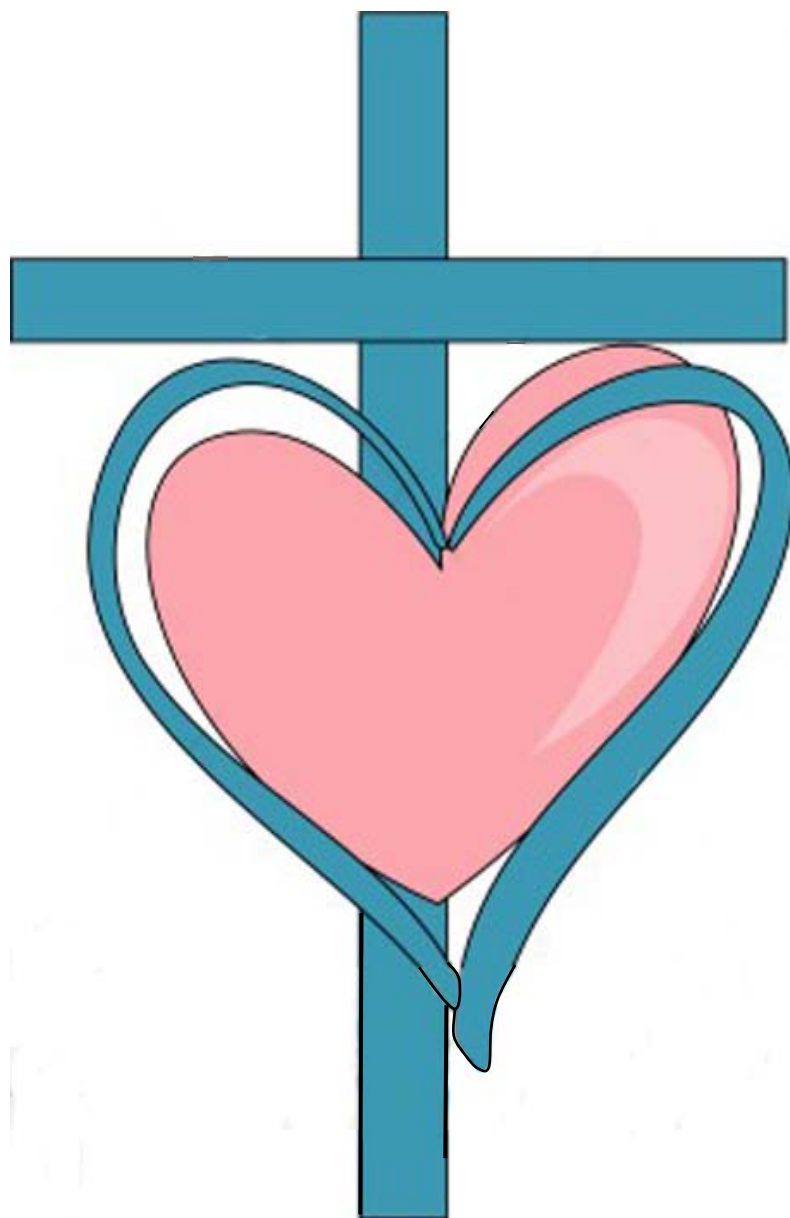


First Church of Christ, Simsbury

February 2012

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FEBRUARY 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
			9:30 Hay Stack, Room 28 9:45 Music Together, Room 29 4:00 Women's Praise Choir Reh.	6:00 Bell Choir Reh., Room 29 6:30 Troop 76 Leadership & Committee Mtg., Parsons' Study 7:00 FV Chorus, Palmer Hall 7:30 AA meeting,	2:10 Junior Fellowship	
5	6	7	10	9	10	11
8:15 Confirmation Large Group 8:30 Worship/ Communion, Chapel 9:30 Teacher/ Shepherd Orientation Breakfast, Parlor 10:00 Uncommon Worship w/ Communion, Sanctuary 10:00 Church School 10:00 PF Youth Group/Youth Room,	1:00 Red Cross Blood Drive, Palmer Hall 4:15 Junior Choir 4:30 Book Club, Parlor 7:30 Executive Council meeting, Parsons' Study	6:00 Winter Bible study, Library 6:30 Bible Study Small Group, Parlor 5:30 Valley Saxophone Quartet, Music Room	9:45 Music Together, Room 29 10:00 Memorial Garden committee meeting, Library 4:00 Women's Praise Choir Reh. 7:00 Farmington Valley Chorus, Palmer Hall	6:00 Scout Merit Badge Workshop, Room 28 6:00 Bell Choir Reh., Room 29 7:00 Boy Scout Troop 76 Mtg., Palmer Hall 7:30 AA meeting, Room 28 7:30 Chancel Choir Reh.	10:30 Farmington Valley Transition Academy, Kitchen & Palmer Hall	4:00 Setup Hometown Nazareth Market Place, Church School Event, Palmer Hall
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
MUSIC SUNDAY 8:30 Worship, Chapel 10:15 Hometown Nazareth Market Place, Palmer Hall 10:00 Worship, Sanctuary 11:00 Annual Finance mtg. following worship,	4:15 Junior Choir 7:15 All Boards meetings (all rooms booked)	12:00 Retired Men's Luncheon, Palmer Hall 4:00 Committee on Ministry Mtg., Parlor 6:00 Winter Bible study, Parlor 7:00 Deacons Meeting, Library 5:30 Valley Saxophone Quartet,	9:45 Music Together, Room 29 4:00 Women's Praise Choir Reh. 7:00 Farmington Valley Chorus, Palmer Hall	6:00 Bell Choir Reh., Room 29 7:00 Boy Scout Troop 76 Mtg., Palmer Hall 7:30 AA meeting, Room 28 7:30 Chancel Choir Reh.	2:10 Junior Fellowship 6:00 Hopkins/ Hirschhoff Wedding Rehearsal, Sanctuary	5:00 Hopkins/ Hirschhoff Wedding, Sanctuary 6:15 Cole/Lynch wedding rehearsal, Sanctuary
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
10:00 Worship, Sanctuary 10:00 Church School-Mission project 11:00 Fellowship/ Coffee Hour, Palmer Hall 4:00 Cole/Lynch Wedding, Sanctuary	Holiday - Office closed - President's Day 1:00 Red Cross Blood Drive, Palmer Hall 4:15 Junior Choir	9:30 Morning Prayer Shawl Mtg., Room 28 6:30 Bible Study Small Grp., Parlor 7:00 Evening Prayer Shawl Mtg., Room 28 5:30 Valley Saxophone Quartet, Music Room	9:45 Music Together, Room 29 12:00 4th Wed. Study Grp., Room 28 4:00 Women's Praise Choir Reh. 7:00 Farmington Valley Chorus, Palmer Hall 7:30 ASH	6:00 Bell Choir Reh., Room 29 7:30 AA meeting, Room 28 7:30 Chancel Choir Reh.	7:30 Longo Eagle Scout Ceremony, Sanctuary 8:30 Longo Eagle Scout Reception, Palmer Hall 7:30 PF Youth Group Lock-In	7:30 PF Youth Group Lock-In
26	27	28	29			
8:30 1st Sunday in Lent Worship Service, Chapel 10:00 Worship, Sanctuary 10:00 Church School 11:00 Fellowship/ Coffee Hour, Palmer Hall PF Youth Group Lock-In ending	4:15 Junior Choir 6:00 FMHCC Board of Directors Meeting, Parsons' Study	10:00 Card Making Group, Rm 28 6:30 Cub Scout Pack 276 Mtg., Palmer Hall 5:30 Valley Saxophone Quartet, Music Room	9:45 Music Together, Room 29 4:00 Women's Praise Choir Reh. 7:00 Farmington Valley Chorus, Palmer Hall			

