



THE MESSENGER
of the
First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

Vol. 63

July/August 2010

No. 11

Men's Fellowship – First Congregational Church

The purpose of the Men's Fellowship group is to promote fellowship among men in social, intellectual and religious activities. Additionally, they are of service to the work and mission of the First Congregational Church while exploring and building their faith. This group was formed in 2008 and continues to evolve with their focus on fellowship, faith and service.

All men are cordially invited to attend the meetings, which are held in the church dining room on the 2nd Sunday of the month from 8:00 to 9:30 AM except for July and August. Refreshments are provided before each meeting. While there are no dues or financial requirements, a free will donation is accepted to offset expenses. Officers are elected at the beginning of each calendar year and consist of a chair and vice chairperson, a treasurer and co-treasurer and a secretary. A liaison from the Men's Fellowship attends Church Council meetings to facilitate communications between these groups.

The group has undertaken many fund raising and service projects at the church and continues to be open to the possibility of others. Some of the projects have included a dinner auction, a pork dinner, and an ongoing commitment to assist Christian Education Committee with Rally Day food prep each year. Over the past year we have raised over \$5,000, and the money has been allocated for the purchase of new

kitchen flatware, to help pay for the operating expenses of the church, and supporting the Members Emergency Assistance Fund.

This fellowship began with the men's interest in the church. It has grown wider as other similar interests have been discovered and as the group journeys together in faith while conceiving and implementing activities together. The group explores faith by talking about various aspects of religion, spirituality and worship. It continues to examine what these subjects mean within the context of family, the church and community, this country, and the world. Various books and articles expressing related concepts in different ways have been discussed at our meetings. The men have also openly shared their individual journeys of faith. During these discussions there is openness, and all viewpoints are welcomed in an atmosphere of acceptance and trust.

So let's examine this fellowship. Within this group is where the formalities and pretensions, the superficialities, and the facades are set aside. This is where we get to express ourselves, and learn about each other..... Surprised? You really didn't expect this here did you? This is the First Congregational Church after all!

But we can share this - it's an exceptional fellowship. It's a group that would like to discover more about faith and spirituality, that enjoys each others' fellowship and that commits enthusiastically to serve important causes. And it's a welcoming group. Please join us...

(For more information, contact the church office.)

K'S MESSENGER

I am quite fond of paraphrasing Isaiah 65:17, "Behold, God is doing a new thing in our midst." For the past year and a half, we, as a church, have been listening for God's still speaking voice. We have been discerning what new things God is doing in our midst and what things the Spirit is calling us to start, stop, continue, and nurture.

Worship is definitely one of those places where we listen for God's voice and are open to the new things God is bringing into our lives. Worship is one of the places where *I* listen for God's call and direction in my life, but never did I expect the new thing God brought into my life during worship on June 13th!

If you have not heard the good news already – or were not there to witness it, my boyfriend proposed during worship. After pacing in the Parish House for most of the service, he came into the Sanctuary during prayer time. When I asked if there were any more prayer requests, he spoke up, "I have a prayer request." Then he got down on one knee in front of the whole congregation and asked me to marry him.

I know I was not the only one present who was stunned and surprised. I also know I was not the only one who cried a lot of tears of joy.

I was incredibly surprised at how he proposed. Actually, at the time, I was totally speechless, but now that I have had an opportunity to regain some coherent thought (notice I did not say all coherent thought), I am thankful he proposed to me in the midst of my church family. He knows how important you all are to me. He told me afterward that this very public proposal was his way of honoring my connection with you and his way of telling you how special you all are in our lives.

While he had not met many members of the congregation before June 13th, he is already thankful for the hospitality extended to him and for everyone who has embraced him so warmly.

I can imagine my engagement might be a surprise to many because few people knew I was even dating someone. He and I have been dating since Groundhog Day (February 2nd). He was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY and currently lives in Meriden, CT. When we are married, he (and his turtle Ike) will move to Bristol. He works in business support for Verizon Wireless, and he is the youngest of three

brothers. His parents live in New Jersey, and I do not know whose family is happier that we have found each other!

