

CROSSROADS

VOL. 71, No. 2

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST), STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT

FEBRUARY 2015

WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY—10:30 A.M.

FROM THE INTERIM PASTORS DESK

February 1 Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
*Holy Communion, Deacons Fund,
Food Trunk Offering*

FEBRUARY 2014

February 8 First Sunday after Epiphany

February 15 Second Sunday after Epiphany

February 18 Ash Wednesday

February 22 First Sunday in Lent

Ash Wednesday Service
Wednesday, February 18, 7:30 p.m.

Join together for a time of prayer, reflection, hymns,
and imposition of ashes.

SUNDAY FLOWER MEMORIALS



To donate flowers for our Sunday worship service, contact the church office for more information or to request a form. The cost for a bouquet to decorate the chancel is \$60. Checks should be made payable to FCC Stamford with "Flowers" in the memo section and may be mailed to the church or placed in the offering plate on Sunday. Please contact the office for open dates.

*"For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him." Psalm 62:5*

About this time of year, I begin to hear this frequent refrain, "I'm ready for spring." Our bones may not be dry like Ezekiel's bones, but they are cold, stiff, and rigid. We yearn to dance, to move, to sing. And like those dry bones of Ezekiel, we yearn for and wait for the Spirit of God to blow through our lives and to gather us up and to breathe new life into us.

Waiting and hoping for the Spirit of God can be a rich time—a time that prepares and shapes us for the God's breath blowing through our lives. This can be a time of discovering what is important to us and a time of discovering what is really not that important to us, a time of cultivating a new faith discipline and a time to let go of old stale habits.

Most often, we wait much longer than we think is good or appropriate or helpful. Such is the nature of time and life. And yet, I God is no less active and that this time is no less rich. Where we are right now may feel dry or cold, but I assure you it holds within it great promise. Where we are right now is a part of an unimaginable love and goodness.

Susan

LENTEN STUDY



*Who do you say that I am?
What are you looking for?
Why would people gain their
whole world, but lose their
lives?* *Jesus*

We think of Jesus as the man with the answers, but really Jesus is the man with the questions. Our Lenten study will be the book, "*Jesus is the Question; the 307 Questions Jesus asked and the 3 He Answered,*" by Martin Copenhaver, the President of Andover Newton Theological School. This book has been praised by scholars and church leaders for drawing us deeper into the company of Jesus.

The books are available in the church office for \$13. (Scholarships available for those unable to pay. Please speak with Susan) We will meet on Tuesdays, at 7pm in the church parlor beginning on February 24th.

Hope to see you there! Bring your questions!

February

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

- 3 Elaine and Ralph Murray, anniversary
- 5 Pat Bryson
- 11 Jan Fuechsel and Alex McGregor
- 12 Elise Coleman
- 13 Joey Nardi
- 14 Jill Winger and Eleanor Yudain
Joe Belisle and David Vintinner, anniversary
- 15 Mary Franklin
- 16 Jim Arata
Mary and Ray Strickland, anniversary
- 18 Josie Constantine
- 19 Florence Battiste
- 21 Bob Arata
- 27 Alex Constantine and Joe Siladi
- 29 Robert Godzeno

LECTIONARY READINGS

February 1: Deut 18:15-20; Ps 111;
1 Cor 8:1-13; Mk 1:21-28

February 8: Isa 40:21-31; Ps 147:1-11, 20c;
1 Cor 9:16-23; Mk 1:29-39

February 15: 2 Kings 2:1-12; Ps Cor 4:3-6;
Mk 9:2-9

February 22: Gen 9:8-17; Ps 25:1-10;
1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

THRIFT SHOP NEWS



After more years than I can count I have decided to pass on the leadership of the Thrift Ship to other, younger members of the staff.

It has been very rewarding to see the Thrift Ship and thrive in both numbers of customers and amounts of donations. As a result, our annual income has also increased, allowing us to continue to support the church and many local, national and international charities in a generous manner.

As of this writing, there will be no single leader in the Thrift Ship, but a committee of six experienced volunteers. If you have any questions, please contact any of the following: Jean Meyer, Kathie Laug, Pam Riley, Helga Downing, Candice Bryan or Elfriede Mallin.

Thank you for your support during my leadership – it has been a challenging but rewarding experience.

Barbara Arata

FAIR MEETING AND FUNDS DISTRIBUTION

We will hold a fair meeting on February 22nd after worship in the West Parlor. All previous booth chairs are encouraged to attend. We will discuss the final distribution of fair money. (\$6,667.00) We are accepting requests for funds.

Please send requests to me via email at dms21@optonline.net or to the church office by Wednesday, February 18th.

