

THE CORNERSTONE

First Church is an Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

JANUARY 2014 WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Join Us!

Worship Services:
8:30 a.m. in the Chapel
10:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary

January 5th - Epiphany Sunday with Communion

Rev. Dianne Arakawa preaching both services
"Home by Another Road", Matthew 2:1-12

January 12th - First Sunday after Epiphany

Rev. Dianne Arakawa preaching both services
"If God is Still Speaking, what is God Saying to Us?"
Matthew 3:13-17

followed by a brief congregational meeting

January 19th - Second Sunday after Epiphany

Rev. Kevin Weikel preaching both services
"Listen, God Is Calling", Isaiah 49:1-7

January 26 Third Sunday after Epiphany

Dr. Erica Nierendorf preaching both services
"Call to Adventure", Matthew 4:12-23

followed by a Volunteer Fair in Palmer Hall

New Year's Collect Prayer

Eternal God, who makes all things new, and abides forever the same, grant us to commence this year in Your faith, and to continue in Your favor; that being guided in all our doings, and guarded all our days, we may spend our lives in Your service, and finally, by Your grace, attain the glory of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ. Amen.



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Rev. Dianne Arakawa
Transitional Senior
Minister

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Out of office Fridays

A message from Dianne Arakawa, Transitional Senior Minister

Dear Friends,

I am sure that I will continue to write “2013” on my checks for at least half-a-month until it really sinks in that 2014 has arrived. At midnight we sang goodbye to the old, the year’s last digit changed, and we replaced our old family desk calendar. We in the church will celebrate Epiphany and enter the bright liturgical season by the same name.

Personally, 2013 was momentous in that it included our son’s being a freshman in college, my completing a ministry at another church, our deciding that I would come to First Church, and meeting all of you. For members last year included adjusting to the departure of your former senior minister, administrator and part-time administrative assistants, and adapting to a new transitional senior minister, administrator, bookkeeper and full-time administrative assistant; all of us with our own particular ideas, personal temperaments and unique styles. 2013 asked a lot from each of us and, of course, this did not happen just overnight. Unexpressed feelings, ingrained patterns of behavior, and unresolved issues are still unwinding. I am eager to address them, even in this New Year.

For the past three months I have begun to know you, and found our members to be friendly, talented, faithful, cheerful and well-meaning. A large percentage is deeply committed to Christ, especially through regular worship, our well-developed ministries and growing programs. A smaller percentage is less committed, perhaps because they are newer to our large congregation or identify with only a particular part of the church. During this period leaders and I began to address some of the issues of church life. These related to worship for our 8:30 and 10:00 a.m. services as well as how we perform baptisms, weddings, funerals and memorial services. We also reviewed our pastoral care offered to our members. We began to reassess the organization of our council, boards, committees and ministries, and the work of our administration, including how the staff supports our ministers and lay leaders. We also began to review our mission outreach work: what First Church does in Simsbury and beyond.

Specifically, we emphasized acceptable standards of behavior among our members and staff, which bespeak our Christian identity. We reinstated the Doxology in the 8:30 service, which liturgists consider the highest moment in any service, and restored the traditional Baptismal formula, which is the only one recognized by both Catholics and mainstream Protestants. We also recently created a Pastor Parish Relations Committee and a Media Team (for videotaping, podcasting and improving our sound system). As the Stewardship campaign winds up, I remain grateful that most of us understand the spiritual importance of giving generously to our free church.

Gil Rendle, an Alban Institute senior consultant, has identified three Biblically-based questions that are key to ask when a congregation revitalizes its ministries. Let me paraphrase: (1) *What gifts have been given to your church, which make it what it is?* (2) *Who are your neighbors within and beyond the congregation?* (3) *How would Jesus ask you to apply your gifts to minister to these neighbors?*

In the coming months I will introduce a series of **Transitional Forums** for all who can attend. They will use Rendle’s three questions to address some of the major transitional issues here. Please let me know what is important to you. Beyond our practical, nuts-and-bolts, nitty-gritty work, these seek to ask: *How can we live out our Covenant, which we repeat when we instate new members, and last year’s Open and Affirming vote? How can we do what we do more faithfully and inclusively so to welcome the newcomers, strangers and youth? How can we turn our ministries inside-out and get out our message to the larger community?*

In 2014 please join me in engaging with these bigger church questions along with a wider group of our committed members and friends. This is a great opportunity to renew and grow together. With God’s help, 2014 will continue to lay a firm foundation for the next historic chapter here at First Church. May the Holy Spirit sustain and guide us all.

