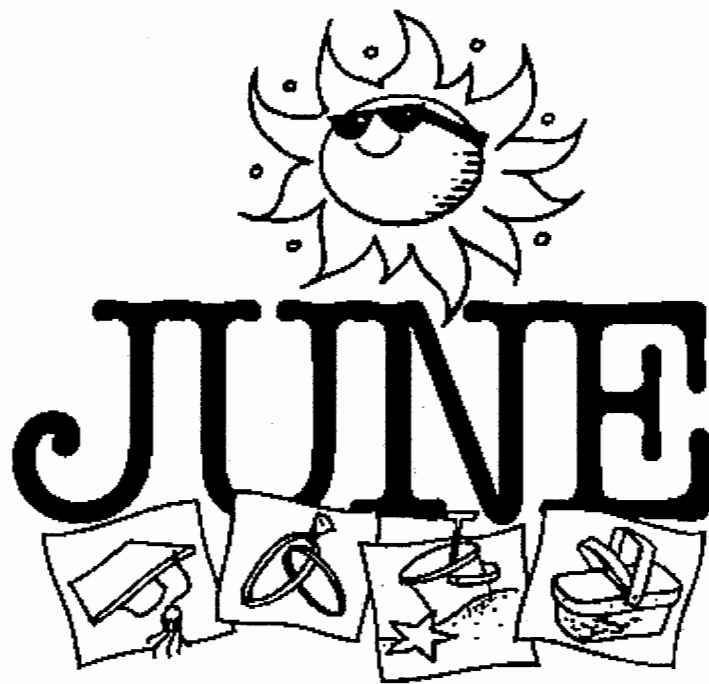


Volume 117

June 2009

THE CORNERSTONE



THE CORNERSTONE



- June 7** **COMMUNION and PENTECOST SUNDAY**
"Dealing with the Anger of Fellow Christians"
Jonathan Morgan will be preaching.
- June 14** *"Seed Stories"*
Alison Buttrick Patton preaching on Mark 4: 26-34
- June 21** *"We are in this Boat Together"*
Jonathan Morgan will be preaching.
- June 28** *"Healing Powers"*
Kevin preaching on Mark 5:21-43.

WORSHIP SERVICES AT FIRST CHURCH

9:30 a.m. One worship service through the month of August

On June 1st, the office summer hours will be: Monday —Friday 9:00 am till 3:00 pm

Cornerstone Newsletter Deadline for July/August 2009 issue: Wed., June 17th

Dear Friends in Christ,

I write my letter while returning from my Board of Director's meeting of the Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, MS. After our two day meeting, I thought I would update you on some of the progress being made in this critical UCC ministry that we help support through our Board of Mission and Outreach (the planned new name of our Board of Christian Service). There has been a lot accomplished since the hurricane of 2005 which wrought such terrible devastation... *and yet*, Shari Prestemon, BBM Executive Director, reported this weekend that the need has never been greater due to the poor economy and because BBM is the only agency remaining in the Gulf Coast region providing comprehensive support and relief to the area. BBM offers critical support in five key areas: **Emergency Relief, Housing Recovery, new Affordable Housing Construction, Housing Assistance for the Homeless, and Community Empowerment.**

Let me lift up some highlights in three of these areas:

The Emergency Assistance Program has continued to experience increased demand since 2008. For example, the Food Pantry has experienced a significant increase of 45% over this period. Many families are facing difficult times due to the poor economy. People who previously considered themselves to be "*upper middle class*" have now become the "*new homeless*" after losing their jobs and homes. Back Bay has become the "last resort" for many people. Perhaps more importantly, BBM has become a beacon of hope for many more. Fortunately, BBM has been able to meet the increased need through the generous donations from the UCC community, of which we are a part, and private donations.

Affordable Housing Construction: One of the building projects BBM is working on is the Pass Christian Bethel Estates Development two towns west of Biloxi. This 32 unit site will provide much needed affordable housing to this area which has seen a 40% jump in housing costs since the storm... effectively pricing residents who lost their homes in the storm out of their hometown. Construction will begin next month with a model home being available for viewing by September.

