

NEWS

Volume XXXII, No. 1

January/February, 2016

**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,
8:30 am to 4:00 pm

Summer Office Hours:
Monday thru Friday,
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
(July thru Friday
before Labor Day)

Phone: (860) 249-5631
FAX: (860) 246-3915

www.centerchurchhartford.org

Sunday Worship Service:
10:30am

Summer Worship Service:
9:00am & 10:00am
(First Sunday in June through
the Sunday before Labor Day)



May the coming year be one of increased riches of grace

Hearing God's voice more clearly,

Knowing God's heart more deeply,

Resting in God's love more fully

Trusting God's care more completely,

Walking God's pathway more peacefully,

Knowing God's presence more intimately,

Blessed by God's goodness more abundantly.

~ Roy Lessin

Dear Family,

Happy New Year! In the year 2015, as a community, we experienced growth, joy, and many challenges. We begin the year 2016 with a commitment to be grateful and to continue to work towards justice and peace. I want to extend an invitation to each and every one of you: let's explore new directions -- new paths. Robert Frost said it best:



*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth...*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence;
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

May God lead us in this New Year to take the road less traveled, and may the journey transform us and our community.

Paz,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Damaris D. Whittaker".

(Rev.) Dr. Damaris D. Whittaker,
Minister



LENT begins on Ash Wednesday, February 10. We will offer Distribution of Ashes at the Meeting House throughout the day. Details and more Lenten information coming soon.



WEATHER-RELATED EVENT CANCELLATIONS

Please note that Center Church is registered with WFSB-TV's *Early Warning Network* for church event cancellations due to weather conditions. Worship and other church-related events will be canceled only in extreme weather conditions, particularly if there is a City of Hartford parking ban in effect. Tune into Channel 3 (or check their website) for the latest information.



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1/6 Gregory Norsigian
 1/8 Richard Piatti-Rios
 1/16 Bruce Bidwell
 1/17 Sandra French
 1/23 Xyon Iyomi Sanders
 1/29 Dimekwan French
 1/29 Adalina Valdes
 1/31 Sarah Gale

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

2/6 Mark Fisher
 2/11 Paul Bobbitt
 2/16 Michael Seurattan
 2/17 Gregory Norsigian
 2/19 Buell French
 2/20 Jonas Otte
 2/25 Peter Fairbairn
 2/27 Curtis Anderson
 2/27 David Maclean

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

1/23 Kathleen & Robert Davidson

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

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



In order to allow ample time for review before the February 7th Annual Meeting, the 2015 Annual Report will be distributed via email in advance of the meeting. In an effort to become more “green,” we ask that you print only as needed. Hard copies will be mailed to those without Internet access.

SAVE THE DATE!

**+ WOMEN’S LENTEN RETREAT +
 Saturday, March 5, 10:30am-2:00pm
 Details soon!**



CHURCH MEMBERS & FAMILY NEWS BULLETIN BOARD

Births, Deaths, Weddings, Transferred at own request: *None*

Baptisms: *Addison Marie Hernandez-Maturo (November 15)*

New Members (all November 22): *Jordan Hegel, Anne Ostberg, Angela Smith, Reverend Michelle Hughes, Catherine Maclean, Erlene Parkes, Diedre Gooden, and Stacia Parkes*

WITH THANKS

"Thank you to everyone who contributed at the November auction in memory of Reg Arvidson. Once again, it was a touching experience for me to realize how much Reg is still in the hearts of so many at Center Church."

~ Carolyn Arvidson

383RD ANNUAL MEETING

The **383rd Annual Meeting** of The First Church of Christ in Hartford/Center Church will be held on Sunday, February 7, 2016, immediately following a Potluck Luncheon and the reading of the year's History.

+ IN OUR PRAYERS +

Curtis Anderson, Arline Baum, James Danis, Gladys Hernandez, Chris Jeffers, Christine MacDonald, Lauren McPhail, Marjorie F. Paust, the Rapsilber family, Jeff Rathnam, Lita Rathnam, Sally St. Amant, Earl Sanderson, Norman Stanley, Jeff Thomas, Deborah Tuthill, the City of Hartford, the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, the First Church of Christ in Hartford, the State of Connecticut, and Syrian Refugees



NEW IN THE CHURCH LIBRARY!

