



The newsletter of The First Congregational Church
Canton Center, Connecticut

The CHURCHMOUSE

February 2008

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PASTOR

It is an honor for me, as your pastor, to be submitting my twelfth annual report. I do so with much appreciation for all members and friends in our church family and with thanks to God for the blessings we enjoy and share among ourselves and in outreach to neighbors near and far.

Planning and leading regular and seasonal services of worship is probably the most visible of my duties as pastor. Providing pastoral care, that includes visitation and being available for members and friends who may want to plan a joyous event like a wedding or who are going through a difficult period in their lives or facing a time of illness or death, is another area of high priority. Working closely with several of our church committees to meet responsibilities and plan for and implement programs that enhance our life together and our mission to others is a third area that receives a fair amount of my attention.

Each year there are highlights to mention. Besides perennial favorites like our Palm Sunday and Thanksgiving potluck meals, there are always new additions. In March, we had a potluck meal followed by Lenten workshop activities for the children and, for the adults, a narrated slide show, "He Was One of Us," presented by Don Mitchell. In April, Mary Lou Keefe directed our Cherry Brook Chimes Bell Choir in a Sunday morning program that celebrated the 25th anniversary of the bell choir. It was tremendous. We are so fortunate to have all the fine choirs that we do and to have Mary Lou at the organ and directing things at that end of the sanctuary. This year, in June, our church hosted the first "annual" Canton High School Senior Class Breakfast. It was a very well received event that was largely conceived and organized by Sarah LeGeyt, who pulled together the clergy and other volunteers from our Canton churches to put on the breakfast as a way of showing support for our community's graduating seniors. Having Sarah as our Director of Christian Education and Youth is a great plus for our church. Also in June, our church hosted an Ecclesiastical Council for Chris Mereschuk, who later in the year (September 30) was ordained into the Christian ministry at a ceremony held in our meetinghouse. Finally, this year's ecumenical Thanksgiving service, *A Musical Feast of Thanksgiving*, was also held at our church and was a wonderful success.



In February our adult study group completed reading and discussing Marcus Borg's book, *The Heart of Christianity*. For Lent we met a half dozen times to view and discuss six of the presentations from the video-based program, *Saving Jesus*. We completed the remaining six sessions in the fall.

Besides attending our Farmington Valley Association meetings I also continue to serve on the Association's Committee on the Ministry. In June, along with a few other members of our church family, I served as a volunteer helper at General Synod XXVI that was held in Hartford and celebrated the 50th anniversary of our United Church of Christ. Each month I also meet with the ministers and priests who pastor our other Canton churches.

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Annual Report of the Pastor, continued

On the first Sunday in June, we welcomed into the membership of our church all 21 members of the 2006-07 Confirmation Class. It was a great group of 16 boys and 5 girls with all but one (a sophomore) being 9th graders. Our 2007-08 class is also a most fine group of 9th graders but much smaller in number—3 boys and 3 girls. Once in the spring and the fall we also hold a New Member Forum. At these times, it is always a pleasure for me and our deacons to meet with a few other adults who are interested in joining or exploring the possibility of joining our church family.

I met three times in the course of this year with six members of our church family who had each faced the death of a spouse within the past year. The purpose was for mutual support and encouragement, as well as to share some group wisdom and helpful resources. All participants expressed the feeling that our get-togethers were helpful.

Sabbatical time, which I took in July, is always a much appreciated opportunity to do some catching up and planning ahead at generally a more leisurely, less distracted pace. Every year I have also taken a weeklong course, usually at Hartford Seminary. This year, however, scheduling problems made that difficult to do. But I did enjoy some additional reading time as well as a 24-lecture CD course from the Teaching Company on American Religious History.

Our CORE committee meetings ended in June. This group consisted of representatives from our Canton churches who helped with the settlement of the Parra family from Cuba. I would also like to note that our conscientious and highly regarded church secretary, Jane Watson, served as secretary for the CORE group.

A few times through the year I conduct a worship service at two of our area nursing/convalescent facilities, Cherry Brook and McLean's. Whenever I run into a scheduling problem, Alastair Clark is always a willing and enthusiastic substitute. Many thanks to him and also to Bill Champion who help on a regular basis throughout the year calling on our folk in the hospitals and in area nursing homes.

A frequent subject of discussions that were held throughout the year focused on the possibility of launching a capital fund campaign. Following a vote at a duly called congregational meeting held in December, the decision was made to go ahead with the campaign that will be conducted in March and April of 2008. Our church trustees, under the chairmanship of Ron Olejniczak, deserve our great thanks for all the effort they have put into identifying and researching projects that need attention. The capital campaign will be a significant undertaking for our congregation in 2008.