As we plan a summer 2011 wedding, I can imagine that my life and ministry will change a lot. Still, we remember the words of God, "Behold I am doing a new thing in your midst." We remember we are called to let go of the old ways of doing things and the old ways of being "church". I am thrilled that we have a group of volunteers to be our Spirit team and to lead us in discerning how we can be truer to our purpose as a Christian community. Their mission is very open, and I do not know how the Spirit of restlessness will help them stir us from placidness. I am extremely encouraged though by the passion and energy this team has to help us reclaim our purpose as a Christian community and to let go of those tasks, procedures, and ways that prevent us from worshipping God and nurturing every person's Christian faith journey and gifts.

Every day, God is doing a new thing in our lives. Not every day is as momentous as being proposed to during worship, but every day, God is doing a new thing in our lives. I give thanks for God's Holy Spirit stirring us from placidness, and I give thanks for this loving, inclusive community that is open to the new direction God is calling us.

Scholarship Recipient

One of our senior graduates received a scholarship from the Amanda Fund on June 6th. This scholarship was awarded to remember Amanda in the year she would have graduated from high school. This person is also the recipient of a Frank Roswell Fuller scholarship, awarded to graduating seniors who attend UCC churches in CT.

Prudential Update

Thanks to some of our members, the parking lot has been swept, saving the church a significant amount of money.

Century Nursery School was required by the state to have a lead inspection test done. Several areas in the Parish House as well as the space under the Sanctuary tested high for lead paint. This issue will need to be remedied in order for the Nursery to open school in September. We will be painting one of the classrooms and replacing a number of windows. Prudential is also reviewing the other spaces and classrooms that our children use to be sure we continue to provide the safest possible environment.

On June 8th, FCC signed a new facility use agreement with Weight Watchers. Weight Watchers will now be using the Dining Room for eight meetings a week. This will increase the shared facility use fee by almost \$16,000.

To accommodate the new WW meetings, another group needed to have their space moved and more keys were needed. The locksmith was called in and during that process noted that the doors on the main level of the Parish House that had windows installed should be inspected to be certain that their fire protection rating is still valid. Prudential is looking into what it means for our use of the classrooms and Auditorium.

Over the summer, the church will be having a free energy audit done. This will highlight areas where we could increase our energy efficiency. The report will include both the potential savings and the costs for making the improvements.

After conversation and prayer, Prudential decided to provide space for a new group. An English and Drama teacher at BCHS (and a UCC member) is beginning a Bristol Youth Theater Group for talented students from area high schools. She is leading the group in a production of **Rent**, with rehearsals being conducted in our Auditorium three days a week for 8 weeks this summer.

Chorister Program Continues to Grow

While we're sure most of you remember the powerful success of our Festival of Lessons and Carols last December, there may be some among you who are not aware of the overall goal in that program, and the programs our Music Committee will be sponsoring in 2010-2011. Lessons and Carols 2009 was the first of what we envision as several events that encourage a very high level of choral singing for young people. The First Choristers are a growing group of auditioned singers, from grade 4 through grade 8, who commit to a weekly rehearsal, and then sing alongside adults in concert. The music they sing is not "children's choir" music, but full-blown choral music - providing the soprano part for the great works of music we prepare for the Christmas event and, next year, a new Spring concert event. The benefits of this rehearsal and performance time are huge: Along with the music itself, kids get the opportunity to learn how to work together as a team, the basics of choral singing and music reading, and how music is such a critical part of our spiritual self. We are excited that we already have a number of new children auditioning for this fall season.

In addition to the children's aspect of our programs, we have offered adults an opportunity to sing with the choir for these special events. Over the past two years, we have built a core of singers from outside the church membership that have joined with us for Lessons and Carols. Once again, our upcoming events are open to anyone Grade 9 through adults, by audition. Teamwork, commitment, and glorious music sung in praise are all hallmarks of singing for these concerts, and any choir member can tell you that the fun and community we share in our rehearsal time is something you'll find you can't live without!

