

CENTER CHURCH NEWS

Volume XXIII No. 3

April, 2007



UPCOMING WORSHIP PLANS FOR MID-APRIL – MAY, 2007

Worship plans for mid-April through the end of May were reviewed and finalized at the March Board of Deacons' meeting. We look forward to worshipping together:

April 15 ~ The Reverend Dr. William McKinney, President of the Pacific School of Religion, preaching. Following worship there will be a luncheon and time for conversation with Bill, a former member of Center Church and Dean of the Hartford Seminary.

April 22 ~ Choir anthems and readings from last fall's choir concert, *Ethnic Expressions and Immigrant Images*. Refreshments will be served after worship.

April 29 ~ Susan Arner, 2006-2007 Warburton Resident, preaching.

May 6 ~ The Reverend Ineke Mitchell, Regional Minister for the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, preaching and celebrating communion. Worship will be followed by the annual Golden Jubilee Luncheon.

May 13 ~ Jeffrey Lukens, Director of Christian Education, preaching.

May 20 ~ Susan Arner, 2006-2007 Warburton Resident, preaching. This is Celebration Sunday and will be Susan Arner's and Jeff Lukens' last Sunday with us. Refreshments will be served after worship.

May 27 ~ The Reverend Joseph Bradley and Timothy Gilbert, worship leaders, for Pentecost and our annual Church Picnic at Camp Asto Wamah. (There will be no service in the Meeting House.)



APRIL BIRTHDAYS

- 4/1 Priscilla Ramos
- 4/2 Susan Hayes
- 4/2 Ryan Bothamley
- 4/2 Scott Ford
- 4/2 Katherine Markham
- 4/3 Kristin Maureen Sherlock
- 4/4 Luke Salls
- 4/5 Abel Tangarone
- 4/6 Pasqualina Meli
- 4/13 Andrew Thompson
- 4/13 Tucker Salls
- 4/14 Jorgette Peroza
- 4/15 Rosemary Arcieri
- 4/16 Nancy Maclean
- 4/19 Alice Norsigian
- 4/23 Jade Peroza
- 4/24 Robinson Buck
- 4/25 Dorothy Derohanian
- 4/25 Jeri Bothamley
- 4/27 C. Sanford Macomber
- 4/28 James Thomas
- 4/29 Amy White
- 4/30 A. Harry Sanders
- 4/30 Elizabeth Boyajian
- 4/30 Ramona Mansfield

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

- 4/5 A. Harry & Sabrina Sanders

PRAYER SHAWLS

If you are in need of a prayer shawl, or you know someone who does, please contact any deacon or call Marie at the Church Office. We will do our best to make sure a shawl is available for you as soon as possible.

CENTER CITY CHURCHES MANNA COMMUNITY MEALS

Center Church Volunteers for
Tuesday, March 6th:

**Susan Arner
James & Mary Ellen Jacobs
David & Nancy Maclean**

FLOWER MEMORIALS AVAILABLE

The following 2007 dates are open for flower memorials: May 6, June 24, August 26, September 2, and November 25. For further information, please call Shirley Ferro at (860) 657-0378.

ASTO WAMAH SPRING CLEAN UP

Everyone is welcome!

When: Saturday, April 28th
9:00am to Lunch at Noon

Come and help get Asto Wamah ready for the new season ~ the more, the merrier!

(Questions or lunch reservations: Nancy Maclean, (860) 649-8614.)



MUSICAL NOTES

By Jason Charneski

ACTORS AND THEIR ROLES

Singing the hymns and responses are the times when all assembled are “acting” together. What are the other parts of worship that ask us to be “active?” The answer is all. Prayer is active, especially for those of us who speak the names of persons during the Prayers of the Church. Any unison litanies, invocations, or calls to worship require us to listen and respond. Giving our gifts and tithes certainly requires the action of passing the plate and placing our offerings in it. Taking and receiving Communion is active. And, yes: listening to the readings from scripture (and other sources) and to the sermon call for us to be active or, at least, engaged. The same holds true for listening to choral anthems and being drawn into the texts sung. Even hearing of the internal and external work of the church, through listening to the announcements, is active. My point is that we are not able to be passive in worship.

As we enter into Holy Week, think about how you can be more active, or more engaged in the worship services offered on Palm/Passion Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Easter...and beyond. Then, ACT ON IT. See what happens to your mind and heart in so doing. Might those events and their meaning become more real and more meaningful – more personal – to you? How is God calling you to a more “active” Christian life? Many events took place in Jerusalem nearly two thousand year ago. What is your “role” in those events today, and what is your “role” in God’s ever expanding and evolving realm?

