



THE CORNERSTONE

SEPTEMBER 2013 WORSHIP SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER 1st —9:30 a.m. COMMUNION SUNDAY

Rev. Kevin Weikel preaching
Luke 14:1, 7-14
"Know Your Place!"

SEPTEMBER 8th—9:30 a.m. WORSHIP SERVICE (last summer worship)

Erica Nierendorf preaching
Philemon 1-21
"Improving Our Vision with Eye Exercises"

SEPTEMBER 15th—10:00 a.m. FALL FESTIVAL WORSHIP

Rev. Kevin Weikel preaching
Luke 15:1-10
"Found"

SEPT. 22nd— VOLUNTEER SUNDAY WORSHIP

8:30 a.m. Early Worship, Chapel
10:00 a.m. Traditional Worship, Sanctuary

Transitional Senior Minister Preaching

SEPTEMBER 29th—SUNDAY WORSHIP

8:30 a.m. Early Worship, Chapel
10:00 a.m. Traditional Worship, Sanctuary

Rev. Kevin Weikel and PF Youth Group leading worship
Mark 10:43b-45

"Radical Reversal: Change What You Are Chasing."
(W. Virginia Mission/Immersion Trip Sharing Service)



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A Message from Rev. Kevin Weikel, Youth & Young Adult Ministry



Greetings!

As I write this, we are approaching Labor Day Weekend, the unofficial last weekend of summer, and I find myself both reflecting and looking forward.

Personally, my summer was bookended with some very difficult moments with my extended family. In May, my Aunt (on my Mom's side of the family), passed away after a yearlong battle with cancer. And in August, my Uncle (on my Dad's side of the family), died of a sudden massive heart attack. In hindsight, we are thankful that we had the opportunity to visit with my Aunt in late April and that we were able to be with my Uncle for a week at the Jersey shore in mid-July. These losses were hard, and they leave holes in our families, but they have made me realize more than ever the need to appreciate the gift of the present; to live each day fully and to the best of our abilities.

This summer also provided some exciting news for Kelley and me, as well. If you haven't already heard, we are expecting a baby in early January. We are very excited! So many of you have expressed how happy you are for us and we thank you for your words and prayers of joy and encouragement. We are grateful to be sharing this journey with you.

Professionally, I attended the UCC's General Synod in Long Beach, California this summer. General Synod is our denomination's biennial gathering. Having never attended a General Synod before, I learned quite a bit about our denomination. I also led our youth and young adult mission trip to West Virginia. It was an incredible trip. We worked extremely hard; in fact, it was more labor intensive than any trip I've been on before. I believe we made a real difference in the lives of the people whose homes we worked on, and the people and their situations made a difference in our lives as well. In many ways, the extreme poverty in rural West Virginia shook us to the core, but it also helped us to gain perspective and grow in Christ-like compassion.

With Jonathan's departure, I was involved in a lot more overall planning this summer when compared to past summers. I also did much more visiting with the adults of our church. It has been an unexpected privilege to work with our staff and leadership more intimately and to get to know different generations of our church more deeply. As we turn the page to fall, I am excited for all that is in store for us this next season, for adults and youth alike.

Peace to you,
Kevin

A Message from Erica Nierendorf, Associate Minister for Parish Life...



Dear Friends in Christ,

Welcome home all those who have been away this summer!

This summer, our time of transition began and I believe it brings an important opportunity to reflect on the call and mission of First Church. How can we, as a community, continue to grow in our faith and reflect the grace and love of Jesus Christ?

This summer, a group of us read and discussed Rob Bell's book, "*Love Wins*." Bell talks about Jesus' invitation to each of us. He states "this God whom Jesus spoke of has always been looking for partners, people who are passionate about participating in the ongoing creation of the world." Together, we can partner with God, to find our way ahead. Together, we become so much more than just our individual selves. Together we can support each other, in creating a community that reflects God's love.

This upcoming year, I look forward to partnering with you in our ministry, bringing together each person's gifts and passions in creating a community of welcome, grace, and as Bell describes, "joy that can't be contained." *Welcome home!*

Yours in the joy of service of Christ,

Erica

MUSIC NOTES



Fall is here after what seems to have been a very short summer! It's time to think about music for our upcoming services and to plan for special events like Thanksgiving and - yikes - Christmas.