THE CORNERSTONE

FEBRUARY 2012 WORSHIP SCHEDULE:

February 5th

Sunday Worship & Communion

8:30 a.m. Early Worship in the Chapel with Holy Communion

10:00 a.m. Uncommon Worship in the Sanctuary with Holy Communion

Rev. Kevin preaching on John 8: 1-11, "Interrupted"

February 12th

MUSIC SUNDAY

8:30 a.m. Early Worship in the Chapel with Rev. Jonathan preaching

10:00 a.m. Traditional Worship in the Sanctuary
Rev. Alison preaching on Mark 1:40-45
"A Leper's Story"

ANNUAL FINANCE MEETING after worship

February 19th

Sunday Worship

8:30 a.m. Early Worship in the Chapel

10:00 a.m. Traditional Worship in the Sanctuary

Rev. Jonathan preaching both services
"Why is there Evil in the World?"

**Wednesday,
February 22nd**

7:30 p.m. ASH WEDNESDAY

Special joint service with the Metropolitan AME Zion Church. 7:30 Worship in our Sanctuary

February 26th

Sunday Worship

8:30 a.m. Early Worship in the Chapel

10:00 a.m. Traditional Worship in the Sanctuary

Diann Bailey preaching both services
"Reflections on Seminary Border Crossing
Immersion to Ghana"

From the Senior Minister's Desk

Dear Friends in Christ,

"Thank you for coming... it means a lot to us! This has been a double tragedy."

On the Sunday following the devastating fire, Todd Bailey and I attended worship with the congregation of the First Church of Somers, CT. It was a moving service and a very poignant scene as members and friends packed the Town Hall across the street from the still smoldering ruins of their once beautiful meetinghouse. There were many tears. The Rev. Barry Cass shared numerous stories of ministry that had happened in their meetinghouse for the past 170 years. There was also laughter and gentle embraces as people gave thanks for the rich blessings they received during all those years... and for the fact that no one was killed during the fire.

During the prayer concerns, I offered words of encouragement and hope on behalf of our congregation since we know something of their plight, having suffered a similar loss in 1965. After worship, we were greeted by grateful parishioners who wished me to thank you for your prayers. I let them know that Pastor Barry and I are in communication regarding ways that we might be of support to them during the coming months of recovery—recovery made all the more complicated by the suspicious nature of the fire. As I sat with them that morning, what struck me most was the strength and spirit of the people. I thought of Paul's second letter to the Corinthian church in which he says:

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh.

2 Corinthians 4

Honestly, these are challenging days for the Church. The never-ending recession is hitting people hard. The ever-increasing needs are met by still stretching resources. These are hard days to be sure. And yet, it is good to remember that our greatest source of strength and comfort is always at hand. For whenever we receive and then reflect the loving Spirit of our Lord, no challenge will be too great.

So, let us walk in the light of God's grace as we enter the coming season of Lent, grateful for this blessing.

In the Joy of Christ's service,

Jonathan

From the Associate Minister for Parish Life and Outreach

On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, I attended a Service of Worship and Celebration at Faith Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut, along with two First Church, Simsbury members. Together we sang a well-loved hymn:

*"We come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord.
Trusting in his Holy Word; he hasn't failed me yet.
Oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh - Don't turn around.
We've come this way by faith."*

It reminded me that the road toward racial justice has been long and arduous. Remember Jonathan's sermon about courage that same Sunday? It does, indeed, take tremendous courage and deep faith to overcome the pain of racism. That work continues even now: people of color still suffer disproportionately in our country: with higher rates of illness, poverty, hunger and incarceration. While the election of our first African-American president serves as a powerful symbol of progress, the continued inequalities in our system remind me that we've got a long way to go yet.

