

THE PARISH POST

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

CHESHIRE, CONNECTICUT
www.cheshirecongregational.org

Volume XXVIII

November, 2011

No. 10

Ever Deeper Into Mystery

By Jeff Braun, Senior Minister

In his national best-seller “The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart,” the Rev. Dr. Peter Gomes had this to say about mystery:

“Mystery is not an argument for the existence of God; mystery is an *experience* of the existence of God. Very much like suffering and joy, mystery can often be that [thin] place in which we come to know better who God is, and who we are.”

Gomes, who has since died, goes on to explain how mystery is not the opposite of knowledge but, rather, the opposite of our prideful belief (one might call it our self-defeating wish) that we can know all. Mystery is not merely a problem yet to be explained, a question yet to be answered. For, in the words of Princeton theologian Diogenes Allen: “We do not solve mysteries; we *enter* into them. [And] the deeper we enter into them, the more illumination we get. Still greater depths are revealed to us the further we go.”

Mysteries are great when they promise to bring us good things, when they work

out in a way that give us obvious cause to thank God. We all love that kind of mystery. What we don’t love as much are the mysteries that leave us hanging. We don’t like the mysteries that test our faith, that challenge our deep-held beliefs. We don’t like the mysteries that leave us wondering, “Where is (or where was) God when I needed God most?”

It’s easy to give thanks when confronted by the first kind of mystery: the kind that works out to our pleasure or benefit. It’s not so easy – in fact, it might even feel impossible – to give thanks when confronted by the second kind of mystery: those mysteries that leave us feeling discouraged, bereaved, or distanced from others and from the God we yearn to know is close by.

And yet, as the Good Book itself tells us, one of the ways we can enter most deeply into the mystery that is God, is to give thanks. Unceasingly. Despite the trials we might be facing. It’s a paradox, no doubt. It could feel strange or even

Continued on the next page

Continued from the previous page

self-denying to give thanks when things are not going as we want them to. But giving thanks has tremendous power. Giving thanks re-focuses us on what we do have to be thankful for. Giving thanks helps us to give over to God, to release our own agendas, and to begin to sense God's presence where before we thought Him absent. Giving thanks, in a word, opens us to grace: the grace of Christ, in whom and from whom all mystery flows.

This month, and throughout the year, may our thanksgiving rise not only from our joy, but from our struggles. And may it lead each of us and our church family... deeper, ever deeper, into God's mysterious love and embrace.

God's Peace,

Jeff



'Unwrapping Gifts' Postponed

The program "Unwrapping Your Gifts," originally scheduled to take place on Thursday evenings this fall, has been postponed, because it would conflict with other church programs. It will instead be offered in January and February 2012. The specific times and dates will be announced later in the fall.



Thula Sizwe Postponed

Due to visa complications, the concert by the African song and dance troupe Thula Sizwe, originally scheduled for October 23, has been postponed to the spring. No date has been set.

November Worship Schedule

Sunday, November 6: Memorial Music Sunday. Single worship service at 10:00. Communion will be served. Food offerings will be received; the food of the month is canned fruit.

Sunday, November 13: Services at 9:00 and 11:00.

Sunday, November 20: Thanksgiving Sunday. New Member Sunday. Services at 9:00 and 11:00 .

Sunday, November 27: First Sunday in Advent. Services at 9:00 and 11:00.

An Extra Sunday in 2012

There will be 53 Sundays in 2012. Before you throw this in the "So What?" file, please be aware that if you have made a WEEKLY financial pledge to the church for 2012, that will entail 53 payments, not 52. So, for example, if you pledged \$50 a week, your annual total will be \$2,650, not \$2,600.

Many people who filled out pledge cards wrote in a weekly amount, then multiplied by 52 to get an annual total. As it turns out, for 2012 that's not the right calculation. (The extra Sunday does not affect those who fulfill their pledges monthly, quarterly, or yearly.)

The total 2012 pledge amount of weekly pledgers will be calculated on 53 Sundays, not 52. If anyone wishes to use the 52-week total for next year, please contact Stewardship Board Chair Henry McNulty at hmcnulty@aol.com.

