

THE CHURCHMOUSE



Newsletter of The First Congregational Church, Canton Center, CT

January 2012



From the Pastor

Rev. Rushan Sinnaduray

It is another new year and it is the season of epiphany. The beginning of another New Year and the beginning of the Season of Epiphany have a lot in common.

The Magi brought gifts that befit a king. The New Year brings something at least as valuable: The gift of time. I'm not sure what the baby Jesus did with his gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, but poet Kathleen McTigue invites us to consider what we can do with our gift of time:

*The first of January is another day dawning,
the sun rising as the sun always rises,
the earth moving in its rhythms
with or without our calendars
to name a certain day as the day of new beginning,
separating the old from the new.*

*So it is: everything is the same
bound into its history as we ourselves are bound.*

*Yet also we stand at a threshold,
the new year something truly new, still unformed,
leaving a stunning power in our hands:*

*What shall we do with the great gift of Time, this
year?*

The promise of the gift is inviting. A fresh start always is. Unless we were born yesterday we enter the New Year all too aware of our failings and regrets. That's of course why we make New Year resolutions. We seek to leave behind the outworn and false, the bad habits or regrets of the past year — in order to create of this yet unformed year something

hopeful and new. The problem is the person making them is the same one who made them last year. Or as Mark Twain observed, "Now is the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving hell with them as usual."

Instead of making a list of resolutions doomed to failure I suggest using this time to reflect on the person we are bringing into this New Year to plant seeds of hope. Let's compare ourselves to a river stone.

It is smooth, polished through the years by the flow of rushing water. It is hard in our hands, and sturdy. Yet, we know it is malleable. It has been shaped by the past, formed by heat and water, the passing of time and the conditions of the environment around it. If it could speak, it would tell of change.

We are no different. Who we are, where we are, what we value, what we love, has been shaped by the past — by our experiences in life. Even what we believe about ourselves, or God, or the nature of reality has been shaped by how we've experienced life. Like river stones, we are strong, and yet we are also malleable, changed and shaped by life.

Epiphany celebrates this reality. Epiphany is all about experiencing life, not making resolutions. Epiphany is all about change embraced.

Most of us prefer ideas and words; we are afraid of any authentically new experience. Unlike the Magi, we do not tend to allow stars to divert us to a new and unknown place. Most of us stay inside our private castles and avoid such questionable adventures. Yes, we avoid death supposedly, but we also avoid birth. We miss out on the great epiphany.

Continued on page 2

From the Pastor continued

An epiphany is not an experience that we can create from within, but one that we can only be open to and receive from outside us. Epiphanies leave us totally out of control, and they always demand that we change. Most of us would rather have objectified religion, which leaves us potentially in control and never having to change at all.

We have large and small epiphanies all the time: that intuitive perception or insight into the reality of essential meaning – after which one knows what one must do. Once we have had an epiphany we can't go home again, or if we do, like the Magi, not by the same road.

Kathleen McTigue, again:

*Let us begin by remembering that whatever justice,
whatever peace and wholeness might bloom in our
world this year,*

*we are the hearts and minds, the hands and feet,
the embodiment of all the best visions of our people.*

*The new year can be new ground for the seeds of our
dreams.*

*Let us take the step forward together onto new
ground,
planting our dreams well, faithfully, and in joy.*

Blessings for a wonderful year ahead.

Rev. Rushan

From the Diaconate:

Do you have a Name Tag? The Diaconate would like to remind all members that the Name Tags are stored on the sideboard on the right-hand side of the Church Vestibule. Please pick up your Name Tag and wear it for all church events. It helps our newer members and those visiting our church when they can associate a name with a face.

Is your Name Tag missing or has it broken? There will be a sign-up sheet with the Name Tags where you can indicate if you need a new Name Tag or you can speak with a Diaconate member if your Name Tag needs a repair.



Christian Education News

Sarah W. LeGeyt

Director of Christian Education & Youth

*I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
And I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,
And I came down from heaven and I danced on the
earth,*

At Bethlehem I had my birth.

Dance, then, wherever you may be,

I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,

And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,

And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.

The Lord of the Dance

The hum and buzz of energy and excitement at this year's pageant was contagious. We all wanted to dance! All the children did a wonderful job retelling the story of the birth of Christ.

Thanks to Mary Lou Keefe, Bob Oswald and Jim Koplak for their help with the music. Thanks to Ana Chambers, Chris Welcome, Dawn Zeffiro, Linnell Munson, Casey Levine, April Oswald, Mary Engvall, and Cora Mutch for their help with the cast. Thanks to Andy Rees, Matt LeGeyt, John Huyghebaert, Matt Solomon, Jim Koplak, Bob Mankowski and John Parshley for the help with the set.