Wishing you grace and peace,

Dianne

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

This is the day that God has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. ~Psalm 118:24

I am writing this on December 16th, but by the time you read this, Christmas Carols will have given way to Auld Lang Syne, and most likely, Kelley and I will have welcomed another child into our family. If I'm honest, at the moment, the next month seems a bit daunting. Christmas, a new baby, a new year, it's all wonderful stuff, but it is also tempting to look past these days to a less hectic time.

"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it," says the Psalmist. And to that I say, "Thanks for the reminder!" Over this next month and into the new year it will be difficult to take it "One day at a time," as the old saying goes, but it will be more important than ever. For living each day as a gift God has made will be the only way to appreciate it.

This has me thinking, if you are, like me, someone who has trouble thinking up a New Years Resolution, maybe this is something to consider. Maybe this year, instead of looking at our "to do" lists and email inboxes lamenting, "One day when this is through," we should instead commit to rejoicing for the here-and-now, wherever that might be. Maybe we should ask ourselves, in the midst of the stress and all that is going on in the moment, "What is good in my life?" and be glad.

You know, on an even broader scale, this might be something for all of us to take on as a church in 2014. Now that Dianne is settled in and has surveyed the landscape, it will soon be time to begin laying the groundwork for the next steps during our transition time. As we go about this work, may we not get too far ahead of ourselves. May we recognize each day as a gift made by God, even in days of transition. May we look at the good around us. May we rejoice and be glad each day, beginning with today.

~Kevin



**Rev. Kevin Weikel
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for Youth and
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Out of office
Wednesdays



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Out of office
Tuesdays &
Thursdays

A message from Dr. Erica Nierendorf, Acting Associate Minister of Parish Life

Friends,

As I write this, we have just had our first major snow storm and are in the middle of Advent. January seems so far away, and yet we know this isn't true. January, of course, begins a new year in our secular calendar, and it also provides us an opportunity to reassess or begin anew our spiritual journey, after Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. How are we doing in our faith life? What might we do that might breathe new life into it?

We might decide to begin regular study and prayer, alone or with a partner or group. Also, we may feel the tug toward creating a new mission or service project at First Church. Or, we may decide to begin a new spiritual practice. I would like to share with you one that I discovered over a decade ago, called Prayer Walking.

Prayer Walking is quite simply the regular practice of praying while walking, alone or with a partner. Some prefer walking with a partner who can provide the safety of companionship, as well as accountability and perspective on one's thoughts and prayers. Walking alone provides opportunity for meditation or dialogue, in communion with God. Prayer Walking is easy on the pocketbook and gets us out into God's creation.

As one walks along, an ongoing panorama of prayer ideas can emerge. Whether we walk in a neighborhood or down route 10 or in the woods, ideas will emerge of people and groups who need our prayers. For example, we can pray for our neighborhood, our church, other churches and our synagogue in town. Also, our schools, public servants, law enforcement, elders and children, and of course, our family, near and far, all need our prayers. Additionally, there are various forms of prayer one might use. The acronym, ACTS, which stands for Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, and Supplication, can be a guide to the order of our prayers.

Another form of prayer I have appreciated is meditation. It can be helpful to read a passage from scripture before leaving for the walk, and to listen for a word or phrase that resonates. Asking oneself, "How is my life touched?" and "Is there an invitation here?" can open up one's heart to God's still, small voice. Whether an answer comes that day or later, it can help to ask a question of God and then to listen. In our frenetic world, the silence of walking and listening can become a unique and beautiful highlight in a person's daily routine.

Walking, while praying, can help us to stay alert and focused, especially when tired and sleepy. In Simsbury, we are blessed with many opportunities to be in God's glorious creation. Some find that their closest connection to the Divine comes when they step outside. The apostle Paul wrote in Galatians, "Since we live in the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." (5:25) As we step into the New Year together, I look forward to hearing your faith walk stories, however they unfold.

Peace,

Erica

MUSIC NOTES

By now, Christmas is in the rear view mirror, the big snows are approaching, and we are all settling down for a long winter's nap. When the New Year comes, not only do we look ahead, but it always seems to be a time of reflection of what has happened in the near and far past. Some pretty good things to look back on:

Some highlights of several great presentations by the choirs:

- a great Thanksgiving service with some pretty complicated yet meaningful music by the **Chancel Choir; Women's Praise** Choir in Charlton, MA, at Simsbury Celebrates and Supper Club; and some wonderful music by the **Junior Choir** and **Cherubs**.
- A meaningful collaboration with fellow Simsbury houses of worship on the **Interfaith Thanksgiving Service**, this year at the Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation.
- A very successful collaboration with the **Farmington Valley Chorale** for two virtually full house performances of Messiah.
- A fantastic concert presented by the **Hockanum Valley Ringers** on a snowy, yet reasonably well attended concert that put all attendees in the Christmas Spirit. (We will definitely have them back!)
- Some wonderful music for the Christmas season done by all choirs, with talented instrumentalists from within and without our congregation.
- Terrific work done by volunteers: **Jeannie Boehner, Jim Martoccho, Tammy Warner, Anna Harris, Cynthia Yocik, Margo Kilbon**, to name a few. I know there are many more, and hopefully you know how appreciated you are.

