

TIDINGS



First Church of Christ, Congregational
UCC - United Church of Christ
190 Court Street
Middletown, CT

860-346-6657
firstchurchucc@sbcglobal.net
www.firstchurchmiddletown.org

Ministers, The Whole Congregation
Minister, Reverend Julia Burkey
Music Minister, Shari Lucas
Moderator, David Foster
Vice Moderator, Bonnie Brooks
Treasurer, Jen Cho
Secretary, Ellen Green
Member at Large, Therese Nivison
Church Administrator, Kortney Balsamo

Founded 1652 Resurrection 2017

From the Minister

Our Church Covenant from 1668:

"We doe in ye presence of God, the Holy Angells and this Assembly, take acknowledge and Avouch the one and onely true God, God the Father, Sone and Holy Ghost to bee our God, giving up ourselves and our children to him to be his people. Ingaging that we will walk with this God and one with another according to the rules of ye Gospell, Attending his Holy will made known to us in his word, that we will bee subject to ye Government of Christ and observe all those lawes yt he hath established in his Kingdome, soe far as hitherto he hath or hereafter shall be pleased to reveale ye same unto us. And particularly yt we will maintaine and diligently attend all his ordinances; obeying them that are over us in the Lord: that we will watch over one another and faithfully deale with and submits to one another in case of offence according as ower Lord hath commanded. All this we promise carefully to perform through the grace and strength of Christ. Grace."

Announcements?

Please send them to Kortney in the office at firstchurchucc@sbcglobal.net by Wednesday each week, so she can print them in the bulletin.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin:

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.
We are quite naturally impatient in everything
to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way to something
unknown, something new.
And yet it is the law of all progress
that it is made by passing through
some stages of instability—
and that it may take a very long time.
And so I think it is with you;
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
will make of you tomorrow.
Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing
that God's hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete

This is our Resurrection and Pentecost Season! The spirit of the living Christ leads us right into summertime. In review: On April 23rd we presented our Visioning Team, comprised of Suzanna Barrett, Heidi Foster Cho, Jim Miller, Catie Olinski, Dionne Raines, Joe Siry, and Jennifer Tortora, along with guidance from Rev. Julia and Moderator David Foster. Dionne began our worship service on April 23rd with a humorous metaphor, stating that the Visioning Team created an "app" for cell phones to provide us a GPS direction for the next few years. Dionne then led the children's message as they revealed the new proposed Mission of the church with signs, while Shari Lucas, our Music Minister, played the theme song to "Mission Impossible." Dionne closed the message by reminding us that the mission was "very possible!"

*Please send articles and news for Tidings
in the body of an email to Helen Evrard
here: hmejan2011@gmail.com · Thank*

During the sermon, members of the Visioning Team introduced the four elements of the Vision. Heidi Foster Cho read from the Gospel of John about doubting Thomas, as well as the minor prophet Habbakuk's encouragement to "write the vision." Moderator David Foster offered the vision and spoke about the scripture, after which Rev. Julia prayed. Jennifer Tortora gave a testimony about "Nourishment;" Suzanna Barrett gave a testimony about "Growing our idea of church;" Catie Olinski gave a testimony about "Revitalizing our youth offerings," and Jim Miller spoke about "launching a capital campaign to fund the vision." Heidi Foster Cho then closed the sermon time reminding all that this vision is the offering to God from the congregation, back to the congregation. Then a one-page summary of the vision was distributed during the offering. Joe Siry led the pastoral prayer. After worship we held a Second Hour where the Visioning Team fleshed things out and shared details on the process required to this place. On April 30th I preached about "walking together," the beginning of our new mission statement, taken from our 350 year old church covenant; during Second Hour we discussed "what will this vision cost?" On May 7th I spoke about "nourishment," and proposed that we begin to ask one another, "How do you become nourished? How do you nourish the world?" We then had a walking tour led by our church archivist Joyce Weybright, and learned details about the windows.

Every Sunday since Easter someone from the congregation - an honest human grappling with how the resurrection of Christ shows up in our daily lives - has shared a "resurrection moment." These moments are part of our vision, something we wish to emphasize and highlight with respect to what we are already doing. The four values we identified with our church are: "Courage, Connection, Curiosity, Compassion." It takes courage to speak from the heart in front of the congregation about our life-and-death experiences. These moments also show that our congregation has curiosity about one another, as well as the still-speaking voice of God, revealing herself.

