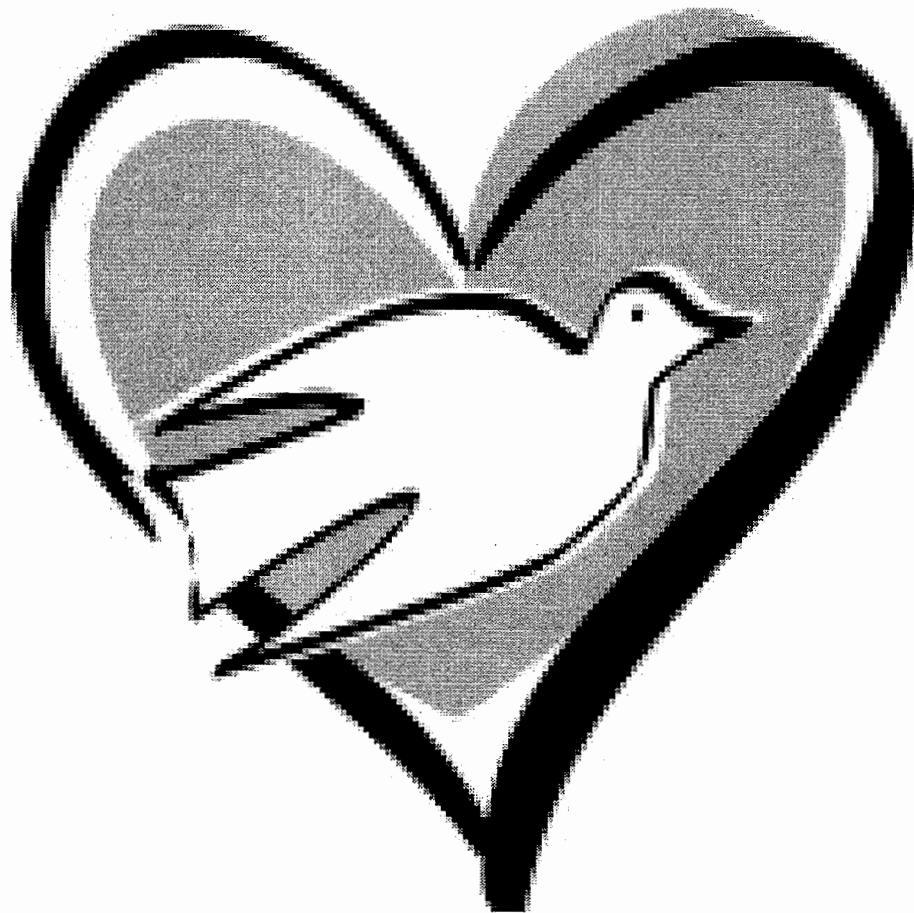


First Church of Christ, Simsbury

Volume 124

THE CORNERSTONE



February, 2010

FEBRUARY, 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 1:00 p.m. Red Cross Blood Drive 4:15 p.m. Junior Choir (3rd-6th gr.) 7:30 P.M. Executive Council Mtg., Parsons' Study	2 3:00 PF Tutoring, Hands on Hartford 7:00 p.m. Love and Logic Parenting Class, Parlor	3 9:30 Haystack - Rm 28 4:00 Women's Praise Reh. 7:30 Farmington Valley Chorus, Palmer Hall	4 6:00 Scout Troup #76 Mtg., Parsons' Study 6:00 Bell Choir Reh, Rm 29 6:30 Occasional Choir 7:00 Troop 76 Mtg. 7:30 AA - Rm 28 7:30 Chancel Choir	5	6
7 8:30 Worship (Chapel) 10:00 Uncommon Worship 10:00 Church School 9:30 Church School Rotation Teacher/ Shepherd Orient., Parlor 10:00 Youth Sunday School (7-12) 10:45 Finance Mtg. following 10:00 Service, Sanctuary 11:15 Liturgical Dancers, (Gr 2+) 12:15 Gordon Crouch's Small Confirmation Gr., Parsons' Study 3:00 Care Bags, Rm 29 6:00 JF & PFSuperbowl Party	8 4:15 Junior Choir (3rd-6th Gr.) 7:15 All Boards meeting	9 12:00 Retired Men's Luncheon 3:00 PF Tutoring, Betances Elem. Sch. 4:00 Farmington Valley Association Committee on Ministry, Parlor 6:30 Sr. High Youth Leadership Mtg. 7:00 Mentoring Grp - Parsons' Study 7:00 Love & Logic Parenting Class, Parlor	10 10:00 Cornerstone Information Submission Deadline for March issue 4:00 Women's Praise Reh. 7:30 Farmington Valley Chorus - Palmer Hall	11 6:00 Scout Troup #76 Mtg., Parsons' Study 6:15 Bell Choir Reh. - Rm 29 6:30 Occasional Choir 7:00 Troop 76 Mtg., Palmer Hall 7:30 AA - Rm 28 7:30 Chancel Choir	12 10:30 Farmington Valley Transition Academy lunch, Palmer Hall/Kitchen 2:15 Jr. High Fellowship	13 Family Matters Worship and Supper
14 8:30 Worship (Chapel) 10:00 Music Sunday, Sanctuary 10:00 Church School 10:00 Youth Sunday School (7-12) 11:00 Mardi Gras celebration in Fellowship Hall 11:15 Senior Youth Choir	15 Presidents' Day - Office closed School Vacation February 15 - 19th 1:00 Red Cross Blood Drive	16 9:30 Prayer Shawl Ministry, Rm 28 3:00 PF Tutoring, Betances Elem. Sch. 7:00 Sr. High Fellowship Advisors Mtg. 7:00 Prayer Shawl Ministry, Rm 28	17 9:00 Sarah Circle, Parlor rehearsal 4:00 Women's Praise 7:00 Confirmation Lg Grp, (Lent/Easter) Ash Wed. Service, Youth Rm 7:30 Ash Wednesday services. Coffee hour to follow in Parlor Reception	18 6:00 Scout Troup #76 Mtg, Parsons' Study 6:15 Bell Choir rehearsal, Rm 29 6:30 Occasional Choir 7:00 Troop 76 Mtg, Palmer Hall 7:30 AA, Rm 28	19	20
21 8:30 Worship, Chapel 10:00 Worship, Sanctuary 9:00 Gordon Crouch's SmI ConfirmationGr. 10:00 Church School 10:00 Youth Sunday School (7-12th) 11:15 Senior Youth Choir 11:15 Liturgical Dancers (Gr 2+) 4:15 Confirmation SmI Grp. Mtg. 6:00 Uncommon Worship 7:00 Sr. High Fellowship	22 4:15 Junior Choir (3rd-6th Gr.) 7:00 Women's Ministry Meeting - "Simplify Our Life," Palmer Hall	23 7:00 a.m. Men's Breakfast, Palmer Hall 10:00 Card Making Group, Rm 28 3:00 PF Tutoring, Betances Elem. Sch. 6:00 Cub Scouts, Palmer Hall 6:30 Sr. High Youth	24 9:30 Cornerstone Collators, Parsons' Study 12:00 4th Wed. Study Group, Rm 28 4:00 Women's Praise Reh. 7:30 Farmington Valley Chorus, Palmer Hall	25 6:00 Scout Troup #76 Mtg, Parsons' Study 6:15 Bell Choir Reh., Rm 29 6:30 Occasional Choir 7:00 Troop 76 Mtg, Palmer Hall 7:30 AA, Rm 28 7:30 Chancel Choir	26 2:15 Jr. High Fellowship	27 5:00 Macho-Man Church Chill Cook-Off, Palmer Hall
28 8:30 Worship, Chapel 10:00 Worship, Sanctuary 10:00 Church School 9:45 Church School Labyrinth, Palmer Hall 10:00 Youth Sunday School (7-12) 11:15 Senior Youth Choir 11:15 Liturgical Dancers (Gr 2+) 12:00 Lunch Bunch at Apollo's 7:00 Sr. High Fellowship						