How to Donate at No Extra Cost to You

Almost all members and friends of First Congregational Church give financially to the church – and these gifts are what enable our missions and ministries. But soon, there will be two new ways to donate financially to the church – and it won't cost the donors *one cent* extra. Details are still being worked out, but the new ways are these:

Gift cards. Doubtless you have seen gift cards in supermarkets, drugstores, coffee shops, and many other retail outlets. They are everywhere these days. Available in various denominations – commonly \$10, \$25, \$50, and \$100 – they are perfect for birthdays, anniversaries, graduations or other gift-giving occasions. And they slip so nicely into greeting card envelopes!

When you pay, let's say, \$25 for a \$25 gift card, you get a card that's worth exactly what you pay. But the store selling the card makes a small amount on that sale; that's why they sell them. Now, through an organization that works with nonprofits, our church will have the opportunity to get that small amount on each card sold. The percentages range from 3 percent to 15 percent, depending on which retail card you buy. And the money goes directly to the church.

A huge variety of gift cards is available – much more than you can find in the supermarket. These range from doughnut shops to clothing stores, restaurants, bookstores, online music sources, and hundreds more. These are exactly the

same cards that you can buy anywhere else. They are not restricted or limited in any way. But our church gets the profit.

Gift cards are, as stated above, fine gifts. But they can be used in other ways, too. Almost all of us buy groceries. If, instead of paying a supermarket \$50 cash, you were instead to buy a \$50 gift card at the church and use it when you shop, the result would be the same for you: \$50 worth of food. But the church would get a percentage of that \$50. It's a gift to Christ's work – at no extra cost to you!

Online shopping. Many of us – more and more every year – shop online. Soon, with a program similar to that of gift cards, the church can receive a percentage of your online purchases.

All you need to do is to make a slight change in your online shopping. Here's how it works: Instead of going directly to a retailer's web site, you go to a secure nonprofit site and select the retailer you want. You then instantly are sent to the retailer's website, just as usual, but a small percentage of the money you spend for a purchase will be diverted back to the church. Your online shopping experience is the same – but our church benefits.

Details of both programs are still being worked out. It is hoped these systems will be up and running by the Christmas shopping season. The missions and ministries of our church will be strengthened, and there's not any extra cost for you. Stay tuned for more details on these exciting initiatives.

Pledgers to Be Listed

The Board of Stewardship has received the unanimous support of the Executive Board to publish a list, in the next Annual Report, of those who have made financial pledges to our church for 2012. The purpose is to thank those who have pledged, and to encourage all to do the same. Please note the following:

☞ The listing will be by name(s) only, and will NOT include the amount pledged. The order of listing (probably alphabetical) will also be such that it will not be possible to identify the amount pledged, nor the financial range involved.

☞ Anyone who does NOT want his or her name to be listed should contact Stewardship Board Chair Henry McNulty at hmcnulty@aol.com.

☞ One of the listings will be “Anonymous,” and will be for those who have pledged but do not want their names published.



Chandelier Cleaning

The church’s main chandelier will be cleaned on Tuesday, November 8, at 10 a.m. If you are available then, we could use many volunteers to help with this annual chore. Our goal is to make the sanctuary sparkle before the holidays. We especially need a strong volunteer or two to assist Fred Turner with the raising and lowering of the heavy chandelier. There is a sign-up sheet on the connector table.

Charlie’s Closet

Last year, my Mom was quite ill and under Hospice care. After she passed away, we were left with some medical equipment that was still in working order. I looked for quite some time to find a place that might be able to use it. Finally, I was told about a place in Guilford called Charlie’s Closet. It is run by Guilford Interfaith Ministries, and serves mostly the shoreline communities, but they are always accepting donations. I brought the equipment there and was very happy that they wanted it. It seems like a well-run, very organized, good resource for people in that community.

There may be others in our congregation who have equipment the way I did, and would be glad to have a place to recycle it. I was told they especially need wheelchairs (in good working order), walkers, shower chairs and rollators (the walkers with a seat). And adult Pull-Ups or Depends are always in demand. You can check out the web site, charliescloset.org. Feel free to contact me at 203-271-1103; I would be happy to help you with information and possibly delivery, depending on the equipment.

