



The newsletter of The First Congregational Church
Canton Center, Connecticut

The CHURCHMOUSE

November 2007

Printed below is an abridged version of the sermon that Phil Doyle, one of our senior deacons, delivered on Laity Sunday, October 21. Copies of the full sermon may be found on the table in the Parish House vestibule near the kitchen door or from the church office.

Back in 1995 as the year closed, Steve Shadford, Dan Towle, other members of the Trustees, and I had just finished the presentation of the annual budget (asking the congregation to consider increasing pledge levels). Evans Sealand came over and said something I'll never forget. It was something like, "Good job, the Trustees have really worked hard, I hope the hard work pays off. I did this for over 30 years, and it sometimes felt like I was rolling a large stone uphill." A few years later, I am now starting to understand Evans' words.

I would like to take a few minutes and look at some critical financial data for the past ten years or so to support my thesis that our efforts are under strain.

- In 1996, our pledge and loose collection income amounted to about \$131,000; Missions disbursements were 17% of the total, or \$22,000.
- By 2006, pledge and loose collection totaled \$234,000 (an 80% increase), yet missions disbursements accounted for only 13% of the total, or \$32,000.
- You will recall our present operating budget expects pledge and loose collection to amount to \$250,000 (almost 100% increase from 1990). Mission disbursements will amount to about 10% of the contributed income, \$26,000 (a decrease from last year's budget).

And, everyone will remember the diligent work of the Trustees to bring budget issues to the congregation's attention.

Each year in October and November as the Trustees prepare the budget, the diaconate is involved in a rolls review; required by the church by-laws. The diaconate contact members who have not been active for a long period of time, and who have not contributed financially to the church. For the purpose of discussion, I consider these members to be "functionally inactive." Yet, when contacted, many of these members tell us they wish to remain to be considered "active." Be assured, the diaconate reach out to each of the members and encourage renewed participation and offer assistance. It is troubling, however, to acknowledge a significant number of members choose to sit on the sidelines.

It is as true today as it was in 1996, 75% of the church income is provided by 25% of the congregation. In fact, the detailed figures are quite alarming; 29 families provide 50% of church funding.

There are many forms of stewardship: in our church, in our families, in our schools, in our towns. William Barclay reports that the Apostle Paul uses many words with varied meanings to describe stewardship.

Were it not for a small number of generous members, our church programs would suffer and we might be forced to choose between missions and providing Sunday school. Perhaps these



CALENDAR OF CHURCH EVENTS

- Nov. 1 Thursday, 7:00 P.M. **Bell Choir.**
- Nov. 4 Sunday, 8:30 A.M. **Teachers' Meeting.**
 Sunday, 10:00 A.M. Worship and Church School (begin in class).
 Sunday, 11:15 A.M. **Cherub Choir** begins rehearsals.
 Sunday, 11:30 A.M. **Junior Choir.**
 Sunday, Noon, **JYF Food Drive** at Marandino's
 Sunday, Noon-2:00 P.M. **Trustees Work Day** (Pizza!)
 Sunday, 3:00 P.M. **SYF Bowling & Pizza.**
- Nov. 5 Monday, 7:00 P.M. **Christian Education Committee.**
 Monday, 7:00 P.M. **Senior Choir.**
 Monday, 7:00 P.M. **Nominating Committee.**
- Nov. 6 Tuesday, 10:00 A.M. **Adult Study.**
- Nov. 7 Wednesday, 10:00 A.M. **Prime Timers' Planning Meeting.**
 Wednesday, 7:00 – 8:15 P.M. **Confirmation Class.**
- Nov. 8 Thursday, 7:00 P.M. **Bell Choir.**
- Nov. 11 Sunday, 9:00 A.M. **Missions Committee.**
 Sunday, 10:00 A.M. Worship and Church School (*begin in church*).
 Sunday, 11:15 A.M. **Cherub Choir.**
 Sunday, 11:30 A.M. **Junior Choir.**
- Nov. 12 Monday, 10:00 A.M. **Prayer Shawl Ministry.**
 Monday, 6:00 P.M. **Board of Trustees.**
 Monday, 6:40 P.M. **Music Committee.**
 Monday, 7:00 P.M. **Senior Choir.**
- Nov. 14 Wednesday, Noon, **Prime Timers** meet for lunch and program in the Parish Hall
 Wednesday, 7:00 P.M. **Church Council.**
- Nov. 15 Thursday, 7:00 P.M. **Bell Choir.**
- Nov. 18 Sunday, 10:00 A.M. Worship and Church School (*begin in Parish Hall*). **Feather Food** processional.
 Sunday, 11:00 A.M. **Thanksgiving Pot Luck dinner.**
 Sunday, 11:15-11:30 A.M. **Cherub Choir.**
 Sunday, 11:30-11:45 A.M. **Junior Choir.**
 Sunday, 2:30 P.M. **JYF** meets for nachos and rehearsal for worship.
 Sunday, 4:00 P.M. **Thanksgiving Ecumenical Worship Service**, Canton Center
- Nov. 19 Monday, 7:00 P.M. **Senior Choir.**
- Nov. 22-23 Thursday-Friday, Church **Office is closed** for the Thanksgiving holiday.
- Nov. 25 Sunday, 9:00 – 11:00 A.M. **Confirmation Class** assembles/distributes wreaths.
 Sunday, 10:00 A.M. Worship and Church School (begin in class).
- Nov. 26 Monday, 7:00 P.M. **Senior Choir.**
- Nov. 27 Tuesday, 10:00 A.M. **Adult Study.**
- Nov. 29 Thursday, 7:00 P.M. **Bell Choir.**

| November 2007 | | | | | | |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | |