

THE PARISHIONER

THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, WOODBRIDGE 1738-2012

An Open, Welcoming, and Affirming Church

Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m.

Telephone (203) 389-2119

E-mail: office@uccw.org

Website: www.firstchurchwoodbridge.org

CT Conference Website: www.ctucc.org

Visit us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/uccwoodbridge

February 2012

COME ONE COME ALL!!!

Buildings and Grounds needs your help. We are entering Phase 2 of our asbestos abatement program and we need to empty part of the basement of the Parish House. So on Sunday, February 5, right after our morning church service, we need many hands to move boxes, supplies, and items to the Board Room for temporary storage. We will have a dumpster in the back parking lot for all the accumulated items that need a final resting place. No special skills are required. The more hands available the faster it will move along. So please consider pitching in and lending a hand. You will have plenty of time to get home for Super Bowl Sunday. Thank you in advance. Michael Lohne



Calling All Interested Mission Trip Participants!

Please join us Sunday, February 12, after church for a soup luncheon/mission trip fund raiser. We will not only work together to make, serve and eat some delicious soups – but after, grab one of your parents and stick around for some discussion of this year's trip. Even if you're not sure you're ready to join us, please come and listen to past participants talk about their experiences, share photos and stories from South Dakota, Nicaragua and Kentucky, and think together about how to make this year's upcoming experience *the best ever!* All youth and friends of the church are welcome, if completing at least the 9th grade this spring.



Moment for Mission:

Did you know that we are working currently with **Sleeping Giant Build**? Sleeping Giant is the local organization that helps us work with Habitat for Humanity. The Mission Statement of Sleeping Giant Build is: Sleeping Giant Build is a community based organization partnering with local businesses, religious organizations, civic groups, individuals and our partner families to eliminate poverty housing in the greater New Haven area. Check it out at <http://www.sleepinggiantbuild.org/> and see photos of some of our folks at work.

How does it work? Through volunteer labor and donations of money and materials, Habitat for Humanity builds and rehabilitates simple, decent houses with the help of the homeowner (partner) families. Habitat is **not** a giveaway program. Habitat houses are sold to partner families at no profit and financed with affordable loans. In addition to a down payment and the monthly mortgage payments, homeowners are required to invest hundreds of hours of their own labor — **sweat equity** — into building their Habitat house and the houses of others. Currently we are working to renovate a farmhouse on Gilbert Avenue in Hamden.

Want to help? We will have another workday some time between now and the end of March. Who should participate? Anyone over sixteen is eligible. You can come if you have construction skills and they will be put to good use, *or*, you can come without previous experience and expertise and they will find something appropriate for you to do.

Let Rich Altman (203 393-0796) or the church office (203 389-2119) know if you would like to be part of this meaningful project and find out about the next workday.

Pastors Corner

The Rev. Dr. Sara E. Penn-Strah

My Dear Friends,

The liturgical season of Lent fast approaches, beginning with Ash Wednesday, February 22. In this church we customarily celebrate Ash Wednesday in a worship service that includes a somber commemoration of the Lord's Supper and the imposition of ashes. As is traditional in many Christian communities, I make the ashes each year from palms that I have saved from the previous Palm Sunday. It makes for a richly evocative time when we acknowledge our imperfections before God as we identify with those who cheered Jesus in the good times, but betrayed him when the going got tough.

Psalm 52 is often read on Ash Wednesday. It includes the plea, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." A curriculum I use frequently as a resource suggests the following about the practice of imposing ashes and about the journey of Lent:

Touching the ashes helps us touch base with our mortality – "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" – and can prompt reflection about what really matters to us. As Lent begins, take time to reflect on what fills your days and how this connects to what you value in life. What faith practice – meditation, prayer, reading scripture, con-templating, or making art – might you engage during Lent to help you deepen these connections?

Occasionally church members have asked me whether a given worship practice, (e.g., ashes on Ash Wednesday), might belong properly to Roman Catholic practice, and thus be inappropriate for use in our church. That is a really good question.

