

TIDINGS

First Church of Christ, Congregational

Founded 1652

Issue: Summer 2011

Schedule of Events Summer 2011

July:

Services at South
Church, 9:30 a.m.

August:

Services at First Church,
10:00 a.m.

August 20

Rock Cats Game—Details
page 3.

Looking ahead...

September 11
Rally Day!



A Note from the Minister

Summer, 2011

My ministry at First Church began on August 15, 1990. My last day will be June 30, 2011.

It has been a great joy and privilege to serve as the 15th minister of our congregation since it was officially chartered in 1668. First Church – or the “First Ecclesiastical Society” as it used to be called – has been through a lot: the time when “witches” were executed in New England; the Great Awakening; the War of Independence; the “disestablishment” of the Congregational Church in 1818 as the “official” church in Connecticut; the Unitarian controversy; the foreign missionary movement and the westward migration; the Civil War; the construction of our present 5th church building; World War I, the Great Depression; floods and hurricanes; World War II; the boom years of American Protestantism in the 1950s; the Vietnam War; and now a technological and economic transformation sweeping the globe and signaling the end of American dominance. With all of this turmoil behind us, do you suppose we are now entering a time of stability and calm nerves? I rather doubt it.

The poet Robert Frost said, “All that I have learned about life can be summed up in 3 words: It goes on.”

In this final “minister’s note” that I write for Tidings, I must say what I feel, predictable though it must be. How grateful I am to know so many wonderful, kind, generous, funny, intelligent, and colorful people. You are my family in a deep, deep way. I will miss being with you all on Sunday mornings for the next period of time until my successor is settled in place. That’s the hardest part, but my absence is now the best gift that I can give to our congregation so that you can more quickly and cleanly embrace a new minister and leader.

I look back with fondness and poignancy at so many things we experienced together. I remember when 65 people lined up in 1992 to sign the proposal to become “Open and Affirming Covenant.” I remember when we had a “lost and found” box, but it got lost. I remember when the plaster from the ceiling of the sanctuary fell down and made a huge mess at 7 p.m. on a Christmas Eve. I remember spending a weekend camping with teenagers in the rain and actually having a good time. I remember countless hospital visits, funerals, weddings, baptisms, church canoe trips, Jacob Group meetings, Holly Fairs, African dancing, Bees potluck luncheons, Holy Weeks, and Sunday morning snowstorms when a handful of the faithful still made it in. I remember all the wonderful and capable people I have enjoyed working with – both paid staff and volunteers. First Church is a very

Continued on page 2



...to engage and support people in WORSHIP

Continued from page 3

cool church. You even made it possible for me to dare to play the harmonica in public, only 3 weeks after I first picked one up.

By the time you read this, my last Sunday will have passed and a new chapter

in the life of First Church will have begun. I'm entering a new chapter too. I will always feel enormous gratitude for all you have been to me, and what you have allowed me to be for you. I look forward to the day when I will once again join you as a worshiper in the pews. I'll be kicking around

Middletown doing my environmental stuff, and I'll keep practicing the harmonica. (Our dog Juno enjoys howling along with it). Life goes on.

Love to you all,
John

SECOND HOURS FOR AUGUST

Check the bulletins for announcements of second hour programs for August and September.

First Church - Minister Transition Update Interim Minister Search Committee Formed!

Members of the search committee for the interim pastor include Darcy Dickinson, Jen Jasenski, Ginny Houghtaling, John Shaw and Cyndi Sanders (Chair). We have met with our Conference Pastor who is working with us through this process. We hope to have an interim minister on board by August 1. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact any member of the interim search committee.

New Group Forming

In the coming months, First Church will do a lot of internal "soul searching" as we go through the interim and search process. This will be good for the church and it will be a valuable opportunity to think anew about what kind of church we want to be as we look forward to a new "era" in the life of the congregation... However, we still have our long running budget issues and we can't look only internally for solutions. We are forming a group that will look outside for like thinking organizations we can partner with and share resources. We're not sure what we're looking for or what we'll find, but think it is important to try. If you would like to work on this with us please give us a call.

