

CROSSROADS

VOL. 74, No. 2

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

FEBRUARY 2016

WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY – 10:30 A.M.

- February 7 Last Sunday after Epiphany**
*Holy Communion, Deacons Fund
and Food Trunk Offering*
- February 10 Ash Wednesday**
Service 7:30 in the Sanctuary
- February 14 First Sunday in Lent**
- February 21 Second Sunday in Lent**
- February 28 Third Sunday in Lent**

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.

CELEBRATING GOOD NEWS AND OUR NEXT STEP INTO THE HISTORY BOOKS

By an overwhelming majority vote, Rev. Dr. Todd Grant Yonkman was elected as our next Senior Pastor and Spiritual Leader! The vote was held on Sunday, January 10th which was the culmination of FCC's "Candidating Weekend." Special thanks to my tireless search committee -- Rob Godzeno, Tom Jenkins, Kathie Laug, Godfrey Ponnuthurai, Pam Shadford and Ellen Taylor! We had been working together with the UCC Connecticut Conference for the better half of 2015 where we interviewed many outstanding and interesting candidates. Rev. Michael Ciba and Rev. Susan Townsley carefully worked with us to help make the process so successful and enjoyable.

Special thanks also go to Virginia Atkinson and to Lynne Koellner who worked so hard at making our *Meet & Greet* such an elegant and wonderful success! They also graciously agreed to put together the very special breakfast reception after our vote. Everything was delicious and it was so nice to see some of FCC's fabulous old silver being put to use again! Thank you as well to all the volunteers who helped make these two receptions so welcoming and fun; Pam Riley, Elfriede Mallin, Wendy Avirgan, Priscilla Jelliffe, Tom Jenkins, Linda Peters, Jan Fuechsel, Lori Constantine, and to Pam Shadford who donated some bottles of her delicious Broadway Vineyard's wine! Special thanks also go to our Rainbow Cafe crew -- Aleks Bruno, Nathalia Flores and Jose Lopez.

Our Trustees also worked diligently at finalizing contract details with Pastor Todd so many thanks to them for their negotiating skills. And last but not least, thank you to all the FCC-Stamford members who voted to make Pastor Todd our next minister! His first day will be Easter Sunday, March 27th. Here's to a future bright with hope and promise! I know our greatest days are ahead!

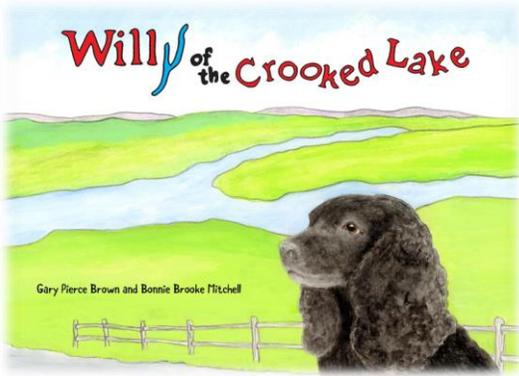
*Thanks and Blessings,
Joe Belisle, Chair,
Pastoral Search Committee*

THRIFT SHOP NEWS



Hours

Thursdays 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
3rd Saturday of the month 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.



We were pleased to have Gary Brown with us on December 20th! After service, Gary signed copies of his new book, *Willy of the Crooked Lake*. Gary distributed over 60 books in Stamford and raised over \$1,000 for the Finger Lakes SPCA, his most successful book signing to date. On behalf of Gary and Finger Lakes SPCA, thank you for your support!

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP



On February 15 we will discuss *Brooklyn* by Colm Toibin. In this novel Ellis Lacey is leading a quiet life in small town Ireland when she finds herself swept up in an unplanned adventure to America. Just as she begins settling into her new life, a tragedy calls her home and her two separate lives suddenly and painfully collide.

The next meeting will be on March 12 when we will discuss *The Gilded Hour* by Sara Donati. This historical novel is a remarkable epic about two female doctors in nineteenth century New York City and the transcendent power of courage and love.

We meet in the church parlor at 7:00 PM. All books are available in the church library.

See Kathie Laug if you have any questions.

The Thrift Shop Committee
*Candice Bryan, Helga Downing, Anne Firmender,
Jan Fuechsel, Kathie Laug, Elfriede Mallin,
Jean Meyer, Linda Peters, Pam Riley*

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
27	Alex Constantine and Joe Siladi
29	Robert Godzeno

COUNCIL



CORNER

The Prudential Council met on January 13th. The UCC's CT Conference is holding its Super Saturday workshop on March 12, 2016 at 8 am at Killingly High School, 226 Putnam Pike, Killingly, CT. We'd love for one or two church members to attend, especially the session on Whole Church Evaluation, which we would like to implement at FCC.

