

First Church of Christ, Simsbury

Volume 122

THE CORNERSTONE

December, 2009



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THE CORNERSTONE

Sundays in December...

- December 6: **Second Sunday of Advent: "Peace"**
 Alison J. Buttrick Patton preaching *"Make Way for Grace"*
 8:30 Morning Worship in Palmer Hall
 10 am Traditional Worship in Sanctuary
 4:00 Lost and Found Concert in Sanctuary
- December 13: **Third Sunday of Advent: "Joy"**
 Poinsettia Sunday
 Jonathan Morgan preaching
 8:30 Morning Worship in Palmer Hall
 10 am Traditional Worship in Sanctuary
- December 16: **Longest Night Service, 7 pm in Sanctuary**
 For all those experiencing loss, grief or feelings
 of disconnection during the Christmas season
- December 20: **Fourth Sunday of Advent: "Love"**
 Alison J. Buttrick Patton preaching: *"Moving with Mary's Song"*
 8:30 Morning Worship in Palmer Hall
 Sunday School Leads Worship
 10 am Traditional Worship in Sanctuary
 Kevin Weikel Presides
 6 pm Uncommon Worship in Palmer Hall
- December 24: **Christmas Eve Services**
 4:00 Puppet Service
 5:30 Puppet Service
 9:00 Lessons and Carols
 11:00 Communion
- December 27: **Christmas Sunday 10:00 - one service only**
 Diann Bailey Preaching: *"This Isn't What I Expected"*

Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.' But Jesus did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, 'Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us.' He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' But she came and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, help me.' He answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' She said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.' And her daughter was healed instantly. Matthew 15:22 -28

Dear Friends in Christ,

In this passage from Matthew's gospel, we witness the remarkable exchange between Jesus and a nameless woman from another land and faith. This outsider challenges Jesus and quite unexpectedly he changes his mind and corrects his perspective. This is the only recorded instance of such an occurrence and it is significant for many reasons... none the least of which is that it provides us a model on how to live as followers of Christ.

It is my belief that as Christians, we must remain open to new and even challenging perspectives to truly be open to God's Spirit and to grow in the faith. I believe faith is a verb and not a noun and that we must constantly strive to be open to new understandings in this complex and often challenging world. I believe we must listen to all voices of God's children and prayerful consideration on how our own perspective may need to be challenged and even changed.

Frankly, this is not an easy task. Too often we become locked down, closed off, and stagnant in our beliefs.

At our November meeting, the Elders had a lively discussion around this topic and one new thing I learned was that we need to be more deliberate in our attempt to engage one another in open and honest conversations around challenging topics. We need to be sure that all perspectives and voices in the room are given the freedom to be expressed so that we might all grow together. With that being said... I also believe that we must all be willing to prayerfully consider the perspective of others with an open heart and mind. We might just learn something when we do. Jesus did!

God bless,

THE GREATEST GIFT

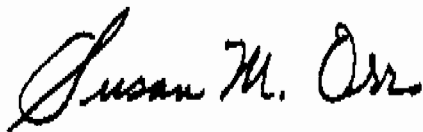
The holiday season is a time of mixed emotions for many people. For some, it holds great excitement and promise—the anticipation of time with extended family and special friends, the fun of gift-giving (and receiving), the magical snowfall, the aroma of balsam fir and roasted turkey. For others, it might open old wounds—recollections of a departed loved one who is sorely missed, the pain of divorce, or a feeling of loneliness in the midst of all the commercial hype around “holiday with the family.”

Much of our reaction to the holidays, and other life events and times, is a function of our expectations and mindset. While job-hunting this fall, I attended a meeting of my networking group at which a recruiter advised all of us very frankly, “Just adjust to the fact right now that you will not find employment until after the first of the year.” She was not being cruel, just honest and realistic, and she wanted us to prepare ourselves mentally, in advance, to truly enjoy the holidays rather than moping in self-pity about unemployment.

Setting expectations and mindset can make the difference between a life of joy and one of disappointment or despair. And setting our minds on the “reason for the season” at Christmas can make all the difference in the world!

Of all times of the year, Christmas in particular should remind us of the greatest wonder, the most precious gift, and the best reason to be joyful regardless of our life circumstances—Jesus Christ is here, Christmas Day and every day, to hold us up, to support us in sorrow, to share our joy, and to offer unconditional and never-ending love. This is, indeed, the greatest gift of all!!

Wishing each of you a joyous and blessed Christmas and a wonderful, healthy and faith-filled New Year.



Susan M. Orr, President

First Church Presents

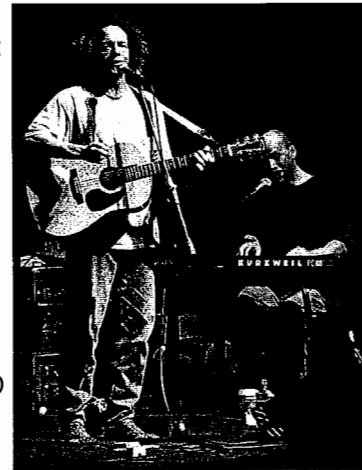
LOST AND FOUND in concert!!!

with special guest "The Uncommon Worship Band"

Sunday, December 6, 2009 at 4pm (doors open at 3pm)

Come and enjoy and an afternoon of entertainment and music. We invite you, your family and friends to be a part of the LOST AND FOUND concert at First Church on Sunday, December 6th at 4pm.

LOST AND FOUND is Michael and George - Michael plays the guitar and George plays the piano. Their style is unique. Some have called it a blending of Simon and Garfunkel and the Ramones. Others have said, "I've never heard anything like that before." Most people agree that the music of LOST AND FOUND is unlike any widely-available Christian music today. Their casual air is melded together with song-writing skills that won the grand-prize in the John Lennon song-writing contest and the experience that comes from performing 150 times each year for crowds in the US and around the world.



Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door. To order tickets or to find out more information about the concert contact Craig at lostand-foundfc@comcast.net. For more information about LOST AND FOUND go to www.speedwood.com. It is an honor to have LOST AND FOUND perform at First Church. We hope you'll take advantage of this incredible opportunity. We hope to see you at the concert! Rev. Kevin

HEIFER LIVING GIFT AUCTION

Why buy milk when you can get the cow?

Do you know your 8 M's? Heifer International teaches that animals provide 8 M's—Meat, Milk Muscle, Manure, Materials, Money, Motivation, and More. Animals are a blessing to resource-poor families and communities in helping them become self sustainable.

JF is hosting a Heifer International Living Gift Auction where you can purchase animals for resource-poor families and communities. You buy the animal and receive a certificate that you can keep or give as a Christmas gift and the animal will go to a resource-poor family who needs it.

Living Gift Auction Dates and Times...

Dec. 13th at Coffee/Fellowship Hour in Palmer Hall (after the 10am service)

Dec. 20th at Coffee/Fellowship Hour in Palmer Hall (after the 10am service)

Dec. 20th in Palmer Hall after the 6pm Uncommon Worship Service

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

PLAY, DISCUSS, WORSHIP, GROW, SERVE, LOVE...

YOUNG ADULTS (ages 18 through 30ish)

- **Sunday, January 3 at 6pm, through Saturday, January 9 at 11am: Mission Trip to Boston with Boston Urban Outreach!** Come to together with other young adults to live in community at a local inner city church. Learn how to become agents of change to impact social issues. Participate in service projects at church and non-profit agencies.

PILGRIM FELLOWSHIP YOUTH GROUP (for 9th-12th graders)

- **Sunday, Dec. 6, 4pm: LOST AND FOUND Concert!** For tickets mail lostandfoundfc@comcast.net.
- **Saturday, Dec. 12:** Salvation Army Bell Ringing at Simsbury Stop and Shop.
- **Sunday, Dec. 13, 7-9pm:** Sunday Night Fellowship in the Youth Room.
- **Sunday, Dec. 20, 6-9pm:** Christmas Uncommon Worship in Palmer Hall followed by Christmas Caroling in the community.