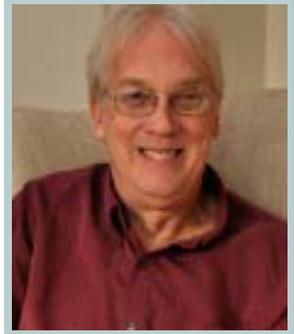
So now we look to the future:

- Easter is coming, and we are already planning music for that.
- A concert planned with the **Trinity Accidentals** of which our own **Will Scully** is a member. Date to be announced.
- A concert by the International early music group – **Cappella Pratensis** – an a cappella singing group of eight men from the Netherlands who perform early church music to a "T." This will be Monday evening, Feb 24, 2014 with a pre-concert discussion scheduled at 7:00 p.m. by early music expert Dr. Jennifer Bloxam, a Professor of Music and Musicologist from Williams College, with the concert immediately following. You can learn more about her here: <http://music.williams.edu/node/278>

Dr. Bloxam offers a very informative lecture/demonstration to accompany the program performed by Cappella Pratensis. The lecture/demonstration usually incorporates images and musical examples sung by the group. Anyone, whether or not you have an interest in early music, will find this to be an incredible and fascinating event. We are extremely fortunate to be able to hold a program of this quality and stature here. Tickets will be on sale after the first week of January.

There's a lot to come. Think about being part of the music here – come to a rehearsal; attend a program; help with a concert. The rewards are more than you can imagine.

Happy New Year!
Mark



Mark Mercier
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Out of Office
Tuesdays

To The Congregation: Welcome 2014!

Welcome 2014!

By the time you read this month's Cornerstone, Christmas likely will have come and gone and another new year begun. Much happened at First Church during 2013, and we have moved into a time of transition that promises to be both exciting and challenging. As we look ahead to 2014, I want to share a few items with you.

Entering into Intentional Transition

As we start the new year, we will begin thinking and acting more deliberately about our transitional process and start laying the groundwork for our search, sometime in the future, for a called minister. For instance, your church leaders will begin looking at various models of ministry to see what has worked well in other churches our size, with similar missions and resources, broadly defined (human, financial, physical). We also will begin gathering input from you, our members, to be sure we have a clear view of your hopes and aspirations for our church, its mission and your ministerial needs. The goal of all this and other foundational work will be to develop a comprehensive profile of First Church that can be used as a compass for a search team, once we are ready to enter that stage in our transition. Let me be clear: we are not at that time yet, and there is much groundwork to be done in preparation. This is a time when we must be completely honest with each other about what we want to hold on to, what we are willing to change and what may be standing in the way of our moving forward together. Candor and kindness are essential as we deal with these issues. This time of transition is challenging and important – it is a time to reflect on where we have been, where we are and where we believe First Church should be going, well into the future.

Congregational Update Meeting on January 12

On January 12, we have scheduled another of our congregational updates following the 10:00 service. The purpose of the meeting is for the leadership to give you a broad outline of the work that we will be doing over the next several months. If you cannot stay for the meeting – or if you typically attend the 8:30 service – we will summarize highlights of the meeting and publish them in the weekly email.

Volunteer Fair – January 26

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. -- 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Have you been wondering how you can become one of the many people in our congregation who regularly give their time to keep First Church running smoothly? No doubt you have a skill or talent or experience that can be applied to one or more of the groups and functions that help to operate our many successful ministries. Don't hide your talent - we need what you can offer. On January 26, we are holding a volunteer fair in Palmer Hall during coffee hour after the 10:00 service. You'll have an opportunity to speak

with members of our various boards and committees and find out where your special skills and capabilities are most needed.

Don't think you have the time to volunteer? As you know we've been looking at our governance structure and trying to find ways to realign some of our boards and committees and/or redefine certain roles and responsibilities and the time commitments involved. If you are interested and willing to serve, we will help find a place for you. Maybe it won't be a 3-year time commitment but a project-based role where you can bring your expertise to help with the work for a more limited time. Maybe it's a new team that fills a new need (like our newly formed media team). We are open to trying new ways of operating in order to leverage the skills and talent of members like you. So please be sure to stop by on January 26!

