

THE PARISH POST

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

CHESHIRE, CONNECTICUT
www.cheshirecongregational.org

Volume XXVIII

April, 2011

No. 4

The Long Journey With Jesus

By Jeff Braun, Senior Minister

On the first Sunday in Lent, during children's time, I asked the children if they'd ever been on a big trip. A trip where they had to travel long and far. A trip where they had to pack the car extra full, perhaps even board a plane, train, or boat. A trip where they ventured beyond homes and familiar surroundings to a special place, a place that made them feel different than they usually do.

In describing how their trips made them feel, the children were, as ever, so incredibly open and honest, so amazingly able – and, what's more, so willing – to voice the feelings their trips inspired. (What a gift their candor is!)

In their own words, they shared how they felt excited about the journey, and yet a bit nervous, too. They explained how they did not travel alone, but with parents and families and loved ones, who helped them to prepare and who encouraged them along the way. They expressed how their sense of anticipation grew as they approached their destination, and, how this anticipation was a mix of both exuberance and impatience. (How aptly

these describe our common experience of Lent.)

When our children “finally got there,” they said they felt excited, happy. Excited, yes. But also tired. At first, that seemed surprising to me. But when I thought about it, this coincidence of elation (for having arrived) and fatigue (from the journey) captured the essence of how we should expect to feel as Christians on Easter morning.

Unquestionably, Christ invites us to celebrate the empty tomb. As feelings, excitement and great joy are unequivocally appropriate to Easter. But so, too, is fatigue. Just as our children remembered how they felt tired from the journey to an exciting destination, Christians of every age should expect (even seek!) to feel a bit tired come Easter day. If Easter is nothing but brightness and ebullience, then Lent was perhaps not the journey, the time of preparation, it needed to be; and, by extension, then Easter is perhaps not as sweet as Christ calls it to be.

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As our often wisest teachers – our children – point out, the at first surprising but then not so surprising confluence of great joy and peaceful fatigue on Easter remind us that it is not a day unto itself, but, rather, the holiest culmination of all that transpires before it. Easter’s brightness is nothing but for the intensifying solemnity of Lent and Holy Week. The empty tomb and our every “Hallelujah” are nothing but for Christ’s cries from the Cross.

Happy Easter, and God’s Peace,

Jeff



A New Easter Schedule

The Board of Deacons and our ministers are excited to announce a new schedule for Easter services. This year, we will celebrate Christ’s resurrection with three services at three new times (and one with a new location).

- 6:30 a.m. – a sunrise Communion service outdoors on the Church Green, with a fellowship hour afterward in the parish hall with coffee, tea, and baked goods.
- 9 a.m. service with Communion in the sanctuary.
- 11 a.m. service with Communion in the sanctuary.

Our mutual hope is that this new schedule will bring freshness and excitement to our Easter celebrations, and perhaps be more friendly to people’s Easter Sunday schedules.

April Worship Schedule

Sunday, April 3: Services at 9:00 and 11:00. The Mission Trip group will lead the service. Communion will be served. Food offerings will be received; the food of the month is canned soup.

Sunday, April 10: Services at 9:00 and 11:00. Jeff Braun preaching.

Sunday, April 17: Palm Sunday
Services at 9:00 and 11:00. Scripture by Heart will tell the Passion Story.

Thursday, April 21: Maundy
Thursday service in the Sanctuary at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, April 22: Good Friday services at noon in the Chapel and 7:30 in the Sanctuary.

Sunday, April 24: Easter Sunday
Services at 6:30 (Sunrise Service on the Green), 9:00 and 11:00. Jeff Braun preaching. Communion will be served.

Give the Easier Way

Now, First Congregational Church offers a new, easier way to support our mission and ministries: Electronic giving.

Those who are giving up hand-written checks, and who don’t want to put cash into envelopes for the offering plate, can now sign up to have whatever amount they choose automatically given to the church on a regular basis. For details, call the church office at 203-272-5323.

Congregational Discussion Series on Same-Sex Marriage

Set for May and June

Same-sex marriage is legal in the state of Connecticut. As a religious institution authorized by the state to legally wed same-sex couples, and in order to engage issues of the day and to remain relevant, our congregation needs to address this matter from a faith perspective.

