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Pentecost Completes the Cycle

By Jeff Braun, Senior Minister

Pentecost. Day of *rushing wind*. Day of *passion*. Day of *faith's fire!*

Christmas and Easter may feel bigger. Yet Pentecost is equally pivotal. Christmas celebrates God's unsurpassable love made human in Jesus. Easter celebrates the triumph of Jesus' faith and forgiveness over sin and death.

Pentecost completes the cycle. It celebrates how God infused Jesus' first followers with the Holy Spirit — the very same Spirit that God had poured onto Jesus, himself, at his baptism; the very same Spirit that God pours... into each of *us*.

Like a sacred current, the Spirit courses forward, from past to present, through the unbroken line of disciples of which we're a part. Like a bolt, it arcs directly from heaven's heart... to humanity's.

The Spirit is more than merely nice to have. It's *essential*. It's our lifeblood. It's the Jesus-is-both-among-us-and-within-us impetus that we need to follow Christ's often thorny path.

Christ is the Way, and the truth and the life. He said so himself. But often, so often, we stumble. Faith falters. And the will to stay on the Way eludes us.

Jesus knew this. He knew that once he was gone, we would feel orphaned. Confused. Alone. So, *before* he was gone, Jesus reassured us that he would send an Advocate, a Spirit of Truth to abide with us forever, and to remind us of everything that Jesus said.

In short, he vowed to ask God to give *us* exactly what God had given *him*: the Holy Spirit.

With power and might, with rushing wind and tongues of flame, and with a love that makes Creation shudder — Jesus fulfilled his promise. God poured out the Holy Spirit — on every disciple across time.

In so doing, the Christian church was born. And we, its members, are inspired to give thanks. We are reassured that, great as our trials might be, God's abiding

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Continued from the previous page

love... is greater, still.

Born of Pentecost, we are a church of divergent peoples, views, and voices; a church of imperfections, shortcomings, and human frailties; but a church made whole — made *one!* — in the Spirit. Thanks be to God for Pentecost's precious gift!

God's Peace,
Jeff



Easter Basket Thanks

Once again, First Congregational Church members and friends spent their time and money to put together 70 beautiful Easter baskets for children connected with the state Department of Children and Families in Waterbury.

Thank you to the following people who donated baskets: Doris and Nuala Hall, Devon Ludwig, Addie Marx, Sarah Marx, Terry Hamley, Karen Gravino, Emilee Ziolkowski, Susan Mancinelli, Ruth MacDonald, Pam Capiello, Gretchen Bates, Georgia Capobianco, Jane Richards, Beth Eichelman, Marilyn Gordon, Kelly S. and Cristen H., June Webster, Lisa Canas, Melanie Pivrotto, Kerrie Dunne, Tim and Sharon Graver, Toni Moldenhauer, Shirley Albanese, Jolinda Heavens, Emily Cowles, Katie Childs and Carlee Moldenhauer.

Thanks also to the following families who made up baskets: Ploch, Wagner, Pappas, Lape, Hisey, Mann, Buell, DePaolo, Albrecht, Brunetti, Sullivan, Fitzmaurice, Warner, Esty, Ross, Monllos and Howard.

Worship Schedule For May

Sunday, May 3: Services at 9 and 11. Jeff Braun preaching. Communion Sunday. Food offerings will be received; the food of the month is canned chili.

Sunday, May 10: Services at 9 and 11; Alison McCaffrey preaching.

Sunday, May 17: Services at 9 and 11. Children's Sunday.

Sunday, May 24: Single service at 10. Jeff Braun preaching.

Sunday, May 31: Pentecost Sunday. Confirmation Sunday. Services at 9 and 11. Jeff Braun preaching.

Coffee Hour Hosts Needed

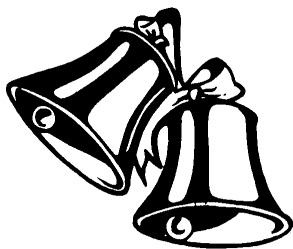
A few opportunities are open for hosting a coffee hour. Why not gather your church friends or pew mates and create a theme for a coffee hour? If interested, please call Regan Huntley at 272-8467.

