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During Lent, We Will Listen

By Jeff Braun, Senior Minister

We remember and celebrate Jesus for many things. In his earthly ministry, Jesus opened hearts and minds with preaching and parables. He championed the poor and oppressed. He radically welcomed the spurned and forgotten. He upended earthly power structures. He exorcised demons and healed the sick and the lame. And, of course, he both modeled and baptized us with a love excelling, a love divine.

Jesus did all these miraculous things. Yet Jesus did something else, as well. Something inherent in each of these other definitive acts. Something so elemental, so subtle, so silent! — that it often goes without notice.

Jesus listened.

He listened.

Before Jesus did any of the things for which we know him best, he listened. First, to God. And then, to us, to humanity. The Gospel According to John describes Jesus as the Word (in Greek: *Logos*). But he was a particular kind of word. Jesus was not a word spoken in a

vacuum. He was the Word... spoken in response. In response to our deep needs. In response to our most silent prayers. In response to our hopes and fears.

What preceded and underpinned and facilitated every movement of Jesus' ministry was listening. Listening... as an act of love.

And so that, among other things, is what we are going to do for Lent. To deepen our understanding and gratitude for the miracle of God's love in Christ, we are going to listen. First, to God. And then, to one another. Borrowing loosely from the one-on-one conversational model used by StoryCorps (www.storycorps.org), whose founder, David Isay, also believes that listening is an act of love, we are inviting each member and friend of our congregation to engage in three sacred conversations during Lent.

These conversations will hone our sacred listening skills, attune us to God's movement in our lives, and further reveal

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our interconnectedness in the One who accompanies and heals and loves us best, by listening.

In the coming weeks, be on the lookout for the materials which will facilitate these sacred conversations!

God's peace,
Jeff



Scripture by Heart

You've watched others offer scriptures by heart—are you ready to try? A new opportunity for “Scripture by Heart” awaits as we work on scripture texts for Holy Week worship, beginning with Palm Sunday.

An informational gathering will be held on Monday, February 8 at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary. Come and learn more about this opportunity and try it out. Our regular meetings will begin Monday, Feb. 15 at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary. Please see Alison McCaffrey with questions. A sign-up sheet is on the lobby table.



Banner and Liturgical Arts Team

We will work on new Lenten and Easter banners as well as get the sanctuary ready for Easter worship. If you like to sew, or if you don't like to sew; anyone who is interested in staging, designing and decorating – your ideas and help are welcome. Please see Alison McCaffrey for more information. A sign-up sheet is on the lobby table.

February Worship Schedule

Sunday, February 7: Services at 9 and 11. Jeff Braun preaching. Communion will be served. Food offerings will be collected; the foods of the month are canned beef stew or corned beef hash.

Sunday, February 14: Services at 9 and 11. Jeff Braun preaching.

Sunday, February 21: Services at 9 and 11. Alison McCaffrey preaching.

Sunday, February 28: Services at 9 and 11. Jeff Braun preaching.

Caring Crafts Ministry

The Caring Crafts Ministry continues to meet the last Monday of every month at Donna Mead's home (15 Conifer Drive, Hamden) at 7 p.m. This month that date will be February 22. All are invited, whether you know how to knit and crochet or don't. We are happy to teach everyone.

The Wednesday Women's Workshop is also continuing to meet every Wednesday in the Church Parlor at 12:30 p.m. This has proven to be a popular group. Drop in with your current project and join them for a pleasant afternoon of fellowship.

**Have you remembered
First Congregational Church
in your estate planning?**

The 'New' Christmas Fair Was a Resounding Success

When a group of 16 women met last March and the ideas began to flow, we had no idea just how successful we would be in revamping a Christmas Fair with a history of more than 50 years.

If you were fortunate enough to be able to visit the fair at any time on December 5, you found little ones through seniors



enjoying themselves in beautifully decorated areas.

“Best fair we’ve been to,” “so glad you had it Dec. 5 so I could come,” “big crowd,” “never been

before, glad I came,” “so much fun,” were comments heard from visitors.

All of you who baked cookies for the cookie walk will be pleased to know that word got around town about the wonderful variety of cookies we had and newcomers were asking those leaving if this was “the place that had the cookie walk.”

And what can we say about the gift baskets? It is clear that we have a very imaginative and creative group of individuals who used their talents to create 57 different baskets. We were hoping to have 20, but they kept coming in until the very day of the fair!