CONFIRMATION (for 8th graders)

- **Sunday, Dec. 6, 4pm: LOST AND FOUND Concert!** For tickets mail lostandfoundfc@comcast.net.
- **Thursday, Dec. 10, 7-8:30pm:** Large Group Confirmation Mtg. on Worship in the Youth Room.
- **Sunday, Dec. 20, 4:15-6pm:** Confirmation Small Group Meetings in Host Homes (Holy Spirit).

JUNIOR FELLOWSHIP (for 7th and 8th graders)

In December, JF will prepare and work a Heifer Living Gift Auction. We will prepare for the auction at JF on December 4th and hold the auction 3 times - at coffee/fellowship hour in Palmer Hall on Dec. 13th and 20th and after the Uncommon Worship Service in Palmer Hall on Dec. 20th. Diann Bailey is organizing teams of JF'ers to work at each date. Please contact her at diannhbailey@comcast.net to let her know when you can work.

See the bottom of page 4 for more information on the Heifer Living Gift Auction.

- **Friday, Dec. 4, 2:10-4pm:** Fellowship and Heifer Living Gift Auction preparation at the church (hop a ride from HJMS on the church bus).
- **Sunday, Dec. 6, 4pm: LOST AND FOUND Concert!** For tickets mail lostandfoundfc@comcast.net.
- **Sunday, Dec. 13, 11am (after 10am service):** Working the Heifer Living Gift Auction in Palmer Hall.
- **Friday, Dec. 18, 2:15-4pm—**Fellowship in the Youth Room (hop a ride from HJMS on the church bus).
- **Sunday, Dec. 20, 11am (after 10am service) and 7pm (after 6pm Uncommon Worship):** Working the Heifer Living Gift Auction in Palmer Hall.

YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL (for 7th through 12th graders):

All youth are invited to sit together in the balcony for the beginning of the 10am service before heading down to the youth room after the children's time for discussion. Liz Guidace and Mike Hogan lead this class.

Visit <http://www.1stchurchsimsbury.org/youth.aspx>

Church School News

Attendance at church school in December is very important!

We rehearse for the Children's Christmas service during Church School.



Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, Dec. 19th at 9:00, before the Children's Christmas Service Dress Rehearsal.

Please sign up with cindy.cole@1stchurchsimsbury.org

Needed:

Mini-Powdered donuts,
Fruit platters, hot chocolate, apple juice

The church school will provide the pancakes and sausage.

K. I. D. S. @ First

Kids Investigating Divine Stories at First Church

Nursery (ages 3 & under)

The nursery (rm. 20) is available during the service for children ages 3 and under. In October the children will be learning Christmas is Jesus' birthday. Nursery is closed on Dec 20th and Dec 24th. Families attend the Children's Christmas Service and the Christmas Eve services together.

Pre-K Class (ages 3-4) and Kindergarten class

The Pre-K class (rm. 38) and Kindergarten class (rm. 37) will be learning the Christmas story in the month of December. Pre-K and Kindergarten students are angels in the Children's Christmas Service Dec 20th at 10:00. Angel costumes are handed out at the dress rehearsal on Sat, Dec 19th in room 28 after breakfast. This dress rehearsal is important because it will be the only time the kids practice in the sanctuary and learn when they participate in the sequence of the service. Please provide your child with a battery operated candle to hold and help your child learn the words to the candle lighting song introduced during music. After the dress rehearsal costumes are labeled with masking tape with your child's name and placed in room 28. Arrive 15 minutes early on Sunday, Dec 20th to dress your child and escort him/her to the pew labeled "angels."

Grades 1-7, Christmas Unit

On Dec 6th and 13th, the students will attend church first, then be dismissed to Palmer Hall to practice for the Children's Christmas Service. There will also be crafts and games available for the students in Palmer Hall.

- Pancake Breakfast, Mandatory Dress Rehearsal and Costume distribution, Sat Dec 19th, at 9. Costumes will be labeled and placed in the Chapel after the rehearsal.

Arrive 15 minutes early on Sunday, Dec, 20th to dress and sit in your assigned pew.

