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No. 6

The Power of the Spirit

By Jeff Braun, Senior Minister

By way of transitions, June is a momentous month. School years and extracurriculars end. Graduations are celebrated. Vacations beckon. Summer truly begins.

The same holds true for our congregational calendar. On June 12, in a special 10 a.m. service, we celebrate Pentecost Sunday by honoring our Confirmation class' intentional (and inspirational!) journey this semester, and by receiving into the church those youth who have prayerfully decided to confirm their faith. On June 19, also in a single 10 o'clock service, we will mark the end of our church school year, transition into summer church school, recognize our graduating high school seniors, and honor those children who've contributed to our worship life by being acolytes, choir members and church school students, as well as the amazing volunteers who teach and serve our children!

Transitions inspire us to name and to celebrate what we've accomplished, with God's help; and they energize us with excitement about what is ahead. And yet,

they give rise to more difficult, contemplative emotions, too. Such as sadness, for what is ending. Or anxiety about whether tomorrow's promise will fulfill our hopes.

In a word, transitions are bittersweet. They are a heady, often unpredictable swirl of feelings, both high and low, both elated and unnerving. And it's good for us to name this, not only because it ensures we attend to transitions holistically, but because it allows us to understand how the early Christians felt as they transitioned from life with Jesus physically among them to life (and ministry) after Jesus ascended to heaven.

Surely, the disciples felt a sense of gratitude for what Jesus had empowered them to accomplish by his side. Surely, they felt energized by Christ's commission to baptize the nations. Yet, just as surely, they felt sad about Jesus' absence. Just as surely, they worried if they were up to evangelism's colossal call.

And so we need not guess about how grateful and how reassured, how steadied

and grounded, how empowered and how accompanied our early church ancestors felt when, amidst their transition, God poured the Holy Spirit out upon them. We need not guess, because God continues to pour that same Holy Spirit out upon us. Amidst all life's change, the Spirit is our guiding, abiding constant. It is heaven's breath in our flagging lungs. It is Christ's "Yes!" that transforms our uncertainty. It is the healing energy that bridges past and present and future. And it is the power of God's love come alive that we recognize, in so many special ways, in our ministry to our youth and (equally) in their ministry to us.

Thanks be to God for the deep teaching of life's transitions, and for the Spirit who rises through them, again and again and again.

God's Peace,

Jeff

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Summer Office Hours

The church office's summer office hours will begin Monday, June 20 and end Friday, September 2. The office will open at 8:30 a.m. and close at 1:30 p.m. during that time period.

◆
Hospitalized?

If you or someone you know is in a hospital or a nursing home, please inform the church office at 203-272-5323. Federal law prohibits health care facilities from giving out this information.

June Worship Schedule

Sunday, June 5: Services at 9:00 and 11:00. Jeff Braun preaching. Communion will be served. Food offerings will be received; the food of the month is breakfast cereal.

Sunday, June 12: Single service at 10:00; Jeff Braun preaching. Pentecost; Confirmation Sunday. A special reception will follow to honor the Confirmands and their Faith Guides.

Sunday, June 19: Single service at 10:00; Children's Sunday.

Sunday, June 26: Services at 9:00 and 11:00. The Rev. Peggy Allen preaching.

The Rev. Peggy Allen will be available for pastoral emergencies from morning of June 24 through 3 p.m. on June 26. Peggy can be reached at home at 203- 272-3654 or by cell at 203-317-9186.

The Rev. John Afman available for pastoral emergencies from 3 p.m. June 26 through midnight June 27. (John can be reached at home at 203-235-6294.)

Come to the Strawberry Fest

This year's Strawberry Festival is Saturday, June 11, from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on the church Green.

All the usual treats (especially strawberry shortcake) will be there, along with many fun activities for kids, music, booths from our church, and much more.

Our Church's Part in a Real-Life Miracle

You may recall seeing the name of Andrew Nitirouth on the weekly prayer list for many months. Let me tell you about him. Andrew is a senior at the Hopkins School, whom I have coached in football and lacrosse since he started at Hopkins in the seventh grade. "Niti," as he is known at Hopkins, is small in stature, but has a very big heart. He is also one of the nicest young men that I have had the privilege to coach.

