

PARISH POST

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH CHESHIRE, CONNECTICUT
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST www.cheshirecongregational.org
Volume XXIV April, 2007 No. 4

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Except for Easter Sunday, services at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.

Church School for Pre-school 3 through Junior High
and Nursery/Toddler care at both hours.

HOLY WEEK

Sunday, April 1 – Palm Sunday: 9 & 11: Worship and Church School. Alison McCaffrey will preach. The lessons are **Luke 19: 28-40**; Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 22:14-23:56. **Communion and food offerings Sunday.** Children from PS3 through 2nd grade will meet in the hallway outside room 11 ten minutes before each service to line up and receive palms for the procession.

Maundy Thursday, April 5: 7:30 p.m. worship in the sanctuary with communion. Alison McCaffrey will preach. The lessons are Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14; Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-17, 31b-35. Worshippers are invited, if able, to bring a new white bath-sized towel to worship as part of their offering. These towels will be given to the shelter residents at Columbus House.

Good Friday, April 6: Two services with Dave Buchan preaching. The Lessons are Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Psalm 22; Hebrews

10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1-19:42. The first service is at noon. The second, a Tenebrae service with the Senior Choir, is at 7:30 p.m.

Silent Vigil, Good Friday to Easter Sunday; see details on Page 2.

April 8 – Easter Sunday: Worship services at 8:00, 9:30, and 11:30 a.m. Communion will be celebrated at all three services. Dave Buchan will preach. The lessons are Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 65:17-25; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:19-26 or Acts 10:34-43; John 20:1-18 or **Luke 24:1-12.** Special music will be offered by the Senior Choir and Handbell Choir. There will be a special children's program for ages PS3 through second grade during the sermon time and nursery care available at 9:30 and 11:30 services.

OTHER SERVICES

Sunday, April 15 – Second Sunday of Easter: 9 & 11: Worship and Church School. Dave Buchan will preach. The

lessons are **Acts 5:27-32**; Psalm 118:14-29 or Psalm 150; Revelation 1:4-8; John 20:19-31.

Sunday, April 22 – Third Sunday of Easter: 9 & 11: **Youth Sunday**; worship conducted by our teenagers. The lessons are **Acts 9:1-6, (7-20)**; Psalm 30; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19.

Sunday, April 29 – Fourth Sunday of Easter: 9 & 11: Worship and Church School. Dave Buchan will preach. The lessons are **Acts 9:36-43**; Psalm 23; Revelation 7:9-17; John 10:22-30.

**GOOD FRIDAY
TO EASTER SUNDAY
SILENT VIGIL**

“Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray’” (Matthew 26:36). You are invited to keep watch for the coming resurrection in quietness and prayer. The Silent Vigil is held in our sanctuary from Good Friday evening through early Easter morning. This time of contemplation offers a meaningful way to prepare our hearts and minds for Easter. You may sign up for one hour time slots, every hour around the clock beginning at 9 p.m. after the Good Friday service ending at 6:00 a.m. on Easter morning. The sign-up sheet for the Silent Vigil is posted on the Parish Life bulletin board on the ramp to the Parish Hall.

During the Saturday 11 p.m. to midnight hour, we will again offer a service of Renewal of Baptismal Vows, one portion from the ancient Great Vigil of Easter liturgy. Anyone who wishes to renew their vows is invited to come at 11 p.m., and there’s no need to sign up in advance.

**HOLY WEEK PROGRAMS
FOR CHILDREN**

Sunday, April 1 (Palm Sunday):
Procession of the Palms.

At the 9 and 11 o’clock services, Church School children from PS3 through 2nd grade will process with the palms. They will meet with Debbie Gravell and their teachers 10 minutes before the service in the hallway outside Room 11.

Sunday, April 8 (Easter Sunday):

8:00 a.m. service: NO Children’s program or nursery care.

9:30 and 11:30 a.m. services: Nursery care in Room 7. Children Preschool 3 through 2nd grade only will begin the service with their families in the sanctuary, and be dismissed during the first hymn to Rooms 8 and 9 where there will be a special children’s worship and program designed for that age group. Parents are asked to pick up their children after the service outside Room 8. Children will be dismissed to parents one family at a time for safety reasons.