Children's Christmas Service, Dec 20th at 10:00, No Time for Christmas

The students in the church school program will be participating in the December 20th 10am service. Students were assigned parts on November 8th. Please contact Cindy Cole if your child has not been assigned a part. The call to worship, lighting the advent candle, prayer of confession, and scripture reading will be lead by students. The Pre-K and Kindergarten will be singing an Advent candle lighting song. The junior and senior high choirs will also be participating. Christmas hymns will be song by the entire congregation. Liturgical dancers will dance during the offering. A skit will be presented by the church school students during the sermon time. Pre-k and K will be angels. 1st graders will be sheep. 2nd & up graders are animals, Santa's elves, nativity characters, or speakers.

Spring Teacher/Shepherd Opportunities, Jan 10th—May 16th.

Help the kids at First Church of Christ grow in their faith and sense of community as you grow in yours. Teaching enables you to meet the families in your children's class

Nursery – Ashley Cole, Christina Skeels, Cheryl Robucci, teen aide Stefanie Mueller, Laura Morgan

Pre-K—4 teachers needed, Christina Skeels, teen aides Christine Mueller

Kindergarten Pattie Scanlon and teen aides Elena Warters

Two teachers are needed for each workshop

Spring units are: Calling the Disciples, Garden of Gethsemane (Easter Unit) and Paul.

Computer room – Craig Patton

Cooking room – Heather Bobinski

Art room –

Science room – Kate Bruno

Game room –

Movie room –

Shepherds

1st grade shepherd -

2nd grade shepherd—Betsey Zackeo, sub Aynsley Hodges

3rd grade shepherd – Kim Tawney

4th grade shepherd –

5th grade shepherd – Brian Tawney

6th grade shepherd -

Contact: cindy.cole@1stchurchsimsbury.org

Additional Calendar Items

Draw a black & white picture for the advent bulletins. Advent picture Handout is available on the table adjacent to the chapel.

Sat, Dec 19th: Church School pancake breakfast and Christmas Service



Dress Rehearsal in the Sanctuary at 9am

Church School Christmas Service, December 20th @10:00

December 28th - Jan 4 vacation—no church school

Jan 11th Spring Church school session starts

Missions and Movie in Palmer

Hall, Grades K and up, Sunday morning, November 29th.

Movie: Veggie Tales, "The Toy that saved Christmas"

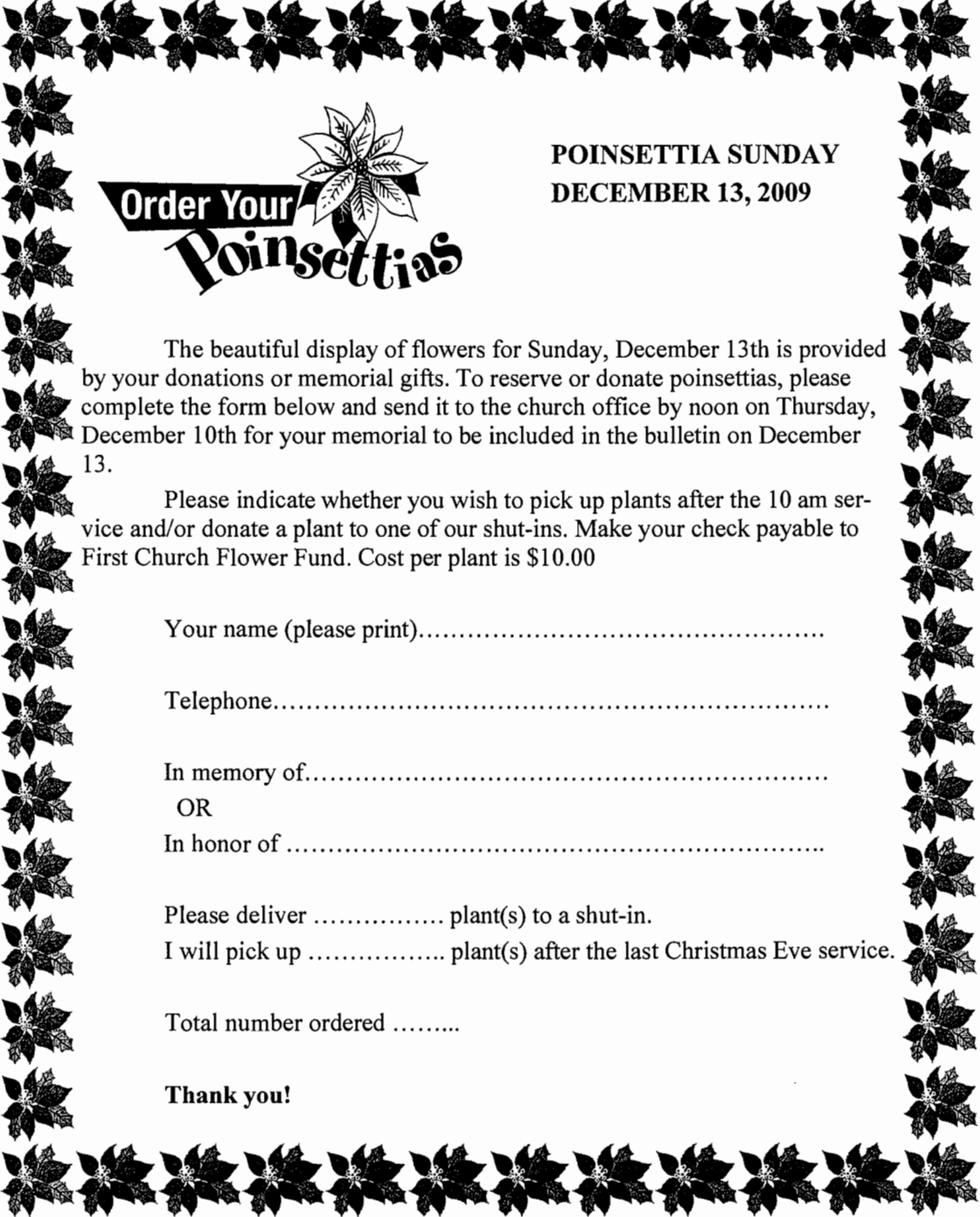
Mission: Tied Fleece Blankets for South Park Inn



