

Lent and Easter Worship & Program Guide

2010



First Congregational Church, UCC
“The Church on the Green”

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Lent, and the sacred morning to which it leads, are a mutual journey into Christ's love.

Through Lent, we discern that Jesus loved us more than life itself. Through Easter, we discover new life and that death is powerless. Together, this season invites and encourages us to delve into the mystery of Jesus' ministry, sacrifice, and resurrection... both as individuals and as members of Christ's risen body.

Our prayer is that the worship services, guests, events, and opportunities noted in this Lenten/Easter guide will provide a path both to and through the Cross, a path both to and through the tomb, that will enrich us as disciples on the Way.

A central aspect of this year's program will be the Sacred Conversations that we have with one another. We invite every church member and guest to engage in at least one— *but, we hope, three!* — one-on-one conversations. (Just listen and speak with an open heart, and follow the prompts outlined later in this booklet.)

These Sacred Conversations will be simple and straightforward. Yet, the results will prove profound. The process and fruits of these Sacred Conversations will frame, inform, and weave through both our Lenten journey and, eventually, our Easter celebrations.

As we listen and pray, share and sing, retreat and gather, descend and *rise* — may this season enfold us in the mystery that exceeds all knowing. And may it enlighten us with the grace that was both Creation's spark... and its *salvation*.

Yours in Christ, and God's Peace,

The Rev. Jeffrey Braun
Senior Minister

The Rev. Alison McCaffrey
Associate Minister

Mr. Joseph D'Eugenio
Music Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTIONS:

Theme and Symbols

Schedule of Services & Events

Groups & Opportunities

A Sacred Conversation

THEME & SYMBOLS

The overarching **theme** for Lent, and, by extension, for Easter, is:

“A Sacred Conversation: Rediscovering the Meaning of Lent”

At the heart of these conversations will be the sacred act of listening. Listening to Christ's still-whispering voice. Listening to the voices of those around us. And listening to the stirrings of our own hearts.

Listening, in the Spirit of Jesus, bears deep spiritual fruits. It strengthens our faith. Enhances our sense of connection to one another, and to Christ. Grounds our prayers. Frames deep questions. And frees us to share our hopes and fears... both with God, and, if we are willing to take the chance, with one another.

In short, listening *transforms* us.

And in a word, transformation is what we seek during Lent. Transformation in the form of new perspectives, new chances, new faith... *new life*... that will rise on Easter morning.

A powerful and age-old metaphor of the transformation that comes from deep reflection and listening... is the butterfly.

And so the butterfly — and the cocoon from which it eventually rises — will serve as central **symbols** for us during Lent and then Easter.

The cocoon suggests both Christ's time in the tomb (from Good Friday to Easter morning), and our time of preparation during the 40 days of Lent.

The butterfly suggests both how Christ rose from death to new life, and how, through Him, we do the same.

The symbols of the cocoon will be woven throughout Lent, and the butterfly into Easter, as spiritual prompts for the journey ahead and the glorious morning to which it gives rise.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES & EVENTS

FEBRUARY:

Outreach Focus: Supporting the Hungry and Homeless

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

Tuesday, February 16

6:00 - 7:15 P.M. in Parish Hall

Fun for every age. New to us, but long observed around the world — Shrove Tuesday (also known as Mardi Gras) celebrates the day before Lent with a pancake supper. Cooking and serving this meal are members of our upcoming adult mission trip to Mississippi's Gulf Coast.

Shrove is the past tense of the verb *to shrive* (roughly: to confess), which stems from the medieval practice of priests hearing confessions before Lent. Pancakes became a tradition as they used up the milk, eggs, sugar, and fat generally not eaten in the six weeks before Easter. Other parts of the world celebrate Carnival or Mardi Gras, but we will combine these various traditions.

We conclude with a brief candlelight service in the sanctuary, which includes a special role for children (that will flow out of a dinner-time activity). A freewill offering will be taken, 100% of which will support our March mission trip.