The Children’s Corner was a particular favorite with children (and some adults – we won’t mention any names!) sitting on Santa’s lap for a take-home picture and doing some creative projects. The parents seemed to enjoy the scene almost as much as their children.

Because of a large number of donations from members and friends, we will clear around \$5,500. That’s much more than ever before, largely due to the new items added this year.

There are so many people to thank for this great event: the coordinators of each area, our greeters, the lunch crew who made it and served it, the setup and cleanup people, the sign makers (who had to battle two wind storms!), those who baked cookies and other goodies, our artists and crafters who donated items, and everyone who volunteered to help.

You were all important to this successful event. And, of course, our thanks to everyone who came out to eat and shop!

Martha Lape



Pick Up Your Directory

The new pictorial directory has arrived! Copies have been given out after Sunday services in January. If you have not already picked up your copy, please notify the church office at (203) 272-5323.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

Please join us on Tuesday, February 16 for our Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, from 6 to 7:15 p.m. in the Parish Hall.

Shrove Tuesday marks the day before Lent begins (Ash Wednesday). It is a day with a long history, and depending on which part of the world you are from, it is called by different names. In European countries, it is most often called Shrove Tuesday – ‘shrove’ being the past tense of the word ‘shrive,’ which referred to the medieval practice of priests’ hearing confessions before Lent began.

Other parts of the world associate it more with the practice of Carnival, or Mardi Gras. No matter the name, the idea behind it is the same: to use up all the fats and sugar, milk and eggs not generally eaten in the six weeks of Lent...all the ingredients in pancakes!

Cooking and serving this wonderful meal are many of those going on the adult mission trip to the Gulf Coast of Mississippi. We will combine traditions for a fun event for all ages as we serve up pancakes, bacon, and fruits as well as some New Orleans jazz. We will end with a brief closing in preparation for Lent.

There is no set cost for this meal. Donations will be received; all funds will offset expenses for the March Mission trip. A signup sheet is on the lobby table for planning purposes.

UCC Spirituality Program

The Rev. Lee Ireland and The Rev. Susan Fowler will host a United Church of Christ, New Haven Association, four-part spirituality program called “The Gifts of the Four Seasons” to open up the joys of exploring our spirituality and having the ‘courageous conversation’ with God.

The purpose of the retreats is to help nurture spiritual life by offering opportunities for anyone, clergy or laity, to learn more about the life of prayer, what aids people in the growth of their spiritual lives, and the gifts of spiritual direction. The programs will include the teachings of different spiritual disciplines, but will most importantly help to create a community of people who are seeking to explore their faith. Lee and Susan will invite attendees to ‘read the scripture that is one’s life.’

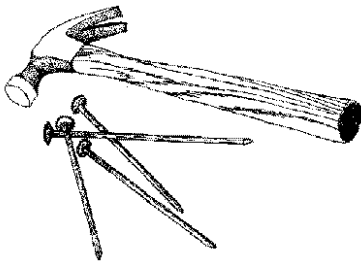
The first retreat will be February 20 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Orange Congregational Church, 205 Meeting House Lane, Orange. It will focus on the gifts of the winter season: a time to hunker down and read, reflect under blankets, watch snowflakes falling, watch flames in a fire, or play in the snow and watch the animal life as it survives in the transformed world and cold.

Refreshments will be provided. If you are interested in attending, please call the Orange church at (203) 795-9749. The subsequent retreats will be held on Saturdays: May 1, Aug. 7, and Oct. 16, all from 9 a.m. to noon, all also at the Orange Church. There is a \$5 per person fee to help cover the costs of the program.

Adult Mission Trip to Mississippi Leaves Next Month

We are very excited to be able to return to the Gulf Coast of Mississippi for a second time in early March. We are thankful to have received financial support from the boards of Deacons and Outreach, and for all who so generously supported the January concert, whether by performing or attending.

This year there will be 26 of us going: 18 from our church, representing members and family members and friends, and eight members of the North Guilford Congregational Church, including their pastor.



We will stay at the new campus of the newly renamed Camp

Coast Care Recovery Effort, Mission on the Bay in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

This was the epicenter of Katrina's landfall, and there is still much work that remains to be done, some 4½ years later. Check their web site:
<http://www.campvictor.org/Bay-St-Louis-Campus.html>.