APRIL OFFERINGS ON MUSIC AND THE ARTS AT CENTER CHURCH

The weekend of April 20-22 just happens to be one of those upon which everything “fell.” But, that “fell” is a good thing – presenting three opportunities for you to invite persons to join you at Center Church (there’s that “active” thing again). **On Friday, April 20, at 7:30 p.m., the Hartt Collegium**, comprised of students and faculty from the Hartt School, University of Hartford, will present a concert of **works for chamber ensemble by Handel, Marais, and Telemann**. The Collegium will offer this concert as a way to raise funds for the upcoming choir-and-friends trip to England; therefore, your \$10 suggested donation will support an exciting cause!

Worship on **Sunday, April 22** will be a **condensed version** of last autumn’s choir concert, “**Ethnic Expressions and Immigrant Images**.” Lay readers will share histories and stories of some of those peoples who have come to call Hartford “home,” and the choir will sing hymns, anthems, folksong, and spirituals that relate to those stories and peoples. You may remember that, due to the ceiling collapse in the Meeting House, this concert was presented at Christ Church Cathedral. A large number of Center Church members in attendance that afternoon suggested that it could be a wonderful worship experience for us when back in the Meeting House; hence, the morning of April 22.

I hope you will choose to return to the Meeting House **the afternoon of Sunday, April 22, at 4:00 p.m.**, for an organ concert to be given by me. The theme of the program, “**A Year Ending in ‘7’**,” is designed to explore **music by composers for whom a year ending in “7” was important, just as this year, 2007, is important to Center Church because of its 375th anniversary**. Herewith, a sampling of composers who are on my mind: Dieterich Buxtehude (born c. 1637, died in 1707); J. S. Bach (some sources state that he finished his “education” in 1707); Felix Mendelssohn (*Three Preludes and Fugues* written in 1837; he died in 1847); Charles-Marie Widor (wrote his 7th organ symphony in 1887, he died in 1937); Louis Vierne (died in 1937); and Paul Hindemith (wrote his 2nd organ sonata in 1937).

CHURCH BULLETIN BOARD AND FAMILY NEWS

WEDDINGS

None

BIRTHS

None

BAPTISMS

Ryan David Hemphill (March 25th)

Anakin Isaiah PiattiRios (March 25th)

DEATHS

None

NEW MEMBERS

None

DO YOU OR A LOVED ONE NEED PASTORAL CARE?

If you would like a visit or are in need of pastoral care during this transition time, please contact the church office. We will arrange for a deacon to be in touch with you as soon as possible.

Easter Hams for the Homeless

Center City Churches is hoping to serve a ham dinner for the Easter Holiday Meal. Please consider donating a Ham for Easter. All donations need to be submitted by April 6th.

If you are able to donate a 7 lb. ham, please contact Susan at sarner@ccchartford.org.

BUYER NEEDED!

Center Church's Soup & Services needs volunteers to shop for the food cooked and served on the first Tuesday of every month at the Soup Kitchen. Please call the church office if you're willing to help.

THE BIBLE AT HOME

April 8

Jesus Alive

Acts 10:34–43 or Isaiah 65:17–25

Psalms 118:1–2, 14–24

1 Corinthians 15:19–26 or Acts 10:34–43

John 20:1–18 or **Luke 24:1–12**

Early on that first Easter morning an empty tomb and angel messengers report the news. The women who have gone to the tomb try to explain what they have experienced, but the other disciples do not believe them. Often we, like those disciples, try to make sense of new facts by fitting them into old frames of reference, or old ways of understanding.

Celebrating Easter is about changing our frame of reference from the expected to the incredible. An empty tomb is totally unexpected and cannot be compared to anything that was known before. At the moment of complete despair, when it looked as if evil had triumphed, God acted. And in that act, the world is transformed. Alleluia! Christ is risen indeed!

- Get up before daylight on Easter morning and watch the sunrise. Read or tell the story from **Luke 24:1–12**. What does the empty tomb mean to you? Share stories about times when everything seemed hopeless, and then you experienced new life and new hope.