February is Black History Month. Students will be studying the contributions of African-Americans to our society. It seems like a good time for all of us to pause and ask ourselves what we might learn about - and from - our brothers and sisters of color. Consider doing something intentional this month, to deepen your own understanding of racism. Is there a book you might read? A documentary you could watch? Even better: do you know someone who has stories to share about experiencing racism? It is a practice of faith to invite those stories and to listen with an open heart. Here are a few authors who have guided me along my own, continuing journey to understand and dismantle racism:

Meditations of the Heart by Howard Thurman

Martin and Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare by James Cone

Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? by Beverly Tatum

...and books for children:

A Taste of Colored Water by Robert Faulkner

God's Dream by Archbishop Desmond Tutu

I believe this is good and important work for faithful Christians. Dr. King himself was, first and foremost, a preacher of the Gospel; he reminded us that the cry for justice is not just a modern cry; it was Christ's cry ("I have come to let the oppressed go free" - Luke 4:18); it was the prophets' cry ("Let justice roll down like water" - Amos 5:24); it is God's own cry ("They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain." - Isaiah 11:9). May God bless each step we take to learn from one another this month and every month. Amen.

Alison

The Importance of Our Open & Affirming Dialogue

In 1969, a 16 year-old named Marsha Stevens wrote a song called “For Those Tears I Died”. Marsha had been raised in a UCC church (her father was an ordained minister) but like many young people in the late sixties, she was caught up in the “Jesus movement” and (in the language of the movement) gave her heart to Jesus at Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California. “For Those Tears I Died” has a simple folk melody, but the words tell a heartfelt message of God’s sustaining love. In the early 70’s – when contemporary Christian music was just beginning to gain popularity – Marsha’s song became “the one” that many Christian singers wanted to perform. In an interview years later, she recalled her amazement when Pat Boone called to ask permission to sing her song. Marsha, too, sang the song (and many others), traveling around the world with a Christian folk-rock group called *Children of the Day*. I never traveled around the world, but I sang Marsha’s song in church many times.

Recently, through the wonders of Google and iTunes, I reconnected with Marsha’s song and was surprised to discover the deep pain and disappointment she experienced nine years after writing “For Those Tears I Died”. I learned that her marriage (which by then had devolved into a platonic relationship) fell apart when she could no longer deny that she was a lesbian. During the break-up, she lost custody of her two children because the judge believed that she would not be a good role model for them. And she lost her career and ministry, temporarily, because the Christian community that had loved Marsha and her beautiful music ,could not accept her sexual orientation. Angry Christians even ripped the song that had inspired so many from their hymnals and sent it to her as hate mail. Amazingly, she did not lose her faith in Jesus, and now uses her gift of music in a ministry to the LGBT community. She still has an incredibly beautiful voice.

Reading Marsha Stevens’ story online has underscored for me the importance of the dialogue we are having at First Church about being open and affirming. It has made me wonder how many Marshas – faithful followers of Jesus, so capable of blessing us with their gifts – Christians may have unknowingly closed the door to.

Melinda Westbrook



Called to Serve A New Ministry



January 24, 2012

Dear Members and Friends of First Church Simsbury,

It is with a mix of emotions that I write to share the news that I have been called to serve as Pastor of Saugatuck Congregational Church in Westport, CT, and so will be concluding my ministry at First Church on Sunday, April 29th. These nearly five years that we have been in ministry together in Simsbury have been full of blessings. I am profoundly grateful for all that I have learned and all that we have done together. Leaving will not be easy.

For one thing: there is so much amazing ministry going on at First Church – so much life, hope, and good work being done to pave the way for new and emerging programs. I am sorry to miss this next season, as First Church Simsbury embraces our new strategic vision, continues the Open and Affirming process, develops more small group ministries and strengthens our partnership with the town of Simsbury. It is a gift to be a part of so dynamic a congregation!

It has also been a privilege to work with the dedicated staff of First Church. I will forever be thankful for all I have learned while sharing ministry with Jonathan, Kevin, Mark and Cindy. Collaborating with them has been a joy! I am equally grateful for Janice, Cathie, Darlene, Ann and Jim – for helping me to be more effective, and for supporting the work of First Church in so many ways!

During these next three months, I will look for every opportunity to tell you what an honor it has been to minister with and among you. I will say, 'Thank you!' over and over, and mean it! In the mean time, we will continue to plan an amazing women's retreat, nurture those small groups, care for members who are sick or isolated, strengthen our mission, study the Bible and worship together. I will continue to praise God – every day – for this dedicated community of faith.

With gratitude for you and for God's continued work in our midst,

Alison

HEARTFELT THANKS

We want to express our deep appreciation for the support that so many of our church friends have given us since the sudden death of our younger son, Bruce, who lived in England. We shall miss him terribly, but are grateful for the 58 years we had together. He will live forever in our memories and in our hearts.

With many thanks to you all,

Mavion & Bob Gilmore



HAVE INTERNET ACCESS?

If so, are you reading the Cornerstone on-line?

If not, you can help First Church save time and money by doing so. If you provide us with your email address, we will send you a link to The Cornerstone on our website each month when it is ready for viewing.

To sign up for this, please send an email to first.church@1stchurchsimsbury.org

SOUTH PARK INN 2012 MEAL DATES

Board of Mission and Outreach

- The people of South Park Inn absolutely love it when we come work with them to help meet the many needs of the people there who are homeless and in transition. And, I must say, the blessings are always ours.
- Each of the opportunities below represents a great experience to bring a family together, to reconnect with friends, to extend your Women's Circle experience, to share with your Bible Study friends, to add a new dimension to your Men's group involvement, or to develop relationships with board members.
- A new approach to this ministry where we will set up teams of people to work together preparing and serving meals and other events. More information to follow on that. Email Denise Bell at denise.bell847@gmail.com if you have any questions.
- **Meal Dates for 2012:** March 10th, April 12th, May 28th, June 21st, July 18th, August 1st, September 23rd, October 21st, November 25th, December 23rd, & December 31st.

