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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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A Letter of Recommendation

By Dave Buchan, Interim Senior Minister

“You are our best letter of recommendation...” (1 Corinthians 3:3)

Have you ever been asked to write a letter of recommendation? I am often asked to write a character reference for someone who is applying to college or for a job. And when the person is someone I really admire and respect, I am only too glad to do it.

Our church is asking you for a letter of recommendation! We ask you to give a letter of recommendation to your neighbors and friends – especially to those who may be looking for a church home – telling them about First Congregational Church. In fact according to the Bible you, yourselves, are our church’s letter of recommendation. That’s what St. Paul said to the Corinthians. “You are our best letter of recommendation.”

We try in many ways to get out the word about this wonderful church – through the Cheshire Herald, cable TV, our web site. That is helpful and necessary. But nothing is as effective as YOUR personal recommendation. Many

people attend worship and eventually join because someone first spoke to them with enthusiasm about this church and its ministries.

Truly ours is a church with real faith and spirit and energy – and we are all privileged to be part of it. Worship, music, Christian education, youth and service: you have a lot to recommend when you talk to your friends, co-workers and neighbors about First Congregational Church.

The polls say that people believe in Biblical basics. 95 percent believe in God, 80 percent believe in miracles, and 72 percent even believe in angels! Nine out of 10 people own a Bible. Yet it is estimated that less than 20 percent attend worship. There are a lot of people out there without a church home. Share the joy with them!

During July and August, our services will be held at 8 and 10 Sunday mornings. The 8:00 service will be an informal one,

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led by the deacons in the chapel. Our regular sanctuary service will be held at 10:00. (The one exception is Sunday, July 6. Due to the holiday weekend when many are traveling, there will be one service at 10:00.)

See you in church.

In Christ,

Dave Buchan, Interim Senior Minister



From The Interim Associate Minister

Sometimes time really does seem to fly, and this eight-week interim period has been flying by for me.

My last day as your interim associate minister will be July 13.

I have enjoyed helping to plan our first contemporary worship service, leading a wonderful group in a fast-paced study of the gospel of Mark, serving sunrise communion to the Team Steeplechase walkers, and having the chance to work with the Board of Outreach and the Membership Committee.

My prayer for our congregation is that the Spirit continue to both gently lead us and also to occasionally firmly push us as we continue to strive to live as a faithful church.

The Rev. Peggy Allen

Worship Schedule For July & August

Please note: During most of July and August, an informal chapel service led by the deacons will be held at 8 a.m. The regular sanctuary service led by clergy will be at 10 o'clock. The regular schedule starts again September 6.

Sunday, July 6: One service at 10:00 (no 8 o'clock service) – Peggy Allen preaching. Communion Sunday. Food offerings will be received; the food of the month is fruit juice.

Sunday, July 13: Dave Buchan preaching.

Sunday, July 20: Dave Buchan preaching.

Sunday, July 27: Dave Buchan preaching.

Sunday, August 3: Dave Buchan preaching. Communion Sunday. Food offerings will be received; the food of the month is baby food.

Sunday, August 10: Alison McCaffrey preaching.

Sunday, August 17: Alison McCaffrey preaching.

Sunday, August 24: Dave Buchan preaching.

Sunday, August 31 (Labor Day weekend): Dave Buchan preaching.

If You Go Away, Please Pre-Pay

As we enter the lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer and prepare for vacations, barbecues and weekends away, remember that First Congregational Church doesn't go on vacation. The church needs our pledges through the summer because all of our expenses exist whether we're here or not.

Here's a contemporary psalm written by Albin Anderson:

Blessed are the church members who pay their pledges before their vacation cometh.

They then go forth with a light heart.

They wear casual clothing as they wander in pleasant places;

They anoint their bodies with sun tan lotion and insect spray;

They sit beside the still waters, hoping that the fish will bite and the insects will not;

They build a fire of charcoal and place savory meat thereon, and the wind wafteth to their nostrils a pleasant scent;

They eat thereof and are satisfied.

Night cometh.

They close their eyes in glad tiredness with thanksgiving to God. And their sleep is undisturbed. For they know that the good work of their church will not be diminished while they are away.



Homecoming Sunday

Sunday, September 7, is Homecoming Sunday at First Congregational Church. Put it on your calendars now so you'll be sure not to miss the fun!

