

CENTER CHURCH NEWS

Volume XXIII, No. 7

September, 2007



“This is the day that our God has made. Let us be glad and rejoice in it.”

Rally Sunday - September 16, 2007

9:15 a.m. CE breakfast (all welcome) and Church School Registration

Second floor of Church House

10:30 a.m. All-Church Family Worship in the Meeting House

Children attend with parents- leave at designated time with teachers to go to classrooms.

Church School Begins!

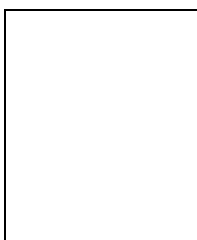


Come welcome Transitional Minister Reverend Paul Goodman!

Sign up for breakfast in the Green Book

“We rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.”

~ Romans 5: 2



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

9/2 Joyce Peroza
9/3 Patrick Hayes
9/5 Alan Roberts
9/7 Patricia Roberts
9/7 William Jackson
9/8 Joyce Buckingham
9/9 Thomas Lombardi
9/13 Lawrence Roeming
9/16 Kaitlyn Thomas
9/18 Joe Cornelio
9/20 Gregory Sanders
9/20 Gail Canzano
9/20 Grace Otte
9/21 Joseph Bradley
9/22 Marcus Steinle
9/25 Christopher White
9/25 Cecelia Jackson
9/27 Valerie Thaxter-Grant

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

9/6 Dennis & Jeri Bothamley
9/8 James & Lisa Thomas
9/11 Harold & Joyce Buckingham
9/16 Dennis Morin & David Owens
9/17 James & Jane Macomber
9/27 Anthony & Karen Sanders
9/30 Donald & Sharon Steinle

MUSICAL NOTES

By Jason Charneski



There is just too little space in this month's newsletter to share the joy that I and twenty-five other pilgrims experienced in England on our "Journey in the Footsteps of Thomas Hooker and Samuel Stone." The phrase that comes to mind immediately is "it was beyond our expectations." Everything ran smoothly and like clockwork. The hospitality extended to us can only be compared to being treated like royalty. The musical experiences in services and concerts were just exquisite and exciting. Meeting people who share the Hooker and Stone heritage was stimulating and educational. Staying in host homes for five nights allowed us to enjoy each other's company and culture. What a trip! I had opportunities to thank our hosts in very public settings and to extend invitations to them to visit us.

If not already there, we hope to post some photos on the church website so that you might catch a glimpse of some of the people and places we came to know. And, talk with those of us who went on the journey. You might just get to know someone that you don't yet know!

I often end reports with the phrase, "Ever forward!" And, so, we do move forward into the 2007-2008 program year. I am excited to begin work with Paul Goodman: having met and conversed with him, I am sure that he and his skills will serve Center Church well in this period of transition. There is much to be accomplished. Let us listen carefully, respond thoughtfully, and move with conviction and faith into areas where the Spirit is leading us.

Musically, we enter the 2007-2008 program year on a "high" from the England trip. The Choir will resume its regular rehearsals on Wednesday, September 12, and will be restored to its place of musical leadership and enhancement of worship on Sunday, September 16 (Pastor Goodman's first Sunday with us). The choir's season highlights will be serving as the core of a larger choral ensemble for a hymn-and-anthem festival, "The Poet as Prophet," on Sunday, October 21, singing some familiar and new anthems in a service of Lessons and Carols the morning of Sunday, December 23, and joining the choirs of Immanuel Congregational Church (Hartford) and South Church (New Britain) and the Hartford Symphony Orchestra on Sunday, April 27, for a festive tribute to and concert of some of the larger works of Ralph Vaughan Williams.

The October 21 and April 27 events listed in the previous paragraph are but two of the programs to be offered on the 2007-2008 series of Music and the Arts at Center Church. On Saturday, October 20, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, hymnwriter and preaching scholar Thomas Troeger, who is the author of our 375th anniversary hymn, "Jesus Never Stayed the Same," will offer a workshop on hymn writing to all interested persons: you need not be a seminarian, professor, or musician to attend. Simply plan to join us for a morning exploring the idea of poet-as-prophet. On Sunday, February 10, jazz and classical pianist Joel Martin will return to accompany the morning worship service and offer another Jazz Vespers that afternoon. Complete season details will be announced in a mailing that you will receive by mid-September.

