

## FROM THE PASTOR

“Why are we praying for the President every Sunday in worship?” A couple of people have questioned me on this, since this President seems to speak and act in ways antithetical to so much that we value and believe here at Center Church. Why would we pray for such a man?

Well, first of all, because Jesus said, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Jesus understood that prayer is not just asking God to help people you love or like, but that prayer is much more powerful than that. We pray to God for those we struggle to love or like or respect, those who hurt us and others, not because we approve of them, but because we want God to intervene in their lives in a powerful way to bring them to a place of health and goodness. We pray for eyes to be opened, hearts softened, minds expanded, lives changed. Actually, we probably all should spend more time in prayer for those we might label “enemies” or even those we just don’t understand or can’t love. Not only do they need our prayers, but *we need to pray like that*. Our eyes open, hearts soften, minds expand, and lives change as we challenge ourselves to love as God loves. This is not a syrupy, Valentine’s Day card kind of love, but a muscular, powerful love that moves mountains, according to I Corinthians 13.

It is too light a thing to ask God only for help for good people. As Jesus said, the physician comes to treat those who are sick, not those who are well, and the context indicates he did not mean physical illness. I challenge all of us to be more vigorous in these times in our prayer life, and pay special attention to Jesus’ call to us to pray for our enemies and those who persecute us. Who knows what power may be unleashed by our spirits joining together to blow a new wind into the world?

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse



## ASH WEDNESDAY

Lent begins this year on February 14, and we will hold an Ash Wednesday service that day at Noon *outside on the front portico of the Meeting House*, weather permitting. If you are, or can be, in Hartford at Noon that day, please join us. The service will be very brief and we will then offer ashes to anyone who wishes, including those passing by. Ash Wednesday is the day we remember that we are all mortal; our lives are limited in span, but limitless in love (and so, Valentine’s Day tie-in!). We remember that we will die in order to remind ourselves to live fully into the lives God calls us to live. Come to get rid of the past and look forward to the new!



### **HAVE YOU GIVEN TO THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN?**

We are about to enter the “Public” phase of our Capital Campaign as we seek to raise as much as possible to pay for the \$1.8 million repair of our steeple! This month, we hope to have the clock and bell working once again, with all work projected to be completed sometime in April, weather permitting! We also will do major repair to the front steps. When we approach Foundations and Corporate Giving offices, it helps us if we can say that 100% of our congregation contributed. Even \$20 helps! Please pledge or give this month.

### **THE “LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR” CHALLENGE**

When Jesus was asked to define “neighbor,” he told a story we know as *The Good Samaritan*. Inside that story, we find characters reacting to each other based on various conscious and unconscious biases. Our Lenten Adult Faith Formation program will ask us to consider our own blocks to loving our neighbors beginning with a UCC program on “White Privilege,” and going on to a special guest addressing how we love our immigrant neighbors, a session on how we need to continually live into our Open and Affirming to the LGBTQI community, and issues of gender. **The point of these studies is not to invoke guilt, but to help us look at the people around us with different eyes!** In the hopes that more of the congregation will attend, we will hold these sessions, beginning February 11, *after* worship in the Church House Parlor, from 12pm-1:30pm, and we will provide both food and child care. Plan now to attend as often as you can!

### **“JESUS AND JUSTICE”--**

#### **HARTFORD UCC CHURCHES LENTEN STUDY**

Join members of Faith, Immanuel, and Asylum Hill as we study the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) through the lens of how we do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God in the world. Each Thursday evening in Lent, beginning February 22, we will meet in each other’s churches from 6:00pm-7:30pm, with some light snacks and wonderful conversation. The schedule is as follows:

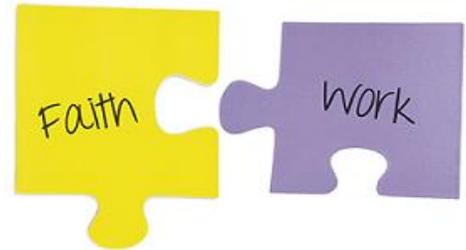
- February 22: Immanuel Church “*Blessed are the Peacemakers*”
- March 1: Center Church “*Salt and Light*”
- March 8: Faith Church “*Love your enemies*”
- March 15: Asylum Hill “*Adultery & divorce: gender justice*”
- March 22: Immanuel Church “*Treasure on earth*”

If you need a ride, let Shelly know. This is a great opportunity to get to know our UCC kin in Hartford and work out our faith together!



