

TIDINGS

Fall 2018

Let Us Celebrate: Reaping the Fruits of Harvest



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

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FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, CONGREGATIONAL

190 Court Street, Middletown, CT
firstchurchucc@sbcglobal.net
860-346-6657 / www.firstchurchmiddletown.org

- Ministers**, The Whole Congregation
- Minister**, Reverend Julia Burkey
- Music Minister**, Shari Lucas
- Minister of Youth & Families**, Pastor Mahogany Thomas
- Moderator**, Karl Scheibe
- Vice Moderator**, Suzanna Barrett
- Treasurer**, Andrea Roberts
- Clerk**, Kari Sullivan
- Member at Large**, Ann Marie Foote
- Deacon Co-Chairs**, Anthony Moran & Julie Hurlburt
- Deacon Rep. for Exec. Committee**, Gabriela De Golia
- Office Manager**, Kortney Balsamo

Upcoming Executive Committee Meeting Dates:

Thursdays 10/18, 11/15, and 12/20 at 6:30 PM, Memorial Room

Wish to share an announcement?

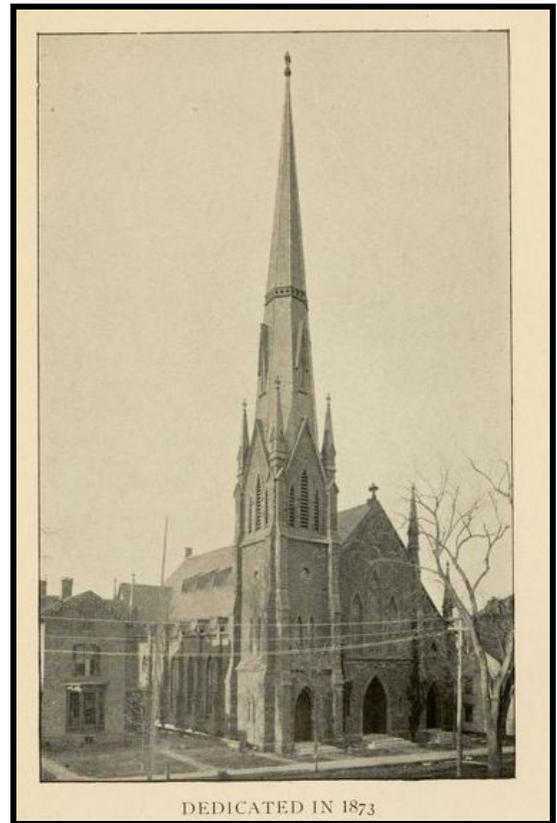
Please send it to Kortney Balsamo, our Office Manager, at firstchurchucc@sbcglobal.net by Wednesday each week so she can include it in the weekly bulletin.

Minister's Note

Vision

- by E.L.M.

We are the vision,
of our ancestors past.
Who set the foundation,
of a church that could last.
Small in our beginnings,
open with our doors.
The warmth inside all of us,
cleanses and steadily pours.
A place where our love,
can be gentle and free.
A sanctuary from,
the pains of reality.
The world is heavy,
yet we remain vessels of light.
As we gaze into the future,
with our ancestors sight.
How could they know,
the seeds they had sown.
Would be safe haven for lost souls,
would last through the years
and continue to grow.



*

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

'See, the home of God is among mortals.
God will dwell with them;
they will be God's peoples,
and God will be with them;
God will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away.'

And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.'

