

From the Interim Minister

What Can We Expect During the Interim Time?

Some churches seem to be in transition every few years. For others, it has been a long time since there has been a major change in pastoral leadership, and maybe another long time before that one. First Church is one of the latter, a congregation that has had just two senior pastors in the last 41 years, and no interim experience in 21 years. So we are stepping onto terrain that definitely feels new and unfamiliar!

This does not mean that there have not been other changes and transitions. You have had a number of associate pastors come and go during these years, as well as other staff. Like so many churches, you have felt the challenge of trying to maintain your facilities and ministries with fewer members and fewer resources. The cultural context in which you are a church has changed quite significantly over recent decades. And so your view of this transition will necessarily be different from the last time you searched for a new pastor.

This is why we don't just pull out the old documents from that time around and dust them off. We need to ask the questions new, giving space for fresh answers that are true for this point in time, not some other. The months of this interim period are meant to provide both time and process for First Church to be thoughtful, reflective and honest about itself, to generate a current level of self-understanding and challenge, that will take you into the search process and hopefully lead not only to

the calling of a pastoral leader well suited to this particular church, but to your eager readiness for that new ministry and partnership.

So we will be, first, about the business of asking questions, around the congregation's sense of identity, history, energy, hopes and fears -- such questions as:

What is this church's core sense of purpose? Why is it here, what is it for? Why do people connect with it? Are we happy with the ways in which we are embodying our core purpose as we understand it? Are we frustrated in any way, as we seek to embody our core purpose? Does that sense of purpose need to grow, deepen or shift in some way? What is most important to us about who we are, as we look to the future? What is our story, and how do we feel about it? When we think of our history, what stands out? What are we proud of? What, in our history, has challenged or troubled us? What are the key things in our past that have made us the kind of congregation we now are? Is there anything in our history, recent or longer ago, that feels unresolved, that needs attention?

Are we a congregation good at developing leaders? Supporting them? Do we have enough of the kind of lay leadership we need? Does our current lay leadership structure serve us well?

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...to engage and support people in WORSHIP

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We are a congregation of the United Church of Christ. What does that mean? What awareness do we have of our denominational identity? What things do we need to understand better?

When we have had opportunity to talk about all of this (and probably more), we will have generated something like a “self-portrait” of First Church. That view will inform the work of a Pastoral Search Committee, who will not be named until we have had a chance to work through this process. It will therefore be at least several months before there will be readiness to name a Search Committee; this is standard timing.

That search committee will then prepare a comprehensive profile of First Church, that goes out to candidates of interest, and in turn receives candidates’ profiles for review. These are lengthy documents, not brief resumes, and considering them thoroughly and carefully takes time. Most search committees read candidate profiles for several months. Your search committee will ultimately decide on a fairly small number of applicants to interview, will pursue discernment with those they feel are the best matches for First Church, and will ultimately recommend to the congregation one candidate to be your new settled minister. The congregation will have a chance to meet that person on a candidating weekend, when he or she will come to spend time with the congregation and lead worship, and then the congregation will vote upon the search committee’s choice. Assuming an affirmative vote, typically 60 or 90 days later (depending upon his or her current circumstances), that person begins as your new minister.

So this is a process with steps and stages. It is my job as your interim minister to help you process these tasks, and make good use of what you learn from them. There is also guidance available at each point from the Regional Minister of the UCC Connecticut Conference, the Rev. Dr. Michael Penn-Strah. And while there is no set time that an interim process “should” take, most churches find that absent any especially difficult conflict that might delay the start of their search, the work cannot usually be completed in less than 18 to 24 months. When the interim is following a long pastorate, such as your most recent one, it behooves the church to take its time, do its work, and put itself in the best possible position to make the best possible choice of new pastoral leader.

Over the coming months, we will gather at various times to work on these questions, seeking to be open and responsive to what we are learning. I ask for your participation in our important all-church discussions as they come along – for generally, the broader the view, the truer the story it tells us. And I also encourage you to talk with me at any time individually, if you have thoughts, insights or questions about the transition at First Church.