**STEPPING STONES
5-6 GRADE YOUTH GROUP**

SAVE THIS DATE:

Friday, April 20, 2007

Parish Hall from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Watch your mailbox for a postcard with details.

**PARISH LIFE?
PARISH CARE?
WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?**

By Alison McCaffrey

What is “Parish *Life*,” and how is that different from “Parish *Care*?”

Shouldn't we be caring for one another as part of our life together? Shouldn't our life together foster and encourage us to care for one another? Which comes first?

I am asked these questions and others, especially now that the Associate Minister for Parish Care position remains unfilled for the time being.

A bit of history might be helpful to answer these questions. During the last church-wide Envision process of 2000-01, a common priority emerged for our congregation to build stronger bonds and become more connected as a community of faith. This objective could be accomplished through small groups and other nurturing events for our members and friends, and through more intentional welcoming and assimilation of our new members.

When the Associate Minister position opened up with Rick's call to the Senior Minister position, the decision was made to refocus portions of the Associate Minister's job description toward these priorities, thus renaming the position “Associate Minister for Parish Life.”

Half of my job description focuses on general ministry: worship leadership, preaching, administering the sacraments, pastoral visitation, officiating at weddings and funerals, working with boards and committees, and participating in ministries in the wider church. The other half focuses on building small groups and nurturing our adult members and friends in connectional relationships.

In the same Envision process, the need for a focused ministry of Parish Care also became clear. The realization that we are a large church with many needs that cannot be met solely by the efforts of two clergy; Jesus' mandate that we are to care for one another; and our call as Christians to equip one another for ministry as the body of Christ all coalesced through a discernment process into the need for a part-time Parish Care minister who could both offer that ministry presence and equip us to be a congregation of care.

When Peggy Allen finished her interim ministry in that position, the many tasks she performed and the ministries she developed as part of that job description needed to be taken on by others. Jim Van Der Beek, chair of the Parish Care Committee that oversees the various caring ministries, carefully delineated the

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tasks and ministries, and members of that committee agreed to take some of the tasks of the Parish Care minister.

However, there are some tasks of the job description that need to be taken on by clergy. When it became clear with Rick's leaving that it would need to be me to take on these tasks, and when last December we all learned that our congregation could not fund the Parish Care minister's position, I offered to set aside portions of my call to take on portions of the Parish Care minister job description.

There are many parts of my call that I love dearly and do not wish to let go of or see lose momentum. At the same time, whether we have someone in position or not, the pastoral needs of our congregation continue, and they must be met. In conversation with the Board of Deacons and the Parish Care Committee, I have taken on some of the Parish Care job description necessitating my setting aside some of my own ministry.

I have taken on the upkeep of our four staff-related Parish Care needs reports, which takes several hours of work each week. I have taken on the oversight of the Prayer Pager ministry, and am the staff liaison and support of our Stephen Ministry leaders, attending the Parish Care Committee meetings, as well as making routine and crisis visitations. By agreement of the Parish Care Committee, other portions of the Parish Care job description will not be taken on at this time: the growth of the Caring Christian ministry,

the planning and leading of Healing services.

What am I setting aside of my call in order to be able to do this? For this year, I have set aside my beloved bicycle ministry and my one week of outdoor ministry co-leading a Silver Lake summer conference. I have set aside offering several events: the Lenten labyrinth, the Maundy Thursday Meal and Worship, as was offered last year (this year, a Maundy Thursday service will be offered in the sanctuary), my leadership of a small group on Brahms' *Requiem* coinciding with Memorial Music Sunday. I will continue to balance the demands of these two vital ministries, and, with the deacons and the Parish Care committee, will keep making decisions about what to take on and what to set aside as we go along.

As we live into this time of transition in so much of our common life, I encourage you to keep asking questions and sharing your thoughts. If there is a need you see that we ought to be meeting, please share it with me, with the Board of Deacons, and with the Parish Care Committee. I encourage you to pray for God's leading and for us all to discern the way through this wilderness time as we move through our current visioning process and seek new leadership.