NEW YEAR'S DAY LUNCH IN HARTFORD

Thanks to 27 folks of all ages from First Church, over 140 of Hartford's hungry people began 2012 with a celebration and a hearty meal.

Once again on New Year's Day we boarded our bus at 9:00 a.m., with Kevin at the wheel, and arrived at South Congregational Church in Hartford. We decorated the church hall, prepared the food, helped the guests play bingo and served the meal at our assigned tables. In addition to ham, macaroni and cheese, salad, rolls and butter, bean casserole and corn, our guests enjoyed varied and delicious desserts that each of us contributed.

On the way home, Kevin encouraged us to reflect on our experience. All of us agreed that the way Hands On Hartford, our mission partner, set up the day with us serving guests at their tables, provided greater opportunity for us to interact with those we were serving, many of whom are homeless. We valued this connection, which went well beyond just providing a meal. We said we would happily do this again and felt a special bonding as we came together in community serving others. What a great way to start the New Year!

Dave and Nancy Wadhams



Reflections on Ghana - Diann Bailey

During the month of January, Diann and several classmates at Andover-Newton Theological Seminary, participated in a two week 'Border Crossing Immersion to Ghana.'

Join Diann for a Second Hour presentation on

*Sunday, March 11th, 11:15 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
in the Parsons' Study.*

First Church member Diann Bailey is Master of Divinity student at Andover-Newton Theological Seminary and a 'Member in Discernment,' preparing for ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ.

Church School News

Church School Events



Feb 5th, 9:30 a.m., Teacher/Shepherd orientation in the Parlor for the Mary Magdalene Unit

Feb 12th, Hometown Nazareth Market Place, Where Jesus was a kid, 10:15 a.m. in Palmer Hall (continues through the church financial meeting)

Feb 19th: Movie and Mission project: toiletry kit making for South Park Inn

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 February, the kids will be doing a unit called, "God is Love".

Pre-K Class (ages 3-5)

The Pre-K class (Rm. 38) will be learning that "God is Love" by doing crafts, playing games, and singing. Students will start in church and be dismissed to their class after the children's message from 11:00-11:15 a.m., the children attend music in Room 37.

Kindergarten Class

The Kindergarten class (Rm. 37) will be learning that "Jesus is with Us" by doing crafts, playing games, and singing. Students will start in church and be dismissed to the chapel after the children's message. They have music from 11:00-11:15 a.m.

Rotation Program for Grades 1-6, Jesus in the Temple:

Unit 5: Mary Magdalene's Story

Mary was the first to hear the good news of Jesus' resurrection. She was afraid and found it hard to believe that Jesus was really alive. But when she saw Jesus herself, she ran to tell the others. Like Mary, we too can tell others the good news of Jesus.

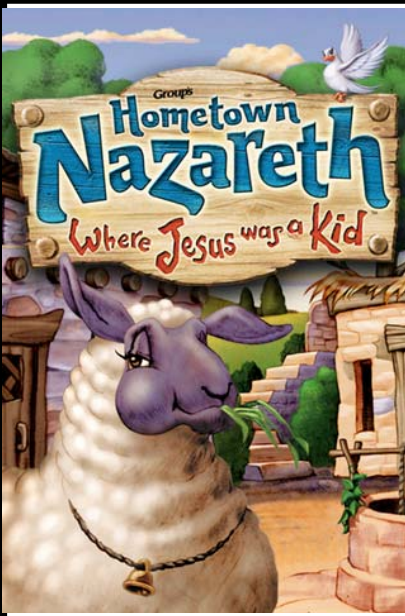
	B.L.A.S.T. Rm.35-Art	Mouse Pad Rm.32- Computers	Creation Station Rm.34- Cooking	Coliseum Rm.29- Games	Matter of Faith Rm.33- Science
Wk. 5 (2/5) PreK-6 Begin in Church K-6 dismissed to chapel	Gr. 5 Gr. 6	Gr. 1	Gr. 2 Gr. 4	Gr. 3	No class today
Wk. 6 (2/12) PreK-6 Begin in Church K-6 dismissed to P.H.	Hometown Nazareth: Where Jesus was a kid, Palmer Hall, continues through the Financial meeting				

Bible Story Reference: Mark 16:1-11

Bible Verse: Do not be alarmed; ... He [Jesus] has been raised; he is not here. (Mark 16:6)

Objective: In this unit the students will: hear the story of the empty tomb in several ways; experience the story of the empty tomb through various means; tell the story of the empty tomb in a variety of ways; reflect on the issues of death and dying.

	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 (2/19) PreK-6 Begin in Church K-6 dismissed to P.H.	Movies and Mission Project: Toiletry kits for South Park Inn, Palmer Hall				
Wk. 2 (2/26) PreK-6 Begin in Church K-6 dismissed to Chapel	Gr. 1	Gr. 2 Gr. 4	Gr. 3	No class today	Gr. 5 Gr. 6



Come to the Narareth Market Place: Where Jesus was a kid

Feb 12, 10:15 in Palmer Hall

Visit the: Carpenter Shop: make a wandering sheep toy,
The Bead Bazaar: make a necklace or bracelet
Synagogue: make a Tzedakah Box
Olive Oil Shop: make an olive/peppermint hand scrub
Farmer Field: get a head start on your spring planting
Scribe Shop: color placemats or scrolls
Wool shop: make felted wool soap or learn to drop
spindle wool
Play Games

Church School Winter Mission Project Toiletry kits for South Park Inn, Hartford



We are collecting items to make toiletry kits for South Park Inn: toothpaste, toothbrushes, hairbrushes, combs, deodorant, razors, shaving cream, etc. Our goal is to make 12 kits for men, 12 for women, 12 for girls, and 12 for boys. Please drop off items in the church school office or in the baskets by the 3rd floor elevator.