Based on our polity, and as the lay-leaders empowered and entrusted to tend the spiritual life of the church and to oversee, direct, and work with its pastoral staff, this matter falls naturally to the Board of Deacons. The specific question before the Deacons is whether the ministers of First Congregational will be allowed to perform same-sex marriages in our sanctuary (and the terms under which that would happen).

Clearly, the congregation's input in the Deacons' discernment will be paramount. As such, in May and June, the Deacons, assisted by our clergy, will hold a three-part conversation on same-sex marriage. The three-part conversation will: a) enable the Deacons to provide further context for this question, and to discern how congregants feel initially about this topic, b) allow for open, thoughtful theological discussion and reflection on this topic (based, in part, on reading materials that will be distributed in print and electronically), and c) to assess if and how people's views shift over the course of an informed conversation.

It will be important that people attend all three sessions. Equally important is that all participants agree to respect both the process that has been created and one another's feelings; and, equally, to keep an open mind. Light fare and refreshments will be served at each session.

To best accommodate people's schedules, the Deacons will offer the three-part conversation in two waves.

Wave 1:

- Session 1: Monday, May 2, 7:15 to 8:15 p.m., Parish Hall
- Session 2: Monday, May 16, 7:15 to 8:15 p.m., Parish Hall
- Session 3: Tuesday, May 31, 7:15 to 8:15 p.m., Parish Hall

Wave 2:

- Session 1: Sunday, May 1, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., Chapel
- Session 2: Sunday, May 15, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., Parish Hall
- Session 3: Sunday, June 5, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., Parish Hall

Please sign up for the sessions you plan to attend either on the lobby table or by contacting the church office. (If it is easier for you to attend one session from Wave 1 and the other two from Wave 2, that is fine.) The Deacons and ministers thank you for your willingness to help them as they engage this timely topic.

Outreach Updates: Midnight Run, Food for All

Where are those bins? The bin for Midnight Run donations and the bassinette for baby supply donations are now in the Parish Hall.

Midnight Run update: Until February, we have been able to send women's and children's clothing to a women's shelter in New Haven through the Midnight Run supervisor, but the shelter is no longer accepting clothing. They now have a voucher system in place with Goodwill for their residents. As a result, we are no longer collecting women's or children's clothing, but we still need men's clothing in good shape, trial sized toiletries, backpacks, new men's socks and new men's underwear. Item of the month for April: toothbrushes.

Want to donate left-over goodies from coffee hour to the Midnight Run? The Midnight Run would very much appreciate leftover treats from fellowship time to include in the dinners we send to New Haven each month. If you want to leave some leftover treats, wrap them well, put a 'for the Midnight Run' label on the package (the labels are in a display stand in the kitchen) including the date, and put the packaged treats in the freezer of the small brown refrigerator.

Food for All: many thanks for your support for the Food for All week. If you participated in Food for All, but haven't sent the money you saved by simplifying your eating to church yet, we are still receiving donations. Just write 'Food for All' on the check or the envelope

containing your contribution and drop it in the offering plate or at the church office. This year, the Board of Outreach will send the proceeds to the Cheshire Food Pantry and the World Vision Hunger Relief program.

Where do our food donations go? The church usually donates most of the food we collect to the Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministry (GWIM) food pantry, with the cereal going to the FISH food pantry in New Haven. The Board of Outreach, however, donated the March food contributions to the Christian Community Action food pantry in New Haven, because they would receive financial support for their food ministry for each item donated to them from the Alan Shawn Feinstein Anti-Hunger Challenge. April donations will go to the Cheshire Food Pantry. We will continue to send food donations to the Cheshire Food Pantry every third month, and will return to supporting GWIM and FISH in the other months.

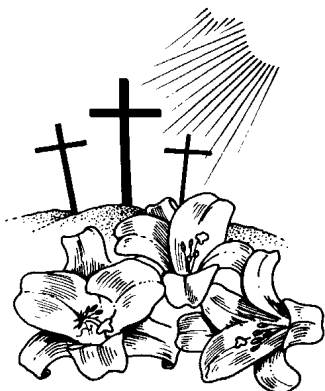


Meeting Changes?

If you head a board, committee, task force, or other church group with a regularly-scheduled meeting, and on a given date your group won't be meeting at its regular time, please notify the church office as soon as possible by calling 203-272-5323. After 5 p.m., please call the Turners at 203-272-4591.