The Taste book fund raiser:

The church school will be selling The Taste Dining & Activity Book as a fund raiser to install a sink and storage cabinets in the rotation art classroom. Currently, the students must go down the hall to wash glue from hands, paint out of brushes, etc. The books will be available outside the chapel for \$20 (50% (\$10) goes to the church school). The Taste book offers over \$1,000 in savings at the area's best retailers and attractions.






Order Your
Poinsettias

POINSETTIA SUNDAY
DECEMBER 13, 2009

The beautiful display of flowers for Sunday, December 13th is provided by your donations or memorial gifts. To reserve or donate poinsettias, please complete the form below and send it to the church office by noon on Thursday, December 10th for your memorial to be included in the bulletin on December 13.

Please indicate whether you wish to pick up plants after the 10 am service and/or donate a plant to one of our shut-ins. Make your check payable to First Church Flower Fund. Cost per plant is \$10.00

Your name (please print).....

Telephone.....

In memory of.....

OR

In honor of

Please deliver plant(s) to a shut-in.

I will pick up plant(s) after the last Christmas Eve service.

Total number ordered

Thank you!

Are Your Beneficiary Designations Up-to-Date?

Your will is not the only thing that will transfer your assets to your heirs upon your death. Certain types of assets are transferred directly to heirs through a beneficiary designation. A **beneficiary designation** is a legal form where you name the individuals and/or charities who will receive your assets upon your death. Beneficiary designations override provisions you make in your will. Assets that pass by beneficiary designation include:

- Insurance (life, accidental death and dismemberment, etc.)
- Retirement plans (IRAs, 401(k) plans, Keoghs, etc.)
- Annuities
- Brokerage accounts with transfer on death (TOD) designations
- Payable on death (POD) accounts (bank accounts, CDs, investments)

It's important to review and update your beneficiary designations on a regular basis. *Why? Because outdated or missing beneficiary designation (deceased parents, ex-spouses, etc.) could misdirect the flow of your entire estate plan, resulting in unintended heirs and/or negative tax consequences.*

If you haven't reviewed your beneficiary designations in a while, now may be a good time to do so. Consult your financial professional to ensure that your beneficiary designations are in tune with your goals.

