Men to Bethlehem. They, like us, are Gentiles. Thus, Epiphany is the day when we are reminded that Jesus didn't come to only be the Jewish Messiah, He came to redeem us all.

- † Sun, Jan 10 - We will have another luncheon after church, this one to undecorate the church and have a belated Epiphany Night Party. Expect some special doings!



Hope to see everyone at all of our celebrations! *In Christ's service, Pastor Jim*

Church Council News

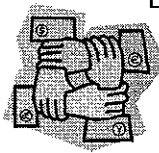
Since this is the last newsletter of 2009, we on the Church Council take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving, a Very Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year! As 2009 approaches its end, things get very busy. There is the budget to prepare; programs, events and meetings to plan; decorating to be done; plans to help those in need; the usual maintenance projects; and a not-so-heavenly host of unforeseens ready to pop up at any minute. On top of all of this, there are school programs, concerts, Christmas cards and Christmas shopping, special meals to prepare, as well as parties, travel and visits. It's very hard to be spread so thin and still hang on to the spirit of the season.

It may be presumptuous to offer a solution to the "Holiday Frenzies," but for me the only

thing that works is to keep my focus on the **Reason for the Season.** Try prioritizing with Jesus at the top of the list. Be as involved with the activities of His church as much as possible and seek to serve God by serving others. When scheduling conflicts arise, choose whatever brings you closest to Christ. Make Thanksgiving about thanks-giving and not about food; make Christmas about gifts of love and not gifts of obligation; and make the New Year about a new year of being closer to God than ever before.



The Church Council recently held its second retreat and focused on gifts and talents. Pastor Jim provided a worksheet that helped us to discover what our gifts and talents might be and how we might use them to benefit the work of the church. Some of us found validation of gifts or talents that we believed we had, but also found there were some areas in which we might be gifted but had never considered. If you'd like to try the worksheet, ask your Flock Leader or Pastor Jim for a copy. Gifts unused may appear to be gifts unappreciated.



Every year, two members of the Church Council reach the end of their terms. Often a member will consent to serving a 2nd term, particularly when no one is willing to step forward and fill the vacancy. Many people decline, stating that they aren't qualified or not well versed in Scripture. Be assured that if a member of the Council approaches you about serving, s/he has already considered your qualifications. The most important qualifications are being a member of the church and wanting to serve God. Are you qualified?

The Church Council will be working hard to meet our year-end responsibilities to the congregation and to keep its focus on Christ's continuing ministry through His church. As always, we value your input, appreciate your help, and need your prayers. - *May God Bless You All, Carl Schroeder - President*

PLANNING AND OUTREACH:

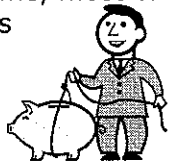


Our planning and outreach efforts this fall focused on two singing events. The "Forever Plaid" Gentlemen's Quartet was well received and definitely inspiring. It was only the second church performance by this local group and they seemed to resonate with freshness and raised our spirits. A small group then heard and enjoyed "Heartsong," a pair of ladies from Connecticut who made us put on our cowboy boots to pray. Musical events like these continue to be our outreach focus with two or three scheduled per year. If you have special music, talented friends or connections with Christian music performers, please let someone on the Church Council know.

Our Committee is also looking for ways to make new members feel welcome. If you have had a good church experience when visiting another church, please let us know what impressed you. It is an honor and privilege to work with our church committee and be part of the joyful South China Community Church Community. - *Bernie Welch, Chair*

FINANCE COMMITTEE:

The church remains fiscally sound, thanks to your commitment to stewardship. Currently (as of 10/31/09), expenses have surpassed income by \$2124.43. However, the balance carried forward from last year still leaves us comfortably in the black. A number of unbudgeted capital improvements were made this year, including new windows for the sanctuary, a rug cleaning machine, a dolly for moving chairs, a new larger refrigerator, and a coffee machine. Each of these items was thoroughly researched and discussed in terms of need and cost/benefit. Although this was a lot to tackle in one fiscal year, the Council felt that the time was right. Over time, most of these items will actually save us money. If the cost of these unbudgeted items is removed from the budget calculations, income has thus far surpassed budgeted expenses.