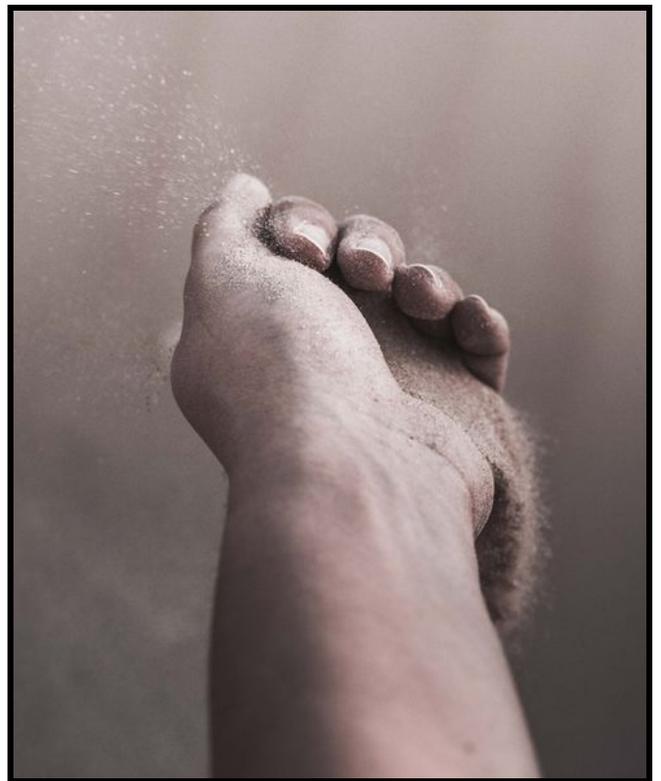
- Revelation 21:1-6

*

"when creating. be kind to your doubt. hear it out. thank it for its concern. and reassure it that you are an artist and risk is essential." - nayyirah waheed

*

In this new and old season, we have the gift of balancing the celebrations of our past 350 years of local church ministry with our future vision and God's vision for what is to come; a new heaven and a new earth. We are holding with grace and love, the works of our ancestors of faith, as well as our hope for future generations of First Church and the world. We have the gift now of zooming out really far and seeing our beautiful community and church as a small spec of love on this watery planet. We have the gift now of knowing that we are part of something bigger than ourselves, whether that bigness is the church community, the Christian community, the world community or the multidimensional cosmic community. We hear the wisdom of Rabbi Bunim of P'shiskha, "Everyone should carry two slips of paper, one in each of their pockets. One piece of paper should read, 'I am but dust and ashes' and the other should say, 'The world was created for me.'"



As Christians we are to see both the world as it is and the world as it could be. We are to take in the beauty and the suffering of the world and hold strong to the vision presented to us in scripture that a new heaven and a new earth are not only possible, but coming. That through Christ, through the God of love, we are able to transform this world and co-create a new world of justice and peace and love. Where Christ's presence is come again. So as co-creators with God, we recognize we each are part of that creation. In the words of Octavia Butler in *Lilith's Brood*, "Give yourself

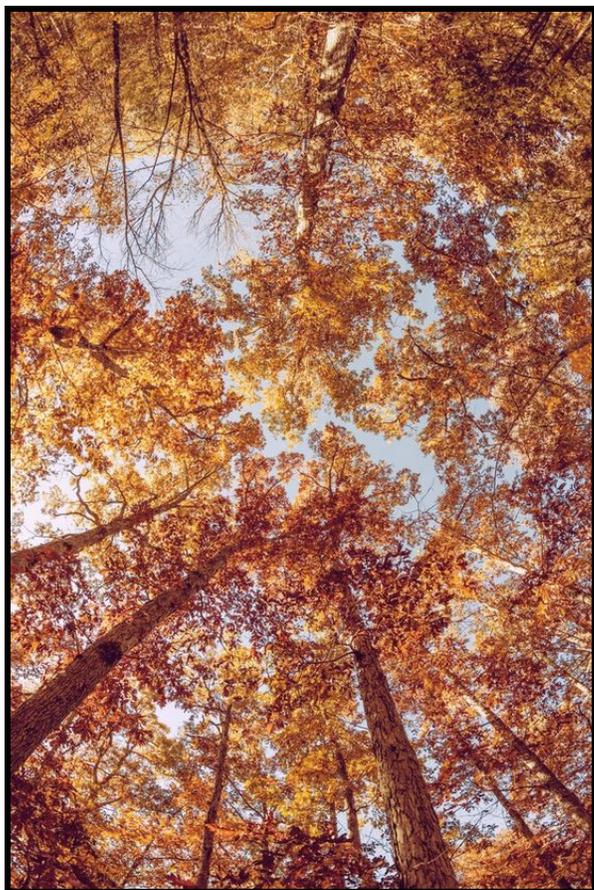
time. You're a new kind of being. There's never been anyone like you before. You just need time to find out more about yourself."

In our creative work of building community together it is time to harvest some of the fruit of the seeds we have planted. I am still trying to peel my chin off the floor that fell agape when I realized we had not only met, but exceeded the goal of our Vision Fund. Now we get to reap the benefits, gather the fruit, harvest our garden. We get to tend the garden of our collective abundance. We have opportunity to take a breath of relief and say, "we have arrived in a new phase of our common lives." Let us celebrate together, let us feast together!