THE CORNERSTONE

Sundays in February

Our 8:30 a.m. Worship has a New Home in the Chapel on the Third Floor!

February 7th

8:30 & 10:00 a.m.

Communion Sunday

"Into the Deep"

Kevin Weikel preaching on Luke 5:1-11

*Uncommon Worship with the Uncommon Worship Band
in the Sanctuary at 10:00*

11:00 a.m.

Annual Finance Meeting in the Sanctuary

NOTE: No 6:00 pm Uncommon Worship this week.

February 14th

8:30 a.m.

Music Sunday

"Up on a Mountain"

Alison Buttrick Patton preaching on Luke 9: 28-36

10:00 a.m.

Music Sunday - *The Magnificat*

February 17th

Ash Wednesday – 7:30 pm

Join us at First Church with our friends from the Metropolitan AME Zion Church – Pastor Jones will be preaching and our combined choirs will be singing. Reception to follow.

February 21st

8:30 & 10:00 a.m.

First Sunday in Lent

"Standing Firm in God's Glory – Facing Temptations"

Jonathan Morgan preaching on Luke 4: 1-13

6:00 p.m.

"Wilderness"

Uncommon Worship, Kevin Weikel preaching on Luke 4:1-13

February 28th

8:30 & 10:00 a.m.

Second Sunday in Lent

"Standing Firm in God's Glory – Meeting our Call"

Jonathan Morgan preaching on Philippians 3: 14 – 4:1

Dear Members and Friends of First Church,

As you know, our neighbors in Haiti are in desperate need of our outreach and care. Through your generous support of our ministry at First Church, the Board of Mission and Outreach has recommended a contribution of \$9,000 from our Mission Funds to the UCC's One Great Hour of Sharing Haitian Relief Fund.

Many of you have asked how to personally respond to the incredible devastation and great suffering of the people. Please pray for the people of Haiti, for our mission partners and for the relief workers who are doing their best in very challenging circumstances. For first-hand accounts of life in the wake of the earthquake, see the blog being written by UCC missionaries Kim and Patrick Bentrrott at www.kimandpatrick.blogspot.com.

Then consider contributing to the United Church of Christ's special appeal for Haiti Relief. Funds from the UCC's One Great Hour of Sharing are being rushed to our Haitian partners to support their initial emergency response. However, our generous donations are needed to provide the greatest level of support for the victims of this disaster right now and throughout the years that it will take for Haiti to rebuild.

To help, you may write a check to First Church, Simsbury with OGHS-Haitian Relief in the memo line and put it in the offering plate or go to: <http://www.ucc.org/disaster/major-earthquake-strikes.html> to give online. The funds you give will help us to remain a critical presence in Haiti for the long term.

Thank you for your prayers and your continued support.

With prayers for healing and restoration,

Jonathan, Kevin and Alison

and the First Church Board of Mission and Outreach

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.

Feb. 7th at the 10:00 a.m. Service in the Sanctuary

Feb. 21st at 6:00 p.m. in Palmer Hall

Dear Friends in Christ,

I am writing to give you an update about our 2010 pledges for the ministry and outreach of our church.

In these difficult economic times, the Executive Committee is working to keep expenses in check without diminishing support for our ministries and programs. For example, effective in 2010 we are requiring benefits eligible full time staff to contribute to their health and dental insurance program, or accept a less generous program. Jonathan actually gave up his coverage entirely. This generous step saves our Church over \$15,000 per year.

In addition, we have decided to put the entire "spend rate" from endowments toward the 2010 Operating Budget, and forgo funding the capital fund, even though there is no money left in that fund.

Finally, we will again be calling upon our boards and staff to keep spending down for this year as they have been in the past two years.

Even with these steps, we are a long way from a balanced budget for this year. Balancing the budget without further cuts to our ministry requires pledge income of \$797,000. To date we have pledges of \$697,450. As we prepare for our 2010 financial meeting on Sunday, February 7th it is critical that we have the best possible estimate of 2010 pledge income.

If you have not yet pledged, or if you are able to increase your financial support for 2010, please do so now. You may call the church office at 860- 651-3593 or go to our church website at www.1stchurchsimsbury.org and click on the Stewardship tab to make your pledge online.

Together we can meet the needs of our vital and active ministry program and continue the important work of this church both locally and in the world.

Thank you.
Jim Trimble

Board of Elders

The Elders are requesting submissions for this year's Lenten Booklet. The booklet is a true testament of our spiritual life.