Stop by the church library to check out these new recent additions from The New York Times' bestsellers list:

"My Life in Leadership" by John Whitehead

"Citizen: An American Lyric" by Claudia Rankine

**"Daughters of the Samurai: A Journey from East to West and Back"
by Janice P. Namura**

"The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle" by Lillian Faderman

"Guantanamo Diary" by Mohamedou Ould Slahi

"Listening to Stone: The Art and Life of Isamu Noguchi, Hayden Herrera

"On the Move: A Life" by Oliver Sacks

"SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome" by Mary Beard

"Ordinary Light: A Memoir" by Tracy K. Smith

"H is for Hawk" by Helen MacDonald

"The Train to Crystal City" by Jan Jarboe Russell

"Frog" by Mo Yan

**"The Shepherd's Life: Modern Dispatches from an Ancient Landscape"
by James Rebanks**

REFLECTIONS ON REMEMBRANCE: **HARTFORD HOMELESS PERSON'S MEMORIAL**

At dusk this past Sunday, I took some time away from my regular work with Community Meals to walk up the hill to the Center Church Meeting House. We gathered there for the annual observance of the Hartford Homeless Person's Memorial. Like much of my experience at Center Church this fall, the memorial was new to me.



I saw many friends there, some from the community of folks who serve the homeless here in Hartford, some from the homeless community that I have come to know through the process of reopening the community resource center in the Center Church Building on Gold Street. The sanctuary had a low, warm light and we all moved towards the front of the room to find our places. Along with the program notes, we each carried a small piece of paper with the name of homeless person who died over the past year.

From the healing balm of the spiritual message carried by Reverend Whittaker to the shared personal remembrances from community members of friends now gone, the soaring tenor voice of Avid Williams singing *Deep River* to the silent chorus of shared prayer, we moved together into the night in a beautiful, bittersweet fashion.

At a point, we were asked to join in call and response in order to fashion a choral litany raised in remembrance of the thirty homeless people who lost their lives in Hartford over the past year. As each name was called out, a small gong was sounded and we were asked to stand and echo the name that was written on the slip of paper that we were given earlier in the evening. One by one, or sometimes two and three (as some of us shared names), we stood until we were all standing. This sounds simple, and it was, in the best sense. The ceremonial gathering of voices was deeply moving, as we 'stood in' for our departed brothers and sisters. The church nave was filled with spirit, sure enough.



There was more to the memorial, including a procession outdoors to lay wreaths in the portico, that I missed, as I jogged back down the hill to get back to work at Community Meals. We found ourselves pulling out extra tables and chairs, as folks who had participated in the memorial joined our weekly diners to break bread together and to continue the remembrance of friends now gone.

Feeling thankful for this life we live, together, and for the particular beauty found in the midst of community.

~ Stephen Haynes,
Winter Solstice/2015



Goodbye, 2015 – Oh, What a Year it Has Been!

It's difficult, almost impossible to fathom, but it was roughly one year ago that the Great Flood of 2015 (is it too early to be giving it a historical name?) struck the Church House, forever altering the trajectory of Center Church. Sometimes it feels like it was yesterday; at other times, it feels like it was eons ago, or perhaps even in a galaxy far, far away... but however long ago it feels like it happened, the past twelve months have been filled with significant changes. From the departure of Jason Charneski and arrival of William Mess, to Jana Priestley relocating her office upstairs, to even the office server and tech closet finding a new home, if there was change to be had, we have had it... and there's much more that I haven't even touched on!

While I celebrate these numerous changes along with the rest of the church, I am (clearly biased) most excited by the changes that have occurred within our Outreach efforts. For it was the flood that opened up the possibility of transforming the underutilized Warburton Room into something more; and it was the flood that allowed us to reconsider our weekend meal offering, resulting in the switch from Saturday breakfast to Sunday dinner.

The switch has been phenomenal. While we aren't serving as many people as we were serving breakfast, we are serving the community in new ways. We are offering more time to relax (we are open to the public for a full three hours) during a period of the day when people have nowhere else to go to get off the street, and we are able to offer life-sustaining supplies like blankets, jackets, and socks. And while we haven't yet opened the recently minted "Warburton Resource, Outreach and Collaboration Center (The WROCC)," we have come so far since last January when it wasn't even an idea yet. In fact, by the time you read this, we may actually be up and running (we're hoping for a "soft opening" on Wednesday, January 6)!