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

Christmas Fair News

Can you believe it? Already the wheels are in motion for our church's big Christmas Fair, to be held on Saturday, December 5. We hope to involve as many church groups and individuals as possible, making this a truly all-church effort. In the past, the Fair has been organized by the three women's groups, but this time, the planners invite men and children to get involved.

We plan to have traditional items (poinsettias, pecans, food, jewelry, handcrafted items, lunch, SERRV items), as well as some new or revived items, including



children's activities and a place where they can shop for gifts for their families, "Granny's Attic," used books, and new and gently used Christmas items, including ornaments and wreaths.

The planning committee invites suggestions and Fair items from the congregation, and has compiled a list of items that can be saved in preparation for use at the fair: plastic berry baskets, gently used books, new and nearly new Christmas decorations and ornaments, or new or nearly new gift items you can't use.

Over the course of the next few months, please hold on to larger mayonnaise jars and smaller jam jars with

matching lids. We will need a fair number of these containers. Once you have saved a bagful, please call Jan Cowles at 272-8441 if you want to store them elsewhere.

This year we are planning a new Children's Area. We hope to have a gingerbread house workshop, a gift market where children can purchase gifts for their parents, and a 'picture with Santa' area.

If anyone would like to help or donate to any of these areas, please contact Beth Ross or Jan Garthwait. Our respective e-mail addresses are meimross@gmail.com and jecgarthwait@att.net.



Summer Music on the Green

On Saturday evening, June 20, the Board of Music will present its fourth annual Music on the Green, featuring the Heartbeat Dixieland Jazz Band, directed by Bill Logozzo.

This eight-piece jazz ensemble is hailed as "New England's most lovable jazz band." Save the date now to join us on the Green with your picnic, ears, and dancing feet, and get ready to experience one of the most enjoyable evenings of the year.

**Have you remembered
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in your estate planning?**

Church Budget, First Quarter 2009

Income

	January to March	Annualized	Budget	Variance
Pledges	\$173,716	\$694,864	\$580,000	\$114,864
Plate	10,720	42,880	35,000	7,880
Trust Fund	8,074	32,296	34,000	(1,704)
Rental	4,095	16,380	18,880	(2,500)
Other	10,809	10,809	10,199	610
Total Income	\$207,414	\$797,229	\$678,079	\$119,150

Expenses

	January to March	Annualized	Budget	Variance
Staff	\$108,189	\$432,756	\$472,347	\$39,591
Christian Educ	3583	14,332	15,945	1,613
Music	2,635	10,540	5,863	(4,677)
Other Boards	693	2,772	9,560	6,788
Maint & Operat	31,573	126,292	148,250	21,958
Outreach	0	20,000	26,114	6,114
Total Expenses	\$146,673	\$606,692	\$678,079	\$71,387

Profit (Loss)

	January to March	Annualized	Budget	Variance
	\$60,741	\$190,537	---	\$190,537

Please see the report on the next page.

Financial Report

Please see the chart on the previous page.

Pledge income for the first quarter has been on schedule. The beginning months generally allow us to prepare for the summer months, which historically run slower. Plate, trust, rental, and other income are all running close to plan.

At this point in the year, it looks as if we should make our targeted income, but the second quarter will be a challenge if pledges should dip from current levels. We ask all members and friends to please keep up their pledges.

Expenses are running favorable to plan at this stage. With our new senior minister in place now, we should see some increase in staff salaries, but this was expected.

All boards and committees are watching their expenditures, to the point that we are at about 21 percent of our full year budget, versus the planned 25 percent.

One unusual item that we have paid included Jeff Braun's relocation costs, \$5,000, which were well within our estimates. Thanks to Jeff for monitoring this so closely.

Members and friends should feel free to direct any questions concerning the budget to the treasurers: Myself, Sara Buell, and Betsy Barber.

Walt Ryan

Rock for a Reason

Students in Church School grades 2 to 8 were given seed money from a Board of Outreach Salt and Light Grant and a challenge to make that money multiply.

The money raised will be used to buy farm animals and provide training for families in the poorest areas of the world through Heifer International. Heifer's mission is to work with communities to end world hunger and poverty. Their philosophy is based on a holistic approach necessary to build sustainable communities, while still respecting the environment.