Housing Recovery and Workcamp Experiences for Volunteers: Work continues on the many homes that need renovation after the storm. Last year, BBM renovated and built a record 50 homes through volunteer labor from churches like ours. The biggest news on this front is the three million dollar BBM Campus Reconstruction and Volunteer Center is now almost complete. There will be a special Dedication Weekend on Oct 3 & 4. So, the participants of our next Mission Trip (Oct 3 – 10) will be able to join in the this important milestone and celebration.

In closing, my work on the board has been valuable and very satisfying. Although BBM covers the cost of my travel to Biloxi, I am grateful to you for allowing me the time to extend our reach as a mission church to this still badly devastated area.

God bless,



THRIVING IN A DIFFICULT ECONOMY

At the March financial meeting, our congregation requested that I appoint a committee to investigate new ways to increase revenue for First Church and to control our expenses, as we face increased pressure on our 2010 budget from the slowing economy. The committee is already at work, and so I'd like to tell you a bit about its members and its mission.

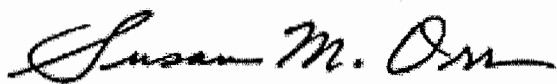
The five members of the committee are Hubert Mueller (chair), Peter Wildman (vice chair), Betsy Hoople, Kevin Prell and Jim Kew. Their task is to help us not only to survive economically during the financial downturn, but to THRIVE! Thus they are leading the THRIVE initiative:

Task Force
Helping
Research
Income
Versus
Expenses

The committee is not focused on stewardship; that is the role of the members of the Stewardship Committee. What the THRIVE initiative is designed to do is to identify opportunities that are not currently utilized by First Church to increase existing sources of revenue, as well as to find new sources of revenue and to look for creative ways to control or reduce expenses going forward. The charge is not to cut programs or services, but to seek efficiencies and use our dollars wisely and judiciously.

Although the five-member committee has been designated to perform the THRIVE analysis, all members and friends of the congregation are encouraged to offer their suggestions and ideas to the committee. If you have something to offer, please contact Jim Kew at 658-6881 or jim.kew@1stchurchsimsbury.org to share your ideas. With the help of everyone, First Church will not only weather the financial challenges of our times but will also continue to THRIVE!

In His Service,



Susan M. Orr

YOUTH SUMMER MISSION TRIP
(for youth currently in 8th –12th grades)

to

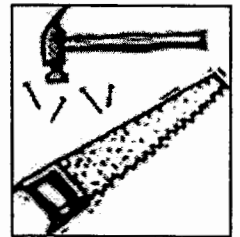
ATHENS, OHIO
 (Rural Appalachia)

July 18-26, 2009

**Limited space is still available. If interested, contact Rev. Kevin right away.
 Final day to register is June 15th!**

What will we be doing?

We will be working with "Good Works," an organization that provides a loving community of hope for those struggling with homelessness, poverty, and recovery issues. "Good Works" runs a shelter for the rural homeless called the Timothy House, a long term residential care community called the Hannah House, as well as job experience programs, creative volunteer service opportunities, and community development ministries. Through "Good Works," we will visit widows in their homes, assist low-income homeowners with maintenance on their property, volunteer at the Timothy House and Hannah House, and work on the "Good Works" property. Our past two trips have been inner-city missions where we have confronted the challenges of the urban poor. On this trip, we will confront the challenges of the rural poor, helping us understand God's heart for this segment of our society. For more information on "Good Works," please visit <http://www.good0works.net/>



Our Schedule in Athens, Ohio

Sat., July 18: Morning: Depart First Church (specific time TBD). Evening: Overnight at St. Paul's, Somerset, PA.
Sun., July 19: Morning: Depart St. Paul's, Somerset. Afternoon: Arrive in Athens, Ohio. Unpack & Orientation.
Mon. & Tues., July 20 & 21: Morning & Afternoon: Work projects. Evening: Free time & evening gatherings.
Wed., July 22: Morning: Work projects. Afternoon & Evening: *Splash Down Water Park* in Jackson.
Thurs. & Fri., July 23 & 24: Morning & Afternoon: Work projects. Evening: Free time and evening gathering
Sat., July 25: Morning: Depart Good Works. Evening: Overnight at Immanuel UCC, Shillington, PA.
Sun. July 26: Morning: Depart Immanuel UCC, Shillington. Late Afternoon: Arrive at First Church

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT HAPPENINGS...