There is much in the works, but first let me urge anyone who has been considering singing or ringing, to join us - even for an anthem or two. It's more fulfilling than one can imagine, and gives a whole new perspective on creativity and experiencing God, whether in worship or not. Schedules are listed here, so take the step and come on by, no matter what you think your ability might be. Although we try to do it all with our best efforts, there is every range of ability and experience, and there is definitely a place for all. ***Some special things to think about:***

Women's Praise will be preparing for a concert that they will be giving in Charlton, MA (the Auclair's new church) at the beginning of November. They will then jump right into rehearsals for their annual appearance at **Simsbury Celebrates**. All of this plus singing for several Sundays and other worship services! But, like all the choirs, the members love what they do and wouldn't have it any other way.

Chancel Choir will be preparing for Sunday services (they provide much of the Sunday music that so many find important to their worship experience), as well as the annual town-wide interfaith

service at Thanksgiving. We also look forward to an expanded Christmas Sunday, and the Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols Service - a beautiful service that many anticipate. There are some singing workshops in the works also - all of us came away from last year's workshop with Nashville's George Mabry with increased knowledge and renewed energy. Again - the members can't imagine life without being part of this choir and doing what they do.

The Children's Choir will continue to meet - planned at this point for Monday afternoons. This is a great, positive, and terrific group of kids - from second through sixth grade - and we have done everything from singing on Sundays (there are many eager solo singers here as well, although you don't have to be one) to being a major part of the children's choir at the Interfaith Thanksgiving service. At the end of each year we double our numbers by combining with the Simsbury Methodist youth choir to sing a joint service. Then comes the pizza party...

Some of our graduates, now in seventh grade on up, have expressed an interest in continuing to sing. So, even though they are welcome to remain in Junior Choir, we are excitedly looking into forming a joint middle school choir, again with the Methodist Church, so that we can have larger numbers and do more

(Continued on page 5)

interesting music. We will be sending an email to see how many are interested and when we would be able to get together to rehearse. This could be a great development, and a pretty cool group. You will hear more about this.

Bell Choir is a really interesting musical entity - where each player becomes an important part of the whole. This is truly where everyone learns to operate as a community of individuals and the final product is more than the sum of the parts. You don't have to sing, but you do wind up making some beautiful music with some amazing instruments. Once you hold a bell in your hand, you never forget it. There is a possible bell festival in the works as well, where we combine with others and fill a space with the sound of these gorgeous instruments.

Each **Christmas Eve** we form the **Chancel Strings** and play for the Lessons and Carols Service. We are always open to any musicians who would like to take part, and it would be interesting to do some other playing as well. Let me know if you are interested, have ever played, and might like to be involved. The same goes for any instrument - we have some spectacular jazz players, some youth that play anything from jazz to rock and roll to bluegrass, some brass and wind players who not only do solo work, but play for events like Christmas, Easter, or even some Dixieland for a Mardi Gras service. There's a musician who plays great Irish fiddle, and there are a couple of really good blues guitar players as well. Talk to me if you want to participate.

Some concerts coming up during the year : a great **bell choir** with

players from all over New England in **December**, a **Renaissance a cappella vocal group from the Netherlands** in **February**, some **jazz** for a **Palmer Hall cabaret**, and some other things in the planning stages. Music is alive and well at First Church!

We are very excited to let you know that we have new chairs in our choir rehearsal room, thanks to a generous donation by a church member. These chairs replace some pretty hard folding chairs that are possibly older than me. Stop by the music room to check them out. We are now working on gathering donations for new chairs in the choir loft - see Bruce Powell if you can contribute.

Take a look at our rehearsal schedule, and be a part of us! Listening to beautiful music is one thing, but making beautiful music is something else entirely— a soul-expanding experience that can make life bigger and infinitely better. Be a part of this journey.

Junior Choir - Mondays at 4:15 in the music room, beginning Sept. 16th.

Women's Praise Choir - Wednesdays at 4:00 in the music room, beginning Sept 4th.

Choral Bells - Thursdays at 6:00 in Room 29 (second floor), beginning Sept 5th

Chancel Choir - Thursdays at 7:30 in the music room, beginning Sept 5th.

Middle School Choir - TBA

Chancel Strings, Cornerstone Brass and instrumental groups rehearse seasonally, as needed. See Mark Mercier for times and places if you would like to be a part.

Mark

WOMEN'S SMALL GROUPS SIGN-UPS



September 15th and 22nd will be sign-up for Women's Small Groups.

If you are already in a group, you don't need to sign-up.

