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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Preparing for Christmas

By Dave Buchan, Interim Senior Minister

A voice cries in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord...' – Mark 1:3

This is the season of Advent, a time of anticipation and preparation for the celebration of Christmas. If we are to get the most out of life, there are times when we've got to prepare – and not leave that preparation to the last moment. But how do we prepare for Christmas?

When that question is asked of me, I think of making lists and getting my shopping done early. Where can I get a handheld Nintendo DS Console? I think of house cleaning, Christmas cards, visiting relatives and all the entertaining that has to be done.

In light of this, John the Baptist comes as a shock. He's got a completely different angle on how to prepare for Christmas. John the Baptist was a fiery prophet, lean and long-haired, who carried out his ministry in the haunting wilderness down by the Dead Sea. And people flocked to hear what they might do to prepare their lives to receive the Messiah, the Christ who comes. How can we prepare? John

says we need to repent – to turn to God – to be able to receive the one who is to come. He calls upon us to be honest in our business dealings. "Do not cheat." To receive the stranger and practice hospitality. To be kinder than we have to be and to notice the needs of others around us. "Let him who has two coats give to him who has none." He calls us to share words of encouragement, peace and comfort because there are many people who need such words.

That is how we can begin to prepare for Christmas. According to John, it's the only way to prepare. Let us live with acts of compassion, fairness and integrity. "Prepare the way for the Lord..."

By the way, I'm forgetting the handheld Nintendo DS Console. But I would like to know where I can get Biscuit, the talking dog. Invite your friends and worship with us in this Advent season as we prepare for Christ's birth.

In Christ,
Dave Buchan, Interim Senior Minister

Candlelight Lessons & Carols

This year's candlelight service of Lessons and Carols will be held on **Sunday, December 21**, at 4 p.m. It will feature scripture and poetic commentary by parishioner John Afman.

Members of our congregation who participate in a small group to prepare the dramatic readings will tell the story of Christ's birth. Traditional carols, anthems, and hymns will be sung by our Senior Choir and congregation.

Please mark your calendars now to join us in the beauty of a winter afternoon for this candlelight service.



A Service for All Who Grieve

Christmas is traditionally a time of gladness and celebration, a time when families gather together and the joyous birth of Christ is proclaimed.

But for those grieving the loss of loved ones, or those whose family circumstances are difficult, or those facing challenging times, the Christmas season can be very lonely and made more painful when it seems that all the rest of the world is celebrating.

On **Thursday evening, December 18**, at 7:30 p.m., we will offer a quiet worship service of prayer, Scripture, and music that lifts up God's presence in these lonely times and God's Word that comes to shine light into the darkest places of life. Please see Jan Garthwait or Alison McCaffrey for more information. All are welcome.

Worship Schedule For December

Sunday, December 7: Services at 9 and 11. Dave Buchan preaching. Communion Sunday. Food offerings will be received; the food of the month is peanut butter.

Sunday, December 14: Services at 9 and 11. Alison McCaffrey preaching.

Sunday, December 21: Services at 9 and 11. Dave Buchan preaching.

Wednesday, December 24: Three evening services. 5:00 – family service, Debbie Gravell preaching. 7:30 – Alison McCaffrey preaching. 11:00 – Dave Buchan preaching.

Sunday, December 28: One service at 10 a.m. Dave Buchan preaching.

Outdoor Advent Labyrinth

The labyrinth is an ancient sacred spiritual tool for prayer and contemplation. Not a maze, a labyrinth is a pathway of prayer where there is one way in and one way out, and where one's heart can be profoundly moved through this contemplative experience. This year, our own rope labyrinth will be set up in the back yard of the church grounds, and it will remain in place for the seasons of Advent and Christmas.

On **Sunday, December 7**, we will meet at 1 p.m. to set up the labyrinth, and at 4 p.m. we will open it with a group walk.

Trustees Report on Infrastructure

On November 2, the Board of Trustees presented to the congregation a summary of the work completed so far in 2008 and a status of the existing infrastructure projects.

Recognition was given to the many people who contributed either labor or money.

Although no formal request was made to raise funds that would address the needed outstanding repairs, the Board of Trustees would welcome any donations that would help defray some of the cost.

It is important that these items get completed in the near future if we are to avoid further deterioration and liability risks.

The proposed budget for 2009 should attain the level at which the Maintenance and Repair Fund can be self-sustaining once the remaining items are completed. A list of the open items is shown in the table.

The Trustees welcome your thoughts on how to reach our goal.

Item	Area	Estimated Cost
Connector Basement Bathrooms	Flooring	\$ 3,400
Connector Basement Bathrooms	Repairs	20,000
Whiting House Front Porch	Porch	5,500
Parsonage Side Porch	Porch	12,000
Parsonage Window Trim	Painting	9,000
Connector Trim	Painting	3,500
Meeting House	Foundation	13,400
Parish Hall	Roof	14,100
Connector	Roof	18,000
Connector Rafters	Roof	14,500
Whiting House Garage Door Hinges and Door	Doors	400
Day Care Storage Facilities	Storage	15,000
Meeting House Basement Water Damage	Bldg & Mechanical	800
Organ Sound Pipes and Enhancements	Bldg & Mechanical	93,200
Surge Protection	Bldg & Mechanical	3,650
Church Security	Bldg & Mechanical	3,000
Meeting House HVAC upgrade	Bldg & Mechanical	<u>25,000</u>
Total		\$ 254,450



Christmas Fair

Saturday, December 6

10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

in the Parish Hall

New this year: Artwork by our own First Congregational Church artists

Back again: SERRV handcrafted gifts, jewelry, nativity scenes, and more.

Made by congregation members: Handmade gifts, crafts, Advent calendars,
baked goods, ornaments, goat's milk soap.

Also, poinsettias, cutlery, pecans.

Lunch with "Christmas Corn Chowder" begins at 11 a.m.

Coffee and . . . begins at 10 a.m.

Your donations are needed! Cakes, cookies, pies, candy, jams, jellies,
– whatever your specialty is – and handcrafted items of all kinds.

**Please bring all donations to the Parish Hall on Friday morning between
9 a.m. and noon or on Saturday at 9:00 a.m.**

If you can give an hour or two to help set-up Friday morning, Dec. 5, or work on Saturday,
please email Martha Lape at mlape@aol.com, call her 272-9327, or sign up in the lobby.

SERRV Is Back! (And Here's What It Is)

SERRV International, the nonprofit alternative international trading organization, has returned to First Congregational Church.

SERRV – which originally stood for “Sales Exchange for Refugee Rehabilitation and Vocation” – is known the world over for its leadership in creating opportunity and employment for people in dozens of countries. It helps these people feed and educate themselves and their children, create sustainable communities, and in some cases, simply survive. Launched in 1949, it began as a program to help refugees in Europe recover economically and socially from World War II.

Rather than simply handing out charity, SERRV invests its resources in helping its partners develop the skills for sustenance on their own. SERRV's design and development experts assist the artisans to create marketable products. The finished products are shipped to the Church World Service warehouse in New Windsor, Md., where volunteers ready them for “picking and packing” to fill customer and consignment orders.

We have received a consignment order of gifts, jewelry, toys, nativity scenes, and so forth that will be offered for sale at our annual Christmas Fair on December 6 and on Sunday, December 7 at coffee hour between services. A purchase of an item from this sale will do Outreach in two ways: 1) the church's purchase price will be returned to the artisan to provide him

or her with a living wage; and 2) the small profit the church realizes from the sale will go to our Outreach Board for distribution to a local soup kitchen.

In order to have the sale this year, we need lots of volunteers. On Saturday, people are needed from 9 a.m. to noon, and from noon to 3 p.m. and on Sunday, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Please sign up at the lobby table or e-mail Martha Lape at mlape@aol.com or call her at 272-9327.



‘Mark Immersion’ Day

Join us as we gather at church at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, December 13, for a daylong journey through the Gospel according to Mark, led by Peggy Allen. Peggy led a similar workshop last summer.

Here is what some of the participants from the summer had to say about their experience:

Chris Albrecht: “The summer Bible session on Mark was an enlightening learning experience for me, and I look forward to December's session. Please join us to learn and share what promises to be a day of fellowship and growing.”
Pam Euerle: “The Gospel of Mark is enormously interesting, and loaded with so much to learn about. I loved the first session so much I plan to go again.”