CHURCH SCHOOL MISSION will be Bedtime Story Lit-

eracy Packs For Covenant to Care: We will be collecting new or gently used story books and new pajamas for children. How comforting is it for a child to be read to and cuddled in a cozy new pair of P.J.'s? To encourage literacy for children at risk, Covenant to Care will give these packs to local children. Please place donations in basket by the downstairs entrance. We will use weekly offering money to buy new books and pajamas for the Literacy Packs. The children will meet in the Parish Hall on January 15th to learn about this new project. We will also continue to collect non-perishable food items for the Canton Food Bank.

What is Godly Play?

Godly Play draws on the traditions of ancient storytelling. The primary goal is for teachers to model how to use the language of the Christian tradition through presentations of parables, sacred stories, liturgy and silence. The Godly Play classroom provides a space to worship God, not just speak about God. The time in the class is similar to our time in worship. If you were to look at our bulletin's Order of Worship, the classroom time is set up in a similar manner.

Greeting - every child is welcomed individually to the circle. The Door Keeper will greet them in the hall as they enter in and ask them if they are "ready" to come in.

Sharing the Word - the storyteller shares an oral narrative. Visual materials help the children focus on the story.

Responding to the Word - children are invited to reflect on the story and work on a personal response to it. We help the child make a connection between religious language and personal creativity.

Offering - every child is invited to share with people in need. We will also offer prayers for people in need.

Thanksgiving Prayer and Feast - the community of children gathers to pray and share the feast. The feast is a simple snack and drink. This time prepares the children indirectly for participating in communion with the worshipping community.

Blessing - after visiting as a group the storyteller invites each child to leave the circle individually. This provides an opportunity for the child to receive personal words of affirmation. This could not occur if parents were able to enter the room at this time so we invite parents to wait by the door.

Children will hear the core stories of the Christian tradition several times over the elementary years because as children grow and change so their understanding of these stories changes and deepens. The repetition of the routine will become second nature and they will have the time and space to make personal connections.



A Special Thanks...to The Card Ministry for their donation of The Parable of the Sower play set and 2 baskets for the Godly Play room.

Thank You to John Huyghebaert for constructing a desert sand box for the new Godly Play classroom.

Senior Youth Fellowship

Mission Trip 2012

Come Help Feed the Hungry on Saturday, January 21st. We will head to Center Church in Hartford to make and serve breakfast. We will leave the church lot at 6:45 A.M. and be home by noon. Please sign up on the SYF board by Jan. 11th.

YOUTH SKI TRIP to Jiminy Peak on Saturday, January 28th. JYF and SYF will head north to enjoy a day of skiing or boarding. Tickets will be \$40 each. Please sign up on the SYF board outside the church office. Money and permission slips are due in the office by January 22nd. Drivers needed! See Mr. Koplak if you have questions.



Junior Youth Fellowship

Good job on your bake sale in December! You raised \$232 for the Canton Food Bank.

Come help sell **Super Bowl Grinders** during coffee hour on January 22nd and January 29th and plan to come at 9 A.M. **Help make the grinders on Super Bowl Sunday, Feb 5th.**



Music Notes

Mary Lou Keefe
Director of Music

Thank you to all the Choir members and Brass Ensemble members who participated in Music Sunday. We all had many positive comments about the song selections as well as the finished product.



*Merry Christmas and A Happy,
Healthy, Prosperous
and of course Musical New Year!*

The following are the participants:

SENIOR CHOIR:

SOPRANOS

Jennifer Connolly
Marilyn Larose
Rina Pane
Judy Robinson
Linda Ripley
Jane Schneider

ALTOS

Betsy Ash*
Linda McAllister
Karen Needham
Kathy Pickrell

TENORS

Jerry Alonzy
Tim LeGeyt
Paul Stansel

BASSES

Dan LeGeyt
George Light*
Russ Schneider
James Todd
*guest singer

CHERRY BROOK CHIMES:

Diana Ferraiuolo
Donna Hammond
Megan Keefe
Gina Magennis
Karen Needham
Bob Oswald

Judy Robinson
Evelyn Sealand
Jon Smith*
Kathy Smith
Martha Stansel
*guest ringer

JUNIOR CHOIR:

Declan Emirzian
Emily Munson
Anna Owens
Grace Owens

Kiera Parshley
Olivia Aaron Scott
Jessie Webb

BRASS ENSEMBLE:

Randy Doyle-horn
Rose Minichiello -baritone sax
Bob Oswald-trombone
Zach Powell-horn
David Solomon-trumpet

Trustees News

Kristin Oswald, Chairperson

TRUSTEE TOPICS

2012 Budget Approved

The 2012 Budget was passed on Sunday, December 18, 2011 with well over 50 people in attendance. This year's budget reflects not only relying on a 4.5% withdrawal from the Endowment funds, which are invested in cash, stock and bond mutual funds and one remaining Treasury security, but also an additional \$10,000+ in order to cover our operating expenses. As of 12/21/11, 2012 pledge commitments totaled \$148,394 while our budget is based on a Pledge total of **\$215,000**.

It is our hope that 1) current members can continue to support the operating expenses of the church through regular contributions of your time, talent and treasures, 2) Pledges will continue to be received by the Church office as we move into the new year and that those pledges might be *greater* than last year's now that so many of us have completed our Capital Campaign commitments, and 3) actual "discretionary" (variable or controllable) spending is lower than requested in the 2012 budget by our various committees.

The Trustees determine the Church's budget by anticipating Annual pledges from members (non-members are encouraged to pledge as well since they are receiving benefits and services from attending church and being a part of the church community), so it is *critical* that we have your promise or best guess as to what you can contribute to the Church's operations and Christian community. Please follow through on your Annual Pledge commitment as best you can throughout the year so that we can pay our bills through financial support from current contributors rather than relying on past ones.

Endowment

Know that not all Endowment funds are able to be fully utilized and be at risk of being exhausted (interest and principal). Our "pool of side funds" is not a bottomless pot from which we can draw, so we need to spend and invest prudently and wisely. The Endowment Funds' asset allocation into stocks, bonds and cash (with a new category called Alternative Investments added as a fourth asset class added recently) were realigned to fall within the Investment Committee's guidelines by year-end 2011.



Land Purchase Offer

The Trustees welcome anyone interested in learning more about the offer by Mr. Lansford Perry last Fall to purchase the 5.74 acres of land directly behind the church on the other side of Cherry Brook to attend information sessions after church (and a short coffee break) January 8th or 22nd. We will have hand-outs available which detail Mr. Perry's offer and our research of the various aspects of this offer. These sessions should last no more than 20 minutes, and it is our hope that the congregation will feel comfortable with the situation to be able to vote on the offer at our Annual meeting which we believe will be held Sunday, February 12, 2012.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristin Oswald

Mission News

David Poleyestewa



Living our Faith

Just a follow-up on November's Brown Bag Food Drive, we collected (49) bags of food. (10) bags were taken by Terry Getchell our Covenant to Care Liaison and delivered to our sponsored social worker at the organization for ten families. The remaining (39) bags were split and delivered to Gifts of Love's food pantry in Avon and Canton Food Bank. Thank you again for contributing food this year.



Missions Box

For November's coat collection, we collected (64) coats during the month. They were taken to Best Cleaners in Canton for free cleaning and then the cleaners deliver them to the various shelters directly. This is an annual event that Best Cleaners supports and we can use to get your spare coats to people who can use them.

We did not do a December mission box collection and hope you were able to give and share with others less fortunate or in need during the holiday season.

It is now January and we would like to collect cleaning supplies: **paper towels, toilet paper, disinfecting spray, laundry detergent, Windex, etc.** for two shelters: South Park Inn in Hartford and Susan B. Anthony in Torrington.

Covenant to Care

Thank you to all who took tags for (20) children whose names were provided by our social worker, Tracy Tatsapaugh and a local Canton Family whose name was provided by Social Services here in Canton. The brightly wrapped gifts returned on Sunday 12/11/11 were distributed and hopefully brightened the day for the children and the family.



Also thank you for leaving scarves, mittens, hats, and gloves on the Giving Tree. These items are divided up with half going to Covenant to Care for children here and the rest going out to Children Youth Services in Bismarck, North Dakota to whom we have sent these items for many years past.

Second Annual Soup Sale Sunday January 22, 2012

We had great response to our first soup sale last year. \$371 was raised for Food Share and the Connecticut Food Bank. This year proceeds will go to those two organizations and help defray the cost of food and paper goods for a breakfast for the hungry at Center Church in Hartford. Sarah LeGeyt and the SYF along with some additional adult volunteers can expect to serve up to 90 people. The congregation at Center Church through UCC appealed for help from other churches to serve a breakfast on a Saturday thru the year and help them eventually get to the goal of serving breakfast each week during a calendar year. We will make announcements and post a sign-up sheet on our Missions Board for soup and chili donations.