The Small Groups meet twice a month, some in the evening and some during the day. They are studying the Gospel of John. The groups consist of six to ten women in each group. We will be starting new groups and looking for leaders. This is a wonderful way to deepen friendships and grow in your faith.

For more information, call Nancy Crouch at 860-658-1894 or Sara Burrows at 860-408-1459.

IT ALL STARTED WITH A NAME TAG ...



Have you noticed some changes throughout the building recently? The Welcome Church Ministry Team (WCMT) has been busy! Earlier in the year they established two central sign up tables for church activities and events. The first is located outside the Parlor and Chapel on the third floor and the second is on the first floor as you enter Palmer Hall for Fellowship Hour. This spring the WCMT hosted a Church Spring Cleaning clean up day and had many volunteers help to "Spring" clean the building, including the stairwells and sanctuary, painted hallways, painted the entrance to Palmer Hall and much more.



This past June, you many have noticed the installation of Welcome Centers on each floor of the church. These "HAPPENINGS @ First Church" centers are a place for you to find, or for your committee to display, announcements for what is happening at First Church, like brochures, visitor information and the ONA certificates and mission statements. This is a key area for our congregation, but also a wonderful resource center for visitors.

The lovely historic bench previously located outside of the church office and senior minister's office, has been relocated to the Historic area on the second floor near the elevator. Stop by and take a look at your Church's history! In place of the bench, you will now find comfortable seating that is available to those waiting for a meeting or appointment, or for just a quiet place to sit.

Please contact any of the members of the Welcome Church Ministry Team with questions or comments.

Keep your eyes open for more in the Fall....



Kris Barnett, Elisabeth Prabulos, Penny Roskin, Kathy Wildman, Dane Woodberry, Erica Nierendorf

K. I. D. S. @ First Kids Investigating Divine Stories at First Church

Visit www.firstchurchsimsbury.com to see the church school schedule, videos, and information about what the kids are doing @ First Church.

Fall Teacher/Shepherd Opportunities, Sept 8-Dec 8, 2013

The church school is a co-operative program where parents work together to teach their children about their faith. Please contact ccole@fccsimsbury.org to volunteer.

Nursery: Teacher needed

Pre-K— Maisie Hansen, Susanne Osborn, **1 Teacher needed**

Job description: The teachers lead the class each Sunday to teach the basics about faith: our church, prayer, God, etc. The students use learning center activities, crafts, and read Bible stories in circle time. All the teaching materials and crafts are provided to the teacher.

Kindergarten—Patti Scanlon, Theresa Carlson

Grades 1-5 Rotation Program: Fall units: "Respect: Living God's Word", "Into the Promised Land" (40 years in the wilderness), Christmas

Workshop Teacher Job description: Teachers remain in the classroom teaching the same unit lesson to the different grades as they rotate into the room. Two teachers are assigned to each workshop and they decide which teacher is going to teach on a given Sunday.

Computer room – Sarah Guasta, **1 teacher needed**

Cooking room – 2 teachers needed

Art room – 2 teachers needed

Game room – Bryan Tawney, **1 teacher needed**

Movie room – Marcie Sullivan, **1 teacher needed.** **Teen Aides:** Nick and Kelsey Sullivan

Shepherd job description: Shepherds meet their students in the chapel each Sunday, take attendance, hand out name tags, etc. They lead the students to class and are in charge of monitoring class room behavior, building relationships, and assisting the teacher as required.

1st grade shepherd— needed

2nd grade shepherd - Dru Breslav

3rd grade shepherd – Erin Naspo

4th grade shepherd – Jackie Brooke

5th grade shepherd - needed

Teens are welcome, to sign up as classroom or shepherd aides.

Pre-Confirmation Teachers: Ann Marie Prabulos, Kim Tawney (subs: Betsey Zackeo, Aynsley Hodges)

6th and 7th Grade Pre-Confirmation Class Registration and information is available at

<http://www.firstchurchsimsbury.com/pre-confirmation-class-6--7-grade.html>



Back Pack Blessing, Breakfast, and Mission Project Thank You!

Special thanks to Jane Hadley for organizing the backpack supplies and for the Board of Christian Education for providing Breakfast.

Church School News



Upcoming events for your Calendar

Sept 1: nursery ages 0-2 (Rm. 20), students ages 4 & up attend church.

