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The Real Meaning of Stewardship

By Jeff Braun, Senior Minister

Some words have a clear meaning, and we know what they ask of us. Some words are received positively or, at least, without reservations or baggage. And some words do not feel falsely confined or limited to a particular season. *Some* words.

But not stewardship.

For many churches, many Christians, stewardship refers to that month or so in the fall when, through our pledges, we seek to raise the funds to meet our annual church budget. It's usually not a season we look forward to, inspiring more ambivalence than enthusiasm.

And often, the season and the whole process of pledging feel cut off from our lives of faith, like something we do *apart* from our Christian witness rather than as a tangible expression of it.

For many, this is what stewardship has become. Yet, if we retrace the word, which dates back to the 15th century, we discover a distinctly different meaning. We begin to reclaim what stewardship can mean to us as Christ's disciples. And, perhaps surprisingly, we allow our pledge-

making to inspire not reticence but, rather, *passion*... a deepened sense of involvement, and an emboldened sense of faith.

Stewardship means the conducting, supervising, or managing of something – *especially* the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.

As Christians, what has been entrusted to us is the Church – that glorious, multi-limbed, multi-generational body of believers that continues Christ's ministry. And the one who entrusted it to us... was Christ.

So, it is to Jesus that we commit ourselves through our pledges. It is his holy work we support, his holy home our dollars sustain — whether that home is the physical sanctuary in which we worship or the figurative sanctuary our Outreach provides.

Seeing stewardship not as it's been seen, but, rather, in it's original (and liberating) sense — *that* is our opportunity. That is

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what will inspire us to pledge not apart from our faith, but as a deeply satisfying expression *of our faith*. Remembering what's been entrusted to us, and the One who entrusted it, let us pledge... thankful, empowered, and with *passion*.

God's Peace,
Jeff



New Member Orientation

The Membership Committee invites all who would like to explore membership in First Congregational Church to join us for a new member orientation class on Saturday, October 3. Those who decide to join will be received into membership on Sunday, October 18. There will be a reception between the services to honor the new members.

Child care will be provided for both of these events. Anyone seeking information about joining the church should talk with an usher, minister, or Membership Committee member (identified by green ribbons on the name tag) or call the church office at 203-272-5323.



Caring Crafts

Caring Crafts will meet on October 26 at 7 p.m. at Donna Mead's home, 15 Conifer Drive, Hamden. All are invited to come and bring whatever projects they are working on. If you need directions to Donna's house, call her at 248-9576.

October Worship Schedule

Sunday, October 4: World

Communion Sunday; services at 9 and 11. Jeff Braun preaching. Food offerings will be collected. The food of the month is canned fruit.

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

Sunday, October 18: New Members Sunday; services at 9 and 11. Jeff Braun preaching.

Sunday, October 25: Services at 9 and 11; Jeff Braun preaching.

Directory Nearly Done

The Membership Committee thanks the more than 200 members and friends whose pictures were taken for the upcoming church directory, either by the Lifetouch staff or by Don Lee or Mark Hall. The final group of photos was taken on Homecoming Sunday.

The Committee is now completing the roster to be included in the directory. It will include all current members and friends of First Congregational Church. All material will be finalized and sent to Lifetouch soon. We can expect to receive copies of the directory for distribution in early November.

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

‘Always There!’

A faith journey never reaches a point of conclusion. If you share an experience similar to mine, your journey has been filled with many ups and downs. We don't arrive one day with all the answers, and exist thereafter with God's purity and complete spiritual understanding. However, it may be this point of recognition in our own human condition that provides the building blocks for a faithful life.

We cannot build our faith by leading with our own self-interest. We need to open our hearts and take a step away from ourselves. Or better yet, we need to step toward God with an open heart. This awareness clearly defines the definition of "faith" to me.

For me, the first step in any faith-building life experience has not been a jump with both feet. It more resembles sticking out one foot, then covering your eyes and waiting for the outcome. Or better yet, just not believing at all!

Despite my doubts and desire to control, my initial bottomless faith step has landed on the Spirit's solid ground every time. And for this, I am grateful to God. I believe each of us shares a common path in this respect. We challenge, and most likely look for reasons or a "way out" in believing. And that is OK! But I think as most of us look to nurture our faith by taking baby steps, we grow and hopefully push our comfort level a bit more each time. We want to build our faith.

Pledging is a personal and respected matter for each of us. But frankly, it is no different than the first time you started to desire a faithful life and God's word. I am guessing it was you alone at some point who said, "I want God in my life." You made a commitment. You changed your life. You opened your heart to God and took the first bottomless step.

