

## ***FIRST AND CENTER***

### **Pastor's Blog**

**September 13, 2017**

Today I went all the way to the top of the steeple in the company of the dedicated workers stripping paint and making repairs and lovingly restoring our church steeple. While the view was indeed amazing, something even more amazing happened on this visit. It began inside the steeple as I noticed people's names painted or carved into the old wood beams inside (the steeple dates from the early 1800s and has been repaired many times over the centuries since.) Often the names had dates next to them, beginning in 1805. When I got to the top and the workers were stripping away old paint, they had discovered underneath the paint more names carved into the wood, along with dates. At some point, a Wadsworth was up there, among many others.

For the most part, we believe these names represent skilled workers in wood and metal and iron and paint whose names are not recorded in any history book, including the ones in the church's library, the ones that record many details about ministers and musicians and moderators. Some of them may have been members of Center Church. Most, probably, were not. Yet, all of them took care to create a thing of beauty rising above the city of Hartford, bearing light, tolling a bell for times of sadness and times of joy, keeping a clock running to mark the hours of lives long gone.

For the rest of my days worshipping at Center Church, I will feel the presence of these people, a cloud of witnesses whose work witnesses to the beauty and presence of God as we pray and sing, and as we work and witness and create beauty, and call upon this city to know that God is in the midst of them with love. Thanks to all of you who carved your names and gave us the gift of beauty. And thanks to those who are doing the same thing again right now.

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,  
Pastor