Ash Wednesday Service

Wednesday, February 17

7:30 P.M. in Parish Hall

Through music and movement, ritual and silence, this service draws us into Lent's reflective mystery. We begin in Parish Hall for a time of confession, and to reflect upon the hopes and fears for which we seek Jesus' help during Lent. We will commit those hopes and fears to paper, place them in a symbolic cocoon (representing the transformative power of both Lent, in general, and Christ's time in the tomb, in particular), and then carry them with us as we process, single-file, to the parlor to receive ashes and an anointing with oil (for those who wish them). We conclude in the sanctuary, where we will present our sacred offerings to Christ, share in his Holy Supper, and light a Lenten watch candle.

Both physically and symbolically, the hopes and fears that we offer to Christ will remain "cocooned" in the sanctuary for all of Lent so they can both receive, and inspire, the transformative power of our prayers.

First Sunday in Lent

February 21

Services at 9:00 and 11:00 A.M.

This service will pick up and broaden both the symbol of the cocoon and the ritual of offering our hopes and fears to God during Lent, as introduced during the Ash Wednesday service. Consistent with various Lenten themes (e.g., our baptism and rebirth in Christ's love), this service includes a symbolic renewal of baptism.

Bereavement Group Series, Session 1 of 6

February 25

7:00 – 9:00 P.M.

Nothing can adequately prepare us for a loved one's passing. Whether your loss is recent or not, the listening ears and caring hearts of our Bereavement Group can help.

Drawing on their deep gifts for listening and their training as Stephen Ministers, Jan Garthwait and Jan Cowles will lead the five small-group sessions on February 25 and March 4, 11, 18, and 25. (Concluding the final small-group session on March 25 frees participants to attend Holy Week services.) Each small-group session will be at First Congregational from 7-9 P.M. in Room 10. Come to one, or come to them all: whatever works for you. Everything is shared in confidence.

The sixth and final meeting of the group will be a special remembrance and healing service, on April 8 at 7:30 P.M., which will invite Christ's resurrecting and "Easter-ly" to shine in our darkness.

To register, please call the church (203-272-5323), Jan Garthwait (203-272-5915), or Jan Cowles (203-272-8441).

"Gospel According to Mark" Immersion Day

Saturday, February 27

9:30 A.M. – 5:30 P.M.

Immerse yourself in the Gospel According to Mark, the oldest and shortest of the four gospel accounts. Mark focuses on what it means to follow Jesus, and what it means for Jesus to be Messiah. The Rev. Peggy Allen will lead this study, which is limited to 10 participants. Sign-up will continue through February 22 in the church lobby.

Second Sunday in Lent

February 28

Services at 9:00 and 11:00 A.M.

MARCH:

Outreach Focus: Mission Trip to Mississippi, Supporting the Hungry and Homeless

Bereavement Group Series, Session 2 of 6

Thursday, March 4
7:00 – 9:00 P.M.

Come and Drum — African Dinner & Drumming Night to Support Malawi

Thursday, March 4
6:15 P.M. for Dinner, 7:15 P.M. for Program

Enjoy an African meal, hear Malawi Mission news, and then circle-up to learn African drumming from master teacher Bob Bloom. Come and drum and sing and dance no matter your age, no matter your ability.

Third Sunday in Lent (Communion Sunday)

March 7
Services at 9:00 and 11:00 A.M.

Bereavement Group Series, Session 3 of 6

Thursday, March 11
7:00 – 9:00 P.M.

Fourth Sunday in Lent (Special Worship Team)

March 14
Services at 9:00 and 11:00 A.M.

Hands-on mission work transforms not only those who perform it — but those who hear their witness. Join us for worship led by members of our church's second annual adult mission team, fresh from rebuilding along Mississippi's Katrina-ravaged coast.

Bereavement Group Series, Session 4 of 6

Thursday, March 18
7:00 – 9:00 P.M.

Fifth Sunday in Lent (Guest Soloist)

March 21
Services at 9:00 and 11:00 A.M.