We leave Saturday, March 6 and will spend that day traveling and getting settled, then touring New Orleans, including the decimated Ninth Ward. Sunday, we will worship at a local church and then get settled at the Mission on the Bay campus and meet the other 170

volunteers from all over the country. We will return on Saturday, March 13, and will share our reflections in worship the next day.

Your prayerful support is much appreciated. We are your ambassadors of hands-on mission work, and we will take you with us in our hearts!

*Alison McCaffrey
on behalf of the members of the 2010 adult mission trip*



Mission Trip Support

Here are some ways you can help support members of the 2010 Adult Mission Team and their work:

- Sign up to drive our workers to the Westchester County (N.Y.) Airport on March 6, very early in the morning, and/or to pick them up there on March 13.
- Buy a Home Depot gift card for them to use to purchase tools in Mississippi. Last year, they found that many of the tools were almost worn out, needing new batteries and drill bits, and they made numerous trips to Home Depot to purchase supplies.
- Come to the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper at church on February 16 (see page 4). The meal will be served by those going on the mission trip and the proceeds will support the trip.

Midnight Run: A New Outreach Program for Our Church

Midnight Run is our new outreach to the hungry and homeless in New Haven. We have signed up to provide 55 bag suppers on the last Monday of each month, along with whatever donations of warm outer clothing, trial sized toiletries and new socks and underwear we can accumulate. We will bring our meals and donations to the steps of Center Church on the Green in New Haven, where the needy are lined up waiting for the food and warm clothing.

After distributing most of the meals and the warmest clothing, we will caravan with the other churches who participate and the coordinator of the project, Mike Guidone, to a men's shelter to distribute the rest of the meals and the toiletries and any remaining warm clothing. For much of the year, our middle school youth will assemble the meals, but there is plenty of opportunity for you to help in the following ways:

- Watch the Outreach bulletin board in the parlor and sign up to donate meal supplies, including bologna, sliced cheese, bread, desserts, juice, fruit, and plastic grocery bags to pack the meals.
- Volunteer to go to New Haven to deliver the meals. You may have to wait a few months for an opportunity to do this, because only two or three people are needed each time. We would send a new driver with an experienced driver.
- Donate warm outer clothing (hats, mittens, scarves, coats) new socks or underwear, or trial sized toiletries.

- Volunteer to assemble meals during the months when the youth group is not meeting.

Our neighbor church in Hamden, Mount Carmel Congregational Church, invited us to accompany them on their Midnight Run in December, and we will be sharing the final Monday of the month with them in this ministry.

Food For All: You are invited to simplify your eating for the first full week of Lent, February 21 through 29, during the Board of Outreach's Food for All project. By simplifying our eating, we can save some money, and donate that money to the church to fund the start up costs of the Midnight Run, and underwrite that ministry and our other ministries to the hungry.

Maybe you could substitute water for soda, brown-bag your lunch, eat from your pantry or freezer, or try fasting for a day, if it is safe for you. Look for the fliers at church that provide suggestions for more ways to participate and also some meatless recipes in case you want to go meatless for a day or the week.

Figure out what you saved and donate that money to the church in the envelope provided with the flier, or by writing 'Food for All' in the memo line of the check, made out to First Congregational Church.

The Board of Outreach will use the proceeds to cover the start up costs for Midnight Run and cover any shortfalls in food donations for that project.

Serving at Columbus House

On December 30, members of our congregation once again provided a hot, home cooked meal to about 90 people at New Haven's Columbus House, a shelter for the homeless.

Thank you to all who took the time during the busy holidays to prepare food: Lori Mann, Terry Adesso, Carol Ploch, Carolyn Brown, Susan Hostage, Shirley Albanese, Emma Norback, Donna Mead, Kathy Duffendack, Karen Basset, Dorothy Easterbrooks, Becki Louys, Chris Albrecht, Anne Giddings, Joy Biggart, Lisa Canas, Toni Moldenhauer, Beth Eichelman, Hope Reinhard, Eleanor Gager, Beth Ross and Patti Dickinson.

Thank you to our servers, including the college students who joined the group on their holiday break: Chris, Emily, and Paige Cowles; Pam and Ken Euerle; Lisa Canas; Kelly Garthwait and friend; Ed and Chris Albrecht. Thank you to Jan and Chris Cowles, who hosted a warm and welcoming fellowship dinner for all the servers following the trip to Columbus House.

