

# THE CORNERSTONE

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

## SEPTEMBER 2015 WORSHIP SCHEDULE

*Join Us!*

Sunday, September 6th—Summer Worship at 9:30

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Sunday, September 13th—no 8:30 am service (Rally Day)  
Please join us for worship at 10:00 am!



September 6  
Summer worship  
at 9:30

Rev. Kevin Weikel  
Matthew 6:24-32  
*The Present Moment*  
with Holy Communion

September 13  
10 am service  
only!

Rev. Dianne Arakawa  
Mark 8:27-38  
***Jesus' Challenge to Us***  
followed by an all-church luncheon on our West Lawn

September 20  
8:30 and 10:00  
services

Rev. Kevin Weikel  
Mark 12:41-44  
*The Size of Our Hearts*

September 27  
8:30 and 10:00  
services

Rev. Dianne Arakawa  
Esther 7:1-6, 9-10, 9:20-22  
***Esther's Request: Let My People Go!***  
~  
*including the Baptism of Camden Jaxson Chaves*

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## Transitions



Rev. Dianne  
Arakawa  
Transitional  
Senior Minister

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Out of Office  
Fridays

Dear Friends,

Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup> at 10 am, will bring our Rally Day Festival service, followed by our all-church luncheon on our West lawn. I hope that everyone will make a special effort to attend, catch up with old friends and welcome new ones. In addition to great food, there will be a dunk tank, foamy-filled fun tent and karaoke singing. If you would like to assist, please contact our creative director, Suzy Sabia.

It has become obvious in recent years that because of the rapid increase in technology and related social changes, there is an increase in the deep craving and need for community, especially religious community. The Church has understood this for more than two millennia. First Church Simsbury defines itself as a place where **everyone, “wherever they are on life’s journey,” can worship together, learn and grow, and serve the church and larger community.**

Recently, we heard former President Jimmy Carter divulge to the press how he was beginning radiation treatment for a cancer that had spread. Most reporters were surprised, even shocked, at how balanced, candid and good humored the 90-year-old was. Not so for us who are church-goers, and clearly understand that our worship life is, among other things, preparation for a faithful attitude and stance towards whatever happens to us and others, especially in the face of ill health and unexpected losses.

President Carter radiated gratitude for life, confidence in God and openness to come-what-may in his future. At the same time, there was a churchman who his entire life, not just when he became ill, had been a dedicated parishioner at his local church, advocated for the ordination of women in the conservative Southern Baptist Convention, established a foundation to aid the poor around the

world as well as promoted Habitat for Humanity. Even our family has volunteered for Habitat builds in the U.S. and Eastern Europe over the years.

Recently, there seems to be an increased longing for the vision of a larger, more interconnected and meaningful world and ways to approach it. David Brooks of the New York Times (July 2015) contrasts fluid and crystallized intelligence. He suggests that those who focus on the tools of emails, texting, instagramming and tweeting, while timely and useful, are missing out. Instead he recommends better positioning ourselves to understand the reach of a richer, more complex life, which religious institutions and sustained reading, especially fiction, provide. How do we find a balance between rapid reaction and meaningful response?

Coming to worship is not a mysterious, insignificant or cute act of the status quo. For some of us it is an act of defiance to the distractions of the world. It expresses the fullness to which we dedicate our lives. Meaning in our lives does not come from lots of money, big fancy houses; many of us have quite enough. Rather through worship we dedicate and rededicate ourselves to **building up God’s realm in a community** of faith, where neighbors love and care for one another as well as the wider world.

Hoping to see you at church on Rally Day!

Grace and peace,

*Dianne*

## *A Message from Rev. Kevin Weikel*

From July 24 through August 3, 68 youth, young adults and adult leaders, from First Church and the Simsbury Community, participated in a Mission Pilgrimage to Bland County, Virginia. We stayed at Camp Laurel, a former Methodist Church Camp located just minutes from the West Virginia border. Most of our worksites were actually in West Virginia.

In this part of our country, jobs are few and far between. For many families, their modest houses – handed down from generation to generation – are the only real possession they have. But these families are often forced to choose between buying food or medicine for their family or fixing a hole in the roof, and as a result, their home becomes a low priority. Walls are buckling, roofs are leaking, and sagging floors are posing hazards to the elderly and very young.

