

TIDINGS

First Church of Christ, Congregational

Founded 1652

Issue: February 2010

Schedule of Events February 2010

February 7 Souper Bowl Sunday. We will join with other churches and organizations to fight hunger. All collections go to Amazing Grace.

February 7
Congregational Meeting. See page 2.

February 14
Dating Jesus
Sermon and Second Hour with author Susan Campbell. See page 4.

February 17
ASH WEDNESDAY
Special service, 7:30 p.m.. See page 5.



A Note from the Minister

February is a strange time of year here in New England. If we are lucky, we have just come out of the January thaw. There is more daylight in our days. In the back of our minds we are thinking “spring”! We’ve caught our breath after the Christmas holiday once more. Life starts to take on a regular pattern. And February dunks us back into the chill of winter...and into the season of Lent.

Perhaps it is not accidental that this deep, reflective season comes to us in the last throes of winter. The cold seems to drag out. Instinctively we want to dig into the warm caves of our homes. Yet, we are called out to be a part of our community of faith...acting in the community.

Barbara Brown Taylor says: Jesus “does not say he has the power to give resurrection and life. He says that he *is* those things, that in his presence they become present reality...Those who trust that with him – in him – begin their eternal lives right now, and nothing on earth can snuff them out.”

Whereas in the past Lent was a time to give up something, today it is more relevant to our faith to act sacrificially. What better way to walk in the way of the one who offered not only love for us but his whole being? When people are left devastated in the midst of earthquakes, we can accompany them with our sacrificial giving and prayers, Christ’s presence through the Body in the world. When there is loss of life, job or loved one, our simple actions and prayers bring the living Christ to those who suffer. Where there is great need our great gift is to be present.

How we act sacrificially is up to each of our own nature and faith. We need only

watch the news or walk down our streets to know how we will respond. Let us walk this journey of Lent together, even the most difficult parts of the path in Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Then, when we celebrate the resurrection on Easter Sunday, we will indeed have a glimpse of what eternal life means, here and now.

--Sue

Joys and Concerns

February 2010 Joys and Concerns

Our prayers are requested for:



Don Lucas, (Shari Lucas’ father) who is in the hospital with pneumonia and is recovering from a heart attack;

Jacqueline Scavetta, (Carri

Wilson’s grandmother) who has lymphoma; **Lisa Naylor**, (Catie Olinski’s and Margaret Lindsay’s niece) who has lymphoma; **Dorothy Pace**, (Joyce Lowrie’s friend) who broke three vertebrae in her neck; **Briget Pierce**, (Alma Zyko’s niece), who has Hodgkins Lymphoma, **Mary Tuchmann**, **Sharon Sharpe’s mom** who was recently diagnosed with cancer; **Ryleigh Hughes**, Darcy Dickinson’s great, grand-niece who has come home; **Sharon Appelman**, (Barbara and Earl Smallshaw’s daughter, who has a motor neuron disease); **Helen Dutcher**; **Jan Edson**; **Gene Cartagena**, who has lost his job; and **Misión Las Delicias** (The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ibagué). Our prayers of sympathy go to the family of Ruth Gustin, who has died.



...to engage and support people in WORSHIP

FEBRUARY SECOND HOURS

Adult Education and Discussion

Meet in the Memorial Room following worship. Nursery care provided until 12:15 pm.

7th Congregational Budget Meeting. Conversation and final decision on the First Church 2010 Budget. Parish Hall.



14th Dating Jesus: a story of fundamentalism, feminism and the American girl. **Author Susan Campbell** shares her experiences growing up in a fundamental tradition and her later realization that in her faith “women would never be allowed a seat at the throne.”

21st State Representative Matt Lesser will share some thoughts about the current legislative session, proposed bills, the State budget issue, and listen to our thoughts about these matters.

28th “A Cup of Justice.” First Church enjoys Fair Trade coffee every Sunday, but do we know what this really means? A visual presentation about the coffee growers, fair trade and how this is a justice issue.

Congregational Meeting 2nd Hour February 7

The Executive Committee has scheduled this meeting as a follow-up to our mid-year meeting on January 10th. At that meeting, an interim budget was passed with a deficit of \$18,357. Those present were also polled on their preferences as to how they would like to see the deficit closed. Using those suggestions as a guideline, the Budget and Executive Committees will be working diligently to formulate an operating budget for the remainder of 2010. This budget will be presented to the congregation for their approval on February 7th following worship. All church members are welcome to attend.



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Earth Ministry Retreat

Earth Ministry, a working group composed of members from three downtown churches, has planned a *day of retreat at Mercy Center at Madison on Saturday, April 17, 2010*. The facilitator will be the Reverend Ted Coolidge of the Church of the Holy Trinity. Details will be forthcoming: I hope you'll save the date. Plan to join in the day of worship and discussion adding your voice as the group considers future ways for the Middletown area to show concern for the Earth and its future.