Our congregation makes and serves a meal at Columbus House whenever there is a fifth Wednesday in the month. The next opportunity to participate in this hands-on outreach is March 31.

**In the hospital?
Please let us know!**

Mark Immersion Day

We had to cancel Mark Immersion Day last year for a good cause – Jeff Braun's candidating weekend – but it is rescheduled for this February 27. No Bible background is needed.

Led by Peggy Allen, together we will read and study the Gospel of Mark, which is the oldest and shortest of the gospels. Mark focuses on what it means to be a follower of Jesus and what it means for Jesus to be the Christ, the Messiah.

We will begin at 9:30 a.m., share a meal at noon, and finish by 5:30. Enrollment is limited to 10. A signup sheet is available at church until February 20.



Church Book Club

Here are the church Book Club selections and meeting dates for the next few months:

February 1 – “The Help” by Kathryn Stockett

March 1 - “The Shack” by William P. Young

April 5 – “South of Broad” by Pat Conroy



Lenten Schedule

Lent begins Wednesday, February 17.

Palm Sunday is March 28.

Good Friday is April 2.

Easter Sunday is April 4.

Christian Education in February

Church school in February will study the story of Jonah.

Thou Art, Room 8: Children will use an old whaling craft to illustrate something in the story. “Scrimshaw” is the craft of scratching, carving, or etching designs into bone or ivory. Many natives of the northwest coast of North America began the art form. Men on whaling ships took up the craft to pass the time while they were out to sea for long periods. They used whale jaw bones and teeth that were ample in supply on the ship. They often included pictures of ships, whales and birds.

Red Sea Productions, Room 9: Grades 2-3 will use puppet materials to act out the story of Jonah and the Great Fish. Grades 4-6 will create a written puppet script in small groups. The groups will then perform their puppet plays for the other groups.

Desert Tales, Room 10: Children will watch the video ‘Jonah.’ After the video, they will journal using journaling paper to write or draw about a time you were like Jonah and did the opposite thing you were told to do. What happened to you?

Gospel Games, Room 11: This workshop will show children how God “leads us in right paths: through the use of a maze game. A discussion will follow the game.

Snacks and juice: Three-year olds through first graders are served snacks and juice on Sunday mornings. We have

found that asking parents to contribute once a year helps us keep within our budget. We welcome all contributions, and offer a schedule as a suggested way to remember.

Please read labels carefully. Snacks should have no nuts, peanut butter or peanut oil. Some suggestions of cookies are: nut-free varieties of Chips Ahoy, Oreos, Teddy Grahams, Vanilla Wafers, and Lorna Doone.

We ask parents whose last names begin with the letters N through Q to provide snacks and juice in February. Those with names R and S in March; T, U, and V in April, and W-Z in May, the last month of the church school year.



YUTES News

We’ve kicked off a fun new year! Our GAGA Tournament of Champions is ongoing. Come play in an official YUTES GAGA sanctioned game to be in the running! Games are held during regular Sunday meetings as well as special events (lock-ins, etc.).

During this winter season, please keep an eye on our web site, www.yutes.org, for any weather cancellations. We’ll try to post updates two hours before any event.

Our first lock-in of the year will be on Friday, February 5 at 7 p.m. until Saturday at 10 a.m. Come enjoy a fun night of games, movies, and course plenty of

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9:00

Date	Thou Art	Red Sea Prod.	Desert Tales	Gospel Games
Feb. 7	Grade 2	Grades 3 & 4	Week Off	Grades 5 & 6
Feb. 14	Grades 5 & 6	Grade 2	Grades 3 & 4	Week Off
Feb. 21	Week Off	Grades 5 & 6	Grade 2	Grades 3 & 4
Feb. 28	Grades 3 & 4	Week Off	Grades 5 & 6	Grade 2

11:00

Date	Thou Art	Red Sea Prod.	Desert Tales	Gospel Games
Feb. 7	Worship	Worship	Worship	Worship
Feb. 14	Grades 5 & 6	Grade 2	Week Off	Grades 3 & 4
Feb. 21	Grades 3 & 4	Grades 5 & 6	Week Off	Grade 2
Feb. 28	Grade 2	Grades 3 & 4	Week Off	Grades 5 & 6

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snacks. Bring your sleeping bag, air mattress, and any games or snack you'd be willing to share. We hope to see you then.

There will be no regular Sunday meetings on February 7 (Super Bowl Sunday) or February 14 (Valentine's Day). We will have a regular meeting on February 21. Enjoy your school break!

A special thanks to those who came home and participated or helped in putting together our first annual College Sunday. It was a great success and we already look forward to next year!



New Group for 7th and 8th Graders

We'll be kicking off a brand new group for 7th and 8th grade students on February 22 from 6 to 8 p.m. Our group

will meet once a month on the last Monday of the month.

Come join us after your school break for a fun night of games and food. We'll spend some time at the beginning of our meeting putting together bag meals to feed the homeless in New Haven. The board of outreach will coordinate getting the meals down there after we get them all bagged and ready to go.

We'll also be deciding on a name for this new group at our first meeting so bring your ideas! We hope to see you on February 22 – and bring a friend.



Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones, our fifth and sixth grade youth group, meets on the second Friday of each month in Parish Hall for

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fun and games and some mission work.

So far we are having a great winter. In December, 19 of us went caroling. We had a fun time and so did the members that we visited! We ended the evening with games, cookies, and hot cocoa at the Mulhollands' home. In January, 22 of us got together to make care packages for our church college kids. It was really hard not to eat the contents! Afterward, we held movie night in the Desert Tales room. We wore robes and slippers and brought pillows and sleeping bags. We ate snacks and popcorn. We made ourselves comfortable and had a great time.

February 12 is bowling night; the cost is \$10. At 6:30, we will meet in Parish Hall and Linda Milton will lead our mission project as we make beautiful cards that will be used by our ministers, deacons and outreach volunteers. Afterward, we will go to Brunswick Bowl for an evening of bowling. We will leave at 7:00 sharp; all you need to bring is a fun attitude, a signed transportation permission slip, and \$10. We will return to Parish Hall at 9:00.

If you have never been to Stepping Stones, please join us. There are always new faces, and everyone is welcome. If you have been to Stepping Stones, we look forward to seeing you again and ask that you invite a friend.

The leaders are Kerrie Dunne, Kate Hall, Mark Sprankel, and Steve and Joyce Mulholland. If you have any questions, ask any of these Stepping Stones leaders or call the Mulhollands at (203) 272-0140.

Kelly Mittleman To Perform

This month, acclaimed jazz-pop singer Kelly Mittleman will bring her remarkable talent to First Congregational Church for a first-of-its-kind fundraising concert.

Her show will be Saturday, February 13 (the day before Valentine's Day), at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$20 per person and are available for purchase through the church office.

Kelly, a finalist in the Today Show Superstar Contest (out of 5,000 entrants), recently appeared with jazz legend Maynard Ferguson, and at New York's famed Blue Note Café. She has just released her second CD of her original music. She lives in Redding, and recently received an award in the jazz category for the 2009 International Songwriting Competition.

Here are what the critics have said about this remarkable singer: "I think it's safe to say singer-songwriter Kelly Mittleman has a Midas touch!" "She takes the standards and infuses them with overtones of soul and R&B with distinctive clarion vocals combined with a hip, sultry and sexy mix." "A fresh and original approach to pop, neo-jazz and soul. Great lyrics and groove."

This evening of jazz will take place in the Parish Hall, which will be transformed into an intimate cabaret-style room. Plan to bring along friends and family members and purchase a group table of 10 for a discounted rate. This is also an opportunity to enjoy Valentine's Day with a special someone!

Notes from the Executive Board

With the elections of the Annual Meeting, your Executive Board has undergone its annual transition phase; new members joined the board while others completed their tours of duty and moved on to serve the church in other ways.

This transition process was made much smoother with the succession plan called for in our recently revised by-laws. Ford Cole, who has been actively serving as President-Elect, took over as President, while Bob Porter moved from the chair of the Personnel Committee to become the new President-Elect. And after two very enjoyable and rewarding years as your President, I have taken on an advisory role as “Immediate Past President.”

We believe this continuity of leadership will enhance the effectiveness of your Executive Board and avoid the annual “re-invention of the wheel” syndrome.

As I send this final input as President to the Parish Post, it is my pleasure to thank the boards, committees, volunteers, clergy and staff who have all contributed so generously to life of our church. What a great team effort.

Indeed, we will continue to face challenges, but looking back on the past two years, it is abundantly clear that the church is moving forward at a renewed pace and heading in a very positive direction.