Our group divided into nine different work crews. One of our crews sided a house, another put on a front porch, and still another put on a roof. Many of our groups put down bathroom and kitchen tile, some of our groups installed toilets and sinks, and most of our groups spent at least some time hanging drywall, mudding, sanding, and painting. Every crew worked extremely hard.

Improving homes was not the only goal of our trip, however. An additional goal was to get to know our homeowners and families, and most of our groups were able to do that. By learning about the situations in which these families find themselves, our young people gained perspective and understanding, which always results in compassion.

In the end, we left Appalachia having made a few homes warmer, safer and drier, and having had our hearts filled. We invite you to a very special worship service on Sunday, September 20th, as our youth give thanks to God for this wonderful experience. We hope you will join us that day.



Rev. Kevin Weikel  
Associate  
Minister for  
Youth and  
Young Adults

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Out of Office  
Wednesdays



## *Musical Notes by Mark Mercier*



Mark Mercier,  
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of Music  
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Out of Office  
Tuesdays

Another church year begins! This is an exciting time for all of us - the possibilities turn into plans, and the plans turn into actions. Musically, this is an exciting time as well. We not only look toward the immediate - we look down the line to the richness of the fall, and the Christmas season and beyond (yes, even though you may not want to admit it, Christmas isn't that far away).

But we start the year with many positive things in place. We have a new choir soprano, who is going to be stepping in as Junior Choir Director as well. We welcome the very talented Nadia Aguilar, and Hartt graduate, voice teacher, performer, winner of the Connecticut Concert Opera's "American Opera Idol" this past summer, and one of the nicest people one would ever want to meet. (See her bio below!) She has much experience with children's voices and choruses, and she comes in to follow in the footsteps of the terrific Lori Lemoine, who did a wonderful job last year with the kids and implementing an entirely new format for the Junior Choir. The plan is for all of us to work together to form a program for the Juniors that is inspiring and exemplary. If you have a child in the Sunday School program, you have already received an email regarding rehearsal plans and prospective singing dates. Meanwhile, Suzanne Osborne, another talented singer and musician, continues to lead our Cherub Choir and work with the younger kids to learn well-known and loved Sunday School tunes and other music. The Choral Bells, having played several times over the summer for services for friends and former members, begin the year with a little more experience and a much enthusiasm. We start almost immediately with a Saturday morning workshop with Hockanum Valley Ringers director Larry Berdensen, and this event is exciting for others as well - other area bell choirs plan to join us for this. This is a terrific opportunity for education and collaboration. If you want to be involved in music here in a non-singing capacity, this is the group for you.

Chancel Choir continues as the main contributors of music for a majority of Sunday services, but we also look toward collaborations with other choirs in events such as Simsbury's Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, and we are exploring the idea of a Sunday or concert combined effort with other churches.

Women's Praise Choir will continue to meet on Wednesday afternoons to learn all sorts of music of varying styles, from jazz to folk to classical. But there is consideration for an alternate rehearsal time as well, for the many that would like to be a part and can't make Wednesday afternoons. Please voice your feelings about this to Me or any member.

We would like to expand the Men's Choir, and will be seeking ways to do this, from other rehearsal times to a broadened stylistic repertoire. Again, if this might interest you, please let me know. Nothing like the sound of men's voices singing together. New board member Doug Maher, expert guitarist, teacher, and all-around musician, is interested in concentrating on a concert season here at the church, an important way to reach out to the community and our own members as well. No singing talent necessary to be involved - just an interest in music of any kind and the desire to take part in the excitement of putting on a concert.

Music is something that First Church is well-known for. It is a perfect way to contribute creatively, and experience God in your life in a place that words may not be able to reach.

## ARTS COMMITTEE

The Arts Committee has met over the summer, and we have planned several exhibits to hang in the office wing and on the wall outside the chapel, areas that are perfectly suited for this. We will be planning and scheduling art openings (with music and refreshments), drop-offs and themes shortly. We are **looking for anyone in the congregation who would like to exhibit their "hangable art"**. Please don't be shy! Also, we are looking for people who would like to help out on the committee.

### Rehearsal Schedule for First Church Music Groups

*(all rehearsals commence the week after Labor Day)*

Cherub Choir - Sunday, following Sunday School, in the classroom area

Junior Choir - Sunday, after worship, in the choir room

Women's Praise Choir - Wednesday at 4 pm in the choir room

Choral Bells - Thursday at 6 pm in Room 23 (2nd floor - end of the hall)

Men's Choir - Thursday at 7 pm in the choir room

Chancel Choir - Thursday at 7:30 pm in the choir room

Nadia Aguilar, *Soprano*

Born in Mexico. Ms. Aguilar started her voice studies in 2008 with Katya Santos.