But last spring, Niti was diagnosed with leukemia, and almost immediately started chemotherapy. That's when he went on our prayer list.

During one of his chemo sessions, Niti suffered a stroke and went into a coma, possibly brought on by the medication.

The doctors told Niti's parents that he might not survive, but that if he did, he would most likely be paralyzed on his entire right side, and might never speak.

Beginning on that first day in a coma and throughout the summer, Hopkins football and lacrosse players visited Niti in the hospital. Niti gained consciousness four days after the stroke. That's when he received one of our prayer pagers. On one occasion when I visited Niti in his hospital room, he said, "Hey Coach – watch this!" and raised his right arm above his head. The players kept visiting him, every day, even when he went to Gaylord Hospital



last July to begin rehabilitation. Niti had stated from the beginning that he was not going to let the leukemia win, and we were all now expecting a miracle.

The miracle happened. Today Niti has no signs of leukemia, and he is playing lacrosse for me this spring. Yes, he wears a small brace on his lower right leg, and has lost a little bit of his speed, but Niti is back! And he is an inspiration to every student at Hopkins.

Both Niti and his parents have told me that they believe that the prayers of the First Congregational Church of Cheshire significantly contributed to Niti's present day's health, and they have asked me to thank all of you who were praying for him.

Miracles do happen, and this church was part of one!

Ford Cole



Prison Ministry Exploration

In response to the interest expressed on Outreach Sunday, 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.

Doings of the Board of Outreach

Thank you to the congregation for your support for Food for All week. We were able to divide almost \$1,000 between the Cheshire Food Pantry and the World Vision hunger relief program. The church was also able to donate more than \$1,800 from our special offering to Japan earthquake relief through Church World Service. Finally, the Board of Outreach was able to allocate \$1,000 to support our YUTES summer mission trip, helping to insure that all our interested young people can participate in this hands-on service work.

Through these contributions, we've reached out in love to neighbors in Cheshire and throughout the world, to people facing long-term hunger and to people coping with a sudden disaster, and we are sowing seeds in the younger generation to value service to others as part of their call to be followers of Jesus.

Baby bottle coin banks: Baby bottles are available at church for the first two weeks of June. Take home a bottle to use as a coin bank and return it to church by June 19. The donations will be used to sponsor the two girls we support through our Malawi mission and to purchase needed items for the children who are sheltered with their mothers at the Chrysalis House in Meriden. We also welcome donations of small items for babies.

Mission: Interesting in learning more about possible future mission trips? The Board of Outreach plans to invite Rev.

Peter Allen this month to talk about the Simply Smiles mission in Mexico, a project started by a member of the Naugatuck Congregational Church. This is part of our exploration of possible future mission trip sites. Please watch the weekly e-mails from church for more information, or contact Peggy Allen at 203-272-3654.

Plants: Buy your tomato plants from the Board of Outreach: The Board will have a table at the Strawberry Festival again this year. We will have large tomato plants ready for you to put right into your gardens along with other plants for house and garden.

Prison Ministry: We have made plans for a visit to the Manson Correctional Center, guided by our own Lorrie Canas. If you would like to be part of this visit, please contact Peggy Allen to see if there is room in the tour: 203-272-3654.



Learn to Knit

Here's an invitation: to girls and boys who would like to learn to knit, and to adults who might like to refresh their knitting skills. This summer, a group of several women from the Caring Crafts group will teach and mentor youth of the church who would like to learn this needle art. We will try to meet weekly and will meet in the late afternoon or early evening, depending on interest and schedules; day and time to be determined. If you or your children are interested please call Kathy Duffendack at 203-272-2885.

Christian Education in June

Caroll's Corner: June is the month that we celebrate our fathers, or the men in our lives who mean the most to us. I, for one, have a wonderful father whom I love very much. He wasn't always perfect, but he was always loved and respected by his family. Not everyone has or had what they would consider a wonderful father; but I want to tell you that no matter what kind of earthly father you have, the creator of our world wants to be that kind of father for you. Our God created our universe and everything in it. He knowingly and lovingly created you in your mother's womb. He sent his one and only son to die for your sins and grant you eternal life. For all who seek will find peace, comfort and love in the arms of our creator.