Sept 8: nursery ages 0-2 (Rm. 20), students ages 4 & up begin in church, then dismissed to Rm. 22 for Veggie Tales movie

Sept 15: 1st Day of Church school
Nursery ages 0-2 (Rm. 20), Students ages 4 and up, begin in the worship service with their parents/guardians.

1. After the children's message, children will be dismissed.
2. Parents will escort Pre-K (ages 3&4) to Rm. 39.
3. Students **grades K-5**, will go to the chapel. Students will review the expectations for the church school, then will be escorted to class by the shepherd/teacher.
4. Students in grades 6 & 7 will go to the youth room (2nd floor).

Oct 6: Teacher/shepherd breakfast and meeting

Oct 19 : Fear Not PJ Party/Parents Night Out

Fall Church School Mission Project

Parents can help teach values of care and compassion by involving the whole family in outreach and mission projects.



One way parents can teach stewardship is to ensure that their children bring their offering envelope to church each Sunday. The student offering is placed in a separate account. The offering is used exclusively for church school mission projects. Students can earn their offering by doing chores.

Offerings collected from Sept. to Nov. will be used to purchase items for children's Christmas stockings. The stockings are assembled on the Sunday after Thanksgiving by the children and donated to children in need. Families can fill and donate their own stockings as a family mission project.



FALL FESTIVAL AT FIRST CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 15, 2013

**Annual Kick-off to An Exciting
New Year at First Church!**

Place: Upper Parking Lot

When: following the 10:00 a.m. Worship

RAIN OR SHINE!!

*Enjoy fellowship, a Music-Filled Fair,
Family Games, Cookout for Lunch and other
delicious food!*

Help is needed to SET UP Fall Festival:

Please contact Suzy Sabia at:

suzysabia@sbcglobal.net , 651-1724 **OR**

enierendorf@fccsimsbury.org, 651-3593 x 15

REV. KEVIN WEIKEL—YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

PLAY, DISCUSS, WORSHIP, GROW, SERVE, LOVE...

JUNIOR FELLOWSHIP (Grades 7-8)

Junior Fellowship (JF for short) is our youth group for 7th and 8th graders. JF meets every other Friday after school from 2:10-4:00 pm during the school year. We enjoy snacks, play games, and participate in engaging activities and discussions. Depending on your situation, there are two different ways to join us on these Friday afternoons.

For those students attending Henry James, the church bus will pick you up from school. It's simple. The bus will be parked and waiting for you in the back lot (the bus parking lot). Just walk out the back doors of HJMS, take a right past the gym and tennis courts, look to your left, and you'll see the church bus parked next to the field.

For those students not attending Henry James, you can still join us and please do. Rev. Kevin will send reminder emails out ahead of each meeting to let you know when and where you can meet up with the group. If you would like Kevin to add your email to the list, contact me at kweikel@fccsimsbury.org.

We require a Parental Permission and Health Authorization Packet for each participant. Please download a packet at our website (www.fccsimsbury.org). Go to "Youth and Young Adults" and then "JF." Your child can bring their completed packet along to their first JF gathering or it can be dropped off at the church office between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Please note, these forms must be filled out each new school year.

September 13th **2:15-4:00 p.m.** It's our first JF of the school year! Join us for community building games and activities. We'll close with the JF candle prayer.

September 27th **2:15-4:00 p.m.** Hop on the church bus and join us for an activity called, "Random Acts of Kindness."

CONFIRMATION GROUP (Grade 8)

Confirmation is our intensive discipling program for 8th graders (plus any older teens and/or adults that may be interested). Confirmation runs from September through May and utilizes both large and small groups for fellowship, topical discussion and study, service and more. As students get to the end of the process we often hear them saying they don't want it to end. The good news is that Confirmation isn't graduation from church, it's the beginning of an exciting new chapter.

September 15th Confirmation Enrollment Forms Due. Please note, if you are interested in enrolling your child in Confirmation but did not receive an Enrollment Form, contact Rev. Kevin at kweikel@fccsimsbury.org.

September 29th **5:00-7:00 p.m.** Pot Luck & Information Meeting in Palmer Hall for students and parents. At this meeting, we will go over the details of the Confirmation process and schedule. Please see below for what to bring... A-D, Salad/Fruit E-G, Dessert H-Z, Main Course (we will provide drinks, plates, cups, napkins and silverware).

PF YOUTH GROUP (Grades 9-12)

"PF" is short for "Pilgrim Fellowship," which has been the name of the High School Youth Group at First Church, Simsbury, for a long time. PF is for all 9th through 12th graders no matter who they are or where they are on life's journey.