A signup sheet is located on the table in the ‘crossroads’ at church. Please sign up by December 4.

Christian Education in December

The December program is Bible Journeys: Through the Eyes of Joseph. This workshop rotation Church School program is for children and youth entering grades 2 through 6. Children will know what workshop they will go to by the schedule printed here, the Sunday Bulletin, or the Bible Journeys Board in the hallway across from Room 8.

Thou Art, Room 8: Students will learn about the distances of places in the Holy Land and the travel route of Mary and Joseph. Students will map out the route of Mary and Joseph, the wise men, and then Mary, Joseph, and Jesus.

Red Sea Productions, Room 9: After reading the traditional Bible stories from Matthew and Luke about Mary and Joseph, children will hear the poem from "Kneeling in Bethlehem" about why we put Joseph at the back of the stable. Children will discuss the poem and arrange the crèche the way they think it should be arranged. Then they will dress up in costumes and arrange themselves in a living crèche for pictures.

Desert Tales, Room 10: Children will view the video Birth of Jesus using the Hanna-Barbera Series. We will learn two stories of listening to and hearing God, and how Mary and Joseph followed God's directions for their lives.

Gospel Games, Room 11: How much do we really know about the Biblical Christmas? This will be the question the children will discover as they play a

"Jeopardy!"-type game that focuses on the Bible story of Jesus' birth and the difference between what it says and what people think it says.

Connections from Week to Week: At the end of the rotation, the students will understand that Jesus was born to bring good news to the world; begin to understand their responsibility in sharing the good news of Jesus' birth and life with the people they meet; begin to understand that God has a plan for their lives; and be able to locate the birth narrative in the Bible.

Our Christmas Pageant: "Glory to God in the Highest." This is a simple Christmas musical for kids, created by Luke Gambill. The date is Sunday, December 14, at 4 p.m. All attending the Pageant, including the cast, are asked to bring a food item for the local pantry. There will be baskets at each entrance to collect the offerings.

A line rehearsal will be held Sunday, December 7, at 10:30. A dress rehearsal will be held Saturday, December 13, from 9:30 a.m. to noon.

Children's Bibles Available: Looking for a gift for your child this year for Christmas? The Beginners Bibles are in, and available to families for \$10 each. This Bible is appropriate for children aged 3 years through 2nd Grade.

Please see Debbie Gravell in the Christian Ed Office to purchase a Bible.

9:00

Date	Thou Art	Red Sea Prod.	Desert Tales	Gospel Games
Dec. 7	Grade 2	Grades 3 & 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Dec. 14	Grade 6	Grade 2	Grades 3 & 4	Grade 5
Dec. 21	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 2	Grades 3 & 4
Dec. 28	<i>No Classes</i>	<i>No Classes</i>	<i>No Classes</i>	<i>No Classes</i>

11:00

Date	Thou Art	Red Sea Prod.	Desert Tales	Gospel Games
Dec. 7	Worship	Worship	Worship	Worship
Dec. 14	<i>Week Off</i>	<i>Week Off</i>	Grades 2 - 4	Grades 5 & 6
Dec. 21	Grades 5 & 6	Week Off	<i>Week Off</i>	Grades 2 - 4
Dec. 28	<i>No Classes</i>	<i>No Classes</i>	<i>No Classes</i>	<i>No Classes</i>

Christmas Eve Family Service:

Debbie Gravell will lead this service. Children will be invited to participate in the telling of the Christmas story. Join us for this 5:00 p.m. service on December 24, with your family, and consider inviting your friends and neighbors!

Single Service Sunday, December 28:

There will be one service, at 10 a.m., on the Sunday between Christmas and New Year's Day. Nursery Care will be available. The service will be geared to children and families. The Rev. Dave Buchan will share a short seasonal message, and we will sing carols. Church School resumes on Sunday, January 4, 2009.



Mission Trip Reminder

Anyone interested in going on our trip to Camp Coast Care in March should be sure to speak with Alison McCaffrey, Chris Fitzmaurice, Peggy Allen, or Robin Sellati.