On Saturday, May 9, at 7 p.m. in the Parish Hall, my band, V.O.R., will put on a free will donation rock concert to raise money for Heifer Project. Music will include songs by Led Zeppelin, Foo Fighters, The Rolling Stones, and many more. It will also feature a guest appearance by Emily Cunningham, who will perform songs by Taylor Swift, The Dixie Chicks, and Linda Ronstadt.



Snacks and beverages will be sold by Ben Monllos, Kaylee Scinto, and friends. Proceeds from the snack sales will also go to Heifer International. All ages are welcomed with an adult. Please come out for an evening of great music for a great cause!

Nick Monllos

Parish Care in March

Here is what your Parish Care Committee and its volunteers did in March:

Baptism/Births: There were two baptisms in March. A plaque was given to each family.

Bereavement – The Bereavement group continues to meet on the last Thursday of every month in Room 11 at 7 p.m. If you have suffered the loss of a loved one, please join this group. A new Grief Series started April 16, and anyone who has experienced a loss may join us at any time.

Cards – Forty-four cards were sent containing sympathy, get well, encouragement, anniversary of deaths, and Easter wishes.

Caring Visitors – Four Caring Visitors are now assigned new parishioners to visit. Please consider becoming a part of this ministry. Call Donna Mead if you are interested.

Chores – No one required anything to be done in March. If you or someone you know has a small chore that needs to be done and he or she is unable to do it, please call John Bates at 272-6389.

Meals – Eleven meals were delivered to three recipients. Jackie Cole is the contact person for May. We would like to thank everyone who made a frozen meal for our freezer ministry. It is now stocked very nicely.

Prayer Pagers – All six of our pagers were used during March. The seventh

pager is now repaired and ready to be distributed. 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 and thinking of them, please call Donna Mead and she will arrange a pager for them.

Rides – Three rides were provided for a parishioner.

Stephen Ministry – Eleven care receivers were ministered to by nine Stephen Ministers. They spent 29¼ hours. If you or someone you know could benefit from having a Stephen Minister, call Sue Chatfield (235-6294) for a consultation.

Telephone – Barbara Grudzias was the person performing the March calls. Bobbie Porter made the April calls. Thank you, Barbara and Bobbie, for performing this important ministry that brings cheer and love to those hearing from you.

Parish Care Coordinator – Donna had an informative meeting with our new senior minister, Jeff Braun. We both received valuable information from each other about Parish Care in general and ideas of how to proceed in the coming year. The response to the need for more prayer shawls was very good – we received nine shawls and are now able to distribute them. Thank you, ladies, for your hard work. The shawls are truly a blessing to those who receive them.

The Parish Care Coordinator spent a total of 40 hours in March.

Donna Mead

How Does Our Giving Compare?

At First Congregational Church, we have a strong tradition of giving. About a third of our pledging members increase their pledges every year, and our Executive Board sent a powerful message with its leadership giving last year.

But what about the other two-thirds who maybe haven't raised their pledge in years – or are perhaps more erratic, pledging one year but not the next? And what of those who don't pledge at all, maybe never have?

How does our church collectively compare with other churches – across our state, in our nation, over the decades? To try to find answers, I hit the 'net and found some remarkable points of comparison.

During the Depression, average giving in U.S. churches was 3.3 percent of income. By contrast, in 2004, at the culmination of our largest economic expansion ever, average giving was 2.5 percent of income. In that same year, the average giving by church folks in this country was \$692, a little more than \$13 a week. This resulted in a collective decrease of about \$2.8 million dollars for churches compared with 2003.

At First Congregational Church, however, our average pledge in 2004 was \$1,631.

So are we bucking the national trend toward giving less? Or – given the affluence of our community within an already wealthy state, perhaps the sheer

number of dollars doesn't tell the whole story. On the discipleship scale, do we pledge more than 2.5 percent of our income? Some of us certainly do. But collectively?

Our town's median income was \$80,466 per household in the 2000 census. This was estimated to have increased by 2007 to \$100,834 per household. In 2007, our average pledge at First Congregational was \$2,058 – just a tad over 2 percent of the estimated household average.

And remember, \$2,058 was only the average pledge of those who pledged, not of all churchgoers here. If we added \$0 for everyone who didn't pledge at all (or gave in some other way), and divided by that larger number, the average would be less than half of that \$2,058, much closer to the \$692 national average in 2004. Our percentage of collective thankfulness to our Maker for our blessings would surely be less than 1 percent of income.