Chris Albrecht

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

Calendar Change Could Benefit Our Church

At the present time, our church's fiscal year is the calendar year, January 1 to December 31. Our Annual Meeting is held on the last, or the second-to-last, Sunday in January. The purposes of the Annual Meeting are to present, discuss, and vote on our operating budget for the next fiscal year, and to approve the Nominating Committee's slate of new officers, boards and committees.

The church's lay leadership has become more and more aware of the fact that having the Annual Meeting in late January hinders our effectiveness in fulfilling our Church's mission. As part of the Prior President's responsibility to help lead strategic initiatives, Ford Cole has been examining what to do about this issue. One thought was to change the fiscal year, but that turned out to create more problems than it solved.

This summer, another solution came to light, thanks to a meeting with the minister of the Green's Farms Congregational Church in Westport: Keep the fiscal year as is, but move the date of the Annual Meeting to mid-March. We would still vote on the church budget and approve the slate of lay leaders at the Annual Meeting, but we'd do it two months later.

Here are some of the benefits. Such a move would:

- Allow the budget development process to begin later in the calendar year (it presently must start in the summer).

- Alleviate undue pressure on our financial leaders to mail tax documents mailing so close to the Annual Meeting date.

- Only briefly extend the time we operate before finalizing the budget.

- Allow us to shift the annual stewardship campaign strategically to late October and November (with Consecration Sunday on Thanksgiving Sunday, when our focus is naturally on giving thanks, giving back); thereby freeing September and early October to focus more on being back together.

- Allow us to align the annual change in boards, committees, and lay leadership with the program year, instead of making disruptive changes mid-program.

- And allow the performance review process (currently run during summer months and beginning of program year) to be more closely aligned with the program year, and in more engaged, less fractured months.

Another overarching benefit is that this shift would allow us to stop working against ourselves, to stop working at inefficient times, and to demonstrate our willingness to adopt new, more nimble approaches to our challenges.

At its October meeting, the Executive Board unanimously approved the proposal to shift the Annual Meeting to mid-March.

Continued on the next page

Continued from the previous page

However, to change the date of the Annual Meeting requires a vote of the congregation, because the bylaws currently specifically say the meeting shall be in January.

Changing the bylaws is a two-step process. The first step is to read the proposed changes, but not act upon them, at a congregational meeting. The second step, taken at another congregational meeting, is to vote on the changes. Step One will be taken at a congregational meeting in December – the date hasn't been set yet – and Step Two will take place at the Annual Meeting in January.

Ford Cole is interested in addressing members' questions, comments, or opinions regarding this proposal. He can be phoned at (203) 271-9041, e-mailed at fcole7619@cox.net, or interested parties may find him before or after the 9:00 a.m. worship service.

These may seem like radical changes, but we are looking to better the way we are going about things and making them more efficient. We need to be good stewards of our talents. How we approach issues such as this embodies, in a definitive way, our spirituality, our faith, and our sense of call to build our church.



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

Lessons and Carols

The annual service of Lessons and Carols will be held on Sunday, December 18, at 4 p.m. in the Sanctuary.



The Lessons and Carols service uses scripture and music to tell anew the familiar story of Christ's birth through song and word. Traditional carols, anthems, and hymns will be sung by our Senior Choir and congregation.

Please join us then, in the beauty of an early winter afternoon, for this festive and moving candlelight service.



Fall Cleanup Day

Saturday, November 19 is fall clean-up day at the church. Please help our church family clean up the grounds from 9 a.m. to noon. Bring your rakes, blowers, tarps, wheelbarrows and other tools for the removal of leaves. All groups and all ages are invited to participate. In case of inclement weather, the postponement date is December 3.



Christian Education in November

Caroll's Corner: As we enter into the season of Thanksgiving, I am always aware of just how much I have to be thankful for. A wonderful husband, children, great neighbors, family, and friends, just to name a few. This year, it seems I have even more to give thanks for. As many of you know, my 19-year-old nephew went through a liver transplant, and what a roller coaster of emotions that was. Most days, I truly had to pray through the days just to get through without being overcome by tears. I leaned on my faith more than I have in years. You never know what's going to happen. Things seem to be going along just fine, and something happens that shakes everything up.