Lent's power *resounds* as guest soloist Tiffany Jackson joins the Senior Choir to sing American composer Paul Halley's gospel anthem, "The Rain is Over and Gone." Born in Philadelphia but raised in New Haven, Ms. Jackson attended the Cooperative High School and Educational Center for the Arts. She earned a Bachelor of Music degree from the

Lent and Easter Worship & Program Guide, 2010

University of Michigan, as well as a Master of Music and Artists degree from Yale University School of Music. Ms. Jackson's gifted voice is in demand throughout New England, and she teaches at New Haven's Neighborhood Music School. Joining Ms. Jackson and the Senior Choir will be percussionist Craig Wilson, pianist Sara Kohane, and members of The Greater Middletown Chorale.

Bereavement Group Series, Session 5 of 6

Thursday, March 25
7:00 – 9:00 P.M.

Sixth Sunday in Lent (Palm/Passion Sunday)

March 28
Services at 9:00 and 11:00 A.M.

Scripture's power increases when we internalize it; when its words are not merely age-old... but our *own*. Join us Palm Sunday, as our Scripture by Heart team presents Luke's version of Christ's Passion. The service will include a children's processional and (at worship's end) the distribution of palms. On this dramatic Sunday, Lent intensifies as Jesus approaches Jerusalem.

APRIL:

Outreach Focus: Easter Baskets, Supporting the Hungry and Homeless

Maundy Thursday Service

April 1
7:30 P.M. in Sanctuary

The ancient rite of foot-washing, and scripture offered by the Scripture by Heart worship team.

The service will also incorporate the collection of new, white bath-towels for the Columbus House Shelter.

Good Friday Services (Two Services)

April 2

Noon in the Chapel

A brief and intimate service that marks and reflects upon Jesus' death on the Cross.

7:30 P.M. in the Sanctuary

As the shadow of the Cross grows into night, we gather under Good Friday's heavy veil to remember Jesus' betrayal and death. Contributing to this atmospheric service will be:

dramatic readings, songs, and the slow extinguishing of each candle — last of all, the watch candle, which has burned through all of Lent. At the conclusion of the service, with the sanctuary black, we will leave in silence... then symbolically seal the sanctuary — like Christ's tomb — until Easter morning.

Good Friday to Easter Morning Silent Vigil

Friday, April 2 – Sunday, April 4

9:00 P.M.

A Holy Week tradition, the Silent Vigil offers participants the chance to keep watch in quiet contemplation for one-hour shifts, one person at a time. The Vigil begins at 9:00 P.M. Good Friday and ends at Easter's first light. To dramatize how the sanctuary is now sealed, like Christ's tomb, this year's Silent Vigil will take place in the chapel.

A detailed instruction sheet will be mailed to each participant. Sign-up begins Ash Wednesday on the lobby table.

Holy Saturday LightFest

April 3

7:00 – 11:00 P.M. in Parsonage Backyard

In the ancient tradition of the Easter vigil, we gather around a campfire to share stories of faith from both scripture and personal experience. Dress warmly. Bring a chair (and guitar).

Easter Sunday (Three Services)

April 4

8:00 A.M. in Chapel

No nursery care. No children's program.

9:30 A.M. in Sanctuary (Communion)

Nursery Care. Program for Preschool through Grade 2 only.

11:30 A.M. in Sanctuary (Communion)

Nursery Care. Program for Preschool through Grade 2 only.

Service of Remembrance and Healing (Bereavement Group Series)

Thursday, April 8

7:30 P.M. in Sanctuary

This service ministers to anyone struggling with the loss of a loved one. This service is open to the public. It will also serve as the final meeting of the Spring 2010 Bereavement Group.

GROUPS & OPPORTUNITIES

“7 @ 7” Fellowship Dinners

Getting to know fellow church members and friends in our large congregation can be hard, even daunting. Dinner is a wonderful way to do so.

If you would like to share a relaxed dinner in a fellow church member’s home (who will serve as the host) with a group of about seven to 10 other participants — or if you would like to be the host — then simply find the geographic Church Life Community (CLC) you live in by checking the map in the parlor, then add your name to the sheet on the lobby table.

Participants in the “7 @ 7” dinners have raved about how connective and fun they are.