This Father's Day, if you are lucky enough to have a dad or special someone you love very much, make a special effort to let him know just how much he means to your family. Show dad some extra respect. Pray for him daily; ask that God keep him healthy and wise. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord who finds great delight in his commands. (Psalm 112:1)

My prayer for you this month is that you would take the time to show extra love and respect for the special men in your lives, and that God will build them up to be great and kindly leaders for their families. I also pray that you all would take time to get closer to your Heavenly Father. Spend time in God's word and try each

and every day to get into a closer relationship with your Lord and savior.

Christian Education Update: I love the chance to come into your homes every month and personally let you know what's going on in Christian Education. This school year is ending with a bang. Children's Sunday is June 19, and in honor of our teachers, helpers, fathers, choirs and children, we have an after-worship Sundaes Spectacular planned. Our children have been working very hard on Children's Sunday — you won't want to miss this very special worship service.

We have also sent out a letter to all the parents of our children in our program asking each family to make a commitment of time to their children's Christian education. We are looking toward the future of our Sunday school and the new changes that are going to head us into a bright, organized, fun and productive school year. There will be no surprises or hidden tasks — it really is simple. We need parents to sign up to be part of a team that will teach once every three weeks.

We need teachers, helpers and nursery care workers. If you haven't gotten a letter you can contact me or pick one up in the hallway outside the C.E. office.

Camera needed: Christian Education has an immediate need, and is looking for your generous support. We need a new digital camera to help document our

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events. If you have a heart to help, please see Jacki Hissick or Caroll Cyr.

Summer Sunday School: Summer Sunday school will begin June 26. We are looking for teachers to sign up for a week or two over the summer. We will hold a two-room schoolhouse, one room for grades Pre K- Grade 2 and another for grades 3-8. Materials are all ready for pick up. See Caroll Cyr for more information.

Children's Sunday Practice: We will have two dress rehearsals for Children's Sunday on June 5 and 12 at 10 a.m. (between services) in the Sanctuary and Chapel. All children are requested to be present at these practices.

Vacation Bible School: Summer is coming. Have you made plans for your children? First Congregational is hosting a wonderful week of fun August 8 -12 from 9 a.m. to noon. If you have a child entering Kindergarten to entering sixth grade, VBS registration is open by going online at www.vacationbibleschool.com/firstcongregationalcheshire or by calling the church office. The cost is \$30 per child, \$60 max per family. All payments may be sent directly to the church office attn: Caroll Cyr. We are also looking for helpers that week. There is a signup sheet located on the table in the lobby.

Vacation Bible School Wish List: Assorted buttons, sequins, fabric scraps, safety pins, old CD's or DVD's, denim fabric. And to borrow, hot glue guns; please mark with your name.

Caroll Cyr

Youth Bash!

We'll be celebrating the end of the year with all of the teens involved in various ministries in the church. All those involved in confirmation, midnight run, youth group, and any other high school or middle school teens are highly encouraged to attend.

Here are the details: When: June 5, 3-6 p.m. Where: 30 Minna Ct, Cheshire (Corner of Boulder Road and Half Moon Road). What to bring: 7th-8th grade families bring a dessert to share; 9th-12th graders bring a main dish (casserole, pasta salad, etc.) to share. Hot dogs and hamburgers will be provided. There is a pool, so don't forget your bathing suit!

Sunday, June 19 is Senior High School Recognition Sunday. Please e-mail office@cheshirecongregational.org or call 203-272-5323 and let the church know what your child will be doing after high school graduation: Off to college? To serve in the military? Traveling?

Church Calendar Online

You may now keep up with all upcoming events at First Congregational Church by going online. Visit cheshirecongregational.org and select "Calendar" from the boxes at the top of the home page. It's a quick and easy way to keep up with everything that's happening in our church!

Sundae Ceremony

After the 10 a.m. Children's Sunday worship service, we invite you to join us for a special celebration. Here are the facts:



their pins. Sunday School teachers will be acknowledged. And: Make your own ice cream sundae!

Date: Father's Day, June 19. Time: 11:00 a.m. Place: On the Green. The Acolytes will receive their pins. The Junior and Primary Choirs will receive

Hands Off, Please

During a recent funeral, someone turned off the microphone used in connection with the video recording of worship services. Apparently, this was supposed to be a temporary measure when the choir was not in the choir loft – but whoever turned the microphone off forgot to turn it back on again. As a result, much of the audio portion of the funeral was lost.

