

PARISH POST

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

CHESHIRE
CONNECTICUT

Volume XXIV

March, 2007

No.3

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary

Church School for Pre-school 3 through Junior High and
Nursery/Toddler care at both hours

Sunday, March 4 – (Second Sunday in Lent): 9 & 11 Worship and Church School, Communion and **Food Offerings**; David Buchan preaching; Coffee hours at 10 and 12; the lessons are Psalm 27, Philippians 3:17 – 4:1; Luke 13:31 – 35; **Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18**

Sunday, March 11 – (Third Sunday in Lent): 9 & 11 Worship and Church School; Alison McCaffrey preaching; Coffee hours at 10 and 12; the lessons are Isaiah 55:1-9, 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, Luke 13:1-9, **Psalm 63:1-8**

Sunday, March 18 – (Fourth Sunday in Lent): 9 & 11 Worship and Church School; David Buchan preaching; Coffee hours at 10 and 12; the lessons are Joshua 5:9-12, Psalm 32, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, **Luke 15:1-3 and 11b-32**

Sunday, March 25 – (Fifth Sunday in Lent): 9& 11 Worship and Church School; David Buchan preaching; Coffee hour at 10 honoring Jessie Waszmer's years of work with the church; the lessons are Isaiah 43:16-21, Psalm 126, Philippians 3:4b-14, **John 12: 1-8**



LENT HAS BEGUN

*A message from Interim Senior Minister
Dave Buchan*

We are now in the season of Lent, a time of spiritual contemplation and nourishment as we prepare for the celebration of Easter. In this time, we recognize our need for God and for one another. Our focus is on the cross of Christ and its meaning for our lives. We relive again those events and encounters in Christ's life which led up to the crucifixion.

In keeping with this, my sermon series

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A LETTER FROM YALE DIVINITY SCHOOL

*The following letter was received by the church in
mid-February:*

Thanks for Welcoming Intern Lisa Horst

At Yale Divinity School, internships are courses in the curriculum devoted to helping students enter the profession of ministry by letting them learn to practice ministry under the supervision of a seasoned practitioner.

For these reasons, the optimal context for an internship is one of stability and consistency. Lisa Horst's internship, as you know, has taken place during a time of transition at First Congregational Church, under two different supervisors. It has been a time when the church has been necessarily (and understandably) focused on internal matters such as saying goodbye, receiving new leadership, assessing both past and future, recalling memories, and generally responding to the myriad challenges that any time of transition brings.

I know that Lisa has learned a great deal and has valued the opportunities she has had of getting to know you and ministering with you during this time.

We have decided, however, that given these transitional circumstances, it would be fitting to make this a six-month internship rather than the eight-month one originally anticipated. I write to let you know that Lisa Horst's internship with you will be concluding this week, and to thank you for your support of her and of the internship program at Yale Divinity School.

Alison McCaffrey has been an able and especially dedicated supervisor. David Buchan has reached out to Lisa and welcomed

her. As a congregation, you have received Lisa graciously and in various ways have affirmed her gifts for ministry. I thank you all for that.

I trust that Yale Divinity School will in the future again have the opportunity to place an intern in your midst, and I look forward to continuing the long relationship we have enjoyed with your church.

*Barbara J. Blodgett
Director of Supervised Ministries
Yale Divinity School*



Lisa's Message to Our Church:

Dear First Church,

I wish to write to thank you sincerely for the gracious hospitality in your church this year. I am so grateful for the support and encouragement by so many wonderful leaders, ministers, and congregants.

This has been my first opportunity to explore ministry in a congregation and I have greatly appreciated your kind words, warmth, and faith throughout my time and explorations.

My supervisors Rick Dacey and Alison McCaffrey, as well as Dave Buchan and all of the staff, have been invaluable in their support and inspirational in their gifts. Although this internship is concluding earlier than anticipated, I have learnt so much and will carry my experiences throughout my further ministry. Thank you for your support in my learning and may God bless you in your journey of faith and continued ministry.