Young Adult Fellowship (ages 18-30ish)

- **Tuesday, June 2, 2:30-6:00pm—Tutoring at Sanchez Elementary School, Hartford.** We will spend time visiting with 4th graders at Sanchez Elementary School in Hartford. We'll depart from the First Church parking lot at 2:30pm. We will arrive back at First Church between 5:30 and 6pm. Contact Nancy Yannopoulos (yanno7@aol.com) or Rev Kev (Kevin.weikel@1stchurchsimsbury.org) to sign up.
- **Thursday, June 4, 3:30-8:30pm—Connecticut Conference Young Adult Event!!!** Young Adults from the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ will gather to undertake a hands-on mission project (the restoration of the memorial garden for Hartford youth and young adults who have lost their lives to violence), engage in conversation with a local community organizer, and enjoy fellowship with "Theology on Tap," a time of getting to know one another and exploring the role of faith with Rev. Day McCallister, the Associate Conference Minister for Youth and Young Adults. Contact Rev Kev (Kevin.weikel@1stchurchsimsbury.org) to sign up.
- **Thursday, June 11, 6-8pm—Meeting at Starbucks to discuss Uganda.** We are considering a young adult immersion experience to Uganda in June of 2010. Our goals would be to see the face of God in the culture and people of Uganda and to serve at the clinic and school in the Masooli village. We are gathering all interested folks to discuss details. Please note—you do not have to be 100% sure that you are able to go to Uganda to attend this meeting—you just have to have serious interest in the trip.

Junior High Fellowship—"JF" (7th & 8th Grades)

- **Sunday, June 14, 5:30-7:30pm—End of Year Party!** We'll meet in the church parking lot at 5:30pm, hop on the church bus, and head over to the Town Forest Park for a special end of the year cookout and celebration. We will play some games and cook our supper on the BBQ. We will arrive back at the church by 7:30pm. Come and help us celebrate our year!

Senior High Pilgrim Fellowship—"PF" (9th through 12th Grades)

- **Sunday, June 7, 7-9pm—Games and discussion in the youth room.** Topic: Sexuality wrap up.
- **Sunday, June 14, 7-9pm—End of year party!** Tonight is the final Sunday Night Fellowship of the school year—come and celebrate! We'll cook some burgers and dogs and play some crazy games before doing our final closing.
- **Sunday, June 28, 7-9pm—Mission Trip Pre-Meeting** for all those attending the summer mission trip to Athens, Ohio.

Church School News

Church School Dates:

June 29-July 2 (Mon-Thurs), 9am-noon, Crocodile Dock Vacation Bible School

Church School Mission projects

Collection of .05 Deposit Cans and Plastic Bottles

The students will be collecting .05 deposit cans and plastic bottles in the chapel to support church school mission projects. Field trips will be scheduled for students to recycle the cans and bottles at the local grocery store. The refund money will be used to support the various church school mission projects that the students undertake each year.

Heifer flocks of chickens

The students have collected enough money to purchase 9 flocks of chickens for 9 families in 3rd world countries to help solve the hunger problem.

K. I. D. S. @ First

Kids Investigating Divine Stories at First Church

Summer Church School @ 9:30

Nursery (3 yrs. Old and under)

The nursery is available during the service for children ages 3 and under.

Movie and Activities (ages 4 & up), rm. 27

May 31, Pentecost, Acts Visual Bible

June 7, Moses: The Great Adventure Series

June 14, Moe and the Big Exit, Veggie Tale

June 21, What's a Manna with you? Bugtime Adventures

June 28, The Not so Golden Calf: about the meaning of God's commandments – "Do not worship any other gods beside me" and "Do not make idols of any kind."

It is time to start thinking about the Fall Church School Program:

The church school is a co-operative program where parents work together to teach their children about their faith. There are many opportunities to volunteer including:

Pre-K—2 teachers needed

Kindergarten—Pattie Scanlon, Jackie Brooke, teen aide Elena Warters

Two Fall teachers are needed for each rotation workshop for grades 1-6 from Sept 13-Dec 14.

Please note: starting Nov 29 – Dec 14, the students are in Palmer Hall instead of the classrooms. One teacher from each workshop will be asked to assist (not teach) the students preparing for the Children's Christmas Service.