Bereavement Group Series – Spring 2010

Drawing on their deep gifts for listening and their training as Stephen Ministers, Jan Garthwait and Jan Cowles will lead five small-group bereavement sessions on February 25 and March 4, 11, 18, and 25. Each small-group session will be at First Congregational from 7-9 P.M. in Room 10.

The sixth and final meeting of the group will be a special remembrance and healing service, on April 8 at 7:30 P.M., which will invite Christ’s resurrecting light to shine in our darkness. To register, please call the church (203-272-5323), Jan Garthwait (203-272-5915), or Jan Cowles (203-272-8441).

The Banner and Liturgical Arts Team

This group will work on new Lenten and Easter banners, as well as stage the sanctuary for Easter. If you are interested in staging, designing and decorating — your ideas and help are welcome. Please see Alison for more information. A sign-up sheet is on the lobby table.

Food for All

Simplify your eating from February 21-28 for the Outreach Board’s “Food for All” project. The idea is twofold. First, to donate the money we would otherwise have spent on our regular food choices. Second, to understand (in a symbolic way) how the hungry feel and to appreciate Jesus’ sacrifice for us. See the pamphlet for more details. Proceeds will fund the Midnight Run, with any surplus to support local food pantries.

Midnight Run

On the last Monday of the month, our church will provide food and clothing to New Haven’s neediest. To help, you can: sign up to donate the various meal supplies via the Outreach bulletin board in the parlor; volunteer to help deliver the meals; donate warm outerwear, new socks and underwear, or trial-sized toiletries.

A SACRED CONVERSATION

THE IDEA:

We remember and celebrate Jesus for countless acts of love. Inherent in each was something so essential, so subtle, so *silent*, that we can overlook it. It's Jesus' ability to *listen*. First, to God. And then, to us — to all of us, and to each of us.

The Gospel According to John describes Jesus as the Word. But he was a particular *kind* of word. Jesus was not a word spoken in a vacuum. He was *the* Word... spoken... *in response*. *In response* to our deep needs. *In response* to our most silent prayers. *In response* to our hopes and fears.

Empowering every movement of Jesus' ministry was *listening*. Listening... as an act of *love*.

And so this will be a central act of Lent for us.

To deepen our understanding and gratitude for the miracle of God's love in Christ, we are going to listen. First, to God. And then, to one another.

Borrowing loosely from the one-on-one conversational model used by the national oral history project, StoryCorps® (www.storycorps.org), whose founder, David Isay, also believes that "listening is an act of love" — we invite each member and friend of our congregation to engage in three sacred conversations during Lent. (You may be unable to complete three. But we encourage everyone to try.)

These conversations will hone our sacred listening skills, attune us to God's movement in our lives, and further reveal our interconnectedness in the One who accompanies and heals and transforms us... by *listening*.

David Isay's oral history project is called StoryCorps®. Our project might be called SpiritCorps or FaithCorps.

Whatever the name, we'll listen to one another, one on one, with Christ and the Spirit to guide us.

THE PROCESS¹:

1. **Pick a Partner** (the person you'll interview... and who *may* interview you, too) Start the process by figuring out whom you want to interview; that is, whom you will listen to. A relative? An old friend? A neighbor? A fellow congregant? A new acquaintance?

The person you approach might be hesitant. She or he might say, "I don't have much to talk about," or, "You already know everything about my life." Remind your friend, your sibling — whoever it is — how important you think their story is and how valuable it will be in understanding Christ's love. Let the person know you would be *honored* to listen to their story.

2. **Create a Question List**

No matter how well you know your conversational partner, a little preparation will improve the quality of your interview enormously. What would you like to learn from that person?

Here are some questions that have yielded great responses in StoryCorps interviews:

- What have you learned in life?
- What does your future hold?
- What are you most proud of?
- Do you have any regrets?
- What was the happiest moment of your life? The saddest?
- Is there something about yourself that you think no one knows?
- How would you like to be remembered?

As a follow-up to any of these questions, you might ask questions, such as:

- Where was God in that experience for you?
- How did that influence your faith?