Worship will be at 9 and 11. Casual dress is encouraged! Music will be provided by our very own Praise Band. A Vespers service will follow the picnic.

The 11 o'clock service will be followed by an all-church picnic at noon. Back by popular demand is the Galvanized Jazz Band, who will play from noon until 3 on the church green. There will be games, races and photo opportunities.

We will have hot dogs, hamburgers and ice cream. Those with last names beginning with A to M are asked to bring salads or chips, while those N to Z please bring dessert or beverages.

Those wishing to help with the Homecoming may call Diane Visconti (272-7719). She will direct your efforts to the appropriate people. Areas of need are: setting up and cleaning tents, tables, chairs; supervising games; cooking and serving food; publicity; and writing thank-you notes, to mention only a few areas.

A Thank You of Platinum Proportions

Relay for Life took place this year on June 6 and 7, a 24-hour period of time when Cheshire came together to support a cause that touches all of us. Whether it is a parent, a sibling, a spouse, a co-worker or maybe even yourself, cancer touches us all.

The temperature this year went from a low of 55 degrees to a high of 90. Our church's Team Steeplechase was a proud presence on the High School track. We fed hot dogs and chicken to more than 100 people and spiritually fed 22 at our sunrise service. Someone was walking the track at all times and ours was the last team walking on Saturday.

Relay for Life may be a 24-hour event held once a year, but it is an event that is worked on for months. Team Steeplechase would like to thank everyone who supported us – everyone who brought books, bought books or straightened up books; anyone who worked at the tea party, who provided food and came to enjoy our “Alice in Wonderland Tea Party;” anyone who contributed to the tag sale in any way; anyone who bought tickets to our “can do” drive; everyone who came to the event, who set up, took down and showed in a thousand ways you cared – we thank all of you.

A big thanks to Carol and Gary Warner for the tent they provided; we would not have survived the elements without it. To Bill Mann, a big thanks for providing the BBQ chicken for the dinner. To the Rev.

Peggy Allen, our deep appreciation for coming to lead the sunrise communion service. To Kirsten Sullivan, thank you for again this year providing the Adora chocolate vitamins for the tea party gift bags. To the Ploch family, thank you for providing the glow bracelets and candy necklaces for hundreds of kids Friday night.

To Kelly and Nicole, friends of the team, your help was invaluable during the relay and at cleanup; it was great to have young hands supporting us. And finally, to the team members and friends who were a constant support to your tri-captains, a



huge thank you. Whether we were asking for manpower, food, or your time, so many of you stepped up to the plate repeatedly to help – we owe you our deepest gratitude.

This year, we again attained the platinum category, raising more than \$10,000. Contributions can still be given if you were unable to participate earlier. Please contact Betsy Adams at 271-1872 for further information.

Team Steeplechase was a proud presence for the church at Relay for Life. Please also know that we are proud to represent the First Congregational Church.

Betsy Adams, Carol Ploch, and Rich Grudzias

Executive Board: By-laws, Church Drive, and More

Here is the latest news from the Executive Board:

By-laws revisions: About 40 people attended the June 8 meeting to discuss the proposed revisions to the church's by-laws. Dennis Lape, Chair of the By-laws Review Committee, led the meeting in a question-and-answer format. Discussion focused on sections regarding use of endowment funds, active members' responsibilities, member verification activities and new member preparation. Proposed by-laws updated with the changes from this meeting will be available on the church web site. The date for a meeting to vote on approval of the by-law revisions has not yet been determined. Members of the By-laws Review Committee are Dennis Lape, Bill Gordon, Mark Sullivan, and June Webster.

Church Drive: With removal of the tree in front of the Parsonage and work on the walkway, the Church Drive improvement project has started. This is a phased approach, aimed at having no disruption of the Church Drive area during certain events, for instance last month's Strawberry Festival and a wedding in July.

Senior Minister Welcoming: There has been some discussion of how to welcome and orient the new Senior Minister when called. The overall objective is to minimize the upheaval often associated with a minister's moving to a new town and beginning a new job. Moreover, the Executive Board recognizes that the congregation will go through an

adjustment period as well. Therefore, the Board is looking for ideas that will make this a positive and upbeat experience for all. Any suggestions are welcome.

