

Saints and sinners: Church is in the mail as newsletter

Sometimes people come to church. Sometimes the church goes to them — in the mail. Most churches send out a weekly or monthly newsletter to their members and friends. It is often eagerly awaited, particularly by the elderly and shut-ins who are unable to get to church and don't get much mail.

Most of us like to see our names in the paper, and the church newsletter offers us our best chance for a fleeting moment of fame.

You might not get a birthday card, but your church will remember you in the newsletter with happy birthday wishes. If you are sick or in the hospital, your church friends will know about it so they can call you or pray for you.

In the May issue of the Meetinghouse News of the First Congregational Church of Madison,

Conn., I counted the names of 127 members who made the news in one way or another that month.

Among other things, readers learned from the newsletter how to create a May Day bouquet (small stems of pink dogwood blossoms, lilacs and white peony tulips). They were encouraged to hang one basket over their front door and one on their neighbor's door — a lovely idea.

On page 4 of the 25-page newsletter, we were all invited to a ham-and-strawberry dinner at the neighboring North Branford Congregational Church. The cost of \$9 seemed a little steep for a church dinner (we used to call them church suppers), but, as my mother used to say, "Everything is so high these days." (She said that even when bread was 1 cent per loaf.)



george plagenz

• saints & sinners

Cheryl Martone, editor of the Meetinghouse News, writes a weekly column titled "From the Heart of the Editor." It is a thoughtful, helpful, well-crafted bit of religious inspiration. In the current issue, she takes us through a mini-session of "touch therapy."

"It seems as though every magazine we pick up lately has an article on 'the healing power of touch,'" she writes.

"You can start by taking the hand of someone who needs healing. Touch exchanges energy. Through our touching someone else, we have begun the healing process. We can hold their hand, stroke their arm or give them a full embrace.

"Much research has gone into the study of premature babies and how the infants with touch thrive over the infants without." She uses her own preemie as an example.

The Rev. Robert St. Clair publishes another kind of newsletter. A retired pastor who lives at the Methodist Camp Grounds in Lancaster, Ohio, St. Clair puts out a monthly, eight-page "Fireside Chat," which is distributed free to about 100 people.

It comes complete with typos, dangling

modifiers, Bible quizzes and puzzles and St. Clair's own brand of whimsy: "Be careful of your tongue. It's in a wet place and it's easy to slip."

Sometimes the spell-checker on St. Clair's computer can't spell, but it's usually possible to make out the words.

Many readers' favorite part of the "Fireside Chat" is the country parson's down-home letter.

"I walk daily to the mall, where I often talk with folks who need prayer and direction in their lives. Last week I took one young man to get a haircut and bought another a pair of tennis shoes. I needed a pair for myself, and the discount store where I go had a sale — buy one pair and get another for \$1."

Appointment of new Venezuelan cardinal sends message to government

By Nicholas G. Jonson

Associated Press Writer

CARACAS, Venezuela — The Roman Catholic Church and President Hugo Chavez each fight for Venezuela's poor. But they have clashed in the process, and don't expect the church to back down from its confrontations with the leftist leader.

Many here think Pope John Paul II's decision to give the Caracas archbishop the added honor of cardinal is a sign the church won't bow to the government.

"The attitude of the church is to follow the process of change and support those that appear good for the people," Cardinal Ignacio Antonio Velasco Garcia, 72, said in a recent interview.

The church will also criticize leaders when their policies don't advance civil liberties and human rights, and do not "relieve the poverty among the majority of the population," the cardinal said. Since his 1998 election, Chavez has

attacked a corrupt political elite for squandering billions of dollars in oil revenues while half of Venezuela's 23 million people live in poverty.

He has created a single-chamber Congress and new Supreme Court, both dominated by his allies, and enacted a new Constitution that upset church leaders who fear it could ultimately permit abortion in this heavily Roman Catholic nation.

Chavez and his allies have also taken on the clergy directly. The president once called church leaders "devils under their cassocks."