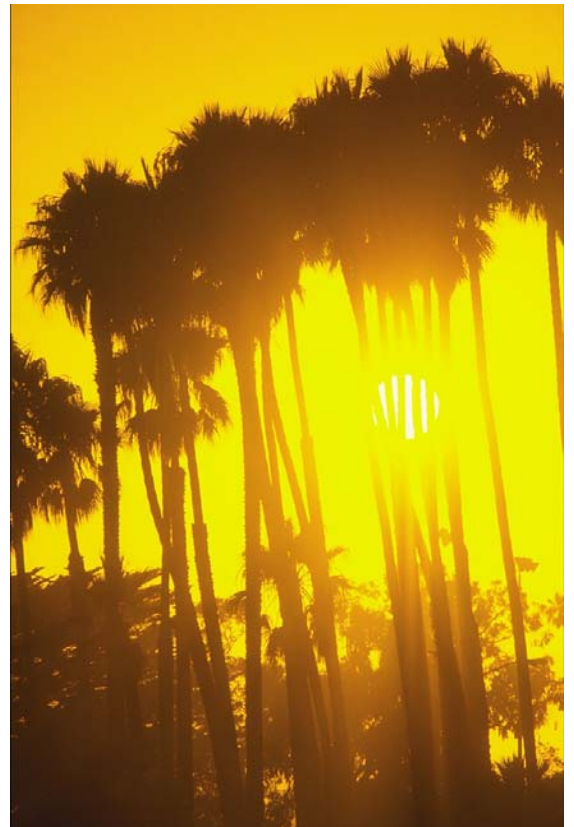
I personally believe that the best criteria for what we do in worship should take into account our heritage as the congregational church, our much longer heritage as the church of Jesus Christ, and also what practices will help those who worship here today encounter God and offer God praise. Because we are a diverse community of faith, with many different learning styles and spiritual needs, we offer a variety of practices. Each of us will find that, on some Sundays, what we do in worship touches us, and on other days, what we do may not "work" for us. When that happens, I hope we can hold our hearts open and give thanks for our sisters and brothers in faith who might be spiritually fed by a practice that seems less helpful to us.

I hope that we can also define ourselves, not by who we are *not*, or even by what specific things we do or don't do in worship, so much as by our desire to follow Jesus to the best of our ability and to become a caring inclusive community that honors and respects the diversity of our spiritual needs. The Lenten journey invites us to ask God's help in transforming our lives as we follow Jesus' path. I am glad we can travel together.

May God bless us on our journey to God's heart.

In faith,

Sara



Worship in February:



2012-02-05 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany. We will celebrate the Lord's Supper. Sara Kroon will preach and lead worship.

2012-02-12 Sixth Sunday after Epiphany. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Mark 1:40-45. (A Man with a terrible skin disease asks Jesus to heal him.) Where and in what ways have you encountered restorative, healing love in your life?

2012-02-19 Transfiguration Sunday. 2 Kings 2:1-12. (The mantle of prophetic ministry passes from Elijah, to his faithful follower, Elisha.). Mark 9:2-9. (Jesus is transfigured on a mountaintop.) How can we be present in those "thin place" moments that are given to us.

THE SEASON OF LENT BEGINS

Lent is a time of sober reflection on the ways the world (and we) are not what we might be as we are beset by brokenness, violence, and division. Lent begins a journey to a promised end that we cannot see.

2012-02-22 Ash Wednesday. 7:00 p.m. in the chapel. We will celebrate the Lord's Supper and offer the imposition of ashes.

2012-02-26 First Sunday in Lent. HYMN SING. Genesis 9:8-17. (God has poured down flood waters to rescue human blessedness.) Psalm 25:1-10; Mark 1:9-15. What is cracked/broken in your life? What would it take to mend this?

Lenten Study: Let's Go Deeper

After worship, have you ever found yourself thinking, "I wish the preacher had addressed _____," or "That makes me think about_____."? Come together on Sundays from 11:30 until 12:30 in the Memorial Room (where the sofas are just off the Parish Hall) during the Lenten season to wrestle with the texts. We'll begin with a discussion of the day's scripture and sermon (and any other parts of our worship that provoked thought), then we'll move on to the text for the following week. Sharing insights can deepen not only understanding, but also faith. Moreover, it can strengthen our community of faith. Do join us February 26 through March 18. I am eager for your insights. Sara



SAVE THE DATE: March 10

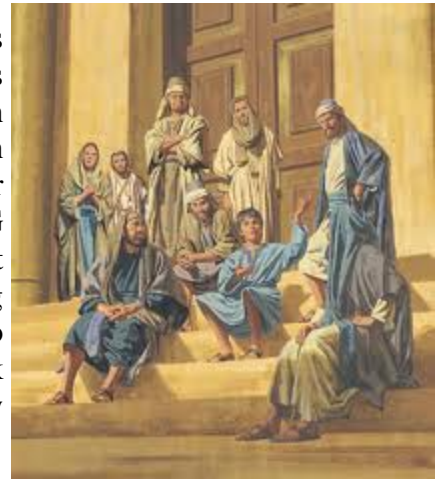
We have noted for several years that our current by-laws simply do not work well, given the cultural milieu in which we find ourselves. Help us revise those in a way that encourages the kinds of ministries that are meaningful and rewarding. You do not need any particular skills to contribute to this process, just an open mind and heart for your church.