Thank you,
Diane Sileo, Fair Chair, 2012

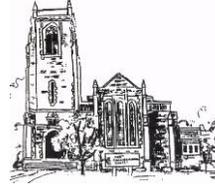
SPECIAL THANKS



**to our mystery volunteer
who secretly replaced the
net on the basketball hoop
at his/her own expense!**



COUNCIL



CORNER

STEWARDSHIP BOARD REPORTS MANY BLESSINGS!

Your Stewardship Board (Dawn Brusco, Jose Padilla, Lynda Stack, Steve Ayres) is pleased and grateful to report our receipt of 51 Pledges through Sunday, 01/25/2015, totaling \$122,167.00, 81% of our Congregation's accepted (and ambitious) \$150,000.00 goal for 2015. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

We still need pledges of about \$18,000.00 to meet that aspirational goal. We would love to have many more pledges. We would also love to exceed our goal for 2015. What a wonderful blessing to this church that would be!!

If you have not yet pledged for 2015. Please use the blue and white pledge card send to you by letter in October and mail or deliver it to the church. You may use a pledge card from your pew rack or from the bulletin board with the stewardship thermometer in the hall and place that pledge card in the Sunday offering plate. If you need a pledge card, please ask one of us or the church office.

Some of you contribute regularly to our church but have not yet pledged. Please give us your plan by submitting your pledge card for 2015. Contributions without a pledge go into "open plate" and make planning for the church's financial future more difficult. Our church depends on you, our members and friends, for its financial support. We all have been blessed by God. Let's each be blessed to be a blessing, by giving back through pledging to First Congregational Church!

Steve Ayres

The Council met on January 21. Part of the meeting was spent planning for the Congregational Meeting on February 1 where the Visioning Task Force will report on their work and a timeline and plan for the pastoral search process will be presented.

Since pledges received to date fall short of the goal set by the Board of Stewardship, Council voted to reduce the pledge line in the budget by \$25,000 and increase the deficit by \$25,000. We are still hoping that more people will decide to pledge or increase their pledges.

The Nominations Board is working hard to fill the slate of elected church leaders. See Bob Godzeno if you are interested or have questions about the positions. Russ Bulkley will be replacing Joe Belisle as Head Deacon. The Trustees have completed an Employee Handbook. The Missions Board is preparing for the mission trip to South Dakota in August. See Jean Meyer for more information.

Susan Gibson will lead a Lenten Bible Study based on the book Jesus is the Question starting February 24.

Kathie Laug, clerk

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP



Major Pettigrew's Last Stand by Helen Simonson will be discussed on Monday, February 23. The major, a set-in-his-ways retired British officer, tentatively courts a charming local widow of Pakistan descent in this humorous novel which doesn't shy away from modern cultural and religious issues.

The March book is *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr. This magnificent, deeply moving novel centers on a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as they both strive to survive the devastation of World War II. Date to be determined.

We meet in the church parlor at 7:00 p.m. All books are available. See *Kathie Laug* or *Pam Shadford* if you have questions or books to suggest.

~

SECOND SUNDAY WALK



On **February 8** we will walk in Cranberry Lake Park in White Plains, NY led by Karen Davis. Highlights include a lake and quarry.

Meet in the church parking lot at noon. Dress for the weather including appropriate footwear and bring water and a snack. Talk to *Kathie Laug* if you have any questions.

CALLING ALL CHEFS!



Many thanks to Kathie Laug, Joan Hamilton and Pam Shadford who all worked so well in preparing a wonderful meal in January for New Covenant House. This is a much appreciated service!

If you are interested in helping to prepare and serve a meal - we are always looking for members of our church who would be willing to help in either the capacity of chef or helper. *If you are one of those people, please come and see me, Helga Downing, or call me at 203-359-0494.*

REVIVE

I'm happy to report that our young adult small group, Revive, is going strong! In late December, Jen and I hosted the group at our home for our "Holiday Leftovers Party", complete with great food, games and a gift exchange. We were very pleased with the turnout, and folks seemed to enjoy some time together outside of the church building.

I'm hopeful that 2015 will bring more informal small group gatherings outside of church, not only for Revive but also for other groups and people in our congregation. I think this would be a great way to work toward the goals in our proposed vision statement that we "develop more meaningful relationships with one another" and "welcome and engage everyone who comes through our doors." Please consider hosting such a gathering for whoever comes to mind or put out an open invitation. It will enrich your experience as well as others'.

In January, only the weather could put a damper on our progress, as we had to cancel our meeting due to the freezing ice conditions that day. We will pick up again with our regularly scheduled meeting on **Sunday, February 15 at noon**, and we look forward to hopefully having at least one new person joining us that day.