And, speaking of goals, *have you considered remembering First Church?* If you haven't already, please consider adding First Church to your beneficiary designations. It is simple to do and may offer tax advantages. Ask the Endowment Development Committee how you can include First Church on your beneficiary designations.

Committee for Endowment Development:

Leigh King, Bob Lyle, Tim Patterson, Bruce Powell

4th Wednesday Study Group

The coming holiday season will have its usual impact on the 4th Wednesday Study Group. Plan to join us Wednesday, December 2nd in Room 28 at noon. We will be discussing the first two chapters in Part Two of "*The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus*" - The Gospel of Fear and The Gospel of Conflict.



Culinary Creativity @ First

Everyone knows that church cookbooks are the best for timeless, nutritious and creative recipes. It has been many years since the publication of the last First Church cookbook and we have a whole new crew of cooks (and some who contributed last time around!) ready to share their recipes and culinary techniques.

In order to get the First Church cookbook off the ground, we are seeking volunteers who will take on the project of compiling, organizing and arranging for publication. This group of *congregational caregivers of culinary creativity* (the "CCCC") will offer you an opportunity for fellowship among CCCC committee members and with the larger congregational family, as well as an opportunity for stewardship in helping to support First Church through the sale of the final product.

If you are interested in volunteering for CCCC beginning in January and continuing until cookbook publication, please contact Susan Orr at susan.orr@comcast.net or leave your name and contact information at the church office and remember to mention that it is for CCCC. Thanks and Bon Appétit!

UNLEASH YOUR SPIRIT AT...

THE UNCOMMON WORSHIP SERVICE

The Uncommon Worship Service blends traditional with contemporary.

It is spirited, inclusive, and contagious. All are welcome.

December Date: December 20th

at 6pm in Palmer Hall

Music at First Church

As we head into the Christmas Season, the music program at First Church is gearing up for the event. Music is, and always has been, a huge part of celebrating Advent and Christmas, and there are some wonderful things planned that will help us all to feel the spirit of the season.

First, **Women's Praise Choir** will represent the church at the "Simsbury Celebrates" Festival, and will perform a 45-minute program at 5:30 on Saturday, November 29th in our sanctuary. This is free, and I urge you to come, hear this terrific group, and support First Church's part in the festival.

The **Occasional Choir** will be presenting Christmas music during our worship services throughout the season, and the **Choral Bells** (Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without bells) will be playing at our December 13th service, not only playing a solo Advent piece but also accompanying the choirs.

The **Chancel Choir**, in addition to presenting music for the Advent season, is preparing a marvelous Lessons and Carols Service on Christmas Eve. Also on Christmas Eve, members of the **Youth Choirs** will be on hand to offer music at the Puppet Pageants at 4:00 and 5:30 PM. Don't forget about plans for the **Festival Choir** to sing John Rutter's Magnificat on *Music Sunday, January 10th*, combining with the choir from Simsbury United Methodist for this event. Anyone is invited to become part of this choir event.

There are some outstanding concerts coming up: We will have the amazing duo **Lost and Found**, who played for the UCC National Youth Event last year, coming to our sanctuary for a major concert on December 6th at 4 PM. Tickets are only 10.00 and this group has been a huge part of most national youth gatherings for the past few years. Anyone of any age will enjoy them, though, and you will definitely come away from this concert knowing why there are rave reviews about this group all over the country. And don't forget about our upcoming **Jazz Cabaret** on January 29th at 7:30 in Palmer Hall, with great jazz players **Dan and Joe Campolieta**. Come, enjoy some hot chocolate and munchies and listen to excellent jazz to warm up a cold winter's evening.

Music at First Church has been a long-standing tradition, and we have a place for all, no matter what your musical taste or ability. Anyone who is interested in being actively involved in shaping First Church's worship experience, and who enjoys the marvelous creativity of making music, is invited to become part of our program. Our focus is not only on singing; it's on fellowship and enjoying ourselves while we fill our spirits with the gift of music. Take a look at our rehearsal schedule, and *please feel free to come to any group, even if just to watch, listen and enjoy:*

Occasional Choir: Thursday evenings at 6:30 in the music room

Chancel Choir: Thursday evenings at 7:30 in the music room

Women's Praise Choir: Wednesday afternoons at 4:00 in the music room

Choral Bells: Thursday evenings at 6:15 in room 29

Senior Youth Choir: Sundays at 11:15 in the music room. Grades 7 through 12.