The student offering collected in the chapel will go to purchase additional items needed for the toiletry kits.



Faith & the Family: How can the family practice their faith at home in the month of February?

In the month of February, we focus on the theme that God is Love and that we are God's hands and feet on earth showing God's love to others.

- See Psychology Today's link below on 10 Tips for Raising kids today who care: <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-parents-we-mean-to-be/200904/ten-tips-raising-kids-who-care>
- Watch the *Be My Valentine, Charlie Brown* with your kids and discuss how it feels to be the child who doesn't receive any Valentine's cards.
- Read and discuss *Berenstain Bear's Show God's Love, God Gave Us Love*, or other Valentine books with your kids.
- Take your kids shopping and have your family make toiletry kits to donate to South Park Inn.
- Family Paper Conversation Heart Wreath:
What you'll need: 9" paper plate, Scissors, Construction paper: pink, purple, red, and blue, markers or crayons, Glue sticks, piece of yarn or string

How to make it:

Cut the inner circle out of the paper plate, leaving approximately a 2" edge creating the wreath shape.

Fold a piece of scrap paper in half, draw a half of a heart shape to create a pattern. Cut out the heart.

Fold the short end of a piece of construction paper up and place the folded heart around the folded paper and trace the half heart shape into the paper.

Cut out all the hearts and flatten out the creases so that the hearts lay flat. Using markers, or crayons write conversation phrases on the hearts such as "God is Love", "Love One Another", "Share", "Care", names of family members or friend, etc. Decorate the hearts.

Arrange your hearts on top of the paper plate wreath shape without gluing them down. Once you have them where you want them, use the glue stick to attach each one.

You can hang the wreath by attaching a piece of looped yarn to the back as a hanger or use as a table center piece with flowers or candles in the middle.



“I Love to Tell the Story...”

“I Love To Tell the Story...” is a monthly column featuring personal stories by First Church members and friends about the ways this church has made a difference in their life and faith.”

When we found out we had to move to Connecticut, we were lucky to have a year to search for a house and a school for our then 13 year old son, Will. Will on the other hand did not think it was so lucky...we were pulling him out of a school he liked, from friends, from a church he grew up in and loved...in his words ‘we had ruined his life’. It was also difficult for me to leave a church I was actively involved in, the kids from the choir who were almost like my own and a wonderful group of friends.

So the spring break before we were to move, we made appointments to look at houses in different towns as well as visit middle schools in Connecticut. Simsbury was one of our front runner towns, so we decided we would visit First Church that first Sunday of spring break week. We heard a great sermon, enjoyed the music and sent Will off to Sunday School, which he seemed to enjoy.

That week one of our appointments was at Henry James Middle School. As we were walking around with the principal; two girls came up to Will and said “We saw you in church on Sunday”. That made Will perk up a little that kids recognized him from one visit to church. That second Sunday we decided to return to First Church to visit again where Will went to Sunday School and reported that other kids mentioned seeing him at school earlier in the week.

We moved to Simsbury in August of 2009, and that first week Will started up at Henry James and found kids he had met at church that previous spring break. Bob and I met some people and everyone was so helpful when they had found out we were new to the area. Bob started attending the Men's Breakfasts and I attended a couple of Women's Ministry meetings. Then when confirmation time came around, we asked Will if he wanted to join the confirmation class (he had missed being confirmed with his friends in NJ) and he eagerly said yes, even though he was a year older than most of the boys.

Bob and I joined the church the spring before Will's confirmation. Since then we have found many things to keep us busy here at First Church, Bob on the Mission Board and myself on the Board of Elders and this year helping plan the Women's Retreat. Thank you for making us a part of this church family.

Cindy Braunlich

Women of First Church: Join us for

**Practicing our Faith:
Living with Intention**



A Two-Day Women's Retreat
at Silver Lake Conference Center in Sharon, CT

**Friday, March 16th, 6:00 p.m. –
Sunday, March 18th, mid-morning**

**Join us as we explore practical ways to
live our faith in daily life through:**

**prayer * journaling * meditation *
nourishment * community * friendship * self-care**

We look forward to welcoming you!

The Women's Retreat Planners: Denise Firestone, Meredith Dendinger,
Susan Stover, Shelley Pilsbury, Cindy Braunlich, Cloris Stock

REV. KEVIN WEIKEL—YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

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

JUNIOR FELLOWSHIP (for 7th and 8th graders)

Friday, February 3rd

2:10-4:00 p.m.: Hop on the church bus in the parent pick-up loop at Henry James and we'll head back to the church to share highs and lows and snacks, participate in discussion on a relevant topic, and close with our traditional candle prayer and a game.

Friday, February 17th

2:10-4:00 p.m. Hop on the church bus in the parent pick-up loop at Henry James and we'll head back to the church to share highs and lows and snacks, participate in discussion on a relevant topic, and close with our traditional candle prayer and a game.

CONFIRMATION (for 8th graders)

Sunday, February 5th

8:15-11:00 a.m. Large Group Meeting (Prayer) in Palmer Hall followed by worship in the sanctuary.

Mid-February

Small Group Meeting (Ministry) at host homes (specific date & time TBD)

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

Sunday, February 5th

10:00 –1:30 p.m. We'll gather for Uncommon Worship at 10:00 a.m. and then after the service, we'll head to the Youth Room where we'll put lunches together to go out and eat and share with shut-in's from our congregation.

