

# THE PARISH POST

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

CHESHIRE, CONNECTICUT  
[www.cheshirecongregational.org](http://www.cheshirecongregational.org)

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No. 2

## Leave Room to Fly

**By Dave Buchan**  
**Interim Senior Minister**

A celebrated Japanese artist once exhibited a rather large painting showing, down in the left-hand corner, a tree with a number of small birds perched on a limb. The rest of the canvas was bare.

When he was asked if he didn't intend to paint anything more to fill the blank space, he said, "Oh, no. I have to leave room for the birds to fly."

I sometimes feel that there is so much going on in our lives that there is no room for us to fly. Our schedules are tight. We cart children from school to soccer to dance lessons. We go from meeting to meeting.

Even in retirement, we say, "I'm busier now than when I was working!" We run at top speed – in all directions – and collapse when we get home at night. And come morning, we start all over again.

For a healthy life, like the birds in the Japanese painting, we all need room to fly. We need some time for ourselves.

We need some time with our families. And we also need to set aside some time to draw closer to God – as the Bible puts it, to be still, and to know that God is God.

Lent is an ideal time for this.

It's a time of religious preparation, study and prayer as we look forward to the celebration of Easter – and it begins this year on Wednesday, February 6.

During Lent, our church will offer a number of opportunities for worship, study and growth.

Remember the words of the prophet Isaiah:

*"...they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles..."* (40:31)

This Lent may there be room to fly in your life – and may you soar like Isaiah's eagles!

In Christ,  
*Dave Buchan*

## Lenten Worship and Activities

Here's a listing of the various opportunities at First Congregational Church this Lenten season:

**Ash Wednesday: Feb 6.** Worship at 7:30 p.m.. A contemplative service with imposition of ashes and oil, and communion.

**Palm Sunday, March 16** worship at 9 and 11 will include the telling of the Passion Story by members and friends in the ancient oral tradition. Anyone interested in taking part in this Scripture By Heart project is welcome. We meet Mondays at 7:15 p.m. in the sanctuary to help each other learn and perform our scripture texts. Please see Alison McCaffrey with any questions.

**Maundy Thursday, March 20, 7:30 p.m. worship in the sanctuary:** Worship service with communion. Worshippers are invited to bring a new white bath towel as part of our offering. These towels will be given to the shelter residents at Columbus House. Alison McCaffrey will preach.

**Good Friday, March 21:** Two services, Noon and 7:30 p.m. (Tenebrae service with the Senior Choir singing). Dave Buchan will preach at both services.

**The Silent Vigil: Good Friday to Easter Sunday** in the Sanctuary.  
"Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray" (Matthew 26:36). You are invited to keep watch for the coming resurrection in quietness and prayer in our

sanctuary from Good Friday evening through early Easter morning. You may sign up for one hour time slots, every hour around the clock beginning at 9 pm after the Good Friday service ending at 6:00 am on Easter morning. The sign up sheet for the Silent Vigil is posted on the Parish Life bulletin board on the ramp to the Parish Hall.; detailed instructions will be mailed to participants.

**Easter Sunday, March 23:** Worship services at 8, 9:30, and 11:30 AM. Join us as we celebrate the glorious resurrection of Jesus. Communion will be celebrated at all three services. Dave Buchan will preach.

## Worship Schedule For February

**Sunday, February 3** -- Dave Buchan preaching: "The Spiritual Lessons of Football" (Super Bowl Sunday). Communion will be served, and food donations accepted. The pantry donation of the month is stew.

**Sunday, February 10** – Alison McCaffrey preaching.

**Sunday, February 17** – Dave Buchan continues his series on the Lord's Prayer: "Lord, teach us to pray (4)".

**Sunday, February 24** – Dave Buchan preaching. His series on the Lord's Prayer concludes: "Lord, teach us to pray (5)".

# The Blessings of Our Church, Continued

Our church has been blessed in so many ways that we couldn't fit the entire list into last month's Parish Post! So here are some more ways in which we are reminded frequently of the good in all of our lives:

➤ Outreach and the ways we care for those beyond our church: Monthly food offerings; families helped by Covenant to Care, with household items and clothing to meet basic needs quickly and generously; meals provided to Columbus House residents, cooked and served by our members; Easter Baskets and Thanksgiving dinners; the Malawi mission; space that is provided to the many community groups – such as AA meetings, La Leche and Boy Scouts; maintenance of our community Green and sharing for town activities like food collection, collection of items for those in active military service, Cheshire's Lights of Hope; the Relay for Life; Churchwide Mission Days.