My experience with many years of interim ministry is that the anxiety that congregations may feel in the beginning gives way as we grapple to a genuine energy and curiosity, sense of renewal and vision, and eventually becomes the exciting, forward-looking time when your search committee one day announces that they have found your next minister, and the beginning of the next chapter is in view.

As I am apt to say at the end of sermons – may it be so with us!

Faithfully,

Rev. Brenda



SECOND HOURS FOR OCTOBER

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

October 2nd Discover The Life You Were Born To Live

with Anne-Marie Cannata and Annaita Gandhi.

Life is filled with challenges! This workshop will enable you to better understand the specific challenges that are in your Life Path. Science reveals much about our lives and the ways of this planet. Peeking into the systems around us and learning their correlations with our lives, can help us to see why we have the challenges and strengths that we do. Identifying these challenge areas or "issues", allows us to deal with them more effectively, helping us to evolve and grow and better understand those around us and ourselves. This short "class" helps you become more accepting, more patient and more loving to your Self and others. It's also very helpful to use this system for family members, to be able to see their specific challenges as well. Based predominantly on the book by Dan Millman, The Life You Were Born to Live. Bring the exact birth dates (day, month and year) of those people in your life with whom you wish to better relate.

October 9th - TBD

October 16th - Beginning Our Interim Process Work

Following worship, Rev. Brenda will lead us in the first of several all-church discussions about our sense of identity, mission and purpose as a church. These conversations are important preparation for the pastoral search process that our church will be entering into, probably within a few months. The more input we have from our congregation, the truer the picture of our church, our strengths and our needs the search committee will have to work with, in seeking our next settled pastor.

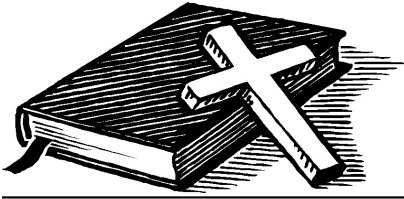
October 23rd – Inquirer's Class

October 30th- No Program. Happy Halloween!



Bee and Missionary

The Bee and Missionary Society will be enjoying lunch out this month on October 13th. Lunch will be in Old Lyme at the Hideaway Restaurant; meet there at 12 noon. Please see upcoming bulletins and previews for more information.



Worship for Sundays October 2011

- Oct. 2** **World Communion Sunday; Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost**
Worship with Communion
We will be providing a “neutral pulpit” on this day. This means we are helping another church, who is in the pastoral search process, by hosting one of their candidates as our preacher, while members of that church’s search committee will be in attendance.
Lectionary: Ex. 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20; Ps. 19 or Ps. 80:7-15; Phil. 3:4b-14; Matt. 21:33-46.
- Oct. 9** **Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost**
Guest preacher: The Rev. Ineke Mitchell, Regional Minister for the North Central Region, Connecticut Conference, UCC.
Lectionary: Ex. 32:1-14; Ps. 106:1-6, 19-23 or Isa. 25:1-9; Ps. 23; Phil. 4:1-9; Matt. 22:1-14.
- Oct. 16** **Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost**
Lectionary: Ex. 33:12-23; Ps. 99 or Isa. 45:1-7, Ps. 96:1-13; I Thess. 1:1-10; Matt. 22:5-22
- Oct. 23** **Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost**
Beginning of Stewardship Campaign
Lectionary: Deut. 34:1-12, Ps. 90:1-6, 13-17 or Levit. 19:1-2m 15-18; Ps. 1; 1 Thess. 2:1-8; Matt. 22: 34-46
- Oct. 30** **Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost**
Lectionary: Josh 3:7-17; Ps. 107:1-7, 33-37 or Mic. 3:5-12; Ps. 43; 1 Thess. 2:9-13; Matt. 23:1-12.