Ms. Nadia made her debut as Laretta in the opera Gianni Schicchi by Giacomo Puccini in Saltillo, Mexico in 2013. She sang Mrs. Fiorentino in Kurt Weill's *Street Scene* with Hartt Opera Theater and the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. She also appeared several times as oratorio soloist in Hartt Chorale concerts. Recently, Ms. Aguilar was seen as Rosina in Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with Connecticut Lyric Opera. Her awards include the Second Prize in the Amici Vocal Competition 2014 and the Artistic Director's Award in American Opera Idol 2015.

**Ms. Nadia earned her Bachelor's degree *Summa Cum Laude* in Vocal Performance at the Hartt School, where she studied under the tutelage of the singer Maureen O'Flynn. Her future engagements include a voice teaching position at Hartt Community Division and a position as Resident Artist with Connecticut Concert Opera in the 2015-2016 season.**

In addition to her studies, she has also taken private voice lessons and master classes with Rolando Garza, Danielle Orlando, Claude Corbeil, Katherine Ciesinski, Corradina Caporello and Andre Dos Santos.

*NOTEWORTHY* - Nadia is available for voice lessons for all ages - kids to adults - here at the church. Please see her or myself at any time. And by all means, say hi and welcome her on Rally Day!!



## Kids @ First

### Grow your heart at First Church



Visit [www.firstchurchsimsbury.com](http://www.firstchurchsimsbury.com) to see the church school schedule, videos, and information about what the kids are doing at First Church. Weekly church school emails are sent to parents on Fridays. If you are not receiving the emails contact [ccole@fccsimsbury.org](mailto:ccole@fccsimsbury.org).



#### Back Pack Blessing and Mission Project:

During the Service the students and adults had the opportunity to have their backpacks and brief cases blessed for the up coming year. During the breakfast in Palmer Hall, students had the opportunity to make buttons for their backpacks, school days door hanger check list and to fill 58 back packs. Covenant to Care will be distributing the back packs for children in need. For more pictures go to [www.firstchurchsimsbury.com](http://www.firstchurchsimsbury.com)



#### Up coming events for your Calendar

- Sept 13:** First Day of Church School, Rally Day Picnic
- October 4:** Teacher/shepherd Family Breakfast at 9:30 in the Parlor
- October 18:** Bible Sunday
- October 25:** Intergenerational Square Dance by PF

#### Church School Fall Session 2015

The church school is a co-operative program where adults in the congregation keep their baptismal promise and work together with children to learn about our faith. Please contact [ccole@fccsimsbury.org](mailto:ccole@fccsimsbury.org) to for additional information or to volunteer.

#### We currently need the following fall volunteers:

- Art room: teacher needed
- Playing with God's Word: teacher needed

#### Fall Church School Registration:



#### Please register your students in the church school program.

Students will not automatically be moved up to the next grade.

#### Please go to the website: [www.firstchurchsimsbury.com](http://www.firstchurchsimsbury.com)

to download the registration form, and sent it to [ccole@fccsimsbury.org](mailto:ccole@fccsimsbury.org) or drop it off at church to register your children for the fall session.

#### Church School Mission Projects:

One way parents can teach stewardship and generosity is to ensure that their child brings their offering envelop to church each Sunday. The student offering is placed in a separated account from the church. The offering is used exclusively for church school mission projects. Student can earn their offering by doing chores. See [www.firstchurchsimsbury.com](http://www.firstchurchsimsbury.com) for information about our mission projects.

In the fall, our offering will go toward the purchase of items for 48 Christmas stockings. These stockings will be donated to area social workers to help families have a joyful holiday.

Here are some items that are needed for our projects through out the year that your family could donate: toothbrushes (from that visit to the dentist); hotel toiletries for the toiletry kits; school supplies; small toys or party favors for Christmas stockings.

**CHOOSE  
GENEROSITY**  
"SOMETIMES WHEN WE ARE  
**GENEROUS IN  
SMALL, BARELY DETECTABLE WAYS  
IT CAN CHANGE  
SOMEONE ELSE'S  
LIFE FOREVER.**"  
-MARGARET CHO

## Youth and Young Adults

*Junior Fellowship* (JF for short) is our youth group for 7th and 8th graders. This year, JF will gather approximately once every three weeks, from 2:10-4:30 pm during the school year. At JF, we eat together, play games together, and participate in engaging activities and faith-based discussions together.