Your submission can be a prayer that has uplifted you, a favorite bible passage, or some words or a statement you feel may make a difference in someone's life. With forty-seven pages to be filled (one for each day of Lent), there's plenty of space so you're welcome to make more than one submission. Specific dates are available on a first-come/first served basis.

All submissions should be made to Steve Towles and are due no later than February 7th, 2010. Material can submitted by e-mail at stphntwis@aol.com, placed in the Elders mail slot in the Church office, or it can be mailed directly to Steve Towles' home at: 32 Old Meadow Plain Rd., Simsbury, CT 06070.

Thank you all for what promises to be an uplifting and spiritual Lenten Booklet.

What are “Members in Discernment?” ... First Church Supports Candidates for Ordained Ministry

We have heard them preach. We’ve been inspired by their worship leadership. We’ve experienced them in small group studies and in Board leadership. And we have offered them our blessing as each has expressed a sense of call to become an ordained minister...

Within the last several months, both Erica Petitti and Diann Bailey have been interviewed by the Farmington Valley Committee on Ministry and formally recognized as “members in discernment.”

The denomination used to call this the “in-care” process, and the candidates “in-care students.” So, why the change? And what are “members in discernment” anyway? “Members in discernment” are individuals who are feeling called by God to serve the United Church of Christ as ordained clergy – and who have had that sense of call affirmed by the local church and the regional Church and Ministry Committee. When the Committee accepts a candidate into the discernment process, it is saying, “Yes! We see your gifts and believe you are on the right path. We agree to walk with you as you develop those gifts, and to work with you to determine, with time, study and preparation, whether you are, indeed, a good fit for ordination in the UCC.”

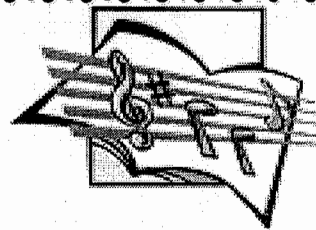
However, not all of those working toward ordination are students. Discernment is an on-going process, which begins before a person enrolls in any formal study and continues long after classes end.

So, we have in our midst two “Members in Discernment.” This is cause for celebration! First Church can be proud that it has provided the kind of nurturing, faith-deepening environment in which a person might perceive and pursue God’s call. Few people ever consider ministry without first hearing someone say, “I think you should be a pastor!” “You have remarkable ministry gifts.” “Have you ever thought about going to seminary?” It is, in part, because we have welcomed and encouraged Erica and Diann that they have come this far.

So keep at it, First Church! Pray for Erica and Diann, that each of them might discern her particular ministry path. And keep your eyes, ears and hearts open for *others* in our midst with gifts for ministry (there are always others!). Consider this: Nurturing candidates for ministry is one more way for us to *practice faith* – and give a gift to the Wider Church!

Grace and Peace,
Alison

MUSIC Notes



I hope you were able to attend the Jazz Cabaret on January 29th. It was a great concert.. Dan and Joe Campolieta have been playing together so long, they are as musically close as two can get; plus, Dan gets better every day – he is becoming a really influential musician in this area.

On February 7th and 14th our choir and the choir from the Simsbury Methodist Church come together for a co-presentation of John Rutter's *Magnificat* – a beautiful modern choral work that sounds remarkably similar to some of the compositions of Leonard Bernstein. We will present it as part of the service at the Methodist Church on the 7th, and as part of our Music Sunday worship service here on the 14th. The two choirs together have a full, extraordinary sound, and I'm sure, judging by some of the rehearsals that we've been having, that this is going to be a memorable Music Sunday.

We're also preparing music for Easter season – and we would love to have you join us in singing for even a few services at this time. We'll find time for some extra rehearsals to accommodate anyone who would like to sing with us.

Then, on March 7th, we are bringing *Wild Asparagus* to First Church. They are a Celtic/Contra Dance band, with a bit of a left-handed twist – fun, rhythmic, energetic stuff born of the Celtic tradition – just in time for St. Patrick's Day. Their phenomenal fiddle player is none other than Becky Tracy – daughter of late parishioner and famous contra and square dance caller Dick Tracy. I'm sure that the only problem anyone attending will have, will be to sit still and ignore the urge to get up and dance. This is a group known nationally for what they do, and they are some of the best at it.

Later on this spring we will have another great Jazz Cabaret featuring our good friend guitarist Doug Maher, (perhaps some may not know that he has toured nationally) playing along with pianist Ken Fischer – the High School Small Ensemble head – and they'll have some surprise guest players. This will be on a Spring Friday evening in May.

And don't forget about the Simsbury Chamber Music Festival, held here in our sanctuary on Thursdays in May.

You can get information and tickets for the Jazz Cabaret and Wild Asparagus Celtic Contra Dance Band through the First Church office. Tickets will also be available at the door, if we're not sold out in advance. If you need more information, please feel free to talk to me at any time.

Mark Mercier

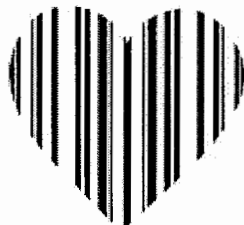
Church School News



Feb 7: Teacher/Shepherd Orientation meeting in the Parlor at 9:30 for the Garden of Gethsemane Unit

Feb 7: Annual Financial meeting Student Valentine Activities, 11:15-12:00 in Rooms 27 and 28.

- Supplies needed:
- Boxes of instant vanilla pudding
 - Chocolate cookies
 - Chocolate chips
 - 3 flat screen monitors



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 January, the children will be learning that God is love.

Pre-K Class (ages 3-4)

The Pre-K class (Rm. 38) will be learning that God is love through activity centers. We still need teachers to volunteer to teach the class in the spring.

Kindergarten class

Kindergarten class (Rm. 37) will be learning the stories of Jesus' miracles.

