

CHURCH CALL
THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
COVENTRY, CONNECTICUT

Vol. 53

No. 6

June 2008

Dear Members and Friends:

Over these few middle weeks in May, we have had the chance to read accounts of all the various commencement addresses that were delivered at our nation's colleges and universities. Last week on Mother's Day, the University of Connecticut featured Rebecca Lobo, and just this morning, there were numerous accounts of area commencement exercises at which graduates were challenged "to define their future" or "take responsibility" or "to focus on humanity and to contest injustice," to cite a few. In the days to come, there will still be more, noting that this is a time to hope that those who step forth from our college campuses with an eagerness to lead will do so with a commitment and competence that will make things better for our nation and the world. There is certainly a national and global agenda out there that begs for attention and invites the genius and gifts of a new generation.

I have always had a special fondness, though, for a line attributed to Howard Thurman. He once said:

"Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

I have always thought that this was a piece of indispensable worth and enduring wisdom. To ask that question of what makes us come alive and then to discover its answer is what makes all the difference. Yesterday, at our Children's Sabbath, which marked the end of our church school year, the teachers and students put forth such a wonderful effort in celebrating Pentecost, the birth and mission of the church. With streamers and noisemakers and bubbles floating from the balcony, we celebrated the gift of the Spirit and those tongues of fire that awakened hearts with the power of the gospel. The message was clear and I think, convincing. It is the Holy Spirit that makes us come alive and empowers us to offer to the world what it needs. And what it needs is the gift of love, the promise of healing, the truth of our reconciliation in Christ, God's uncompromising call to justice and a hope that will never fail us.

Our Sunday school curriculum, in an effort to capture the essence of Pentecost, shared an excerpt from "To Dance with God" by Gertrud Mueller Nelson. It ends with a prayerful line:

"Come, Holy Spirit, sear and quicken us with a love that will re-create meaning in this worldly existence of ours."

It is the Holy Spirit that quickens us with God's love, making us come alive and what the world needs now in these confusing and conflicted time, is people who are alive with God's love, who possess God's passion for justice and who want to make the world a better place.

Yours in Christ,

June's Worship Schedule

(June, July and August worship schedule- one service at 9:30 a.m.)

June 1, 2008 Third Sunday after Pentecost

Confirmation Sunday: One Service 9:30 a.m.

The Hebrew Bible Lesson: Psalm 46
The Christian Scripture Lesson: Matthew 7: 21-29
Sermon: "Having Heard and Learned-Now Do!"

June 8, 2008 Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

The Hebrew Bible Lesson: Genesis 12: 1-9
The Christian Scripture Lesson: Romans 4: 13-25
Sermon: "The Promise rests on Grace"

June 15, 2008: Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

The Hebrew Bible Lesson: Genesis 18: 1-15
The Christian Scripture Lesson: Romans 5: 1-8
Sermon: "The Wonder of Fatherhood"

June 22, 2008: Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Annual Meeting Sunday

The Hebrew Bible Lesson: Genesis 21: 8-21
The Christian Scripture Lesson; Romans 6: 1-11
Sermon: "Dead to Sin- Alive to God"

June 29, 2008 Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

The Hebrew Bible Lesson : Genesis: 22: 1-14
The Christian Scripture lesson : Matthew 10:40-42
Sermon: "God Promised"

Dear Friends,

A few weeks ago, we made our annual pilgrimage to the veterinarian with our two dogs and our cat in tow. It takes both of us to get them all out of the car and into the office, and to listen to the doctor's advice. Our three pets were all fine and they received their vaccinations. This year all three received rabies, and when we were finished and all the pets were loaded in the car (the trip home from the vet is the *only* time Luke and Maggie are glad to be in the car), I was at the counter paying the bill. The receptionist printed my receipt and the rabies certificates. And then she *signed* the doctor's name at the bottom. If this were a check, we would call it forgery. But in this particular case, she is signing the certificate in the doctor's name and the signature is as good as if he had signed it himself. If there were ever a problem, the authorities could call the vet's office and he would confirm the legitimacy of the receptionist's signature.