➤ Parish Care and the ways we care for each other: Flower delivery and home visits; the Stephen Ministry for care at times of crisis; the prayer pager and Prayer Net; Caring Crafts – prayer shawls and quilts; Baptism and Newborn – Welcoming the growing family; rides, meals, card writing and small chores; visitation programs.

➤ Music: Memorial Music Sunday, the annual Service of Lessons and Carols, Malawi Concerts, the summer Concert on the Green.

➤ Fellowship – Showing our joy in being part of the church family: Men's Breakfast, Women's Fellowship, the Tuesday Circle, Colonizers, Ladies' Aid, greeters, coffee hour.



## From Outreach, A Thank-You

As my term as Outreach Chairperson for 2007 comes to an end and Lisa Canas takes over for 2008, I would be amiss not to thank the members of the Board of Outreach for volunteering their time.

They are: Gretchen Bates, Joy Biggart, Lisa Canas, Kerrie Dunne, Chris Fitzmaurice, Matt McCaffrey, Leah Sanders, and Amy Webb.

I would also like to thank the Rev. Alison McCaffrey for guiding us through the year. Two other people that do a considerable amount of work and organizing with Covenant-to-Care are Jan Cowles and Jan Garthwait. Thanks to all.

On behalf of Outreach and the many people the church helped in 2007, I would like to thank those in the Congregation who donated money, items, time and talent.

You did make a difference; please continue with your generosity.

*Beth Ross*

# Report of the Church Clerk

Summaries of the minutes of Church Meetings held during 2007 are listed here. The complete minutes may be found in the Church Report, and are available to interested parties.

**Annual Meeting January 28, 2007** for the following purposes:

1. Accepting the Annual Report for 2006
2. Electing Officers, Board and Committee members
3. Conducting any other business that may properly be brought before the Church.

Resolutions:

1. The Annual Report was accepted.
2. The report of the Nominating Committee was read and accepted with changes discussed at the meeting.
3. Other Business Items:
  - The revisions to the 2007 budget were accepted and the Treasurer was granted the ability to use the \$16,400 of cash reserves, if necessary, during the year. (Changes were made to the budget originally presented to the congregation on December 10, as a result of additional pledge monies received subsequently.)
  - A nine-person Senior Minister Search Committee was accepted: Harry Black, Ford Cole, Joy Deegan, Patty Dickinson, Regine Hahn-Selzer, David Hostage, Amy Webb Mower, Jack Sellati and Kirsten Sullivan.

**Congregational Meeting June 10, 2007** for the following purposes:

1. Hearing reports from the Search Committees for: Senior Minister, Director of Youth Ministries and Church Administrator.
2. Approving the proposal to reactivate the search for Parish Care Minister.
3. Authorizing the use of up to \$180,000 through the end of 2008, from the endowment fund, to fund shortfalls in staff and salary benefit packages.

Resolutions:

1. None; this was an informational item. Search Committees for Senior Minister, Director of Youth Ministries and Church Administrator are actively engaged and progressing.
2. A resolution to table discussion on the Parish Care Minister was passed.
3. A resolution to authorize the use of up to \$180,000 through the end of 2008, from the endowment fund, to fund shortfalls in staff and salary benefit packages, was passed.

Yes – 50

No – 46

Abstain – 4

Vote was by paper ballot. The ballots received at the meeting are included in the archived minutes at First Congregational Church.

**Congregational Meeting September 23, 2007** for the following purposes:

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1. Review of the Preliminary Proposed 2008 Budget
2. Hearing an update from the Senior Search Committee
3. Hearing an update from the Director of Youth Ministries Search Committee

Resolutions: None; this was an informational meeting.

**Congregational Meeting December 9, 2007** for the following purposes:

1. Hearing an Update on good things at First Congregational
2. Hearing an Update from the Senior Minister Search Committee
3. Hearing the Report of the Nominating Committee
4. Approving the Proposed Budget for 2008

Resolutions:

1. None; informational item. Reports from Stewardship and Membership on church attendance were presented.
2. None; informational item. The committee expects to begin candidate review in late winter, and for that process to last for several months.
3. None; informational item.
4. A resolution to approve the 2008 budget as presented was passed.