Rotation Program, Grades 1-6: Calling the Disciples:

Rotation schedule	B.L.A.S.T. Rm.35-Art	Mouse Pad Rm.32- Computers	Creation Station Rm.34-Cooking	Coliseum Rm.29- Games	Matter of Faith Rm.33 Science
Wk. 4 (2/7) k-6 Begin in Church	Gr. 5 Gr. 6	Gr. 1	Gr. 2	Gr. 3	Gr. 4
Financial meeting 11:15-12am	Financial meeting - --student activities: crafts, movie <i>Be My Valentine</i> , Charlie Brown, and snacks in Rooms 27 and 28				
Wk. 6 (2/14) Pre-K - 6 Begin in Church	Palmer Hall: movie and mission project: Toiletry kits for South Park Inn				

Garden of Gethsemane

Jesus struggled with the best way to be faithful to God. Jesus received strength from trusting God. It's not always easy to be faithful to God. We, too, can be strengthened when we trust God.

Bible Story Reference: Mark 14:32-38

Bible Verse: Not what I want, but what you want. (Mark 14:36, Good News translation)

By the end of this unit children will have: 1) heard and explored the story of Jesus praying at the garden; 2) offered their own prayers to God; 3) depicted in various ways their understanding of Jesus' act of prayer; 4) explored a variety of tools to help them pray; 5) focused through various means on the power and importance of prayer; 6) created ways to remind themselves of the story of Jesus praying in the garden.

Rotation Schedule	B.L.A.S.T. Rm.35-Art	Mouse Pad Rm.32- Computers	Creation Station Rm.34-Cooking	Coliseum Rm.29- Games	Matter of Faith Rm.33 Science
Wk. 1 (2/21) K-6 Begin in Church	Gr. 1	Gr. 2	Gr. 3	Gr. 4	Gr. 5 Gr. 6
Wk. 2 (2/28) K-6 Begin in Church Bible Sunday	Gr. 2	Gr. 3	Gr. 4	Gr. 5 Gr. 6	Gr. 1
Wk. 3 (3/7) Family Sunday, Pre-K - 6 Begin in Church	Gr. 3	Gr. 4	Gr. 5 Gr. 6	Gr. 1	Gr. 2
Wk. 4 (3/14) K-6 Begin in Church	Gr. 4	Gr. 5 Gr. 6	Gr. 1	Gr. 2	Gr. 3
Wk. 5 (3/21) K-6 Begin in Church	Gr. 5 Gr. 6	Gr. 1	Gr. 2	Gr. 3	Gr. 4

Good books for Adult Winter Reading:

Until It Hurts: America's Obsession with Youth Sports and How It Harms Our Kids By Mark Hyman

Amazon description: Near the end of a long season, fourteen-year-old baseball pitcher Ben Hyman approached his father with disappointing, if not surprising, news: his shoulder was tired. With each throw to home plate, he felt a twinge in his still maturing arm. Any doctor would have advised the young boy to take off the rest of the season. Author Mark Hyman sent his son out to pitch the next game. After all, it was play-off time.

Stories like these are not uncommon. Over the last seventy-five years, adults have staged a hostile takeover of kids'sports. In 2003 alone, more than 3.5 million children under age fifteen required medical treatment for sports injuries, nearly half of which were the result of simple overuse. The quest to turn children into tomorrow's superstar athletes has often led adults to push them beyond physical and emotional limits.

In *Until It Hurts*, journalist, coach, and sports dad Mark Hyman explores how youth sports reached this problematic state. His investigation takes him from the Little League World Series in Pennsylvania to a prestigious Chicago soccer club, from adolescent golf and tennis superstars in Atlanta to California volleyball players. He interviews dozens of children, parents, coaches, psychologists, surgeons, sports medicine specialists, and former professional athletes. He speaks at length with Whitney Phelps, Michael's older sister; retraces the story of *A Very Young Gymnast*, and its subject, Torrance York; and tells the saga of the Castle High School girls' basketball team of Evansville, Indiana, which in 2005 lost three-fifths of its lineup to ACL injuries. Along the way, Hyman hears numerous stories: about a mother who left her fifteen-year-old daughter at an interstate exit after a heated exchange over her performance during a soccer game, about a coach who ordered preteens to swim laps in three-hour shifts for twenty-four hours.

Hyman's exploration leads him to examine the history of youth sports in our country and how it's evolved, particularly with the increasing involvement of girls and much more proactive participation of parents. With its unique multiple perspective—of history, of reporting, and of personal experience—this book delves deep into the complicated issue of sports for children, and opens up a much-needed discussion about the perils of youth sports culture today. Hyman focuses not only on the unfortunate cases of overzealous parents and overly ambitious kids, but also on how positive change can be made, and concludes by shining a spotlight on some inspirational parents and model sports programs, giving hope that the current destructive cycle can be broken.

- quick read, interesting, author talks to college coaches including UCONN, must read if your child plays sports, ballet, etc. Cindy Cole

Altar in the World, An: A Geography of Faith by Barbra Brown Taylor

This wonderful book by Barbra Brown Taylor, a retired Episcopal priest, shows us how to find the sacred meaning in the everyday tasks of life, like walking, paying attention, hanging the laundry, cleaning toilet bowls, and making eye contact with checkout cashiers. If you are searching for God in your every day like this is a must read. The twelve chapters are independent of each other, therefore can be picked up and put down easily.

Review from www.barbarabrowntaylor.com: In her critically acclaimed memoir *Leaving Church*, Taylor wrote about leaving parish ministry to become a teacher, a decision that rearranged everything from her wardrobe to her faith. Now in her stunning follow-up, *An Altar in the World*, she reveals how she learned to encounter the God who does not live in church.

Describing spiritual practices as basic as walking, carrying water, being with other people, and saying blessings, she calls conventional distinctions between the sacred and the secular into question. Delving into darker practices of getting lost, falling ill, feeling pain, and grieving loss, she challenges the notion that God does God's best work in the light. Throughout this richly personal narrative, she suggests that no physical act is too earthbound to become a path to the divine. The world is full of altars, she says, for those willing to welcome the truth that comes to them in the flesh.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

June 22*-26 (Tues-Fri), 9am-noon) (school snow days permitting)

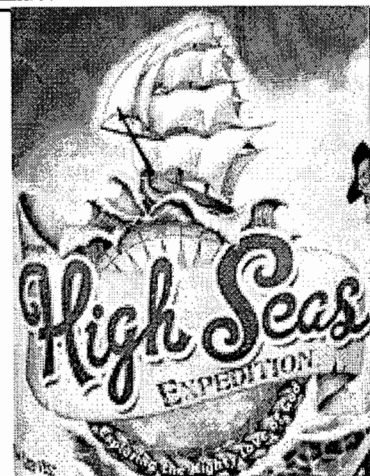
Come and have fun this summer at Expedition of the High Seas!