Last month, one of our scripture lessons, in which Jesus was explaining to the disciples that if one of them had seen Him, then he had also seen God, the lesson ended with the verse, "I will do whatever you ask in my name..." (John 14:13). Here at church we end our prayers of invocation and confession as well as the pastoral prayer with the phrase, "In Jesus' name we pray," just as he instructed the disciples. When we pray in Jesus' name, we are praying a prayer that is a prayer Jesus himself might pray. Just as the vet's receptionist only signs his name where the vet himself would sign it, so also we pray in Jesus' name only those prayers He would pray Himself.

For example, we could certainly see Jesus' praying that a sick person be healed, that the people in Darfur have food and water and live in peace in their own homes, that those who grieve be comforted. Those are the sorts of prayers we would feel comfortable praying if Jesus were in the room.

There are some other prayers, however, that Jesus never prayed. He never prayed for Caesar's assassination, nor should we pray for the death of Osama bin Laden. Jesus never prayed that the people who hurt him—and ultimately the people who crucified him—should be punished. He prayed instead for their forgiveness.

Maybe what Jesus was reminding the disciples was that they should *begin* their prayers with a reminder to themselves that their prayers were not only in Jesus' name, but in Jesus' and God's presence, that their—and our—prayers are granted a measure of divinity when we wrestle with what we might *want* to pray and what we *ought* to pray as disciples. God always answers our prayers. Sometimes God answers them just the way we prayed. And sometimes God answers the prayer we ought to have prayed, leaving us *feeling* unanswered. There are, of course, times when our prayer seems caring and honest, but the answer is not visible, but that's a whole different issue.

As we enter the season of Pentecost during which we practice living as disciples, join me as I *begin* my prayers, "In Jesus' name I pray." That in itself is a prayer, isn't it? That we might pray as he prayed?

Yours in Christ,
Leslie

REMINDER: As a result of recent changes in the regulations governing the management of patient information at all hospitals, nursing homes and other health care facilities, (HIPAA), patient rosters for clergy and hospital visitors are no longer available at the information desks. Therefore, there is no way that we can find out whether we have church members and friends at the hospital. Because of these changes, Bruce and other hospital visitors will not be including hospital visitation in their weekly routine without knowing in advance of someone's admission. We are asking for everyone's cooperation in dealing with these changes. There are two things that we can do:

First, if you or a member of your family or a friend is admitted to the hospital and would like a visit, you will need to inform the church of the patient's name and hospital.

Second, when admitted to a health care facility, you can request specifically that the hospital notify the church and the pastor. The Department of Pastoral Services will then call or e-mail the church.

We are certainly in a period of transition but if we work together, we can continue to do meaning ministry for one another. Thanks.

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IN THE CHURCH FAMILY *JOYS AND CONCERNS*

Wedding Announcements: *We extend our best wishes for a life of love, health and happiness to those recently married:*

Stephen Dempko and Jill Andrews, married on April 19, 2008 in Newport Rhode Island

Brian Jones and Heidi Hodgkins, married here, at First Church

Bryan Gordon and Ashley Ouellette married at Villa Louisa, Bolton, CT

Baptisms: *We send our congratulations to:*
Lilah Moore Ohlund, baptized May 18, 2008

In the hospital or ill at home: We extend our prayers for a return to better health to the following:

Betty Bearce	Alice Beaton	Len & Priscilla Gillon	Bill Brainard
Ruth Prusack	Steve Turner	Tim & Christi Johnson	Michael Gale
Justin	Nick Gephardt	Ginny Brown	Kate Sullivan
Lynn	Betsy Sturrock	Armond Garrison	Dan Davis
Joyce Mooney	Colin Locklear	Carl Larson's Aunt	John Keeney
Karen Bement's mom	Susan Prusack	Matthew, Mark & Melissa Millard	
Bob Pintavalle		(Mark Spink's grandchildren)	

Those In Nursing Homes:

Harriet Eaton – in Florida

Viola Thorp – Haven Health

Bob Doggart – Laurel Gardens

Bill Brainard – Haven Health

Kathleen Sanborn – Mansfield Rehab

Millie Wass – Haven Health

Roland Green - Mansfield

Eunice Palaoro – Haven Health

Lorris Fuller – South Windsor

Deaths: *Our prayers are extended to the families and friends of those who died recently:*

“Blessed are you who mourn, for you shall be comforted”

Arthur R. Voss – March 23, 2008

Michael J. Guinan – May 7, 2008

Thomas E. Mansfield – May 12, 2008

Darin Tufts (Dean's brother)

Memorials: *Gifts were given in loving memory of the following:*

In memory of Carol Carpenter:

George and Mary Carpenter

IN APPRECIATION

Thank you to all who helped with the mailing of the May Church Call: Ethel Harris, Audrey Moran, Karen Bement, Louise Rose, Mary Scott, Kert Kersen, Edwina Rodrigues and Anne Hicks.

First Church would like to thank Adam Salinsky and Dimitri's Restaurant in Coventry, for the wonderful catering of our luncheon that was held here on May 4th in celebration of our new Church Carillon. The food, service and cost were exceptional. Again, many thanks!

Thank you to Edith Bissell for her donation towards the cost of mailing the Church Call.

The church received the following thank-you recently from the AA group that meets here weekly:

I want to express our group's appreciation for having the use of the hall on the 27th of February to celebrate our group's anniversary. It marked 48 years of continuous meetings at this church. While our meetings unusually 15 or so members in attendance, over 50 AA's showed up that night to share in the celebration and to share their belief that a life based on the 12 steps of AA and the guidance of a Higher Power is indeed a wonderful life!

Dear members and friends,

As we will be moving out of town during the summer, we will probably not have the opportunity to see as many of our dear church friends as we would have liked. So we are taking this opportunity and venue to say good-bye and to thank you all for your support and friendship during the past 12 years. If all goes as expected, we will be closing on our current house on July 11 and moving to Arizona at that time. When we have a permanent address there, we will let everyone know.

Thanks, again,.....Mary and Tom Wilsted

FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

YOU CAN E-MAIL THE CHURCH AT CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB!!

First.congregatnl@snet.net

www.firstchurchcoventry.org

THE SEPTEMBER CALL DEADLINE IS AUGUST 17TH

Sign Up for Progressive Supper June 21st!

The progressive supper is set for Saturday, June 21st from 5:30 – 9:00 p.m. The evening starts with appetizers at Deb & Scott Gallo's home, 130 Avery Shores, Coventry, then to dinner at Kim & Walt Chambers, 113 Hillyndale Road, Storrs, and ending with dessert – which we still need a host for. **A sign-up sheet is now posted on the bulletin board (across from the office) for you to note if you want to bring either an appetizer or dessert or to volunteer to host dessert at your home.** This is always a very enjoyable evening- hope to see you there!

***THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF COVENTRY
CALL TO THE ANNUAL MEETING***

The members of the First Congregational Church of Coventry are hereby called to the 296th Annual Meeting. The meeting is scheduled for Sunday, June 22, 2008 directly following the 9:30 a.m. worship service. Members will act on the following:

- I. To receive the reports of the officers, boards and committees and organization.*
- II. To receive the reports of the Treasurer and the Financial Secretary.*
- III. To elect officers, board members and delegates to the Tolland and Connecticut Conferences.*
- IV. To receive the report of the Trustees on the progress of this year's Capital Campaign projects.*
- V. To transact any other necessary and proper business.*

*Respectfully submitted,
Kim Chambers, Clerk*

SUPPER OF THE MONTH

Our May supper was well attended – feeding 222 with a profit of \$922. Thanks to everyone who has helped this year in our effort to provide delicious and nutritious meals to our community. During these evenings we get so many compliments to the chef and all the kids that work, how lovely the church is and what a great time it is to share a meal sitting with their friends and neighbors. These suppers are really a community event.