Background: in early 2009 three downtown churches offered programs on sustainable living to their members. The Church of the Holy Trinity held a weekly voluntary simplicity group. The group included people from First Church of Christ, South Congregational Church and the Church of the Holy Trinity. During the meetings the book, "Simpler Living Compassionate Life" was discussed.

South Church had had an active Earth Ministry group for some time. Concern for the earth at First Church had been demonstrated by its creation of the Jonah Center for Earth and Art. On January 16, 2009, Holy Trinity invited the three churches to a potluck supper and film. A discussion around our common passion for sustainable living led to a February 23 meeting of members of the three churches at South Church. The whole group adopted the name Earth Ministry.

The group's primary focus has been honoring and protecting the environment. On April 25 members participated in the Earth Day clean up of the North End of Middletown that was organized by the North End Action Team (NEAT). On other occasions some members attended workshops on yard care and gardening conducted by the Jonah Center; (the impetus for the First Church Community Garden came from that). The three EM churches also encouraged their members to use compost bins and rain barrels that were being sold by the Middletown Water Department. When there was a clean up of Harbor Park, Earth Ministry members were there with their rakes.

Last Fall the group focused on promoting the awareness of global climate change. Together the Jonah Center and Earth Ministry sponsored a talk by Wesleyan Professor Brian Stewart on the subject of the "human footprint" on the earth. The group's meetings and planning over the summer of 2009 led to Middletown's participation in the worldwide "Sounding the Alarm" project: our three church bells rang 350 times and we each passed out literature informing citizens that the earth had already passed the level of 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide beyond which life was endangered.

The next meeting of Earth Ministry, a potluck, will be held at my home, 111 Bretton Road, on Monday, February 8 at 5:30 PM. Rev. Coolidge and his wife, Joy, will be present to plan the April retreat. Please contact me if interested in attending the meeting at Lynshaw@aol.com or 860-346-0862.

Lyn Shaw



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Dating Jesus



A Morning with Hartford Courant Columnist Susan Campbell

On Sunday, February 14 (Valentine's Day) the popular columnist Susan Campbell will be our guest preacher and 2nd Hour presenter. Susan grew up in southern Missouri in a fundamentalist, Baptist family. She has reflected deeply on that experience and she has much to say about the role of churches in American society. Her book *Dating Jesus: Fundamentalism, Feminism, and the American Girl* has recently been published in paperback and will be for sale on February 14.

**This promises to be a very special Sunday.
Please spread the word and invite your friends.**

PLEASE NOTE!

Calling all those who can Sew!

The Religious Education Committee invites you to be an integral part of our banner – the **Fabric of Our Lives**. Take home a packet of fabric and simply stitch the pieces together to make long tubes. **Return them back to church by March 14th**. We'll have a weaving "party" on Saturday, **March 27th at 9 am** in the Memorial Room to create our new church banner. It will be unveiled on Palm Sunday. For more information, contact Jennifer Ide at jjide@snet.net or 860.349.3005.

The Bee and Missionary will meet on February 11th at 11 o'clock a.m. (note the time change) in the Memorial Room of the church. Rev. John Hall will be our guest speaker. Women are asked to bring a bag lunch. Beverages will be provided. All women of the church are urged to attend. For more information call Wanda Hartz at 860-346-2340.

Christian Education

Just a reminder to parents: please check the Church School Brochure for the class schedule. If you do not have one, they are available in the entrance to the Parish Hall.



...to engage and support people in FELLOWSHIP

Ash Wednesday Evening Service February 17, 7:30 p.m.

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent, the period of 40 days (not counting Sundays) before Easter. The 40 days of Lent represent the 40 days Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness before his public ministry began. The temptations can be viewed as the time when Jesus struggled to realize the true nature of his spiritual mission.

Lent has traditionally served as time of spiritual renewal as well as a period of preparation for baptism. In the medieval church, catechumens or students of the faith humbled themselves in a ceremony called the “Penitential Rite.” This was the first step in their preparation for baptism at the Easter Vigil service.

This year, as in past years, we will hold our evening Ash Wednesday service in the Memorial Room. This will be a very simple, meditative service similar to last year’s. The room will be gently lit with candles. We will sing a chant to oxygenate our brains and then proceed into a “deep relaxation” exercise, followed by an Ash Wednesday reading, prayers, and another chant. The service will conclude with the “imposition of ashes” for those who wish to receive them.

Last year, many people said they found this format to be very powerful. We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to make the season of Lent a special time in your spiritual life.



Mid-Week Lenten Services

The Middletown mid-week Lenten services will begin at Church of the Holy Trinity (Main St.) on Ash Wednesday, February 17 at 12:10 p.m. followed by the usual luncheon. (The host churches for the remainder of the mid-Lenten services are as follows:

February 24:	Christ Lutheran Church (Washington St.)
March 3	First United Methodist (Old Church St.)
March 10	South Congregational (Pleasant St.)
March 17	Cross Street AME Zion (Wadsworth & West St.)
March 24	St. Paul Lutheran (High St.)