The Parable of the Talents project

On Gathering Sunday, September 11, 2011 Rev. Rushan loaned every family in the congregation \$25 with the challenge to use that money for the glory of God and to return that money and any "profits" made with it 7 weeks later. The final numbers are now in:

We loaned \$1,875 to families within our congregation. The seed money came out of Missions Committee funds. After we repay the Missions Committee for their advance of the seed money, we will have \$2,584 to spend on a worthy mission or outreach cause. We need your input and ideas on where and how we could use these funds, so please give your suggestions to any member of the Missions Committee.

Thank you

David Poleyestewa
Chairman of Missionary and Stewardship Committee



You may have heard the news of the meetinghouse of the Somers Congregational Church UCC being destroyed by fire late on New Years day.

The meeting house that was built in 1842 was completely destroyed. We can help them in several ways. Firstly, we will continue to keep the leaders, members and friends of the Somers Congregational Church in our prayers over the next few weeks and months. Secondly, although they are fully insured, they will need assistance with those financial burdens which are beyond their coverage. To that end we will have an opportunity for members of our church to provide financial support to them.

You can place your donation in the specially marked boxes in the sanctuary. Please make checks out to "The First Congregational Church, Canton Center" and write "Somers Congregational UCC" on the memo line. You can also make donations online by going to the CT Conference's website at: www.ctucc.org.

Community Life

A THANK YOU NOTE:

I must say I did not know what to expect on the first day of Advent as I walked into the church. Did I really have to keep my 6 year old in church with me the *whole* time? Would I be able to put up with his fidgetiness and complaining? Would I get anything out of this service? Would he?

I am having a hard time putting into words the sheer awesomeness of the whole experience. I'll admit I'm a sentimental soul, especially this time of year, but this day I was truly moved.

He chose to sit in the very front of the church towards the right. Neither of us knew we would be so close to the phenomenal quartet of Claire Byko, Randy Doyle, Bob Oswald and Reverend Rushan. What a treat! Listening to the music, watching my son sway back and forth, singing Oh Come Oh Come Emmanuel; it all brought tears to my eyes. Again, not hard to do, but you get the picture. Even weeks after the service, we both would be singing "I believe, I believe, I believe". Thank you for your music.

What can I say about Jon Smith's sermon? A truly inspiring message delivered so eloquently that most adults were probably jealous. I know I wish I could speak in front of a crowd like that! Did the message get absorbed by the little ones? I don't know for sure, but they were paying attention. When Jon came to sing at the school with the chamber singers, Josh recognized him right away as "the boy from our church with the curly hair". Okay, maybe he didn't say "the boy from our church with the powerful sermon", but a connection was made none the less. Thank you for your words.

All the other aspects of the service, from the readings to the children's message to the hanging of the greens and the lighting of the Christmas tree, are not to be forgotten either. I really want to thank all the kids and adults who put so much effort into that day. I left the sanctuary feeling hopeful, joyful and full of peace. I know I wasn't the only one.

Casey Levine

JYF SUPER BOWL GRINDER SALE



Order grinders for game day from the JYF during Coffee Hour on January 22nd or January 29th. Choose from turkey, ham or Italian combo. Pick up your Grinders on Game Day, February 5th !

Card Ministry

Sunday, January 15th. Join us as we make some Get Well cards. There is a \$5 fee to cover the cost of supplies which will all be provided. Make 4 cards for the church and take one home for yourself.

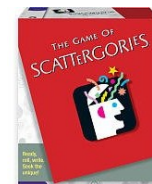
Thanks,
Linda



PRIME TIMERS

"Souper" Wednesday Lunch

Meet **January 11**, at Noon in the Parish Hall for lunch and a game of "Scattergories."



Please bring a can of soup (NO creamed soups) to add to the mixture.

Dessert and beverage provided.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 2011

Reader 1: John

Reader 2: Joseph

Reader 3: Colin

Reader 4: Katie

Baby Jesus: Ariana

Mary: Abigail

Joseph: Jon

Donkey: Jared

Gabriel: Leah

Cow: Evan

Inn Keeper: Olivia

Pages: Ashley, Ainsley, Ella

Sheep: 3- & 4-year olds, K, Grade 1

Angels: 3- & 4-year olds, K, Grades 1 – 5

Angel helpers: Ally, April and Liza

Shepherds: Kindergarten, Grades 1 - 5

Set Crew: Donnie

Wise People: Lauren, Jeremy , Bryon

Ribbon Dancers: Amelia, Hailey, Olivia, Anna, Grace , Jessie

Choreographer: **Abigail**

Cherub Choir, directed by **Judy Robinson**:

Maria, Hunter, Owen, Bella, Elaina, Brooke, Taylor, Alena and Connor.