Budget: Members of the Budget Committee have been named, and began meeting in June. They will work throughout the summer to prepare the draft budget that will be presented to the congregation in the fall. Other church boards and committees will also participate by providing input and review. Members of the Budget Committee are Walt Ryan, Sara Buell, Betsy Barber, Rich Kruczek, Jim Louys, Ruth MacDonald, Lisa Canas, and Bob Porter.

Other Items: Troubleshooting the audio problems in the sanctuary continues; so far, there are no conclusive results from the testing. Review of church attendance shows that attendance numbers have evened off, and that the second service shows more consistency than the first service, where there is noticeable variability.

Please Note Summer Church Office Hours

Summer hours for the church's office began June 30 and will end Friday, September 5. During the summer, the office will open at 8:30 a.m. and will close at 1:30 p.m.

Music on the Green

The annual “Music on the Green” event will be held Saturday July 26. It begins with a bring-your-own picnic at 6 p.m.

From 7 to 9 p.m. there will be music for listening and dancing provided by “Higher and Higher,” featuring our own Jennifer France on lead vocals. The band plays great dancing music from the 1950s to today.

The event is sponsored by the Board of Music, and money raised benefits the church’s music program.

Admission is \$12 per person, or two people for \$20. Students and senior citizens pay \$8, and children under 14 are admitted free. Tickets are available at the gate.

Rain moves the event into the Parish Hall.

◆

Last Call for Casseroles!

If you have casseroles or other dishes that you brought to the church for a dinner and then left, please pick them up in the church kitchen.

All items remaining on July 31 will be donated to charity.

Thank you!

Martha Lape



Youth Group Picnic

Both High School and Middle School Yutes are invited to attend our end-of-year picnic on July 13 at the Brunettis’ home at 3 p.m. The pool will be open! Each youth is asked to bring a snack or a dish to share. We will provide hot dogs, hamburgers and beverages. The picnic will be combined with a Tool Training event for anyone going on the Mission Trip who missed our first training session. Directions can be found online at www.yutes.org.

As our year winds down, the focus now is on the upcoming Mission Trip to Wilmington Del., where our teenagers will share the love of Christ with people by performing much needed home repairs. They’ll serve as they’ve never served before.

And over six days, our young people will be transformed – their Christian faith deepened. The youth thank our generous congregation for all the help provided throughout the year to make this life-changing event possible. We also thank our adult volunteers who are giving a week of vacation time to be a presence in the lives of our youth. We’ll be posting news and photos on the Yutes web site.

Summer Church School – and Preparing for Fall

Summer Church School began May 25 and will continue through Labor Day weekend. Its theme this year is “Treasure Hunters: Digging into the Bible.” Children from age 3 through 3rd grade (and their helpers, from grade 5 up) dig into the Bible for the treasures of God’s Word. They learn short verses, create Bible Crafts, and have a ‘Bible snack.’

Volunteer teachers are needed each week. If you are interested in joining us with your gifts of teaching, please contact Emilee Ziolkowski (755-3390) or Debbie Gravell.

Please note that during July and August, when there is a Chapel service at 8 a.m. and worship in the Sanctuary at 10, Summer Church School is offered only at the 10 a.m. service.

Noah’s Ark Nursery: Our church nursery is looking for volunteer caregivers to work one Sunday during the months of July or August at the 10 a.m. service. Each volunteer is one of a two-person team. Training is provided for those who have never provided nursery care before.

We offer childcare for ages 6 weeks up to age 3. If interested, please contact Elaine Daly (Nursery Coordinator) at 272-8646 or Debbie Gravell (Minister of Christian Education) at 272-5323 ext. 16.

The School Year: Do you wonder what happens downstairs with our children and youth on Sunday mornings during the Church School year?

In the nursery, babies and toddlers learn about God’s love through playing with our wonderful trained caregivers.

Preschool 3 through the 1st grade Church School use prepared Bible-based lessons to teach about the Bible. One teacher and at least one helper are in each room.

Grades 2-6 participate in Bible Journeys Church School. Volunteer “shepherds” guide the children each week through a different workshop. Our workshop leaders use prepared lessons to lead young people though learning about a different Bible story each month.