We will be using a process based upon work by a local church pastor, Alan Klaas. It is called "Flexible, Missional Constitution/Bylaws: In One Day, Not Two Years." We need YOU to come March 10 all day (8:30 to 4:30). Yes, it is a long day, but I can guarantee it will be worth it. The process will be led by Mike Penn-Strah.



News from Christian Education

We are now in the season after Epiphany and our Church school is learning about Jesus and his ministry. Did you know the Bible shares with us stories of Jesus as a boy, (and how he frightened his parents) his young life in the temple as a student, much like our Confirmands, his Baptism, and then walks us through his ministry? Our kids are learning these stories, many for the first time, and are enjoying making hands on projects for our LIVE BIG Story Book. Our overview themes are The Wise Men, Jesus in the Temple at Twelve, Jesus' Baptism, Jesus Beginning His Ministry, and Jesus Healing Peter's Mother in Law. Wow, that's a lot to cover! Perhaps you would like to share one of your favorite Jesus stories with our great group of kids, or ask them questions about what they are learning, you'll be surprised what they know!



Souper Bowl Sunday February 12-(note NOT Super Bowl Sunday)

Immediately following Worship come for lunch and join the Confirmands and Youth for a delicious bowl of homemade soup and bread! Our soup luncheons are something that many people rave about (place and time yet to be determined). It is a time of multigenerational fellowship and breaking bread together. Bring a friend, family member, or shut-in! This \$5 luncheon will support our annual Youth Mission Trip.

It is expected that all youth grades 6 and above, especially those planning to go on the trip, will be here to help cook, set-up and serve. If anyone would like to donate a homemade soup, or take out containers, see or call Barbara at the church, or at 203-239-3095. She will even come pick them up!

Confirmation

Please lift up our Confirmands in your prayers for their upcoming retreat at Silver Lake, February 3-5th. This retreat will be a time for them to reflect with other youth in the greater church, what it means to be Baptized in the body of Christ, and the nature and identity of the faith community. We will explore our faith in play, creativity and personal expression. We might even sing a song or two! When we come back we hope to put our new discoveries into action with *our* church family.



Mentors: Please be in contact with your Confirmand. If you would like to help or shadow your Confirmand at the Souper Luncheon consider yourself welcomed!

Dates to Remember:

January	31	Class after school
February	3-5	Silver Lake Retreat
February	12	Souper Luncheon
February	14	Class after school? tbd
February	19	Class
February	22	Ash Wednesday Service
March	3	Retreat with Mentors



Columbus House Outreach Cooking Schedule 2011-2012

Columbus House is New Haven's primary shelter for homeless individuals. We provide residents one meal a month (the third Monday night of every month). Cooking is usually done after church on the Sunday prior to the Monday meal. Henry Gates is our generous shopper. Julie Altman schedules the various groups and provides back up as needed. Groups need 3-4 volunteers to cook and to serve for their duty month.

Any questions about this mission opportunity, or to volunteer, please call Julie at 393-0796. Thank you!

February 19/20	Women's Fellowship
March 18/19	Confirmation Class
April 15/16	Board of Deacons
May 20/21	Board of Christian Education
June 17/18	Board of Trustees
July 15/16	?? It could be your group here!
August 19/20	?? It could be your group here!



Stewards of Our Relationship with God

Be still and know that I am God. – Psalm 46:10

In all our living we belong to God. Stewardship begins with our relationship with God. We've experienced it in the midst of a rush of celebrations and hope-filled worship during the Christmas season. Now experience a season of Sabbath rest in God to deepen that relationship. Sabbath is simply setting aside time to delight in God, a gift to God and oneself in the midst of our rushing, checklists, productivity, and burn-out. As the Rev. Rochelle Stackhouse said in *The Gifting God*, "God gives, in the midst of relationships, to create, to strengthen and honor, and with the intimacy of one desiring deep and fruitful relationships."

There are many ways of Sabbath keeping. Some people prefer to set aside a specific time daily or weekly to engage in particular spiritual practices. Others prefer to incorporate spiritual practices into the midst of daily life. Through spiritual practices, Christians through the ages have encountered God in life-renewing ways. Prayer is the most traditional but there are many others – fasting, hospitality, forgiveness, gratitude, meditation, Bible study, journaling, worship, listening, living simply, acts of compassion and justice, honoring the body, generosity, artistic expression... We become what we practice. As centers of hope and transformation, local churches help people live into a new way of life.