A Reminder about Your 2014 Pledge

"Freely you have received, freely give." --Matthew 10:8

If you've already sent in your 2014 pledge card, thank you! Your financial commitment to First Church is helping our Board of Finance to plan for the new year and ensure that adequate funding is in place to support our wonderful clergy, capable staff, spirit-filled programs and yes, maintenance of our beautiful facilities, where so much of our church's ministry happens. If you have not yet made a 2014 commitment, please consider doing so now – it's not too late, and we need your support. And if your heart is telling you to increase your pledge for 2014, well, that's okay, too! We meet as a congregation in early February to approve the 2014 budget, and it is my sincere hope that we will do so from a position of financial strength and stability.

Go Paperless and Help First Church "Go Green"

First Church budgets about \$5,000 each year for postage, much of it to mail the Cornerstone and various special mailings throughout the year. An equally large sum is spent on paper for bulletins, newsletters, program materials, etc. To help conserve our resources, we will be sending you the Cornerstone by email – within the next couple of months - using your email address currently on file with the Church Office. Please be sure to notify the office of any change to your email address as soon as possible. If you do not have an email address on file, you will continue to receive hard copy but should let the office know your email address so we can begin email delivery. Also if you are not able to access the Cornerstone online, we would appreciate your notifying the office (or asking a friend to do so for you), and we will be happy to continue mailing you a hard copy. Thank you for doing your part to help us to save some money and "go green".

With anticipation for a blessed 2014,

Melinda Westbrook, President

The Connecticut Conference: Justice-Focused for Centuries!

First Church is a part of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ. What does that mean for our church? As First Church's delegate to the Conference, I'd like to share with you a brief introduction in this first installment in a series on the work of the Connecticut Conference.

The Connecticut Conference dates back to the 1700s with the establishment of the Missionary Society of Connecticut, which continues to this day, and is a direct descendant of the Congregational Christian Conference of Connecticut which was later formed in the 1860s. Headquartered in Hartford, the Conference today provides pastoral support and placement services, educational materials, a voice for public discussion of social issues and much more to all UCC churches across the state. We are one of 39 UCC conferences nationwide, and the Connecticut Conference is among the largest UCC conferences in the country.

Social justice has long been a focus of the Conference. It was active in the 19th century in the abolition of slavery, with many member churches supporting the underground railroad during the Civil War. In the 20th century, the Connecticut Conference was the voice of Connecticut's UCC churches with respect to civil rights, women's equality, LGBT equality and economic justice—work that continues today. In the 21st century, the Connecticut Conference is now leading the way for UCC churches in our state to embrace environmental responsibility and sustainability as "green churches", taking note of our effects on the environment and encouraging responsible environmental stewardship at church, at home and in the workplace.

The Conference is a democratic institution, with delegates who hold voting power on behalf of their respective churches. First Church is entitled to four delegates to the Conference. Currently I am the only delegate serving. If you have an interest in joining me in the important work of representing our congregation at the state level, please feel free to contact me at susanbabcock24@gmail.com for more information.

The Connecticut Conference mission statement states in part "We come together as Local Churches and Members to equip one another to proclaim the Gospel to the communities of Connecticut and to the world by teaching the Good News of Jesus Christ, doing the work of reconciliation and justice, and living faithfully in daily life." May it be so here at First Church.

Susan Babcock White
Conference Delegate for First Church of Christ Simsbury

First Church Financial Update

The 2013 budget for First Church is being finalized with year end expenses and will most likely show a slight deficit due to unplanned expenses for the office and other Boards within the church.

The Board of Finance is beginning to formulate the 2014 budget for presentation and approval to the congregation on February 9th, 2014. As most of the budget forecast depends on an accurate picture of the income from pledges, I would strongly encourage members to fill out their 2014 pledge cards in the next 2 weeks and send them to the church office. The 2014 year will be challenging given what we know how about our expenses and ministry needs. Your prayerful help in sustaining our vibrant schedule of mission and outreach, music, youth ministries, and service to our members is requested.

Happy Holidays to you all.
Ron Patterson, Treasurer

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.



Students in Grades 1-5 will be learning about Jesus' Baptism

Bible Story information (Bible passages: Matthew 3:1-17) :

Jesus was baptized when he was about thirty years old. About eight years passed between the time he visited the Temple and the time of his baptism. He probably spent that time in Nazareth in the trade of carpentry. Jesus' baptism marks the beginning of his public ministry.

John was preaching, baptizing, and calling people to change their ways. Jesus did not need a "repenter's" baptism, but his baptism identified him with those who were searching for God. The Bible tells us that, when Jesus was baptized, the heavens opened and the Spirit of God came down on Jesus in the form of a dove. A voice spoke, "This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased." These words are a composite of Psalm 2:7—a description of a messianic kind—and Isaiah 42:1—a description of a suffering servant of God. Jesus' mission became that of the

Messiah, God's anointed One, who would endure much suffering.