I am truly thankful that I have a faith that will take me through the hard times.



I'm thankful for doctors and organ donors and for God for seeing all of us through this season in our lives. We have a wonderful church full of caring and prayerful people. I am thankful for all of you and your prayers. We must never take for granted our fellow members in our faith community, for it is in community that we can stand tall and we are not alone. Thank you for your prayers and for standing alongside me as my new church family. You all are one of the things I am thankful for this Thanksgiving.

I hope you all have a blessed holiday and truly count your every blessing. Take time to count them, name them, and thank God for them.

Caroll Cyr

UNICEF: If your child went trick or treating for UNICEF, all donations can be given to their Sunday school teachers on November 6.

Operation Christmas Child: There is still time to pack a shoe box for a child in need. Boxes are available in the lobby and outside the Christian Education office. Please pick up a pamphlet for your packing label and don't forget the \$7 donation towards shipping. Thank you very much for your part in putting a smile on a child's face this Christmas. All donations should be brought to the church on November 13.

Malawi Concert: Calling all Vacation Bible school children! The Board of Outreach has asked any child who attended our summer program this year to sing two songs for the very special concert to benefit people in Malawi on November 20. For more information, please see Kim Tabor or Amy Webb.

Christmas Pageant: Yes, it's that time of year again ... calling all children and parents! Our pageant will take place on December 11 at 4 p.m., followed by refreshments. We will have auditions on November 6 at 11:15 a.m. (it's a single service Sunday) immediately after worship

Continued on the next page

Continued from the previous page

in Room 10. All practices will take place at 10:15 a.m. SHARP between services every Sunday throughout the month of November.

There will be a blocking rehearsal on Sunday, December 4 from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. (cheese pizza will be served), and a dress rehearsal on December 10 from 10 a.m. to noon. Make sure you check your calendar for these dates before auditioning.

We need all children, especially those with speaking parts, at all rehearsals. It will be fun!

Christian Education is looking for parents to help out with the Christmas Pageant. We are looking for three parents to help out with picking and organizing costumes; three parents to help kids with their lines; and three parents to help guide children through the program.

If you would willing to be an extra set of hands, please see Caroll Cyr.

Advent Workshop: The season of Advent is almost here. We invite you all to a special Advent event on November 27 at 5 p.m.

We will start off with a pot luck dinner and then move on to Christmas crafts, Advent wreaths, and making cards for our homebound members. There will something for everyone, from children through senior citizens. If you would like to come just for dinner, that's fine too – just come, and let's start Advent as a church family. There is a sign-up sheet in the lobby.

Baby Basket Ministry

Our church's contributions to the Baby Basket Ministry benefit needy women and their newborn babies, through Waterbury Hospital and Bristol Hospital. Donations are brought

from
Cheshire to
the
Waterbury
Church of
Christ,



where a team assembles laundry baskets filled with five or six outfits for each season of the baby's first year.

Here's how you can help this important outreach. What's needed is a collection of new and good quality used baby clothing, shoes, bibs, blankets, toys, towels and washcloths, and new baby toiletries.

These are collected all the time, but especially on the third Sunday of each month. Please use the baby bassinet in the Parlor on the third Sunday of the month for collections. The rest of the month, the bassinet can be in Parlor or in the Parish Hall.

For further information, contact Patti Dickinson at 203-271-7003. Also, please see the Waterbury Church of Christ's website at: www.basketministry.org.



Hospitalized?

If you, or someone in the congregation, is in the hospital, please tell the church office. Federal law prevents hospitals from releasing the names of patients.

Amazing Grace(s)

During a recent Children's Time in worship, I shared a message about saying grace at dinner. I had collected a few graces for families to choose from, and I encouraged the children to say grace that night at dinner (maybe the start of a family ritual?). The children and I practiced one before they went to their classes.

After worship, several members came to me with their memories of saying grace.

There was a traditional one with long forgotten words a grandparent would always say; a funny one that went "For scrambled eggs and buttered toast, Thank Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;" a story of siblings clambering to hold the grace plaque while the other offered the words; a warm memory of a long ago table with extended family gathered, holding hands.