### **THANKS TO OUR JANUARY COFFEE MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS!**

*Led & Nancy Baxter, Catherine Thompson Maclean & family, Dennis Morin & David Owens, and Jamaly Rios & family*



### **FAITH AND WORK**

How does your faith impact your work in the world? How do you find meaning in your work? What obstacles keep you from fully integrating your beliefs and values at work? Where do you see God active during your daily life? These are the kinds of questions explored in a new small group resource: *Sacred Conversations: Connecting our Spiritual Lives with Our Work in the World*. Shelly and six other UCC and Presbyterian clergy and lay people put this together over three years and have used it with other churches. Now, Shelly would like to invite 6-8 people to join her in a small group to work through this study. We would meet in each other’s homes or at the Church House at times mutually convenient to group members, approximately 90 minutes every other week for 7 sessions. Intrigued? Speak to Shelly today!

### **CHURCH MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

Baptisms, Births, Weddings, Joined, Deaths, Transfers, Confirmations,:

*None*



### **UPCOMING DEADLINES**

*March Newsletter: Thursday, February 22*  
*Weekly E-News: Each Tuesday*

# MUSIC News



## MEET NEW SOPRANO SECTION LEADER, HANNAH SHANEFIELD



A native of Philadelphia, soprano Hannah Shanefield is in her senior year at the Hartt School pursuing her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance. She studies with internationally renowned soprano Maureen O'Flynn. She has studied at the CoOPERative program and choral Vocal Institute at Westminster Choir College. She is thrilled to be the new soprano section leader at Center Church after singing at the Church of the Good Shepherd for the past year and a half. An avid opera singer as well, her recent operatic performances include Hartford Opera Theater's New in November Festival, covering Gilda and singing the Paggio in Verdi's Rigoletto with Opera Connecticut, and with Hartt Opera Theater, the title role in Janáček's The Cunning Little Vixen, and Madame Herz in Mozart's The Impresario.

~ Bob Gilbert,  
Director of Music/Organist

### FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

2/6 Mark Fisher  
2/9 Graeme MacKenzie  
2/11 Paul Bobbitt  
2/16 Michael Seurattan  
2/17 Gregory Norsigian  
2/19 Buell French  
2/20 Jonas Otte  
2/25 Jordan Hegel  
2/27 David Maclean



2/4 Richard & Sara Markham  
2/18 David & Nancy Maclean  
2/21 Van & Lucille Parker



### BACK IN THE DAY!

Do you recognize this picture of Center Church? It is probably from the late 1800s. About twenty years after the fourth Meeting House was built in 1807, it was painted. I can only assume it was the fashion to do so. In 1917, the paint was removed and was described in a *Hartford Courant* article as being a “dirty yellow” color. I’ve noticed that the painted portions of the Old State House are yellow. Perhaps that is the color our Meeting House was for nearly two hundred years.

~ Roberta L. Roy,  
Historian



### CALL TO THE 385<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

The 385<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the First Church of Christ in Hartford (Center Church) will be held on **Sunday, February 4, 2018** following lunch and the reading of the History for 2017. The purpose of the meeting is:

- to receive and act on reports and the proposed 2018 budget;
- discuss bylaws and 2018 goals;
- to transact any other business to come before the meeting.

~ Larry Roeming, Clerk

*(A potluck will be served – please bring a main dish, salad, or dessert.)*



## **FROM THE WARBURTON DIRECTOR OF OUTREACH MINISTRIES**

I have only been here two weeks and already feel at home. During my short time, I have been reminded that justice is a team sport and it has been beautiful to catch glimpses of that team in action. I have seen residents of Covenant Village prepare beef stew on a Saturday evening. I have seen Salvation Army staff patiently work with a homeless family of four, helping them to get into a motel for the night. I have seen high schoolers from Newington UCC completely organize a toiletry and clothing closet, and one particular high school senior volunteer to come in on one of his days off in order to finish the job. To everyone I've mentioned and the countless who couldn't fit in this paragraph, I say: *thank you*. I am honored to be on your team and look forward to what we will accomplish together.

~ Logan Singerman

## **MEET INTERIM YOUTH COORDINATOR, LYNN MANNING**

Hello, Center Church! I am Lynn Manning, and I am thrilled to be your Interim Youth Coordinator. My own son and daughter are all grown up, but they *loved* Youth Group at the UCC church we attended in Salt Lake City. I hope that, together, we can make our time just as wonderful, and I'm looking forward to getting to know you. As for me, I work as a Special Education tutor at Washington School in Manchester and attend Hartford Seminary during the week. Eventually, I hope to be a hospital chaplain. I live with my two French Bulldogs, Vincent and Lily, in Hartford. (You may email Lynn at [lmanning@cchartford.org](mailto:lmanning@cchartford.org).)



## ***THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN HARTFORD***

*A member of the United Church of Christ (UCC)*

CENTER CHURCH, 60 Gold Street, Hartford, CT 06103

Church Office Hours: Monday thru Friday, 8:30am to 4:00pm

Summer Office Hours: Monday thru Friday, 9:00am to 3:00pm

Library Hours: Wednesdays, 9:30am to 11:30am, Sunday 9:45am to 10:45am, or by appointment.

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*"Return to me with all your heart."*

*~ Joel 2:12*