Christian Education in April and Beyond

Caroll's Corner: Lent is now upon us. I would like to encourage all our families to make the most of these 40 days. Take some time to retreat into your family. Close out the outside world and spend some time with God each day. Do a Bible



study with your family to explore, in detail, the road our Savior walked starting with the last supper right through his resurrection.

I suggest reading Matthew 2:1-17, 34-40, chapters 26-28 and all the parables in between. While Christ's journey was hard and at times brutal, the truth is that God provided a sacrificial Lamb for us all. Jesus walked for you, and for me, so that we would not have to travel that same road: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that, whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." This is the good news of our faith, and the blessing that is awaiting us Easter Morning. My peace and blessing to you all. He has risen... He has risen indeed!

Vacation Bible School: Christian Education has put together a team of folks to help lead an exciting week of Vacation Bible School. We are going "Inside Out and Upside Down on Main Street!" Here

is a list of people you can see if you would be available to help in any way. Whatever time you may have available or skill or desire you may have, we have a space for you! Please feel free to call Caroll or any of these people for more information: Snacks, Beth Ross (9 a.m.); Crafts, Martha Triplett Strollo (11 a.m.); Story, Susan Harris (9 a.m.); Decorating, Barbie Lyke (11 a.m.); Games, Jacki Hissick (11 a.m.)

If you have a child entering Kindergarten all the way up to entering sixth grade, Vacation Bible School registration is open by going online at www.vacationbibleschool.com/firstcongregationalcheshire

The cost is \$30 per child, \$60 max per family. All payments can be sent directly to the church office attn: Caroll Cyr.

Sunday School Help: We are blessed with volunteers, but are still in need of a few more. There is a sign-up sheet outside room 8 (Thou Art) with many open spots in both April and May. If you have any questions please see Caroll Cyr.

Next school year, we will be moving from the rotation model Church School to an age-appropriate classroom model, and again we are looking to put together a team of teachers for each grade. The team would be three or four volunteers for each grade who would rotate, which will leave each volunteer teaching only once every three or four weeks. This is no more work

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than is presently put into the present rotation. This is very popular with busy families, and every schedule can accommodate this kind of commitment. We are trying to streamline things to make it easier to volunteer. If you are willing to be a helper or team member, please e-mail me so we can start putting teams together: cedircheshire@yahoo.com.

Easter Sunday School: There will be a Sunday school program for the 9:00 and 11:00 services (not for the sunrise service). We want to make Easter a special Sunday for our children as well. We will need volunteers for nursery to grade 6. Seventh and eighth graders will stay with their parents for worship. We are going to try to have a one- or two-room session for 9 a.m., so that fewer volunteers are needed. Thank you for your support of both our children and our church family.



Holy Week Labyrinth

Come and learn all about labyrinths, then be part of creating one in our Parish Hall for Holy Week. Join us at 3 p.m. Palm Sunday afternoon (April 17) as labyrinth facilitator Laura Litvinoff returns.

She will lead us in the learning and constructing of our labyrinth, which will be opened for use throughout all of Holy Week, through the Good Friday to Easter Sunday Silent Vigil, and through Easter Morning. Make the labyrinth your Holy Week practice.

Sign Up for Silent Vigil

The Silent Vigil is held in our sanctuary from Good Friday evening through early Easter morning; it is a time to prepare our hearts for Easter. This is a rich tradition



here at First Congregational Church offering an opportunity for an hour of quietness and prayer alone in our sanctuary.

You may sign up for one-hour time slots, every hour around the clock beginning at 10 p.m. after the Good Friday service ending at 6:00 a.m. on Easter morning. The general signup sheet for the Silent Vigil is posted on bulletin board outside Alison McCaffrey's office. Detailed instructions will be mailed.



Praying in Color

Would you like to learn more about this way of prayer? If you do, you are invited to come to the Colonizers' (women's group) meeting on Monday, April 11 at 7:30 p.m. in the Whiting House. You don't have to be an artist or have any particular skills to do it.

If you have colored markers, please bring them. All women of the church are invited to participate.

**Visit our web site often:
cheshirecongregational.org**

Sabbatical Time for Alison McCaffrey

At the annual meeting in January, our congregation voted to approve the second half of my sabbatical, to begin late this spring. I am deeply appreciative of this opportunity, and I write to share my plans.