With such interest and memories sparked, it seems we've tapped into something here: a desire to share prayer at home but perhaps not knowing how or where to start. Maybe it's in saying grace together.

I'd like to collect your favorite table graces and create a booklet to offer to our congregation, family, and friends for use. I invite you to send them by e-mail to me at revalison@onelane.org, or by postal mail. You can also share a memory, if you wish, of why this grace is special to you.

I will need them by Sunday, November 13, and will have the booklet ready for Thanksgiving Sunday, November 20.

Here's one of my favorites that my dad used to say: "Bless this food to our use and us to thy loving and faithful service. And make us ever needful of the minds of others. Amen." I look forward to receiving yours.

Blessings,
Alison



Our Thanksgiving Meal

It is hard to believe, but we as a congregation will be celebrating our third annual Thanksgiving Day Meal and fellowship this year. This program, sponsored by our Deacons, is designed to reach out to our church members and families to offer a warm festive and comforting place to celebrate our national holiday giving thanks to God. We have grown from our first event with 32 friends attending to an increase of 74 friends attending last year. Our dinner will take place at 2 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day in the Parish Hall, starting with our prayer.

The way in which we run the event is as special as the day itself. The Deacons prepare the turkey, but we ask all who can, to add a special personal touch to the event, by making their family favorite special dish to share. This adds such a meaningful and personal dimension to our event. Please do not feel you can't attend if you don't make a dish; we always have

Continued on the next page

Continued from the previous page

plenty to share and value your fellowship.

For planning, please let us know you're coming. A signup sheet will be located near the office – or a phone call to Leslie in the office, ministers Jeff or Alison, or even a call to a Deacon will suffice. There are many different reasons to attend, and we respect every one. Please join us!

Jim Parys, for the Deacons



'Unbroken' Invitation

The First Congregational Church Book Club extends an invitation to their November book club meeting to ALL members of the church who have read the current best-seller "Unbroken" by Laura Hillenbrand. This the true story of a WWII soldier's survival and of his resilience and redemption through extreme events.

The members of the book club feel this is a book that would greatly benefit from a discussion with both the male and female points of view. The meeting will take place Monday, November 7, at 7 p.m. at the Meads' home, 15 Conifer Drive, Hamden. If you plan to attend, please let Donna Mead know at 203-248-9576 so that we can have enough space.



Thanksgiving Donations

Once again, our congregation will be putting together Thanksgiving meals for 50 families in the care of the state Department of Children and Families of

Waterbury. Each dinner includes non-perishable food items and a frozen turkey for a family of six. If you are able to help, please sign up on the Outreach bulletin board so we can get an actual count.

Here are some suggestions for non-perishable goods. It's only a guide, as everything you offer is greatly appreciated: Boxed or bagged stuffing, packaged mashed potatoes or a bag of potatoes (if purchased right before delivery), canned yams, canned beans, canned corn, canned cranberry sauce, canned gravy, boxed pie(s), cookies, packaged rolls, olives, nuts, juice, coffee, napkins, paper plates and candles. These should be in cardboard boxes, because the canned goods are heavy and bags might break. If you need one, boxes will be available Sunday, November 13 at coffee hour sponsored by Covenant for Caring.

Please drop off your dinner fixings to the church parish hall between 9 a.m. and noon on Sunday, November 20, or in the church parking lot between 7:30 and 9:30 a.m. Monday, November 21.

You may also donate a frozen turkey and a disposable aluminum pan in which to cook it. Due to lack of storage for 50 frozen turkeys, if at all possible, please drop off frozen turkeys on Monday, November 21 between 7:30 and 9:30 a.m. There will be drive up service in the back church parking lot. If that's not convenient, Sunday, November 20 from 9 to noon is OK.

Please call Christine Fitzmaurice at 203-272-1472 or Beth Ross at 860-426-0702 if you need your donations picked up.