Computer room – Kristin Garrison, 1 additional teacher needed

Cooking room – Heather Bobinski, Yolanda Wilde

Art room – Ann Marie Prabulos, JoAnn Hogan

Science room – Kate Bruno, 1 additional teacher needed

Game room – Nancy Dennen, 1 additional teacher needed

Movie room – Kariena Grieten, Linda Peach

Shepherds for Sept 13-Dec. 14

1st grade shepherd—

2nd grade shepherd - Aynsley Hodges

3rd grade shepherd – Kim Tawney

4th grade shepherd –

5th grade shepherd – Bryan Tawney, Charmaine Arena

6th grade shepherd – Ann Ritson,

Teens are welcome to sign up as classroom or shepherd aides.

Crocodile Dock Vacation Bible School June 29-July 2 (Mon-Thurs), 9am-noon

Please submit your registration forms promptly to hold your spot.

Each day the students, ages 4—entering the 5th grade in fall 09, gather in the Sanctuary to learn the Bible point and learn new songs. Then they rotate to the games, movie, art, and Bible story rooms to learn about the day's Bible story. Volunteer opportunities are available for 6th-12 graders and adult shepherds.



Day 1 God is with us: God speaks to Moses in a burning bush

Day 2 God is powerful: God sends the plagues on Egypt

Day 3 God does what he says he'll do: God spares the Israelites at Passover

Day 4 God cares for us: Israelites cross the Red Sea

Thursday evening student presentation to parents which includes slide show about the week and singing.

Cost: \$35 includes t-shirt, music cd, crafts, and 12 hours of fun!

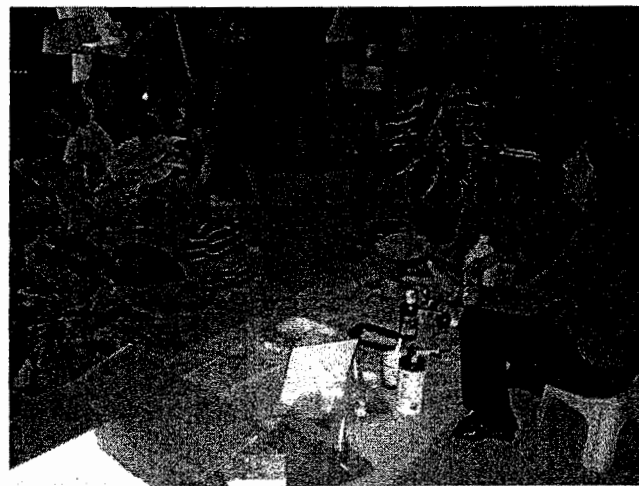
This VBS is held in conjunction with the Simsbury United Methodist and St Alban's church at UMC.

Jerusalem Market Place

Sunday morning, May 17th at 10:30



Save white twin bed sheets...next year we are going to the Roman market place and wearing togas.



First Church Responds to Hunger

As our country deals with a huge economic crisis, our Church witnesses the results of these times on the poor, who are always the most affected. As people lose jobs and homes, we see the number of poor increase significantly and the problems of hunger and homelessness multiply. As people of God, we have been inspired to respond.

Sixteen hardy walkers from First Church joined 3,000 walkers in Hartford for Foodshare's Walk Against Hunger. Thanks to many sponsors from our congregation, we raised about \$1,000 to address the needs of the hungry.

Our youth participated in a 30 hour famine vigil, experiencing what it feels like to be hungry. They raised around \$4,000 which will go to World Vision. World Vision will use this money in Third World Countries for food and programs to help alleviate the problem of hunger. Besides going without food, some of our youth slept in cardboard boxes to experience homelessness. Following this experience our youth gathered for prayer and a discussion on how it feels to be hungry and homeless. It is these experiences that change the hearts of our youth so that they have the compassion to make a difference in this world.

A number of First Church families, individuals and youth continue to respond to those who are hungry by preparing and taking meals to feed over 150 men, women and children each month at South Park Inn.

It is a blessing to belong to a faith community that responds to hunger and those in need, not just in our own community, but in Hartford and the world.

South Park Inn Fundraiser and Family Fun Night!

Experience The Fun & Excitement Of **Rock Cats Baseball**

Catch the Future Stars of the Major Leagues!