Now comes the next step of this incredible journey that we have undertaken at Center Church - in many ways, these next steps will be more challenging than the steps we took to get here. Saying "yes" was tremendous, but now comes the grind, the follow through of the commitment - which can be intimidating, when you really think about it (sounds a lot like marriage, all jokes aside.)

Personally, my two-year journey at the church has resulted in so many incredible experiences, learnings, and relationships. Collectively, I'm excited to see what we can do with this new space as we continue to deepen our investment in this great community of Hartford. To 2016 – oh, what a year it will be.

Happy New Year's, my friends!

~ Nate Fox, Warburton Director of Outreach Ministries

Chase the Chill ~ Hartford

On New Year's Eve afternoon, about 120 donated scarves, hats, and gloves were placed on the Meeting House fence at the corner of Main and Gold Streets in Hartford. These items were there for the taking by anyone who needed extra warmth this winter. *Chase the Chill* sends a heartfelt thank-you to the people of Center Church, Asylum Hill UCC, West Hartford's Flagg Road UCC Knitters, and all the other people who donated scarves. Additional thanks to Joe Bradley, Melanie Meredith, and Sarah Schneiderman for placing these items on the fence!



SUNDAY MORNING ADULT EDUCATION CLASS

CHURCH HOUSE PARLOR, 8:45 a.m.

THROUGH JANUARY 31:

We continue our study of "The Only Necessary Thing: Living a Prayerful Life" by Henri Nouwen. The following is an excerpt from Chapter Seven:

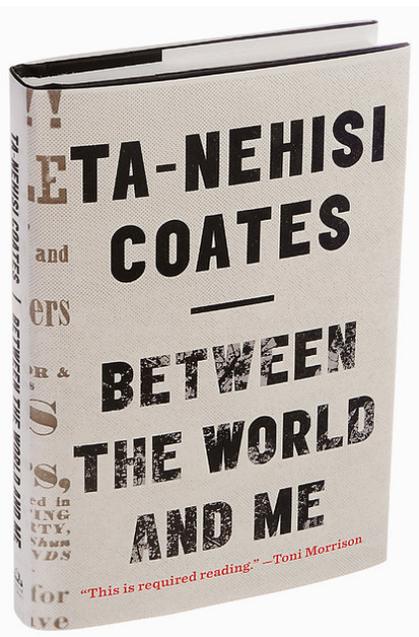
Creating Boundaries around Our Meeting with God

We simply need quiet time in the presence of God. Although we want to make all our time, time for God, we will never succeed if we do not reserve a minute, an hour, a morning, a day, a week, a month, or whatever period of time for God and God alone. This asks for much discipline and risk taking because we always seem to have something more urgent to do and "just sitting there" and "doing nothing" often disturbs us more than it helps. But there is no way around this. Being useless and silent in the presence of our God belongs to the core of all prayer. . . .

[Originally in "Reaching Out"]

* * *

BEGINNING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7:



The class will be discussing *Between the World and Me*, by Ta-Nehisi Coates (chosen by *The New York Times Sunday Book Review* as one of the ten best books of 2015.)

For this book, we will try to schedule times for discussion in addition to Sunday mornings.

* * *

For more information or questions, please contact
Joe Bradley, Alvin Thompson,
or Bill Warner-Prouty.

*** NEWS FROM FAITH FORMATION! ***



Welcome to the New Youth Coordinator!

Hi! My name is Anne Russo and I am excited to work with the youth at Center Church in the role of Youth Coordinator!

I grew up in Milford, CT and completed my Masters of Arts in Art Therapy Degree from Albertus Magnus College in New Haven, CT. I am a Licensed Professional Counselor and I have worked with children, youth and families professionally for over ten years. I currently manage a foster care program, which supports relatives raising their family members, such as grandparents raising grandchildren aunts and uncles raising nieces and nephews and siblings raising siblings. This program is called Kinship Care Support.

I believe in utilizing art as a safe space, to connect with the Holy, meditate and express one's self. I offer art therapy groups for children and youth and try to incorporate art and creativity in all that I do. I have volunteered with the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ using these skills with teens at Synod, Silver Lake Conference Center and True Colors.