We have green thumbs and we will have a green carpet! Our sanctuary is going to look like an enchanted forest. The Store and Décor committee, an offshoot of our Trustees who care for the building, shared with the Executive Committee and then with the congregation after church in mid-July this new carpet color. It goes splendidly with the stained glass windows.

I have some intentions for us this Fall. With all of our celebrations and planning, all of our church renovations and building projects, all of our hope to make the world a better place, starting with us. I want us to be able to flow with the spirit, even when we have deadlines for pew renovations and expectations for how things will go.

I want us be able to slow down and leave room for the presence and movement of God. I want us to slow down enough to notice the tree in our neighborhood and how the leaves begin to slowly catch fire of red orange and yellow to blend with the radiant dance of the sun. I want us to slow down enough to feel our breath match with the blowing wind outside. I want us to slow down enough to feel the miracle of our aliveness on this watery blue planet. I want us to slow down enough to hear our ancestors of faith whisper to us, especially the voice of Jesus. I want us to slow down enough to match the rhythms of our beating heart to the rhythms of God's love for us, so we can hear this eternal truth spoken from God; "You are enough, beloved. I love you forever."



Blessings,
Rev. Julia Burkley
Senior Minister

YOUTH & FAMILIES UPDATE



During the last weekend of August, we hosted Vacation Bible School at First Church! We had a wonderful time with our families learning about Environmental Justice through the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4. Together we fostered space to learn and grow as seeds, in the good soil we created together.

With such enthusiasm for the environment, on Friday evening we made windowsill planters and planted our own herbs using compost and fresh cedar. Saturday afternoon we made greeting cards about what we were learning and then experienced the wonderful artistic expertise of Allison Plous, who taught us how to make treasure boxes out of recycled material. Sunday morning we met in the park outside of South Church to recap, reflect and create. We made a large picture of our roots together before leaving messages of love for those would later enter the park.

There is so much to learn about God and the environment through Jesus! We learned about how the ways each of us takes care of the earth reflects how we show our love to God. We learned that good soil requires intentionality and that we are capable of being good soil!

We are never too small or too young to show love to one another! What a joyous time we shared together at Vacation Bible School and we cannot wait to share our experience with each of you!

With gratitude,

Mahogany Thomas

Minister of Youth & Families

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 9, 2018: Re-Gathering Sunday

September 16, 2018: Baptism and Blessing of Executive Committee



September 23, 2018: EKKLESIA DANCE COMPANY, International Day of Peace, Celebration of Autumnal Equinox

September 30, 2018: Pastor Mahogany Preaches! Intergenerational worship

October 7, 2018: World Communion Sunday: Blessing of the Animals + Intergenerational Worship.

Before our new rug is installed, we thought this would be a great time, near the Feast of Saint Francis, to welcome and bless animals in our midst! Bring your pets or pictures of animals to have them blessed!

October 14, 2018: Disability Awareness Sunday, congregant Marty from South Church preaches. *Our Accessible to All ("A2A") Team concurs that we should have Marty speak during October, which is Disabilities Ministries Month.*

Text: Mark 10:46-52, the story of blind Bartimaeus.

October 21, 2018: New Member Second Hour, Congregational Led

October 28, 2018: New Members Join!

November 4, 2018: 350th Anniversary!

10am Service, Dr. John Caputo preaches on *The Weakness of God*; Communion Service with antique silver from Wadsworth Atheneum

4pm Service, Lee McQuillan presents his original musical piece *Vision of Our Ancestors*; Blessing of Middletown



MARK YOUR
CALENDAR!

November 18, 2018: Thanksgiving Sunday

A Quick Glance at Christmastime



December 1, 2018: Annual Holly Fair from 9:30 AM to 2:30 PM

December 2, 2018: Advent 1, Communion Sunday, making of Advent Wreaths

December 9, 2018: Advent 2, Annual Candlelight Christmas Concert

December 16, 2018: Advent 3, Mary's Sunday

December 23, 2018: Children's "Instant" Christmas Pageant



December 24, 2018: Christmas Eve

5pm Barn Service

10pm Candlelight Service held at First Church

December 25, 2018: Annual Community Christmas Day Dinner



January 6, 2018: Story Telling by Chuck Bates

SIPS & SLATES: A HUGE SUCCESS!

Something different took place at First Church on Saturday evening, September 15th, 2018. *Sips & Slates* was a showcase of many different talents in our congregation. 