Thursday, June 11, 2009

Game Time: 6:35 PM

Gates Open: 5:05 PM

Picnic and Ticket \$20 (\$5 for child 4 and under)

Enjoy A Pre-Game All-You-Can-Eat Picnic!

A Portion of All Ticket Proceeds Will Benefit South Park Inn!

Enjoy A Pre-Game Meet The Players Session On The Field!

Please speak to Jonathan if you would like to join us!

Women's Bible Study

Beginning Sunday, May 31st at 8:30am

We will be studying the Book of Ruth.

This will be a casual and interactive Bible Study.

No prior knowledge is required. Just bring your energy, enthusiasm and questions!

Summers are busy, so this will be designed for participants to "Come when you are able."

For more information, contact Diann Bailey at diannhbailey@comcast.net or 860.651.0270.



Women's Retreat

Rested, Refreshed, Renewed

Forty Women gathered at our Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ camp, Silver Lake Conference Center, for a 24 hour retreat May 15-16. Surrounded by the natural beauty of the camp and by the sounds and images of flowing water, we heard the Psalmist's promise that God "leads us beside still waters." Participants created quilt squares, wrote poetry, strung beads and reflected together on the significance of having been created in God's image (Genesis 1), "knit together in our mother's womb," (Psalm 139). We talked about being both *created* and *creative*.

We laughed a lot, wept a little, ate well, deepened friendships, sat in sunbeams, practiced a little yoga, took walks... and warded off the ticks (!). Eleven women scaled a 30 foot high ropes course, and another nine women worked together to solve low-ropes challenges (Imagine nine women balancing on one board set up like a seesaw, while singing "Jesus loves me"!). We explored our faith, broke bread together, prayed ... and came away grateful for the time.

A heart-felt *thank you* to all who attended this year's event; *gratitude* for those who contributed to the program – including Betty Warner, Tammy Campson, Dawn Medve, Julie Erasmus and Women's Praise; and *deep appreciation* to the members of the retreat planning committee: Anne-Marie Prabulos, Sara Burrows, Nancy Grandin, Barbara Spear and Annette Lilly.

Rev. Alison Buttrick Patton

The Sexton's House – a Home-based Mission Project

It's been more than twenty-five years since the sexton's house was built behind the church. Some minor repairs and renovations were done, but since 1999 when Avdo and Ferida Fatic came from Bosnia to live there, little has been done, until recently. The house was very energy inefficient, badly in need of repairs and repainting, and the large upstairs had never been finished off to provide an extra bath and two good sized bedrooms.

In April, the Trustees and several volunteers painted all the downstairs rooms, and new carpeting was installed. A new floor has been laid upstairs, plumbing roughed in, and wall studs raised for the bath and two rooms.



In July the Fatics will go to Bosnia on vacation and we have a window of opportunity to install insulation and put up the sheet rock while the family is away. We are looking for volunteers who have done sheet rocking and mudding before – Biloxi and Women-Build volunteers and others. After that, trim, window and door frames need to be hung, so those with carpentry skills will be asked to help out. Finally we need painters to finish off the renovations upstairs.

Some of the work will be contracted out – electricity, plumbing, insulation, etc – but if we can use the good skills and volunteer work of our congregation, we can get this done, perhaps not as quickly as we'd like, but at a reasonable cost and within the Trustees budget. Please consider carefully if there is some way you can help on this project, either with volunteer work at the house, a cash donation for supplies or appliances, or preparing lunch for the work crews. And look for the sign up sheets on Sundays to volunteer to help with this much needed domestic mission project.

Board of Trustees

COME SEE THE LIGHT- one of the original church sconces that was used to light the sanctuary in the 1800's has returned to the church. The refurbished light now glows in the narthex. The light came to the Trustees via Shirley Meyers, via Bob Naylor, via who knows who, and refurbishing paid for by an anonymous donor. For those interested in seeing the lights before the 1965 fire turn to pages 64,65,72, and 106 in Lyman Potter's book, "To Settle Ourselves In Gospel Order". Let's hope it lights the way for us for another hundred years.