September 15th **12 Noon-8:00 p.m.** First PF Youth Group! It's our first PF of the school year! Join us for community building games and activities. We'll close with the PF candle prayer.

September 21st **7:00 p.m. through**
Sunday, September 22nd **at 11:00 a.m.** Lock In at the church! We will revisit the theme of the West Virginia Mission Trip and plan our worship sharing service scheduled for Sept. 29th. But you need not have attended the mission trip to join us this night, please join us for a great night regardless of whether or not you joined us in West Virginia!

September 29th **9:30 a.m. (report to the Youth Room) and 10:00 a.m. (Mission Trip Sharing Service in Sanctuary)...** We will praise God for our experiences in West Virginia and share with the congregation what we learned.

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T O W E R T A L K



Did you ever wonder about the Tower on the mountain?

Or ride down Nod Road or Hopmeadow Street and see this imposing building high above?

And how many pictures do you have with the Tower in the background?

Who lived there?

Does anyone live there now?

How do we get up there?

Is it open?

Wow, I wonder what the view is like from there?

When was it built?

Why was it built?

You say the name's Heublein?? Did they make vodka there?

Well, if you've ever raised any of those questions, you'll have the opportunity to get all of your questions answered.

Supper Club will open its season with a talk and power-point presentation of the Tower by Jay Willerup, co- president of the Friends of Heublein Tower. He is very knowledgeable and has done much restoration work on the Tower, along with the Friends of the Heublein Tower. Jay is a local resident and has spent many hours involved with promoting the Tower through lectures and question and answer sessions.

To find out exactly what's going on and how you can learn even more, come to the **Supper Club meeting on Friday, September 20, 2013 at 6:00 pm.** A scrumptious catered dinner, prepared by Suzie Sabia for \$16.00, will be served at 6:30 pm. Come and learn all about the Tower so you'll be ready for your hike to the Tower when the leaves turn in October. Hope to see you there. Everyone is welcome to attend.

For reservations, call the church office, 860-651-3593, Cynthia Yoczik, 860-658-7460 or Mim Shepard, 860-658-6386. **Reservations must be made by September 15th.**

Exciting New Leadership for the Connecticut Conference!



First Church Friends, I'm delighted to share some exciting news with you from the Connecticut Conference office in Hartford. After a two year search, the conference has called a new conference minister to help lead Connecticut's UCC churches into the next chapter of their long and faithful history as servant disciples of Christ.

I was privileged to be a part of the search committee that worked tirelessly and searched nationally to find the one called to lead our conference forward. Before reviewing candidate profiles and interviewing, the search committee prepared a detailed profile of the conference itself (a task that hadn't been performed in nearly two decades!) and conducted 55 listening sessions all around the state to see and hear the issues, joys and challenges on the hearts and minds of our congregations' members. Those sessions helped to inform our search so that we could select the best candidate for our conference.

Our search was national in scope, and candidates came from a wide range of locations and backgrounds. The search committee reviewed resumes, conducted phone interviews, and held a weekend-long series of in-person interviews. We then presented our recommended candidate to the delegates to the Connecticut Conference in April. The delegates voted, and Rev. Kent Siladi was elected on April 20th as the new Connecticut Conference minister.

A few words about Kent—he is a native of Connecticut, grew up in Stamford and is a graduate of Yale Divinity School. Kent served churches in Brookfield and North Guilford before moving south to lead the Florida conference as its conference minister for the last five years.

It was clear to our search committee members that Kent has great passion for the church and for the UCC, a vision for the church of the 21st century, wonderful energy, a commitment to social justice and inclusiveness, and an interest in building relationships between churches throughout our conference. It was truly a privilege to be a part of the selection process, and it is a joy to welcome such a great new leader to our conference! Once Kent is formally installed in September, I'm looking forward to introducing him to all of you here at First Church.

Susan Babcock White

Search Committee Member, Connecticut Conference

HISTORIC PRESERVATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT (HPTAG)



KEEPING YOU POSTED...

As you will recall from the April issue of The Cornerstone, our application for a Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grant (HPTAG) was approved/awarded.

We now are preparing our application for the subsequent Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grant, which is due for submission by the **25th of October 2013**. This year's HPF grant will be filed on-line for the first time, with hard copies of the documentation sent in via the postal service.