I love spending time outdoors, as well as spending time with friends and family. I love animals especially dogs and I have an obsession with Snoopy from The Peanuts! I love Dollar Tree shopping, listening to all types of music, and watching movies. I look forward to getting to know the teens and their families, through mission, service, prayer and fun! Feel free to contact me: arusso@cchartford.org anytime!

CHURCH SCHOOL MISSION & SERVICE

WITH

ALVIN AND LESLIE THOMPSON

Center Church Outreach has established a relationship with **EfforTZ 4 Kidz** providing school scholarships to young people in Tanzania. Last spring the youth donated over \$50 to **EfforTZ 4 Kidz** on behalf of Center Church Church School. As well as, this fall the Church School collected over 50 school supply items to send to students!

Continuing to learn about our neighbors in Tanzania, on **Sunday, January 10th**, Alvin and Leslie Thompson will share all about their trip to there with Church School classes! An amazing opportunity to learn about the culture, environment and history of Tanzania!



Sunday, January 10th, 2016
@ CHURCH SCHOOL

HOT COCOA WITH THE PASTOR



Center Church kids and their parents are invited for a special afternoon to....
Enjoy a cup of hot cocoa and chat with Pastor Damaris!

GOT QUESTIONS?

This is a time just for you!

SAY, "HI!"

HAVE IDEAS?

Sunday, January 31st, 2016

--Church House - After Church School--

CENTER CHURCH WINTER FUN DAY SUNDAY

SUNDAY, JANUARY 24, 2016
FOLLOWING WORSHIP

*Ice skating & Carousel Rides
in Bushnell Park*



Ice Skating: Free

Carousel Rides: \$1

WALK OVER TO BUSHNELL PARK AFTER WORSHIP FOR A DAY OF WINTER ACTIVITIES! BRING A FRIEND, JOIN IN ON ACTIVITIES OR JUST COME ON OVER WITH A HOT COCOA OR COFFEE AND MEET NEW PEOPLE!

IN CASE OF SNOW OR RAIN: CHECK YOUR EMAIL FOR CANCELATIONS



THINKING ABOUT WORKING FOR GOD
WINTER RETREAT

February 5-7, 2016

Silver Lake Conference Center in Sharon, CT

Youth in grades 9-12 are invited to gather for a weekend of conversation, worship, music, & exploration of spiritual practices.

WHEN & WHERE?

Meet at Center Church, Church House at 5:00pm on Friday to carpool to Silver Lake. Youth will return to Center Church, Church House for pick up at approx. 1pm on Sunday.

WHAT TO BRING?

Pillow, sleeping bag, toiletries, boots, clothing, hat, gloves, scarf, instruments if you play 'em, art supplies if you like to create, games you'd like to share and an open mind and willingness to meet new people and make new friends!

PRICE?

\$20 per person – includes Friday evening snack (eat dinner at home, before leaving for Silver Lake!), as well as all Saturday meals and Sunday breakfast! Also, includes comfortable overnight accommodations for two nights (bring your own bedding!).

HOW TO REGISTER?

Contact Anne Russo for registration information: email arusso@ccharford.org
Registration Closes 1/31/16



SAVE THE DATES!!!

*January is around the corner and
we do not want you to miss out!*

- January 3rd **Epiphany Sunday with the Three Kings**
The Rev. Marilyn B. Kendrix, Preaching
*After Worship: Rev. Marilyn will lead a
discussion detailing the facts and
consequences of mass incarceration in
America.*
- January 10th **Jolie Rocke-Brown** will be a guest
singer at our worship service
- January 17th **Martin Luther King, Jr. Service**
Passionate readings and transforming
music

Sunday Worship begins at 10:30 am.
**Looking forward to seeing you
in the New Year!**



The deadline for the MARCH/APRIL 2016 ISSUE OF *CENTER CHURCH NEWS* is **Friday, February 19.**

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Minister: The Reverend Dr. Damaris D. Whittaker

Minister Emeritus: The Reverend J. Alan McLean

Warburton Director of Outreach Ministries: Nate Fox

Director of Faith Formation: Jana Priestley

Interim Director of Music/Organist: William Ness

Librarian: Bruce Bidwell

Office Administrator: Marie Ferrantino

Bookkeeper: Jamie Maheu

Receptionist/Office Assistant: Monique Young

Office Assistant: Frances Burton