While we must recognize the strong traditions of leadership giving in this church, and the movement of many people's hearts in the right direction, we must nevertheless recognize (as our budget troubles indicate) that the discipleship of our giving is falling behind that of less advantaged peer churches.

Collectively, it's only our affluence that allows our lower discipleship percentage to keep our church viable. More of us need to take those strong traditions of giving to heart.

Mike Pownall, Stewardship Board

Malawi Mission Needs

The Malawi Mission Team would find the following items very useful in their continued work:

Chichewa-Chinyanja-English Dictionary. Chichewa, also known as Chinyanja, is the national language of Malawi. The dictionary, edited by Steven-Paas, is available on line from www.africabookcentre.com or www.africanbookscollective.com. Both web sites are British, and the price of the book is given in pounds. With shipping to America, the book costs about \$55 in U.S. dollars.

Also needed are **pre-loaded debit or credit cards** in any amount. These will enable the team to keep pre-paid minutes on the phone card to stay in touch with the group and sponsors in Malawi. This will be important while planning a visit from two sponsored orphans, hopefully this year.

Welcoming New Members

A new member orientation session will be held on Saturday, June 20. The next day, June 21, new members will be received, and there will be a reception between the services. Anyone seeking information about joining the church should talk with an usher or a minister, or call the church office at 272-5323.

Coming Soon: Our Photos

The Board of Membership is pleased to announce that a contract has been signed with Life Touch Church Directories to produce a directory for us. Photographs will be taken at the church from August 25 through 29, and September 1 through 3. The signup process will begin in mid-July.



*Church
Directory*

The final details are still being arranged; further updates will be reported in the Parish Post, by e-mail and by announcements on Sundays. If you have questions, please contact the Church office or speak with anyone on the Membership Board.

We are also asking for volunteers to assist during the photo sessions. If you can spare two to three hours on one of the days to help greet and check in families, it would be greatly appreciated. Please contact the Church Office or email churchdirectory@live.com.

Visit the church web site:
www.cheshirecongregational.org
to keep up to date!

Outreach Update

May is a busy month for the Board of Outreach. May 10, Mothers Day, will be Blanket Sunday at First Congregational Church. We will offer members of the congregation the opportunity to purchase blankets for Church World Service for \$5 each. These blankets are always in demand both for disaster relief and also as aid to impoverished families throughout the world. Gift envelopes will be available in the pews on both May 10 and May 17, and if you wish to honor someone with your gift of blankets, gift cards will be available during coffee hour after both services on those Sundays.

Outreach will also host the coffee hour on May 10 to celebrate last month's mission trip to the Gulf Coast. Later in May, you are invited to Mississippi Night, May 21, with dinner at 6:30 followed by a presentation at 7:15 by those who went on the trip.

The Board of Outreach wishes to thank all those who provided Easter baskets for the offices of the Department of Children and Families in Waterbury, and those who brought their gently used shoes to church on April 19, to be sent with our barrel of school supplies and clothing to Haiti.

We also want to thank those who helped make Malawi Night such a success, especially Karen Gravino, Audrey Finkelstadt and Matt McCaffrey for their organizational help, and Don Lee for taking and posting the wonderful photos.

Confirmation Class Project

Did you know that in Connecticut, one person in eight does not have adequate health care insurance? Our church's 2009 Confirmation Class wants to do something about that!

On Saturday, May 2, the class will be on the church green accepting donations for AmeriCares Free Clinics in southwestern Connecticut. These clinics provide free quality health care for uninsured state residents.

Donations will be accepted from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please come to Church Drive on May 2 and help the Confirmation Class save a life!

Clark/Alexander Scholarship

The Clark / Alexander Scholarship fund provides a one-time award to one or more persons per year for any educational endeavor. The award is intended to support church members, relatives of church members, and friends of the church in any educational endeavor including, but not limited to, primary school, secondary school, college or university, advanced education and special educational needs.

Year 2009 scholarship applications are available in the church office. The deadline for returning them to the church is June 30. The recipients will be selected in August.

Christian Education in May

The Bible Journeys program for May continues to be Summary of Treasures in Heaven.