*Peace,
Lisa Horst*

PLANT SHARING

If anyone has perennials they'd be willing to split and share, please call Anne Giddings at 272-9347. Lists of available plants will be posted, so that those who would like to try them in their gardens can sign up.



CHURCH LIBRARY NEWS

These are the latest new library books:

Healing for Life, by David A. Seamands

Interpretation – Ezekiel, by Joseph Blenkinsopp
(A Bible commentary for teaching and preaching)

God's Promises (for your every need), by A. L. Gill, Jr.

In the Presence of God, by David & Vera Mace
(readings for Christian Marriage)

Little Lamb, Who Made Thee?, by W. Wangerin, Jr.
(a book about children and parents)

When Morning Gilds the Skies, by Joni Tada
(Hymns of heaven and our eternal hope, CD included)

Our Hope for Years to Come, by Martin Marty
(the search for spiritual sanctuary)

Children's books

The Tale of Three Trees (a traditional folktale retold by Angela Hunt)

Welcome to this World, by Debby Boone (a love letter to little ones)

We're All Special, by Arlene Maguire

Bananas, Bubble & Busy Bodies – DVD
(discovering God's world...together)

Still missing from the Church Library: *Dreams From My Father* by Barack Obama

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Topic: Jeremiah: Demanding Love

Leader: Debbie Gravell

Dates: Wednesdays, Feb. 21 to April 18

Time, place: 10 a.m., Parlor

We will use a study guide from the Life Guide Bible Study series. In this study of Jeremiah, we will get a glimpse of what it is like to have a personal relationship with God. You will see a message of love that grows



from a relationship of love – a hard love, a demanding love, but love nevertheless.

We will also discuss and discover how we can grow in our own personal relationship with God. Jeremiah at times used symbols to get his message across to the people. We will look at these symbols and the messages that accompany them. We use a study guide each week which is available throughout the study. The cost of the study book is \$7.00. Babysitting is available.

You are welcome to join us when you can, and be away when you must. Each week stands by itself. We read the Scriptures together, share reflections on the scripture and close with prayer requests. All women of the church are welcome.

STEPPING STONES 5TH-6TH YOUTH GROUP

In January we made Valentine boxes and cards for our college youth as well as poster cards for the children at the Cromwell Children's Home.

In February, Amy Webb-Mower talked with the group about the Malawi mission project and how they can help.

- ☛ **Save the Date: Friday, March 16**
Parish Hall from 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Stepping Stones: Watch your mailbox for a postcard with details.

BIBLE JOURNEYS GRADES 2 TO 6

The Workshop Rotation Model we call Bible Journeys has been continuing to inspire and excite the children in grades 2-6. In March, they will have experiential lessons on the Lord's Supper. The summaries below will describe briefly what will happen in each workshop.

Thou art (Room 8)

Children will view pictures of paintings of the Last Supper and talk about what they see in them. After some discussion about the artists painting, children will have an opportunity to paint a picture of the Lord's Supper as if Jesus were eating the meal at their house.

Red Sea Productions (Room 9)

Children will hear the teacher in costume dramatize the story of the Lord's Supper through the eyes of the disciple Matthew. They will read the story in Luke 22:14-20 from their Bibles. They will experience a

communion meal together dramatizing it as a class. Discussion will follow.

Desert Tales (Room 10)

Children will discuss what our church believes about Communion. They will watch the video the Gospel of Matthew in the Visual Bible. Children will use several of their senses to watch, listen and imagine the story of the Lord's Supper.

Gospel Games (Room 11)

Younger grades will play a memory game about the Lord's Supper and a game about the elements of communion. Older grades will play a game and create a life size movable crossword.

CONFIRMATION

A great retreat with 90 other confirmands from all over the state was enjoyed by the members of this year's confirmation class at Silver Lake Conference Center in Sharon on February 2-4. The group became closer as a class, and closer in their relationship to God. They met some new friends and enjoyed games, activities and small group discussions.

Reminder: Information about snow cancellation of Confirmation:

If public schools in Cheshire are canceled, there is no confirmation. If they are dismissed early due to inclement weather, there is also no confirmation. If snow arrives late in the day and you are unsure, call 272-5323, Ext. 16, and listen for a message, or call Debbie Gravell directly at 265-9943.