When it comes to our personal finances, the bottomless step may appear to extend off a cliff, not just a curb. After all, we are talking about the resources that help us survive. The wonderful thing is, God does not pass judgment on the amount of dollars flowing from our wallets. All God is hoping for is an open and faithful heart directed toward him from each of us.

He is waiting for us to turn or step toward him. In my view, a pledge is a personal consideration of "faith dollars," not just our consumable currency. There is a personal message that accompanies a pledge, declaring, "I believe." Another step towards God. A pledge of \$1 can build the same "faith dollars" as a person pledging 10 times more. It may even create more "faith dollars" if his or her finances only allow for such an amount. This year, when you prayerfully consider a pledge, keep in mind your dollars may carry much more value than you could ever "cash in." I am quite confident God will not upgrade his lifestyle with the proceeds of our open and faithful hearts!

*Bill Mann
For the Board of Stewardship*

We're Looking for Christmas Fair Baskets

Your help is needed for our Christmas Fair! One of the attractions at this year's fair will be gift baskets of all kinds. We'd love it if each church family would donate a gift basket. Get creative! Build it as a family project.

We are looking for baskets with a theme (for example: Lego blocks, art supplies, hobby items, chocolate, coffee, handcrafted items, books) or themes with no basket (sand pail filled with beach supplies, Christmas box with ornaments, restaurant gift certificate with a bottle of wine, grocery gift card with a reusable shopping bag, baby supplies in a diaper bag, etc.)



Here are three ways to help.

1. Creative: you build the basket, deliver it to church, ready for bidding.
2. Not so creative: if you are not feeling creative, but would like to help, we can build a basket, box or pail with items you donate.
3. Wannabe creative: if you'd like to be a category 1 person but don't know where to begin, join us with your supplies on Tuesday, November 17 at 7 p.m. in the Parish Hall for a class on building beautiful gift baskets. After building a basket for the Christmas Fair, you'll be ready to create beautiful, individualized baskets for everyone on your Christmas

list! RSVP to Patti Dickinson (271-7003) to hold your spot and for a supply list.

Please consider supporting our church's fair by donating a finished basket or ingredients for a basket. Donations of baskets and supplies will be ongoing from now until November 22. Finished baskets will be accepted through November 30. For basket delivery or questions please contact Patti Dickinson at pdickinson4b@cox.net or 271-7003.



Christmas Fair Requests

The group planning this year's Christmas Fair is looking for several common household objects. Can you donate? There will be a box in the church parlor. What's needed are: Coffee cans, with lids, any size; cookie tins; Christmas-themed mugs; and dried beans (pink, red, black, pinto, or kidney). Those with questions may call Jan Cowles at 272-8441.



New Group for Women

A new group, the Wednesday Women's Workshop, has been formed. We meet every Wednesday in the Church Parlor at 12:30 p.m. If you would like to join us, bring your lunch and a craft you are working on, and be prepared to join in the fellowship and fun. If you don't have a craft and would like to learn how to knit or crochet, we will be happy to teach you.

Notes from the Executive Board

At the September Executive Board meeting:

The Trustees evaluated the pros and cons of each option for use of the Parsonage. They looked at all the benefits and risks, including items such as costs to prepare and maintain the property; projected taxes and revenue; the existing real estate sales or rental market at this time; administration; and the impact on the church and the community.

After much discussion and evaluation, Trustees decided that the Parsonage will not be rented at this time, and will be used by the church only on an as-requested basis. Each request will be reviewed and approved by Trustees.

Since this is a churchwide issue that crosses many boards and committees, and this decision means that the Parsonage will not be providing a revenue stream as originally thought, Executive Board members approved a recommendation by Trustees to not use the Parsonage except for specific internal activities during the next 6-12 months. The issue will be revisited in six to 12 months by the Trustees.

An update on Safe Church activities was given by Trustees and Christian Education: A church-service fire drill was completed during a regular Sunday service.

The new faculty have arrived for church school. This entails a great deal of activities such as orientation, distribution of safe and nurturing policies and

guidelines, name tags, monitoring of hallways during church school, and physical considerations such as reinforcing safety precautions and food handling policies around the flu season and the H1N1 virus.

A defibrillator is being ordered for the church.

The idea of so-called “e-giving” (paying pledges electronically) is still being evaluated. Information received from the United Church of Christ has raised a number of questions; they are being looked into. The UCC policy will not be finalized until this month, and our church can’t move ahead easily until this information is available.