Interesting facts:

- The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. It reminds us of God's presence.
- The shell became a symbol of baptism because people in the early Christian church probably used a shell to dip the water for baptism .
- The shell symbol often includes three drops of water to represent the Trinity (Father, Son, & Holy Spirit.)
- Water is a symbol of cleansing and of new life because we bathe in it and drink it. It is essential for life.
-PowerXpress Curriculum

See www.firstchurchsimsbury.com for more information about the Bible Story and Baptism in the UCC denomination.

Up coming events for your Calendar

Jan 5:

Teacher/Shepherd Breakfast Meeting at 9:30 a.m. in the Parlor

Spring Church School Session begins

Feb 8:

Valentine Party/Parents Night Out, 5:00 -8:30pm., Palmer Hall

Martin Luther King Jr:

Martin Luther King Jr. loved God and understood that we're all loved by God. He knew it didn't matter to God what color eyes or skin we have. He worked hard throughout his life to make sure everyone else understood how special each of us is to God. On January 16th, we'll celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday and remember his efforts to create a world where all people were treated the same.

Video for kids—MLK—The King and His Dream: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6Au81aHuSq>

Family Activities:

1. Each family member can discuss at dinner what they can do to make the world better.
2. Draw pictures of your dream for God's world.
3. Make a birthday cake for Martin Luther King with candles and have each person talk about what they wish for the world to make it a better place for all.
4. Find I Samuel 16:7 in your Bible and read aloud. *"But the LORD said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn't make decisions the way you do! People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at a person's thoughts and intentions."*

Valentines Party/Parents Night Out
Save the date: Sat, Feb 8, 2014 in Palmer Hall
5:00—8:30 p.m.

Please sign up and fill out the registration form



Activity Stations:

Games: wii bowling and dance party, Valentine Bingo, Valentine matching, I have who has, Valentine Twister

Activities: movie and popcorn, Chocolate heart hunt, play dough station, doll house station

Crafts: Make your own popper & play, make Valentines cards and crafts

Story rug for younger kids



Ages: 3(potty trained) - 6th grade, teen helpers are needed
Cost: free will offering

Spring Church School Teachers and Shepherds Needed: Jan 5, —May 11, 2013

Help the kids at First Church of Christ grow in their faith and community as you grow in yours, become a church school teacher or shepherd. Contact ccole@fccsimsbury.org.

Nursery – Kate Bruno, 1 nursery caregiver needed, substitute—Michelle Cole,

Pre-K— Suzanne Osborne, 1 teacher needed

Kindergarten Patti Scanlon, Theresa Carlson

Rotation Program for grades 1-5:

Computer room – Sarah Wilmarth Guasta, David McElligott

Cooking room – Sarah Leathers, 1 teachers needed

Art room – JoAnn Hogan, 1 teacher needed

Game room – BryanTawney, 1 teacher needed

Shepherds

1st & 2nd grade shepherd - needed

3rd grade shepherd – Erin Naspo

4th & 5th grade shepherd – Jackie Brook

6th & 7th grade Pre-Confirmation class – Anne Marie Prabulos, Kim Tawney



Church School Mission Project

Our January church school offering will be used to purchase pajamas for children in need. You can help by purchasing pj's and bringing them to the chapel. They will be brought forward during the offering. We are also **collecting travel toiletries** for South Park Inn.



20 pairs of Pj's have been collected so far.

REV. KEVIN WEIKEL—YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

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

JUNIOR FELLOWSHIP (Grades 7-8)

- January 3rd** **2:10-4:00 p.m.** New Year's Party! We will celebrate the New Year with food and games in Palmer Hall before going up to the Youth Room to discuss "Faith Resolutions" in the New Year.
- January 17th** **11:15-1:00 p.m. (HJMS Early Release)** Topic: "Heroes." What is a "hero?" Should athletes and musicians be heroes? Who are your heroes? Who are heroes of our faith?
- January 31st** **2:10-4:00 pm,** Regular JF meeting, Topic: TBD

CONFIRMATION GROUP (Grade 8)

- January 12th** **5:00-7:00 p.m., Large Group Meeting (Baptism & Communion)** in Palmer Hall for students
- January 26th** **5:00-7:00 p.m., Small Group Meeting (Saints)** at host homes for students

PF YOUTH GROUP (Grades 9-12)

- January 5th** **7:00-9:00 p.m. Regular Gathering in the Youth Room:** PF Alumni will join us to discuss life after high school.
- January 12th** **7:00-9:00 p.m. Regular Gathering in the Youth Room:** Topic, "This I Believe."
- January 18th** **4:30-6:45p.m. (note, this is a Saturday):** Broom Hockey and Pizza! We will gather at the church at 4pm and take the bus to Simsbury Farms for Broom Hockey. We will then head to The Old Well Tavern for Pizza. Parent pickup will be 6:45pm at the church.
- January 26th** **7:00-9:00 P.M. Regular Gathering in the Youth Room:** Blessing of the Animals

EVERY SUNDAY:

Look for Maddie Earnhardt in the "Youth Pew" for worship every Sunday morning at 10:00 am. The Youth Pew is located in the balcony on the right front side.