Use the questions above, and those listed in the back of this book, to create a list you'll work from. These questions are suggestions. Feel free to craft your own.

It's not about how many questions you get through in your conversation/interview, so much as how deep the questions help you to journey.

¹ As borrowed from David Isay's book, *Listening Is An Act of Love*, 2007, Penguin Books; pp. 274-284.
Lent and Easter Worship & Program Guide, 2010

3. ***Pick a Quiet Place, Free from Interruptions, & Set Aside the Necessary Time***
This conversation (this mutual interview) is sacred. Do whatever you can to make one another feel honored and free from disruption. Shut off phones. Turn off televisions and radios. The less background noise and the more calming the lighting, the better.

Set aside 45 to 50 minutes for your interview/sacred conversation.

4. ***Getting Started***

Start with a prayer, if it feels natural. Something as simple as: “God, be with us in this hour. Bless us as we speak and listen to one another, in the Spirit of Christ. Amen.”

Use the questions you’ve identified as a guide. But trust your instincts as you listen to your conversational partner. If something intrigues you, feel free to ask about that.

Sometime your conversational partner will need “permission” or encouragement to talk about a topic. This can be as simple as saying, “Tell me more,” or “I’m listening.”

5. ***Nurturing Great Stories***

In addition to your questions, use these tips to help the interview/conversation flow:

- *Listen closely.* Maintain eye contact. Nod your head. Smile.
- *Be yourself.* Feel free to laugh or to cry with the person you’re interviewing, if you feel so moved.
- *Honor what moves you.* When something moves you, feel free to invite your partner to talk more about it. Feel free to go back in more detail to something they may have said earlier, too.
- *Invite emotional and spiritual answers.* Questions, such as “How did you feel when that happened?” will invite your storyteller to delve deeper.
- *Respect your partner/storyteller.* If there is a topic your storyteller is uncomfortable with, simply move on to other areas.
- *A few notes are okay* if it helps you to remember something. But resist the desire to become a scribe, which breaks the connection and the eye contact.
- *Be curious and honest* and trust that the Holy Spirit will guide you.

6. *Winding Down*

Before finishing, ask your conversational partner/storyteller if there is anything else they want to share.

7. *Turning the Tables*

When you are done listening to your conversational partner, it can be powerful to turn the tables and to tell the person: what they mean to you, what has most struck you, or what most moved you.

Be sure to thank your partner/storyteller.

Something to Consider: *Staying in ONE role the entire time*

The purpose of this exercise is to better understand, and to better practice, how Jesus listens to us. It's to practice "listening as an act of love." As such, the goal is not necessarily to switch roles (so that both participants are interviewed). In fact, the conversation will often reach the desired depth when one person remains the interviewer, and other the storyteller, for the whole time.

However... if you would like to more fully turn the tables so that your partner can interview you after you interview them... then simply decide beforehand to switch roles at about 45 minutes, and to allocate approximately another 45 minutes for the second go-through.

8. *Sharing the Conversation* (as agreed, as appropriate)

If your storyteller/partner gives you permission, you may share some of the conversation with others. This can spark additional conversations and reveal commonalities that we did not know we had with our fellow parishioners.

9. *Commemorating the Conversation*

Finally... be sure to write your name and your conversation partner's name on the butterfly template provided on the parlor table, then place it in the drop box. Put your name on one wing, and your partner's on the other. (The butterflies will be incorporated into our Easter celebrations.)

REMEMBER:

***Please deposit the butterfly in the drop box located in the parlor,
Or drop it in the office BEFORE Palm Sunday.***

Thank You!

Questions to Draw From

This list (borrowed from StoryCorps) will help you prepare for your sacred conversation.

Review the questions, write down all the ones you might like to ask, then take your list to your interview as a guide. (However, feel free to use your own questions and to ask unscripted questions as they arise during your conversation.)

General

- What are the most important lessons you've learned in life?
- What are you most proud of?
- What was the happiest moment of your life? The saddest?
- Is there something about yourself that you think no one knows?
- How would you like to be remembered?
- Is there anything we didn't talk about that you would like to add?