We will start up again on September 13th. We encourage you to think ahead and mark your calendars for the second Saturday of each month – it's a great family opportunity. We will also be earnestly looking for monthly help in carving the meat and late clean up in the hall. These are two areas we really can use some able help. Thanks again for the support and have a great summer!

17th ANNUAL STEEPLE CHASE SATURDAY AUGUST 16, 2008

Please join Coventry Congregational Cycling (**TEAM 3C**) for the annual **Steeple Chase Bike Tour** this coming August in and around greater Willimantic. As has been the case these recently past years, our team is recruiting both Riders and Sponsors.

Riders are to be reminded that the Tour is *NOT* a race but a fun fellowship event. All that is required is a suitable bike and inspiration. This surely should not, however, diminish the quiet speculation from certain serious factions within the team that this year some may actually embark on the full Century (100 miles) that Saturday. Others on the team may tackle the Half Century (50 miles) and of course certainly the obligatory 20-mile riders are most welcome among our ranks.

In preparation for the Tour, Riders will have weekly Sunday conditioning jaunts beginning in June for those whom can make it. The schedule for these rides will be decided upon by the Team as the time approaches.

Sponsors are to know that The Tour is the largest annual fundraiser conducted for Windham Area Interfaith Ministries as well as Perception Programs. Donations may be made at any time for Team Three C at Coffee Hours in July and early August.

Questions? Call Mark Campbell at: 742-9008

BOARD OF PASTORAL RELATIONS

This very important church board that meets once a month to hear the concerns of the pastor regarding work with the Congregation, Boards and employees.

We are also here for the Congregation to let us know how our Pastor is doing in the work of the church. The board meets at 12:00 noon on the 3rd or 4th Sunday of the month (meetings are held on the Sunday before the church council meeting). Please let one of us know if you have a concern that should be brought to our attention and we will meet with you.

Board of Pastoral Relations 2007-2008 Staff Survey

Dear Members and Friends:

The Board of Pastoral Relations assumes a unique responsibility within the life of the parish. According to our By-Laws, our purpose is “to support and maintain an open and healthy relationship between the pastor(s) and members of the congregation.” In addition to serving as an advisory and support group for the pastor, we also provide the pastor with a yearly evaluation of his or her performance. For many years, this Board has chosen to discharge this responsibility in a four-year cycle, utilizing four very different models for evaluation: an all-member survey, a boards survey, a staff survey, and a Board of Pastoral Relations examination. The observations are shared with the pastor. We believe this cycle and system has served us well. As this church year comes to a close, the Board has completed its survey of the staff. A summary of our findings appears below.

Staff Survey Summary

In keeping with its mission to conduct an annual survey of the Pastor’s involvement in the life of the church, the Board of Pastoral Relations of the First Congregational Church of Coventry this year conducted its survey of the staff. The staff members were asked a series of questions relating to their positions and their interaction with Bruce. Members of the Board of Pastoral Relations were available to receive comments.

The staff reports good communication between the Pastor and staff. They feel that Bruce provides adequate guidance when needed, is approachable, and employees are at ease when talking with him. Overall, he is interested in their questions and ideas and gives input, guidance and suggestions as needed. There were requests he reach out more to youth groups. The staff enjoys their jobs very much. Bruce was described as “great to work with” and a “pleasure to work with” and the reason why one staff member accepted a position with this church.

In summary, the Board concludes that Bruce and the staff have an excellent working relationship and mutual respect for each other. The formal report is on file in the office.