Thou Art, Room 8: Children will learn that Jesus is a servant leader. As they create a group cross, they learn ways that Jesus was a leader and ways that he was a servant. Children identify servant leaders in their church. They will glue pictures of these leaders to a church that reminds them that Jesus glues us together in one body although we are many people. Children learn that they can be servant leaders in the church and in their daily lives. They choose a servant leader card that they incorporate into a Servant Leader Collage that they create with the cross at the center, church leaders woven throughout, and bound together with the glue of Jesus.

Red Sea Productions, Room 9: Children learn that God wants them to be good stewards of their possessions. Through two stories, The Quilt Maker's Gift and The Rich Young Man, children come to understand that God wants them to have a Spirit filled attitude towards their possessions – one of generosity and contentment, not greed and selfishness. As they assemble paper quilt squares, they discover a Bible verse that can guide them in the stewardship of their possessions in their daily lives. A give-away activity helps children put in action what they have learned.

Desert Tales, Room 10: It is never too early to “train up a child” in God’s way of

handling money. Church giving, savings, expenses, spending, and giving generously are all aspects of good stewardship of money that will be addressed in this workshop. Through hands-on experiences with real money, children learn how to use three banks – Giving to the Church, Savings, and Expenses/Spending Banks– allowing them to live in God’s way and make thoughtful and responsible decisions about money. Children learn that everything they have belongs to God and God wants them to give the first part back to God in love.

Gospel Games, Room 11: Through the “Poor Woman’s Gift” story (Mark 12: 41-44) children hear that the poor woman was a good steward of her relationship with God. Her relationship with God was an everyday practice that resulted in her living her life with a generous spirit. She gave out of trust and faithfulness. Through another story, “The Flour Bag,” children hear of a poor modern day family who give their last bag of flour to the local food pantry.

Children learn that their daily relationship with God can result in having a generous spirit. Children put this in action by making Pancake Mix; during Coffee Hour on Children’s Sunday they will give out the mix they made in exchange for a donation of food for a food pantry. They see how their efforts and spirit can make a difference in someone else’s life.

Continued on the next page

9:00

Date	Thou Art	Red Sea Prod.	Desert Tales	Gospel Games
May 3	Grades 3 & 4	Week Off	Grades 5 & 6	Grade 2
May 10 *	Week Off	Grades 3 & 4	Grade 2	Grades 5 & 6

Note: This is a change, as we didn't have church school on April 5.

11:00

Date	Thou Art	Red Sea Prod.	Desert Tales	Gospel Games
May 3	Week Off	Week Off	Grades 5/6	Grades 2-4
May 10	Week Off	Week Off	Grades 2-4	Grades 5-6

Continued from the previous page

On Sunday, May 3, all 11:00 children (PS3-Grade 6) will be in Church School, not in the worship service. Please plan to be in attendance to help children prepare for Children's Sunday.

The dress rehearsal for Children's Sunday is Saturday, May 16. All children (Preschool 3 through 8th grade), teachers, shepherds, and helpers are needed at the rehearsal. The 9:00 church school will rehearse from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. The 11:00 church school will rehearse from 11:00 to noon.

Children's Day is Sunday, May 17. The children in our church school will all participate as worship leaders. The theme is "Treasures in Heaven." They will share how they used their Salt and Light grant money to further God's kingdom and support Heifer Project International.

Silver Lake Summer Camp: Even though it's a while before summer, it's time to start thinking about sending your

child to a session at our United Church of Christ camp, Silver Lake in Sharon, Conn. This is an overnight camp for children going into 4th grade through High School. For more information you can see the Christian Education Board in the Parlor or log on to <http://silverlake.ctucc.org>. For additional information, please speak to Debbie Gravell.

Summer Church School: Summer church school will be held from May 24 through Labor Day weekend. This year's theme will be God Sightings. Children will read some selected Old and New Testament stories using their Children's Bibles. We will have a similar program to last summer's, where we focused on Bible skills, prayer and life application of the Bible. Volunteer Teachers and helpers will be needed each week. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Pat Scinto at 271-1795. Please consider checking your calendar and volunteering

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for a Sunday in the summer. Participants are age 3 through second grade. Youth Helpers will be in fifth grade and up.