Each day the students gather in the Sanctuary to learn the Bible point and new songs. Then they rotate to the games, movie, art, and Bible story rooms to learn about the day's Bible story. This VBS is held in conjunction with the Simsbury United Methodist and St Alban's church at SUM.

Sign up at the table adjacent to the chapel.

- Day 1 God's Word is true: God frees Peter from prison
- Day 2 God's Word is comforting. God comforts Paul in a storm at Sea.
- Day 3 God's Word is surprising: Paul survives a bite by a poisonous snake.
- Day 4 God's Word is for everyone. The community of believers share.

Cost: \$35/student; includes craft, t-shirt, snacks, music cd, etc.



JANUARY 2010 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL SUMMARY

Following are the highlights of the January 2010 Executive Council meeting:

- Alison Patton reported that she will be serving as a co-host with Charlie Kuchenbrod, Conference Associate Minister, at a Silver Lake high school age retreat in late June.
- Susan Stover, Chair of the Board of Stewardship, reported that through January 4th \$685,383 had been pledged for budget year 2010 from 315 pledging units. Based on 2009 pledging units – 30 major units; 50 units of under \$1,000; and 182 non-pledging units remain uncommitted. The Board continues to use follow-up techniques for those non-pledging units.
- The nomination of Kathy Yannopoulos was approved to serve as the youth representative on the Board of Mission and Outreach.
- Treasurer Jim Trimble reported that, based on preliminary financial results for fiscal year 2009, it appears that a small surplus will occur, primarily due to the efficient budget expense management by the several Boards throughout the year. The 2010 budget developed to date, based on submissions from the several Boards, stands at \$970,000 with an estimated income of \$811,000. The Boards were asked to re-examine their 2010 budget submissions for possible reduction opportunities.
- A special meeting of the Executive Council has been called for January 19th to review and approve the 2010 budget strategy and content for presentation to the Congregation at the Annual Financial Meeting scheduled for February 7th. Copies of the report to be presented on February 7th are expected to be available to the Congregation at the Church Office beginning January 31st.
- Chris Morkan, Chair of Elders, reported that Elders continue to assess the 8:30a.m. worship service with a recommendation concerning the service and location expected in February. Charlie Kuchenbrod, Conference Associate Minister for Endowment Ministries, attended the meeting and made a very enlightening presentation. Charlie was very complimentary of the OCWM support received from First Church. His presentation and discussion focused on how the traditional mission model of support (OCWM) has changed from UCC major leadership, with financial support from the UCC Congregations, to a local Church model of mission and outreach activity. He noted that currently 37% of our contributed support to the CT Conference stays within the Conference, while 67% of our contribution flows to UCC National. He proceeded to outline how these contributions “change lives”. Of major concern to both the Conference and National, however, is what is not being funded globally as a result of local mission activities. He noted that at UCC National, discussions are underway on the governance of their four areas of independent ministry.


- Bill Ketchabaw, Clerk



MACHO-MAN CHURCH CHILI COOK-OFF—

Who is the best Chili Chef at First Church???

The Board of Trustees will host a **Chili Night** fundraiser on **Saturday, February 27th from 5:00-7:00 p.m. in Palmer Hall**. A competition among some of the noted Chili chefs of First Church will be the featured attraction. An unbiased panel of judges will award prizes for the best bowl of Chili. This fund-raising dinner will be open to all and we hope to see you there. If you want to be a Chili Chef in this competition, please email rassy7@aol.com. To attend this fundraising dinner, sign up sheets will be available outside of Palmer Hall beginning this Sunday, Jan. 24th. More details will be published in the Sunday bulletins as well as on-line. Please support this fundraiser to benefit our church. Be sure to bring your own food containers to purchase any leftovers to enjoy at home.



Tutoring at Burns School

Have you ever considered what a few minutes of your time each week could mean to a precious child in Hartford? The schools and teachers are under enormous pressure to raise the reading and math levels of all their students. Many kids come from homes where English is not spoken or the parents are functional illiterates. Twenty minutes spent with a child listening to him read or helping her work out the sounds of English can relieve the teachers and help the children master reading. No training or specialized education is needed - just a willingness to help a child.

At this time there are eight tutors from FCC going to Burns School at the corner of Capitol Ave and Park Terrace each Monday or Friday. There's ample parking and the school is safe. The school desperately needs more tutors. You can go on either of these days or form your own group and go on whatever day is best for you. The time is from 11:00 a.m. (leave the church) to about 2:00 p.m. You work with 1st or 2nd grade kids from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., one child at a time for about 20 minutes. The teachers select the kids and give you the materials. It's so easy and so rewarding! Please join us.

Tutors: Sally Smith, Anita McCoy, Margaret Kennedy, Diana Woodberry - Mondays
Lisa Green, Birch Milliken, Bev Drees, Julie Barcelo - Fridays

Call Sally Smith, 860-658-7574 for more details or questions.

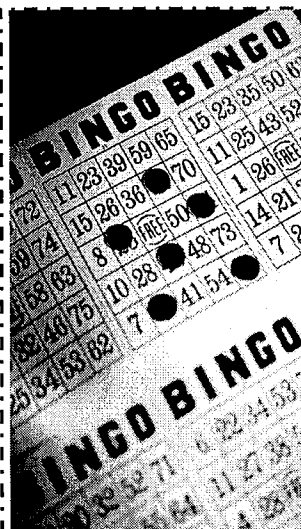


World Attention: To anyone who has ever been to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, MS

February 14th is going to be **Music Sunday at First Church**. It is also **Valentine's Day** and **Mardi Gras** too! To keep the spirit flowing following the wonderful music during worship with our friends from the Methodist Church, I am asking anyone who has been to Biloxi to help out with Fellowship Hour this day. We could make some great southern food to share with our congregation and friends (jambalaya, corn bread, sweet tea, etc.) Please contact me if you would like to "share the love" of this special Sunday and

help out by cooking or serving or cleaning up at Fellowship Hour - we can all have lots of fun! Wear your Back Bay shirts and Mardi Gras beads!

Contact Kathy Wildman at wildmanfamily@comcast.net or (860)651-9790.



BINGO, BINGO, BINGO!

Supper Club will present BINGO night, on Friday, March 19th, at 6:00 p.m.

Please bring a wrapped white elephant gift.

POT LUCK Dinner will be served!

As usual, you will be contacted by one of our callers. Remember to mark your calendars for this fun filled evening

Report on the Fall Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ October 23-24, 2009

The meeting was attended by Jonathan Morgan, Alison Patton, Bill Goss, Lee and Henry Ora, Diann Bailey, Erica Pettiti, and Meg Gaines. At Friday's luncheon, Jonathan was honored on the 25th anniversary of his ordination. Congratulations Jonathan! Shari Prestemon, Director, gave an update on Back Bay Mission. On Saturday she was given a check for over \$100,000, 10% of the monies raised so far by the "Now for the Future" capitol campaign for Silver Lake Conference Center.

We heard a report of the stark financial reality of CT UCC. There are deepening consequences of the falling OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission) Basic Support giving over the last ten years and currently projected to be down 11.4% this year. Some of the cuts that have been made include layoffs, shortening of the time of our legislative advocate, and significant furloughs of staff. Because administrative costs are covered by investment income, and some staff positions are paid for by other income sources, OCWM directly funds Regional, Youth and Young Adult, Christian Education and Resources, Communications and the Silver Lake Co-Directors' ministries. The Directors recommended the formation of a Special Commission on Conference Sustainability which will report to the May 8, 2010 meeting of the conference.

Conference Minister, the Reverend Dr. Davida Foy Crabtree began her annual address by saying, "We need to talk." She traced the 300 year history of our "passionate conviction to global, national and domestic mission," starting with the first meeting in June 1709 of what is now CT UCC, an organization that sent out the first missionaries in 1774. Then, in 1810, various states' missions were brought together to found the American Board for Foreign Missions, today's Wider Church Ministries Board. She is concerned that now churches are doing their own missions and OCWM contributions have decreased over the past few years, resulting in serious cuts in personnel and programs at the state and national level.

On Saturday morning, Geoffrey Black, General Minister and President of the United church of Christ gave the keynote. He asked us to think about why, on critical issues, some people are bystanders and some people are "upstanders." We are called to be Christian upstanders. As members of the UCC, our witness is larger than our individual reach. When we contribute financial support to OCWM we are part of the expansive reach of the UCC and thereby, during critical times, we are *there*, we are upstanders.

Everyone was assigned to a small group for the Sacred Conversation on Race. Alison Patton was one of the facilitators.

Awards were announced for giving to OCWM. Simsbury First Church was honored for:

- ~ Highest giver at \$74,767,
- ~ #10 for per capita OCWM at \$72 per member, (#1 is New Haven at \$256, #2 is Trumbull at \$168)
- ~ #11 for percentage of expense budget at 8.1%, (highest is Oxford at 13.8%)

There is much more information on the CT Conference website, www.ctucc.org.

Submitted by First Church delegate: Meg Gaines

Board of Missions & Outreach

How Gifts Of Love Helps Families in Crisis

The families that are served by Gifts of Love's programs face a short-term crisis in their lives due to the loss of employment, reduced working hours, illness, divorce, death of a spouse/mate, domestic abuse, or a significant unexpected increase in expenses. By helping clients meet their family's most basic needs, such as food on the table, a winter coat, or a bed to sleep in, etc. this organization enables them to focus on putting their lives back in order, and regaining their independence.

Gifts of Love programs offer assistance to its clients for a period of up to one year, although each case is monitored and evaluated separately. Through the program's emergency services, this organization also assists a number of families on a one-time basis. All support is provided free of charge. Gifts of Love's current programs include: a Food Pantry, a Clothes Closet, a Linen (& Household Items) Closet, a Furniture Program, Weekend Food Backpacks, along with several other seasonal services.

Donations to the above program can be placed in a collection basket in Palmer Hall. For more information, please visit the Gifts of Love web site at www.giftsoflovect.org, or contact Mim Shepard (860-658-6386).

Care Bags

Through the coordination efforts of Becky Goss, and with DCF (Connecticut Department of Children and Families), the Care Bags program assembles items such as pajamas, clothes toiletries, and other items for any child who has been pulled from his or her home, and placed into emergency foster care. Volunteers for the program have also decorated the bags, purchased the items needed, knit baby hats & blankets, made fleece blankets, or provided financial support for this program.

The next gathering to assemble the Care Bags is Sunday, February 7th at 3:00 pm in Room #29. For more information, please contact Becky Goss (860-658-7016).

Honest Tea Run for Refugees

The third annual 5K "Run for Refugees" Race will be held on Super Bowl Sunday, February 7, 2010, and will benefit IRIS (Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services).

Last year, more than 400 runners and walkers started their Super Bowl festivities early with this fun-filled event that raises funds to help refugees start new lives in Connecticut. The race begins at New Haven's Wilbur Cross High School and features a picturesque run through East Rock Park. Participants may collect donations for IRIS or pay a flat entry fee. Prizes will be given to the three participants who collect the highest number of donations for IRIS!

Participants are encouraged to support their favorite Super Bowl team with jerseys and costumes. They will enjoy t-shirts and a post-race party featuring international food, live entertainment, and an exciting and fun awards ceremony.

You can register for the road race at: jbsports.com

For further information about Run for Refugees, please contact: Lucile Bruce (203) 562-2095

FROM REV. KEVIN WEIKEL
ASSOCIATE MINISTER OF YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS



A group of First Church Young Adults spent the first week of January in Boston. They stayed at First Church Charlestown and took the T each day to non-profit agencies and churches, working at a soup kitchen, food bank, prison book ministry program, and a homeless art program. The goal was to serve the homeless population of Boston and to learn about forgiveness, justice, and love from their situations and stories. Below is an excerpt of message that Young Adult Oliviarose Hurley shared at Uncommon Worship after returning from the trip.