Our investments remain safe and stable, although as each certificate of deposit matures, new and considerably lower interest rates are

currently coming into play. The most recent maturity resulted in a drop from 4+% down to .5%. It was rolled into a much shorter term (7 months) for two reasons: first, interest rates appear to be at a low point and will hopefully rise; and second, by timing the maturity of two certificates, we will be able to combine them and take advantage of the higher rates that are offered for larger deposits.

We are in the process of preparing next year's budget, which is always a balancing act that demands skill, hindsight, foresight, stewardship, practicality and above all - Faith. Your prompt response to the Stewardship/Pledge letter that you will be receiving goes a long way toward making the budget process easier. So please consider prayerfully your commitment to the church when you receive your letter.

In doing the work of the church, we try very hard to spend wisely, fairly and in accord with the work that God has set before us. The more resources over which we are given stewardship, the more of God's work the church can accomplish. *God Bless, Carl Schroeder - Chair*

BENEVOLENCE & MISSION COMMITTEE:



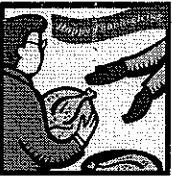
I happen to have a great job that takes me out on the road early in the morning. As a reward, I get to see the most beautiful sunrises. Bold colors of orange, yellow, pink and purple cover the sky and dance off any stray clouds that happen to be passing by. Other mornings, I get to experience our beautiful lake at its finest, smooth as glass and not a ripple to be seen. When I am treated to such fabulous eye candy, I slow the bus down and say a prayer of Gratitude. Gratitude for being able to get up in the morning, take a shower with warm water, in a warm home, drink a cup of fresh coffee, eat a little breakfast and the ability to go out and do my job. I am Grateful and I Thank God for every moment he gives me in this wonderful life I am privileged to take part in.

Working with Missions and Benevolence, God has also opened my eyes to the terrible

conditions that an enormous part of the world lives in. Stripped of their rights and values, starvation, disease, death and everything in between greets them as they awake every morning. It's hard to see the beauty when life is so bleak! I pray that God watches over these folks!

M & B is trying to do its part by helping out globally and locally. We have had two mission specified turkey pie suppers. The proceeds from these suppers have gone directly to *Voice of the Martyrs* (to provide Bibles to those who can't get them), *Salvation Army* (to help those who were caught in the recent tsunami), *Compassion* (to help high risk babies) and to our *in-church PDF* to help our own struggling families. The need is great and the funds are limited, but it's so important to do what we can.

We continue our community family outreach program and are now assisting four families. Three of these families consist of a single mother with one child and the fourth includes parents and three children. Many Thanks to all who are filling the Thanksgiving Baskets with groceries or Hannaford gift cards. They are quickly filling up and will be delivered to the families very soon.



The Secret Pal Program continues and is a lot of fun and very rewarding! The best part is watching the recipients try to figure out who their Secret Pals are. Trust me; they can be pretty sneaky about trying to find out. LOL!!

My thanks go out to all who participate in all these programs through your generous gifts of time and/or money. May God Bless you continually for all you do, and may you see the beauty of God's Glory everywhere you look. Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas! - *In God's Service, Linda Rodrigue, Missions and Benevolence Chair*

P.S. You may need to remind me to be grateful when the temps dip below zero, the wind is whipping and I'm trying to clean off my bus... ☺

BUILDING & GROUNDS COMMITTEE: *No report at this time*

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS: *No report at this time*

Women's Group B

We girls are enjoying lively discussions every other Sunday night, all about our latest title, The Excellent Wife - A Biblical Perspective, by Martha Peace. We're learning to put God first through our roles as Christian wives. This topic should take us well into the New Year.



We've already chosen our next book: Leslie Parrott's You Matter More Than You Think: What a Woman Needs to Know About the Difference She Makes.

We hope more of you will join our group! It's a wonderful time of learning and fellowship. Meetings are at Emily's house and start @6PM, and generally last about an hour. Feel free to talk with me if you might be interested; call 445-3571 or e-mail: buffywg@yahoo.com Thanks! - *Emily S.*



A little boy was in a relative's wedding. As he was coming down the aisle, he would take two steps, stop and turn to the crowd. While facing the crowd, he would put his hands up like a claw and roar. So it went, step, step, ROAR, step, step, ROAR, all the way down the aisle. As you can imagine, the crowd was near tears from laughing so hard. By the time he reached the pulpit, when asked what he was doing, the child sniffed and said, "I was being the Ring Bear."