375th ANNIVERSARY OPEN TABLE FUND UPDATE

In July we sent a letter to members of our church family inviting them to contribute to a special Anniversary Open Table Fund to help offset the cost of the Anniversary Brunch being held at *Ann Howard's at the Bond*. Our goal is to raise a minimum of \$1500. This will enable us to keep the cost of tickets to \$15 per person. As of 9/1/07 we are pleased to announce that more than \$1,100 has been contributed. Additional gifts may be sent to the Church Office at 60 Gold Street, Hartford, CT 06103. Make your check out to *The First Church of Christ in Hartford* and write *Anniversary Open Table Fund* on the memo line. For each \$10 you contribute, it helps fund one person's brunch ticket. \$50 helps fund brunch for five and \$100 brunch for ten. We all thank you for your generosity to make this a wonderful and memorable occasion!

Excerpt from “FROM RESPECTABLE RELIGION TO EVANGELICAL FAITH”

By John H. Thomas, General Minister and President, United Church of Christ

(continued from our July/August newsletter)

Respectable religion seeks a congenial place where cross and flag can easily cohabit to claim our dual allegiance. **Evangelical faith** calls into question every parochial idolatry and places us under the sole and sovereign claim of our Lord.

Respectable religion wants at all cost to avoid standing out; its cry is “please don’t make me feel embarrassed.” **Evangelical faith** is prepared to be odd, a peculiar salt and leaven in the world.

Respectable religion prays for the victims of war and for those in harm’s way. **Evangelical faith** does this, but also challenges the arrogance and deception of those who lead us to war.

Respectable religion treats the church’s Book as a shrine to be worshipped, a talisman to be carried, an armor for protection. **Evangelical faith** opens the Book to hear the surprising, confounding voice of the Still-speaking God.

Respectable religion views the offering as at best a “necessary evil,” a time to give “just enough.” It finds talk about money intrusive and offensive. **Evangelical faith** sees the offering as an act of gratitude and joy, a time for extravagance and dance!

Respectable religion is an older brother ever grumpy that grace abounds for those deemed undeserving. **Evangelical faith** is a waiting mother or father eager to embrace the one returning from a far country.

Respectable religion is always serious, sober, and somber. **Evangelical faith** plays, teases, pokes fun, provokes us toward joy!

Growing on the Journey of Faith: Open Doors

By Jason Charneski

Thanks to a generous gift from the Lincoln Financial Foundation, the Greater Hartford Arts Council will host an “Open House Hartford” weekend on Saturday, September 8 and Sunday, September 9. The idea is akin to First Night, except that all venues open and performances offered free-of-charge. Center Church will be open, and will be the site of a series of performances by an ensemble comprised of singers from The Hartford Chorale. This event, coupled with many other offerings the same weekend: Guitars Under the Stars, a series of biking and walking tours of the city, and the annual Connecticut Gay Pride festivities, increases the likelihood of many people entering Center Church for the first time.

This Open House has led me to think about open doors. When are our doors open? Symbolically, all the time. But in reality? On Sunday mornings, for concerts, and – during the months of good weather – on Thursdays from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (this under the wonderful eyes and ears of Earl Sanderson). What message does a “closed” Meeting House send to the downtown residential community and the persons who work downtown? We have a beautiful building. It needs to be open more often, so that more persons may meet God there through prayer, meditation, reflection, and inspection. If you are able to spend some time as a “docent” please let me or Earl know.

I was glad when they said unto me, “Let us go into the House of the Lord.” – Psalm 122: 1



**CHURCH BULLETIN BOARD
&
FAMILY NEWS**

**BIRTHS, BAPTISMS,
NEW MEMBERS**

None

WEDDINGS

Alan Roberts & Patricia Erdmann, 6/30

DEATHS

None

Please remember to visit the
Upcoming Events page on the
Center City Churches website at
www.centercitychurches.org.
From there, click on Volunteer
Opportunities for effective ways
to serve our community!

**OCTOBER NEWSLETTER
DEADLINE:
THURSDAY,
SEPTEMBER 20TH**



**UPCOMING WORSHIP PLANS
SEPTEMBER 2007**

Early September Worship plans have been finalized by the Board of Deacons. We look forward to worshipping together in the coming weeks and welcoming the following to our pulpit:

September 2nd - The Reverend William Warner-Prouty, Assistant Moderator of Center Church, will preach and celebrate communion.