Friday, September 4: First JF of the school year!  
Sunday, September 13: Rally Day! Worship at 10 am followed by food and fellowship (and a dunk tank!)



The *Confirmation* year is a concentrated time for 8th graders to explore what it means to be Christian. We do this through large and small group gatherings, mission/service work, experiencing and reflecting on worship, going on retreat, participating in the events and activities of Junior Fellowship (JF), and much more. The goal is for our Confirmands to build positive and grace-filled relationships **with one another, develop a deeper understanding of God's love for all people, and explore what it means to follow Jesus.**

*\*Information Regarding the 2016 Confirmation Class will be posted on our website ([www.fccsimsbury.org](http://www.fccsimsbury.org)) soon!\**

**“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. The meaning behind this name dates back to the pilgrims who came to New England in search of religious freedom. The name still fits quite well because all of us, especially teenagers, are pilgrims on a journey.

PF is for all 9th through 12th graders no matter their religious background, ideas about God, or anything else. Everyone is welcome. PF is a place to play, discuss, worship, grow, serve, and love. PF is a place for teenagers to journey together in faith.

PF meets for fellowship, retreats, mission opportunities, and more

Friday, September 11th at 8 pm into 10th thru 12th Grade Sleepover and Freshmen Kidnapping!  
Saturday, September 12th at 11 am  
Sunday, September 13th, 10 am-noon Rally Day Worship & Picnic. We will sit together for the 10am worship service, then head outside for food and fun. There will be a dunk tank!  
Sunday, September 13th, 7-9 pm First Regular Gathering in the Youth Room!  
Sunday, September 20th, 10 am 2015 Mission Pilgrimage Worship Service  
Sunday, September 20th, 7-9 pm Regular Gathering in the Youth Room  
Sunday, September 27th, 7-9 pm Regular Gathering in the Youth Room

**Rev. Kev's Recap**  
**of the United Church of Christ's General Synod 30**  
in Cleveland, Ohio

Theme: *Unexpected Places*

From June 25th through July 1st, 2015, Marguerite Boslaugh, Gabby Cusano, Maddie Earnhardt and I attended General Synod, our denomination's biennial gathering in Cleveland, Ohio. Marguerite attended as a Trustee for the United Church of Christ Pension Boards, Gabby as a Young Adult Delegate, Maddie as a participant in the Youth @ Synod Program, and I through my involvement in the United Church of Christ's Next Generation Leadership Initiative.

In total, 3,134 members of the United Church of Christ gathered for General Synod where there was worship, sermons given by some of the best preachers in our denomination, keynote speakers, workshops, opportunities for fellowship, and church business...lots of church business! Changes to our denominational structure were discussed, and resolutions (formal expressions of opinion on a variety of key issues), were debated and voted upon.

Below you will find a synopsis of General Synod. I have included the names of the preachers and speakers we heard and what they spoke about, the important church business that was discussed and voted upon, and descriptions of the resolutions and their various outcomes. You will also find some quotes from Gabby, reflecting on her experience as a delegate, and Maddie, reflecting on her experience with Youth @ Synod. Currently, Marguerite is in London, and I was therefore unable to include her comments in this synopsis. I would encourage you however to ask Marguerite about her experience at Synod, and about her role as a Trustee for the UCC Pension Boards, when you see her.

#### Preachers

- Rev. Molly Baskette, the pastor of a renewing church near Boston, told us us to “be brave” and show people our whole selves. She believes church people work too hard to show our “front stage,” when in reality there is more meaning in honestly letting people see our “back stage.”
- Rev. Dwayne Royster questioned what is too often understood as the purpose of the church, getting butts in pews. Instead, he implored, the purpose of the church is to “Change the Damned World!” He believes that if we took this seriously we wouldn't have to worry about the None's and the Millennial's not showing up, they'd be coming to our churches in droves.
- Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, a Palestinian Christian pastor, reminded us that the foundational question of our faith is not, “Is there a God?” but “Where are you, God?” If we ask this question, we find God showing up in unexpected places. He shared how Palestinians are currently asking this question under occupation.
- Dr. Sharon Watkins reminded us that “Normal does not work,” and that “the wrong place becomes right when we follow Christ into unexpected places.”