Church School Schedule

9:00

Date	Thou Art	Red Sea Prod.	Desert Tales	Gospel Games
Mar. 4	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grades 5 & 6	Grade 2
Mar. 11	Grade 5&6	Grades 2	Grade 4	Grade 3
Mar. 18	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grades 2	Grade 5&6
Mar. 25	Grade 2	Grade 5&6	Grades 3	Grade 4

11:00

Date	Thou Art	Red Sea Prod.	Desert Tales	Gospel Games
Mar. 4	Worship	Worship	Worship	Worship
Mar. 11	Grade 3	Grades 2	Grade 5&6	Grade 4
Mar. 18	Grade 4	Grades 5 & 6	Grade 2	Grade 3
Mar. 25	Grade 2	Grade 4	Grade 3	Grades 5 & 6

IMPORTANT TRAINING EVENT FOR THOSE WHO WORK WITH YOUTH

The United Church Board that carries our liability insurance has set some new guidelines for safe church training. The Board of Christian Education is working to get us up-to-date in meeting those guidelines.

In order for us to keep our insurance, all people who work with children and youth must go through a series of training events, and we must keep documentation that everyone was trained. There will be different levels of training for those involved with children and those involved with youth.

Our first event will be held on March 29, from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Parish Hall:

Title: "Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect and Reporting Procedures"

Presenter: Douglas Howard from the state Department of Children and Families

Format: PowerPoint presentation
Training packets for each participant
Sign in Sheet

Participants will receive a copy of our Safe and Nurturing Policy, and will be asked to sign that they received it. Discussion and questions will follow.

☛ **If you work with children or youth of our church in any capacity, please plan to attend.** Those who have not already done so are asked to RSVP to Debbie Gravell: Phone, 272-5323, ext. 16 or e-mail, thirl.gravell@snet.net.

Please call Debbie with any questions or concerns.



NOTES FROM THE ANNUAL MEETING

This year, the Annual Meeting was held on Sunday, following a single worship service. This new format was well received, with nearly 150 attending. Your input on this new format and time is welcome; contact any member of the Executive Board.

A brief *Year in Review* discussion covered the success of Challenge 2006 and the activities of these three teams:

- Communication Task Force, which has studied church communication and developed recommendations for improvements; Henry McNulty, Chair
- Membership Assessment Team, whose goal is to verify membership and contact information; Ruth MacDonald, Chair
- Planning Team, a team planning for the future of the church; Bob Mead, Chair

For more details on any of these initiatives, please contact the chair or any member of the Executive Board.

Wrapping up the *Year in Review* was a recap of the staff changes that took place during 2006, recognition and thanks to the current staff for their hard work and introduction of Interim Senior Minister, the Rev. David Buchan and his wife Patty.

In addition, the following resolutions were made at the Annual Meeting:

- The Annual Report was accepted.
- The report of the Nominating Committee was read and accepted with changes discussed at the meeting.

- 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. Those on the committee are: Harry Black, Ford Cole, Joy Deegan, Patty Dickinson, Regine Hahn-Selzer David Hostage, Amy Webb Mower, Jack Sellati and Kirsten Sullivan.

*Susan D. Hostage, Church President
submitted by Christine Albrecht, Church Clerk*

MEMBERSHIP VERIFICATION PROJECT

Who, exactly, is a member of the First Congregational Church? Who is still an official member of our congregation? Because we're self-governing, knowing who is a member (and who thus can vote) is vital to our governing process.

Salaries for clergy and our pledges to the Connecticut Conference and to the New Haven Association are all based on the number of members on the membership rolls, so we must know who is in active covenant with us – and who is not.

A small team of members has set out to discover this information, because it's been some years since the rolls have been closely examined.

Continued on next page

Specifically, the team is looking for those on the official list who may have moved, changed churches, or otherwise switched their affiliation. We'll be inviting them back if they're willing, and moving them to inactive status or transferring their membership if that's what they'd prefer.