Childhood and Family

- When and where were you born?
- Where did you grow up and what was it like?
- Tell me about your parents.
- Did you get into trouble? What was the worst thing you did?
- Do you have any siblings? What were they like growing up?
- What did you look like?
- How would you describe yourself as a child? Were you happy?
- What is your best memory of childhood? Worst?
- Did you have a nickname? How'd you get it?
- Who were your best friends? What were they like?
- How would you describe a perfect day when you were young?
- What did you think your life would be like when you were older?
- Can you tell me some classic stories from your childhood?

Love and Romance

- Do you have a love of your life?
- When did you first fall in love?
- What was your first serious relationship?
- What lessons have you learned from your relationships?

School and Education

- What are your best memories of grade school/high school/college/graduate school? Worst memories?
- What kind of student were you?
- What would you do for fun?
- How would your classmates remember you?
- Was there a teacher or teachers who had a particularly strong influence on your life? Tell me about them.
- Do you have any other favorite stories from school?

Marriage and Commitment

- How did you meet your spouse/partner?
- How did you know he/she was “the one”?
- How did you propose?
- What were the best times? The most difficult times?
- Did you ever get divorced or separated? Can you tell me about it?
- What advice do you have for young couples?
- Do you have any favorite stories about your relationship or spouse/partner?

Parenthood

- When did you first find out that you’d be a parent? How did you feel?
- Can you describe the moment when you saw your child for the first time?
- How has being a parent changed you?
- What are your dreams for your children?
- Do you remember when your last child left home for good?
- Do you have any favorite stories about your kids?

Work

- What do you do for a living?
- Tell me about how you got into your line of work.
- Do you like your job?
- What did you want to be when you grew up?
- What lessons has your work life taught you?
- Do you plan on retiring? If so, when? How do you feel about it?
- Do you have any favorite stories from your work life?

Religion and Spirituality

- Can you tell me about your religious beliefs/spiritual beliefs?
- What has been your journey of faith?
- What was the most profound spiritual moment of your life?
- Do you believe in an afterlife? What do you think it will be like?
- When you meet God, what would you want to say?
- What about your faith have you most struggled with?

Ethnicity and Family Heritage

- What is your ethnic background?
- Where is your mom's family from? Where is your dad's family from?
- What traditions have been passed down in your family?
- Who were your favorite relatives? Can you tell me any stories about them?
- Do you remember any of the stories they used to tell you?
- What are the classic family stories? Jokes? Songs?

War and Service

- Were you in the military? What was it like?
- Did you go to war? What was it like?
- How did war change you?
- During your service, can you recall times when you were afraid?
- What are your strongest memories from your time in the military?
- What lessons did you learn from that time in your life?

Illness

- Can you tell me about your illness?
- Do you think about dying?
- Are you scared?
- How do you imagine your death?
- Do you believe in an afterlife?
- Do you regret anything?
- Do you look at your life differently now from before you were diagnosed?
- Do you have any last wishes?
- If you were to give advice to children, what would it be?
- What are the most important things you've learned from life?
- Has this illness changed you? What have you learned?
- How do you want to be remembered?

First Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ
“The Church on the Green”

111 Church Drive
Cheshire, Connecticut
Telephone: (203) 272-5323
www.CheshireCongregational.org

Office Hours:

Monday – Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Friday 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

STAFF

<i>The Rev. Jeffrey Braun</i>	<i>Senior Minister</i>
<i>The Rev. Alison McCaffrey</i>	<i>Associate Minister</i>
<i>Donna Mead</i>	<i>Parish Care Coordinator</i>
<i>Hope Reinhard</i>	<i>Acting Dir. of Christian Education</i>
<i>Todd Skrzyniarz</i>	<i>Director of Youth Ministry</i>
<i>Joseph D'Eugenio</i>	<i>Music Director</i>
<i>Leslie Holmes Meyer</i>	<i>Church Administrator</i>
<i>Michael Lombardi</i>	<i>Office Assistant</i>
<i>Fred Turner</i>	<i>Sexton</i>