April 15

Unfolding Story

Acts 5:27–32

Psalms 118:14–29 or Psalm 150

Revelation 1:4–8

John 20:19–31

The stories of Jesus now turn to the stories of Jesus' community. This unfolding story does not come without conflict. Today we read of a hostile episode involving the authorities of the day. The apostles are asked to account for their disobedience to an earlier edict banning teaching in the name of Jesus. Peter defends the apostles' witness on the basis of "obeying" God. Obedience is simply a matter

of priority. Faithful obedience puts first things first. In the midst of their unfolding experiences of God, the community answers the call of the Spirit to witness to God's life-giving ways.

- Light a candle to symbolize the message of good news. Tell about the first time you heard the story of Jesus. Where are the places where sharing the story of Jesus may be hard? How can a story like **Acts 5:27–32** help us tell our story about God's love?

April 22

Encountering Christ

Acts 9:1–6, (7–20)

Psalms 30

Revelation 5:11–14

John 21:1–19

This week we meet one of the great leaders of the early church. Saul experiences a dramatic encounter with the risen Christ while journeying to Damascus, and is radically transformed. It is also the story of the call of Ananias, which is also a story of transformation. Jesus comes to Ananias and calls him to go to Saul and bring healing to an "enemy." It is an encounter with Christ whose call to reconciliation remains as timely for the church today as it was for Ananias. By the end of the story both Saul and Ananias have had visions that transform not only them but also their communities.

- Read **Acts 9:1–6, (7–20)** and dramatize the story. In what ways, and through what persons, have we encountered Jesus? Share stories of events in your lives that were transformative.

April 29

Holy Work

Acts 9:36–43

Psalms 23

Revelation 7:9–17

John 10:22–30

This week we meet the disciple Tabitha. Tabitha's ministry with the widows of her community is clearly evident in this text. She made clothing and, more than that, showed

caring and compassion in her work – holy work. Holy work is shown by words and actions that wipe away tears, restore life, and testify to God’s love. What does Tabitha do? She sees a need and responds in love as Jesus did. Like Jesus, Tabitha ministers with those on the margins and, in so doing, draws together a community who grieves her death, celebrates her gifts, and witnesses her restoration to life.

- Together talk about what you might do as a family to respond to those in need. Can you think of someone who would appreciate a visit, some free babysitting, or homemade goodies?

“The true call of a Christian is not to do extraordinary things, but to do ordinary things in an extraordinary way.”
 ~Dean Stanley

Is Your 2007 Pledge up to Date?

In order to help members to better understand giving patterns, the Stewardship Committee will be providing periodic updates. Thank you for your financial support!

Year to Date Pledging Summary (12 out of 52 Sundays)

Total pledging expected for 12 weeks	29,337.24
Actual pledges paid for 12 weeks	30,315.77
Percent received of annual pledge	24%
Outstanding pledges at 12 weeks	.00

<u># of units</u>	<u>% of 91 units</u>	<u>% of pledge paid</u>	<u>months “behind”</u>
38	42%	23% or more	0 (on track)
24	26%	1% - 22%	1 – 3 months
29	32%	0%	zero payments made

OPEN TABLE FUND

as of March 26, 2007

Beginning balance	733.08
*Contributions	<u>120.00</u>

Current Balance Open Table Fund \$ 853.08

**Anyone wishing to make a contribution to the fund may do so by sending a check to the church office with the memo "Open Table Fund."*

FAMILY CAMP 2007

On April 22nd right after worship, there will be an informational and organizational meeting for all Center Church members who are or may be interested in attending Family Camp this summer between August 19 and Sept 2.

At this meeting we will review and discuss the goals of the family camping experience at Asto Wamah, and the rules and regulations under which this program operates for the enjoyment of the Center Church Family. If you are planning to attend Family Camp for all, or a part of the designated dates, we ask that you attend this information session.

Light refreshments will be provided.

Suzanne Thomas
A. Harry Sanders

"He who has learned to pray has learned the greatest secret of a holy and happy life."

~ William Law

THE 15TH THOMAS HOOKER LECTURE

will be delivered by

William McKinney, PhD
President,
Pacific School of Religion

on the topic:

***"WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO
SPEAK OF AMERICA AS
A VIRTUOUS NATION?"***

**SATURDAY,
APRIL 14, 2007
3:00PM**

*(Reception in the
Church House follows)*

CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

From Jeff Lukens, Church School Director:

SIGN UP FOR CAMP

Did you know that Center Church owns two camps? We all know of Asto Wamah, but we also own Silver Lake Conference Center in Sharon.