More information is available at:
<http://www.ctucc.org/supersaturday/>

We recognized that many members are stretched thin with all the activities and big changes happening at FCC. Some changes are underway with crib room volunteers, building opening & closing docents and hospitality, which we hope will help ease the burden somewhat. Another way to help lighten your fellow church members' load is to say "thank you". So please be sure to acknowledge and thank everyone who you see working at the church, including those serving on boards and committees, hospitality hosts, docents, crib room workers, choir, church staff, ushers and greeters, folks who clean up after church services and events, counters, soup kitchen and Downtown EATS cooks, thrift shop workers and many other unsung heroes. Help us create a culture of gratitude in our community. It won't lessen anyone's workload, but it will make the work easier and more joyful.

Rob Godzeno, Moderator

STEWARDSHIP BOARD REPORTS MUCH TRUST IN THE PROMISE!

Your Stewardship Board (Lynda Stack and Steve Ayres) is pleased and grateful to report our receipt of 48 pledges through Sunday January 24, totalling \$133,000, 95% of our congregations's accepted \$140,000 goal for 2016. Thank you, Thank you! This is great!

We still need pledges of about \$7,000 to meet that rather modest goal. We would love to have many more pledges. We would also love to exceed our goal for 2016. What a wonderful way to show that you trust in God's promise to this church! What a wonderful way also to welcome Pastor Todd when he arrives in March.

If you have not yet pledged for 2016, please use the black and orange pledge card in the Sunday offering plate. If you need a pledge card please ask one of us or ask at 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 2016. 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 show that we trust in God's promise, by promising to give through pledging to First Congregational Church!

Steve Ayres, Stewardship Board



Serving Another in Love Together with
Love Inspiring Great Hope Today

Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have.

Margaret Mead

Missions is off and running for 2016 and we hope you will join in the excitement of connecting with and changing our world! Here are the highlights:

- **Simply Smiles Summer 2016** planning is underway. (We need to find another name for "Mission Trip", because a week on the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Reservation is more about mutual transformation than 'doing good'.) Bryan Nurnberger gave us such a good example of what happens for the children when he shared the fact that when asked what they wanted to be when they grow up, the children used to have no answer. They didn't see themselves as having a future. After a few years of Simply Smiles presence and the volunteers that come weekly, the children now respond with all the expected dreams of children. One little girl even wants to be the chief. (Interested in going?)
- **IRIS** (Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services) has a working group in Stamford who call themselves SIRS (Stamford Interfaith Refugee Settlement). FCC has a tradition of welcoming refugees to Stamford. This time FCC invited other caring people to partner with us. The response has been amazing. People of many faiths sitting around the table, exploring options for housing, employment, ESL, etc. Radical Welcome lives! (There's room at the table for YOU)
- **A Mission Retreat** is in the planning for March 5, 2016, a Saturday morning from 9AM to Noon. We will spend the time together in reflection and prayer about the meaning of mission. Bagels will begin the day and only God knows how we will end. We guarantee that you will be refreshed. (Mark your calendar...)

As always, we invite you to join us in any way that you are able. We have fun together while changing the world....it doesn't get any better than that, right?

Anne Mochulsky, Tephilla Ponnuthurai,
Katie McAllister, Anne Firmender, Warren Richardson,
Maureen Matthews, Jean Meyer

CALLING ALL CHEFS!



Many thanks to Helga Downing, Jan Fuechsel and Elfriede Mallin, who prepared a wonderful meal for New Covenant House in January.

This is a much appreciated service!

Are **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 volunteer 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.



MISSION TRIP 2016



Join the 2016 journey to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Reservation. Talk to Jean Meyer or John Jelliffe if you would like to learn more about this trip.

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, tuna and fruit

Please bring donations on Sunday, February 6. Downtown EATS this month is February 13.

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

Thank you for your continued generosity!

SUSAN'S FAREWELL

I want to extend a big thank you to everyone who helped with the festivities for Susan Gibson's farewell January 2nd and 3rd. I hesitate to name names for fear of missing someone, but special thanks are in order for: Anne Mochulsky and Jill Shepherd for serving a lovely menu (and their families for supporting them!); Ellen Taylor for composing a beautiful song, and Ellen and Lynne Koellner for making sure we had enough supplies; Pam Shadford for her guidance and advice to me, acquiring the bike basket to collect the notes for Susan and being our wine supplier; Joe Belisle for designing and ordering a thoughtful framed picture of the church for Susan to take with her; Linda Peters for her tasteful decorations that made the whole weekend feel more festive; Wendy Avirgan and Bob Meyer for keeping track of donations towards the cash gift and writing a check after last minute donations came in on January 3rd; Peter Birch for being our Senior Deacon and ensuring continuity of pastoral care for our congregation; Godfrey and Tephi Ponnuthurai for sharing their son, Joah, with us for his dedication during Susan's last service with us and bringing cakes for Susan and Joah on the 3rd; Peggy Kittle for sending out the mailing announcing the weekend and collecting the cards and donations that came into the church office; and many others who gave of their time and talents in many ways. It was a whole-church effort, of which I am very proud because of all of you; it was a fitting way to send Susan off to her next pastorate. Thank you!