**Church Statistics**

Total Membership as of December 31, 2006: 1068 Adjustment for Membership Audit: +37

Admissions  
Confirmation Class 22  
Confession of Faith 1

Reaffirmation of Faith 9  
Letter of Transfer 5  
Total Admissions 37

Dismissions  
Letter of Transfer 8  
Transfer to Inactive 294  
Deaths 21  
Total Dismissions 323

Total Membership as of December 31, 2007: 819

Those wishing the names of persons included in the above categories may consult the Annual Report.

**The Missing Words?**

Fill in the blanks (and here's a hint: you need just two words to fill all the spaces).

From Matthew 5:13-16 – “You are the \_\_\_\_\_ of the earth. But if the \_\_\_\_\_ loses its \_\_\_\_\_y taste, it cannot be made \_\_\_\_\_y again.”

“You are the \_\_\_\_\_ that gives \_\_\_\_\_ to the world. A city that is built on a hill cannot be hidden. And people don't hide a \_\_\_\_\_ under a bowl. They put the \_\_\_\_\_ on a lamp stand.”

Here are the answers: “salt” and “light.” Two metaphors used by the Lord to describe the people of God. Is God calling you to do his work here on earth? Do you need seed money to get that work started? Please see Alison McCaffrey or a member of the Board of Outreach for information on the church's “Salt & Light” grants.

# Join the Handbell Choirs!

Our church is lucky to have active and talented Handbell and Chime Choirs; they add much to our shared worship experience. We are also extremely fortunate to have as our director Marianne Beckman, a music teacher with both bachelor's and master's degrees in music.

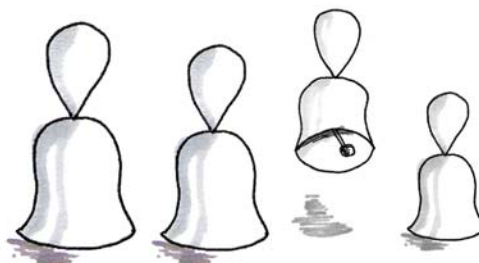
The choirs are now looking for both new and experienced players, minimum age 8 years old.

We practice Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m. at the church, and we perform once a month, as well as at Christmas and Easter. Being in the Handbell and Chime Choirs is not only a worthwhile ministry, it's also fun and rewarding! Don't worry if you have never played handbells or chimes before ... we will teach you!

Although some schools have handbells, these days churches are almost alone in providing this interesting and ancient musical form.

Handbells are thought to have originated in Britain; people who performed on a local church's carillon would practice using handbells, so the church's neighbors weren't kept awake at all hours by the ringing of bells in the belfry! It didn't take long for people to realize that the music of the handbells themselves was a musically excellent act of worship all on its own.

Marianne has taught in public schools for more than 30 years, integrating hand chimes into the students' music theory



experiences. She has also taken many postgraduate courses and workshops in both bells and chimes. In addition to directing the choirs, playing solos and duets, and turning pages for Joe d'Eugenio, Marianne also sings in the Senior Choir.

The handbells at First Congregational Church were purchased for about \$5,000 through memorial contributions in the 1970's. Today, they are estimated to be worth at least twice that amount. Sales of a book written by our former senior minister, Rick Dacey, paid for the hand chimes; they provide an opportunity for the many eager younger members of our church to be able to participate.

For more than 12 years, many members of First Congregational have received their first course in both music theory and performance by being part of the Handbell Choir.

If you'd like to join either choir, or to obtain more information, please see Marianne, Martha Lape, or John Crowell, or simply join us on a Wednesday evening at the church.

# Christian Education News

## **March 2 Special Schedule**

On Memorial Music Sunday, March 2, there will be just one church service, at 10 a.m. This will necessitate a change in the Church School schedule for that Sunday only.

For Preschool 3-2nd Grade, there will be a presentation of the movie, "Veggie Tales: The Prodigal Son," in Room 10. Popcorn will be served. Teachers and helpers scheduled for that day are asked to help with the special event (please bring attendance folders.)

For Grades 3-6 at both church schools, there will be a presentation on summer programs at Silver Lake Camp and Conference Center, held in the Whiting House.



## **Bible Journeys For Grades 2-6**

The workshop rotation continues to be a popular model for learning for our elementary children. Each month is different and exciting. New this year is the Bible Journeys Herald, a monthly elementary church school newsletter that will be e-mailed to families as well as posted on the church web site.

