

TIDINGS

Resurrection 2018

Gestation: Preparing to Celebrate



A publication of
First Church of Christ, Congregational
United Church of Christ
190 Court Street, Middletown, CT

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Treasurer, Jen Cho
Clerk, Kari Sullivan
Member at Large, Therese Nivison
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Wish to share an announcement?

Please send it to Kortney, our Office Manager, at firstchurchucc@sbcglobal.net by Wednesday each week so she can include it in the weekly bulletin.

Minister's Note

"May the nourishment of the earth be yours, may the clarity of light be yours, may the fluency of the ocean be yours, may the protection of the ancestors be yours."

- John O'Donohue, "Beannacht"



Happy Easter! On the first of this month we observed Christ rise from the tomb, resurrected into wholeness with God. Sometimes resurrection happens slowly, like watering a planted seed, gestating in the earth. Our month of April will be one of gestation, preparing to celebrate.

New life is all around us. The crocuses and daffodils are blooming. The sun brightens the sky for more hours. At church, our Vision Fund prepares this month to burst into full bloom on April 29th with a big celebration at the Elk's Club after church: everyone is invited and it is totally free celebration of our common lives together. Child care, free dinner, ice-cream Sundays, meaningful party favors, rides for people after church will all be provided. On June 10th we will then have a Birthday Party for the church, and every Sunday in between we will celebrate our common life together as a church!

This month of April 2018 we prepare for a season of celebration. In our 350th year of celebrating the covenant that binds us together, we are honoring our past and shaping our future. Lent held space for us to explore how we participate in the wounds of the world. We explored moments in our church history where the congregation and pastors participated in systems of oppression, through several history-themed Second Hours and a collaborative event with the Middletown Racial Justice Coalition and the Middlesex Historical Society. We heard Lenten Confessional Testimonies where individuals confessed on behalf of the whole, ways we perpetuate the wounds of the world and how we seek to turn back to God. The deep theological significance of our Lenten time was to allow us to understand ourselves as part of sin and wounding, not separate from it or above it, so that we can claim ourselves as healers. This time together took courage and we have courage in spades.

After journeying through Lent and encountering how we are complicit in the wounds of the world, we will hold space for a Truth and Reconciliation Ceremony. Special guest Rev. Juan Carlos Areán, a pastor and peace activist, will lead us in ritual, meditation and circle discussion on how atonement and forgiveness can heal historical and personal trauma on April 22nd. On this Earth Day celebration we will re-dedicate ourselves to living lives of love and healing the face of the earth.

When we thought we were alone, God sent her sweet spirit among us. Thanks be to God! Let us imitate the first blossoms of springtime and arise from the once frozen earth of winter. Let us spend time gestating, watering our seeds, and preparing to celebrate our 350 years, and being people of the resurrection!

For us, this unbelievable mystery of the resurrection, means new life springs all around us. Out of arbitrary violence, somehow, God brings the promise of Love. Out of grief and sadness, somehow, God brings abundant Life. Out of evil and hatred, somehow, God brings true wisdom of the Good. Out of oppression and suffering, somehow, God brings Justice and Liberation. We hold these promises in our heart: that the power of the Love of God is stronger than anything and this knowledge brings healing.

Blessings to you,

Rev. Julia Burkey

Reverend Julia Burkey
Pastor, First Church of Christ
Middletown, CT
revjuliaburkey@yahoo.com



UPCOMING EVENTS



You are invited to the

First Church Vision Fund Campaign Luncheon

**April 29th 12-4PM at the Elks Club Crystal Ballroom
44 Maynard Street, Middletown, CT**

On April 29th, we will launch our Vision Fund -- which is the name of our capital campaign -- with a 'Lavish Feast' Campaign Luncheon! The lavish part of the feast recognizes the abundant love God pours on us all the time. This is a family friendly event and all are welcome.

Child care, free dinner, ice-cream Sundaes, meaningful party favors, rides for people after church, and more will be provided.

RSVP to Mary Lou Brady by April 22 at mlbrady405@yahoo.com or 860-519-7816.



Mark your calendars, the Annual Meeting is approaching!

Annual Meeting Announcement

~ to be held Sunday, May 20th ~

Once a year, the church gathers to reflect on its past year, to elect new officers and committee members, and to collectively look forward to the future year to come. This is the Annual Meeting, which will be held on Sunday, May 20, following the worship service.

This year, in addition to elections, we will take time to review the progress on implementation of our new vision and look forward to next steps, as well as hear about upcoming activities in celebration of our 350th.

