

The Meeting House Times

The Congregational Church of Salisbury, United Church of Christ
March, 2009

World Day of Prayer Friday, March 6th - 2:00 Immaculate Conception Church

Norfolk, CT 4 North Street -
at the junction of Routes 44 & 272

The Women of Papua New Guinea welcome us to a land of many languages, cultures, traditions and beliefs. Within this context, the Christian community draws deeply upon the New Testament assurance that "In Christ, there are many members, yet one body."



Though many of its communities experience isolation due to rugged terrain, there is unity in diversity. The women say, "By God's grace we are able to be united." They invite us to

join them in celebrating their unity in Christ, where diverse communities are of one heart and soul, and where the Body of Christ unites to overcome evil with good.

The women plainly name the violence that plagues their society. They name the differences that become divisions in their churches. They name personal selfishness as a bondage that traps us individually and diminishes our capacity for living in unity. We know in our hearts how we, too, are a troubled society, a repentant church and prodigal children.

As we observe World Day of Prayer 2009, millions of God's people are suffering from violence, exploitation, poverty, hunger and disease. We are called to unite as a body of Christ to fulfill Christ's mission on earth, to partner with each other so that we can overcome evil with good and bring about reconciliation in our families, countries and the world.

Ruth Tyrol, for Church Women United

If the rich could hire other people to die for them, the poor could make a wonderful living.

Yiddish proverb



Youth Fellowship Bake Sale a Great Success

Yes, it was a great turnout, and we did better than any of us imagined - the sale took in \$230!! Almost all of the goodies were sold and several people made cash donations. At our last meeting the kids drafted a letter to send along with the money to the University Soup Kitchen in New York City.

Many thanks to everyone who baked, bought, and participated in the sale!

Cynthia LaPier

Annual Meeting Part II Sunday, April 19th, 11:15.

Since this meeting is a week earlier than usual, **reports from boards and committees must be turned in to Al Sly no later that Tuesday, March 31st**, in order to be included in the Annual Report.

Easter Flowers Order Form are now Available

Please See Al Sly in the church office. Completed forms must be received by the church office by April 5th.

What a Blessed Church Is...and Isn't

In our upcoming Lenten book study, we will be taking a very interesting, rather introspective look at the various ways a local church can experience being blessed, along with some of the potential consequences it may encounter if it desires to be less than that. This notion of "blessedness" is, of course, subject to a wide scope of interpretations and definitions, but for the purposes of our discussions, we are focusing on the aspects author Graham Standish suggests are the earmarks of a church that is, in his words, "vibrant, inspired, unique, and spiritually-driven."

It can be threatening to us as individuals, I think, to discover that our Christian lives may not be all they could be, that our understanding of God is not in fact complete, and that there just might be some type of inner accountability to a God who wants more interface with us than we originally expected. The idea that there is so much more we may discover - no, that God has *designed* us to discover - and that's a lot to take in. And though at first it may sound exciting, it can also be a very uncomfortable thing to face. Well, it's no less for a church to take in. And not the least bit more comfortable, either.

As Congregationalists nation-wide, we have striven over the centuries to live in the freedom of our own self-determination and governance. This is not surprising; we - at least those rooted in our American expression - grew and morphed simultaneously with the political experiment of democracy, in the process of declaring ourselves independent from Great Britain. And as we did religiously, so we did politically. That legacy has not left our ranks. It defines us, it describes us, and it empowers us. It can also consume us.

In the staunch pursuit of self-determination and autonomy, we might also risk sacrificing something precious: the voice of God, which oftentimes comes in a whisper, and one not necessarily subject to majority vote. Especially if the majority isn't listening.

Take the issue of church ministry and outreach. Am I suggesting that the church do away with bottom-up organization in favor of hierarchical control? Not at all. But I am suggesting, as does Standish so articulately, that simply what we want - defined by our own needs, and those of our ministry departments, our committees, or even our families - does not automatically represent the voice of God, simply because a majority decision was arrived at. If those before whom important decisions are placed are not themselves, at least to some degree, plugged into the ability to hear God for the church, we might as well pull straws. The voice of the majority - even the voice of consensus - is not necessarily the voice of God.

In the 127th Psalm, King Solomon wrote something as challenging as it was thought-provoking, in which he challenges us to consider this:

"Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. It is in vain that you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat - for God grants sleep and food to those He loves."