There will be significant changes to the Christmas Fair this year. A committee of 15 to 20 people is planning for new and creative activities like the sale of Christmas trees on the green during the fair; photos with Santa; a place for children to buy gifts for their parents; cookie decorating; and sale of wreaths. Also there will be a central spot for handling of money. The event is focused on bringing the community into the church. The Fair will be held Saturday, December 5.

Dates of upcoming congregational meetings are:

- Sunday, December 6 – vote on final budget.
- Sunday, January 24, 2010 - Annual Meeting (snow date is Monday, January 25).

Christian Education in October

Bible Journeys: Grades 2 – 6: This workshop rotation for children and youth who have entered grades 2-6 this school year. Children will know what workshop they will go to by the schedule below, the Sunday Bulletin, or the Bible Journeys Board in the hallway across from Room 8.

Grades 3-6 will go to class when dismissed from the church. Grade 2 at the 9:00 service only will leave for Chapel in the early part of the service. After Chapel they will go with their Shepherds to their Bible Journeys workshop. Parents may find their children in the classroom listed in the bulletin at the end of Church School. Grade 2 at 11:00 will go directly to their Bible Journeys workshop room from the sanctuary. October's focus will be "the Miracles."

Thou art, Room 8: The children will build a graham cracker house to act out the story of the paralytic who was let down through the roof. The children will learn that Jesus showed he had God's power to heal and forgive. The other concept will be that we show our faith by helping and praying for others.

Red Sea Productions, Room 9: Children will be able to recall the facts of the story of the feeding of the 5,000 through acting out the event. Children will read the Bible story and then use a play about the feeding to act out the passage.

Desert Tales, Room 10: Children will learn the story of Jesus' calming the storm and songs about miracles. This is a music workshop. A CD or tape will be available.

Gospel Games, Room 11: Children will learn about the miracles of Jesus through use of computer programs. They will think about and define miracles and relate and recognize God's miracles in their lives.

Stepping Stones Grade 5 and 6 Youth Group: This group meets on the second Friday of each month October through May from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall. This is a fellowship group designed for children in grades 5 and 6 to get to know one another and work together to help others while having fun. Leaders this year are Joyce and Steve Mullholland, Mark Sprankel, Kerrie Dunne and Kate Hall.

The first meeting is Friday, October 9 at 7. We will gather in the Parish Hall or outside, weather permitting. If it is not raining, there will be a firepit and s'mores making as well as get-to-know-you games. If it is raining, we will have a special dessert inside and play games. Please bring a bag of Halloween candy to give to the Cromwell Children's Home. The group will put together pumpkin buckets for each unit at the home. Bring your great ideas for fun during the year in Stepping Stones, and a friend if you desire.

Included in the mailing to each house will be a health form. All children participating must bring this completed health form. If you do not receive a mailing with a health form please contact

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9:00

Date	Thou Art	Red Sea Prod.	Desert Tales	Gospel Games
Oct. 4	Week Off	Grade 2	Grades 5 & 6	Grades 3 & 4
Oct. 11	Grades 3 & 4	Week Off	Grade 2	Grades 5 & 6
Oct. 18	Grades 5 & 6	Grades 3 & 4	Week Off	Grade 2
Oct. 25	Grade 2	Grades 5 & 6	Grades 3 & 4	Week Off

11:00

Date	Thou Art	Red Sea Prod.	Desert Tales	Gospel Games
Oct. 4	Worship	Worship	Worship	Worship
Oct. 11	Grades 3 & 4	Grade 2	Grades 5 & 6	Week Off
Oct. 18	Grade 2	Grades 5 & 6	Grades 3 & 4	Week Off
Oct. 25	Grades 5 & 6	Grades 3 & 4	Grade 2	Week Off

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the church office or go online at www.yutes.org and download a health form to bring that night.

Snack and Juice Supply: Three-year olds through 1st 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 which have no nuts are: nut free varieties of Chips Ahoy, Oreos, Teddy Grahams, Vanilla Wafers, and Lorna Doone.

Families whose last name begins with C and D bring juice and cookies in October. Families E, F, and G, in November. Families H, I, and J, in December.

Yutes News

The Yutes have kicked off a new year, and are hoping it's a great one. We have a bunch of exciting and fun events in the works so keep an eye on our web site, www.yutes.org, for news and details about our events. A special thanks to Emily, Livia, and Patricia for taking a part in making our church homecoming event a huge success!