- David Foster, Moderator

Healing Historical Trauma Through Ancestral Atonement with Rev. Areán



April 22nd, 2018

Sermon and Circle Description

In November 2016, Rev. Areán was called to be part of a powerful spontaneous sacred ceremony in Teotihuacán, Mexico. A series of synchronicities guided him to ask for forgiveness for the historical atrocities committed by his people (the Spanish) upon the Aztecs and their land. In his sermon, Rev. Areán will share the story of how he ended up kneeling in front of an Aztec shaman / dancer, surrounded by a circle of Mexican and American fellow spiritual travelers, and the repercussions that this act has had in his life.

During Second Hour, Rev. Areán will lead a sacred circle, which will include ritual, meditation, discussion and space to practice individual and collective atonement and forgiveness.

Rev. Juan Carlos Areán is an ordained interfaith minister and an internationally recognized activist, public speaker, facilitator, published author, and documentary producer. He works as a Program Director for Futures Without Violence in New York City. Since 1991, he has worked on healing men across cultures (especially himself) to end gender-based violence and achieve gender and racial equity and justice. He is an active trainer, who has led hundreds of workshops and presentations throughout the United States, the Americas and the Caribbean, as well as in Europe, Asia, the US Congress and the United Nations in New York and Geneva.



May is for New Members!

In May, we'll be welcoming new members into the church! If you are interested in joining us in our 350th year, we invite you to attend the following events:

- **Sunday, May 6th - New Member Second Hour**, led by the congregation
- **Wednesday, May 16th at 6pm - New Member Dinner**, hosted at First Church
- **Sunday, May 20th - New member Sunday!** Officially become a member and tell the congregation about yourself and your journey to our church.

Fiftieth Anniversary
ORGAN CELEBRATION
Sunday, May 6th, 4:00PM at First Church
 190 Court Street, Middletown

First Church is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of its Austin Organ with a special Organ Concert showcasing the many ways the organ is used in worship and in the community. Minister of Music and organist Shari Lucas will play solo works by Bach, Mendelssohn and Widor.

- First Church's Senior Choir & Celebration Singers will sing anthems for organ, choir & congregation.
- Works for trumpet & organ, violin & organ and piano & organ.
- Wesleyan organ students share their talents.

The Concert is part of the 350th Anniversary Celebration of First Church.

ADMISSION IS FREE, but donations will be accepted to support the restoration of the organ to be done in 2019.





First Church UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

May 6th Organ Concert

You are invited to sing on Sunday, May 6 for our Fiftieth Anniversary Organ Celebration! Join our choirs as we learn two anthems for choir, organ, brass and congregation to celebrate the fiftieth birthday of our Austin organ.

We will have rehearsals for the concert pieces on Mondays April 23 and 30 at 6:15pm and Wednesdays April 25 and May 2 at 7:30pm The rehearsals would last about a half hour each time. You need to attend two rehearsals minimum. We will meet at 3pm sharp on Sunday, May 6 to run the anthems before the concert which begins at 4pm.

If you have questions please contact our Minister of Music, Shari Lucas, at shari.lucas@sbcglobal.net.

Vision Fund Update



Firstly, we have adapted the name “Vision Fund” rather than Capital Campaign because we think it better describes what we are doing. Rather than simply raising “capital”, First Church is trying to support our vision for the future.

The theme for the campaign is “Honoring our Past, Shaping the Future”. This theme ties together our 350th anniversary celebration with our vision for the future. In order for our congregation to be celebrating this 350 year history, our congregation, many times since 1668, has had to make challenging decisions, raise money, or alter our path to “Shape the Future”, based on how they saw the world at the time.

Our current vision has led us to identify five projects or programs which we hope will shape our future:

- Create vital programs for children and families;
- Update our building to accommodate the wide range of abilities of our members and visitors;
- Refurbish our pipe organ and update the sanctuary space for greater flexibility in use for First Church and others;
- Maintain and protect our stained-glass windows and exterior trim to preserve our historic building and help beautify downtown Middletown;
- Extend our vision to the wider community.

We have estimated the cost to do these projects (see project list below) and run the Vision Fund campaign at \$700,000. Based on our consultant, Jay Turbush’s estimation of our congregations giving capacity, we have set our Vision Fund Goal at \$550,000 with a stretch goal of \$600,000. We will seek out other sources of funding to successfully complete all projects.

Campaign Process

Under Dr. Terbush’s guidance, our Vision Fund team is following the process that he has used successfully at other churches. In January, he conducted a **Feasibility**

Study, both to determine the church's giving capacity and to confirm the commitment of the congregation to the identified projects.

In February and March our focus has been on **building a campaign team, selecting a theme and imagery, refining our list of members and friends, planning a kickoff event, and identifying key donors** who will commit early in the process to a significant portion of the goal, through an Advance Giving process.

In April, we will build enthusiasm that will culminate in the **Kickoff Event on April 29th** that signifies the beginning of our public fundraising campaign. In May, we will be **collecting pledges from all members and friends, leading up to a celebration event at the church on June 10th**.