Jim and Pam Miller, 860 347-5785



Bee and Missionary

The Bee and Missionary Society will hold its first meeting of the season on Thursday, September 8th at 11 a.m. All women of the church are welcome. Please bring a bag lunch. Tea and coffee will be provided.



Church Office Update

In the interim between John's departure and the arrival of our Interim Minister, Lorel Czajka the Church Administrator will be fielding phone calls, emails and or communications to First Church. Please contact Lorel in the church office if you need information on anything church-related. If she can't answer your question she will connect you to someone who can. You may call the church office at 860/346-6657 x10 and leave a message or email firstchurchucc@sbcglobal.net.

During the month of **July**, the First Church office will not be open. Lorel will be checking voicemail and email remotely, from June 27th – July 29th. The office will be open Monday's through Fridays starting August.



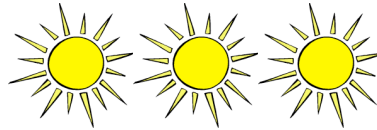
Banner Help Needed

Pam Miller and I are looking to see if anyone else would like to help us or to take over doing the banner changes. It'd be a great small way to help out that would not take long for someone who is already here weekly. The banner doesn't need to be changed again until the end of Oct. If you are interested, please contact Lorel in the office at (860) 346-6657 x10 or firstchurchucc@sbcglobal.net.



First Church Annual Baseball Outings

Our second outing at the Rockcats will be Saturday, August 20th, at 7:05pm, when the home team takes on the New Hampshire Fishercats, the Blue Jays' AA Affiliate. You will see some very familiar faces singing the National Anthem before the game, and at least one lucky First Church member will get to throw out the first pitch! Tickets are \$5 per person. If you are interested, please contact Greg Brooks at (860) 635-3855 or gbrooks@universalbach.com <<mailto:gbrooks@universalbach.com>>. The cutoff for reserving tickets is Sunday, August 7th.



Initiation to Adulthood News

On June 5, by the Rite of Initiation and the Rite of Confirmation, the eighteenth Initiation to Adulthood Group made their ritual transition from the world of childhood to the world of adulthood during the Sunday worship service. The symbol + indicates those Initiates who became members of First Church by the Rite of Confirmation. The Initiate leaders and the congregation performed the “laying on of hands” for all 4 Initiates.

Leo M. Lavado
Alexander Harvey Nivison
+ Katharine Marion Sung Wilcox-Smith
+ Roberta Florence Sung Wilcox-Smith

Initiation to Adulthood is a two-year program that begins in September when the Initiates are in 8th or 9th grade, and ends almost two years later when they are in 9th or 10th grade. It is a powerful, experience-based program that provides opportunities for learning of many kinds, but covering four general areas: 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. A primary goal is to teach the Initiates how to be a group — how to include everyone, how to speak, how to listen, how to have an intimate conversation that requires and generates trust. A new two-year cycle will begin next September, when youth from First Church and South Church will form our sixteenth Initiates group.

Why does First Church’s program for teenagers work, when so many other churches have such a frustrating struggle in this area of ministry? The answer is probably complex, but one factor is clear. Most church look upon the natural energies and impulses of adolescents as obstacles to be overcome. In other words, how can we suppress or circumvent the restlessness, rebellion, and sexual energy of these young people in order to teach them the stuff we want them to learn!

Our Initiation to Adulthood program looks at the situation differently. Instead of seeing these natural impulses as problems and obstacles, our programs seek to tap and utilize those same energies — to get them working with the program rather than against it. In terms of the soul-tasks of their stage in life, teenagers need two things. 1.) They crave emotionally intense experiences; they need to be challenged psychologically and physically in order to achieve a sense of personal power. They need to experience some

Continued on page 4



Continued from page 5

form of danger. 2.) They also need to establish appropriate boundaries between themselves and their parents. They need some space in their lives where parents won't enter. They need some privacy.