Sunday, February 12th

7:00—9:00 p.m. Regular gathering in the Youth Room with icebreakers, games, discussion and prayer. Our topic of conversation will be, "Different Ways to Read the Bible."

Sunday, February 19th

6:30-9:30pm: Whirlyball! Whirlyball is a wild and wacky game played on bumper cars and there is no athletic ability required. We will depart for whirlyball from the church parking lot promptly at 6:30 p.m. and arrive back at the church at 9:30p.m. Cost is \$15 per person. You must bring a completed parental consent from (download form from the Youth webpage).

Saturday, February 25th

7:30 p.m. PF Lock-in! Overnight Lock In - come and spend **through Sunday,** the night! Our evening will include a round-the-town **February 26th** scavenger hunt, a midnight run to IHOP, and the exploration of a relevant topic. Please bring \$10 to cover food. Also bring a sleeping bag, pillow, toothbrush, and something to sleep in that's suitable for a co-ed area.

HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

What was life like?

The Stowe Baptismal Bowl and the Traveling Communion Kit

If you have had your child baptized at First Church or participated in a baptism here, you have seen up close the lovely silver baptismal bowl. Many of you may not know its history. In 1906 it was given to the Rev. Oliver Hart Bronson who was a close friend of the Stowe sisters. He followed the Rev. Charles E. Stowe who left in 1899. Hatty Stowe, one of Rev. Stowe's twin sisters, gave it to the Rev. Bronson in memory of her mother, the author Harriet Beecher Stowe. When Rev. Bronson left First Church in 1907, he took it with him.

After he died, his widow, who then lived in Santa Barbara, CA, sent the bowl and the traveling communion kit to the Rev. Kenneth Palmer, who was the minister in 1953. It has been in use here for baptisms ever since.

In 1903, Hatty gave the Rev. Bronson another beautiful gift. It was a silver traveling communion kit in a leather box. It was given in memory of her brother Frederick William, who had been wounded in a fight at Gettysburg during the Civil War. He received shrapnel in his ear and even though he survived, it caused him constant pain for the rest of his life. He struggled with dependency on alcohol due to this and he became a burden on his whole family. It is thought that this is why Hatty gave this gift to the Rev. Bronson, to atone for her feeling that her brother was an embarrassment to the family. We have lovely photographs of this set taken by a former member and professional photographer, John Kennedy. The case is kept among the historical artifacts and is not used any more.

The Stowe twins lived in Simsbury until their deaths. Hatty died in Simsbury at age 71 on February 1, 1907 and her funeral was held at Trinity Church in Tariffville with assistance by the Rev. Bronson. Eliza died in Simsbury at age 76 on March 17, 1912. The Rev. Bronson conducted her funeral service at First Church, even though he lived in New York at that time.

We keep in our archives the letter written by Mrs. Bronson that accompanied the gifts and the return letter thanking her written by the Rev. Palmer. We are indeed fortunate to still have these special items in our collection.

Donna Hopkins, 109 years since the Communion Set was given to the Rev. Bronson.
Historian 106 years since the Baptismal Bowl was given to the Rev. Bronson.
59 years since the Rev. Palmer received these gifts and began using the Bowl.

Music Notes



The holiday decorations have all been put away, the three wise men have come and gone, and we all gather ourselves back together and settle in for a month (or two) of winter weather.

I hope you don't get too settled, though, because there's a lot going on in preparation of what's to come. The choirs are rehearsing for Sunday services, a Music Sunday in March, a choir exchange with the Methodist church, not to mention Palm Sunday and Easter. There's a lot to do, and we'd like to include as many of you as we can.

To give you a heads up, there will be our second-half-year "Pickup Choir" – where we gather as many as possible together to do the anthems and responses for one Sunday service. This is to involve those that can't commit to anything regular, but would still like to sing every now and again. The December Pickup Choir was a tremendous success, and we hope for a repeat of the number taking part. Our next date for this will be in early March – on the 11th. We haven't chosen the pieces yet, and I am still open to suggestions.

On Friday, March 9th, we will hold another installment of our Midwinter Jazz series in Palmer Hall. The last one was a sell-out, so we will be making tickets available for sale a bit earlier – in the middle of this month, so as to give as many as possible a chance to attend. This year will once again be organized by the famous and talented Doug Maher (on guitar), and will feature a return of Matt and Atla DeChaplain. Tickets will be available in the church office weekdays between 9:00-4:00 p.m. Get tickets early!

At the end of March we will hold our semi-annual choir exchange with Simsbury United Methodist Church. We both sing one Sunday there, and then proceed on the following Sunday to First Church to repeat the presentation for our congregation. If you would like to take part, this is once again a good opportunity to sing great music in a choir of great numbers for only a limited engagement. This year's program will be settings of various psalms, and will also include the Kyrie from Mozart's Great Mass in C.

So don't get too comfortable in front of that fire – you still need your exercise, and there's no better way to get it than by getting out and doing some singing, ringing, and playing here at the church. We'll shovel the walk and leave the light on for you...

Mark

CARE BAG COMMITTEE

For more than 10 years, First Church has provided monthly emergency removal tote bags for children removed from their abusive homes and entering into the CT DCF (Department of Children and Families) foster care system.

Each month we donate 20 bags filled with daily living essentials for children aged newborn through teen. These children come into the DCF system with nothing except the clothes on their backs. We provide a complete change of clothing, socks, underwear or diapers, toiletries, book, fleece blanket, stuffed animal, toys, baby supplies, winter hat and mittens, and food.