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DECEMBER EXECUTIVE COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Reverend Arakawa had earlier distributed a report of activities for the past month. In her remarks she highlighted the Memorial Service for Amy Lang Potter on November 24, 2013. Her Pastoral Relations Committee has been formed and includes Bruce Powell; Barb Patterson; Evan Gross; Lorrie McElligott; and Denise Alfeld. Dianne informed the meeting that a “media team” has been formed to work with SCTV for the broadcasting of our worship service. A “test run” will be performed in December. The team is in need of volunteers to assist in editing of the program to be broadcast.

Reverend Weikel also had distributed a summary of his activities for the past month. In his remarks he highlighted the very successful PF Retreat held November 8th through 10th at Silver Lake that was teen planned and led with 53 participants. He noted that he will be out of the office from January 5th through the 12th attending a meeting of his UCC Next Generation Leadership Initiative education program.

President Westbrook explained that she had received favorable comments from the congregation concerning her information update and that it had clarified some misunderstandings of events underway. She plans to provide a similar update in the January edition of the Cornerstone.

Treasurer Ron Patterson presented a first draft summary of the 2014 Budget, commenting that it was a work in process and needed further refinement. It is expected that fiscal year 2013 will end with a modest surplus that will be carried forward into the 2014 income. The draft reflects the “requests” received from the various Boards and Committees and will need further discussion. Much will depend on how the 2014 Stewardship campaign concludes. Ron plans to present an updated proposed budget draft at the January meeting of the Executive Council and noted that a special meeting of the Executive Council may be necessary in late January for approval of the 2014 Budget to be presented to the Congregation for approval at the February annual financial meeting.

In the absence of Mark Scully, Chair of the Board of Stewardship, Ron Patterson provided a brief 2014 Stewardship progress report indicating that pledges in the amount of \$544,000 had been received to date from 204 pledging units. For comparison, we had received pledges from 339 pledging units at this point in time last year. Mark Scully will be asked to provide a Stewardship progress reports to the congregation in the December weekly email and worship bulletins. Discussion resulted in agreement to investigate the possible merger of Stewardship with the Board of Finance as part of our governance strategic planning.

Janice Johnson, co-chair of the Board of Personnel, provided an update on the Church

Office staffing project. Job elimination notices have been given to the current part-time secretaries – Darlene Davis and Ann Gallion. The search for a full-time Administrative Assistant is underway, with 60 applications received, but has slowed due to the holiday availability of candidates and the interviewing personnel. For that reason, Darlene Davis has agreed to extend her employment until late December. Interviews will commence the week of December 2nd, with an expected hire by mid-December.

It was moved; seconded; and carried that the recommendation of the Board of Personnel be approved that recommends the Plan B option of the UCC health insurance coverage be offered to eligible employees. It was noted that the premium rates for the UCC coverage plans remain unchanged for 2014.

Bruce Powell provided an update on efforts underway to improve the quality of the sanctuary sound system. Mark Mercier has taken the lead on this project based on his expertise on sound projection management. Discussion concluded that we should seek a quality system upgrade (versus a patchwork style of improvement) and that the cost of the upgrades, since they are a facility improvement, is to be allocated against the Trustees budget.

Dave Wadhams reported that “governance discussions” are underway concerning the assignment to investigate the possible merger of the Board of Deacons with the Board of Mission and Outreach. It currently does not appear viable based on the mission of the Board of Deacons and research into their method of operation, however, discussion surfaced several options for consideration by both Boards during the investigation of a possible merger.

Discussion occurred related to recruiting activities to fill the several Board vacancies and how, during recruiting efforts, we might offer candidates of interest various options to serve with respect to term commitments and/or participation. Cindy Braunlich agreed to discuss and organize with the Board of Elders a “volunteer job fair” during one of the fellowship times in January.

It was moved; seconded; and carried that Linda Peach be ratified to serve a three-year term on the Board of Finance, effective immediately. Dave Wadhams gave notice that he intends to bring forward at the January meeting the names of the four “associate members” of the Board of Mission and Outreach for ratification and inclusion in the Church Officiary.

It was noted that Betty Kierstead has resigned from the Board of Personnel, and that Dick Meyer and Bill Pike have resigned from the Board of Finance.

Bill Ketchabaw
Clerk of the Congregation



THE BOARD OF MISSION & OUTREACH

Escape Fire: The Fight To Rescue American Healthcare Movie

Join us on January 17, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. in Palmer Hall with delicious soup and bread, followed by a FREE viewing of the award-winning documentary, *Escape Fire: The Fight to Rescue American Healthcare*. The film premiered at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival and received honors at several prominent festivals. The movie is entertaining and educational— a film everyone, young and old, can relate to.