Yours in Christ,

Board of Pastoral Relations
Joyce Wicks, Mark Campbell, Bruce Campbell,
Lynn Lukach, Marilyn Barrette, Bob Ford

CHURCH FAIR NEWS

FAIR DATES: November 14th and 15th, 2008

- **Yarn Extravaganza:** Thanks to a generous donation of yarn you have an opportunity to knit or crochet something for the church fair for free! We had the yarn set up in the social hall on May 18th, but have it tucked away for now. Please see Kim, Karen or Betsy after any church service if you would like to take a look. If something catches your eye for personal use, please give a free will donation to the church fair.
- **Basket Booth:** The sign up sheet is posted on the bulletin board outside the kitchen. Please sign up to put together a gift basket for the fair. Many suggestions are listed, but feel free to add your own idea. Start collecting over the summer. More than one person can sign up for the same basket theme. The most popular baskets are priced between \$10-25.
- **Church Signs needed:** We are in need of a large new sturdy wooden sign to put out in front of the church for the fair and a couple of church shaped signs to post around the town. Please call the church office if you can help with this or Karen Bement.
- **Church Fair workshops:** are held the 2nd and 3rd Tuesday's of the month in the music room. If you can attend, we'd love to see you. If you can't, please continue to support the fair with your hand made projects you make at home.
- **Attic Treasures:**
 - As you clean out your attic, garage, bedrooms and playrooms, for ATTIC TREASURES, set them aside at home until **SEPTEMBER** as the balcony is occupied on several occasions by wedding guests and photographers during the summer months.
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 - **PLEASE** make sure that all items are **clean** and in **very good condition**. We are not looking for items that didn't sell at your tag sale!
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 - **What to donate:** Toys, games, stuffed animals, kitchen items, trinkets, DVD's, Videos, Holiday decorations, and collectables.
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 - **What NOT to donate:** Books (no room), clothing, furniture, paint, computers, hardware or software, audiovisual equipment, or electrical appliances.
 -
 - **Questions:** Call Betsy Sturrock
 - **Jewelry booth:** You may leave your unwanted jewels in the church office (bagged or boxes) for Louise Valley.
 - **Thank You:** Karen Bement (742-9797), Kim Chambers (742-8487), and Betsy Sturrock (487-1763)

CHURCH RAFFLE – If anyone would like to donate an item for the Church Raffle, please let Kim Chambers know by September 1st. There is a deadline in getting our list of raffle items to the state for our permit. We have one donation already. **Special Request:** Lynn Lukach our 'past unofficial quilt maker' will not be able to make a quilt this year. If anyone would like to donate a quilt, please call me at home: at 429-7494 or at the church office: 742-8487. Thanks for all your help!!

			JUNE			
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Worship: 9:30 a.m. Confirmation - All church brunch following worship	2 Seekers: 12-2	3	4 Girl Scout Fly-up 5 – 9 p.m.	5 Bible Study: 10:00 Jr. PF.: 6-8:30 p.m. AA 7:00	6 Haven Health: 10:00	7
8 Worship: 9:30 a.m.	9 Seekers: 12-2	10 Fair Workshop: 6:30	11 Koffee Klatch: 11:30 – 1:00 p.m.	12 Bible Study: 10:00 Jr. P.F. 6:30 – 8:00 AA 7:00 p.m.	13	14
15 <i>Father's Day</i> Worship:9:30 a.m.	16 Seekers: 12-2	17 Friendly Circle Luncheon Fair workshop: 6:30	18	19 Bible Study: 10:00 Jr. P.F.; 6:30 – 8:00 AA 7:00 p.m.	20	21 <i>Progressive Supper 5:30 – 9:00 p.m.</i>
22 Worship: 9:30 a.m. <i>Annual Meeting following service</i>	23 <i>No Seekers</i>	24	25	26 <i>No Bible Study</i> AA 7:00 p.m.	27 Mansfield Rehab: 2:00 Rehearsal away	28 Wedding away: 4:00
29 Worship: 9:30 a.m.	30 Seekers: 12-2					

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Mission Statement

THE mission of the First Congregational Church of Coventry is to worship and serve God through word and deed. In the name of Jesus, we welcome and include all people as sisters and brothers.

WE pledge and dedicate our lives and resources to God, working to transform both church and society into more just and compassionate communities.

WE fulfill this mission by faithfully preaching the Gospel, by educating our adults and children and by living out the teachings and example of Jesus Christ.