These applications are administered, respectively, by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and Department of Economic and Community Development. The HPF grant, if approved, results in a fifty percent return on expended expenses. This grant application focuses on replacing the roofing on the church (which includes the Meeting House, Palmer Wing and Naylor Wing). We intend to continue this application process in the future for other church projects.

In the process of gathering the necessary documentation and information required for the application, we have enjoyed discovering some interesting church facts, and have been assisted by some very helpful folks.

Want to know more? Please be in touch with either Rick Wilde or Dane Woodberry.



COMMUNITY FARM, YEAR II

The Community Farm would love your help!

There are many vegetables to harvest. All the fresh vegetables go to Gifts of Love.

Please stop by **Monday, Wednesday or Saturday at 9:00 a.m. or later** to help.

Any questions, please call **Maggie** at the Farm **(860) 217-0453** or on her cell at **(860) 294-2424**.

Thank you!

Board of Mission and Outreach

WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE?

What Do Our Records Tell Us, Continued.

Continuing with the records of the *First Ecclesiastical Society 1832-1907*, let's take a look at more of the votes of the early 1800's. Many of these may seem trivial to us and some need no further explanation.

Page 10 – Annual Meeting December 5th 1836.

Voted - to form a committee and wait on the Revd. Allen McLean and to request a copy of his Thanksgiving sermon for publication. [We have several copies of this in the safe in the Archives Room. It was considered a particularly moving sermon and was famous for many years.]

Page 12 – Annual Meeting December 4th 1838.

Voted - to have the Committee borrow on the responsibility of the Society one hundred dollars to pay Mr. McLean, a balance due him some 2 or 3 years since. [Rev. McLean received \$450 a year salary as minister from 1809 until he went blind in 1849. After that he received only \$100 a year until he died in 1861. Sometimes it was inconvenient to pay the minister's salary.]

Annual Meeting of December 4th adjourned to December 10, 1838.

Voted - that there be no association of persons other than those who have no families in any one slip or pew except at the discretion of the Committee. [People were very jealous of their pew seats and others were not allowed to sit in with families who rented the pew.]

[There were many times that the issue of renting or selling the pews and slips was on the agenda for Annual Meetings. This meant people gave a slip of paper saying what they would pay for the seats for the coming year and were obligated to pay it. Sometimes they found that if they rented out the pews, the amount raised was not enough to pay the expenses of the Society. So they voted again to make the sales void and started again.]

Page 15 - Annual Meeting Adjourned to January 13th.

Voted - that the committee, heretofore chosen to solicit subscriptions for the purpose of reviving the singing, be directed to appropriate the money so obtained ...for hiring Ashbel Moses, if they can, until said money be expended. [Frugal they were, but did this mean they stopped singing if the money ran out and they didn't have Ashbel's direction?]

Page 17 – Annual Meeting December 28th 1840.

Voted - that the Annual Society Meeting be held in future on the last Monday in December instead of the first Monday and that the slips and pews be rented on said day.

Voted - that 5 percent be added to the sale of each pew and slip sold.

Voted – that the sale of pews and slips be void.

Voted – that the committee to superintend the purchasing of a bell and blinds for this house be directed to engage or purchase blinds for this house.

Annual Society Meeting January 1st, 1841.

Voted – that the bell be rung for all Society purposes including funerals. [Now that they had a bell it's good to use it and get your money's worth out of it.]



HISTORICALLY
SPEAKING



PAIN AND PERSPECTIVE

By Steve Novy

56 of our youth, young adults, and adult youth advisors traveled to Chapmanville, West Virginia, to work with ASP (Appalachia Service Project), in an effort to make the homes of Appalachia's poorest families warmer, safer and drier. We improved their lives by fix in their homes, but these families changed our lives, too. Through their eyes we saw ourselves as the people Jesus calls us to be: Compassionate and committed, with the power to make a difference. Read the reflection below written by Adult Youth Advisor, Steve Novy. ~Rev. Kevin

M I S S I O N T R I P

It's been a week since returning from our Chapmanville, West Virginia mission trip and I've had some time to reflect on my experience. This was my second mission trip with First Church and this one, in particular, encouraged me to take stock and consider how fortunate and blessed my life has been. It also reminded me of the many people in this world who are less fortunate than I am and are in need of help. I grew up in a middle-class family with four siblings. While we were not rich, we lived a happy, comfortable family life. We had a good, solid roof over our heads, and always had plenty of food. I enjoyed a college education and have a good paying job. I am married to my wonderful wife and have two great children. We have a nice home, two cars and are able to take a couple of vacations each year. All in all, I have experienced very little hardship in my life.