Texts from the lectionary, a three-year cycle of readings commonly used by many Christian churches, may or may not be the texts actually used in any given service. They are given here so that whether or not they are used in worship, they may be used for personal reading and reflection.



MUSIC for October



- Sunday, October 2
 - Celebration Singers - 9:15am
 - Senior Choir - 9:29am
- Monday, October 3
 - Celebration Singers - 6:15pm
 - Heart in Hand Bells - 7:30pm
- Wednesday, October 5
 - African Drumming - 6:30pm
 - Senior Choir - 7:30pm
- Sunday, October 9
 - Celebration Singers & Senior Choir - 9:20am
- Monday, October 10
 - NO CELEBRATION SINGER REHEARSAL
 - Heart in Hand Bells - 7:30pm
- Wednesday, October 12
 - NO REHEARSALS/ Senior Choir - Drumming
- Sunday, October 16
 - Celebration Singers - 9:15am
 - Senior Choir - 9:29am
- Monday, October 17
 - Celebration Singers - 6:15pm
 - Heart in Hand Bells - 7:30pm
- Wednesday, October 19
 - African Drumming - 6:30pm
 - Senior Choir - 7:30 pm
- Sunday, October 23
 - Celebration Singers - 9:15am
 - Senior Choir - 9:29am
- Monday, October 24
 - Celebration Singers & Senior Choir to Comcast, 7:00pm
 - NO HEART IN HAND REHEARSAL
- Wednesday, October 26
 - African Drumming - 6:30pm
 - Senior Choir - 7:30pm - CHRISTMAS REHEARSAL
- Sunday, October 30
 - Womens Choir - 9:20am
- Monday, October 31
 - Celebration Singers - 6:15pm
 - Heart in Hand Bells - 7:30pm

AFRICAN DRUMMING MOVED TO WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

Our African Drumming Ensemble has moved to Wednesday evenings from 6:30 - 7:30pm. Come join us. No experience is required. We learn traditional rhythms from Guinea, West Africa. Come once or come alot. It's a great stress reliever at the end of a day. We have lots of drums or bring your own.

WATCH OUR CHOIRS ON COMCAST

The Senior Choir and Celebration Singers will preform live at Comcast in Middletown on Monday, October 24 at 8:00pm. This is our third year of singing on cable. Tune in to Channel 15 and enjoy. Tell your friends!

SING WITH OUR CHOIRS FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON!

You are invited to sing with our Senior Choir or Celebration Singers, or both, during our Christmas Season. Senior Choir rehearsals are on Wednesday evenings at 7:30pm and their Christmas rehearsals are on Oct. 26, Nov. 2, Nov. 9, Nov. 16, Nov. 30 and Dec. 7. Celebration Singers rehearse on Monday evenings at 6:15pm and their Christmas rehearsals are on Nov. 7, Nov. 14, Nov. 21, Nov. 28 and Dec. 5. Both groups will sing this music during the Advent and Christmas season and at the Annual Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 11. If you have any questions, please contact Shari Lucas at shari.lucas@sbcglobal.net or at the church office, 860-346-6657 x11.



...to engage and support people in WORSHIP

HOLLY FAIR 2011

Saturday, December 3rd, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

We'll feature our usual fare and have some exciting vendors selling their wares.

Please think about how you can help make the fair a success!

SET-UP: Folks needed to set up Holly's Diner and the parish hall on Thursday evening December 1st from 6:00pm to 8:30pm

CLEAN-UP: Beginning at 2:30 pm on the day of the fair people are needed to help pack things up, take things to the basement, take out the trash and break down tables.

SERVERS: Several people are needed to serve food in Holly's Diner on fair day from 11:00am to 2:00pm.

COOKS: We'll need SOUPS & PIES for Holly's Diner (please bring your soup in a crock pot if you have one). BAKED GOODS needed for the baked goods booth.