Outreach and Mission in November

Mission: 1 – First Congregational Church is taking part in the United Church of Christ's Mission: 1 project to combat hunger. Our goal is to collect 1,111 items of non-perishable food between November 1, 2011 and November 11, 2011 (that is, between 11/1/11 and 11/11/11). Most months we collect about 100 items for our food bank donations, so we will need to increase our donations this month in order to reach that goal. Half of our donations will be contributed locally to the Cheshire Food Bank as part of the Cheshire Food Drive, which runs at the same time. The other half will go to the Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministries food pantry, and any cereal donated will go to the FISH food pantry in New Haven.

You may bring your non-perishable food donations to church on Sunday, November 6 or on weekdays between 1/1/11 and 1/11/11. There will be a large bin in the 'crossroads' to collect the donations. Sunday donations may be placed at the communion table as usual. Hunger is a reality for some in our town and in our nearby communities. We can make a difference! Jesus said, 'I was hungry and you gave me food.... Truly, just as you did this for one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did this for me.'

Lights of Hope: Lights of Hope is scheduled for November 12 this year. We are looking for your help so we can once again illuminate not only the Green but

also our church. This is a visible display of our care for our neighbors. Ten luminaries cost \$10. If you would like to purchase luminaries, please put your donation in the offering plate with 'Lights of Hope' in the memo line of the checks or with 'Lights of Hope' written on an envelope containing a cash donation. We also need help assembling the luminaries, placing them on the Green, and lighting them on November 12. If you would like to help, please sign up on the sheet in the lobby.

Midnight Run: All are invited to meet Mike Guidone, the coordinator of the New Haven Midnight Run. He will come to part of our Midnight Runners meeting (our middle school youth) on Monday, November 28 from 6:45 until 7:15 to talk with them and with anyone who is interested about the Run.

The Midnight Run will go on November 28 this month. Please sign up to contribute ingredients for the 55 meals we bring to the New Haven Green and a men's homeless shelter. Used men's clothing in good condition is also needed and well as trial sized toiletries, backpacks, towels or blankets, flashlights, umbrellas, and (always needed) new men's underwear and socks. Food donations should be left in the kitchen (perishable food in the fridge) and clothing and toiletries in the yellow bin in the fellowship hall.

Continued on the next page

Continued from the previous page

Angel Tree: Angel Tree is a new ministry this year. Through this project, our church is reaching out to the children of incarcerated people from neighboring towns.

The desire is to bring these children hope through the Good News, reconciling the people in prison with their children during Christmas.

The gifts we provide will be given to the children on behalf of their jailed parent, along with a note from the parent. Already we have volunteers to contact families to find out what each child needs, and also hopefully to learn of a gift that is not filling a need but would be just a joy.

We also have volunteers to deliver the gifts. We are now looking for sponsors to buy and wrap one gift each, costing between \$15 and \$25, for the 25 children for whom we will provide gifts.

On Sunday, November 20, you will have an opportunity to volunteer to sponsor a child. Look for the “Angel Tree” display set up in the Parlor between services.

A sign-up sheet and Angel tag with your child's name and gift giving ideas will be available. Wrapped gifts are due at the Church by Dec. 10. Know that by sponsoring a child you are making a positive change in the life of that child.

The Board of Outreach



Remember our less fortunate neighbors

Christmas Bakers Wanted

Thanks to the bounty and selection of cookies made by the congregation, the Cookie Walk has been a booming success for our Christmas Fair. The event provides a variety of homemade goods to freeze for the holidays or serve as hostess or teacher gifts. It is truly the efforts of all of you fine cooks that make it fun and the talk of the town. Each year, we sell out to the last crumb!

Now it's time to start thinking about this year's Christmas Fair (Saturday, December 3).

A signup sheet is in the connector near the back door entry. Please list your name, phone number, and e-mail address in case we have last minute questions or information.

If you want your containers returned to you after the fair, please make sure to label the dishes under the platter (not on the plastic it is wrapped in, because it may be inadvertently tossed). The containers or dishes that are to be reclaimed will be washed and ready for pickup in the kitchen on a side counter by Sunday, December 4.



We would love your recipe! If you attach the recipe to your cookie contribution, we will add it to the First Congregational Church Cookbook for

Continued on the next page

Continued from the previous page

next year. How nice to have so many bakers collected together as a clear sign of “many hands working together” for our church.