A "Chavista" governor, Florencio Porras of Merida state, filed corruption charges against a leading Chavez critic, Monsignor Baltazar Porras, in October. The governor charged Porras with embezzling donations meant for a local hospital. The church strongly denied the claims.

Another thorny issue is church

schools, some of which are government-funded. Government attempts to influence curricula, and veiled threats to revoke funding, have provoked intense opposition from both church and private schools.

"The problem of Venezuela is a problem of moral values, not one of poverty," said Velasco Garcia, who was in Rome this week for a meeting of cardinals. "As long as education, which is one of the strongest means to convey moral values to children and young people, is not presented in this way, it won't be able to correct the situation in this country."

Just last week, the Venezuelan Episcopal Conference joined in the debate by releasing a document that harshly criticized the Chavez government for failing to reduce poverty. Government officials responded with an invitation to discuss the document.

The bespectacled Velasco Garcia

says conflict with the president shouldn't be the norm — and he hopes, ultimately, for fruitful collaboration with Chavez.

There have been some signs of rapprochement since the pope's Jan. 21 announcement that Velasco Garcia, Caracas' archbishop for five years, would become a cardinal. Chavez cited the church as a key element of Venezuela's war on poverty.

Velasco Garcia said he believes Chavez has done a great deal to help the poor, such as creating the Social Fund, a foundation to help the disadvantaged, as well as other social welfare programs.

"But the most important thing for the state to do is to create a stable economy that produces work for the Venezuelan population — which has not been the case up until now," he said.

A smile comes to Velasco Garcia's tanned face when he is asked if his ap-

pointment was a signal to Chavez from the Vatican.

"I see it this way," he said. "My appointment to cardinal is a way to support the church. This is the way the people see it. And the pope feels that by naming cardinals, he has strengthened the church against the public authorities, and against any group, not just political groups."

"Although I am a person who likes

a good dialogue, I try to be like a bridge, to exchange ideas, unless there is clearly something negative that needs to be said. And the church will always say it."

The cardinal doesn't rule out trying to patch up his faith's differences with the president.

"President Chavez finally, after I was appointed to cardinal, offered to talk. Let's talk!"

Court affirms prayer decision

ATLANTA (AP) — A federal appeals court has again ruled public school students in a Florida county may choose a class member to give a prayer or personal message at graduations.

The 11th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled last year the school's policy — which gives Duval County school officials no control over who is chosen to speak or what the speaker says —

does not violate the U.S. Supreme Court's ban on graduation prayers.

Several Jacksonville students and parents had sued, contending the policy was an unconstitutional establishment of religion by government.

The Supreme Court last year barred student-led prayers at public high school football games in Santa Fe, Texas.



First United Methodist Church

Bible Baptist Church
Pastor: Don Crutcher
 Fifth & Broadway
 899-7368
Sunday: Sunday School: 9 am
 Worship Service: 10 am
 Evening Service: 6:30 pm
Wednesday: Evening Bible Study: 7 pm

Calvary Gospel Church
Pastor: Rev. Steve Rains
 Fourth & College • 899-3605
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am
 Morning Worship: 10:30 am
 Evening Worship: 6:30 pm
Wednesday: Family Night: 7 pm
 Adult Bible Study and Youth Group
Saturday: Prayer Meeting: 5-7 pm
If you would like to receive a free newsletter, please call the church office.