The reason we've gone through this visioning process is to honor our 350 year-legacy of being church in Middletown together! The best way to honor our past is to be intentional about our future. Let us whole-heartedly go into summer time, walking together one with another, and with our God.

Blessings,

Rev. Julia

First Church
Middletown



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Our Mission: Who We Are

We walk together in the path of Jesus to create more good in the world by experiencing and embodying God's love, nourishing the divine spark in all people, and offering a spiritual home within and beyond our walls.

Our Values

Connection

Courage

Curiosity

Compassion

Our Vision: Where We Are Going

1. Nourish ourselves and each other
2. Grow our idea of church
3. Revitalize our youth offerings
4. Launch a capital campaign to fund our vision

Worship Schedule

June 4th, 2017 - Pentecost, we wore **red!**
Psalm 104: 24-34, Acts 2:1-21

June 11th, 2017 - Anne-Marie Cannata McEwen and Linda Choser heledp the 'Youth Gathering,' lead worship on the theme of Love.

June 18th, 2017 - Father's Day
Genesis 18:1-15 (21:1-7), Matthew 9:35-10:8, (9-23)

June 25th SUMMER WORSHIP BEGINS, 9:30am
 Outdoor Riverfront Service, "Wings on the River"

Sunday, June 25 at 9:30 a.m.
 Brownstone Riverfront Park
 284 Brownstone Avenue, Portland

Everyone is invited to the outdoor worship service on the last Sunday in June. This is the first shared summer service with Middletown's First Church of Christ and South Congregational Church. We will sit at the picnic tables under the pavilion, but feel free to bring lawn chairs and blankets if you want to sit in the sun. Beverages will be provided after the service, and you are welcome to bring a picnic lunch and enjoy the park and the great outdoors. In case of inclement weather, we will meet at The First Congregational Church of Portland for the service.

The Pick-up Choir will rehearse the anthem at 9:00 a.m. at the park. All are welcome to join the choir. Providing the message that day is Mary-Beth Kaeser from *Horizon Wings*, a non-profit *Wildlife Rehabilitation Center* specializing in birds of prey (www.horizonwings.org). Mary-Beth will talk about birds and their habitats. She will also bring a bald eagle, a red shoulder hawk, a barred owl, and a peregrine falcon for her presentation.

July 2, 9, 16, 2017 - First Church in Portland, 554 Main Street, with Rev. Sarah Vetter as Rev. Jane Hawken's Sabbatical Minister

July 23, 30, August 6, 2017 - South Church, 9 Pleasant Street, Middletown

August 13, 20, 27, 2017 - First Church, Middletown

September 3, 2017 - First Church Middletown, Joint Labor Day service

September 11, 2017 - Rally Sunday, church school begins

MAKE GLAD!

SUMMER CHURCH 2017

Rev. Julia Burkey, Rev. Thea Racelis, & Rev. Sarah Vetter will be leading a summer of lively worship! Musicians Kasha Breau, Shari Lucas, & David Yi invite you to join our **Summer Pick-Up Choir** that rehearses at **9 am**. *All voices welcome!*

5/25 - 9:30 am

Portland Riverfront Park and Pavilion

284 Brownstone Ave. | Portland, CT 06480

7/2, 7/9, 7/16 - 9:30 am

Worship at First Church, Portland

554 Main St. | Portland, CT 06480 | 860-342-3244

7/23, 7/30, 8/6 - 9:30 am

Worship at South Church, Middletown

9 Pleasant St. | Middletown, CT 06457 | 860-346-5006

8/13, 8/20, 8/27, 9/3 - 9:30 am

Worship at First Church, Middletown

190 Court St. | Middletown, CT 06457 | 860-346-6657

Vision Implementation: Summary

On April 23, 2017, we revealed the Vision!

Now that we have released our Vision, Mission Statement and Core Values, we face the sacred work of translating them into the life of the church. Here is a summary of past and ongoing steps in the process:

On May 3rd, 6 -7 pm, we shared our 350th celebration ideas with Joyce Weybright in the choir room.

On May 10th, 6 - 8 pm, we held a Vision Implementation Meeting, where The Vision Team handed things off to the Implementation Team and the Communications Team. All were welcome. This meeting began in the choir room, then moved to the upstairs classrooms in focus groups.

On May 17th, 6 - 7 pm, we held a meeting about Vision and 350th, to discuss the ways we want to celebrate the past based on our vision. Led by Joyce Weybright and Rev. Julia.

On May 21st, we held our Annual Meeting after church, where we discussed by-laws, budget and Vision Implementation.