Thanks as always for your support of this ministry!
Rob Godzeno

~



*Sign up now for Silver Lake
2015 Summer conferences are now open!*

It's cold outside, but we're planning for the sunny days of summer! Registration for the 2015 summer camp season at Silver Lake is now open at www.silverlakeect.org. Download the brochure, choose your week, and sign up now to be sure you get the conference you want! Mailing address:

*Silver Lake Conference Center
223 Low Road
Sharon, CT 06069*

**FCC IS GOING ON A JOURNEY
TO A NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITY**

On February 8, Bryan Nurnberger, the Founder and president of Simply Smiles will give the morning reflection. He will lead a follow up conversation after worship about the needs and work being done on The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Reservation.



Our Mission trip is scheduled for August 1-8 to La Plant, South Dakota

*“Sometimes when God wants to teach you something
He sends you on a journey.”*

Unknown

~

**Be part of our church's mission,
support *Downtown EATS* by:**

- Volunteering to help on the 2nd Saturday each month (10:00 a.m.-1:00p.m.)
- Donating non-perishable food and toiletries

This month the following items would be especially helpful:

- Easy-open cans of soup, meals, small boxes of cereal, granola bars.
- All small toiletries

Please bring donations on Sunday, February 8

Downtown EATS this month is February 14.

Collections will be ongoing on the first Sunday of each month.

Thank you for your continued generosity!



MISSIONS 2015

“In times of trouble, people all over the world light candles. In 2015, there will, without a doubt, be moments of darkness, for you, for our neighbors, for the world. But there will also be moments of bright light. Each of us has light within us that we are called to shine in the world.”

Scott Bostic

Each month, Jean Meyer shares a reflective thought (see above) to inspire us and challenges us to be SALT and LIGHT, both locally and globally. We hope that you are inspired by these words and that you join us on this mission journey.

We started 2015 with our eyes focused beyond the doors of FCC. Several of us accepted Pastor Susan's invitation to meet at *Lucky's* for dinner and then walk together down the street to the Ferguson Library and join in the conversation of Race. There we were met by others from FCC and a large group of Stamford residents who reflected the diversity of our city. The evening was real, inspiring, and challenging. It was also a good lead in to the MLK weekend events.

We will have many other opportunities to be in conversation with our community and our world in the coming months. We invite you to join us in serving dinner at the Shelter, dancing with our Latina brothers and sisters at Neighbor's Link, and preparing for our Mission Trip with the Native Americans.

Stay tuned for dates and times. Our LIGHT will shine ever brighter as we keep our eyes focused on our shared mission.

*Anne Mochulsky, Tephilla Ponnuthurai,
Katie McAllister, Anne Firmender, Warren
Richardson, Maureen Matthews, Rev. Susan Gibson,
and Jean Meyer*

*Beyond hand-wringing
to thoughtful action*

The InterFaith Council with
the Ferguson Library and
UConn-Stamford present a



COMMUNITY CATALYST

CONVERSATION: ELIMINATING HOMELESSNESS

Tuesday, February 17, 6:30 pm

UConn-Stamford

Broad Street at Washington Boulevard, Stamford

Doors open at 6; light refreshments provided
Information: 203-348-2800 ♦ www.interfaithcouncil.org

Join with other members of your community to hear from local non-profit leaders, and gather in strategy circles to plan actions we can take to eliminate homelessness in our city and country.



Sponsored by the Ferguson Library, UConn-Stamford
and the Interfaith Council of Southwestern CT

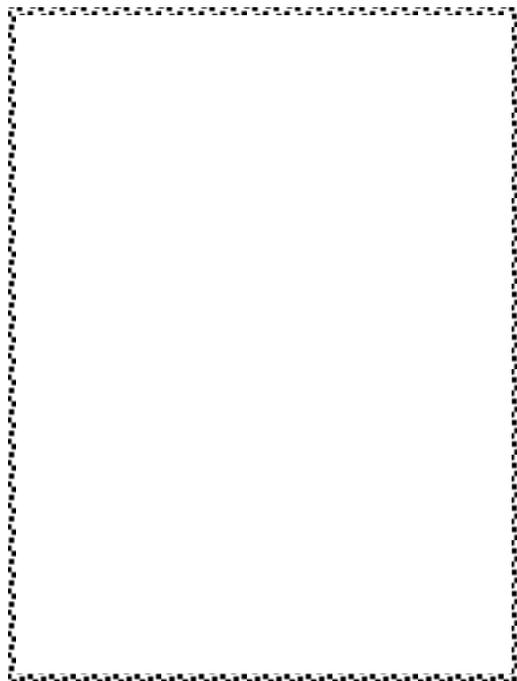


"The place for interfaith action..."



the space for interfaith conversation."

First Congregational Church
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Keep us informed!

**If you are hospitalized, please call the
church office and let us know.
We would like to include you in our
prayers and visit you!**