Hello, I'm Olivia – I graduated from Canton High School in 2007 and spent two years in the Navy. I recently completed my first semester at the University of Rhode Island studying to become a nurse.

I was invited to go on this trip by my friend Evan Gross. Evan told me about his experiences on previous mission trips and he was confident that I'd get a lot out of it. So, with an open mind, I accepted the invitation. The open mind thing was important from the start because, in the middle of blowing up the first of 9 air mattresses, our one and only air mattress pump blew up – red ball of fire and all - leaving us to sleep on the hard church floor. Running through my mind was, "What on earth did you get me to agree to, Evan?"

After an uncomfortable but bearable first night, we woke up, got ourselves together, and I'm not sure why, but Kevin designated me to lead us to our first destination (he obviously didn't care if we got there on time). After a few misguided turns, we walked into a soup kitchen. For me, it was the first soup kitchen I had ever seen. Our duties consisted of prepping, cooking, setting, and serving. Simple enough. But it wasn't our duties at the soup kitchen that surprised me; it was the people in attendance that did.

If you would have asked me ahead of time I probably would have guessed that the soup kitchen would be filled with smelly, bum-looking mostly African American men. But it wasn't long before I came to see that homelessness knows no ethnicity or gender. There were men and women there - White, Black, Asian, and Hispanic - some smelled pretty bad and wore tattered clothes, but others looked pretty clean.

After the soup kitchen was finished, we talked with the manager of the soup kitchen, Chris. To my surprise, Chris told us that he used to be homeless and attend the soup kitchen himself. I never would have known! It turns out that after some very difficult years struggling with addiction and subsequently losing his job, his home, and sleeping on the streets, Chris has turned his life around and now has four part time jobs, and managing the soup kitchen is one of them. Hearing his story was inspiring.

On Wednesday we attended a program in the Fellowship Hall of Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Boston called Common Art. It's a time and a place where homeless people can congregate to express themselves through drawing, painting, and crafts, something they do not often get the chance to do.

Soon after we arrived at Common Art, Kevin introduced me to a man named Kirk. Kevin had met Kirk at Monday's soup kitchen. Kirk and I shook hands, starting talking, and for an hour I was fascinated as he told me his story.

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Kirk is a 40 something white man who graduated from Boston College and had “made it” in the world of big business. But regardless of the amount of money or status he accumulated, it was never enough. Greed overtook him. To relieve stress he relied on alcohol, and before long, drinking became a part of his daily routine. In time Kirk was almost always intoxicated and hit rock bottom when he was caught stealing from one of his clients. He lost his job, and then his wife, and then his connections with his family. Kirk lost everything and spent a year behind bars.

Kirk is sorry for the people he hurt by what he called his selfishness and addiction, but is at the same time grateful for all that he has learned along the way. He has come to understand that life isn't about money, it's about being content with who you are. Since this realization a few years ago, Kirk has been alcohol free. He doesn't wish to hold a high paying job again but aspires instead to simply be happy with each day and help others who may be going through something similar to what he has gone through.

Kirk showed me that everyone has a story to tell. He taught me that just because someone is labeled “homeless” doesn't mean they're any less of a person. Kirk told me that he appreciated my listening to him because each time he tells his story it helps him to understand a little more about himself. My conversation with Kirk meant a lot to me. It opened my eyes to how addiction and greed can take over your life and how we have to make sure we are at first content and at peace with ourselves. It taught me how money and status can get in the way and block our view of what's really important. I'm thoroughly thankful for the opportunity to meet and learn from Kirk.

On Thursday night we had two guests over for dinner, Ron and Rudy. They came to tell their stories about life on the streets. When I talked to Ron, he asked *me* questions. I thought this was interesting because up to this point in the week *I* had been the one asking the questions of the people we met. One question Ron asked me was, “Can you describe a stereotypical homeless person?” And so I told him about the stereotypes I had before I went into the soup kitchen on the first day, and how those stereotypes changed. I told him how my experiences in just a few short days broadened my thoughts and how I learned that homelessness knows no ethnicity or gender.

Rudy said something amazing when telling us about his battle with drugs. He said that every night he tells himself when he's putting his kids to bed, “life is beautiful but it has bad moments—and this is not one of them.” It helps him appreciate the fact that he has overcome his addiction and that he is in a good place. It helps him remember that God believes in us and gives us second chances.

God believes in us. This was something we talked about at length one night as a group. We discussed how having faith in Jesus is important, but sometimes the question is really more about Jesus' faith in us. I believe that Jesus must have faith in us because he leaves so much in our hands.

I'm so grateful and thankful that I was able to participate in this trip. It was without a doubt transformative and life changing. The people I was able to meet in Boston and the friendships I was able to establish among the other young adults in our group will be with me forever.

My prayer is that you have gained something by my words. May you take the time to listen to the stories of those around you. May you trust with your whole heart that God has faith in you. May you come to understand that God loves each of us—no matter our status, power, wealth, or size of the shelter over our heads – or lack thereof.

Amen.

Olivia

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

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

Check <http://1STCHURCHSIMSBURY.ORG/YOUTH.ASPX> often for up-to-the-minute youth/young adult information.

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

Sunday, Feb. 7th— 6:00 p.m., Superbowl Party! Check the Youth/Young Adult Website for details.

Sunday, Feb. 14th— No PF, SHS February Vacation.

Sunday, Feb. 21st— 7:00-9:00 p.m., Gathering in the Youth Room with icebreakers, games, and a discussion on the topic, *“Why PF, what’s our purpose?”*

Sunday, Feb. 28th— 7:00-9:00 p.m., Gathering in the Youth Room with special guest Jeremy Osborn, co-founder of 350.org, “an international campaign dedicated to building a movement to unite the world around solutions to the climate crisis.”

PF is tutoring 4th Graders at Betances School in Hartford on Tuesday afternoons. See Kevin for details.

March 12-13: PF will participate in a 30 Hour Fast, raising funds for the One Great Hour of Sharing Haiti Relief Fund. Detailed information at the youth/young adult website.

CONFIRMATION (for 8th graders)

Sunday, Feb. 7th — 10:00 a.m., Special Uncommon Worship in Sanctuary. 11am, Annual Church Financial Mtg. in Sanctuary. 11:45ish, lunch in Youth Room. 12:15ish, Small groups gather and discuss Session 7, Communion.