#### Keynote Speakers

· Cleveland-based journalist Connie Schultz shared, “Christianity is about fixing ourselves and helping others, not the other way around.” She also encouraged us to be committed to sharing our stories and listening to one another, and in doing so to see more clearly the Author of all of our stories.



- Rev. Paul Raushenbush, Religion Editor for the Huffington Post, urged us to fight for the soul of The Church, acknowledging that too often injustices have been perpetrated in the name of our faith. He also called us to the mission field of social media: **“The Internet is too important, too wonderful, and too dangerous for The Church to sit out.”**
- Ms. Winona LaDuke, an environmental activist and writer, called us to face our **“addiction to fossil fuels,”** noting that – like addicts – we justify our use and engage in extreme behaviors to attain the product.

## Church Business

- Last fall, The Rev. Geoffrey Black announced that he is retiring from his position as the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. Shortly thereafter, a search committee was formed and a candidate was identified. The delegates at General Synod had the task of electing the new General Minister and President, The Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer (Conference Minister of the Southwest Conference). Rev. Dorhauer was elected with 85% of the vote. There was some discussion/debate about the election of a white male in a denomination that honors diversity, and I believe this to be the reason the percentage was not higher. Rev. Dorhauer has a strong vision, and he asks for our prayers as he begins. Let us keep him in prayer as he transitions into this position.
- The Rev. Dr. James Moss was re-elected to the position of Executive Minister of Wider Church Ministries. Wider Church Ministries is one of four Covenanted Ministries in the United Church of Christ, providing support for congregations, conferences, and the national church as they work to become global, multiracial, and multicultural, open and affirming, and accessible to all.
- **A proposal by the United Church Board to restructure the “Collegium” (the four national offices of the UCC)** did not pass. There was a great deal of debate over both the process and the content of these proposed changes.

## Resolutions

Ahead of the 2013 General Synod, the Connecticut Conference contacted me to see if we had a young adult that might be interested in serving as a delegate for General Synod. Gabby Cusano grew up at First Church and has not only been an active member, but she takes her church involvement very seriously. We thought Gabby was the perfect choice and she immediately obliged. A delegate can serve **for two Synod’s, and so for Gabby, this was her second and final General Synod.** Gabby is to be recognized not only for taking the time out of her schedule to attend the past two General Synods, but also for her dedication to studying the issues and resolutions beforehand. Gabby represented us well. Below is a quote from Gabby about the resolutions process, and below that are bullet points describing each resolution.

**“There are people from all around the country and world gathered in a convention center to debate and vote on a variety of resolutions. We have all studied the issues beforehand and have our own individual perspectives and opinions on these issues that are pressing the world, which makes it very interesting. Emotions ran high and occasionally the room grew tense or fell silent. But in the end, regardless of what might be holding us apart or blocking our ears from hearing different sides of the story, we all kept our unity in Christ and denomination at the center. I was honored to be a delegate, representing First Church and the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ.” ~Gabby Cusano**

## Here is a synopsis of the resolutions that were discussed, debated and voted upon at General Synod...

- Commemorating 100 Years Since the Armenian Genocide: Approved
  - o With this resolution, our denomination marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, reiterating its acknowledgement of the events and reasserting its concern for people and communities that are victims of violence, particularly when based on race, ethnicity, creed, or any other aspect of identity.
- Dismantling Discriminatory Systems of Mass Incarceration in the United States and Dismantling the New Jim Crow: Approved
  - o In the United States, not only do we imprison more of our own people than any other country (by a large margin), but also, the prison population is far from representative of **the nation's population as a whole. People with mental illness, people of color, and especially African American men are imprisoned at extremely disproportionate rates. Much of this is a consequence of the unequal enforcement of the "War on Drugs."** These resolutions call our denomination to work to eradicate these systemic injustices.
- Resolution to Change the Racially Demeaning Name, Mascot and Imagery of the Washington NFL Team: Approved
  - o **"Redskin" is a historically pejorative and insulting name. The use of the term "Redskins" for the team and mascot of the Washington NFL team is offensive and hurtful to many Native Americans. Every major Native American organization, along with hundreds of clergy, churches, civil rights organizations, media outlets, sports writers and journalists, authors and elected officials (including the President of the United States), has voiced support for changing the team name. This resolution calls for a boycott of the team's games and paraphernalia, and letters to be written to the owner of the team and the commissioner of the NFL.**
- A Call for the United Church of Christ to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Approved
  - o The dominant narrative in the United States is from the pro-Israel **"side," and this resolution targets the injustices being perpetrated by the Israeli government against Palestinians. Some strategies are involved, including a call for divestment and boycott from companies who profit from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands. This resolution was passed not without a lot of spirited debate. Our new General Minister and President, The Rev. John Dorhauer, along with many others, fear that this resolution has the potential to hurt our relationship with our Jewish brothers and sisters. Nevertheless, a Delegate from and grandchild of a Holocaust survivor reminded us of the quote by Desmond Tutu, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality."**
- Calling on the United Church of Christ to Recognize the Actions of Israel Against the Palestinians as Apartheid: Defeated
  - o As the title implies, the purpose of this resolution was to have the United Church of Christ **label the actions of Israel against the Palestinians "Apartheid."** While there is an