So, please help the Music Committee's mission by passing this info on to anyone you think might be interested in auditioning, adults or children in grade 4 and up. Detailed info can be read and easily passed on at www.musicatfirst.org or by picking up one of the First Choristers brochures around the church building. We will also be sending out

periodic invitations by email - if you could forward these on, it would be so helpful in getting the word out about our music opportunities!

GOD'S WONDER PLACE



This summer, we will be offering our children the opportunity to attend "God's Wonder Place", after the Time for Children. Children in preschool through 5th grade are invited to attend. Every week, we will learn about the Bible and our Christian faith and have a snack. Snacks will be juice boxes and individually wrapped items such as goldfish and crackers. If your child has an allergy, please speak to the adult "Story Teller". Please consider sharing your gifts and sign up to lead our children one Sunday in wondering about God and growing in faith.

COME AND JOIN THE SUMMER SINGERS

This is the perfect time to sing if you cannot commit to rehearsals during the regular season! Join us in the choir loft on any Summer Sunday at 9:00 to learn a simple anthem that will be sung in worship.



SUMMER FELLOWSHIP



Iced tea will be served on the lawn during the summer months. The Fellowship Committee is looking for volunteers to make and serve the iced tea. Please sign up during fellowship or in the church office if you are interested. (In the event of rain, it will be served inside.)

The Mum Parade Float Committee Needs Your Help!!!



The Mum Parade Float Committee is in full swing planning a great float for our church for the Parade this September. The Float Committee is looking to collect used paper towel rolls (the cardboard

tube left over once the roll is gone). Please drop off as many as you can into the box labeled, **“Paper Towel Rolls for the Float”**. The box will be located in the hall where the nursery door is along with the other collection boxes for other purposes. We will continue to collect the cardboard tubes all summer so don't forget to bring them to church on Sundays!!! Thank you.

MISSION TRIP SHARES

Please help support FCC's mission trip to Dungannon, VA by buying a "share" in the trip. You can buy shares starting at \$20 which will provide you with email updates up to a \$100 share which will include email updates, plus a postcard, a t-shirt and some other gifts. Donations of any amount are very appreciated!

LECTIONARY LESSONS FOR JULY

July 4 – 2 Kings 5:1-14, Psalm 30, Galatians 6:(1-6), 7-16, Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

July 11 – Amos 7:7-17, Psalm 82, Colossians 1:1-14, Luke 10:25-37

July 18 – Amos 8:1-12, Psalm 52, Colossians 1:15-28, Luke 10:38-42

July 25 – Hosea 1:2-10, Psalm 85, Colossians 2:6-15, (16-19), Luke 11:1-3

LECTIONARY LESSONS FOR AUGUST



August 1 – Hosea 11:1-11, Psalm 107:1-9, 43, Colossians 3:1-11, Luke 12:13-21

August 8 – Isaiah 1:1, 10-20, Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23, Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16, Luke 12:32-40

August 15 – Isaiah 5:1-7, Psalm 80:1-2, 8-19, Hebrews 11:29-12:2, Luke 12:49-56

August 22 – Jeremiah 1:4-10, Psalm 71:1-6, Hebrews 12:18-29, Luke 13:10-17

August 29 – Jeremiah 2:4-13, Psalm 81:1, 10-16 Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16, Luke 14:1, 7-14



“No matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here . . . God is still speaking,”

OPEN AND AFFIRMING STATEMENT

We, the congregation of the First Congregational Church, UCC of Bristol, CT, welcome everyone. We affirm the dignity and worth of every person by declaring ourselves Open and Affirming. With God’s grace, we strive to include all persons without regard to race, ethnic or socio-economic background, sexual orientation, gender, marital status, physical or mental challenges, or age. We cherish the richness that this diversity brings to us, individually and as a congregation. Our acceptance of each other embodies our commitment to unity with God and each other in Christ. We welcome all to share in the life, leadership, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities and blessings of full participation in our congregation.