This is a reminder to members of the congregation, including the choir, not to touch the audio or video controls. The video crew will soon appoint someone who can adjust microphones when necessary.

What a Tea Party!

On the afternoon of May 1, about 130 girls and women enjoyed an afternoon of tea, wonderful food, a fashion show and most of all, fellowship, in our Parish Hall.

In all of our busy lives, it was nice to take time to laugh and chat and catch up with one another.

Many thanks to all who came, and to those who shared or modeled dresses and loaned us teacups, teapots, and wedding pictures. The team that worked hard to make this happen were: Pam Euerle, Karen Gravino, Martha Lape, Sue Mancinelli, Kathy Duffendack, Jackie Cole, Ginni Donovan, Carol Cummings, Linda Milton, Kate Altobello, Susan Bishop, Brian Castler, Ken Euerle, Ed Albrecht, Matt McCaffrey and Don Lee.



Anne Giddings was a big part of the planning for this event as well, and she was dearly missed that day. She taught us all to make the most of every day.

Any money left over after tea expenses are paid is being donated in her name to the Capital Maintenance & Repair Fund, one of her many passions.

Jan Garthwait

Telephone and Card Ministries

During my time as Church Secretary/Office Manager at First Congregational Church, I often received calls from older members who had a question to ask, but it quickly became apparent that they just wanted to talk for a while. Recognizing the need for a friendly phone call now and then, I volunteered to start a telephone ministry when I retired.

The Telephone Ministry volunteers make calls to our older members on their birthdays and anniversaries to bring them greetings from their church family and they are pleased to be remembered. While we chat with them, we may also be able to determine what other needs they may have.

If you would like to volunteer to make calls for one month out of the year, or if you have questions, please call or e-mail me. Together we will decide which month works for you; when that month approaches, I will give you a list of people to call and a script to use.

The Card Ministry started with the pew prayer card that allowed you to indicate that you would like a card sent to someone. Now volunteers send get well, thinking of you, sympathy, encouragement, and thank-you cards to members of our congregation or to those requested by a member. It is just one way of letting individuals know that their church family is thinking about them.

The cards and stamps are provided by Parish Care and the names and addresses of recipients are emailed to the volunteer

as they are received. It averages two to five cards per month per volunteer. If you would like to be a part of this Card Ministry or if you have questions, please call me at 203-272-9327 or email me at mlape@aol.com.

Help us show Christ's love by becoming a volunteer!

Martha Lape



A Prayer for Stewardship

A recent Board of Stewardship meeting opened with this prayer: "Dear God, the real meaning of stewardship starts from the strength of our faith. We live our faith first. We contribute our money to support our faith when we are committed. Help us share this vision with our congregation."

That short prayer tells a meaningful truth about what stewardship really is. Yes, it has to do with contributing money to the church. But at a more profound level, stewardship is not so much committing cash as committing ourselves to what we believe. In our ever more commercial world, "money" sometimes sounds like something people of faith should avoid. But beyond the talk of dollars and budgets, there must be the understanding that with God's help, we are able to turn money into mission and ministry.

The Board of Stewardship

Meet Promise Mchenga

If you were lucky, you got to meet Promise Mchenga when he visited us a couple of months ago. If you didn't get the chance, you can meet him at the Strawberry Festival on June 11. Promise has the gift of grace and a life story that will astonish and inspire you.

Our church, through the Malawi Mission Team, helped put Promise through the African Bible College. He is now serving the Urban Promise Ministries in Newark, N.J. He was recently awarded a tuition scholarship to Asbury Theological Seminary, where he will study for a Master's degree in Christian Leadership. His hope is to establish a nonprofit organization in Malawi to help and inspire children.

When you meet Promise, you can ask him about walking two hours to high school each way, encountering wild animals and crossing rivers. Or you might learn how he helped a grade school boy in Newark win a Martin Luther King Day speech contest.

So either before you eat your strawberry shortcake or after, look for the young man with the wide grin and be prepared to have your heart touched, and to be proud of our church's important role in his education.