First, some background and history. The word “sabbatical” has its roots in the biblical concept of Sabbath, which means “to rest” or “to cease.” We first encounter this concept in the creation story in Genesis, when, after creating the world in six days, God rested on the seventh. During the exodus from Egypt, God directed the Israelites to gather their manna for six days, but not on the seventh. Indeed, God knew how hard it was to convince the Israelites to rest, so God commanded them to observe the Sabbath. We also find in scripture the concept of sabbatical farming: allowing the land to lay fallow and rest every seven years so that it can be more productive when planted again.

These passages suggest that there is a rhythm to life. As the preacher said, for everything there is a season (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Jesus’ own life and ministry reflect a deep understanding and appreciation for the rhythms of life. In the Gospels we read of his routinely taking time apart for prayer and spiritual solitude to balance the great demands of his ministry.

For our purpose, Sabbatical time is an extended leave during which the minister can shift gears, rest, disengage, study, and reflect. Sabbatical is not vacation time. It is a particular season of the spirit,

intentionally designed to deepen relationship with God, renew one’s sense of call, and replenish one’s body, mind, and spirit, so that he or she might return to ministry refreshed and renewed. In this way, both the clergy person and the congregation benefit from this time apart.

In our denomination, the United Church of Christ, sabbatical time is standard recommended policy. Recognizing the demands particular to ordained ministry, our congregation has for many decades offered sabbatical time to clergy after they complete six years of service.

In 2008, I had begun my seventh year of ministry in a time of ministry transition. With the agreement of the deacons, I took one-half of my sabbatical, eight out of the 17 weeks, with the remaining nine weeks to be taken at a later time.

It is now “later.” With input from the Deacons, the Executive Board, and Jeff Braun, my time away has been scheduled from Friday, May 6 and returning on Monday, August 1. This block of time includes the majority of my yearly vacation time to be taken first, then to take the nine weeks of sabbatical.

My study plans are twofold. I am interested in learning as much as I can about what I am calling sacred staging: those permanent and temporary sanctuary atmospherics and installations that create the space to invite the Holy Spirit to speak.

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I will visit churches with interesting architecture and creative use of space and artful elements, like our Advent stars. I am interested in learning how artists in the church can be invited to share their gifts.

Second, I want to explore the full range of Parish Care offerings of churches in a variety of denominations. If we think of Parish Care as an umbrella, we would put under its scope all of what we already do: when something happens to someone, we respond with a variety of offerings. But needful times are only a part of our lifetime experiences. The umbrella of Parish Care could also include wellness care for body, mind and spirit across the life span. I look forward to investigating how other congregations care for their people.

I am deeply thankful for your support and for this opportunity to delve into areas of study not possible with the daily and weekly responsibilities of ministry. I will bring back my findings and I look forward to sharing my learning with you.

Alison McCaffrey

Hospitalized?

If you or someone you know is in a hospital or a nursing home, please inform the church office at 203-272-5323. We want to be able to minister to those in our congregation, but federal law prohibits health care facilities from giving out this information. We need your help in order to know who is in the hospital or another health care facility.

Our Malawi Connection

Promise Mchenga, one of our sponsored young adults from Malawi, has concrete evidence of the power of encouragement. Promise was the mentor for Bryan Estevez, a fourth grader in Davis Elementary School in Camden, N.J. In January, the town had a Martin Luther King Day public speech contest, and Bryan went on to win in his age group. Bryan was then asked to give his speech in a church. The circle of love and encouragement continues!

One Great Hour

One Great Hour of Sharing is an offering through our denomination, the United Church of Christ, and others, that makes the love of Christ real for individuals and communities around the world. It helps those who suffer the effects of disaster, conflict, or severe economic hardship, and those who serve them through gifts of money and time.

Today, projects are underway in more than 100 countries, including the United States and Canada. In the past, receipts have exceeded \$20 million annually. While specific allocations differ in each denomination, all use their One Great Hour of Sharing funds to make possible disaster relief, refugee assistance, development aid and more. First Congregational Church is scheduled to accept this offering in worship on April 3.

For more:
www.onegreathourofsharing.org

Being Businesslike about God's Work

Our church is not a business! As stated in our by-laws, "The purpose of this church shall be to worship God; to preach and teach children, youth and adults the good news of Jesus Christ; to celebrate the sacraments; to encourage individual growth in Christian fellowship; to continue the church's rich heritage in this community; to render loving service toward all people; and to strive for righteousness, justice and peace."