Please bring the cookies either Friday, December 2, anytime or Saturday, December 3 before 9:00 a.m. The fair will begin at 9:00, and we are often the first table approached!

The buyers will purchase either a small or large container for a fixed price. Also available will be mugs filled with dipped chocolate items, fudge, etc., wrapped for gifts as well as cookbooks (full price) or additional inserts for those who have the book (for a nominal cost).

If you have any questions, please contact Regan at huntley6@cox.net, Melanie at melpiv@gmail.com or Jan at jbcowles@sbcglobal.net. Blessings to each one of you who have made this such a successful church venture.



Youth Group News

Our youth group year is in full swing. Our Wednesday night FUEL meetings are open to all youth in middle and high school. Feel free to come check us on the first and third Wednesdays of each month at the church.

S.A.W.: We had our first SAW (Service Along the Way) event on October 15. We participated in the Big Day of Serving in Danbury alongside more than 500 other young people from the area. Our group

was assigned to work at Jericho Partnership Inc., an umbrella organization that provides a facility, staff, administrative costs, and grants to allow nine autonomous ministries to serve the community including a homeless shelter, transitional housing, after-school program to at-risk students, and a free health care clinic to children that are uninsured or underinsured. We put some spackle and paint on an all-purpose room, shampooed and vacuumed an office area, made 81 bag meals for the homeless, and planted some mums. Thank you to all those who participated, as well as Kevin Ross and Cameron MacDonald for joining us.

Our next SAW event will be on November 19. We'll meet at the church head to Christian Community Action in New Haven in the morning to help assemble Thanksgiving meals. Christian Community Action then distributes those meals during the holiday week to families that may not otherwise have one. We'll then head to a local New Haven pizza restaurant for lunch! Keep an eye out at church for an opportunity to sign-up as the event gets closer or contact Todd with any questions.

Midnight Run: If you're in middle school (7th or 8th grades), join us for Midnight Run. We meet the last Monday of each month. We spend some time making 55 bag meals that include a sandwich, fruit, cookies, juice, and water. Those meals are picked up by members of the outreach board at the church and delivered to the hungry and homeless in

Continued on the next page

Continued from the previous page

New Haven that evening. After we make the meals, we share in a meal together, then play some games and have some faith building discussions. Join us on November 28 from 6 to 8 p.m.

Nooma: “Jesus lived with the awareness that God is doing something, right here, right now, and anybody can be a part of it. He encouraged his listeners to search, to question, to wrestle with the implications of what he was saying and doing. He inspired, challenged, provoked, comforted, and invited people to be open to God’s work in this world. Wherever he went, whatever he did, Jesus started discussions about what matters most, because for Jesus, God is always inviting us to open our eyes and join in. ‘Nooma’ is a series of short films that explore our world from a perspective of Jesus. Nooma is an invitation to search, question, and join the discussion.”

Teens and their parents are invited to join us on Communion Sundays, the first Sunday of the month, in Room 11. We’ll start the video approximately 10 minutes after the end of the 9:00 service. Come early to join us if you usually come to 11 o’clock. If there is a single 10 o’clock service (such as there is this month), we’ll start 10 minutes at the end of the service.

Schedule: November 2, FUEL from 6:30 to 8 p.m.; November 6, Nooma from 11:30 to noon; November 15, FUEL from 6:30 to 8 p.m.; November 19, S.A.W. event; November 21, Midnight Run from 6 to 8 p.m.

Talent for Malawi Show

Hollywood may have its brand of reality talent shows, but it can’t compete with the 7th annual Talent for Malawi concert to be held Sunday, November 20 at 6 p.m. the church. Plan on spending the evening with us, as our church family shares its musical talents in an enjoyable, musical extravaganza, unlike any other held at our church. Everyone is welcome. Invite your family and friends.