Both Silver Lake and Asto Wamah are taking registrations for their summer programs for youth. Asto Wamah invites kids from 8-14 and Silver Lake invites kids entering 4th grade through post-high.

The Board of Christian Education has scholarships available for everyone who wishes to go to either (or both) of these camps. Each child from Center Church will receive \$100 to go to Summer Camp. See Jeff for more details.

To sign up for Asto Wamah: Pick up a brochure in the Church office or Meeting House.

To sign up for Silver Lake: Pick up a brochure from Jeff or visit <http://silverlake.ctucc.org>

FROM PALMS TO EASTER – PALM SUNDAY EVENT

Sunday, April 1st

On Palm Sunday, April 1st, the Center Church School will have a special event to celebrate Palm Sunday and prepare for the season of Easter. After meeting in worship and participating in the Parade of Palms, we will go to the Church House to decorate Easter eggs and make gifts for shut-ins.

This year, the Easter eggs will be given to the men and women who eat at the Soup Kitchen. The other gifts will be delivered with the plants on Easter Sunday.

Parents can pick up their child in the Dining Room on the Ground Floor of the Church House after worship on April 1st.

He is RISEN!

On Easter Sunday, there will be no Church School so that families may worship together. After worship, there will be an Easter egg hunt for all children in the Church School. The Board of Christian Education will also be providing refreshments for the church.

CELEBRATING 375 YEARS 1632 – 2007

We continue to celebrate our church's history through the presentation of adult education programs on various topics by Center Church members.

April 1st – *Hartford's Thomas Hooker: Two 20th Century Views from New Haven*, presented by Bill Warner-Prouty. 9 AM in the Church House Parlor.

June 3rd – *The Ecclesiastical Society and the Business of the Church*, presented by Kathy Gourlie. This program was originally scheduled for May 6th. Place and time will be announced in the May newsletter.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR HISTORY

As we continue our 375th anniversary year, research into our archives resulted in a collection of additional anniversaries that are happening in 2007. One highlight is being shared each month.

~ Robin Roy, for the Anniversary Committee

UCC 50th Anniversary: In 1957 – fifty years ago, the United Church of Christ celebrated its first General Synod as a new denomination. In late June, 2007, at the General Synod being held in Hartford at the Civic Center, the UCC will celebrate its 50th anniversary. We, at Center Church, are members of the United Church of Christ, and I was curious to look back into our archives to see how Center Church was involved in the deliberations for church union between what had been four individual denominations at the turn of the 20th century. The Congregational and Christian Churches merged in 1929/1931, and the Evangelical and Reformed Churches merged in 1934.

First of all, I learned that it was a long and complicated process, and secondly, for many Congregationalists it was an unsettling time, because they were afraid they might lose their Congregational inheritance of “self-government under Christ alone.” (H. Newsham 2/1/56) But for us, all worked out in the end, even though it took thirteen years from 1948 to 1961! In 1948 Center Church voted 105 to 18 for union between the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Churches following informational meetings and study by a special committee. Nationally, between 1948 and 1956 there were at least two court cases over E & R individual church properties, plus the General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches was working to get the 75% affirmative vote needed from individual churches to approve the merger.

By the time the national organizations were ready to move to the next step in the merger, Center Church was having second thoughts. In February 1956, our minister, Harold Newsham, wrote to church members summarizing what had occurred since 1948, and the concerns people were expressing. In addition, our membership had changed and new members didn't have the background in what had previously happened. Our church then voted to rescind their 1948 vote until a proposed UCC constitution became available to answer their questions about self-government, individual church funds and property, and what happens if an individual church wants to leave the denomination. Our church did support the principle of union.

Five years later, in February 1961, Dr. Elmer Voelkel, who succeeded Mr. Newsham, wrote to announce that Center Church had approved the new UCC constitution; and so, we would join the United Church of Christ. He also reported that a) We didn't have to change our name, b) We didn't lose control of our funds and property, and c) We could withdraw from the UCC by our own decision without forfeiting ownership or control of our property and funds.

Dr. Voelkel ended his letter with some observations that still speak to us today: “If people think, we should expect them to differ, and Congregationalists have been taught to think for themselves, so we can anticipate a variety of opinions when a matter is presented to a congregation. But this is not all that can be said. Man is more than mind. He is also spirit, and we believe that the spirit of Christ is more than able to lift us all above differences of opinion, and make us one in His service.... (In the) words of Paul: ‘For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.’ And may it be with the members of the First Church of Christ in Hartford.”

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