Escape Fire depicts the crisis our healthcare system is in with real life stories of a broken system and examples on how it can be better. It portrays how the medical industry is designed for quick fixes rather than prevention, for profit-driven care rather than patient driven care. Escape Fire shows the pressures providers feel to reduce costs and limit time with patients and the frustrations of patients struggling with preventable conditions that are often exacerbated by inappropriate care.

Americans spend twice as much as any other country on health care, but rank 50 out of more than 220 nations in life expectancy. We spend \$300 billion a year on pharmaceuticals, almost as much as the rest of the world's total expenditure. This is partly due to the impact of for-profit interests that focus more on disease management than disease prevention.

Any questions, please contact Dave Wadhams at 860-321-7160 or email him at wadhams.nd@comcast.net.

CARE BAG MISSION



Your Board of Mission and Outreach invites you to join us for "fifteen minutes of service." Yes, only fifteen minutes. After the 10:00 a.m. service on Sunday, February 1, 2014 during fellowship hour.

During this time we will be assembling toiletry kits for the Care Bag Mission, which provides bags of clothing and toiletries for children who are removed urgently from their homes.

Please join us and give a little of your time to this very worthwhile cause. Donations of toiletries are much needed and welcomed. Items needed are: toothbrushes, travel sized toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, body wash or soap, deodorant, baby wipes and small Kleenex packs.

You will also have the opportunity to learn more about First Church's many mission projects. Contact Denise Firestone at 860-463-5468 with any questions. Hope to see you there!

SMALL INVESTMENTS YIELD BIG BENEFITS MASOOLI, UGANDA

In October 2013, the U.S. Faith Health Care Center Board of Directors was able to fund the purchase of mosquito nets for two schools in Masooli, Uganda, thanks to the penny jar collections by children from the St. Thomas the Apostle Elementary School (STA) in West Hartford.

The STA students decided to create a *Coins for Nets* fund drive when they learned how mosquito nets help to prevent the children in Masooli from getting malaria. By bringing in loose change from their homes, the STA students raised over a thousand dollars. The donation allowed the Masooli clinic to distribute 250 mosquito nets to two schools in Masooli, the Assubira Primary School and the Brain Tree Primary School. Coleen DiSanto, Principal of St. Thomas the Apostle School said that the drive was part of the school's mission to encourage personal responsibility, show respect for others, and become independent members of a global society.

First Church of Christ

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LET'S GO PAPERLESS!

Please notify the church office of your email address(es) or any changes so that we can prepare to transition our newsletter from paper to electronic.

Thank You!