Church of Christ
 401 Caldwell
 899-6185
Sunday: Bible Study: 9:45 am
 Worship Service: 10:45 am
 Evening Service: 6 pm
Wednesday: Bible Study: 7 pm

Church of the Nazarene
Pastor: Matthew Delp
 Third & Caldwell
 899-2080 or 899-3797
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:45 am
 Worship Service: 10:50 am
 Evening Service: 6 pm
Wednesday: Evening Service: 7 pm

First Baptist Church
Pastor:
 Fifth & Center • 899-3450
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am
 Morning Worship: 10:30 am
 Evening Worship: 6 pm
Tuesday: Mens' Prayer Group: 5:30 am
Thursday: Ladies' Bible Study: 10 am

Seventh Day Adventist Church
 1160 Cattletrail
Pastor: Bobby Potter • 332-3956
Saturday: Sabbath School: 9:30 am
 Worship Service: 11 am

First Christian Church
 (Disciples of Christ)
Pastor: Loren Strait
 Eighth & Arcade • 899-5233
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am
 Worship Service: 10:30 am
Activities: Junior High & High School Youth Groups, Adult Bible Study, Choir, Men's and Women's Groups, Devotions Study, Monthly Fellowship
Special Notice: Handicap Accessible, Hearing Assistance Equipment and Infant and Toddler Nurseries Available

First United Methodist Church
 1116 Sherman
 899-3631
Pastor: Rev. Carol Moore-Ramey
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am
 Worship Service: 10:30 am

Sonrise Christian Church
 Ninth & Caldwell • 899-5398
Minister: Tony Kafka
Youth Minister: Doug Bean
Sunday: Worship Service: 9:30 am
 Sunday School: 10:45 am
Wednesday:
 Junior/Senior High Meeting: 7 pm
 Adult & Children's Classes: 7 pm

Emmanuel Lutheran Church
 13th & Sherman • 899-6161
Pastor: Scott Grimshaw
Sunday: Sunday School: 8:45 am
 Worship Service: 10 am
Wednesday: Confirmation: 6 pm

Kanorado
United Methodist Church
Pastor: Leonard Cox
 399-2468
Sunday: Sunday School: 9 am
 Worship Service: 10:15 am

Goodland Bible Church
 109 Willow Road • 899-6400
Pastor:
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:45 am
 Morning Worship: 11 am
 Evening Worship: 6 pm
Wednesday: Call for location

Grace Fellowship Church
 104 E. Hwy 24 • 899-6423
Pastor: Bob Snyder • Residence: 899-0134
Sunday: Sunday School: 10 am
 Worship Service: 11 am

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
 13th & Center
 899-2115 or Rectory 899-2114
Priest: Father Charles Schneider
Deacon: Gretchen Talitha
Saturday: Church School: 4 pm
 Holy Communion: 5 pm
Wednesday: Bible Study: 7 pm
 Sr. Warden for emergencies during the week 899-2067

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
 1200 15th Street • Burlington, CO • (970) 664-2470
Sacrament Meeting: 9:30 am
Sunday School: 10:45 am
Priesthood/Relief Society: 11:30 am

Word of Life Foursquare Church
 223 E. 10th
 899-5250
Pastor: John Coumerilh
Sunday: Worship Celebration & Kids' Church: 10:30 am

United Methodist Church
Brewster:
Pastor:
 Worship Service: 10:45 am CST
 Sunday School: 9:45 am CST
Winona:
Minister: Rev. Bob Winters
 Worship Service: 9 am CST
 Sunday School: 10:15 am CST

Iglesia Del Dios Vivo
 La Luz Del Mundo
 Spanish Speaking Church
Minister: Esteban Ortiz B.
 1601 Texas • 899-5275
Daily Prayer: Sunday thru Saturday: 5 am & 6 pm
Sunday: Sunday School: 10 am

Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Pastor: Father Daryl Olmstead
 307 W. 13th • 899-7205
Sacrament of Reconciliation:
 4:30-5 pm Saturday or by appointment
Mass Schedule:
 Saturday: 6 pm
Sunday: 8 am and 10:30 am
Spanish Mass:
 1st & 3rd Sunday: 2 pm

Pleasant Home Church
 Serving the rural community for over 100 years
 Rt. 1, Box 180 • 694-2807 • 3190 Road 70
Pastor: Jim Cress
 899-5784
Sunday: Worship Service: 9 am
 Sunday School: 10 am
 Evening Service: 6 pm

The following sponsors urge YOU to attend your chosen House of Worship this Sabbath:

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