I encourage you to share your gifts and your skills as we grow more fully into a caring congregation who lives out and offers to each other and the world, the life-giving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

*Alison, Associate Minister of Parish Life
(With a whole lot of Care in the mix!)*

IF YOU'RE HOSPITALIZED

If you are hospitalized, it is important that you or a family member call one of the ministers or the church office to let us know so we can visit and care for you properly. Federal law prohibits hospitals from giving us any patient information, so unless you tell us, we will not know you are there.

GRADES 2 THROUGH 6 HEIFER PROJECT

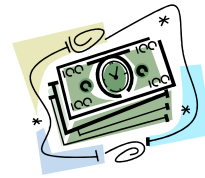
Children in these grades will be given a "money talent" envelope on Sunday, April 1, as a part of our parable of the talents rotation introduction. Please be sure that your child is in church on this Sunday. All classes will meet in Rooms 8 and 9 to learn about the April/May rotation that will prepare them to lead worship for Children's Sunday. All Shepherds will be needed for this Sunday, but not workshop leaders.

What will be done with the money the children receive?

The money is a 'talent' entrusted to the youth by the church for them to invest and grow for God. All the money they "grow for God" will go toward purchasing one or more animals through Heifer Project International that the children will choose on April 1.

Children will brainstorm ways they can grow their money, but they will need parental involvement and oversight as this project proceeds.

Money needs to be returned on Sunday, May 6. Children also need to write the story of how they 'grew' their money. Children who want to will be invited to share their stories in the worship service on Children's Sunday.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT CHILDREN'S SUNDAY

On two Sundays, April 1 and May 6, all 11:00 children (PS3-6th grade) will be in Church School, not in the worship service. Please plan to be in attendance to help children prepare for Children's Sunday on May 20. April/May rotations will be different. We will be preparing for Children's Sunday using the Parable of the Talents Rotation. We need all children in our church school, especially our Bible Journeys children, to attend each week so we can prepare to be worship leaders.

Children's Sunday is May 20. Dress rehearsal for Children's Sunday is Saturday, May 19. All children, teachers, shepherds and helpers are needed at the

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rehearsal (preschool – 8th grade).
9:00 Church School will rehearse from
9:30 to 10:30 a.m.

11:00 Church School will rehearse from
11:00 to noon.

What will happen on Children's Sunday?

The children in our Church School will all participate as worship leaders. The worship theme will be "The parable of the talents." Children will be worship leaders based on where they were in the planning groups after the three weeks of rotation.

BIBLE JOURNEYS APRIL AND MAY DATES

Dates for the Rotation:

9:00 and 11:00 Church School

April 1 All children will meet in Rooms 8 and 9 for Heifer project and rotation introduction.

April 8 NO Church School due to Easter services 8, 9:30 and 11:30

April 15 Workshops

April 22 Workshops

April 29 Workshops

May 6 All children meet in Rooms 8 and 9 to organize the worship service and break into worship service Preparation Teams

Teachers of the workshops will be the team leaders for preparation, and Shepherds will choose where they want to help. Children will choose from the preparation teams below:

Thou Art – Put together the "Well Done Good and Faithful Servant" board and Scripture reading

Red Sea - Sermon – Acting of the parable

Desert Tales - Children's story using the Max Lucado book

Gospel Games – Reflections on sermon – children who will share their experiences of raising money for Heifer Project. These will be children who wrote (or will write) about their project, and what they did with the money they were given.

May 13 Preparation Teams continue to work and finalize their parts in the service.

LOOKING TOWARD SUMMER

Silver Lake Summer Camp

Even though it's a way before we get to summer, it's not too early to start thinking about sending your child to a session at the United Church of Christ camp, Silver Lake, in Sharon, Conn. This is an overnight camp for children going into fourth grade through High School. For more information, see the Christian Education bulletin board in the parlor or go to <http://silverlake.ctucc.org>

Mark your calendar for the Silver Lake open house on May 6 from 2 to 4 p.m. For additional information, please speak to Debbie Gravell.

Summer Church School

Summer Church School will take place this year from May 27 through Labor Day weekend.

The theme of the 2007 Summer Church School is "Galilee By the Sea." Participants are children from age 3 through 2nd grade, and youth helpers are in grades 5 and up.