Our church nevertheless has an important obligation to manage its affairs in both a legal and a prudent manner. In addition to worshipping God, we must carefully manage everything from proper control and stewardship of our monetary resources, to maintenance of our properties, to the safety of children in our church school and youth groups. Oversight of all the activities of our church entails huge responsibility and, frankly, it was one of my most important considerations when asked to serve as president-elect. I accepted the nomination because I saw that I was really joining a team of presidents – president, president-elect, and past president. In addition, there are many extremely talented lay leaders on our boards and committees as well as, to me, a 'dream team' of staff.

Now that I have assumed the role of president, I would initially like to focus my tenure on a review of the responsibility that the lay leaders and staff have assumed, and document how we are managing it. Of course a great deal of this has already been

accomplished and can be found in the Deacons' Manual, the Trustees' Manual, the Employee Handbook and Personnel Policies Manual, and the Church's Safe and Nurturing Policy. More work, however, needs to be done. For example, while we have proper financial policies and procedures in place, they are not written down.

Another area of concern for me relates to the decision making authority within our church. The by-laws assign specific responsibilities to specific boards and committees. For example, the deacons are charged with the religious and spiritual life of the church, and the trustees are to maintain the church's financial stability and our real properties. But there is a significant difference between any organization's by-laws and its statements of policies and procedures. This is necessary and by design. By-laws are general in nature and discuss broad topics and concepts. It is the policy and procedures manuals that provide specific guidelines. Of course, if a policies and procedures manual does not exist, we have a problem!

As president, I chair the Executive Board, the purpose of which is to coordinate, promote, and evaluate the program and welfare of the church. While there is some additional language in the by-laws suggesting how the Executive Board is to do this, I hope to develop an

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Executive Board Policy and Procedures Manual by the end of this year. Such a manual does not exist, and leaves a number of unanswered questions, including some questions about decision-making authority. For example, it is my understanding that the Executive Board was originally established to resolve conflicts between the Deacons and the Trustees. But it is not at all clear how the Executive Board is supposed to resolve any such conflict. Another example: the Executive Board must approve all special offerings and fundraisers, but there is no written guidance on how to do so. What criteria are used? How do we avoid competing with our stewardship drive?

I have heard some concern that the Executive Board is trying to gain too much power in the church. This is my fifth consecutive year serving on the Executive Board, and I can assure you that such concerns are unfounded. But as a final example of the need for a new Executive Board manual, let me note that the by-laws state that the Executive Board must "Review and coordinate all changes to board and committee handbooks." The by-laws, however, are silent on who approves the Executive Board's manuals. This is a question that will be addressed in the new Executive Board manual.

I will be happy to discuss issues of church governance with anyone who would like to share thoughts on the subject or are simply interested in talking about it.

Bob Porter, President

Spring Cleanup April 16

The Church spring cleanup day is Saturday, April 16. We will need to pick up the leftover leaves and tree debris around the Meeting house, connector, Parish Hall, the Parsonage, the Whiting House, the Green and the perimeter of the parking lot.



You can help by joining us and donating your time and energy. We will need rakes, shovels, tarps, wheelbarrows and a couple of chainsaws. We will begin at 9:00 a.m. and plan on being done by noon.



Prison Ministry Exploration

In response to the interest expressed on Outreach Sunday in January, a new small group is now forming to explore potential ways we might begin a ministry to those in prison, either as a church or as individuals.

There is much to learn and much to discern as we prayerfully and faithfully consider how God might be calling us in this direction. A sign-up sheet is on the lobby table. This group is sponsored by the Board of Outreach, and convened by Alison McCaffrey.

**Check our online calendar at
cheshirecongregational.org**

Join the Meals Ministry

The Meals Ministry is an important part of the network of caring in our church. Our approximately 30 cooks welcome the opportunity to prepare meals for those who can use a helping hand during a difficult time. According to our 2010 annual report, more than 75 meals were prepared and delivered to 25 people last year.

Here is what some of the recipients have had to say: “When I was facing dark times with breast cancer, dear friends and fellow church members brought light to many days with meals and other treats. When the doorbell or phone brought news of kindness and caring or a food delivery, my husband would say ‘God Calling,’ and that is what it felt like.” ... “What a blessing it was to us during my illness. I know it was a big part of my healing so fast.” Clearly, the meals ministry is about more than food.

We offer an invitation to anyone who would like to be part of the Meals Ministry. It is a most rewarding way to serve others and a true testimony to



God’s hands at work.