All services begin at 12:10 p.m. At First Church, the Deacons will host our own Ash Wednesday evening service in the Memorial Room, beginning at 7:30 p.m. (See above.)



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MUSIC SCHEDULE, February 2010



Monday, February 1
African Drumming, 6:15pm
Heart in Hand Bells, 7:30pm
Wednesday, February 3 - Senior Choir,
7:30pm
Sunday, February 7 - Senior Choir,
9:29am
Monday, February 8
Celebration Singers, 6:15pm
Heart in Hand Bells, 7:30pm
Wednesday, February 10 - Senior Choir,
7:30pm
Sunday, February 14 - Senior Choir,
9:29am

Monday, February 15
Celebration Singers, 6:15pm
African Drumming, 7:30pm
Wednesday, February 17
Senior Choir attend Ash Wednesday
service, to be followed by brief
rehearsal.
Sunday, February 21 - Celebration
Singers, 9:30am (No Senior Choir)
Monday, February 22
Celebration Singers, 6:15pm
Heart in Hand Bells, 7:30pm
Wednesday, February 24 - Senior Choir,
7:30pm
Sunday, February 28 - Senior Choir,
9:29am

JOIN US FOR "A LITTLE JAZZ MASS" with the SENIOR CHOIR-MARCH 7

Just a reminder that on March 7, our Senior Choir will perform "A Little Jazz Mass" by Bob Chilcott, arranged for SATB choir, bass, piano and drums, during our morning worship. "Chilcott's jazz influences truly come to the fore in *A Little Jazz Mass*: The Kyrie has real groove, the Gloria swings, the Sanctus sits right back, the Benedictus hums along, and the Agnus Dei draws inspiration from the Blues. This highly effective setting of the Latin *Missa brevis*, is one of Chilcott's most celebrated and popular choral works to date, and has received countless performances (both on the concert platform and as part of the sung liturgy in church services) across the world, perhaps most notably at St Paul's Cathedral, London.

A Little Jazz Mass was written for the massed choirs of the 2004 Crescent City Choral Festival, and received its premiere in St Louis Cathedral, New Orleans in June of that year."

Deadline for March Tidings – Wednesday, February 17th at noon. Send submissions to Suzanna Barrett at stamminen@wesleyan.edu.



Theology and Practice

Managing Your Energy Use

Humans are uniquely called to be caretakers of creation, stewards of the earth and its resources. Fossil fuels that hold stored hydrocarbons underground for millions of years are an amazingly rich energy source and they drive our modern economy — transportation, heating and cooling, manufacturing, and food production.

But there are 2 problems with this situation. First, fossil fuels are not an infinite energy source. As developing countries use more and as oil reserves are depleted, the price is bound to rise in the future. Second, mining and burning these fuels cause all kinds of environmental problems. Almost every day in the news we hear or read something about global climate change, wars in the oil-rich Middle East, and the need to become more energy efficient.

First Church has become more energy conscious and we are using less energy than we used to. Thanks to Chuck Bates who records our monthly electricity usage and provides annual totals. Here’s our record for the past 5 years. (The number of days in the year varies because the CL&P billing cycles don’t correspond exactly to the year.)

Year	# days	Usage (kWh)	Cost	Cost/kWh
2005	385	44,310	\$6,070	\$.137
2006	364	50,240	\$8,874	\$.177
2007	365	41,600	\$7,748	\$.186
2008	368	36,480	\$7,119	\$.195
2009	364	33,040	\$6,876	\$.208

Note the rising cost per kWh in the right hand column. If we used the same amount in 2009 as in 2006, our total bill would have been \$10,450 (not the actual \$6,876).

What is the point? Here are some things you can do to save money, protect the environment, and reduce our nation’s dependence on fossil fuels that gets us into wars.

- Start keeping track of your own energy use, including gallons of auto fuel and heating oil purchased, and kilowatt hours of electricity consumed. Start a contest with yourself to see if you can reduce your yearly consumption (as the church has done) by finding ways to waste less energy. Keeping track of your dollar expenditures won’t give you an accurate measure of your consumption, because prices change. Let John Hall know if you do this, because we’d like to keep a list of those who do and celebrate your attention to this issue..
- You can now buy your electricity from a competitive supplier on the open market and reduce your costs significantly, by approximately 15%. Go to www.ctenergyinfo.com/ and click on “Choose An Electric Supplier” and pick the lowest cost available. You will still get your bill from CL&P and your service will not change in any way.
- Because of the savings you get from buying electricity from a competitive

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supplier (above) you can participate in a “green energy option” and still save money. Contact John Hall to find out how to do that. It’s simple, and First Church will get \$10 if you sign up through us.

- Visit the Jonah Center website www.thejonahcenter.org and go to the Eco-Friendly Living Resources page to find out other ways to reduce home or vehicle energy costs.

The longer we wait before addressing global warming and our dependence on fossil fuels such as oil and natural gas, the harder and more expensive it will be for future generations to so.

----John