Children will experience how Jesus lived in the Galilee region. What did he do? What kinds of foods did he eat? What games did he play?

A note about summer services: In June, worship will be at 9 and 11 a.m. as usual. In July and August, as well as on May 27 (Memorial Day weekend) there will be a single service at 10 a.m.

CONFIRMATION UPDATE

Following our church's longstanding tradition, Confirmation Sunday will be held on **Mother's Day, May 13.**

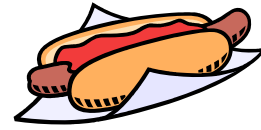
Young people will receive a sheet to fill out before confirmation; one of the questions will ask at which service they wish to be confirmed. We attempt to honor all requests, but we do need to split the class so that the number of confirmands is more or less even at each service.

Confirmation interviews will be scheduled with Debbie Gravell and Dave Buchan throughout April. At these interviews, the teenagers will discuss their experiences in confirmation and talk about their decision whether to follow Jesus and join the

church and be confirmed. This is a serious decision, and not everyone is always ready to make it. We respect each person's choice.

Parents will receive information about the final details of confirmation and when each teen will be confirmed after the interviews.

A Confirmation picnic and rehearsal will be held on Friday, May 11, in the back yard of the church, weather permitting. Anyone able to bring a gas grill so we can cook hot dogs and hamburgers should please contact Debbie Gravell.



WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY: JEREMIAH

The topic of the current Women's Bible Study program, which continues until April 18, is "Jeremiah: Demanding Love." Debbie Gravell leads the sessions, which are held at 10 a.m. on Wednesdays in the church parlor.

The group uses a study guide from the Life Guide Bible Study series. In this study of Jeremiah, we get a glimpse of what it is like to have a personal relationship with God. You will see a



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message of love that grows from a relationship of love – a hard love, a demanding love, but love nevertheless. We also discuss and discover how we can grow in our own personal relationship with God. Jeremiah at times used symbols to get his message across to the people. We look at these symbols and the messages that accompany them. We use a study guide each week which is available throughout the study. The cost of the study book is \$7. Baby sitting is available.

All women of the church are invited, and are welcome to join us when you can and be away when you must. Each week stands by itself. We read the scriptures together, share reflections on the scripture and close with prayer requests.

MEMORIAL MUSIC SUNDAY

The tradition of Memorial Music Sunday continues this year on April 29. The Senior Choir will join forces with the Greater Middletown Chorale to sing Brahms' *German Requiem* on Sunday, **April 29, at 4 p.m.** in the sanctuary, with two pianos and timpani. Don't miss this opportunity to experience some of our culture's most powerful faith expressions! A reception will follow in the Parish Hall.

On May 6, the two groups will perform together at Xavier High School in Middletown with full orchestra.

CARING CRAFTS MINISTRY

The next meeting of the Caring Crafts ministry will take place at Donna Mead's home on Monday, April 23 at 7 pm. **Please note that this meeting is a week earlier than the normally scheduled one.** All who knit/crochet, or would like to learn, are invited.

NEW BOOKS IN THE CHURCH LIBRARY

The following books are new to our Church Library:

Knowing Jesus Personally – New living translation
(Billy Graham Library Selection)

Life of Christ, by Fulton J. Sheen
A source of inspiration & guidance

Living Letters, Life Application Bible
To help you apply the Bible to everyday life.

The Master, A Life of Jesus, by John Pollock
A vivid retelling of the life of Jesus

The Mind of Christ, by T.W. Hunt
The transforming power of thinking his thoughts.

The Trouble with Jesus, by Joseph M. Stowell
(Billy Graham Library Selection)

The Bible on Cassette – New King James
Version, New Testament

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The Brethren by Beverly Lewis (part of a series) LARGE PRINT

The Screentape Letters and Screentape Proposes a Toast by C. S. Lewis

Between Heaven and Ground Zero by Leslie Haskin – One woman’s struggle for survival & faith in the ashes of 9/11

The Five People You Meet in Heaven by Mitch Albom

Jesus, by Leith Anderson – an intimate portrait of the man, his land, and his people.