In contrast, on the mission trip, we were required to sleep in sleeping bags on a hard floor in the Middle School classroom. We got up early each day and did not get back to bed until late at night. Breakfast and dinner consisted of inexpensive food which was prepared in the school's cafeteria. We had to pack our own lunches each day -- cold cuts, or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, plus an apple and snack. The cafeteria ran out of apples the third day. The work we performed at our hosts' houses was very labor intensive. We stayed on the worksites all day in 90 degree heat and high humidity. We would return to the school each evening exhausted, sweaty, weary, dirty, and smelly. We had it tough!

If you detect a bit of a tongue-in-cheek tone in the previous paragraph, you are on target. We all complain at times about how tough our lives can be, but do we really know what it's like to live with pain and suffering on a daily basis? We might complain about losing power for 10 days, or we might lose patience with the person in front of us at the grocery store who is taking too long to check out because they refuse to bag their own groceries. The conditions I saw in West Virginia put things clearly in perspective for me.

Don and Cathy, (not their real names) own the house my crew was assigned to work on. This family has experienced many hardships. Cathy was working for \$8.00/hour, which she proudly mentioned was good money. On the third day we were there, she got the devastating news she was losing her job; the business was closing. Don has been living with type I and type II diabetes, and is unable to work. The family income is \$1,000 per month and Don's medication (no health insurance) is \$1,000.00 per month. Don and Cathy have three daughters who are unable to live with them because of the condition of the house. It is a one story home built in the 1920's during the "coal rush". I would guess it was meant for temporary housing and designed to last 20 or 30 years, and here we are 90 years later. Due to a recent flood, the house was completely water logged. The roof has been completely compromised and even the slightest rain brings water pouring into almost every room. Don and Cathy had numerous buckets; one, which looked like a 30-50 gallon container, was placed under the largest gaping hole in the roof. In the interior, wall boards on the ceiling and the walls were soaked with water. The flooring had been so wet that there were numerous sagging areas or complete holes in the floor boards. There is no running water in the house which also means no plumbing. Don and Cathy rely on neighbors or the local Community College for their bathroom needs. They must also buy bottled water to drink. This family has been through a lot; they are survivors. They are a compassionate, appreciative family and there are thousands more in that community under similar circumstances. These conditions are the product of a lack of quality education and the non-

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existence of good paying jobs. Our crew was able to finish the roof so that it would leak no more. We also replaced the ceiling and wall boards and installed fresh insulation for winter comfort. Lastly, we finished the living room and entry way floor with new materials.

The West Virginia Mission trip was a humbling experience. ASP (Appalachia Service Project) is the organization that runs the mission we were on. One theme that was stressed and repeated all week by the ASP staff was a term called "Radical Reversal". This concept of Radical Reversal calls us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Jesus lived the life of ultimate servitude. He demonstrated to us that we should live humble lives, and put ourselves in the position of service to people who are in need. The following passage from the bible sums this message up. "...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:43b

So I have two messages for all of us to remember and act on. First, keep things in perspective when things seem difficult in our lives: Don't complain when our Starbucks Grande Latte is not at the proper temperature, or whine about the traffic on Route 6 as we head off to our Cape Cod vacation. Don't sweat the small stuff. Second, keep the Dons and Cathys in this world forever in your thoughts. Remember the many people in this world who are hurting and struggling every day and need to be served. How many times have we not taken action to help a stranger because we didn't want to get involved, or because we were late for work, only to regret it later? I would ask that our response to these situations becomes less cerebral and more aortal; your heart will not lead you astray. I would ask all of us to find ways to ease the pain of others. Carry the torch of compassion. Help ease the pain. Ease the pain.



Mark Dennen, Matt Ritson and Ryan Juliano working on the porch roof.



Steve Novy (author of the article) and Ryan Juliano standing on the roof that they and their work crew worked on all week.



Riley Morkan nailing down new floor board.



Anna Hart, Mackenzie DuBois, and Emily Franklin rolling out the new floor.

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**FELLOWSHIP HOUR SCHEDULE
SEPTEMBER 2013**

9/1/13—No Fellowship Hour

9/8/13—Patty Howland, Ginny Lawry, Janet Marcum & Karen Yanik

9/15/13—No Fellowship—Fall Festival

9/22/13—Betty Forristall & Dave McElligott

9/29/13—TBD

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