I'm sure those who decided to build that house - or guard that particular city - did so with some type of consensus in place between the stakeholders involved. Nonetheless, he says, if God is not the initiator of such activity, it will be an act of futility - even if it seems at first to answer an imminent need, or simply be a good thing to do.

The question arises, then: ***How can we know what the will of God is?***

Unfortunately, there is no easy - or perhaps "quick" is a better word - answer to that. The voice and direction of God are discerned through several means, but all of which are tied to the idea that we are in pursuit of a relationship with God, one that goes beyond simply acquiring the things we need. God desires us to be in full communion with Him - not to simply be our cosmic vending machine.

Secondly, there is a reason all of the Psalm writers talked about the need to "wait for the Lord." The act of waiting requires us to deny a baser desire: to achieve an immediate response and result. It is in the waiting that our own instincts and tainted tendencies are mitigated in their influence by sitting in, absorbing, reflecting on the presence of God. It is there that our desires are changed, our perspectives amplified, and our input ultimately impacted by a source greater than ourselves. And it is then that our decision-making is much more reliable as being directed by God.

Among other things and attributes, the blessed church is one that, while admitting such an approach is more time-consuming and simultaneously less tangible, sees the absolute value of embracing such a process in its attempts to grow, or at least determines itself to learn that process - that of becoming spiritually-driven, familiar with the voice and calling of God, and hungry for an encounter with His presence.

May we be such a church!

Pastor Steve

Dear Friends in Salisbury,

Louise and I enjoyed seeing so many of you at the farewell service for Dick. It has been more than eighteen months since I left my student position with you to graduate from seminary (which I did last May) and to pursue my call in starting a new UCC church here in the Saugerties, NY area. So far I have succeeded in drawing together a small group around the "Living the Questions" study series. That much is going quite well, but we need to attract more people. I am now putting together an evangelism/marketing campaign to do that.

I feel called to reach those not comfortably rooted in traditional communities of faith. My vision is to start a church that is deliberate in its emphasis of what Marcus Borg in *The Heart of Christianity* calls the emerging paradigm. I intend that evangelism (outreach) and spiritual formation (helping people grow spiritually) be permanent and prominent dimensions of this ministry.

As this project grows, I hope it will mostly fund itself, but I expect it will be one to two years before we have adequate regular income to maintain this media outreach on our own. Meanwhile, your generous \$1000 farewell gift (thank you again!!) will provide the base funding for this campaign.

Thank you all for the role you have played in moving me along this path. It feels very right. It is a lot of work, but I find much joy in it. Please pray for me and this project.

See what's happening at www.ProjectHodos.org.

Yours in Christ,

John Speers (jspeers@hvc.rr.com)

Holley and April Tierney watched over the toddlers in our Nursery room on Sunday mornings for several years. Holley recently traveled to India under the auspices of United Planet, an organization headquartered in Boston. April is at the Connecticut Culinary Institute. We miss them but are happy to hear from Stephanie, Recreation Director at Geer Nursing, about what they're doing:

My daughter Holly Tierney arrived safely in Bangalore on January 10th and says "India is amazing!" After six days of orientation at the Intercultural Dialogue and Exchange she traveled about 40 miles to the more rural Ramgaram where she's living at a private school for about 350 students. She has a small apartment with her roommate Nomy from France. They have meals at the headmaster's

home, plus afternoon tea. She teaches computer skills (they have only four computers, no internet connection), English, some music and dance. The school is very understaffed.

Holly is enjoying the vegetarian diet and says she's gaining weight by politely eating all they want her to. She's learning to accept being "put on a pedestal" and being stared at while walking down the street. Both girls recovered quickly from a GI illness in the beginning, and they now drink well-filtered tap water. Most Indians there speak English but she's learning some Karnata. They volunteer six days a week and have Sundays free to go on their own to Bangalore to sight-see, shop and use the internet. The landscape is lush, and the weather is beautiful this time of year.



Holly would like to give the school money to buy more computers and to possibly help pay for internet connection via satellite. We don't know, however, if she did get donations

how to make them tax-deductible.

In April she's planning to travel around India with two other people and still plans to go to Nepal this summer with the organization WOOFF - World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms. Holly says thanks again for all the support from church members and friends!