Jackie Cole, Bobbie Porter, and Marianne Eagleson share the responsibility of coordinating the Meals Ministry rotating leadership every two months. If you have questions about the Meals Ministry, know of a family in need of a meal, or want to be

added to our list of cooks, please let one of us know:

Jackie Cole, jackie.cole@cox.net and 203-271-9041

Marianne Eagleson,
marianne.eagleson@cox.net and 203-271-2850

Bobbie Porter,
bobbieporter@gmail.com and 203-699-9988



Coffee and Commitment

A small cup of coffee – just the regular “java,” not the fancy lattes, cappuccinos and the like – costs \$1.44 at a Dunkin’ Donuts shop here in Cheshire. Have a nice hot cup every day, and that amounts to just a little more than \$10 a week. Many in our congregation routinely spend at least that much on coffee.

What does coffee have to do with our church? Just this: For 2011, about 100 people in the congregation have pledged \$10 per week or less to the support of our ministries and mission. Put another way, nearly a third of those who have pledged their support this year have done so at a level equal to just one daily cup of coffee.

Isn’t our life-supporting parish care, our outreach to those desperately in need, the Christian education of our children, our music ministry, our centuries of presence here in town, worth lots more than that “cup of joe”? Think about it ... maybe during your next coffee break.

The Board of Stewardship

Numbers ... and People

Fourteen years! This will be the 14th consecutive year our church will send young people on a weeklong summer mission trip.

Fourteen months and 825 meals! The Midnight Run event our middle schoolers have participated in has prepared that many meals in a year and two months.

Wow. I can't believe we went on that first mission trip so long ago. And it seemed like just yesterday that Peggy Allen approached me with the idea of the Midnight Run and we talked about how our church could participate. Those are impressive numbers. A lot of time, energy, and willing people to make that all happen.

There's another way to look at these numbers. Our youth through the Midnight Run, equipped by our church and its members, has fed 825 people. Over the many years we've gone on summer mission trips, we've served hundreds of people. Jesus' ministry was focused on people. They are what was important to him. Through our service opportunities, we get to be the breath and life and touch of Jesus to those we serve.

John 6:5 tells a story we've heard many times: Jesus feeds 5,000 with only five loaves and two fish. If you haven't read that story in a while, I encourage you to read it again.

We don't serve to put another notch on our spiritual belt. If that were the case, it would be all about us. But it's not. It's all

about God's love for people. And we get to have a part in that. When we work together and focus on the people God places before us, lives will be changed. Forever.

This year's mission trip will be to Owego, N.Y., from July 31 to August 6. All those in high school, including teens who will enter 9th grade this fall, are eligible to come. See www.yutes.org for more information.

If you haven't been on a summer mission trip, I encourage you to ask about it. Talk to someone you know who has gone on the trip. Ask about the person they served. Find out how you can change someone's life in one week. A nice bonus: It's a lot of fun!

Todd Skrzyniarz



News of the YUTES

Midnight Run this month is April 25. If you're in middle school, come help us make meals to feed the hungry and homeless in New Haven. We then share in a meal together and play some games.

High School Seniors Small Group: The church is putting together a small group for high school seniors beginning April 13. We'll meet every other Wednesday at 7 p.m. Join us as we chat about our hopes, fears, and how our faith plays a part in this exciting time in our lives.

We Say Thanks

I am enjoying the lovely flowers that Kirsten Sullivan brought to me, and I was pleased that she took the time to stay and have a pleasant chat. Thank you for thinking of me.

Ruth Havlick

I am so very grateful for the many expressions of love and concern sent my way over the last several months. The visits, cards, flowers and phone calls have provided comfort, encouragement and cheer during the slow process of healing. May God bless each of you as you continue to share His love with others.

Carol Tucker

To our dear younger friends at Church School, thank you! We appreciate your warm welcome as your new friends and neighbors. We also enjoyed the snow, but at the same time pray to see spring very soon!

Dariush, Marguerite, Daniel and Samuel Golmohammadi

Thank you and the fifth and sixth grade Stepping Stones youth group for the lovely, original Valentine card. It was wonderful to be remembered. I'm still enjoying the poinsettia that Stephen Mulholland and his son brought to me.