About 70 people sampled home-brewed beer by Jim Miller and Brendan Hildum, sangria made by Bonnie and Greg Brooks, and cider from Lyman's Orchard. They were entertained by 3 different musicians: Steve Nivison and Steve Crabtree on guitar and Jim Miller on banjo, all while munching on a variety of wonderful appetizers made by many church members.

There was a silent auction of 30 original art pieces created on roof slates from our 145 year old building by about 12 different artists, most of whom were from our congregation. Almost all of the pieces were purchased by event guests.

The event raised over \$1900, which will go toward the restoration of our beautiful church building!



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ekklesia Dance Company to perform “Roar of Nations” at First Church this Sunday, Sept. 23, in honor of International Peace Day!

EKKLESIA CONTEMPORARY BALLET



Ekklesia Contemporary Ballet exists to “love all and serve all” as the church embodied through the visible form of dance. Ekklesia’s passionate performers, choreographers, and collaborators are committed to presenting innovative work that speaks to every audience member in an effort to heal our world.

“Roar Of Nations”

Choreography: Elisa Schroth

Music: Leonard Bernstein

The first movement, based on Psalm 23 and Psalm 2:1-4, is in response to the humanitarian crisis of the war in Syria, which has resulted in 13.5 million refugees seeking asylum in the world today. Ekklesia has had the privilege of meeting and hearing firsthand stories of and from refugees, and we are directly involved in welcoming a Syrian refugee family in our community. This piece not only addresses this major crisis; on a smaller scale, it displays how one can choose to offer revolutionary love in the face of hate, and how love has the power to transform one's

oppressor into a friend. Finally, this piece is a call to action; we can all play a part in opening our hearts and homes to those seeking refuge.

The second movement is based on Psalm 131. Psalm 133:1 addresses our personal dealings with God when it comes to our enemies -- "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" The choreography points to how we are all God's people; God desires us to move into unity and take big strides through and beyond the sufferings we may experience in our dealings with one another.

The third movement based on Psalm 108:2. We have an exaltation of a thankful heart and its embodied joy, which can be found only through true unity, in which everyone is a full participant.

YOU ARE INVITED TO WITNESS A SHOWING OF A PLASTIC OCEAN FILM



This 22 minute film covers the environmental crisis we are experience with regards to oceanic pollution. It will be followed by a discussion about ways to combat plastic pollution and save our seas.

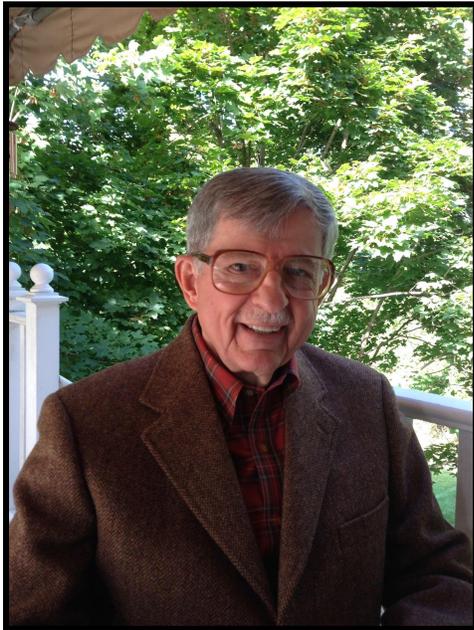
EVENT DETAILS

Tuesday, October 16, 7:00 PM
Wesleyan Campus, Fisk Hall, Room 208
262 High St., Middletown, CT

This event is **free**. All are welcome.

Parking is in the rear of the building, off College Street.

Special Guest Preacher for Nov. 4th 10 AM 350th Anniversary Celebration Service!