The team will make several attempts to contact these people in person, by phone, by postal mail, by e-mail, or in any other way they can think of. The recommendations will go to the Board of Deacons for final action.

Are you one of these people? If you're getting the Parish Post, yet haven't been in touch with the church in a while, please let us hear from you! Calling to 272-5323, an e-mail to office@cheshirecongregational.org, or a personal visit will tell us that you're still with us!

The Team is: Peggy Allen, Matt Glatt, David Hostage, Mark Hostage, Don Lee [for the Deacons], Ruth MacDonald, and Alison McCaffrey.

ENVISIONING SURVEY

As we travel on our faith journey, it is worthwhile occasionally to review where we have gone, where we believe God is calling to go next, and also to determine what obstacles may lie before us. This process is healthy for us as individuals as well as for our entire church.

The purpose of this survey is to gather your thoughtful and prayerful responses for five basic questions. We ask that you provide answers in each of the five areas. You may use a word or two, a short phrase or a complete sentence.

Your anonymous replies will be used to form the starting point for more extended conversations with the church membership. During these follow-on conversations, we will jointly strive to discern God's will, identify a manageable number of key objectives, and plot a course that will move us towards achieving those objectives over the next three to seven years (2010 and beyond). You will receive more information about these follow-on conversations in the near future.

There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. We encourage you to consider and comment both the spiritual and non-spiritual aspects of the life of the church.

Here are your reply options: (1) e-mail them to: office@cheshirecongregational.org. (2) Place completed survey forms in collection box located in the church parlor (3) Mail the survey to the church office: First Congregational Church, 111 Church Dr., Cheshire, CT 06410-3104

We want to hear from everyone, so please complete the survey and turn it in. Turn in completed surveys no later than Sunday, March 11.

Here are the five questions:

- **STRENGTHS.** Tell us the current strengths of the church. Please provide at least three examples.

- **WEAKNESSES.** Tell us the current weaknesses of the church. Again, provide at least three examples.

NOTE: The "strengths" and "weaknesses" answers discuss the church as it exists right now.

- **OPPORTUNITIES.** Tell us where you believe the church has the most opportunity to grow and to move where God is calling us.

Three or more replies in this section as well.

- **BARRIERS.** As you compare the current condition of the church (strengths and weaknesses) to the opportunities, you may see obstacles that, if not addressed, will hinder our ability to move forward. Tell us about those barriers.

- **THE SUCCESSFUL CHURCH.** Without any constraints, please tell us your vision of a successful church. Once again, please consider both the spiritual and non-spiritual aspects of the life of the church.

TRANSITIONS

BAPTISMS

February 18

Grace Helen Harlow, daughter of David Richard and Ruthann Gilliland Harlow

DEATHS

February 14

Stephen Flaherty, brother-in-law of Joe Madden

February 15

Salvator Monarca, Judy Monarca's father-in-law

HOSPITAL STAYS

If you or someone you know are hospitalized, it's important that you or a family member call the church to tell us, so we can visit and care for you properly. Federal law now prohibits hospitals from giving out patient information, so it's difficult for us to know who's a patient.

PRAYER PAGER UPDATES

Six members or friends of First Congregational Church now carry pagers as part of the Prayer Pager ministry. If you wish these people to know that you have been praying for them, please follow the instructions below.

The following have prayer pagers:

NEW Judy Ozdemirer, prayers for healing, (203) 657-0022

NEW Rich Grudzias: prayers for healing, (203) 657-1120

Bob Mason, prayers of healing for his family, (203) 657-0057

Nancy Milton (John and Alyce Fowler's daughter-in-law), prayers for healing, (203) 657-0017, please call after noon due to the 3-hour time zone difference.

Kevin Webster, prayers for healing, (203) 657-0081

Joe and Jo-Ann Holstein, prayers for healing, (203) 657-0009

INSTRUCTIONS: If you wish to let people know that you have been praying for them, (1) Dial the phone number. The automated voice will say "Please leave your message after the tone."