Junior Youth Choir: Tuesdays at 4:15 in the Music room. Grades 2 through 6.



Advent is Here! The season of Advent begins November 29th. For the four Sundays in Advent and Christmas Eve there are nine opportunities for couples and families to engage in a meaningful way in worship in these beautiful services. If you would like to participate in the Advent wreath candle lighting and sentences at the beginning of an Advent service, call Jeannie Bohner, 658-1245.

WHITE GIFTS FOR CHRISTMAS

White Gifts have been a tradition at First Church for the past fourteen years. In partnership with Covenant to Care, our church works with several of their social workers whose clients are impoverished children. We usually have 15-20 families all with children. Also, our gift list usually includes teen mothers and children whom several church members are mentoring.



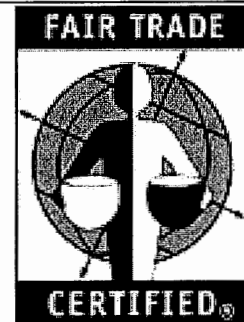
We received over 170 Christmas gift requests last year. Our congregation has very generously provided microwaves, blanket, pots and pans, coats, food baskets, scarves, gloves, and toys ranging from dolls and basketballs to the latest in computer games.

This year's gifts are expected to be collected during the first week in December. At that time they will be sorted and tagged for the social workers to distribute to their clients.

Your gifts may be the only gifts a child or family receives at Christmas, so your generosity is greatly appreciated! For more information, please call Karen Yanik at 658-6533 to help

Fair Trade Coffee

Have you thought about the coffee that you drink recently? A few years ago our church made the switch to serve and sell **Equal Exchange Coffee** during coffee hour on Sunday mornings. Equal Exchange Coffee is *fairly traded* which means that everyone along the line of producing your cup-o-joe gets an equal wage and the workers aren't taken advantage of by large corporations.



Making the switch to fair trade coffee is a simple way to take social issues into your own hands and of course it tastes good as well. So when you have your cup of coffee during coffee hour think about the people that got that to you and how much their lives are better because of your choice.

And if you like the idea and taste of Fair Trade Coffee, you can drink it at home, too! We are selling a jumble of varieties of Fair Trade Coffee at coffee hour (they also make wonderful presents for this upcoming holiday season!!!) Equal Exchange also makes a variety of fair trade teas, chocolate, and other yummy items. Here is a link to their website if you are interested: <http://www.equalexchange.coop/>.

Nate Bailey, High School Senior

DECEMBER FELLOWSHIP HOURS

- December 6th Board of Stewardship
- December 13th Carol Ciotto's Confirmation Small Group
- December 20th Board of Mission & Outreach, Covenant to Care, Care Bags
- December 27th The Morkan Family

**Buy two, Donate one: Keep our children wrapped in caring warmth.**

As winter approaches Covenant to Care for Children, based in Bloomfield, anticipates continued growth for requests for winter coats. We are asking for donations of new or gently used and clean winter coats of all sizes and genders. We want to keep all our kids warm! Our request this year is that when you are out purchasing a winter coat for your child or yourself, you take a moment to purchase one more child's coat or check your closets for a suitable donation. The Board of Mission and Outreach will set up a collection point for your contributions. Please contact chairman Roger Auclair (651-8643) for more information.

NOVEMBER 2009 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL SUMMARY

Following are the highlights of the November 2009 Executive Council meeting:

Kevin Weikel commented that he continues to be pleased with the leadership of the youth at the Uncommon Worship service; attendance is very good.

Jonathan Morgan commented that the Biloxi trip was a great success, as was the partnership with the Granby and Farmington Churches. The next trip is scheduled for November 2010 and will include members from Simsbury, Farmington, Avon, and Granby Churches.