The Missing Books of the Bible, Vol. I & II

The Secret Supper, by Javier Sierra
A historical thriller with a unique vision of da Vinci’s genius and his masterpiece

Children’s video and audio

Lesson in Handling Peer Pressure – Veggie Tales

Lesson about Selfishness – Veggie Tales
Stories from the New Testament for Young People (audio tapes)

NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The following items were discussed at the March meeting of the Executive Board:

Communication Task Force

Parish Post: The Task Force is working with the Church Office to learn the publishing routine and assist with publication, at least for the short term. Improvements, such as including

photographs, are being discussed.

Web site: Carolyn Brown has made several changes to the church’s web site, including adding up-to-date information and adjusting the Small Groups page to reflect changes there. Both the 2006 Annual Report and the most recent issues of the Parish Post have been added to the site. The Task Force continues to consult with Carolyn Brown on other aspects of the web site, including getting the site to a larger size and making it much easier to find material located there.

Membership Verification Task Team

The team has started contacting members who are out of contact with First Congregational Church to understand their membership status and intentions. The team is also working with the Membership Committee to determine follow-up for the list of approximately 400 people who are not formally members but who are on the mailing list. In addition, the team has developed a proposed amendment to the by-laws regarding process and criteria used to inactivate a member.

By-Laws Review Committee

The committee continues to meet, and is actively working on proposals regarding changes to wording for Parish Care Committee, Youth Director, and Calling Program Staff Members. The original target date for finishing the by-laws review was April 30, with presentation of the proposed revisions to the Executive Board in May or June. Given the volume and

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timing of changes coming to the committee, those dates may be revised.

Staff Updates

The Youth Director Search Committee is working on resolving some outstanding questions that need to be answered before a settled position is offered. A sub-committee has been formed with representation from the CE board, Search committee, Personnel and youth. In addition to meeting to discuss various aspects of the Youth Minister position, they will survey the congregation to understand how the congregation at large wishes the Youth Minister role and the Yutes program to develop.

The Senior Minister Search Committee met for the first time with Kent Siladi to learn about the steps in the search process. They will meet again to establish a chair, chaplain and scribe, and begin the process of gathering information from the congregation to develop a profile.

Planning for the Future

The Planning Team has started to gather information from the congregation in order to develop a profile of membership and various aspects of church life and ultimately a vision for the church.

For those who have not filled out an envision survey, forms are available at the sign-up table in the church, and can be left in the designated basket in the church parlor. Input from as many people as possible is welcome and needed. Any

questions can be directed to members of the Planning Team: Bob Mead, chair; Matt Glatt, Bill Gordon, Susan Hostage, Martha Lape, Ruth MacDonald, Donna Mead, Bob & Bobbie Porter, Al Worden, and Ellen Wright.

THE WELCOMING TEAM

The Welcoming Team invites you to consider joining this important ministry of hospitality. Isn't it nice to come to church and be welcomed so warmly to God's house? We invite you to join our teams of greeters at both services in the vital ministry. We offer an orientation (a fun event), lots of answers to your questions, and a warm and helpful group of greeters to join. And let's not forget that colorful greeter name tag! You can choose your own best times to greet. The Welcoming Team hopes you will accept this invitation to join us. Please speak with any one of us: Peggy Allen, Mark Hall, Martha Lape, Alison McCaffrey, Matt McCaffrey, Jane Montgomery, and Ellen Wright.

COME TO LEARN ABOUT WOMEN & HEART DISEASE

Did you know that 10 percent of women aged 45 to 64, and 25 percent of women over age 65, have heart disease? That nearly 13 percent of women over age 45 have had a heart attack? That heart disease is the leading cause of death of American women? Come to an informative and, perhaps, life-saving

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 program and learn more! All women in the church are invited to hear Donna Jones of MidState Medical Center speak on "Women and Heart Disease." The presentation will be held on April 9 at 7:30 p.m. and is sponsored by the Colonizers.

Church Rummage Sale:
Thursday, April 26, 3 to 7 p.m.
and
Friday, April 27, 9 to 11 a.m.