COOKIES: MaryLou "Keebler Elf" Brady will be chairing the cookie walk. She will be baking cookies in the church kitchen the week of the fair (11/28-12/2). See her if you'd like to help or make cookies at your home.

**GREENS WORKSHOPS: Join in the fellowship, fun and satisfaction of creating things of beauty.

WORKSHOP DATES & TIMES: Monday 11/28, Tuesday 11/29 and Wednesday 11/30 from 6:00pm to 8:30pm each evening.

**GREENS: Baskets & other vessels needed for the greens arrangements as well as plastic containers to line them.

DONATIONS OF: ANTIQUES & COLLECTIBLES, HANDCRAFTED ITEMS, JEWELRY, ***LINENS & LACE, CHILDREN'S BOOKS and ladies SCARVES can be dropped off outside the church office or in the Holly Fair basement storage space anytime.

***LINENS & LACE: Pam Miller will be chairing this fair favorite. She is looking for donations of tablecloths, table runners doilies, handkerchiefs, etc. She would like to receive donations as soon as possible so she can sort, clean, press & price them.

BOOTH WORKERS: Will be needed the day of the fair between the hours of 9:30am and 2:30pm.

SIGN-UP SHEETS WILL BE POSTED IN THE PARISH HALL

THE FAIR IS ONE OF OUR BIGGEST FUNDRAISERS AND IS LOTS OF FUN!

PLEASE SEE LORI OREND IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE TO HELP SHE CAN BE REACHED AT (860) 342-1509 or email: loriorend@comcast.net



New Members' Process in October

The next opportunity for new members to join First Church will be during the service on October 30. Two preparatory sessions will be held beforehand, with the minister and Deacon representatives: Tuesday evening, October 18, 7 – 8:30 p.m., and Sunday, October 23, after worship, 11:30 – 12:30. These are different sessions; those interested in membership are asked to attend both.

Sometimes called “Inquirers’ Classes,” these gatherings are open both to those who know they want to join the church, and those who wish to explore the possibility and simply learn more, without obligation. They will provide opportunity for the discussion of the spiritual and worship life of First Church, the United Church of Christ as our denominational home, the church’s leadership structure, opportunities for involvement and participation, and an overall understanding of what “membership” means. There will be plenty of chance to ask questions.

If you are planning to attend, please let us know by contacting the church office (860-346-6657 or firstchurchucc@sbcglobal.net <<mailto:firstchurchucc@sbcglobal.net>>), by Wed., October 12. If you have a conflict with one of the dates but can make the other, please let us know that as well, so that we may try to accommodate. And if you need child care in order to be able to attend, please tell us.

In GOD we trust!

We are a faith community based on our belief and trust in God. For hundreds of years our First Church community has persevered and now WE are stewards of our First Church community, including our church building. We SHALL prosper and thrive and continue for generations to come, *if we choose to!* Coming up in the next few weeks and beyond, we'll be looking at how important it is to know our collective vision for the future and identify our individual commitment to our church family. The Stewardship Committee encourages you to think about the ways First Church has served you in your life and will in the future. We also look forward to November 6th, when we will worship with our ancient silver cups and plates, currently housed in the Wadsworth Museum. Please join us for this special service!



Have Your Party or Special Event at First Church!

Planning a birthday part? Baby shower? Retirement party? Need a comfortable space for your book group or business meeting? Consider renting one of the spaces at First Church. The parish hall, Memorial Room and upstairs classrooms and meeting rooms are all available with great rental rates for church members. Contact Lorel Czjaka in the church office for more details.
860-346-6657 x 10 and firstchurchucc@sbcglobal.net



Common Council Recognizes John Hall's 21-year Ministry

On September 6, the Common Council recognized John Hall's 21-year ministry and congratulated him on his retirement during a special ceremony. Here is a transcript of the plaque he received.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, John C. Hall retired as Minister from the First Church of Christ Congregational after 21 years; and