Upcoming dates: October 4 – Zip-line canopy tour in Middletown. October 7 – Game night! 6 to 8 p.m. October 11 – No meeting; Columbus Day weekend. October 18 – Regular meeting with dinner at 5 p.m. (Parent pot-luck) October 25 – Regular meeting with dinner at 5 p.m.

For the parent pot-luck on October 18, at least one parent of each Yutes member is expected to attend. We'll all share dinner together, then the Yutes will have a program while parents stay in the parish

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hall for an important meeting regarding our program year, expectations, and other fun stuff. Junior high families bring a salad (pasta or lettuce) and senior high families bring a main dish.

Other ways to stay connected: Search for "Cheshire Yutes" on Facebook. Become a friend and make sure you indicate whether you are in junior high, senior high, or a parent. E-mail Todd at Cheshireyutes@gmail.com.



Advent Meditation Booklet

You are invited to take part in creating a booklet of Advent meditations for each of the days of the four weeks of Advent, the season of preparation and watchful waiting for God. A scripture is provided for you as the basis for your submission, which can be your own words or a favorite story or poem, an original drawing – whatever speaks to your heart of this season will surely speak to the hearts of others.

Alison McCaffrey will collect the submissions into a booklet that will be available congregation-wide on the first Sunday in Advent, November 29. Look for the sign-ups and instructions on the sign-up table in the lobby.

**In the hospital?
Please tell the church!
Under federal law, hospital's can't
tell us that you are a patient.**

'7 @ 7' Fellowship Dinners

Getting to know fellow church members and friends in our large and ever changing congregation is a daunting task; some might even say, impossible. But God calls us to be a church

community in the richest sense of the word. And what better

way to do this than to enjoy warm and welcoming fellowship over a shared meal!



During October, fellowship dinners, called "7 @ 7," will be held all across the geographical terrain of our church membership, our "Church Life Communities" (CLC's). You are invited to sign up to share a meal with six to eight others who live in your CLC. Hosts and hostesses are ready to welcome you; won't you say yes? Sign up on the sheets in the lobby or by calling the church office. The dinners will be held again in January and April. Questions? See Alison McCaffrey.



Join Us for Cleanup

Fall cleanup day is Saturday, November 21, from 9 a.m. to noon. (The bad-weather date is the next Saturday, November 28). You are invited to join our church family to help clean up our church grounds. All groups and all ages are invited to participate. Please bring rakes, blowers, tarps, wheelbarrows and other tools for the removal of leaves.

The Board of Trustees

‘What Unites Us’ – in Photos

Our third annual photography show celebrates the bonds that unite us in relationship with God and one another. We invite all members and friends of First Congregational Church to submit photos that capture the bonds that we hold in common. New this year, we expand the circle of community and invite the members and friends of all our Cheshire churches and synagogues to join us in offering their photographic expressions on this theme.

Our gala reception will be an uniting expression of community as we open our doors on the evening of November 14 and celebrate our common bonds.

Our theme this year is “What Unites Us.” Be on the lookout for expressions of



what you believe unites us as human beings; what are things that we share in common, that give

joy, that speak to our hearts. Take a photograph. Or, you may choose to submit a photo previously taken.

Develop your photo – color, or black and white. If possible, please mount your photo on a background of your choice (matte board, foam board). Submit your photo, any size between 4x6 and 11x14, including a one-sentence description, by Sunday, October 25.

Join us for the showing and gala reception on Saturday evening, November 14 in the Parish Hall from

6 to 8 p.m. All ages and skill levels are invited to participate, amateurs to professionals; anyone can use a camera. Friends, families, and neighbors may participate; all are welcome. This is not a contest, but a time to share in the beauty and diversity of our relationship with God and one another through the arts.



Women’s Book Group

The women's book discussion group meets the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m. for fellowship and stimulating discussion of books chosen by the group. Selections for the next three months are:

October 5: “Here If You Need Me” by Kate Braestrup; November 2: “The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court” by Jeffrey Toobin; December 7: “Skipping Christmas” by John Grisham. You are invited to come when you can, having read the book or not. If you are interested, please e-mail Martha Lape at mlape@aol.com so she can include you in the announcement of host home (with directions).



Trustee Thanks

The Board of Trustees thanks all “flower bed adopters” for the care given to your selected areas. Our grounds have looked especially nice all summer long. We also extend a special thank-you to the DePaolo family for the donation to cover the cost of a wall of new cabinets in Debbie Gravell's office. This will give Debbie more storage and a work area.

Malawi Benefit Concert

The sixth annual Malawi benefit concert and silent auction will take place on Sunday, November 22, at 7 p.m. Our own Robin Sellati will once again share her musical talents and those of her gifted young students.