Mary Louise Sylvester

Thank you to the members of First Congregational Church. Selling handcrafts from SERRV at your Christmas Fair changed disadvantaged artisans' and farmers' lives for the better. These purchases mean more opportunities for them to have a stable income, send their

children to school, develop needed community-wide projects like wells, and improve their skills through trainings and workshops. You've also spread the word about the vital benefits of fair trade, and how we can build a strong global community together.

SERRV International Inc.



Lectionary for April

Sunday, April 3: 1 Samuel 16: 1-13; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5: 8-14; John 9: 1-41.

Sunday, April 10: Ezekiel 37: 1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8: 6-11; John 11: 1-45.

Sunday, April 17, Palm Sunday: Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29; Matthew 21: 1-11; Isaiah 50: 4-9; Psalm 31: 9-16; Phillipians 2: 5-11; Matthew 26: 14-27; Matthew 27: 11-54.

Thursday, April 21, Maundy Thursday: Exodus 12: 1-14; Psalm 116: 1-19; 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26; John 13: 1-35.

Friday, April 22, Good Friday: Isaiah 52: 13 – 53: 12; Psalm 22; Hebrews 4: 14 – 5:9; Hebrews 10: 16-25; John 18: 1-19.

Saturday, April 23, Holy Saturday: Job 14: 1-14; Lamentations 3: 1-24; Psalm 31: 1-16; 1 Peter 4: 1-8; Matthew 27: 57-66; John 19: 38-42.

Sunday, April 24, Easter Sunday: Acts 10: 34-43; Jeremiah 31: 1-6; Psalm 118: 1-24; Colossians 3: 1-4; John 20: 1-18; Matthew 28: 1-10.



Milestones

in the life of our church family

Deaths

Elsbeth Gadsby, sister-in-law of Peter Gadsby, February 17.

Pam Friend Corte, mother of Meredith Kurtz, February 18.

Jessica Riehl, granddaughter of Mary Johmann, February 23.

Connie Gozzi, mother-in-law of Kerrie Dunne, March 8.

May Day Tea Party

Plans are being made for a Tea Party on May 1, 2011 from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. in the church's Parish Hall. Please save the date and any wedding, bridesmaid and flower girl dresses you may have for a fashion show.

Models are needed for the fashion show. Teens are welcome! If you are interested, please speak to Jan Garthwait. During spring vacation, we will meet to try on gowns and learning the steps of modeling. If you would like to join our committee, please contact Jan at 203-272-5915, Pam Eurele at 203-272-9345, or Karen Gravino at 203-272-1067.

**Have you remembered
First Congregational Church
in your estate planning?**

Thanks for 'Pew Pals'

Thank you to all who have brought in a small stuffed animal for our 'Pew Pals,' the furry little creatures found at the end of each pew in the Sanctuary.

Your donations keep this unique ministry of joy and companionship in the pews going. Donations may be placed in the basket outside Alison McCaffrey's office.

Web Site Offers Much

First Congregational Church's web site, www.cheshirecongregational.org, has lots for everybody.

Check out the photo galleries, with pictures from such exciting church events as Homecoming Sunday, Music on the Green, this year's Youth Mission Trip, and much more. Got photos or videos of your own showing church events? You may upload them to the site for all to enjoy.

Don't forget to check the complete church Calendar on the web site, and keep on top of all the latest happenings with the Church News section of the home page.

The "Church News" column, at the right on the home page, has news of special interest: Upcoming concerts, events, and other opportunities. Want to send an e-card with a spiritual theme to a friend? You can do that through the church web site too,

Visit the site often! It's all for you.

For Purchasing Easter Lilies

Now is the time to order your Easter Lilies.

You have the option of either picking up your Easter Lily after the 11:00 a.m. service on Easter (April 24), or giving it to someone who's in the hospital or a shut-in. Remember, **you will not be bringing a plant to church.** Instead, please fill out this form to order your flowers. The cost of each Easter Lily is \$10. Orders must be received no later than April 10. If you have questions, please call the Church Office at (203) 272-5323.



EASTER LILIES

To order one or more Easter Lilies for the Easter Sanctuary services, please fill out this form and send or bring it to the church office, along with \$10 per plant, no later than Sunday, April 10. Payment must accompany the order.

Your name(s): _____

Telephone and/or e-mail address _____

_____ Please give this Easter Lily to someone in the hospital or a shut-in

_____ I will pick my plant up after the 11:00 a.m. Easter service

_____ In memory of _____

_____ In honor of _____