My daughter April qualified to be a baking and pastry chef team member at an Iron Chef competition at the Connecticut Culinary Institute in Hartford on February 12th. Her team of six students won a "High Bronze" for a beautifully executed meal. It was wonderful to watch them work and to hear the critiques afterward.

One more thing: Geer Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Canaan is recruiting volunteers to push the ice cream cart and serve ice cream on Saturdays from 1:30 to about 2:45. (Not the second Saturday, however) This is a way to help out, visit shut-ins and see Geer's renovations. **See Stephanie Tierney or call 435-0216.**

Man is an exception, whatever else he is. If it is not true that a divine being fell, then we can only say that one of the animals went entirely off its head.

G. K. Chesterton



in March

- 1st Robert Weber
- 4th Desean Taber
- 6th David Helming
- 9th Katrina Martin, George Kellogg
- 10th Dave Heck
- 13th Carrie Babigian, Hawk Blumert,
Michelle Kinzinger
- 14th Matt Alexander, Lester Lipton,
Debra Palmer
- 17th Leanne LaFosse
- 18th Hawk Blumert, Samantha Wilson
- 21st Rebecca Offensend
- 23rd Barbara Branchina, Karin Noyes
- 27th Bill Fox
- 28th Tom Townsend
- 31st Lauren Hanlon, Sarah Zarbock

In Memoriam

George (Mike) Ongley

March 14, 1930 - February 7, 2009



Special dates

- o First Sunday in Lent - March 1st
- o World Day of Prayer- Friday, March 6th
- o Second Sunday in Lent - March 8th
- o Daylight-Saving Time begins - Sunday March 8th
- o Girl Scout Sunday - March 8th
- o Third Sunday in Lent - March 15th
- o First Day of Spring - Friday, March 20th
- o Fourth Sunday in Lent - March 22nd
- o Fifth Sunday in Lent - March 29th

Our March Calendar

Sunday, the 1st:

Worship with Communion and
Church School - 10:15
Board of Trustees - 11:15

Friday, the 6th: World Day of Prayer - 2:00

(Immaculate Conception Church, Norfolk)

Sunday, the 8th:

Worship and Church School - 10:00
Board of Christian Action - 11:15
Youth Fellowship - 5:00

Friday, the 13th - Pot Luck Supper - 5:30

Sunday, the 15th:

Worship and Church School - 10:00
Church Council - 11:15

Sunday, the 22nd:

Worship and Church School - 10:00
Youth Fellowship - 5:00

Sunday, the 29th:

Worship and Church School - 10:00

Monday, the 30th - Board of Deacons - 4:30

Tuesday, the 31st: Reports from Boards and
Committees due in church office

2009 Lenten Study - "Becoming a Blessed Church"

Tuesday evenings @ 7 p.m.:

March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

Thursday morning @ 9:00 a.m.:

March 5, 12, 19, 26, and April 2

Sunday afternoon Dialogue Sessions

Discussions of our church's
vision, mission and ministry

April 26th, May 17th, June 1st



Low-down Musicians Needed

Help preserve four-part choral harmony in our choir! While voices in any part are always welcome, **we have a serious shortage of basses available on a regular basis.**



We rehearse Wednesday evenings at 7:30 for about an hour and practice Sunday mornings at 9:30 before the service. We usually sing three Sundays a month, with the second Sunday off. It's a great group of people, Al Sly is a fine director, and we have fun!

If you can carry a tune and have a reasonably good ear, please come to a Wednesday night rehearsal. We have a robe that's just your size.

John Estabrook, for the basses

All Families with Children in Grade 3 to High School

Sign up for Silver Lake summer conferences soon!

“What is Silver Lake?” you say. Silver Lake Conference Center is the home of the Outdoor Ministries of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ. Located in Sharon, Silver Lake has been welcoming church groups, youth groups, schools, non-profits and businesses, for almost fifty years during the Fall, Winter and Spring.



People come from all over the state to attend events there, and we're fortunate to have it right next door. Our Confirmation class spent a retreat weekend at Silver Lake last spring.

Each summer, Silver Lake continues the proud tradition of being the vibrant church camp for up to 1300 fourth graders through high school-age young people. Week-long conferences offer a wide variety of opportunities for summer fun and learning in a nurturing Christian community.