On June 7th, 6 pm, in the choir room, Joyce Weybright held a 350th celebration meeting.

On June 11th at 9 am, Bill Roberts and Rev. Julia held a Youth Revitalization meeting

On June 15th, 6:30 pm, our Implementation Team will meet.

On July 13th at 6:30pm, our Implementation Team will meet.

On August 19th from 9:30-3:30, our Implementation Team will go on retreat

Over the summer we will lock down plans for a monthly celebration event for our 350th year!

Surveys:

Rev. Julia and the implementation team want to know how much ownership and buy-in the congregation feels they have around the Vision. The purpose of this process was to connect to the heart of the congregation, and we want to be united in one spirit as we walk together into our courageous and nourishing future. Last year around this time we took a church-wide survey, and on May 21st we will have another survey for people to fill out. Next year around this time we will have a 3rd survey. We want to be able to measure growth and transformation!



Dear First Church,

After much research and trying to do our best with the old databases (they were pretty out of date), we have taken the leap to use a new database system called BREEZE. This choice is aligned with our vision, in particular to stay *connected* and to "Grow Our Idea of Church." It truly is a breeze and will make our church lives more cohesive.

Here are some things we would like you to know about Breeze:

-It's our new user friendly database that offers members of the congregation a chance to create and update their own profiles.

-Our office minister Kortney just sent another round of invitations to each member of the congregation that still haven't signed up. Please be on the lookout in your inbox and spam folders. Click on the link and follow the directions to create a profile.

If for some reason, you do not receive an email invitation to Breeze, let Kortney know by emailing her at firstchurchucc@sbcglobal.net or calling 860-346-6657. It is very important that all of the information is accurate and up to date, and if you do not wish for other to see your contact information, there are privacy settings.

Look in your email inbox for "breeze invitation"

Here's to staying connected and growing our idea of church!

Nourish Your Soul

Come to Sacred Space Meditation starting this Thursday from 12:15 to 1 pm in The Sanctuary. We began this practice during Holy Week and want to continue it as a source of nourishment for the soul. This will be happening every Thursday!

Begin to ask yourself, "How hungry am I for spiritual nourishment? How do I become nourished? How do I nourish others? What are my gifts for nourishing the world?"

Come and experience the peace and beauty of the sanctuary, an oasis of quiet space just off Main Street. The pace of daily life can be stressful. To offer a refuge and a respite for a while is the mission of First Church as it opens its doors at lunch time every Thursday. The church doors on Court Street will be propped open so anyone who wants to can come in and spend some time in solitude.

What: S'mores

When: September 1st

**Where: The Foster Residence
330 Parmelee Hill Road
Durham , CT 06422**

Stay connected to each other over the summer by coming to the Foster's on a Friday night for a Summer bonfire with s'mores and fun treats for adults.

Summer Fellowship Opportunities



What: Summer Solstice Potluck and Bonfire

When: June 21st from 6-8:30pm

**Where: Drewniany Residence
425 Butternut Street
Middletown, CT 06457**

ALL ARE WELCOME! Come for an Easy potluck on the evening of the solstice. Come sit by the bonfire with good food and fellowship. Bring your own drinks.



What: Summer Picnic

When: July 9th at 6pm

**Where: The Miller Residence
143 Margarite Road
Middletown, CT 06457**

Stay connected to each other over the summer by coming to the Miller's on a Sunday night for a Summer potluck picnic.

Circles of Connection:

Connect with Suzanna T. Barrett (stamminen@wesleyan.edu) or Vickey Allen (vicky.allen@gmail.com) about beginning a Circle - our new way of saying "small group" - that will meet 5 times with at least 5 people on any topic you'd like this Spring and Summer. Reach out to Kortney in the office if you are interested. You can call 860-346-6657 or email firstchurchucc@sbcglobal.net



Staff Summer Schedule:

Rev. Julia will be away June 22-26th, and June 29-July 5th attending the UCC National Synod. Shari Lucas and Rev. Julia are taking vacation in the month of July and will be back to lead worship in August. Kortney will be in the office on Wednesdays during the summer weeks and available by appointment and over phone or email. She will be away on vacation the week of August 14th - August 18th.

Vacation Bible School:

Bill Roberts and helpers will lead a VBS the week of August 14th Monday-Friday from 9am-12pm. Kids up through 8th grade are welcome to join!