made here - and it was mentioned that Desmond Tutu has himself condemned Israel as an apartheid state - it is my opinion that labeling and name-calling rarely brings about peace. This resolution was defeated.

- Transition from Fossil Fuels to Renewable Energy: Approved
  - o During the previous General Synod, the United Church of Christ resolved to divest from Fossil Fuels. Since then, the UCC Pension Boards has responded by creating a Sustainable Investing option. This resolution commits us to work toward transitioning completely away from fossil fuel dependency by 2040. As keynote speaker Winona LaDuke suggested, we are addicted to fossil fuels, and this addiction is wreaking havoc on **God's creation. This resolution calls each of us to lessen our carbon footprint, as individuals and as churches, while encouraging the expanse of renewable energies.**
- A Call for Peace, Justice and Reunification in the Korean Peninsula: Approved
  - o The acknowledgement was made that the deep divide between North and South Korea seems impossible. Regardless of the odds, this resolution calls on the United Church of Christ to trust the power of the Gospel and work towards this end.
- Resolution on Full Communion Relationship Between the United Church of Christ and the United Church of Canada: Approved
  - o With the approval of this resolution, the United Church of Christ and the United Church of Canada are in full communion. This means that our pastors and can serve their churches and their pastors can serve our churches. When this resolution passed, the **convention hall broke out into the singing of "O Canada!"**
- Developing Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive and Engaged Congregations for Mental Health (WISE): Approved
  - o The purpose of this resolution is to help local churches become more welcoming, inclusive, and supportive to people with mental health problems. For more information on WISE visit <https://www.facebook.com/wideningthewelcome?fref=ts>.
- Resolution to Support Legislation Requiring Labeling of Genetically Engineered Foods on Packaging: Defeated
  - o There were compelling arguments on both sides of this issue, and this resolution did not garner enough support.
- Resolution Marking the 30th Anniversary of the Just Peace Pronouncement by Recommitting Ourselves to be a Just Peace Church: Approved
  - o In 1985, the 15th General Synod made the decision to become a Just Peace Church and called on congregations, associations, and conferences to become communities of **Just Peace. That General Synod affirmed Just Peace as "the vision of shalom, linking peace, and justice" and the "interrelation of friendship, justice, and common security from violence."** Since that time, the need for a vigorous **Just Peace movement in our world has only intensified.** Just Peacemaking expresses our commitment to engage practices to resolve conflict at every level - in ourselves, in our families, in our communities, and in our world- without violence whenever possible; when it is not possible, to then restrain,

contain and reduce violence; and finally to work actively to bring it to a swift, sustainable, and just conclusion. The power of the Just Peace movement is that it works to address challenges at their roots by changing the structures that give rise to conflict and injustice. By marking the anniversary of the Just Peace Pronouncement, the 30th United Church of Christ re-committed itself to being a Just Peace Church.

- Responsible Stewardship of the Outer Space Environment: Approved
  - o **This resolution is lovingly called the “space junk resolution.” “Space junk” that orbits around our planet (debris from satellites, space shuttles, etc.) is accumulating and becoming dangerous. Due to NASA’s funds being cut, they do not seem to be able to do much about it.** This resolution expresses concern for this serious issue and calls for education.
- Resolution Urging Socially Responsible Investment Practices: Approved
  - o This resolution calls for individuals, local churches, conferences, and the national church to be conscious about how investing affects justice, peace, human rights, and the environment, and to invest accordingly.