Pick up a brochure from the Pastor's Resource Table in the parish hall or go online - silverlakeect.org - to find out more about this special place and the programs it provides. Some conferences fill up quickly so begin thinking about summer now!

From the Trustees:

Discussion at the Trustees' February 1st meeting ranged from issues of broad policy to matters more immediate and mundane.

Board members renewed discussion of one key element in preparing a budget: what percentage of the endowment to draw on to meet annual expenses. Our current policy is to use 4.5% of a running three-year average of the endowment value. The remainder of budget income comes, of course, from the annual stewardship campaign.

Continuing its long-range planning, the Trustees looked at the age of our roofs: Parish Hall roof replaced in 1989; Meeting House reroofed in 1992.



By March 1st, we must decide whether to go ahead with painting the north side of the Meeting House and Parish Hall in this calendar year; the south side was painted in 2008.

Under mundane, but critical items: was it an ice dam that caused a leak over the kitchen sink and counter in mid-February?

We are grateful to Nancy Bridge, Dick Carley, Linda Estabrook, and Scooter Tedder for helping care for this old building.

Sue Morrill for the Board of Trustees



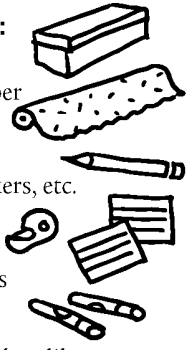


PRAYER BOX

Family prayer time is a good habit. Make it fun with this activity for all family members. They can use this special box whenever they have a prayer request.

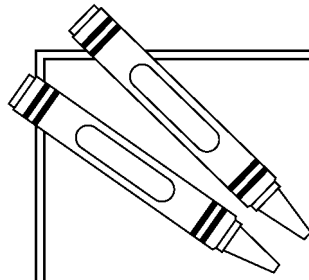
What you need:

- Shoebox
- Wrapping paper
- Scissors
- Tape
- Stickers, markers, etc. (optional)
- Index cards
- Pencils or pens



What you do:

1. Wrap the shoebox like a present. Be sure to wrap the lid separately so it can be removed.
2. Let the whole family help decorate the box. You can write Bible verses about prayer, draw pictures, glue on pictures or add stickers. Be creative!
3. Put the box in a prominent location of your house. Keep a pile of index cards and pencils or pens near the box.
4. Whenever a family member has a prayer request, he or she can write or draw it on a card and put it inside the box.
5. Family members can share the cards in a prayer circle, or people can take turns praying for all the requests. Throughout the week, family members can check the box for new prayer needs.



Just for KIDS

A FAMILY OF PRAYER

The book of Acts tells about a man named Cornelius. He was a Roman centurion from Caesarea who worshiped God. Through his encounter with Cornelius, Peter learned that God accepts everyone who fears him and does what is right.

Use the code below to see the example set by Cornelius and his family. Solve the math problems by using the grid. Then use the key to find the letter that matches each answer. Write the letter on the blank.

GRID	
A	B
2	4
C	D
6	5

KEY: a=7 e=8 i=10 o=9 u=11 y=6

"H e ___nd ___ll h___s f___m___l___
A+C A+D A+D B+C A+D B+C A+B

w___r___ d___v___ ___t ___nd
A+C A+C A+C B+D C+D A+D

G___d-f___ ___r___ng; h___ g___v___
B+D A+C A+D B+C A+C A+D A+C

g___n___r___ ___s l___ t___ th___s___ ___n
A+C A+C B+D C+D A+B B+D B+D A+C B+C

n___ ___d ___nd pr___ ___ ___d t___ G___d
A+C A+C A+D A+D A+B A+C B+D B+D

r___g___l___r l___." ___cts 10:2, NIV
A+C C+D A+D A+B A+D

Answers: "He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly." Acts 10:2, NIV

A Prayer Request

Comedian-actor George Burns wrote that after he played "God" in a movie, he received a letter simply addressed to "God - Beverly Hills, California." It was from a 6-year-old boy who asked "God" to keep it from raining on the day of his baseball team's championship game. The boy ended by saying, "Don't forget - it's this Sunday."

Burns said he guessed it didn't rain that day because he later received another letter from the boy that read, "Thanks, but we lost."