WHEREAS, John was the 15th Minister of First Church which was the original congregation organized by the settlers who came to Middletown in 1650; and

WHEREAS, his ministry was welcoming and affirming to all members of the community into church life; and

WHEREAS, the Church played a leading role in the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ to support legal marriage for same sex couples in Connecticut; and

WHEREAS, through his ministry, First Church made a special effort in accepting and understanding people who suffer mental illness and to appreciate the difficulties they bear both by the illness itself and the stigma attached to it; First Church has an on-going ministry and outreach to patients at the Connecticut Valley Hospital; and

WHEREAS, he began an annual memorial service at the cemetery at Connecticut Valley Hospital to name and honor the patients buried in numbered graves; and

WHEREAS, John has been an advocate for Middletown's natural environment; he is a member of the Clean Energy Task Force which has played a role for energy conservation measures in municipal buildings; and

WHEREAS, John is a founder of the Jonah Center for Earth and Art, a not-for-profit organization working with the community on environmental issues; the organization, founded in 2004, involves our citizens in the appreciation of our natural environment and promoting and adopting eco-friendly practices.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MIDDLETOWN: That we congratulate John C. hall on his retirement from the First Church of Christ, Congregational; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That we thank him for advocating understanding, respect and tolerance within the community for all people, as well as his continued efforts in promoting eco-friendly practices within the community.

Dated this 6th day of September, 2011 at The City of Middletown, Middlesex County, Connecticut.

Sebastian N. Giuliano

Mayor

Attest: Sandra Russo Driska

City and Town Clerk

Submitted by: Councilman Daniel T. Drew

On behalf of the Common Council



...to engage and support people in WORSHIP

Dear friends of Amazing Grace-this is a RED ALERT!

Yikes! We've weathered hurricane Irene, but it's been pretty tough for many of us. Hopefully your power has been restored and life is beginning to get back to normal. What this emergency does, too, is to remind us once again how crucial good friends are. Neighbors helping neighbors with food, water, a bed, a hot shower, and even a place to charge up electronics.

At Amazing Grace we face another emergency- a RED ALERT: we simply don't have enough food to distribute to the 900+ households who come to the pantry every month to feed their families. That's about 100 more households each month this summer than in 2010, for a total of over 29,000 items of food given away EACH MONTH! Many of our shelves are alarmingly bare.

So we turn to our friends - YOU - to help stock the shelves. Many people and organizations have been incredibly generous this summer, and for this we are profoundly grateful. But food supplies are dangerously low and some days we have had to scale back the number of items each family is allowed to select. So, in the midst of this natural emergency, please remember the RED ALERT at Amazing Grace and do whatever you can to help.

Please send on this notice to all your networks – at work, at your faith community, to your organizations and friends. We appreciate all food donations – large and small.

Food can be delivered to Amazing Grace Food Pantry at 16 Stack Street in Middletown's North End (on the street behind Macdonough School) from 10am – 5pm on Mon/Wed/Fri and on Saturdays from 9am – 1pm. Call 860-347-3222 for more info.

With heartfelt thanks,
- all those who “shop” and the staff and volunteers at Amazing Grace

Green Envelopes

The green envelope offering for the month of October will benefit Neighbors in Need – NIN Neighbors in Need is the UCC's annual offering to support ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States, including the Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM), justice and advocacy efforts, and direct service projects funded by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries.