(2) Enter 777 # – the automated voice will say "Thank you for calling." (3) Hang up. The pager of the person you are calling will sound.



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

On **March 18**, the One Great Hour of Sharing offering will be collected. One Great Hour of Sharing, abbreviated OGHS, is a fund for international relief collected by the United Church of Christ. It supports self-help programs; responds to disasters such as hurricanes, tidal waves, or civil strife; and ministers to refugees.

The UCC unites with eight other Protestant denominations in OGHS, thus multiplying its effectiveness many times over. The funds are administered



by such groups as Church World Service, Action by Churches Together, Foods Resource Bank, and many others in 80 countries.

The OGHS envelope is included with this issue of The Parish Post, and other envelopes will be placed in the pews.

STEPHEN MINISTRY EVENTS

The Stephen Ministry of the First Congregational Church invites members and friends to these educational and informational evening events. Please contact Stephen Ministries leader Sue Chatfield at 235-6294 for more information.

The Living Will: Protect Yourself in the event of incapacity. Atty. Frank Scinto, a member of our church, will discuss your rights

to make decisions about the medical care you receive. He will describe how you can prepare written directions in the event you are unable to participate actively in determining the treatment you receive. Learn how to be proactive on your own behalf. **Wednesday, March 7, 7 p.m., Whiting House.**

Issues of Divorce. Judy Kopman-Fried, MSW, will reflect on the many issues that need to be addressed when couples permanently separate. There will be plenty of time for questions. **Monday, April 3, 7 p.m., Whiting House.**

Understanding Levels of Care. Gail Gianelli, administrator of the Elim Park retirement community in Cheshire, will discuss the different levels of care offered at Elim Park and other facilities. Questions faced by older people, such as "Where should I be?" as well as issues involving independent living, assisted living, skilled nursing care and other situations will be addressed. **Wednesday, May 2, 7 p.m., Whiting House.**

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this year is called “On the Way to the Cross.” We’ll look at the following events and people in those last days of Jesus’ ministry.

Sunday, Mar. 4 “The Garden of Gethsemane” (Luke 22:39-46)

(Sunday, Mar. 11, Alison McCaffrey will preach)

Sunday, Mar. 18 “Pontius Pilate” (Matthew 27:15-25)

Sunday, Mar. 25 “Simon of Cyrene – the Man who Helped Jesus Carry the Cross” (Mark 15:21-24)

I hope you will worship with us in this very special time of the church’s life.

Patty and I would like to thank everyone for the friendly and warm welcome we have received as we enter the life of your congregation. First Congregational Church of Cheshire has a tremendous future of Christian service ahead of it – and it is my honor and privilege to serve as the interim minister of your church.

*In Christ,
Dave Buchan*

EXECUTIVE BOARD

The following items were discussed at the February meeting of the Executive Board:

Communication Task Force

The task force is currently working on two projects aimed at improving congregational communication: improving the church web site in terms of content, appearance, ease of use and timeliness; and reviewing the current process for the Parish Post.

Membership Verification Task Team

This team has begun to verify directory and email information and identified a list of members for follow-up regarding their membership status. In addition, they are looking at the process and criteria used to inactivate a member, with possible changes to be recommended to the by-laws.

By-Laws Review Committee

The By-Laws Review Committee continues to meet with the goal to finish by-laws review by April 30 and present proposed revisions to the Executive Board in May or June.

Staff Updates

- The Youth Director Search Committee is meeting; there are two viable candidates. Recent discussions and meetings have identified questions that need to be answered before a settled position is offered.
- A formal commissioning of the Senior Minister Search Committee will be held at Sunday service; specific date to be determined.

Planning for the Future

- The Planning Team members are Matt Glatt, Bill Gordon, Susan Hostage, Martha Lape, Ruth MacDonald, Donna Mead, Bob & Bobby Porter, Al Worden, and Ellen Wright. The purpose of the team is to conduct an analysis (including profile of membership and various aspects of church life) and provide a report with recommendations pertaining to: current and future ministries; activities and programs; and organizational issues.

Susan D. Hostage, Church President
submitted by Clerk Christine Albrecht