Grades 3 to 6 go to class when dismissed from the church. Watch the bulletin for when children may leave.

Grade 2 at the 9:00 service only leave for Chapel in the early part of the service. After Chapel, they go with their Shepherds

to their Bible Journeys workshop. Parents may find their children in the classrooms listed in the bulletin at the end of Church School.



## **February: Our Malawi Ministry**

Thou Art, Room 8: Children will learn about the crafts of the children in Malawi, Africa, to enhance their understanding of other cultures and the needs of children in other lands. Children will create a soap carving. They will see pictures of carvings from Africa.

Red Sea Productions, Room 9: We will begin the lesson with some information about Malawi and its children. Students will write letters to children in Malawi. We will take pictures of each student to place in the letters.

Desert Tales, Room 10: Children in this workshop will hear information and see pictures about life in Malawi. Using the pictures and the information they will create a play about life in that land. This will be fictional; they will be able to use their creative imaginations.

Gospel Games, Room 11: Students will take an imaginary trip to Malawi. While on the plane they will hear a story from Malawi, see pictures, and snack on food grown in Malawi. We will read scripture about God's love and relate it to children in Malawi.

**9:00**

Date	Thou Art	Red Sea Prod.	Desert Tales	Gospel Games
Feb. 3	Grade 6	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 2 & 3
Feb. 10	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 2 & 3	Grade 4
Feb. 17	Grades 2&3	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 6
Feb. 24	Grade 4	Grade 2 & 3	Grade 6	Grades 5

**11:00**

Date	Thou Art	Red Sea Prod.	Desert Tales	Gospel Games
Feb. 3	Worship	Worship	Worship	Worship
Feb. 10	Grade 6	Grade 4	Grades 5	Grade 2 & 3
Feb. 17	Grades 5	Grades 2 & 3	Grade 4	Grade 6
Feb. 24	Grade 2 & 3	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 4

**Lenten Mission Projects**

The Lenten mission project for grades 2 through 6 will be to raise money for our church's Malawi ministry. Children are being asked to collect bottles and cans from neighbors and their own homes throughout February, take them to stores, and redeem them for the money. They will receive a Mission Project Sheet when they leave class explaining our project. The money raised in this way will go toward our Malawi ministry; we plan to have a contest among the classes to see which can raise the most. Watch the wall across from the basement bathrooms for the weekly totals.

For Preschool 3 through 1st Grade, children will participate in the traditional Heifer Project mission for a Lenten mission project. Families will receive a Heifer calendar and an ark; they are invited to use the ark and the calendar suggestions to raise money. The children will decide

as a class which one small farm animal they will raise money to purchase for a family in need somewhere in the world. The children always love this project, as they can relate to the animals and see their money going for something tangible.

**Church School Volunteers**

First Graders are beginning to learn to read, and are eager to learn.

Our volunteers in the First Grade class at our 9 and 11 church school hours spend time creating a lesson to meet those specific spiritual and learning needs.

They minister to our first graders through their creative lesson preparation, storytelling and encouraging the children to read from their story cards, developing age-appropriate crafts and especially their love of the children.

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When you see our first grade teachers, please thank them for their ministry to this age group.

Thanks to: Emily Cowles, Jennifer Farrell, Karen Pettit, our wonderful team of first grade teachers at the 9:00 church school. Thanks to their helpers: Betsy DePaolo, Adeline Arumainayagam, and Olivia Mulé.

Thanks to: Aislinn Walters and Stephanie Canada, our wonderful team of K/1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers at the 11:00 church school. Thanks to their helpers and substitute teachers: Stephanie Turner and Chelsea Clouse. Your ministry to our children is special.

### Snack & Juice Supply

Three-year olds through first graders are served snacks and juice on Sunday mornings. We have found that asking parents to contribute once a year helps us keep within our budget. We welcome all contributions and offer a schedule as a suggested way to remember.

Please read labels carefully as snacks should have no nuts, peanut butter or peanut oil. Some suggestions of purchased cookies with no nuts are: nut free varieties of Chips Ahoy, Oreos, Teddy Grahams, Vanilla Wafers, and Lorna Doone.

The schedule is: Last name beginning with K-M, bring snacks in January. Beginning with N-Q, in February. Beginning with R-S, in March. With T-V, April. With W-Z, May.