Women's Bible Study

Women's Bible study takes place on Wednesdays at 10 a.m. in the church parlor. The facilitator is Debbie Gravell. All women of the church are invited to join us as they are able. Please feel free to join at any time. The group uses the Life Guide Bible Study Series. A new series will start in early December.

The cost of the Bible Study Guide is \$5. Please call Debbie in advance if you need childcare, and she will try to arrange it.

In the Hospital?

If you or a family member is in the hospital, please remember to tell the office at First Congregational Church. We want to minister to you, but because of federal privacy laws, we may not ask hospitals whether you are a patient.

Youth Group News

Here's what's happening with First Congregational Church's youth groups this season and into next year.

December 7: **Labyrinth walk.** After our regular dinner together, both groups will take a spiritual walk through the First Congregational Church rope labyrinth.

December 21: **Christmas Caroling.** Both groups will meet in the Parish Hall at 4 p.m. We'll travel together by bus and bring the joy of our voices to various members of our church family. Dress appropriately for the weather. We'll call for pick-up when we return .

December 28: **Alumni Night.** If you are a former member of YUTES and are now in college or beyond, join us on Sunday, December 28. Watch the YUTES web site and Facebook for more information.

January 10: Deposit for summer **Mission Trip.** Next year, the summer mission trip will be to Groton, Conn. from July 19 through 25, and slots are filling up fast. We need your initial deposit by January 10.

January 30 to February 1: **Senior High Winter Retreat.** This winter's retreat for Senior High YUTES is scheduled for January 30 to February 1 at Monadnock Bible Center in Jaffrey, N. H. There are only 20 slots available, so if you plan to go, get your payment of \$85.00 to the church office along with the permission slip and registration form as soon as possible.

From The Deacons' Closet

The Deacons last met on October 21, but we have been busy.

- Acolyte training has been conducted, and an Acolyte Orientation Handbook has been created. The acolyte concept is an effort to increase youth involvement in the worship service.

- We approved expenditures to purchase new Advent banners, as the present ones need replacing.

- We continue to work on membership review. Working with the Clerk and the Membership Committee, the goal is to create a database that will not only allow us to accurately track membership, but also be user-friendly for other boards and committees.

- Planning was done for the "Gifts of Thanks" service held on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Initiated last year, different groups of people came forward, and presented different gifts. This year the acolytes were added to the service.

- First Congregational Church hosted this year's Thanksgiving Interfaith Service, with members from Temple Beth David, the United Methodist Church, and others. The service was held on Wednesday, November 26, with a reception after the service. The Deacons not only planned for the service, but served as greeters and coordinated the reception, flowers, etc.

As December begins, The Deacons will begin preparations for the arrival and settling of a new senior minister.

Giving Thanks, and Giving First Fruits

Here is a message from the book “Ask, Thank, Tell” by Charles R. Lane, which is being shared by members of the Board of Stewardship:

In earlier times, when most people lived off the land, Thanksgiving was a harvest festival and a pay day. Once a year, people could count on the crops' coming in and giving thanks for the bounty of the land that would see them through the year. It was a pay day in a big way. During those harvest festivals, people gave thanks for the bounty of the land and returned thanks with a portion of their harvest to support their churches and clergy. They didn't wait until the spring to see what they had left over to give back to God and the ministries of the time.

Likewise, we in modern times are asked to give the 'first fruits' of our labor to God in thanks for the generous gifts we experience in our lives. The envelopes that many people use to make a weekly offering provide a structure and a plan for giving. People who 'pay God first' find that there's enough left at the end of the pay period to cover the needs of their households. Most folks receive income more frequently than once a year. Following the example of giving 'first fruits' is a way to manage finances faithfully, and with good results both for the giver and those who receive.

As of November 10, there were 229 'first fruit' pledge units in the congregation – families who have made a faith commitment of finances even before they



have received their income. All who participate in the life of this church are asked to follow their faithful example. It's never too late to make a pledge of faith and money.



Annual Meeting Plans

The church's Annual Meeting will be Sunday, January 25, beginning with a potluck dinner at 4 p.m. hosted by the Deacons. There will be a short program prior to the annual meeting. We want to make this a time of warm fellowship for our parish family, as well as an opportunity to do God's business.