In many denominations, the national church speaks for the local church. In our denomination, we have the autonomy to decide for ourselves. We are in covenant with our denomination, which means we are to take resolutions seriously, but we have the freedom to decide the extent to which we would like to entertain resolutions. Our denominational polity is what makes our denomination beautifully frustrating. The fact that not all resolutions make it to and through each local congregation within our denomination allows for inconsistency between our churches, which can be frustrating. The beauty, however, is that our denomination empowers us to prayerfully work through decisions for ourselves. Honestly, we as a local church do not have the time to consider each resolution above. We could, however, consider some of them. Therefore, if you have a specific **interest in a resolution above, let’s talk and see if it is something we want to focus on as a church.**

## Youth @ Synod

Maddie Earnhardt attended Synod as part of a program called Youth @ Synod. Members of Youth @ Synod are not delegates and do not vote, but they do explore many of the same issues and participate in many of the same worship services and meetings as the rest of Synod. Youth @ Synod was created for the most active and serious participants in UCC churches in an effort to have youth exposed to the national church. Because Maddie serves on our Mission and Outreach Board and is an active and spirited member of PF Youth Group, we encouraged her to apply. Like Gabby, she also represented us **very well. Here are a few things that Maddie had to say about her experience...**

*“I had never been in a place where there were people of so many different races, sexual orientations, gender identities, and upbringings. We all had very different perceptions and opinions about the many social justice issues that we learned about and very different perspectives of the world around us depending on where we were from, yet I had this overarching sense that we all had something in common. Through all of our very apparent differences - from the color of our skin to our sexuality - I sensed a passion in all of us for the teachings of Jesus. I met so many amazing people, and I became much more aware of our larger church community and denomination as a whole. I am now determined not to let the*

*lessons that I have learned on this trip fizzle out. It's my goal to inform PF and the mission board and our church community as a whole of the amazing processes that I witnessed, people that I met, and perspectives that I gained. Thank you to the many people who made this trip possible for me."*  
~Maddie Earnhardt

Our denomination is not perfect, no denomination is. At the same time, I left Synod even more grateful for our denomination than I had been. The United Church of Christ is doing so many things in an effort to take seriously the Gospel call to speak up for those who have little voice. Like Maddie and Gabby, I too was inspired, and I pray that the inspiration we found makes its way through this congregation in meaningful and unexpected ways.

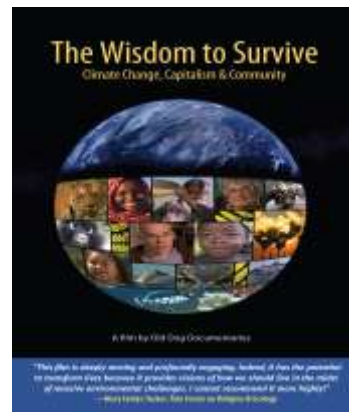
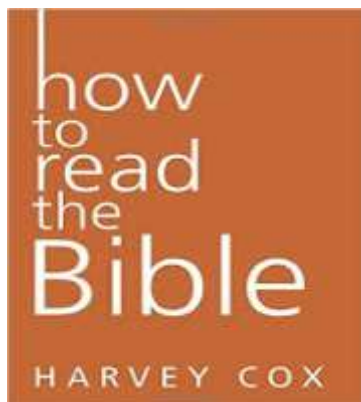
**In Christ's Service,**

Rev. Kevin

## Fourth Wednesdays

The women's Fourth Wednesday Book Discussion Group will hold its first meeting of the new year on Wednesday, September 23rd. This year we will be discussing Harvey Cox's How to Read the Bible. Harvey Cox is a retired professor at Harvard, and a few years ago we studied his very readable book When Jesus Came to Harvard.

New members are very welcome to join us. We each bring a brown bag lunch and meet monthly in Room 28 from noon until approximately 1:30 p.m. If you'd like more information, please call Pat Ketchpel at 860-658-9357.



## Movie Night

### *The Wisdom to Survive*

The Board of Mission and Outreach will be sponsoring another in our series of social justice films on October 23 at 6:00 PM. We will enjoy a light supper followed by the hour-long film.

*The Wisdom to Survive* examines the challenges that climate change poses and discusses meaningful action that can be taken by individuals and communities. It explores how unlimited growth and greed are destroying the life support system of the planet, the social fabric of society, and the lives of billions of people.

The film will be followed by a discussion led by our own environmentalist, Mark Scully, in which we explore ways we can address climate change in a positive way. Please join us. For more information, contact Sara Batchelder, 860-658-4557.