## Youth Group News

Twenty-four Senior High Youth and leaders spent the weekend of January 11-13 at the Monadnock Bible Center in New Hampshire for their winter retreat. Laser tag, a bungee run, heated pool and a full slate of games were available during activity time. Every morning and evening there was worship and an opportunity to explore along with 225 other youth from around New England what it means to "Walk with Christ." The speaker, Greg Dyson, runs an inner city program for youth and provided upbeat and powerful messages throughout the weekend. We came away enriched and inspired to walk as Christians in our daily lives.

Regular meetings with dinner will be held for both Middle School and High School groups each Sunday from 5 to 7pm throughout February in the Parish Hall. New members are always welcome. It's never too late to come and find out what Yutes is all about.

Summer Mission Trip Update: We will be in Wilmington, Del. from July 20 through 26, repairing homes for those in need and participating in a week of spiritual growth. If you plan to attend this year's trip, please get your deposit in as soon as possible (today would be good!) so we know how many to plan for. If you need more information, please contact Roger Olander.

Things sometimes change quickly, so please check the website [www.yutes.org](http://www.yutes.org) for last minute updates.

# Safe Church Policies Updated

A Safe Church Committee was created last fall with the goal of establishing oversight for all safety-related policies. The focus of the committee is church-wide, not just children and youth.

It is the role of the committee to identify areas where safety policies should be developed, as well as to ensure that current policies (such as the Safe and Nurturing Policy) are being met. Examples of the types of issues which the committee will address include: process for responding to medical emergencies during worship; process for communicating weather-related worship or Christian Education changes; revisions to the Safe and Nurturing policy; and more.

The Committee is a subcommittee of the Executive Board; members are appointed by Executive for a two-year period. It is expected that the committee will report to the Board twice per year. The members include a representative from the Board of Trustees, the Board of Christian Education, and three members of the congregation. The congregational members are healthcare professionals or those who work in education or insurance.

The current committee membership consists of the following members of the congregation: Alex Demac, (Psychiatrist), Bill Eagleson, (Trustee representative), Jill Gibb, (Registered Nurse) Committee Chair Anne Giddings (School Administrator) and Lynn Ryan (Christian Education representative). The group has

met twice, and plans to meet monthly as they work on policy and procedure development. The group will be meeting with various staff members and lay leaders as they develop their work plans for the year.

The Safe Church Committee has created the following statement which it plans to publish in various places throughout the church: “The Safe Church Committee invites you to forward suggestions, questions or concerns about the safety of our programs for children, youth, or adults to any member of the Committee. The Committee members are: Alex Demac, Bill Eagleson, Jill Gibbs, Anne Giddings, and Lynn Ryan. In addition to the committee members, a minister or the president of the church, Bob Mead, may also be contacted.”

The Committee has also requested that the church office staff, if contacted by someone regarding a safety concern, should forward the concern to both a minister and a lay leader such as the Chair of the Safe Church Committee or the Church President.

■

We are a church that has always been committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all programs for children and youth. Continuing that commitment in 1998, we joined with other UCC churches in our state and nation in

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beginning the process of establishing a policy for a safe and nurturing environment. The Christian Education Board and the Youth Safety Team have completed their tasks for updating and continuing to create nurture and safety of our children and youth.

The Christian Education Board spent many hours poring over the Safe and Nurturing Christian Education Policy originally adopted in 1999. It was revised and updated in 2003, 2004 and now, 2007. Please see the bulletin board in the Church Parlor for more information about the policy and a copy of that revised policy.

The Youth Safety Team, composed of Joellyn Jason, Charlene Black, Jan Cowles, and Anna Hannen, worked for a year to complete a policy and necessary forms creating a Youth Safety Manual. Each resource adult volunteer currently working with the youth group has received a copy of the Youth Safety Manual.

Each month at the Resource Adult planning meetings, our Interim Youth Director, Roger Olander, has committed to going through the manual section by section to ensure all the adults understand it and policies are followed. If you are interested in reading the Youth Safety Manual, there are copies in the Church Library, Senior Minister's Office, Christian Education Office, and Director of Youth Ministries Office.

Here are the kinds of safe and nurturing procedures in place for children and youth under our care:

A fire drill was held for the Church School in October. All teachers, helpers, nursery caregivers; mentors, Stepping Stones leaders and resource adults have been screened and educated in the safe church policies. Church School and nursery volunteers work in pairs.

Permission slips are required, collected, and information distributed to all volunteers for each offsite event. Offsite volunteer drivers fill out a form and provide information about their vehicles, insurance and licenses. First aid kits have been updated.