Leaders who love art sign up for a month to teach Thou Art. Those who love drama sign up for a month to teach Red Sea Productions. Those who love storytelling through video, music or characters sign up for a month to teach Desert Tales. Leaders who love computers or games sign up for a month to teach Gospel Games.

In a month, students have visited each of the workshops and have learned in different ways about the Bible story. Children, workshop leaders and shepherds love this way of learning.

Grades 7 & 8 participate in activity-based learning to explore faith topics as they relate to their everyday lives. Monthly lesson plans give detailed lessons for the month. New faith topics change monthly.

All of these ministries require

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committed and dedicated volunteers willing to share their faith with youth through their gifts and talents given them by God. If you have a desire to be a member of the volunteer team in Children's Ministry, please see Debbie Gravell to set up a time to talk about your gifts and talents and where they would be best used in the ministry.

Preparing for the Church School year: Church school begins on September 7 this year.

(Labor Day weekend is Aug. 30-Sept. 1.)
The year is preceded by leader orientation.

All teachers and helpers for age 3 through 1st grade will attend curriculum training and Safe Church orientation on Wednesday, August 27, from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Parish Hall. All are strongly urged to attend, as Safe Church orientation is required of all volunteers. There will also be curriculum training, using our new curriculum "Live Big." Volunteers will experience a lesson and learn how to plan using the new curriculum.

All Bible Journeys and Junior High teachers, workshop leaders and shepherds will attend orientation and training on Thursday, August 28 from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Parish Hall. The agenda will include Safe Church orientation and training, which is required of all volunteers. There will also be curriculum lesson planning and adjustment for different age groups, an introduction of the rotations for the Church School year 2008-2009, and a

special focus and Bible study on September lessons.

Watch your mailboxes: All parents of nursery and church school children should watch their home mailboxes for the Nursery and Church School Brochures for the 2008-09 Church School year. In the center will be enrollment forms that must be filled out (new each year, so if you did it before you must do it again) for every child in our nursery and Church School. Please return the forms promptly so we can have accurate class lists for the start of the Church School year.

Church School resumes on Sunday, September 7, 2008. We ask for enrollment forms to be in to the office by the end of August. The Church School brochure will have information on the new "Live Big" curriculum that will be used by the Preschool 3 through 1st grade classes. Be sure to see the article at the beginning of the brochure. We encourage feedback from parents during the fall as the children experience the new curriculum and families experience the "at home" papers and suggestions for families.



If You're Hospitalized, Please Let Us Know

Under federal law, hospitals and nursing homes may not disclose the names of patients without their specific permission. Therefore, if you or a family member is in the hospital, please tell the church; otherwise, we may not know. Help us be a caring congregation!

Membership News

All-Church Photo Directory: About five years have passed since the last church photo directory was published. We have seen many changes in that time, including the addition of many new members. With the able assistance of Betsy Adams, the Membership Committee is planning to publish a new directory at some point during the next church year (after the



settled senior minister has been called).

At this time, the Membership Committee is asking

anyone with an interest is being part of this project to contact the church office or send e-mail to churchdirectory@live.com.

As with past directories, in addition to individual photos of members, the directory will contain many pages of general photos taken at church functions (Strawberry Festival, Progressive Dinner, Youth Group Meetings, etc.) or other events such as Outreach Mission Day and the Yutes Mission Trip.

We are also asking anyone with photos taken at events such as these, or other general church photos, to bring copies to the church office or send electronic copies of the photos to the above e-mail address.

New Member Orientation: The next new member orientation will be Saturday, October 4, with those joining to be

welcomed into church membership on Sunday, October 19.

Anyone with an interest in joining the church, please call the church office or speak with one of the ministers or any member of the Membership Committee: Jan Cowles (chair), Sharon Brenneman, Marianne Eagleson, Pam Euerle, Kate Hall, Jay Knipe, Bobbie Porter, Ken Stevens, and Carol Tucker.



Strawberry Fest Thanks

Thanks to the more than 100 church volunteers who so generously gave of their time and talents to contribute to one or more of the numerous parts of this year's Strawberry Festival – whether it was hulling the berries on Friday morning or helping to put the last table and chair away just before a powerful thunderstorm blew through Cheshire.

This wonderful community event would not be possible without the hard working and creative individuals who make up our church membership. See you again on June 12 and June 13, 2009!