Confirmation Update: Confirmation Sunday is May 31, 2009, which is Pentecost. Parents and mentors will receive information about the final details of confirmation and when each student will be confirmed in early May. If you do not receive this information, please call Debbie Gravel. There will be a Confirmation picnic and rehearsal for families and mentors on Friday, May 29 at 6:30 p.m. behind the church, weather permitting. (Otherwise, inside.) Families of confirmands are asked to bring a salad, main dish or dessert to share; the church will provide meat and drinks. Please note that the mentors are our guests when you are thinking about portions.

Stepping Stones Youth Group Grade 5 & 6: We will meet on Friday, May 8, in the Parish Hall from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Watch your mailbox for a postcard with details.



Hospitalized?

If you or someone you know is in the hospital, please tell First Congregational Church. Federal privacy laws now forbid health care providers from informing others, including churches, when someone is admitted to the hospital. We want to care! But we can't do it without your help.

Youth Group News

Our High School Group is looking forward to our summer Mission Trip to Groton, Connecticut. We're staying close to home to save resources in these difficult economic times. We hope to set aside whatever we can for a more distant trip next year but for now, austerity is a good lesson!

Even though the trip isn't until July, those who plan to attend must be paid in full by May 15. Please see Roger Olander for scholarship information if needed.

The Middle School YUTES did not get to do the 30 Hour Famine and they are not invited to attend the Mission Trip. What's up with that? It looks like it's time for a special outing for Middle School YUTES only.

How about Whirlyball? This is a team game a little like Jai Alai played from bumper cars. (Really!) It doesn't quite compare to not eating for 30 hours, but it's something. Watch our web site for details.

The YUTES spent much of April planning and putting together our Youth Sunday service. It is our hope that the entire service, including our stories of faith, will be an inspiration to all.

We would like to offer a special thanks to our fantastic Praise Band and to our resource adults, who give so much time and spiritual energy to make our youth group such an uplifting component of church life.

‘Adopt’ a Flower Bed

The Board of Trustees invites individuals, families, or friends to adopt one or more of the church’s landscaped areas. You will be responsible for keeping your “adopted” area weeded from April



through November, and will be asked to help spread the (provided) mulch if mulching is done in your area. There’s no pruning; that will be

done by the Grounds Chair. Sign up on the poster on the lobby bulletin board.

Here are the areas for “adoption”:
Meeting House – front and south side;
Meeting House – north side; Connector and Parish Hall – front; Parish Hall – south side; Parish Hall – rear (west side); Triangle outside rear connector doors; Connector/Chapel – rear; Parsonage – front; Parsonage – sides; Parsonage – rear; Whiting House – south side; around the maple tree behind the benches on the back walk; the Memorial Garden (between the chestnut tree and Whiting House); the area around the two signs on the Green.

Annuals may be planted in some areas, but permission must be received beforehand, and the plants must be watered weekly.

All annual plantings must be removed before the first frost. If you have questions, please call Bill Eagleson at 271-2850 or Martha Lape at 272-9327.

UCC Event for Women

Celebration VIII, a United Church of Christ Women of New England event, will take place March 12-14, 2010 (next year). Join us in Burlington, Vt., for this special weekend. The theme is “Together Building Bridges...a time to break down and a time to build up” ...Ecclesiastes 3:3.

The Workshop Planning Committee has been hard at work and has created an impressive and varied list of forums and workshops for participants.

New and exciting intergenerational opportunities will be offered, and women of all ages are invited to enjoy uplifting worship, inspiring music, spiritual workshops, stirring speakers, energetic music, informative programs, and more.

See the web site for more information: www.uccwomenscelebration.org.

If you have questions about Celebration VIII or any previous Celebrations, ask Martha Lape or Karen Gravino, who have attended many times.

There will be a bus going from Connecticut. If you are interested in attending the Celebration and riding the bus, please let Martha know so she can see that you get the bus information when it is available.

**Visit the church web site:
www.cheshirecongregational.org
to keep up to date!**

Idea of Single Worship Service Is Tabled for Now

After the single worship service for Candidate Sunday on December 14, 2008, several Deacons and lay leaders received positive feedback from many congregation members about the possibility of having one worship service on Sunday morning.