While we recognize that we can't prevent all accidents and incidents, having procedures and policies in place that we all follow creates the best possible safe and nurturing environment.

If you have further questions about our policies and procedures, please don't hesitate to speak to a member of the Board of Christian Education: Chair Lynn Ryan, Assistant Chair Peggy Allen, Will Arpaia, Jim Parys, Kate Hall, Emilee Ziolkowski, Grace Knipe, Kelly Swartz, Sue Branzell, and Regine Hahn-Selzer.



## Help Us Reach You!

First Congregational Church has instituted an e-mail notification system to let the congregation know of important, immediate events in our church life.

The system has been in place for a couple of months now, and it works well. Won't you give the church your e-mail address?

## Progressive Dinner Planned for May

On Saturday, May 3, there will be a First Congregational Church Progressive Dinner (a dinner party in which each successive course is prepared and eaten at the residence of a different host).

It should prove to be a fun evening for all. At this point, the Dinner Committee is looking for people interested in hosting a dinner in their home.

The host is not required to cook the meal, only be willing to have people come into their home (number of people to be determined by the host), and enjoy the fellowship of others.

The guests will be the ones bringing the meal and the dessert. Our plan now is to meet in one home for hors d'oeuvres and drinks, and move to a second home for both dinner and dessert.

We will also need suggestions on where to have the hors d'oeuvres part of the evening.

If you have any ideas or are interested in helping to coordinate this special night, please feel free to call Donna Mead (248-9576).

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

## Church Drive Project Is Set

The Board of Trustees has announced that the long-awaited Church Drive improvement project has been put into action.

The Town of Cheshire has agreed to co-partner the work effort and cost. This project is scheduled to begin as early as this March, weather permitting, and to be completed before the Strawberry festival on June 14.

This is only one of many projects to rehabilitate the church infrastructure that were addressed at the last church meeting.

The Church Drive project is unique in that the church has committed its resources to the project and therefore needs to have committed funds available before construction begins.

We estimate that the church's portion of the \$125,000 project will be about \$35,000. To date, we have been able to raise \$17,500 through generous pledges.

We would like to raise another \$20,000, and ask that those who are willing and able please consider contributing to this cost beneficial project.

Donations of any denomination will be accepted. If you wish to make a pledge or donation, please contact the church office.

## New Small Group Series

Using the “Questions of Faith” video series as a springboard for discussion, participants are invited into thoughtful discussion of the basic questions of belief and meaning that come to us over and over in our lives. Produced by EcuFilm, the “Questions of Faith” series presents, in 20-minute segments, contemporary Protestant, Jewish and Roman Catholic thinkers.

They range in vocation from priests to psychotherapists to Old Testament scholars to evangelists to preachers to sociologists, and they share their thoughts on such questions as: Who is God? Who is Jesus? What Good is Prayer? What’s the use of the Bible? How Do We Right the Wrong? What Gives You Faith? What Happens After Death? What’s God Got to Do With Evil?

There are two opportunities each week to meet. Nancy Brunetti will host at her home on Tuesday evenings and on Thursday evenings we will meet at 7:30 in the Parsonage, with a potluck dinner preceding at 6:30 p.m.. Specific dates to be announced.



## Caring Crafts Ministry

The next meeting of the Caring Crafts Ministry will be February 25 at 7 p.m. at Donna Mead’s home, 15 Conifer Drive, Hamden. Please call for directions or information: 248-9576. All are welcome: wannabe crafter, beginners, and “experienced” crafters.

## Thursday Night Supper

The last Thursday Night Church Supper of the season will be February 7 at 6:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall.

Africa Night will be presented by Amy Webb, speaking on the Malawi Mission. There will be a “drum experience” for all to participate in, along with information on the Malawi Mission. It should prove to be an interesting evening for everyone.

Advance tickets will be on sale in the Parlor and the Parish Hall after services. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$2 for children 6 through 12 and free under 6. If you plan to pay at the door, please call Audrey Finkenstadt (272-9438) to make a reservation.

## Meet the Women Of the New Testament

The Women’s Bible Study group is looking at “Women of the New Testament.” The group meets weekly in the parlor. Participants use a study guide from the Life Guide Bible Study series. It costs \$5.

The group explores different scriptures and different women each week, as members walk through this series. You are welcome to study with us when you can, and be away when you must. Each week stands by itself.