First Church of Christ

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JANUARY 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<p>1</p> <p>NEW YEAR'S DAY - OFFICE CLOSED</p> <p>New Year's Day Soup Kitchen</p> <p>6:30 PM KP meeting</p>	<p>2</p> <p>3:30 Bridal preparation</p> <p>4:30 Schuyler Wedding Rehearsal</p> <p>6:00 Bell Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>6:30 Troop 76 Boy Scouts Mtg., Palmer Hall/Kitchen</p> <p>6:30 Troop 76 Leadership Mtg., Parsons' Study</p> <p>7:30 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous Mtg, Rm 28</p> <p>7:30 Chancel Choir/ Music Room</p> <p>7:30 Troop 76 Adult Committee Mtg., Parsons' Study</p>	<p>3</p> <p>2:10 JF - Youth Room/ Palmer Hall</p> <p>4:00 Bridal preparation</p> <p>5:00 Schuyler Wedding</p>	<p>4</p> <p>5:00 Schuyler Wedding snow date</p>
<p>5</p> <p>8:30 Early Worship, Chapel</p> <p>9:00 Church school teacher/shepherd event</p> <p>9:00 Teacher/ Shepherds Breakfast Meeting, Parlor</p> <p>10:00 Communion Sunday, Sanctuary</p> <p>7:00 PF Youth Group, Youth Room</p>	<p>6</p> <p>10:00 CCC</p> <p>12:00 Hopmeadow Nursery School Dance Class, Rm 29</p> <p>1:00 American Red Cross Blood Drive</p> <p>4:15 Junior Choir</p> <p>4:30 Book Club, Parlor</p> <p>7:30 Executive Council Mtg., Parsons' Study</p>	<p>7</p> <p>11:00 Hopmeadow Nursery School Dance Class, Rm 29</p>	<p>8</p> <p>9:30 Hay Stack, Rm 28</p> <p>4:00 Women's Praise Choir</p> <p>7:00 Farmington Valley Chorus, Palmer Hall</p>	<p>9</p> <p>9:30 Small Group Bible Study, Library</p> <p>6:00 Bell Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>6:30 Troop 76 Boy Scouts Mtg., Palmer Hall/Kitchen</p> <p>7:30 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous Mtg, Rm 28</p> <p>7:30 Chancel Choir/ Music Room</p>	<p>10</p> <p>10:00 Farmington Valley Transition Academy</p>	<p>11</p>
<p>12</p> <p>8:30 Early Worship, Chapel</p> <p>10:00 Worship Service, Sanctuary</p> <p>11:00 Brief Congregational Meeting following worship</p> <p>11:15 Care Bag Committee - Assembly</p> <p>5:00 Confirmation Lg. Grp., Palmer Hall</p> <p>7:00 PF Youth Group, Youth Room</p>	<p>13</p> <p>10:00 CCC</p> <p>12:00 Hopmeadow Nursery School Dance Class, Rm 29</p> <p>4:15 Junior Choir</p> <p>7:30 All Boards Meeting - All Rooms</p>	<p>14</p> <p>11:00 Hopmeadow Nursery School Dance Class, Rm 29</p> <p>12:00 Retired Men's Luncheon</p> <p>7:00 Deacon's Committee Mtg., Library</p> <p>7:00 Youth Advisor Meeting, Kevin's Office</p>	<p>15</p> <p>4:00 Women's Praise Choir</p> <p>6:30 KP meeting</p> <p>7:00 Farmington Valley Chorus, Palmer Hall</p>	<p>16</p> <p>6:00 Bell Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>6:30 Troop 76 Boy Scouts Mtg., Palmer Hall/Kitchen</p> <p>7:30 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous Mtg, Rm 28</p> <p>7:30 Chancel Choir/ Music Room</p>	<p>17</p> <p>5:00 Escape Fire Movie-Mission, Palmer Hall</p> <p>11:15 JF - Youth Room/ Palmer Hall</p>	<p>18</p> <p>4:30 PF Youth Grp— Broom Hockey, Simsbury Farms/Pizza</p>
<p>19</p> <p>8:30 Early Worship, Chapel</p> <p>10:00 Worship Service, Sanctuary</p>	<p>20</p> <p>MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY - OFFICE CLOSED</p> <p>1:00 American Red Cross Blood Drive, Palmer Hall</p> <p>1:00 Martin Luther King Day Celebration, Sanctuary</p> <p>7:00 Trojans</p>	<p>21</p> <p>9:30 Prayer Shawl Morning Gathering, Rm 28</p> <p>10:00 CCC</p> <p>11:00 Hopmeadow Nursery School Dance Class, Rm 29</p> <p>6:00 Cub Scout Pack 276 Meetings, Palmer Hall/kitchen</p> <p>7:00 Prayer Shawl Evening Gathering, Rm 28</p>	<p>22</p> <p>12:00 4th Wednesday Study Grp., Rm 28</p> <p>4:00 Women's Praise Choir</p> <p>7:00 Farmington Valley Chorus, Palmer Hall</p>	<p>23</p> <p>9:30 Small Group Bible Study, Library</p> <p>6:00 Bell Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>6:30 Troop 76 Boy Scouts Mtg., Palmer Hall/Kitchen</p> <p>7:30 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous Mtg, Rm 28</p> <p>7:30 Chancel Choir/ Music Room</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p> <p>9:00 Cub Scout Pack 276 Pinewood Derby, Palmer Hall/kitchen</p>
<p>26</p> <p>8:30 Early Worship, Chapel</p> <p>10:00 Worship service, Sanctuary</p> <p>11:00 Volunteer Fair, Palmer Hall</p> <p>11:30 Lunch Bunch Gathering</p> <p>5:00 Confirmation Small Grp. - Host home</p> <p>7:00 PF Youth Group, Youth Room</p>	<p>27</p> <p>10:00 CCC</p> <p>12:00 Hopmeadow Nursery School Dance Class, Rm 29</p> <p>4:15 Junior Choir</p> <p>6:00 Masooli FMHCC Board Meeting, Parsons' Study</p>	<p>28</p> <p>10:00 CCC</p> <p>10:00 Card Making Group, Rm 28</p> <p>11:00 Hopmeadow Nursery School Dance Class, Rm 29</p>	<p>29</p> <p>4:00 Women's Praise Choir</p> <p>7:00 Farmington Valley Chorus, Palmer Hall</p>	<p>30</p> <p>6:00 Bell Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>6:30 Troop 76 Boy Scouts Mtg., Palmer Hall/Kitchen</p> <p>7:30 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous Mtg, Rm 28</p> <p>7:30 Chancel Choir/ Music Room</p>	<p>31</p> <p>2:10 JF - Regular JF Mtg.</p>	