Those who approached the various lay leaders spoke of the wonderful sense of unity they experienced on December 14. A common theme was feeling like one congregation, not a “9 a.m. congregation” or an “11 a.m. congregation,” not as “9 o’clockers” or “11 o’clockers,” but as one church family.

While serving as your Senior Deacon, I also listened to several members of your lay leadership suggest a range of reasons (beyond the enhanced sense of unity) to consider a single Sunday service (such as: stewardship of resources, and the chance to pursue adult education opportunities on Sunday morning).

The Deacons decided that we needed to address the idea of one versus two services. We deemed it crucial to begin this study of our own initiative, and well before our new Senior Minister arrived, so that it could be framed and pursued (as deemed appropriate) by the Deacons on behalf of the church. We wanted to assess the feasibility of one Sunday morning worship service, as well as to assess the feelings of the broader church via a truly congregational conversation. We knew it would likely be an involved study; one requiring great care and sensitivity.

To begin, the Executive Board formed a

small *ad hoc* team with representatives from Deacons, Christian Education, Music, Trustees, and Outreach, as well as other at-large members.

The *ad hoc* team met on April 1. After thoughtful discussion, the committee unanimously determined that this study should be tabled for the near future. Positive feelings about the single service on December 14 remain. And it makes sense to revisit this constructive, grassroots conversation later.

But the *ad hoc* committee felt that, for now, the church is best to focus on growing with our new Senior Minister and our current worship structure. I firmly believe that a unanimous decision on any subject, especially in the Congregational Church, is God speaking to us loud and clear!

We have a new, vibrant Senior Minister who is working with an already blessed staff. We have an incredible congregation, and only the Lord knows what He has in store for us. God will lead us... when we listen. And I believe the *ad hoc* committee *has* listened to what feels right at this moment.

As I have said before, I have no doubt that, with this parish family, which I have come to love, it will be the Lord’s decision in whatever we do.

Let us go forward to love and serve the Lord.

Ford Cole
Chair, Ad Hoc Committee on Worship

We Give Thanks

On behalf of my family and myself, I would like to express my gratitude for the outpouring of kindness and sympathy we received, after our mother Jan's passing. As our family seeks to find peace, we are comforted by the fact our church family keeps us in their hearts and prayers. The beautiful prayer shawl was a great way to begin our journey of peace.

Jana Priestley and Family

Our sincere thanks for the card signed by so many of our church friends. Our son's ongoing battle with cancer is now in its fourth year; the good news is that nothing new has appeared in a year, but he still has two tumors that must be battled. Thank you again to all for your thoughtfulness.

Betty and Roy Pritchard

Thank you so much for all of the visits, flowers, cards and food which have brightened my days since the March 13 surgery. You all certainly make me want to get well soon and return to the normal ding-a-ling routine.

Marianne Beckmann

[Editor's note: Marianne is the church's Handbell Director.]

Patty Syme and I thank you all for your prayers and caring during a difficult time. Patty can walk with a cane now and I am breathing normally. We love you all!

Dolores Bozzuto

Lectionary for May

Sunday, May 3: Acts 4: 5-12; Psalm 23; 1 John 3:16-24; John 10: 11-18.

Sunday, May 10: Acts 8: 26-40; Psalm 22: 25-31; 1 John 4: 7-21; John 15: 1-8.

Sunday, May 17: Acts 10: 44-48; Psalm 98; 1 John 5: 1-6; John 15: 9-17.

Sunday, May 24: Acts 1: 15-26; Psalm 1; 1 John 5: 9-13; John 17: 6-19.

Sunday, May 31: Acts 2: 1-21; Ekekiel 37: 1-14; Psalm 104: 24-35; Romans 8: 22-27; John 15: 26-27, 16: 4-15.

Milestones

In the life of our church family

Deaths

Janet Priestley, mother of Jana Priestley, March 2.

Jon "Butch" Mattson, brother of Dick Mattson, brother-in-law of Sue Mattson, March 22.

Marge Lombardi, friend of Jackie Cole, April 5.

Jeffrey Norback, son of Emma Norback, April 6.

Lawrence Bray, husband of Abby Bray, on April 17.

DeWitt E. Weschler, father of Rev. Alison McCaffrey, April 13.