The acts are varied, crossing many musical genres. Amy Webb, our Malawi Mission Team “godmother” and talented flutist, will be featured during this magical evening. Enjoy our beautiful Kim Hester Tabor’s amazing voice, as she performs a medley of Duke Ellington songs. (Her last Broadway show was “The Producers”) Continue to be impressed with the homegrown guitar talent of young Dante Strollo and Nick Monllos. Our Jonny Allen will delight us on the marimba, and will bring the Yale Percussion Ensemble. Irina Zayaruzny will play the harpsichord. Our own VIP Vacation Bible School choir will charm us. The district champion Sweet Adelines group (female barbershop singers) will perform.

Admission to the concert is free, though there will be a freewill offering. During the intermission, you can enjoy delicious complimentary refreshments, thanks to our Board of Outreach. Your wallet may be tempted by our Silent Auction items. Many of these items are donated by First Congregational Church family sharing

Continued on the next page

Continued from the previous page

their non-musical talents. There will be paintings, photographs, inspirational garden rocks, handcrafted jewelry, theater tickets, and more.

Unlike the Hollywood brand of reality talent show, there will be no judging. There will be “winners,” though. They are children in Ntcheu, Malawi who are supported by our mission work there. The Malawi Mission Team wants to improve the quality of life for children in one of the poorest countries in the world. We provide basic necessities including food, clothing, blankets, school fees, and supplies for the impoverished, orphaned children whom we sponsor. This concert is the Malawi Mission Team’s major fundraiser. Over the years, we have “fed,” both physically and spiritually, our African neighbors. The need is still great.

The Malawi Mission Team

We Say Thank You

Thanks for the beautiful flowers delivered to me by Bobbie Porter for my birthday. We had a wonderful visit. (Bobbie, I hope the lily pollen washed out of your blouse!) Also, thanks for the many cards, especially one very clever, adorable one!

Ruthe Sperzel

I would like to thank everyone involved in making the beautiful prayer shawl. What wonderful colors. I have wrapped it around me several times. It is so cozy and comforting. I know God will get me

through this; I see signs of his presence throughout this journey.

Cathy Bradford

Thank you to all who did anything to support me during my illness of many months. To Jeff and Alison for their visits and prayers, those who made meals for Jim and me, to those who sent me cards and greetings including the congregational cards and all the flowers – I appreciate every thought! It’s uplifting in this world to know the church is always behind you even in the darkest times!

Ginny Humphrey

Milestones

in the life of our church family

Birth

Nandini Jane Groshart, daughter of Stacey & Chad Groshart, September 29.

Baptisms

Emma Recknagel, child of Karl & Amanda Recknagel and grandchild of Peter Gadsby, September 18.

Beckett Joseph Bouteiller, child of Joseph & Kyra Bouteiller, September 25.

Mckenna Anne Marquis, child of Robert and Kerry Marquis, October 23.

Deaths

Joe Monarca, husband of former Church Administrator Judy Monarca, September 26.

James White, relative of the Spirito & Tripodina Families, October 3.

Memorial Music Sunday
Sunday, November 6, 2011
Single Service at 10:00 a.m.

This year's Memorial Music Sunday will feature the music of American composer and Lyme, Connecticut resident, Eugénie Rocherolle. Eugénie's A Sacred Trilogy is an uplifting and joyous three-movement work that is based on Psalm 98 ("A New Song"), Psalm 23 ("Shepherd Lord"), and Psalm 47 ("Clap Ya' Hands!"). Additional musical offerings will be Gordon Jacob's "Brother James' Air" and Virgil Thomson's "My Master Hath a Garden." The Senior Choir and Music Director Joseph D'Eugenio will be joined by pianist Irina Zayaruzny, oboist Jonathan Selzer, and members of The Greater Middletown Chorale.

Memorial Music Sunday is intended to honor our loved ones, particularly those who have passed away. If you would like to memorialize or honor someone, please enclose a check with the form below and mail it to the church, or turn it in at the church office. Contributions must be received by Tuesday, November 1, 2011, if you wish the names to be printed in the bulletin on Memorial Music Sunday.

I would like to make a contribution _____ in memory of or _____ in honor of:

Donor's name:

Address:

(please print clearly)

Please make checks payable to the First Congregational Church and marked "Memorial Music" in the memo area. You can use the envelopes provided in the pews or mail to: 111 Church Drive, Cheshire, CT 06410.