Amy Webb will update us on this year's successes in our ministry to children orphaned by AIDS in the African country of Malawi.

Other surprises are being planned. Arts and crafts donated by members and friends of the congregation will be auctioned, and refreshments will be served.

Those wishing to donate new arts and crafts for auction please contact Amy Webb or Don Lee. Please bring friends, relatives, neighbors, and perhaps one of our senior members who cannot drive after dark.



Memorial Music Sunday

Every year, the Memorial Music Sunday service honors the memories of those who have died. The Senior Choir sings an extended choral work that offers hope, comfort, and inspiration to the congregation. This year's Memorial Music Sunday will be November 1 at a single 10 a.m. service. The music will be Leonard Bernstein's beautiful "Chichester Psalms," for choir, soloist, organ, harp, and percussion, as well as other anthems written by American composers.

Fall Rummage Sale

The fall rummage sale will be Friday, October 23, from 1 to 6 p.m. and Saturday, October 24, from 9 to noon in the Parish Hall. Saturday's sale is a "Fill a Bag" event.

Help is needed for setup on Tuesday, October 20, Wednesday, October 21, and Thursday, October 22, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and between 7 and 9 p.m. For more information, call Sherry Kovalesky at 271-9860. Helpers are also needed on Saturday afternoon to pack up items that didn't sell.

Donations of clean clothing, household items, toys, books, CD's, sporting equipment and jewelry may be placed on the stage starting at noon on Monday, October 20 (and please – not before then). The donation period will end Thursday at noon. No heavy or big items, please. Paper grocery bags and cardboard boxes are also appreciated.



Thanksgiving Dinners

Coming in mid-October to an Outreach bulletin board near you: Thanksgiving basket sign-up. Your generosity is greatly appreciated by the families that receive your Thanksgiving dinner fixings and turkeys.

Milestones

In the Life of Our Church Family

Baptisms:

Gianna Karyn Silas, the child of Robert and Marisa Silas, on June 28 by Jeff Braun.

Cadence Reese Fasano, the child of Marc and Kara Fasano, July 19 by Alison McCaffrey.

Austin Blake Mosebach, the child of Kelly Ann Mosebach, July 19 by Alison McCaffrey.

Ava Whitney Watts, the child of Whitney and Gina Watts, on August 2 by Alison McCaffrey.

Weddings:

Erin Casey and Eric Pope, June 6; Alison McCaffrey officiating.

Cassie Novak and David Maliar, June 19; Alison McCaffrey officiating.

Krissy Sienkowski and Jordan Dorsey, July 18; outside clergy officiating.

Bernadette Luster and Michael Cropp, July 18; Alison McCaffrey officiating.

Deaths:

Bob Montgomery, husband of Jane Montgomery, September 2.

Edward Kiely, father of Lynn Ryan, September 5.



We Give Thanks

I wish to thank the church for the flowers and also the visit by Deacon Peter Gadsby celebrating my 94th birthday.

Robert E. Moseley

I would like to thank the entire congregation for the special reception I received on Sunday, July 12. It's a day I will always remember. A special thanks goes out to Karl Stephan for his kind words and his presentation of the church softball team photo. I'll always treasure it! Thanks also to all the players who signed it along with your thoughtful comments. Ten years as coach of our church softball team – it's hard to believe! God willing, I hope to continue as coach for 10 more.

Hugh Larson

I want to thank all my fellow church members for the support and help I have received since returning home. The many cards and calls, as well as the dinners brought by Pam Euerle and Bobbie Porter, made my homecoming so much easier. Also, the beautiful prayer shawl will be a constant reminder of your support. I am blessed to be part of such a caring church.

Abby Bray

Lectionary for October

Sunday, October 4: Job 2: 1-10; Psalm 26; Genesis 2: 18-24; Psalm 8; Hebrews 1: 1-4; 2: 5-12; Mark 10: 2-16.

Sunday, October 11: Job 23: 1-17; Psalm 22: 1-15; Amos 5: 6-15; Psalm 90: 12-17; Hebrews 4: 12-16; Mark 10: 17-31.

Sunday, October 18: Job 38: 1-7; Psalm 104: 1-9, 24, 35; Isaiah 53: 4-12; Hebrews 5: 1-10; Mark 10: 35-45.

Sunday, October 25: Job 42: 1-17; Psalm 34: 1-8; Jeremiah 31: 7-9; Psalm 126; Hebrews 7: 23-28; Mark 10: 46-52.