We do all this with the help of many volunteers. Our members decorate the bags, shop for "bargain priced clothing", knit hats, sew blankets, and donate many items.

With current budget constraints, we are especially appreciative of any donations of small travel sized toiletries (soap, shampoo, conditioner), small toys, stuffed animals, children's books, new basic clothing- socks, underwear, pajamas, sweat pants, and sweat shirts, and winter hats and gloves. Our donation bin is located in Palmer Hall. Many thanks for our latest donation – a fabulous collection of monkeys and dinosaurs!

We have been told by DCF that our church is the ONLY organization that donates monthly. Yes, there are groups who provide Christmas gifts, have coat drives, etc., but we are the only entity that has provided much needed and appreciated goods consistently for years. Our bags not only provide needed comfort to a damaged child, but also help their stressed social workers and emergency foster families.

For further information regarding volunteers or donations, please call Becky Goss 658-7016.



ABOUT GIFTS OF LOVE

Mission: Being hungry does not necessarily mean being poor. Gifts of Love provides basic needs - food, clothing, furniture, household items, energy assistance -- to people in the Greater Hartford area, but in order to qualify for our program, in most cases, someone in the household needs to be working. When times are toughest, the working poor who don't qualify for many government programs are often hit the hardest.

What We Are Doing: The families that are served by Gifts of Love's programs face a crisis in their lives due to a variety of circumstances. Gifts of Love helps clients meet their families' most basic needs – food on the table, a winter coat, or a bed to sleep in – and enables them to focus on putting their lives back in order and regaining their independence. All support is provided free of charge.

Assisting a struggling family during a tough time is truly at the heart of Gifts of Love, "families helping families."

Farmington Valley Hunger Collaborative: The myth is that no one could possibly be hungry in Avon, or Simsbury, Canton or Farmington. The reality is that there are currently over 1,000 kids receiving free and reduced lunches in the Farmington River Valley. The Farmington Valley Hunger Collaborative was formed to better assist the people in the Valley and the people who help the people in the Valley.

The people involved with the Hunger Collaborative work together to ensure that local residents do not fall through the cracks. We combine resources in order to purchase in bulk, pick up orders as a group at Foodshare, assist with SNAP applications and Operation Fuel and grow food in collaboration with the Community Farm of Simsbury.

Team Solution: The Farmington Valley Hunger Collaborative is comprised of the food pantries in Avon, Farmington, Canton and Simsbury, members of Avon/Canton United, town Social Service Directors, clergy members, Foodshare and others interested in the issue of hunger in the Farmington River Valley. We needed to partner with the local food pantries in order to better deliver services and additional support to those in need in the Valley.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program: The mission of The Farm is to preserve the Simsbury Town Farm as an environmentally sound, sustainable working farm, providing education, building community support, and serving the local community. Part of the mission is to grow food for low-income people in the community. Crops grown in the teaching garden are delivered to Gifts of Love, Simsbury Social Services and Billings Forge. We also assist in harvesting and delivering. Gifts of Love also freezes and stores the produce for distribution to the Valley food pantries and assists clients with cooking ideas.

In addition, Gifts of Love is growing food across the street from the farm in conjunction with the UCONN Master Gardeners Program and the First Church of Christ Simsbury! In addition, we work with our school children to grow plants in the Lifecycle of a Plant science segment to be planted at the Farm, the Gifts of Love parking lot garden and at the Avon Senior Center. We also offer our clients container gardens in order to enable them to grow their own food, even in limited space.

ABOUT GIFTS OF LOVE (continued)

Weekend Food Backpack Program: Previously released data from the USDA show that two groups are at highest risk for food insecurity: adults ages 60 to 65 who are jobless but not eligible for Social Security and children, especially on weekends and during the summers. More than 17 million children are food insecure.

When some students go home on Friday afternoons, they aren't just leaving behind their studies. Many of them leave behind the free meals provided at school and return after the weekend with empty stomachs. In addition, some children were forced to hoard their lunch to bring home in order to have food for the weekend or were bringing their free lunch home to siblings not yet in school. That's why Gifts of Love has instituted a backpack program - to help fill that void.

Each Friday Gifts of Love distributes backpacks in Avon, Simsbury, Farmington, Canton and now West Hartford full of easy to prepare food and juice to be used by the family over the weekend and for the children to use for snacks throughout the week. Children pick up their backpacks in the office on their way to the bus line or pick-up line. Kids return the empty backpacks to the office on Monday morning so volunteers can refill them the following week. This program is completely anonymous and confidential and runs the entire duration of the school year. Gifts of Love wants to ensure that children have adequate food and nutrition over the weekend and is committed to helping families struggling to make ends meet.

Volunteer Program: Gifts of Love's Volunteer program brings together our clients and the teen volunteers in this community. Gifts of Love volunteers are the lifeblood of the agency and perform essential functions at all levels, from serving on our board of directors and managing programs, including the back to school backpack program, our weekend food backpack program, and the holiday program, to scheduling and meeting with clients, picking up and delivering furniture, and sorting food and clothing for the food pantry and clothing room. We designed this program to make it easier for teens to become involved with the agency and have opportunities for all who would like to participate.

Gifts of Love is working with the local school systems, clubs, youth groups, sports teams, religious and civic groups to enable students to volunteer and to allow Gifts of Love to assist more people. Many students have a community service requirement. Gifts of Love has hired a Volunteer Coordinator to work some weekends and evening hours, times that are more convenient for students. These Volunteers run the Gifts of Love program one Saturday every month and 2 week nights per month. These times are also more convenient for our working clients. They assist with the fresh food program, fund raising and events.