All women of the church are welcome.

The sessions are led by Debbie Gravell.

# Sitting the Dance Out

By Alison McCaffrey  
Associate Minister

At a seminar I attended recently, one participant remarked how helpful it was to take time apart from day-to-day church work: "It's like getting off the dance floor and going up to the balcony for a look."

One of the benefits given to staff here at First Congregational is the gift of sabbatical, a time to step off the dance floor that is ministry to rest, reflect, and renew.

Having completed six years of ministry, the Board of Deacons has approved my plan to partake in sabbatical from May 19 through July 14.

These eight weeks comprise half of the allowed 17 weeks; they are "Part One," with "Part Two" to come at a later date. We decided to divide the time because of our transition status and to accommodate family needs.

Stepping onto the dance floor to serve will be our own Peggy Allen, whose ministry among us as interim Minister of Parish Care still resonates.

In the next months, I will share more of my plans and hopes for sabbatical with you. I ask your prayers for this time apart, that it may be a blessing and a time of refreshment so that I may return to you renewed and ready to take up the dance.

In Christ's service,  
Alison

## Lectionary Readings for February

**Sunday, February 3:** Exodus 24: 12-18; Psalm 2; Psalm 99; 2 Peter 1: 16-21; Matthew 17: 1-9.

**Sunday, February 10:** Genesis 2: 15-17, 3: 1-7; Psalm 32; Romans 5: 12-19; Matthew 4: 1-11.

**Sunday, February 17:** Genesis 12: 1-4; Psalm 121; Romans 4: 1-5, 13-17; John 3: 1-17; Matthew 17: 1-9.

**Sunday, February 24:** Exodus 17: 1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5: 1-11; John 4: 5-42.

## Women's Book Discussions

The Women's book discussion group meets at 7 p.m. on the first Monday of each month. Women who like to read and discuss books are welcome to join us for any or all meetings. The schedule for the next three months is:

Feb. 4 - *The Plain Truth* by Jodi Picoult at Phyllis Balser's home

March 3 - *Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson at Charlene Black's home

April 7 - *Sarah's Key* by Tatiana DeRosnay, at Laura Whinfield's home

Call 272-9327 or send your email address to Martha Lape (mlape@aol.com), and a reminder and directions will be sent to you the week before the meeting.

## Thanks for Poinsettias And More

My sincere thanks to Deacon Joy Deegan for bringing me, on behalf of First Congregational and the Deacons, a beautiful Poinsettia plant. I appreciate your thoughtfulness and kindness in sharing this beautiful Christmas plant with me at this most beautiful time of the year.

*John W. Dewey*

Thanks to all of you for your thoughts, prayers, notes, telephone calls, and especially the flowers and the poinsettia. They have all brightened my days, eased my convalescence, and comprised the silver lining of the stubborn clouds of irritation attending my ailments. Special thanks to Dave Buchan for his visits to me in person and by phone in the hospital and at home. He made me think less of my problems and more of my blessings – no mean achievement!

*Arthur Hostage*

Thank you so much for the beautiful poinsettia Sue Mancinelli so kindly left for Roland. We appreciate the caring and kindness of our church family.

*Lorna Fowler*

I am so very grateful for our church family. The prayers, cards, phone calls, and flowers have brought great comfort since I learned of my sister's passing. Thank you for expressing God's love in these tangible ways.

*Carol Tucker*

Thank you so much for the lovely poinsettia plant given to me at

Christmastime. It was brought in by Mark Hostage, and we had a nice visit. I am going to try to get up to church a bit more, but right now, Elim Park Chapel is more convenient.

*Lois Grace*

Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness and company while both Whitney and I recovered from our surgeries. The meal delivered by the Lintons was delicious; the flowers are so beautiful, and we especially thank Debbie Gravell for her thoughtfulness and prayers. Thanks also to Dave Buchan for the uplifting calls.

*Linda and Whitney Milton*



## Milestones In the Life of our Church Family

### **Births**

Liana Cathleen Perez, daughter of Megan Perez, December 19

Stephen Andrew Fitzmaurice and Patrick Michael Fitzmaurice, sons of John and Chris Fitzmaurice, January 2.

### **Baptisms**

Earl Alix Kurtz, son of Earl and Tina Alix Kurtz, December 16.

### **Deaths**

Rosemary Port, January 10

Eunice Marshall, January 11

Virginia Burton, January 15