Junior Choir, directed by **Betsy Ash**:

Declan, Emily, Sierra , Anna , Grace, Kiera, Olivia, Jessie and Renee.

Pageant Ensemble, directed by **Bob Oswald**:

Clarinet: Katie

Clarinet: Julia

Clarinet: Noelia

Percussion: Claire

Flute: Anna

Flute: Emma

Flute: Grace

Baritone Sax: Rose

Alto Sax: Henry

Alto Sax: Axel

Trumpet: David

Trumpet: Alexandra

Trumpet: Kyle

French Horn: Zach

French Horn: Randy

Trombone: Mark

Trombone: Josh

Trombone: Ben



Many thanks to the set creators, **Jim Koplak, Bob Mankowski and Matt Solomon**; to **Bob Oswald** for planning the Ensemble music; to **Abigail** for the Ribbon Dance and to all the **church school teachers**.

Wider Church Fellowship

15 people attended the bus trip to Mystic. A great time was had by all.

TENTATIVE CALENDAR:

January 20th: Pizza and Bell Choir with the Bell Choir performing Disney Songs.

February 25th: Harlem Globe Trotters at the XL Center in

Hartford; March 16th: 41 Bridge St. Comedy night: Andy Pitz & Ted Alexandro
For more information visit <http://41bridgestreet.com/>

April 1st: Palm Sunday Pot Luck;

May 11th: Movie and Pizza night;

June: Strawberry Festival



In February or March we will start participating in the UCC Coffee Project and we will start serving Fair Trade coffee during the coffee hour. Craig and Linda will place the first order and then the coffee hour hosts will take over the ordering. Church members will also be able to purchase the coffee for personal consumption.

The UCC Coffee Project is a new way for your congregation to join hands with communities in the developing world. As Christians we can address a consumer dilemma by buying coffee that is fairly traded. Through the project, farmers and their families gain more control over their lives, earn a fairer share of income, have access to credit and technical support, and gain a trading partner they can trust, a fair trade organization called Equal Exchange. At the same time, our congregation will begin to learn about the impacts of our consumer habits and how to advocate for more just global economic policies for coffee producers, small farmers, and workers throughout the world

JANUARY 2012 CALENDAR



Meetings and Events

- Monday, January 2
Office Closed
- Sunday, January 8
CE set up for Godly Play after worship
- Monday, January 9
Prayer Shawl Ministry, 10:00 am
- Wednesday, January 11
Prime Timers "Souper" Wednesday 12:00 pm
- Sunday, January 15
CE Teacher's meeting, 8:30 am
Church school starts in the Parish Hall/Mission Meeting
- Monday, January 16
Martin Luther King Day
Office Closed
- Friday, January 20
Wider Church Fellowship Pizza & Bells
- Saturday, January 21
Youth Group, Center Church Hartford, prepare breakfast
- Saturday, January 28
Senior Youth Fellowship ski trip



Boards and Committees

- Diaconate:** Tuesday, January 3, 7:00 pm
- Christian Education:** Sunday, January 8, 8:30 am
- Board of Trustees:** Monday, January 9, 7:00 pm
- Church Council:** Wednesday, January 11, 7:00 pm
- Music Committee:** Thursday, January 12, 6:30 pm



Choirs

- Senior Choir: Mondays, 7:00pm
January 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30
- Bell Choir: Thursdays, 7:00 pm
January 5, 12, 19 & 26
- Junior Choir: Sundays, 11:15 am
January 8, 15, 22 & 29



Sunday Worship *10:00am*

- Sunday, January 1**
First Sunday after Christmas
- Sunday, January 8**
First Sunday after Epiphany
- Sunday, January 15**
Second Sunday after Epiphany
- Sunday, January 22**
Third Sunday after Epiphany
- Sunday, January 29**
Fourth Sunday After Epiphany
Inter-generational Worship



The Churchmouse
The First Congregational Church
(United Church of Christ)
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We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.cantoncenterchurch.org

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**DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ITEMS
FOR THE FEBRUARY ISSUE IS JANUARY 22TH**