Special Fall Choir Event, September 2017

The choirs of First Church will combine with the Heartbeat Dixieland Jazz Band to sing in worship on Sunday, September 24 and again at Comcast during the Rev. Bantum Gospel Hour on Monday, September 25. The Heartbeat Dixieland Jazz Band has been delighting audiences for years with their traditional New Orleans style jazz, and often plays jazz services in churches throughout CT. We are inviting the public to join the choir for this special event. Rehearsals will be held on Mondays and Wednesdays, September 11, 13, 18 and 20. It's asked that those who wish to sing attend at least two rehearsals. For more information, contact Shari Lucas, the Minister of Music at First Church, at shari.lucas@sbcglobal.net.

In Historic Vote, Three Conferences Vote to Move Toward Union

By Tiffany Vail

Associate Conference Minister for Communications

HARTFORD, CT - The Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island Conferences of the United Church of Christ voted decisively on Saturday to move ahead toward forming a new combined Conference, so that they may have a stronger voice speaking for justice and may more effectively carry out mission and ministry together.

The votes, taken at the first-ever joint annual meeting of the three bodies, mean that Conference leaders will now develop a formal proposal for a new Conference which will be brought before a second joint Annual Meeting a year from now in Springfield, MA.

"I am proud of you," United Church of Christ General Minister and President The Rev. John Dorhauer told those gathered following the votes. "Your yes today matters, and your yes today casts a vision for the future that was not otherwise available to you. And, my covenant promise to you is that the entire denomination will walk side-by-side with you on whatever journey unfolds."

The votes were taken at separate, simultaneous Conference plenary sessions on the afternoon of Saturday, June 17, at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford. More than 1,000 people - lay and clergy from the three Conferences - gathered for the two-day meeting, with most of their time spent together in worship, joint plenary, hearings and shared meals. The Massachusetts and Connecticut votes were nearly unanimous; Rhode Island delegates approved the measure by a wide margin. ([Read a sampling of questions and comments made at a joint plenary before the vote here.](#))

"I believe that the impact of the United Church of Christ in Southern New England was enhanced today by the affirmative votes of our three conferences," said The Rev. Barbara Libby, Interim Conference Minister of the Rhode Island Conference. "Now that we know, we can move ahead to put flesh on the bones of this imagined new conference. What a unique and awesome opportunity we have as we move into the future together."

In the months, weeks and hours leading to the vote, Board members and the three Conference ministers shared their vision for a new organization that can make a greater impact on local churches, their communities, and the world.

"As some of our churches approach their 400th anniversary, the United Church of Christ is doing a new thing," said Massachusetts Conference Minister and President the Rev. Dr. Jim Antal following the meeting. "We are discovering unity without uniformity while we celebrate diversity without division. Today we affirmed the ties that bind. In the coming year, we will explore the power and possibility of a collective voice and vision."

The boundaries of the conferences of the United Church of Christ have not changed since the 1970s. Dorhauer told delegates earlier in the day that the entire denomination was watching with interest to see what would happen in southern New England. If delegates in 2018 approve the new Conference proposal, it will then be presented to General Synod, the national gathering of the UCC, in 2019.

After the vote, several staff and board members said much work lies ahead in working out what the new Conference would look like.

"Let us together, as one, respond with the Gospel of Jesus Christ to face the challenges that lie ahead," said Connecticut Conference Minister The Rev. Kent Siladi. "Come, Holy Spirit, come."



June 30-July 4, 2017 | Baltimore, MD

In June 2017, thousands from across the country (and abroad) will gather for General Synod 31 in Baltimore, Maryland. Together, we will discern resolutions of witness, church structure, and function. We will stand up for issues that demand a faithful witness. And we will join together in worship each day to lift up the Stillspeaking God. Rev. Julia will attend this with the Next Generation Leadership Initiative; a leadership program aimed at training and empowering ministers under 40. They also pay for Rev. Julia's travel, accommodations, food and registration for Synod, so it is a huge gift to the church and our pastor.

Open Sundays for Memorial or Dedication Flowers

We have two Sundays available for memorial or dedication flowers to be placed on the communion table in the sanctuary. The first is August 27, and the second is September 17. Please contact Chuck Bates (c.p.bates@gmail.com; 860-344-1832; or after worship any Sunday) to reserve this date. We ask for a donation of \$50 to cover costs, but please don't let the cost be an issue to requesting memorial flowers. Scholarships are available.

October 2018 - Church Retreat?

Potential All-Church Retreat, Incarnation Center, Ivoryton, CT, October 26-28, 2018, who would want to come? If we guarantee 100 people, we get a great price and the whole grounds to ourselves.