The Strawberry Festival Committee is Brad Fuller, Martha Lape, Jim Louys, Addie Marx, Beth Ross, Carol Warner, Gary Warner, and Jessie Waszmer.

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

News from the Board of Outreach

For many years, the church, via the Board of Outreach and specifically through the caring ministry of Jan Cowles, has supported Covenant to Care, an interfaith agency that mentors, advocates for, and provides direct assistance to at-risk, neglected, or abused children.

Largely because of budget considerations, our church is no longer supporting Covenant to Care directly, but instead is strengthening our connection to the state Department of Children and Families. We will still continue with our with our mission of assisting families with clothing and household needs. However, a slight name change is necessary. Our church's work in this area will now be known as "Covenant for Caring."

Look for this new name, and more exciting news about the help we are able to give Connecticut's most vulnerable residents.

Thank You to Lori Mann and Juliann Nowie for stepping forward and volunteering to lead the "Collections" portion of Covenant for Caring. Lori and Juliann have some new leadership ideas to grow this very important part of the mission. They will announce their plans for Covenant for Caring later this summer.

WANTED: The Board of Outreach is in need of one to three volunteers to take on the missions of the Easter baskets, Thanksgiving meals, and Christmas gifts. Either one person can be in charge of all

three missions, or the missions can be split up among other volunteers. This is a great opportunity to reach out to the community! For more information, e-mail Gretchen Bates gbates55@cox.net or talk to any Board of Outreach member.



Parish Care: May Report

Here's a list of what the Parish Care Committee and its volunteers did in the month of May, the most recent month for which statistics are available:

- Baptism/Birth – One blanket delivered.
- Meals – 19 meals. The freezer is getting fuller, but we could still use more items.
- Cards – 21 cards sent.
- Stephen Ministry – Four new Stephen Ministers finished their 50 hours of training. Two Stephen Ministers have agreed to take on the extra responsibility of being facilitators during the bi-monthly supervision meetings. Seven of the 12 Stephen Ministers have been assigned a care receiver.
- Rides – One ride.
- Caring Christians – Five trained Caring Christians are visiting nine members.
- Prayer Pagers – All six pagers were being used in May.
- Chores – One chore of splitting and

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stacking firewood; another was cleaning the sanctuary, twice. A painting job still needs to be done.

- Bereavement – Two people being visited
- Caring Crafts – Five items were taken to be given to those in need after the May 4 service where they were displayed. An additional two were taken later in the month.

The Parish Care Coordinator spent 47 hours performing her duties.



When is That Meeting?

Now, it's easy to keep track of the many events going on at First Congregational Church. The church's web site has a new, up-to-date calendar, listing both church happenings and events by outside groups that use our facilities.

Don't Wonder – Check It Out!

www.cheshirecongregational.org

Blankets of Giving

Remember Jesus' observation about how much more the poor widow was giving when she threw in her two small coins than the much larger alms given by the rich man? Did you ever wonder what the widow was thinking when she threw in those coins?

A widow's lot was grim indeed in those days, so the prospect of giving money away on the rare occasion when she had any would have been unlikely at the very least. And she didn't give away the minimum – that would surely have been just one of those coins! So you could say she was even being extravagantly generous, according to her means.

Of course, we'll never know what she was thinking, but I cherish the notion that she was full of joy – the joy of the cheerful giver, someone who might actually be motivated to throw in both of those coins despite her poverty – someone, in fact, who is mindful that she is being generous, and pleased about it.

In case that seems like a stretch to you, consider a lesson that comes from a lot closer home. As you may recall, the Board of Outreach carried out a fundraising project in April and May to support the UCC's global mission to provide blankets to the needy. For just \$5, a small piece of cloth (the "blanket") could be pasted onto a world map. The project was a terrific success, gathering \$849 – enough for dozens and dozens of blankets to cover

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most of the map.

Furthermore, the project gathered a good deal of spirited momentum among us: kudos to the Outreach folks for seeing how to move us once again to generosity. People were contributing not just the allotted \$5, but whatever they could muster. (Hence the uneven figure of \$849.) Some wanted to put a blanket on the place their family came from. Some were thinking of typhoon-damaged areas and the incredible suffering and loss of life there. Everyone was reaching out to places in the world that otherwise had no share in the tremendous bounty God has shown us here in Cheshire.