More information will be forthcoming concerning specific requests, but please contact Jackie and Ford Cole by calling 271-9041 or e-mailing fcoble7619@cox.net, or Joyce Mulholland, 272-0140 or Joycemulholland@live.com if there is some specific way that you would like to contribute.

The bad weather date for the Annual Meeting will be Monday, January 26.

Outreach Notes

The Board of Outreach sponsored Mission Day on October 25, providing the Chrysalis House shelter in Meriden with small chores; we also raked two properties. Thank you to those who participated in this rewarding mission.

Thanks as well to those who donated toys for children in Iraq and Afghanistan during our Homecoming Picnic. The toys are on their way to both destinations.

The Board of Outreach, through Covenant for Caring, delivered Thanksgiving meals to those in need.

The annual World AIDS Day Concert took place on November 23. It raised funds to benefit AIDS orphans in Nthandzi, Malawi, Central Africa. The concert featured Robin Sellati, our Praise Band, and other talented musicians.

Also regarding Malawi, Amy Webb is there now to support and grow our mission. Amy will return December 18th. She has been keeping in contact with the church through Gretchen Bates, sending her progress reports during her visit.

As the holidays approach, keep an eye out for the Covenant for Caring request for presents for needy children. The children's requests are again posted on the Board of Outreach bulletin board. Please continue to bring in your donations of food and cereal.

The Board of Outreach is grateful for all the support of time and donations it has received, making this year of change a very rewarding one.

Executive Board Actions

At the Executive Board meeting November 4, based on approval of the By-Law revisions, two positions were added to the Board: President-Elect and Immediate Past President. Topics at the meeting included discussion of upcoming congregational meetings.

Details for the December Budget Meeting were finalized. Here is the call:

“Call To a Church Meeting. A meeting of the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, is called by the Executive Board for Sunday, December 7, 2008, in the Parish Hall immediately following the 11 a.m. worship service, for the purposes of: 1. Hearing the Report of the Nominating Committee. 2. Hearing an Update from the Senior Minister Search Committee. 3. Approving the Proposed Budget for 2009.”

Plans for the Annual Meeting were also discussed. It was decided that the Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 25, 2009. There will be a pot luck supper in Parish Hall at 4 p.m., with the meeting immediately following. There will also be a short program. Specific topics for the agenda are still under discussion.

The Annual Meeting is the one opportunity of the year where a member may bring up any topic for discussion before the congregation.

More details will be discussed at the December and January Executive Board meetings.

It's Time to Order Poinsettias

Christmastime is right around the corner, and that means the Flower Committee is turning its time and attention to filling the church with the color and beauty of poinsettias. It is time to order your Christmas Poinsettias. The cost of each plant is \$10. You have the option of either picking up your poinsettia after the 11 p.m. service on Christmas

Eve, or giving it to someone in the hospital or a shut-in.

Remember, you will **not** bring a plant to church. Instead, please fill out the form below to order your flowers. Orders must be received no later than December 7.

If you have questions, please contact Sharon Graver at 272-4786.

Poinsettia Order Form



If you would like to order a poinsettia for the Christmas Eve services, please fill out this form and send or take it to the church office, along with \$10 for each plant, no later than Sunday, December 7. Payment must accompany the order. **Please PRINT neatly.**

YOUR NAME _____

_____ Please give it to someone in the hospital or a shut-in.

_____ I will pick it up after the 11 p.m. service on Christmas Eve.

_____ IN MEMORY OF _____

_____ IN HONOR OF _____

Love and Worry

(Submitted by Martha Lape)

As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised." And they were greatly distressed.— Matthew 17:22-27

By Lillian Daniel

Love and worry go hand in hand. You can't love someone and not worry. Worry can turn the lights on love. Sleepless and worried in the middle of the night, you suddenly realize how much that person means to you.

"Don't worry," we say to each other, but what we may really mean is, "Stop talking. I'm tired of this." Worry is messy, and hard to listen to – especially when the person they are worried about is you.

So isn't it good to know that the disciples worried too? They worried about Jesus' plans. They were really distressed. The miracle-working Son of God had people who worried about him.