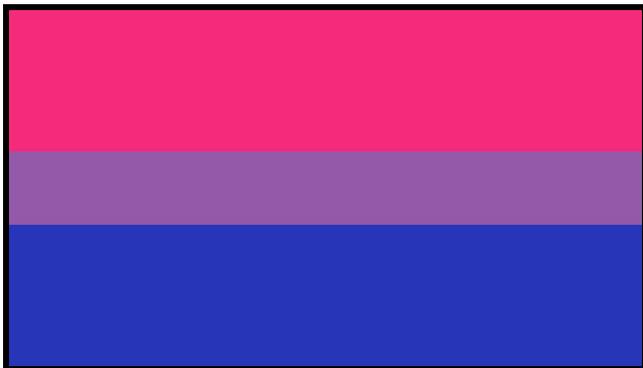
John D. Caputo, the Watson Professor of Religion Emeritus (Syracuse University) (2004-11) and the Cook Professor of Philosophy Emeritus (Villanova University) (1968-2004), writes and lectures in the area of postmodern theory and religion for both academic and general audiences. He is a hybrid philosopher/theologian who works in the area of what is called radical theology. Prof. Caputo has spearheaded a notion he calls “weak theology,” by which he means a “poetics” of the “event” that is harbored in the name (of) God, or that “insists” in the name (of) “God,” a notion that depends upon a reworking of the notions of event in Derrida to theological ends. In his major works he has argued that interpretation goes all the way down (*Radical Hermeneutics*, 1987), that Derrida is a thinker to be reckoned with by theology (*The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, 1997), that theology is best served by getting over its love affair with power

and authority and embracing what Caputo calls, taking a phrase from St. Paul, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (2006), which won the American Academy of Religion award for excellence in the category of constructive theology. In *The Insistence of God: A Theology of Perhaps* (2013), he argues that God does not exist, God insists, and that God’s existence depends upon us. He has also a special interest in addressing more general audiences in books like *On Religion* (1971), and *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?* (2006).

His most recent work includes a book entitled *Hermeneutics: Facts and Interpretation in the Age of Information* (London: Penguin/Pelican, 2018), which argues that interpretation goes all the way down while resisting the idea of “alt-facts;” *The Folly of God* (2015), a philosophical-theological meditation that entertains the questions, “Does the Kingdom of God Need God?”; *Truth* (2013), which is part of the Penguin Books “Philosophy in Transit” series celebrating the 150th anniversary of the London Underground. *A Caputo Reader*, a collection of his work from the early 1970s to the present, has recently appeared from Indiana University Press (2018).

Since retiring in 2011, in addition to his scholarly work, he’s been speaking to various church and community groups interested in a more progressive concept of religion.

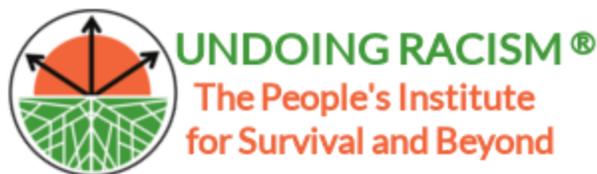
BISEXUAL DISCUSSION GROUP STARTS SEPT. 26th



As part of our Open and Affirming Ministry and as outreach to our community, a Bisexual+ Discussion Group will begin monthly meetings at First Church. Shari Lucas, our Minister of Music, is openly bisexual and will lead the group on the fourth Wednesday of the month at First Church from 6:00 - 7:15 p.m., beginning on September 26th. The

group is for all genders who consider themselves bisexual, bi-curious, queer, pansexual, fluid, and those who are not bisexual but want to know more about bisexuality. We will be self moderated and not offer professional advice. Shari already runs this group on the second Tuesday of the month in New London. If you have questions, please contact Shari at shari.lucas@sbcglobal.net.

RENOWNED ANTI-RACISM TRAINING BEING HELD IN HARTFORD OCT. 5-7



Immanuel Congregational Church in Hartford is hosting the renowned “Undoing Racism” training, facilitated by the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, from Friday, October 5th to Sunday, October 7th. See below for more information:

- **Dates and times:** Friday Oct. 5th & Saturday Oct. 6th from 8:30 am-4 pm; Sunday Oct. 7th from 8:30 am-1 pm
- **Location:** Immanuel Congregational Church, 10 Woodland St, Hartford, CT
- There is a maximum participation of 40 people per training.
- **Cost:** \$450 per person, includes the training and continental breakfast, snacks, and lunch each day.
- **Payment** can be made online through Christian Activities Council’s website donation page (<https://christianactivities.secure.force.com/donate/>) or by check made payable to Christian Activities Council, 47 Vine Street, Hartford, CT 06112 and write “Undoing Racism Training” in the subject line.
- Full and partial **scholarships** are available on a first come, first serve basis
- **Registration link:** <http://christianactivities.org/undoing-racism-registration/>