A message from Stewards in the Household of God: a Resource for Holistic Year-round Stewardship available from United Church of Christ Resources.



Update on the Church Basement Repairs:

Apparently there have been some questions about what is happening to our church basement. Let me try and answer some of them. Back in 2007, when Sprint was installing their wires for the cell phone tower, they crossed over our septic line and crushed it. They attempted to repair it and backfilled the area. Since that time, we have been plagued with water and dampness in our church basement. On one occasion, we had a major flood and ended up with an insurance adjuster from UCC Church Insurance Board to settle a claim for repairs from the water damage. In examining the floor tiles under the carpet, and testing them, we knew they contained asbestos and needed to be professionally removed. For a week, an asbestos removal company removed all the floor tiles and glue from the concrete slab. They followed the strict guidelines enforced by the state and did air samplings which came back negative. So we have a clean basement! Next we sealed the floor with a two coat product that is rated to withstand 2500 psi from any ground water pushing up.



Now on to the septic issue. During the major flood, we were taking water in through the basement toilet floor flanges. We pumped the septic tank to take any pressure off the fields and the water flow ceased. We had to examine why the water did not easily flow to the galleys (septic fields) and kept backing up to the toilets. This past week, we uncovered the line that connects our septic tank to our galleys and found more crushed and broken pipe. The white plastic pipe that was in the ground was not the appropriate pipe to be used. What's more, the repair made by the Sprint contractor also used an inferior pipe. Fortunately, we were able to replace the line that connected the septic tank to the galleys with the proper piping and backfill the area before the snow. It was also determined that the baffle on the outflow of the tank was missing and that was repaired as well.

Now the next step will be to repair the walls in the basement and prepare to paint. That's where we need your help. We will be scheduling a painting party in the next month or so and then the final step will be to install a new wall to wall nylon carpet. Carpet was recommended over tiles for ease to clean and for a no slip surface. If you are willing to help paint the basement, please be in touch with me or any of the trustees. We know this worked well in the Memorial room and Parish House and look forward to faithful painters once again. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Michael Lohne, Chm. Buildings and Grounds



WHAT'S THE POINT? WHAT PURPOSE DOES THAT SERVE? IS THERE ANY REASON FOR THAT?

We always seem to look for a purpose behind the circumstance. Somebody gives us a gift out of the blue...do we wonder in our brain of brains about the reason for the gift? "To every action there is always an equal and opposite reaction." Newton spelled that out about three centuries ago in his Third Law of Motion. At our February meeting we'll talk again about the purpose of some of the books of the Bible. Between now and then, think about Genesis, Numbers, Job, Psalms, Paul's letters, Lamentations, Acts, the Four Gospels, and Revelation. Member of our Circle or not, join us Wednesday, February 22, (NOTE CHANGE) at 12 Noon in the Parish House. Bring your Bible and your lunch and let the purpose be served.

CIRCLE 4 - THE STUDY/OUTREACH SUPPORT GROUP

March in the Son: Equipping Church Leaders for a New Decade – March 24, 2012

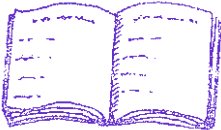
Gather from 9:00 - 3:15 at First Congregational Church in Cheshire for 16 amazing workshops, including: Growing a Vibrant Youth Ministry: 5 things YOU Should Know; The Caring and Sharing Ministry of the Deacons, Raising a Child of God: Growing Their Faith at Home, and many more. Each workshop will be offered at one time and will be two hours long. For questions call Karen Ziel at the Conference Office (860-761-7104 or karens@ctucc.org.) Many wonderful offerings to choose from...mark your calendars and check for registration information at ctucc.org.

Event Link: <http://www.ctucc.org/events.php?event=2812>

Flyer Link: http://www.ctucc.org/events/pdfs/20120324_marchingintheson_savedate.pdf



Welcome New Members Sally Pisciotta, Andrew and Ellen Townsend



Marking Life's Passages

Baptism	January 8, 2012	Lynnea Violet Youngberg	daughter of Marlys and Trevor Youngberg
New Members	January 22, 2012	Sally Pisciotta Andrew and Ellen Townsend (with their daughter)	

Leave behind more than an empty pew. Remember the church in your will.

The Parishioner

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NEXT PARISHIONER DEADLINE IS WEDNESDAY, February 22, 2012 (a firm date)