As a child taking off for fun, I would always exit to a chorus of parental questions and instructions. "When will you be home?" "Don't forget your jacket. It's cold out." "Call as soon as you get there."

And I would roll my eyes and say, "Don't worry." I felt immortal. Their concerns seemed ridiculous.

But now, I am the one at the door, calling out last-minute worries into a harsh

world. "Don't worry," they tell me, but still, I do.

Worry is the cranky friend who shows up uninvited, to hold love's hand in the dark.

Prayer: Dear God, you worry over us as a mother hen broods over her chicks. Take our worries, turn them into prayers and let them soar to the heavens where you can hold them for us. Amen.

Lillian Daniel, formerly an Associate Minister at Cheshire's First Congregational Church, is the senior minister of the First Congregational Church in Glen Ellyn, Ill.



Oberammergau 2010

Plans are underway for a trip to a 2010 performance of the Passion Play in Oberammergau, Germany.

We are working with King Travel-Ways Travel Agency and Collette Tours to plan this 11-day trip that will take us to Italy, Switzerland, Austria and Germany.

An informational meeting will be held on Thursday, December 4 at 7 p.m. in the Parish Hall, led by a representative of Collette Tours and by Jean King, owner of King Travel-Ways.

The meeting will be preceded by a potluck dinner at 6:30.

Anyone who is interested in the trip and anyone who wants to learn more about the play, even if you don't plan on participating in the trip, is invited and welcome to come.

Mission Trip Concert

First Congregational Church has two students at the prestigious Eastman School of Music, and both have agreed to participate in a concert to help underwrite some of the costs of our upcoming adult mission trip to the Gulf Coast. Eric Biggart is an accomplished classical guitarist, and Jonny Allen is a talented percussionist. Jonny's percussion trio from Eastman, Trio Volta, will also perform, and our own Praise Band will add their voices to the concert. Bring your family and friends to this exciting concert. It will be appropriate for children.

The concert will be held on Sunday evening, January 4, in our sanctuary, beginning at 7 p.m. A free will offering will be received, and the Board of Outreach will host a reception following the concert.

Have you prayed
for someone who has a
Prayer Pager?



Instructions are on the "pastel page" in
each Sunday's Bulletin.

Giving Thanks

Sherry Kovalesky answered the call to volunteer to take over the leadership of our church rummage sale, and what a wonderful job she did! She was so organized and worked 12-hour days to make the rummage sale successful. Thanks to everyone who contributed items, helped sort and arrange items, and served as cashiers. And a HUGE thanks to Sherry for a job very well done!

Pam Euerle

Thank you for all the kindnesses that you have shown me and my family during the past six months as I made the move to Houston, cared for my sister Barbara, and ultimately grieved her loss. The cards, the hugs, the e-mails, the "prayer pages", the warm and comforting prayer shawl, the notes, the expressions of concern, the smiles, the visits, the meals, and most of all, the continued loving prayer support has been of immense comfort. I am truly blessed to be a part of this First Congregational Church Family.

Amy Webb

A big thank you goes to the wonderful group of volunteers who assembled on Veterans Day to clean the sanctuary chandelier and glass globes in the sanctuary. The radiance of the newly-cleaned glass is overshadowed only by the brilliance of your generous and diligent spirit. Thanks for preparing the sanctuary to make it a true home for the holidays.

Leslie Holmes Meyer, Church Administrator

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A personal thank you to all the helping hands and to our parishioners who donated items to our fall rummage sale. Household items, books, toys, shoes and clothing went to many agencies for the needy. “Thank you, Lord, for the given blessing to those who understand the meaning of charity, and that it is not taken for granted.” With your help again, I would like to continue in this way with a spring rummage sale.