Susan Stover reported that the Board of Stewardship is active with the 2010 stewardship pledging. Calls are being made to members to encourage return to prior giving levels and to those who did not pledge for 2009. Pledge card mailing will occur by mid November.

Two items contained in the THRIVE report (an examination of income and expense reduction opportunities) are now under review. Namely a study of rental policies by Trustees and the possible publication of another First Church cookbook.

President Orr announced that the Bylaws Revision Committee will commence meeting soon to act on any changes that need to be addressed.

Manny Psarakis reported that all eligible staff has been informed of the 2010 revisions to the staff healthcare coverage. Applications for the vacant position of Office Assistant have been evaluated and finalists have been selected. The interview process will now begin.

In the absence of Treasurer Jim Trimble, **President Orr reported that expenses to date are under budget.** Pledge income is significantly under budget. If the income trend continues, we may end the year in a deficit position. 2010 is expected to be a difficult year financially.

Trustees reported that the work on the Sexton's house is complete and that a certificate of occupancy was awarded. The Board is working on a **Church Bus Policy** to govern the use of the bus.

Chris Morkan, Chair of Elders, reported that Elders are studying worship patterns to assess the effectiveness of our Worship programs.

Meg Gaines reported that the Delegates attended the annual meeting of the Connecticut Conference in October. She displayed a set of prints of Congregational Church members who have been influential in the mission movement pre-dating the formation of the UCC. The prints are available to be displayed in the Church.

Bill Ketchabaw, Clerk

One Great Hour of Sharing Goes to Jerusalem

On October 25, guest speaker **Lydia Bartholomew** treated us to personal stories and insights about life in Jerusalem and in the occupied territories. Lydia spent a year in Jerusalem, serving as a Global Mission Intern supported through the joint offices of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She began by giving the history of tensions between Israel and the Palestine, from 1944 to the present. She had an amazing ability to articulate how the various cultures, political groups and faith communities have all been vying for land over the past half century. We soon realized just how complex this situation is, and although seemingly hopeless, Lydia expressed her belief that there is hope for a shared peace, although it may well take more than ten years to reach.

With a great deal of compassion and sympathy, she told personal stories of the people she encountered. Living near the Palestinian Boarder, she worked both with a Jewish organization and a Palestinian organization. She witnessed the cruelty of isolating (with barbed wire and thick walls) the Palestinians from resources in Jerusalem that they badly needed for survival. As they would come to the wall, they would be constantly harassed and mistreated by Jewish armed forces. As Jewish settlers took over areas in which the Palestinians were living, she told how the Palestinians were evicted from their homes, unable to take any of their belonging and placed in camps with no hope of returning.

Her own hope comes from the work of several interfaith organizations that are working hard to facilitate reconciliation. It was encouraging to know that our UCC has people like Lydia, who speaks Aramaic and Hebrew and is politically astute, working to be a critical presence in such a volatile area as Jerusalem.

Her work in the Middle East was funded by gifts to *One Great Hour of Sharing* – a special offering to which First Church has contributed.

Nancy Crouch

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***Together Building Bridges: UCC New England
Women's Celebration VIII, March 12-14, 2010,
Burlington, VT:*** An intergenerational celebration for
ages 14 and up!

Contact Pastor Alison if you are interested in attending
with a group from First Church:
www.uccwomenscelebration.org

ALSO, check out the events calendar of the CT
Conference, UCC at:
<http://www.ctconfucc.org/events.php> or see Pastor Alison
for details on these events.

FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS @ FIRST

THANK YOU....THANK YOU... THANK YOU!

To everyone who ate, listened, volunteered, attended, and shopped
at the first ever Festival of the Arts @ FIRST on November 14th &
15th, a big, warm and wonderful THANK YOU! Even though the
remnant rains of Hurricane Ida kept some away, the attendance was
still great. The evening became an "intergenerational outreach"
event that was embraced by all generations. Amazing food,
beautiful music, and fantastic artwork filled the halls of First
Church in a new light. A special thank you to everyone who
volunteered behind the scenes and in the kitchen. The "light" that
shined inside First Church on Saturday night and Sunday morning
was blinding!!!

With gratitude and love, Kathy Wildman and the Festival of the
Arts @ FIRST committee