Even children were getting into the act, and some for as little as the single coin they had in their pocket. (Starting to sound a little like that widow?) One little girl even bought a blanket for an empty spot in the ocean – because she was sure there must be an island there!

When we experience God's bounty, and are sensible that others are not so fortunate, and then when we also choose to act on the basis of our most generous impulse, we are doing God's work, and there's joy in it. It's part thanksgiving, part love of our fellow man, and part a feeling that we have become what God wants us to be. And in that moment, our worldly cares fade away and the camel passes through the eye of the needle.

*Mike Pownall
Board of Stewardship*

Lectionary for July and August

Sunday, July 6: Genesis 24: 34-38, 42-29, 58-67; Song of Solomon 2: 8-13; Zechariah 9: 9-12; Psalm 145: 8-14; Romans 7: 15-25; Matthew 11: 16-30.

Sunday, July 13: Genesis 25: 19-34; Psalm 119: 105-112; Isaiah 55: 10-13; Psalm 65: 1-13; Romans 8: 1-11; Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23.

Sunday, July 20: Genesis 28: 10-19; Wisdom of Solomon 12:13, 16-19; Isaiah 44: 6-8; Psalm 86: 11-17; Romans 8: 12-25; Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43.

Sunday, July 27: Genesis 29: 15-28; Psalm 105: 1-11, 45; 1 Kings 3: 5-12; Psalm 128; Psalm 119: 129-136; Romans 8: 26-39; Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52.

Sunday, August 3: Genesis 32: 22-31; Psalm 17: 1-7, 15; Isaiah 55: 1-5; Psalm 145: 8-9, 14-21; Romans 9: 1-5; Matthew 14: 13-21.

Sunday, August 10: Genesis 37: 1-4, 12-28; Psalm 105: 1-6, 16-22, 45; 1 Kings 19: 9-18; Psalm 85: 8-13; Romans 10: 5-15; Matthew 14: 22-33.

Sunday, August 17: Genesis 45: 1-15; Psalm 133; Psalm 67; Romans 11: 1-2, 29-32; Matthew 15: 10-28.

Sunday, August 24: Exodus 1:8 – 2:10; Isaiah 51: 1-6; Psalm 138; Romans 12: 1-8; Matthew 16: 13-20.

Sunday, August 31: Exodus 3: 1-15; Jeremiah 15: 15-21; Psalm 26: 1-8; Romans 12: 9-21; Matthew 16: 21-28.

Milestones

In the Life of our Church Family

Births

Sadie Elizabeth Eisbach, daughter of Anne and Chris Eisbach, on June 8.

Anthony William Watrous, grandson of the Rev. Alison McCaffrey and the Rev. Matthew McCaffrey, son of Brian & Stacey Watrous, on June 10.

Baptisms

Connor James Rayball, son of Sean and Kristen Rayball, grandson of Ken and Pam Euerle, on June 1.

Liana Cathleen Perez and **Amelie Serena Perez**, daughters of Francisco and Megan Fuller Perez, on June 15.

Antonio Leonardo DiMarco, son of Philip and Grisel DiMarco, on June 15.

Deaths

Leocadia Sullivan, Mark Sullivan's mother, on May 16.

Marvin Turner, on May 21.

Betty Floyd, on May 31.

Summer worship hours

in July and August

except July 6

8 o'clock (informal service)

10 o'clock (regular service)

Letters of Thanks

Thank you so much for the blanket and the "Jesus Loves Me" book. We are so happy to have found a caring community.

Stacey, Chad & baby Meena Groshart

It is difficult to find words to express our gratitude for the many kindnesses you have shown us during the past year. We are so grateful for all that you have done for our family. The cards, phone messages, prayers, meals, gift cards meant a great deal to us. The day Kacey Rose was baptized you made a promise, and you have lived up to that promise. We are extremely thankful for that.

Glen, Kristina & Max Mitchell

We can't sing enough praises for the wonderful job that Bill Eagleson, Ken Euerle and Martha Lape did painting the Church Office on June 6th. The office looks terrific—please take a look when you get a chance! THANK YOU!

*Leslie Holmes Meyer, Church Administrator &
Michael Lombardi, Office Assistant*