Somewhat related to discussions about the need for a capital fund drive were the Cottage Meetings that were held in the homes of church members. The meetings were opportunities for members to become better acquainted and to address church issues of mutual concern that included the gathering of ideas related to the church's future and capital needs. Dan Towle and Rachel Baugher ought to be recognized for their leadership with the Cottage Meetings and in the area of our church's stewardship program.

Finally, I conclude with much the same sentiment as I began this report – with a deep sense of thankfulness for the many members and friends of our congregation who do the small and greater renderings of service in a variety of ways that help to make our life together a joy and our mission to others a grateful offering to God. Amen!

Respectfully submitted,

Larry W. Smith



CALENDAR OF CHURCH EVENTS

- Feb. 3 Sunday, 9:00 A.M. **JYF Grinder making** in the kitchen.
 Sunday, 10:00 A.M. Worship and Church School (begin in class).
 Sunday, 11:15 A.M. **Christian Education Committee. (Note change.)**
 Sunday, 11:15 A.M. **Cherub Choir** rehearses in the Music Room.
 Sunday, 11:30 A.M. **Junior Choir** rehearses in the Music Room.
- Feb. 4 Monday, 6:40 P.M. **Music Committee.**
 Monday, 7:00 P.M. **Senior Choir.**
 Monday, **Honor Court** is hosted by our church in Hartford.
- Feb. 5 Tuesday, 5 – 7 P.M. **“Fat Tuesday” Pancake Supper.**
- Feb. 6 Ash Wednesday, 7: 00 –8:15 P.M. **Confirmation Class.**
- Feb. 7 Thursday, 7:00 P.M. **Bell Choir.**
- Feb. 9 Saturday, 6:30 P.M. Wider Church Fellowship **“Movie Night”** in the Parish Hall.
 Saturday, 8:30 P.M. – 10:00 P.M., **JYF Bowling at Rock ‘n Bowl**, Simsbury.
- Feb. 10 Sunday, 9:00 A.M. **Missionary & Stewardship.**
 Sunday, 10:00 A.M. Worship and Church School (*begin in church*).
 Sunday, 11:15 A.M. **Cherub Choir** rehearses in the Music Room.
 Sunday, 11:30 A.M. **Junior Choir** rehearses in the Music Room.
- Feb. 11 Monday, 10:00 A.M. **Prayer Shawl Ministry.**
 Monday, 6:30 P.M. **Board of Trustees.**
 Monday, 7:00 P.M. **Senior Choir.**
- Feb. 12 Tuesday, 7:30 P.M. **Diaconate.**
- Feb. 13 Wednesday, Noon, **Prime Timers** meet in the Parish Hall.
 Wednesday, 7:00 P.M. **Church Council.**
- Feb. 14 Thursday, 7:00 P.M. **Bell Choir.**
- Feb. 17 Sunday, 10:00 A.M. Worship and Church School (begin in class).
 Sunday, 11:15 A.M. **Cherub Choir** rehearses in the Music Room.
 Sunday, 11:30 A.M. **Junior Choir** rehearses in the Music Room.
- Feb. 18 Monday, the Church Office will be closed for Presidents Day.
 Monday, 7:00 P.M. **Senior Choir.**
- Feb. 19 Tuesday, 10:30 A.M. and 7:00 P.M. **Adult Study Group.**
- Feb. 20 Wednesday, 9:30 A.M. Staff Meeting.
- Feb. 21 Thursday, 7:00 P.M. **Bell Choir.**
- Feb. 24 Sunday, 10:00 A.M. Worship and Church School (*begin in church*).
 Sunday, 11:15 A.M. **Cherub Choir** rehearses in the Music Room.
 Sunday, 11:30 A.M. **Junior Choir** rehearses in the Music Room.
 Sunday, 11:30 A.M. **SYF Pizza Lunch and Broomball.**
- Feb. 25 Monday, 7:00 P.M. **Senior Choir.**
- Feb. 26 Tuesday, 10:30 A.M. and 7:00 P.M. **Adult Study Group.**
- Feb. 27 Wednesday, 7:00 P.M. **ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION.**
- Feb. 28 Thursday, 7:00 P.M. **Bell Choir.**
- Feb.29-Mar.2 Friday-Sunday **All-Church Retreat** at Silver Lake.

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