As you read the Annual Report, you will see ample evidence of a vibrant church that is on the move. This good news is a

verification that the Spirit is moving among us and, as a team, we are responding to God’s call in so many remarkable ways.

Finally, thanks to all the members and friends of the church who have asked probing questions, offered thoughtful suggestions, and stepped up when we needed a helping hand. You are the church, and serving you has been a pleasure.

Bob Mead



UCC Women’s Event

It's not too late to register for the UCC Women Leaders of New England Celebration VIII, Together Building Bridges. Join other women from New England when we gather to celebrate our faith in Burlington, Vt., March 12-14. You can still register and choose from 28 stimulating workshops and sign up for any of the speaker meals planned during this exciting event. You can register by going to www.uccwomenscelebration.org.

For further information contact the Coordinator, Susan Waldron, at (860) 923-2887 or swaldron01@snet.net. Or in our church, ask Martha Lape or Karen Gravino.

Please invite your daughters, granddaughters (14 and older) and friends for our intergenerational participatory workshop, “Connections.” We hope to see you there.

Parish Care for December and January

The Parish Care Committee and Parish Care Coordinator's activities for the year 2009 have been well chronicled in the church's 2009 Annual Report. This narrative picks up where that report concluded. Last year we witnessed a 30 percent increase in the number of parishioners who participated in providing care to one or more members of our church family. This, in turn, translated to a 100 percent increase in the number of people who were assisted in one or more ways. The new decade brings new challenges and new opportunities to serve the Lord. Listed below are a few of those challenges and fulfilled opportunities.

Jim Van Der Beek, the Parish Care Committee leader for more than five years, has decided that it is time to step down and spend time doing more hands-on care – something the Van Der Beek family has been doing for many years. His quiet, gentle leadership will be sorely missed by all. We thank Jim for his wonderful opening prayers every month, his smile and laughter during our meetings, and most important, his love of our congregation and the great care he gave to us all. Thank you, Jim.

Birth/Baptism – We provided commemorative gifts to the parents of two children who were baptized.

Bereavement – The Bereavement group conducted five sessions for members dealing with grief and loss. These sessions culminated with a beautiful Remembrance Service.

Cards and Telephone – Your letter writers have been very busy writing 64 cards to people who have had birthdays, get well, sympathy, thinking of you and thank you. The cards also included handmade Christmas cards made during the Advent workshop. The recipients were very touched by their thoughtfulness.

Meals – There were three meals delivered to two families. The Meals Coordinator for February is Jackie Cole. If you know of anyone who could use a meal during a busy or stressful time in their life, please call Jackie, and she will arrange one to be sent.

Prayer Pagers – Three of our seven pagers have been used. Thank you all for “beeping” them and letting them feel God's presence. It is comforting to know someone is praying for you during a difficult time in your life. If you, or someone you know, is going in for surgery or going through a difficult time and would benefit from knowing that others are praying for them, please call Donna Mead and she will deliver a pager to them.

Stephen Ministry – Eight Stephen Ministers tended to eight care receivers and spent a total of 24 hours in the month of December. If you or someone you know could benefit from having a Stephen Minister, call Sue Chatfield at (203) 235-6294 or one of our parish ministers for a consultation. During the January meeting of the Stephen Ministers, Erica

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DeFrancesco of the Alzheimer's Research Center of Connecticut in Plantsville, gave a wonderful, informative talk that helped all the ministers. She offered her services to our church to come speak on Alzheimer's disease anytime there is a need. We were very grateful for her time and expertise.

Parish Care Coordinator – I have spent time coordinating Parish Care efforts among the Parish Care Committee, the ministers and other care givers.

One aspect of my ministry is to provide the link between those in need and those who have expressed a desire to provide some measure of care. Here a few examples of my weekly activities: providing a list of church family addresses for the two Christmas caroling sessions, identifying members to receive Christmas poinsettias, determining who would most benefit from receiving sanctuary flowers following Sunday services, passing on the names and addresses of those who benefit from cards, telephone calls, meals, rides, chores, or specially crafted and comforting shawls and blankets. Finally, I strive to serve as a focal point for those who wish to volunteer their services or those who wish to pass on the name of someone in need. For December, this took about 44 hours.

This is a most rewarding experience, and I strongly solicit your continuing support.

Donna Mead

Parish Care Coordinator

donna.mead@comcast.net (203) 248-9576

We Give Thanks

We would like to thank everyone in the congregation who helped at and supported the First Congregational Church Children's Corner at the Christmas Fair. Many of you generously donated to our craft projects and to our gift tables. It was fun watching children shop for their parents and create their own gingerbread houses, snowmen, cupcakes, ornaments, or cards. Special thanks to 'Santa,' who spent the entire five hours welcoming and listening to children; Jeffrey Schroeder, who spent the day as our photographer; Janet Gordon, who helped with decorations; Amy Webb, who patiently helped children wrap each gift with great care; Rita Hughes and Emily Ziolkowski, who told stories throughout the day; Todd and the YUTES, who enthusiastically helped children with crafts; and to Darby and Vivian Bronson, who willingly oversaw the gingerbread house and snowman projects; and to all the children who came and participated. Hope to see you all again next year.

Beth Ross, Joellyn Jason, Jan Garthwait

I will cherish the memories of the lovely worship service, reception and wonderful gifts. Thank you so much for the retreat gift money, books and gifts. The children singing was such a delight. The montage photo presented during the service already has a special place on the wall in our living room. God's richest blessings to you all.

Debbie Gravell

Thank you so much for the beautiful

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poinsettia plant Jackie Cole delivered. It added much cheer to my holidays and I enjoyed my visit with Jackie. I do appreciate all the kind thoughts I have received this past year.

Abby Bray

Dan and I were so happy when Donna Mead, her daughter and beautiful twin granddaughters came to bring Dan the lovely poinsettia. It was a very cold and windy day, and they brought so much cheer to both of us.

Dan and Helen Prince

Thank you so much for that lovely Christmas poinsettia you delivered to our door. Our daughter came in from California and with a rental car, drove us to New Hampshire to spend Christmas with our son's family. We appreciate so much your concern and are so happy the church is moving forward.

Ruth and Magnus Hansen

I can't thank you enough for the delicious meals that were delivered to our home after my surgery. I was grateful not to have to plan, shop or prepare meals until I was steadier on my feet.

The meal ministry is truly a wonderful gift our church offers, and I have great admiration for those who volunteer their time and efforts to provide for those not being at full strength. A special thanks to Bobbie Porter, Chris Albrecht, Melinda Van Der Beek, Kirsten Sullivan and Susan Hostage.

Sue Chatfield

Thank you so much for the beautiful prayer shawl. The service by Alison, Jeff's comforting words, the cards, calls and food were greatly appreciated. To the Ladies Aid--thank you for the lovely flowers. Your love and friendship are priceless.

*Eleanor, Dorothy and Sarah Gager
(DuBois)*

Words cannot express our thanks and gratefulness for the love, care, and prayers that we have received from this church during the time of Jackie's dad's passing. It has all been, as usual, incredible. From Jeff's first pastoral visit immediately upon hearing the news to all the help and love at our home after the funeral started a tender feeling of peace. And the time that you have spent with us has been healing. Jackie told me that she has a quiet feeling of peace, and the care of our church family has done much to bring that peace. Once again, the Coles have been tended to by angels... and we thank our Lord for all of his angels.

Jackie & Ford Cole



Help Prevent Theft

The many cars parked in our lot, both on Sundays and for night meetings, offer an enticing opportunity for thieves to "shop" for cars where purses and other valuables are locked in the car, but still visible.

Remember to stow all valuables in the trunk before leaving for church – or bring them with you inside.

Milestones

in the life of our church family

Deaths:

Carl Lombardi, brother of Michael Lombardi, January 8.

Arthur Dayton, husband of Nancy Dayton and father of Betsy Barber, January 8.

Thelma Wilcox, grandmother of Jaclyn Hissick, great-grandmother of Jillian and Jarrett Hissick, January 9.

Engagement:

David Brys, son of Kathy Duffendack, and Virginia Avedisian.

Lectionary for February

Sunday, February 7: Isaiah 6: 1-13; Psalm 138; 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11; Luke 5: 1-11.

Sunday, February 14: Exodus 34: 29-35; Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3:12 – 4:2; Luke 9: 28-43.

Sunday, February 21: Deuteronomy 26: 1-11; Psalm 91: 1-2, 9-16; Romans 10: 8-13; Luke 4: 1-13.

Sunday, February 28: Genesis 15: 1-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17 – 4:1; Luke 13: 31-35.

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