Sherry Kovalesky

On October 30, Pam and Ken Euerle, Jan Cowles, Karen Gravino, and Joe and I traveled to Columbus House to serve dinner to nearly 100 guests. Many were waiting in the parking lot when we arrived and were thrilled to hear what the menu was. Although we have been preparing the same food – meatloaf, mashed potatoes, green beans, rolls and pie – for several years now, it continues to be their favorite. Many thanks again to all of our wonderful and generous cooks: Grace Knipe, Chris Fitzmaurice, Diane Visconti, Carol Tucker, Karen Gravino, Sharon Graver, the Albrechts, Lori Mann, Beth Ross, Emma Norback, Emilee Ziolkowski, Tracy Bloschichak, Sally Ziegler, Marianne Eagleson, Jan Cowles, Gordon Hurlbert, Ann Giddings, Abby Hurlburt, Pam Cappiello, Lisa Canas, Beth Eichelman, Ruth MacDonald, Regan Huntley, Marilyn Gordon, Kirsten Sullivan, and Hope Reinhard and her students Joel Kelleher, Sarah Liebeskind and Robert Hedden. After serving, Chris and Ed Albrecht invited us to their home for a great dinner and wonderful

fellowship. Without all of your generosity, this mission would not be possible. It is wonderful to pass a plate of this comfort food to someone and receive a big grin and heartfelt thank you. So thanks again to all of you. Our next meal there will be on New Year’s Eve.

Jan Garthwait

Thanks to Carol Cummings for all her hard work cleaning the church kitchen so beautifully and to Donna Mead and friends for polishing the silver Sanctuary candelabras!



Lectionary for December

Sunday, December 7: Isaiah 40: 1-11; Psalm 85: 1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3: 8-15; Mark 1: 1-8.

Sunday, December 14: Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; Luke 1: 47-55; 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24; John 1: 6-8, 19-28.

Sunday, December 21: 2 Samuel 7: 1-11, 16; Luke 1: 47-55; Psalm 89: 1-4, 19-26; Romans 16: 25-27; Luke 1: 26-38.

Wednesday, December 24 (Christmas Eve): Isaiah 52: 7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1: 1-12; John 1: 1-14.

Sunday, December 28: Isaiah 61: 10 – 62: 3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4: 4-7; Luke 2: 22-40. Or Isaiah 60: 1-6; Psalm 72: 1-14; Ephesians 3: 1-12; Matthew 2: 1-12. Mark 13: 24-37.

What events are happening at our church?

Check the Calendar on our web site!

Go to www.cheshirecongregational.org Then select “Calendar” on the first page.

Columbarium Proposal Explained

Between services on November 2, the Trustees presented to the congregation a proposal for a columbarium to be constructed on church property.

A columbarium is defined as vault or other structure with recesses in the walls to receive the ashes of the dead. The proposal made by the Trustees, however, is more in the nature of a garden for the placement of ashes, not a free-standing above-ground structure.

As proposed, First Congregational Church's columbarium would resemble the one now at Dunbar United Church of Christ on Benham Street in Hamden. The suggested location is near the existing Memorial Garden by the Whiting House, which was built as an Eagle Scout project. Its proximity to the Whiting House and the Sanctuary would make it a convenient place for church members to reflect and pay their respect to loved ones.

The existing garden would become the focal point of the columbarium. It would be encircled by a slate walkway, surrounded by low-maintenance shrubs. The Trustees also suggest installing a low white fence around the outside. As planned, there would be room for 49 concrete double burial niches (holding the ashes of 98 people). There would be room for expansion. Ashes would be interred two deep in the niches, each one of which would be capped with an 8-by-8-inch blue stone marker.

The expected cost of the columbarium would be between \$20,000 and \$25,000. Funds would be raised through donations and through the sale of plots. It is estimated that each double plot would cost \$900. Details will be finalized by a governing committee, which would oversee the operation of the columbarium.

A number of congregation members have contributed time and energy to researching this issue – among them Chris Marx (now deceased), Ted Wright, and Attila Ozdemirer. There is a copy of the proposal in the church library, including photos. Please contact Joe Madden or Kevin Ross of the Board of Trustees with questions.

Milestones

In the Life of our Church Family

New Members, October 19:

Doris Bazley, William Bazley, Ted Bloschichak, Tracy Bloschichak, Lorrie Canas, Brendan Devine, Courtney Devine, Janet Hisey, Devon Ludwig, Mark Ludwig, and Christine Pittsley.

Deaths

Mildred Goodwin, mother of Carol Montano, September 20.

Nadine Simmons, October 18.

Sandra Gaye Sinclair, mother of Hugh Sinclair, October 23.