Our programs work because the youth come to recognize that the adult leaders are on their side in this quest for this personal power and independence. Of course, the program needs to be conducted within safe parameters, and the teenagers themselves are required to take collective responsibility for respecting those parameters. How effectively the group members handle this responsibility determines what challenges we allow them to face. In the process, the Initiates establish bonds with adults other than their parents who can then communicate — by word and example — the essential “techniques and mysteries” of responsible, authentic, and spiritually awakened adulthood.

Needless to say, our adult leaders are not perfect human beings either, and for that reason more than one, and hopefully three or four adults serve as leaders simultaneously. But parents must decide whether they prefer their adolescent offspring to be “initiated” on their own (which can mean resorting to extremely reckless behavior) or to be “initiated” under the supervision and guidance of adults, as fallible as those adults may be.

The questions teenagers ask are: Who am I? How am I like my parents and how do I want to be, different? How can I fit in with, or contribute to, the complex world around me? How can I have relationships that are healthy, safe, and enriching? What am I going to do about sex? What do I believe? What/who/where is God?

Because our teenagers thrive on the mysterious nature of our Initiation group, we feel it is important not to put too many details into the newsletter, but there are ways parents can learn more. Next fall, before new groups are formed and begin to meet, the parents of prospective members will have an opportunity to learn more.

Ministry to and with teenagers through these programs is a great example of First and South Church working together, doing much more than we could do separately. The “paid leader” will be Lena Harwood, a member of South Church who went through the program herself, finishing in 2003. The other leaders will include Linda Darcy, a new member of First Church, and a male leader yet to be confirmed. Both are Lena and Linda are professional teachers.

John



Religious Education for June 2011

A Thousand Thanks to all our teachers and nursery staff and volunteers who made this last year a wonderful success!

Thank you for creating a space that our children looked forward to being in each week.

Mark your calendars for **Rally Day, September 11th**. There will be a **Registration Pancake Breakfast** for all Children and their Parents at 9:00 am in the Parish Hall.

Learning and Growing while Leading

Teachers (and teachers-to-be): You are the reason our children enjoy coming to worship and have fun building community. We need you! And we thank you!

Ask any of our church school teachers how they do it and they'll tell you: "I learn as I go!" All our teachers are volunteers – not experts. They want to learn as well as give something back. Our lessons are varied: *Godly Play* is biblical storytelling with an element of wonder – that allows the children to use their creative minds doing journals or drawing or simply playing. *Powerful Play*, that Linda Heidorn initiated, is similar to Godly Play and uses fun experiments to bring the Bible stories to life.

If any of this sounds like something YOU might like to do – learn, grow, teach, build community – then join us in the fall for our new church school year! Contact Sue Springer or Lorel in the church office, 860-346-6657.

Youth Programs: looking ahead

Pre-Initiate Group

This fall we welcome all 6th and 7th graders to be a part of this group that combines serving and learning with fun activities. Friends are always welcome to attend.

Currently, we hope to meet following worship 2 Sundays each month. Watch the newsletter and bulletins for more updates.

Initiation to Adulthood

Calling all 8th and 9th graders...to be a part of this unique program that include Mystery Rites, special trips, and intense group activities. At the end of twoyears, youth are also invited to consider membership (Confirmation) to the church.

We welcome Linda Darcy as our new Youth Leader!

Please contact Lorel Czajka in the church office 860-346-6657 [firstchurchucc@ sbcglobal.net](mailto:firstchurchucc@sbcglobal.net) for more information about this formative group.



Our **Green Envelope Giving** offering for the months of July and August will be used to purchase back-to-school supplies and backpacks for the children in the Pilots Program. Sponsored through The Connection, approximately 20 families (some with multiple children) will be the recipients of these very much needed items.

In the past we have asked church members to purchase individual items, with Outreach supplementing the balance of items needed. However, this year we thought we would ask for donations, in advance, to allow the Outreach Committee members to shop during the sales and make the funds go further.