Rob Godzeno

I also thought I'd take this opportunity to share the lyrics to Ellen's song and Susan's final benediction to us.

***Look and watch the butterfly, fluttering its wings.
Nimbly flying in the air, travels here and there.***

***Stops and rests and stays awhile, allowing us to see.
All the beauty of its life, sharing willingly.***

***For we thank God for butterflies, they are all around.
Nimbly flying in the air, travels here and there.
Fly, butterfly, fly!***

Song by Ellen Taylor

Benediction: "Matins"

Somewhere, out at the edges, the night
Is turning and the waves of darkness
Begin to brighten the shore of dawn
The heavy dark falls back to earth
And the freed air goes wild with light,
The heart fills with fresh, bright breath
And thoughts stir to give birth to color.

I arise today
In the name of Silence
Womb of the Word,
In the name of Stillness
Home of Belonging,
In the name of the Solitude
Of the Soul and the Earth.

I arise today
Blessed by all things,
Wings of breath,
Delight of eyes,
Wonder of whisper,
Intimacy of touch,
Eternity of soul,
Urgency of thought,
Miracle of health,
Embrace of God.

May I live this day
Compassionate of heart,
Clear in word,
Gracious in awareness,
Courageous in thought,
Generous in love.

by John O'Donohue

There are no words to express my gratitude for the 3 years of ministry with First Congregational Church of Stamford, except to say "Thank you!" For your generous gift and for your ministry to and with me. You are hospitable, kind, adventurous, fun, and faithful. My faith was challenged and nurtured by you. I leave FCC with a deeper sense of God's grace and of the possibilities that a church can live into.

"We bless this time for all we learned,
For all we loved and lost
And for the quiet way it brought us Nearer to our
invisible destination"

John O'Donohue

God bless you all....
Susan

TRUSTEE'S



CORNER

The Trustees are happy to announce that, after the overwhelming show of favor by vote for Todd Yonkman to become our new Pastor, we have extended and he has accepted our 'letter of call' to at least three years of shared ministry with us. As is the custom for letter like this, it begins with ten promises from Pastor Todd and ten from the congregation, which the Trustees agreed to on your behalf, in full faith that we of First Congregational Church of Stamford can stand behind this exchange of promises.

The Congregation shall:

- A. Encourage you as Pastor by prayers, loving criticism, and stewardship of time and talents, with respect, trust, and fidelity
- B. Invite you as Pastor to be involved in the totality of the church's ministry, including property, finances, and staffing
- C. Support the involvement and leadership of you as Pastor in denominational activities, clergy associations, Ministers' Support Groups, and the Stamford community
- D. Seriously consider implementing programs suggested by the Pastor
- E. Continue to provide sufficient staff support
- F. Function as the "Body of Christ," making visits to worship guests, members in hospitals, nursing facilities, homebound, and inactive members
- G. Maintain education, mission, music, and other ministries of the Congregation
- H. Provide resources necessary to engage the services of a transition coach for the purposes of leadership training and accountability, and other specialists as needed, in reaching the mutually agreed upon goals enumerated in the Transitional Covenant. [The Trustees will let Prudential Council explain that document some other time! -dv]
- I. Commit to the process of self-evaluation as described in the Transitional Covenant.
- J. Commit with you as Pastor to a third year review process to set future goals and priorities, involving the CT UCC Regional Minister or that minister's designee

The Pastor shall:

- A. Encourage the congregation in its ministries by prayers, loving criticism, pastoral care and responsible leadership, with respect, trust, and fidelity
- B. Work with the Church Council and its program committees as a witness to the ministry of Jesus Christ
- C. Maintain a collegial relationship with the area clergy association and ministerial standing in the denomination
- D. Beginning Easter 2016, lead and preach in the Congregation's worship services, including administration of the sacraments
- E. Administer church business and oversee church staff with diligence and not for personal financial gain
- F. Oversee preparation of the worship bulletin and coordination of routine publications (including newsletter, email, website, social media)
- G. Visit members who are hospitalized or homebound, including nursing facility residents
- H. Provide counseling and make appropriate referrals, honoring all confidences
- I. Provide pastoral services for weddings, funeral, and memorial services
- J. Teach confirmation/new member class for youths and adults

We look forward to continuing, with Pastor Todd as our witness, to serve as ministers to Stamford and the world together with the rest of you in our congregation.

Yours in service, the Board of Trustees,

Nya Chambang

Stuart Constantine

John Jelliffe

Warren Richardson

Nicoline Sawabini

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Stamford, CT 06901

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LECTIONARY READINGS

February 7: Ex 34:29-35; Ps 99; 2 Cor 3:12-4:2;
Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)

February 14: Deut 26:1-11; Ps 91:1-2,9-16;
Rom 10:8b-13; Luke 4:1-13

February 21: Gen 15:1-12, 17-18; Ps 27;
Phil 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35 or Luke 9:28-36
(37-43a)

February 28: Isa 55:1-9; Ps 63:1-8;
1 Cor 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9