Board of Trustees

Uganda Update

There is a beautiful health clinic situated in Masooli, Uganda – beautiful, but closed. Why is it not yet open? Why are we not yet treating patients? The lack of activity is very difficult for the villagers to comprehend. Why aren't we doing something? We are doing many things, but they can't see it. The building itself is only part of the equation. Both the US and the Ugandan Boards of Directors are busy on each continent actively researching sustainability plans and meeting legal requirements of both the United States and Ugandan Governments. Since 9/11, many requirements must be met to transfer money, equipment, and supplies from one country to another. We are meeting all of these requirements to make sure that all our donations are protected and our efforts are fruitful.

We ourselves saw many clinics standing empty in Uganda because their openings were hurried in order to meet the overwhelming needs of the people. Consequently, these clinics were forced to shut down because a plan for sustainability had not been in place. We have studied (and continue to study) a variety of sustainability plans for health clinics in Africa. Kaiser Permanente, along with the Land O'lakes Corporation, has supported several small clinics in Uganda and they have developed a successful business plan that has enabled these clinics to become self-sustaining. We are currently trying to set up a conference with them and our African Board to see how we can best carry out a comparable plan for our clinic in Masooli. Our hope is that a plan will be in place and the doors of the clinic will be opened by the end of the summer.

We continue to see God's presence in this mission in so many ways. The Erickson Company in Uganda (a phone service provider) donated a \$22,000 generator to our clinic last month, along with several desks and chairs. We continue to receive monetary donations from many of you in our congregation for which we are extremely grateful. I recently asked Jeannie Boehner why she felt so strongly about supporting the clinic. Without hesitation, Jeannie responded that after going to Africa a few years ago (when her daughter, Nicole, was in the Peace Corps), she saw what just a few American dollars could do to stop much of the suffering and to give people hope again. Although most of you have not seen the devastating effects that malaria, AIDS and starvation have on these villagers, you have, nonetheless, given very generously to the clinic. We know that with God's continued blessing, the Faith Mulira Health Care Center will open soon and will be successful in providing quality health care.

STAFF

689 Hopmeadow St
Simsbury CT 06790

860-651-3593
Fax 408-9229
Kitchen 658-9043

Rev. Jonathan Morgan
Senior Minister
jonathan.morgan@
1stchurchsimsbury.org

Rev. Kevin Weikel
Associate Minister for
Youth and Young Adults
kevin.weikel@
1stchurchsimsbury.org

Rev. Alison Buttrick Patton
Associate Minister of
Parish Life and Outreach
alison.patton @
1stchurchsimsbury.org

Mr. Mark Mercier
Dir. of Music Ministries
mark.mercier@
1stchurchsimsbury.org

Mr. Joe Campolieta
Dir. of Youth Music
mr.campo@
1stchurchsimsbury.org

Ms. Cindy Cole
Director of Christian Ed.
cindy.cole@
1stchurchsimsbury.org

Ms. Anne Nelson
Church Administrator
anne.nelson@
1stchurchsimsbury.org

Mr. Jim Kew
Assistant Treasurer
jim.kew@
1stchurchsimsbury.org

Miss Catherine Behrens
Assistant Church Admin.
cathie.behrens@
1stchurchsimsbury.org

River City Reunion – The 27th General Synod

The 27th General Synod (bi-annual national gathering) of the United Church of Christ will be held on June 26 – 30 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Over 2,500 people are expected to attend, including over 700 delegates. Among the delegates this year is First Church member Craig D.B. Patton. Delegates serve as the local church's voice in the wide range of business, policy, and advocacy issues that are a part of every Synod.

This year, delegates will vote on proposed changes to the UCC's constitution and bylaws as well as receive nominations and elect new officers for the national church. The Rev. Geoffrey Black, the Conference Minister of the New York Conference, is the nominee to succeed the Rev. John Thomas as the UCC's new General Minister and President. Delegates will also consider and discuss a broad slate of resolutions spanning: economic justice, international relations, HIV/AIDS, the global food crisis, climate change, and more. Several resolutions deal specifically with the issue of governance, how to realign the national church to best pursue its mission within the financial realities we all face.

All attendees will be invited to participate in Sacred Conversations on Race. Many churches, including First Church, have been engaged in these conversations over the last year, and the conversations at General Synod will be an opportunity to expand these sacred conversations to consider institutional and societal issues related to race.

For additional information on General Synod 27, visit www.ucc.org/synod. Please keep Craig and all of the other delegates in your prayers as they prepare for and carry out this important work of our wider church.