**Notices for September Tidings due Wednesday, August 24th by NOON
to Suzanna Barrett at stamminen@wesleyan.edu**

PLEASE NOTE: If you can help Lorel collate the newsletter, please let her know. She needs some people who would be willing and able to help her with this task each month.





...to engage and support people in GROWTH

HAPPY BIRTHDAY !!!

- 07/07 Jasenski, Jennifer 58 Summerhill Road Middletown CT 06457
07/09 Hickcox, Evelyn 134 Nejako Drive Middletown CT 06457
07/15 Miller, Peter 143 Margarite Road Middletown CT 06457
07/15 Richards, Leah 14 Glover Place Middletown CT 06457
07/17 Bynum, Rachel Waterpenny Farm 12093 Lee Highway Sperryville VA 22740
07/17 Lindsey, Margaret 55 Hartford Avenue Wethersfield CT 06109
07/18 Bradbury, Melissa 33 Wanda Lane Middletown CT 06457
07/20 Palmer, Jessica 15 Jackson Road Higganum CT 06441
07/21 Eldridge, Susan 76 Lenox Street Manchester CT 06040
07/21 Heidorn, Kyle 265 Briarwood Lane Middletown CT 06457
07/23 Wilcox, Nancy 65 Prout Hill Road Middletown CT 06457
07/23 Paddock, Eileen 62 Loveland Street Apt. #3 Middletown CT 06457
07/24 Reynolds, Chase 275 Maple Shade Road Middletown CT 06457
07/24 Reynolds, Luke 275 Maple Shade Road Middletown CT 06457
07/28 Blanchard, Lucile 22 Orange Road Middletown CT 06457
07/29 Brown, Clarine 40 Rose Circle Apt. E Middletown CT 06457
07/30 Gagnon, Ellie 538 Bow Lane Middletown CT 06457
07/31 Williams, Harrison 550 Blackstrap Road Falmouth ME 04105*
- 08/01 Sanders, Cyndi 233 Bartholomew Road Middletown CT 06457
08/01 Czajka, Kyle 8 Wildwood Road Portland CT 06480
08/03 Rouse, Joe 26 Pine Street Middletown CT 06457
08/05 Crane, Wilma 38 Boston Road, Apt. #321 Heritage Commons Middletown CT 06457
08/05 Royer, Cole[V] 33 Highland Terrace Middletown CT 06457
08/06 Hansen, Jo-Ann 876 Newfield Street PO Box 635 Middletown CT 06457
08/12 Miller, Pam 143 Margarite Road Middletown CT 06457
08/14 Tuttle, MaryAnne 353 Newfield Street Middletown CT 06457
08/14 Wilcox-Smith, Robbie P.O. Box 492 417 Buttonball Lane Glastonbury CT 06033
08/14 Wilcox-Smith, Katie P.O. Box 492 417 Buttonball Lane Glastonbury CT 06033
08/15 Brooks, Greg 724 Middle Street Middletown CT 06457
08/18 Bacon, Addie 340 Hubbard Road Higganum CT 06441
08/19 Scott, Linda 178 Prospect Street Middletown, CT 06457
08/21 Olinski, Catie 123 Old Farms West Middletown CT 06457
08/22 Drewniany, Peter 425 Butternut Street Middletown CT 06457
08/22 Michael, Linda 166 Congdon Street East Middletown CT 06457
08/23 Ladr, Karen 125 Dorothy Drive Middletown CT 06457
08/25 Heidorn, Linda 265 Briarwood Lane Middletown CT 06457
08/26 Baldwin, Bennie[V] 28 Valley Drive Middletown, CT 06457
08/27 Robinson, George 193 Spencer Drive Middletown CT 06457
08/28 Chace, Thomas 17 Red Clover Circle Middletown CT 06457
08/29 Kelsey, Richard 241 Higby Road P.O. Box 93 Middletown CT 06457
08/29 Fountain Jr., Fred 30 Oakwood Manor Cromwell CT 06416
08/29 Sanders, Hillary 233 Bartholomew Road Middletown CT 06457
08/30 Many, Wally 1 Linden Place #511 Hartford CT 06106-1744*