Wed., Feb. 17th — 7:00 p.m. Large Group Meeting in Youth Room. Topic: “Lent & Easter”

Sunday., Feb. 21st—4:15 p.m. Small Group Meetings in Host Homes. Topic: “Ministry”

Throughout January & February, each small group will meet with Kevin for “Pizza with the Pastor.” Times will be scheduled with small group communicators.

March 12-13: Confirmands are invited to participate with PF in a 30 Hour Fast, raising funds for the One Great Hour of Sharing Haiti Relief Fund. See detailed information at the youth/young adult website.

JUNIOR FELLOWSHIP (for 7th and 8th graders)

Sunday, Feb. 7th— 6:00 p.m. until halftime, Superbowl Party! Check the Youth/Young Adult Website for information.

Friday, Feb. 12th— 2:15 p.m. Games & a topic in the Youth Room (hop a ride on the church bus from HJMS).

Friday, Feb. 26th— 2:15 p.m. Games & a topic in the Youth Room (hop a ride on the church bus from HJMS).

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

All youth are invited to sit together in the balcony for the beginning of the 10:00 a.m. service before heading down to the youth room after the children’s time for discussion. Liz Guidice and Mike Hogan lead this class.



SUMMITTING EVEREST AS A FAITH COMMUNITY

I recently viewed a television program about climbing Mt. Everest and was struck by how much of the effort required to accomplish this feat is mental preparation and concentration, which is just as important as the physical preparation and conditioning. Without the right attitude, determination, resolve and commitment to teamwork, success on Everest is not possible and the climb may actually turn deadly. If you think only of yourself, you are sure not to reach the summit. If you refuse to participate as a valuable member of the team, you are left behind. And even if you make it to the summit, it is even more important, and far more difficult, to maintain your focus and determination on the trip back down, where you are four times more likely to lose your life than on the way up. Working collaboratively is a necessity of life in the trip up to the summit of Everest.

The Everest “collaborative imperative” shows us that something wonderful and seemingly superhuman can be accomplished when a group of people with a common purpose comes together as a team to overcome obstacles and accomplish what seems humanly impossible. The same imperative is available to us as a church, where working together as a team we can accomplish the miraculous, and have much more of an impact than any one of us individually. And the team, in our case, need not be composed solely of other members of First Church. We can partner with other churches, as we did on the recent Biloxi trip, or with community organizations such as Hands on Hartford, or with the national UCC as we do in making financial contributions toward Our Churches Wider Mission, or with those in other countries as we do with the Masooli clinic—in each case to effect change and advance justice and broaden opportunities for others in a way that is exponential.

As on Everest, keeping our focus is equally important on the ascent—when we are focused on attaining a common goal—and on the descent as we regroup for the next part of our journey together. As we embark on a new decade in a world that is in transition in so many ways, how will we at First Church use the “collaborative imperative” in 2010 and the years ahead? The idea warrants our prayerful consideration.

Keep in mind that with singleness of purpose and faith in God, anything is possible.

Yours in His service,

Susan M. Orr

FEBRUARY 2010 FELLOWSHIP HOURS:

2/07/10	Annual Budget Mtg. (NO FELLOWSHIP HOUR)
2/14/10*	Mardi Gras Service / Back Bay Mission Groups.
2/21/10*	Susan Orr's Confirmation Group
2/28/10	CE labyrinth Palmer Hall / Women's Praise Choir

4th Wednesday Study Group

We will meet on February 24th at 12:00 noon in Room 28. To prepare, please read Chapter; 8 in Part 3: A Social Gospel. Kibitzers are always welcome!

First Church of Christ
689 Hopmeadow St
Simsbury CT 06070

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

STAFF

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Notice of Annual Financial Meeting— The annual Financial Meeting of the Congregation is scheduled for **February 7, 2010** and will begin following the 10:00a.m. Worship Service. The agenda will focus on the financial results for budget year 2009 and the presentation of the recommended 2010 budget for approval by the Congregation. Advance copies of the Financial Report will be available for pickup at the Church Office beginning January 31st.

Monthly Cornerstone – In our attempt to reduce costs with the Cornerstone mailings, we seem to have increased confusion with how the Cornerstone will be distributed. To clarify, we will be emailing a notification that the Cornerstone is available on line, with a **LINK** to the Church Website at www.1stchurchsimsbury.org where you can preview the Cornerstone there. We will NOT be emailing the Cornerstone as an attachment. Please contact the Church office if you wish to discontinue the regular postal mailings or email darlene.davis@1stchurchsimsbury.org so that we know how many to mail out for the February Cornerstone. If you have any further questions, please let us know. Thank you!

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

From the FC Mission Board: Participate in a Cultural Immersion in Mexico, March 19-26th- Many of you heard the Rev. Delle McCormick speak to our congregation in November about the work of **BorderLinks** in Tucson, AZ. Borderlinks is offering an education trip this March to Copper Canyon in Northern Chihuahua, Mexico. *"Learn about the history and contemporary issues of this region in a guided seminar led by the bi-national BorderLinks staff team. Explore such themes as migration, environmental preservation, land rights, art and culture."* Sara Batchelder is inviting church members to join her on this adventure. If you are interested, please contact Sara at sara_j_batchelder@sbcglobal.net or call her at 860-658-4557. Learn more by visiting their website: www.borderlinks.org.

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Women of First Church - Mark your calendars! Our 2010 Women's Retreat will be held on **Friday, May 14—Saturday, May 15 at Silver Lake Conference Center**. If you would like to be on this year's planning team, please contact the Reverend Alison (651-3593) or alison.patton@1stchurchsimsbury.org.

New Small Group Study Program on Grace! - First Church will start an exciting new program of a small group study based on the book, *"What's So Amazing About Grace?"*, by Phillip Yancey. The program will run Sunday mornings from 9:00 to 9:55 a.m., starting March 14th. We will start each weekly session with a video on that week's chapter. Then, we will break out into small groups to discuss the topic, to learn from each other and get to know one another. Anyone who took part in the Alpha program at First Church knows what a wonderful experience this can be. More information to follow.