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

A Yarn Donation

The Caring Crafts group has received a generous donation of yarn from Bob Giddings; it was Anne Giddings' supply. We have five bins of worsted weight yarn, sorted by color.

If you knit mittens, hats, scarves, prayer shawls, lap blankets, baby blankets, afghans, or sweaters for donation and would like some yarn please let me know, and I can meet you at the church and you can select some.

This is a good time to plan ahead for the Mitten Tree during Advent, and for Midnight Run. In some colors, we have more than 10 skeins. If you need patterns, we can also supply those, and other suggestions for donation sites.

Any and all knitters are welcome to share in our supply. For more information or for yarn, contact Kathy Duffendack 203-272-2885.

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.

Jackie Cole, Bobbie Porter, and Marianne Eagleson share the responsibility of coordinating the Meals Ministry rotating leadership every two months. To help, contact Jackie: jackie.cole@cox.net or 203-271-9041

Lectionary for June

Sunday, June 5: Acts 1: 6-14; Psalm 68: 1-10, 32-35; 1 Peter 4: 12-14, 5: 6-11; John 17: 1-11.

Sunday, June 12: Acts 2: 1-21; Numbers 11: 24-30; Psalm 104: 24-35; 1 Corinthians 12: 3-13; John 7: 37-39; John 20: 19-23.

Sunday, June 19: Genesis 1: 1-4; Psalm 8; 2 Corinthians 13: 11-13; Matthew 28: 16-20.

Sunday, June 26: Genesis 22: 1-4; Psalm 13; Psalm 89: 1-18; Jeremiah 28: 5-9; Romans 6: 12-23; Matthew 10: 40-42.

Milestones

in the life of our church family

Baptisms

Olivia Grace Conoscenti, child of Cristin Macchiarulo and Steve Conoscenti, great-granddaughter of Carol Cummings, May 15.

Mckenzie Busbee, child of Jessica Gagné and Todd Busbee, May 22.

Gavin Henry, child of Todd and Jennifer Henry, May 22.

Weddings

Jessica Warzeniak and Jason Youngblood, May 21.

Deaths

Anne Roede Giddings, wife of Bob Giddings, mother of Robert Giddings and Charlotte Giddings Gillespie, April 25.

We Say Thanks

Thank you all so very much for the use of the prayer pager. It was such a comfort to hear it buzzing day and night. You can't believe what a help it was. I found the strength to keep going from all the prayers.

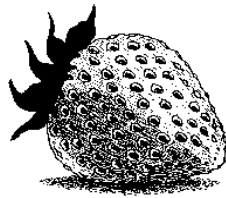
Thomas and JoAnn Bouteiller

The Rev. Jeff Braun delivered a wonderful memorial service on April 1 for my father, Jerry Beach. My brother Jeff and I spent a few hours talking with Rev. Jeff as we carefully planned the service. The service was so eloquent and personable. Jeff really captured the sense of who our dad was. He is a treasure to First Congregational Church, and my family and I are so grateful for his work. I will always look back at that day and feel blessed and comforted by the experience. I wish to thank Leslie Holmes Meyer and Michael Lombardi from the office for their guidance, Joe D'Eugenio for his musical talents, and Joellyn Jason and Pat Turner for their time and efforts. And to the extended church family, thank you for your kind words, the sympathy cards received, and the wonderful lily brought to my home by Kirsten Sullivan. Your kindness and generosity was appreciated and helped to soften the difficulty felt after losing my dad.

Julie Witte

And the following wrote to express thanks for having received Easter lilies: *Nancy Dayton, Dolores Bozzuto, Jeanne Zook, Marie Venter, Lorna Fowler, Irene Drufva, and Ruth and Magnus Hansen.*

HOT DOGS & HAMBURGERS ★ KIDS' GAMES ★ CLOWNS
MAGIC SHOW ★ PONY RIDES ★ MUSIC ★ PETTING ZOO
AND STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE!



THE 74TH ANNUAL
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

CESHIRE STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

SATURDAY, JUNE 11

ON THE GREEN IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH
(ROUTE 10, CESHIRE)

11 A.M. TO 4:30 P.M.

FREE PARKING BEHIND THE CHURCH
RAIN MOVES THE FESTIVAL INDOORS