Donations are welcome and encouraged, and items may be dropped off on the stage in the Parish Hall starting on Sunday, April 22. (Not before then, please.)

Sponsored by Women's Fellowship

TRANSITIONS

Births:

March 6, Riley Margaret Wichman, John Afman's granddaughter

Baptisms:

March 11, Hannah Billado, daughter of Melanie Nygard and Richard Michael Billado

New Members, welcomed March 18

Adeline Arumainayagam
 Christopher and Michelle Barbour
 James and Traci Fanning
 Jeannine Heavens
 Kathena Nenninger
 Arleen and Thomas Reid
 Irlind Stronkowski

Deaths:

February 14, Warren Dreher, Steven Hunter's uncle
 February 13, Irene Hetman, Sandra Lobdell's mother
 February 17, Anita Amberg, Steve Amberg's mother
 February 26, June Duffendack, Kathy Duffendack's cousin
 February 28, Dorothy Innes
 March 2, John Olsen
 March 5, Edward O'Hara, Jo-Ann Fackler's father
 March 5, Judy Ozdemirer
 March 14, Dale Miller, Dick Miller's son
 March, Rita Jones, John Mulé's grandmother
 March, Lois Nowlan, Andy Shoop's aunt

THANK-YOU NOTES

Thank you so much for the beautiful poinsettia plant that was delivered to our home. It's wonderful to belong to such a caring church.

Charlie and Lillian Malis

Many thanks for your thoughts and prayers. I was truly blessed, and have made a speedy recovery with the help of your many prayers.

Gayle Bird

A MESSAGE FROM MARILYN DONOVAN

As some of you may know, I am retiring as director of First Congregational Church Day Care & Nursery at the end of this school year. I began this Preschool program here with this church's endorsement and help, more than 13 years ago in late 1994, and it has grown and flourished.

Some of what we have accomplished over these years as a not-for-profit preschool serving our Cheshire community includes Accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, a committed early childhood staff of seven teachers, and service to approximately 50 families of children ages 3 to 5 years old each school year.

Many of our families are from within our congregation and many are of other faiths, with some getting comfortable here and trying out our church!

I have received much support for our program from members here at church who were willing to share their gifts and expertise with me, especially as we were starting up with little or no ability to pay for services. Gradually as we grew and became established, in 2004 we were able to pay back our initial startup loan from the church, and we now contribute financially for use of space and utilities. I want to thank all of you who have helped in so many ways – checking our pets, painting and repairing, giving support

and advice, and so much more.

You have helped make First Church Preschool the great program that it has become, touching the lives of many children and their families.

We are in the process, with the help of dedicated parents, church members, and our Board of Directors, to find and hire a new director as my replacement to keep this wonderful program going as I retire and move on with my husband. I believe a dedicated, caring, early childhood professional will emerge with God's help, ready to move us forward, although perhaps not a First Congregational Church member. If you know of anyone who may be interested please call me at 699-1169 or check our web site for more information at www.1stchurchpreschool.org.

I invite your prayers for our program as we move forward in this transition process. Thank you for all the blessings you have bestowed on us here at First Church Preschool over the many full years of service in this early childhood community. I pray that the strong bonds established between our church and First Church Preschool extend on into the future.

Marilyn Donovan

THANK YOU

The Millers very much appreciate the exceptional and complete arrangements for Dale Miller's memorial service March 20. Thanks especially to organist Joe D'Eugenio, and to the Men's Fellowship for taking care of the reception.

Dick Miller and family

UCC GENERAL SYNOD NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

The United Church of Christ General Synod (national meeting) is coming to Hartford June 21 to 26, and this time, the UCC is celebrating its 50th anniversary as a denomination.

There's a need for volunteers to help out at the Synod – everything from logistics and communication to office work to welcoming and ushering ... even baking cookies! Plus, volunteers will be allowed to attend the Synod at a greatly reduced rate (\$40 instead of \$150).

If you'd like to volunteer – and hundreds of people will be needed – here's what to do: Go to the Connecticut UCC web site, www.ctucc.org, find the link at the bottom of the home page labeled "General Synod Needs You," and click on it. Fill out the online form. You will be contacted by a member of the Local Arrangements Committee.