## *JustFaith*

*JustFaith* is happening in September at First Church. We still have room for a few more people in our group. During the fall we will be discussing some readings from Tattoos on the Heart by Gregory Boyle, Compassion, A Reflection on the Christian Life by Henry Nouwen et al, How Much is Enough by Arthur Simon, and Cloud of Witnesses by Jim Wallis and Joyce Hollyday. This doesn't mean we will be reading every book in its entirety.

As a group, we will be exploring scripture and examining what our faith calls us to do in the face of poverty, violence, racism, hunger, and other troubling issues facing us today. Please join us. We need to know who is going to be participating, so please let one of us know as soon as possible if you will be a part of the group: Sara Batchelder, 860-658-4557, s.batchelder10@comcast.net or Frank or Louise Gould at 860-874-3452, fgould@wesleyan.edu.

### **A Friendly Reminder from Finance ...**

When making a purchase on an account at a store (such as Fitzgerald's) please sign with both your first and last name, and also notate the purpose of the purchase on the signature pad. This will help us to be able to quickly identify erroneous charges on our monthly statement, and to properly classify expenses.

Thank You!

## Prayer Team

Since the inception of the Prayer Team a few years ago, we have witnessed the power of prayer. We **are inspired by the impact of these prayers, as we have witnessed God's responses.** Please know that we are praying for each of you in general and, specifically, for those of you who either personally ask us to pray for you (or a loved one) or submit requests in the prayer boxes located throughout the church. All prayer requests are held in strictest confidence and shared with prayer team members and ministers only.

Your prayer team would like to share this prayer with you. We hope you find peace and comfort in these words.

*Sometimes we forget that illness can be more than just physical, and healing can be more than just making things physically right. And so, when we walk with each other and hold each other and carry our friends, we carry each other toward healing even if we don't get that miracle of physical healing. There is more often than not the miracle of emotional and spiritual healing. For we transform the other person's isolation and mend their emotional pain with a tenderness and wholeness that draws them back into loving community. God's healing of our emotional wounds often comes through the loving outreach of others- our outreach to our neighbors, and our neighbor's outreach to us.*

*Author unknown...*

May you feel the grace and spirit of God today and every day!

— Gordon and Nancy Crouch, Mario Chiappetti, Lyn Lauben, Jim Martocchio, Chris Morkan, Penny Roskin, Ashley Schwitter

Save The Date!

**Women's Retreat 2016!**

April 22–24, 2016



## Message from the President

It's hard to believe that it is already September! My summer flew by, with wonderful visits with our daughters in California and Maryland and relatives in Canada. (Our son is in Thailand, so we didn't see him this summer)! I hope you all had an equally enjoyable summer, taking some time to relax with family and friends.

I anticipate another very active year at First Church. Please join us at our annual Fall Festival (aka Rally Day) on September 13, always a fun-filled day to start the year. **Of course, that's only the beginning.** We are blessed to have many opportunities for you to get together with your friends at church, and to make many new friends as well. For example, last year I attended my first Supper Club meeting and had such a good time that I went to them all. I encourage you to attend this year for a great meal, lively conversation and excellent programs. You might also consider joining a Choir. We have a great range of opportunities to sing, or even play bells. Our small group ministries have been very successful **and enjoyed by many. There is likely one for you. Perhaps you can attend the women's retreat or a mission trip this year.** You get the idea- First Church is full of opportunities for all. It all starts with our wonderful worship services on Sunday mornings, but that is only a start. I encourage you to seek out **these other activities as well. You'll be glad you did.**

Faithfully yours,

Jim Trimble

### Sarah Stops Hunger

On October 3rd the 2nd annual Sarah Stops Hunger/Feeding Children Everywhere meal-making event will be held in Palmer Hall. This year we plan on making 25,000 meals for hungry kids in Connecticut and need your help. Donations and volunteers for the 10am/11:30am shifts are still needed!! Visit [www.SarahStopsHunger.com](http://www.SarahStopsHunger.com) to sign up or for more information. Or, contact Sarah Ackels at [sarahstopshunger@gmail.com](mailto:sarahstopshunger@gmail.com) with questions. Thank you!!



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## FELLOWSHIP HOUR SCHEDULE

September 6 No Fellowship Hour  
(Labor Day)

September 13 No Fellowship Hour  
(Rally Day)

September 20 Search Committee

September 27 Pastoral Relations  
Committee

*~ Please notify the Church of any address changes. ~*

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