Donors to the campaign will have three years to pay their pledge. Work on the planned projects will begin as early as this summer and continue through to completion.

Participation

One of the hallmarks of a successful campaign is that everyone associated with the church participates in some way. We will be asking everyone to make a financial commitment, recognizing that we all have different capacities to give and every gift is vital. We also are looking for additional volunteers to help with the campaign. These volunteer opportunities, like the campaign itself, will be relatively short in duration, but intense for that short time. Please contact Heidi Foster-Cho or Jim Miller if you are interested.

We have a particular need for the Family Giving Task Group. These are the folks who will visit members personally to answer any questions about the projects, various methods of giving, and collect pledge forms in a sealed envelope. Others who have done this in the past describe these visits as social in nature and rewarding – they are not high pressure sales calls! Volunteers for this group will attend a short training session on either April 26th at 6pm or April 28th at 9:30am.

We are grateful for the many who have already volunteered and recognize their commitment here:

- **Co-Chairs:** Heidi Foster-Cho, Jim Miller
- **Consultant:** Dr. Jay Terbush
- **Spiritual Support:** Julia Burkey, Vickey Allen
- **Feasibility Study Hosts:** Rhea Higgins, Ann Marie Foote, Pam & Jim Miller, Alma Zyko, Kari Sullivan
- **Advance Giving:** Karl Scheibe, Rhea Higgins, Mary Gould
- **Publicity:** Pam Miller, Jean Chatfield, Jen Tortora, Laura Williams, Kathleen Archer, Julia Burkey, Cheryl Fogg, Kari Sullivan, Susanna Barrett

- **Administration:** Doug Kneeland, Jane DiMauro, Janice Hickey, Frank Green, and Ann Marie Foote
- **Family Giving:** Gabriela De Golia, Chuck Bates
- **Kickoff event:** Mary Lou Brady, Kari Sullivan, Ann Marie Foote, Vickey Allen, Jeff Miles
- **Building and Grants:** Trevor Davis and Susanna Barrett

To support our vision, we plan to raise funds starting 2018 in the following areas:

Estimated Cost	Project Description
\$90,000	Revitalize Youth programming: We have made a commitment to invest in the children and families by hiring staff to support and revitalize our youth programming.
\$167,500	Accessibility for all: Renovate existing elevator and other improvements to make our church building more welcoming and accommodating.
\$135,000	Arts and Worship: Changes to the sanctuary to allow more flexibility in use. Refurbish our 50-year-old pipe organ. Update carpeting.
\$57,500	Windows and Trim exterior maintenance: Begin repainting our exterior woodwork and updating the protective covers of our stained-glass windows.
\$55,000	Outreach: Extend our Vision of nourishing the community, growing our idea of church, and engaging youth, to the wider community.
\$45,000	Making it happen: Events, consultants, marketing materials, administrative costs.
\$550,000	Total all costs

The Vision Fund Committee is recommending a fundraising goal of \$550,000 with a stretch goal of \$600,000.

Key Changes:

- **Windows and Trim exterior maintenance project will be reduced.** It will be phased in and partially completed depending on final funds raised. Achieving our stretch goal and obtaining grant funds could result in all projects being completed.

Vision Fund: Opportunities for Engagement



Daily Devotionals: *Connecting and Deepening Faith*

Everyday during our Vision Fund campaign from April 29th to June 10th, we will send a daily devotional to your inbox. Each devotional is 250 words, ending with a prayer. To get to know one another better, we will collect devotionals from different people in church around the themes of giving, generosity and gratitude for our Vision Fund. If you'd like to participate, reach out to Deacon Vickey Allen.

Family Giving Task Force: *Honoring Each Gift*

From the end of April to the middle of June, a number of us will be going from house to house to collect congregants' Vision Fund pledge cards! This is a meaningful way of honoring the generosity of our community, no matter how big or small the individual offering. If you'd like to participate, contact Deacon Gabriela De Golia at gdegolia@gmail.com or 415-710-6792.

See page 4 for more details about our Vision Fund Kick-off Party at the Elks Club on April 29th, and check out page 7 for the Vision Fund Update!

BENEDICTION

Go out into the world in peace.

Have courage.

Hold on to what is good.

Return no one evil for evil.

Strengthen the faint hearted,

Support the weak,

Help the suffering,

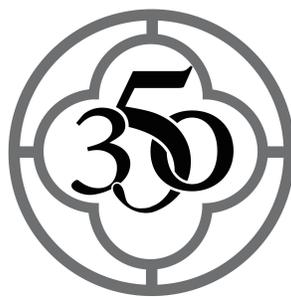
Honor all persons.

Love and serve the Lord,

Rejoicing in the Power

Of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.





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