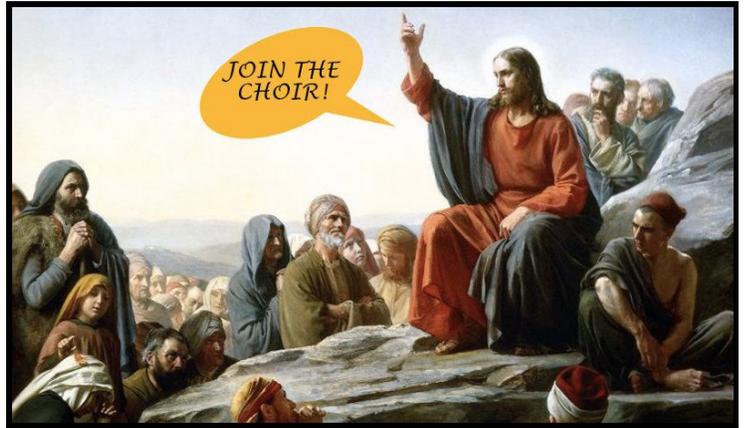
CALLING ALL CONGREGANTS! Jesus has a request!

We LOVE to Welcome New Choir Members!

Our choirs have an exciting season of singing and ringing this fall. Our

Celebration Singers meets on Mondays at 6:15 PM beginning September 10 and sings modern, gospel and spiritual styles. Our **Senior Choir** meets on Wednesdays at 7:30 PM beginning September 11 and sings classic choral repertoire. Our **Heart in Hand Bell Choir** has a couple of

openings and meets on Mondays at 7:30 PM beginning September 10. A little music reading skills is helpful. No previous bell ringing is needed - we are happy to teach you. There are no auditions for the vocal choirs. We will learn anthems to sing and play in worship, as well as premier a special piece written just for our choirs and bells for our November 4th 350th Anniversary Celebration. And, of course, we bring in the holidays with our Annual Candlelight Christmas Concert in December. Come join us!



Sing With Our Choirs at Christmas!

You are invited to learn seasonal music to sing at our Annual Candlelight Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 9 at 4:00 PM. You can join our Celebration Singers on Mondays, November 5, 12, 19, 26 and December 3 at 6:15 PM and/or our Senior Choir on Wednesdays, November 7, 14, 28, and December 5 at 7:30 PM. Come share the joy of the season!

Be a part of our 350th Anniversary Celebration Choir!

Our choirs will perform a very special piece, "Vision of Our Ancestors", composed by Lee McQuillan especially for our 350th Anniversary Celebration on Sunday, November 4, at 4:00 PM. Come join us!

Rehearsals will be held throughout October, on Mondays at 6:15 PM (during Celebration Singers rehearsal time) and Wednesdays at 7:30 PM (during the Senior Choir rehearsal time). Please attend at least five rehearsals. There is also a dress rehearsal on Thursday, November 1 at 7:00 PM. For more information, please contact our Minister of Music, Shari Lucas at shari.lucas@sbcglobal.net.

PARTAKE IN SUPER SATURDAY OCT. 20th, 2018!



Each spring and fall, the Massachusetts Conference holds a Super Saturday event - a full-day of skill building, networking and discussing best practices. Each event offers numerous workshops, a keynote address, worship, a marketplace of vendors and ideas and an opportunity for church leaders, both clergy and lay, to network with one another. The events began in 2010 to serve as supplements to the Conference's Annual Meeting. Super Saturdays focus on the theme from the previous meeting. Super Saturday is now a collaborative effort of the Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island conferences, with presenters and attendees from each conference.

LOCATION: Keefe Regional Technical High School, 750 Winter Street, Framingham, MA 01702

COST: \$54.00 Individual, \$44.00/person for groups of 5 or more who register at the same time. Cost includes morning worship, 2 workshops, an optional lunch activity, continental breakfast, lunch, marketplace, and closing worship.

REGISTRATION LINK: <https://bit.ly/2QEL75I>

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

OPENING

Registration at the event begins 8:00 am—9:00 am

Register, grab a Refreshment/Continental Breakfast and browse the

Marketplace 9:00 am—10:15 am

Worship with Dr. David M. Csinos

WORKSHOPS

10:30 am—12:00 pm AM Workshops 1:45 pm—3:15 pm PM Workshops

Participants will be able to attend two 90-minute workshops related to various aspects of church life, mission and ministries, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

LUNCHTIME

12:00 pm — 1:30 pm

CLOSING

3:25 pm—3:45 pm

MARKETPLACE

The marketplace gives participants a chance to learn about a variety of ministry opportunities and to shop their favorite vendors.

BE GREEN!

We encourage attendees to carpool and to bring their own reusable water bottles and/or travel mugs.



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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