November Tidings Deadline

Notices for November Tidings will be due to Suzanna Barrett by noon on Wednesday October 19th. Please send your notice or article to Suzanna at stamminen@wesleyan.edu.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

- October 1 Doug Gagnon, 538 Bow Lane Middletown CT 06457
- October 3 Muriel Hofmann, 11 Upton Lane Boxford MA 01921
- October 3 Burt Brock, 212 Prout Hill Road Middletown CT 06457
- October 5 Brian Fay, 25 Sunset Road Unit 2A Old Saybrook 06475
- October 7 Dave Oliveria, 11 Pinewood Trail Deep River CT 06417
- October 7 Virginia Houghtaling, 1862 South Main Street Middletown CT 06457
- October 7 Collin Boylin, 1228 Arbutus Street Durham CT 06422
- October 9 Thelma Warena, 161 B-1 Cynthia Lane Middletown CT 06457
- October 10 Cameron Brooks, 724 Middle Street Middletown CT 06457
- October 11 Parker Davis, 806 Mott Hill Road Glastonbury CT 06033
- October 12 Joshua Tagnon, 173 Woodbury Circle Middletown CT 06457
- October 12 Alisha Tagnon, 173 Woodbury Circle Middletown CT 06457
- October 16 Eric Williams, 550 Blackstrap Road Falmouth ME 04105
- October 18 MaryAnne Diamond, 20 Greenwich Ct. Middletown CT 06457
- October 19 Elizabeth Wilcox-Smith, P.O. Box 492 417 Buttonball Lane, Glastonbury CT 06033
- October 22 Ginny Tagnon, 4 Blue Orchard Drive Middletown CT 06457
- October 23 Pam Fine, 15 Shady Lane East Hartford CT 06118
- October 24 Sam McQuillan, 18 Schuyler Avenue Middletown CT 06457
- October 26 Minnie McDonald, 6 Olson Avenue Portland CT 06480
- October 27 Sharon Lundell, 75 Lake Shore Drive Middlefield CT 06455
- October 28 Beatrice Brock, 222 Prout Hill Road Middletown CT 06457
- October 29 Samantha Truskowski, 7 Wildwood Road Cromwell CT 06416
- October 31 Mildred Paddock, 339 Hunting Hill Avenue Apt. #9 Middletown CT 06457

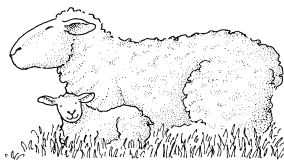


...to engage and support people in WORSHIP

Religious Education

Church School Registration

Registration may be done any time during the year. Even if you are just visiting, we'd like the registration for your child's safety!



Religious Education for All Ages...

Nursery Care is provided for our youngest up to 4-years-old. Our regular, paid, nursery staff is overseen by our Nursery Coordinator. Care is provided from 9:45 a.m. to 12:15 pm.

One-Room Classes – *Powerful Play!* Meets the 2nd Sundays. Learn Bible stories through a variety of hands-on activities including crafts, games and drama. Watch for more information to come.

Kindergarten through 5th Grade

On the 4th Sundays, our own First Church Curriculum allows children to explore Bible lessons. Follow the calendar to read ahead in time for class! Many of our lessons are the hands-on storytelling of *Godly Play* which makes Bible stories transformative.

October K-5 Schedule

- 2rd Communion/Communion Lesson
- 9th Powerful Play! with Linda Heidorn Gen. 3
- 16th Young Peacemakers Club with Julie Hurlburt
- 23th Bible Study (K-5) Genesis 3
- 30st Pumpkin Painting

2011-2012 YOUTH PROGRAMS Shared with South Church

Pre-Initiate Program (P.I.G.s) 6th & 7th grades

A primary goal of the P.I.G.s is to prepare youth for the Initiation to Adulthood Program. We learn and work together as a group. We help out in worship. We reach out to the community through projects - raking, food drives, craft items & cookies. Meets the **2nd and 4th Sundays at South Congregational Church.**

Initiation to Adulthood 8th & 9th grades

The Initiate program continues on our 2nd year of a 2-year path of exploration of personal faith, growth and self-discovery. Similar, yet intrinsically different from a typical "confirmation program", the focus is on helping young people channel their natural impulses into working on the soul-tasks of their stage in life. Learning areas include society, self, sexuality and spirituality. Various "mystery rites" serve as signposts as the teenagers make their psychological, social, and spiritual journey from childhood to adulthood.