A basketball in my hands is worth about \$19.
A basketball in Michael Jordan's hands is worth about \$33 million. It depends on whose hands it's in.

A baseball in my hands is worth about \$6.
A baseball in Roger Clemens' hands is worth \$475 million. It depends on whose hands it's in.

A tennis racket is useless in my hands.
A tennis racket in Andre Agassi's hands is worth millions. It depends on whose hands it's in.

A rod in my hands will keep away an angry dog.
A rod in Moses' hands will part the mighty sea. It depends on whose hands it's in.

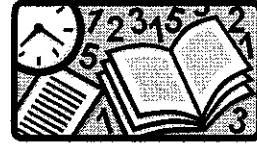
A slingshot in my hands is a kid's toy.
A slingshot in David's hand is a mighty weapon. It depends on whose hands it's in.

Two fish and 5 loaves of bread in my hands is a couple of fish sandwiches.
Two fish and 5 loaves of bread in Jesus' hands will feed thousands. It depends on whose hands it's in.

Nails in my hands might produce a birdhouse.
Nails in Jesus Christ's hands will produce salvation for the entire world. It depends on whose hands it's in.

As you see now, it depends on whose hands it's in. So put your concerns, your worries, your fears, your hopes, your dreams, your families and your relationships in God's hands because... it depends on whose hands it's in.

This message is now in YOUR hands. What will YOU do with it? It depends on whose Hands it's in!



Calendar of Events

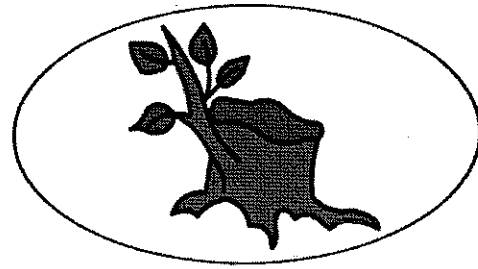
- † COMMUNION SERVICES
DEC 6 – JAN 3 – FEB 7
- † MEN'S BREAKFAST - MEMORIAL HALL, 8AM
2ND SATURDAYS: DEC 12 – JAN 9 – FEB 13
- † WOMEN'S STUDY GROUP A – 11AM
2ND & 4TH WEDNESDAYS: DEC 9 & 23 – JAN 13 & 27 – FEB 10 & 24
- WOMEN'S STUDY GROUP B – 6PM @ EMILY'S
EVERY OTHER SUNDAY: NOV 29 – DEC 13 & 27 – JAN 10 & 24 – FEB 7 & 21
- † CHURCH COUNCIL MEETINGS, 6:30PM
2ND WEDNESDAYS: DEC 9 – JAN 13 – FEB 10
- † KOINONIA (FAMILY NIGHT), 6:30PM
3RD WED: NOV 22* - DEC 16 – JAN 20 – FEB 17
*NOTE CHANGE TO SUNDAY FOR NOV
- † DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER: FEB 14

While nearly everyone has a Christmas tree, there has been reluctance in some circles to incorporate them into the church sanctuary, arising from suspicions about the pagan origin of the symbol. However, since the Christmas tree has become such a part of Christmas celebration around the world, it seems more important to give it some clearly Christian meaning. Some churches do this with a service of the Hanging of the Green. Some use a Christmas tree with ornaments representing symbols of the Christian Faith. Others use a tree, either at home or in the sanctuary, as a Jesse Tree. This is a tree (or large banner with a symbolic tree) that is decorated each week, usually by the children, with ornaments or objects that represent Old Testament events from Creation to the Birth of Jesus. The ornaments are traditionally handmade, and are added one each day of Advent, or a group on each Sunday, with explanations of the symbols and a brief verse of Scripture from the story represented. Some churches choose to decorate the tree with small items of warm clothing as a way to minister to the needy in the community.

From: <http://www.cresourcei.org/jesse.html>

*"A shoot shall come out from the stump
of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of
his roots."*

- Isaiah 11:1



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