Goals: Our goal is to have the financial resources to assist every client who qualifies for our program and is in need of services. Most of our clients are not poor enough to receive government aid but, because of a crisis in their lives, cannot make ends meet and are forced to make impossible choices. It is our mission to help families meet these immediate needs and survive the financial crisis without becoming dependent on welfare, having to declare bankruptcy or becoming homeless. Last year, Gifts of Love was able to assist over 13,000 people in the Greater Hartford area.

Mim Shepherd, Director of Gifts of Love

January 2012 Executive Council Summary

1. Reverend Morgan reported that a new start to the Men's Ministry is under development and will begin in the near term. A new program for the ministry to seniors is also under development with a meeting of advisors scheduled for the week of January 9th. Jonathan is proposing to hold periodic Sunday morning discussions on the Strategic Plan with members of the Congregation at the 8:30 a.m. Chapel service. Jonathan noted that both Kevin and Alison will be out of the office for continuing education – Kevin the week of January 9th and Alison the week of January 16th.
2. Reverend Patton commented that the Women's Small Group Ministry will continue into the winter and spring months; program planning is underway. On March 16th through the 18th a Women's retreat will be held – planning is underway. The Advent to Epiphany program is complete but Bible study will continue.
3. Reverend Weikel noted that the JF Heifer Project raised in excess of \$5,600. The PF group raised in excess of \$1,200 for the purchase of Christmas gifts for the residents of Harbor Star. Kevin announced that he will be participating in a Youth Ministry program at Yale Divinity, along with other Youth Ministers, and he will be presenting the First Church youth program he has developed.
4. Treasurer Jim Trimble reported that the 2011 final financial report will be available January 11th. On a preliminary basis, it appeared that we would end the year with a projected deficit of \$18,000, but with year end giving recently reported, he has revised the projected deficit to \$3,500. He further noted that expenses to date of \$892,000 for 2011 were the lowest in five years; for comparison fiscal year 2010 expenses amounted to \$927,000.
5. Susan Stover, Chair of Stewardship, reported that an overview of results to date indicate 2012 pledging is down – 299 pledge units of \$750,000+ that compares to 2011 with 361 pledge units for \$775,000. 78 units have not pledged for 2012 but did pledge \$78,000 in 2011 – follow-up efforts with those units continue.
6. Based on the financial report and the stewardship report, President Goss led considerable discussion on 2012 budget reduction planning. After much discussion, it was concluded that an effort will be launched to make the Congregation aware of the situation, with its attendant ramifications, and to seek supplemental pledge support from the Congregation. Commencing with worship on January 8th, a schedule of announcements was developed with an expectation of overcoming the revenue shortfall for the 2012 budget. A special meeting of the Executive Council was scheduled for January 30th to assess the results and to approve a final budget for presentation to the Congregation at the Annual Financial Meeting, scheduled for February 12th following worship.

(Continued on next page)

January 2012 Executive Council Summary (continued):

- 7. Vice President Melinda Westbrook provided an update to the meeting on activity to date related to the Fatic family support. The major concern at the present time is the appointment of an attorney to represent the Fatic family in the financial settlement proposed and approved by First Church. It was moved; seconded; and carried that First Church place a limit of \$2,000 reimbursement to the Fatic family to pay for their attorney fees. No further action is planned by the Executive Council until attorneys for both parties are in communication.
- 8. A Personnel Policy change, based on agreement between the Board of Personnel and the Board of Finance, was approved for the eligible staff health benefit adjustment and remuneration, if the employee waives the coverage offered by First Church.
- 9. It was noted that construction activity is underway for the Town and Library Board approved additional parking at Boy Scout Hall, along with pathway improvements for a walkway to the Library.

Bill Ketchabaw
Clerk

NOTICE OF ANNUAL FINANCIAL MEETING:

The 2012 Annual Financial Meeting of the Congregation is scheduled for **February 12, 2012 and will begin immediately following the 10:00 a.m. Worship Service.** The agenda will focus on the financial results for budget year 2011 and the presentation of the recommended 2012 budget to the Congregation. Childcare activities will be provided during the meeting. Advance copies of the Financial Report will be available for pickup at the Church Office beginning February 6th.

William Ketchabaw
Clerk of the Congregation

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FELLOWSHIP HOUR SCHEDULE FOR FEBRUARY 2012

2/5/12 JF/PF FAMILIES
2/12/12 **NO FELLOWSHIP HOUR—Financial Meeting**
2/19/12 Families & Board of Music Ministries
2/26/12 Committee for Endowment Development

SAVE YOUR GENTLY USED/UNWANTED ITEMS FOR THE CHURCH TAG SALE:

Remember after the Holidays, when making room and clearing out stuff, to save your items for the **Church Tag Sale** at the end of April! We count on your donations to help support the church school throughout the year.
Thank you!

RETIRED MEN'S LUNCHEON 2011-2012 SCHEDULE

Join us on the Second Tuesday each month, as follows:
2012: Feb. 14th, Mar. 13th, Apr. 10th, May 8th

SUNDAY FLOWERS— IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY

It is not too early to reserve a Sunday during this church year to commemorate, honor or memorialize with flowers for the Communion table in the sanctuary.

If there is a Sunday that you would like to reserve, please contact *Bill Lawry* at 860-651-0281 or wlawry@aol.com.

CLOSURE OR POSTPONMENT DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER

If we have to cancel or change any Sunday services and/or related Sunday church activities because of inclement weather, it will be posted as follows:

- ~On our website <http://www.1stchurchsimsbury.org>.
- ~The automated message on our main phone number will be changed to reflect what is happening
- ~WFSB (Channel 3) and WVIT (Channel 30) will scroll our announcement on air under First Church of Christ, Simsbury. An announcement will also appear on their websites - www.wfsb.com and [www.http://www.nbcconnecticut.com](http://www.nbcconnecticut.com).