September 9th - The Reverend Kevin Ewing, Associate Minister, Amistad Church, West Hartford, will preach.

FAMILY FUN- RAISING EVENT FOR LGBT FAMILIES & ALLIES

Friday, September 7th, 6pm - 8pm

at the Carousel at Bushnell Park, Hartford

Reserve Your Tickets Today at www.lmfct.org

- Unlimited Carousel Rides, Playground, Pizza & Popcorn, Face Painting!
- Bring your kids, grandkids, nieces, and nephews—all are welcome! Rain or shine.
- Suggested Donation: \$40 per Family or be a Family Pride Sponsor at \$100!
(RSVP by 9/4)
- Proceeds benefit Love Makes a Family's campaign for marriage equality for same-sex couples in Connecticut.

CELEBRATING 375 YEARS 1632 – 2007

UPCOMING ANNIVERSARY EVENTS FOR OCTOBER, 2007 ~ MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!

Thursday, October 4 – Opening day of the **Center Church exhibit** at the Antiquarian and Landmarks **Main Street History Center** at 255 Main Street. It will run through January, 2008.

Sunday, October 7 at 9 AM in the Parlor at the Church House – Larry Roeming will present an Adult Education Program entitled, ***Passive Acceptance to Joyful Affirmation: Becoming an O&A Congregation.***

Saturday, October 13 – The Antiquarian and Landmarks Society will lead a **walking tour** focused on Center Church and Hartford history on Main Street.

Sunday, October 14 – Our 375th Founders' Day!

10:30 AM : Worship in the Meeting House with the Reverend Dr. Nancy S. Taylor of Old South Church in Boston preaching. Special music will include the hymn, *Jesus Never Stayed the Same*, commissioned for our anniversary.

11:30 AM: A **Group Photo** will be taken on the Meeting House steps.

1:00 PM: Our **Anniversary Brunch** will be held at **Ann Howard's at the Bond** at 338 Asylum Street in Hartford. Tickets are \$15 per person and will be available for purchase beginning September 16th. Information about parking will be in the October newsletter.

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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*

It's September, and for lots of people that means BACK TO SCHOOL. Education has always been important to our church and our church family. **Two hundred and seventy five years ago, in 1732,** our sixth minister died at aged 79. His name was the Reverend Timothy Woodbridge. He was our minister for 47 years and he was very interested in education. The only college in the northern colonies when Mr. Woodbridge became our minister in 1685, was Harvard College in Massachusetts Bay Colony. Mr. Woodbridge graduated from Harvard. It wasn't very easy for young men from the southern parts of New England to have to travel to Cambridge. A group of men got together to talk about founding another college; that college was Yale College, and it was founded in 1700. Mr. Woodbridge was a founder and then a trustee. He and the other founders each contributed books from their personal libraries to begin a library for the college. It took another sixteen years to decide on a permanent location for the school, and New Haven won out over Old Saybrook, Branford, and Wethersfield. Mr. Woodbridge is also remembered for supporting the idea of building a school for Native American children and for baptizing a Native American boy in 1711.

THE BIBLE AT HOME

September 2, 2007

Let's Be the Church

Jeremiah 2:4–13

Psalms 81:1, 10–16

Hebrews 13:1–8, 15–16

Luke 14:1, 7–14

(Scripture in bold print is the focus for the week.)

Today's scripture readings talk about hospitality, and welcoming others. In the church we seek to be a hospitable community, showing God's love to all. In the Christian community we have a code for living. In our families as well as our churches we strive to be welcoming, encouraging, and supporting. Jesus reminds us to invite those who might not usually get invited, to welcome in the people who might get left out.

To explore together:

- When we are hospitable and welcoming and showing God's way of love to others, we are acting like the hands and feet of Jesus. We are to treat others as Jesus would treat them. Trace and cut out several copies of each family member's hand and foot. On each one write or draw how you can show kindness and hospitality and God's way of love to friends, family, and others.
- On a large piece of paper write a family code for living. List what is important to each person to live in community and love, where all are valued.

September 9, 2007

Freed to Be

Jeremiah 18:1–11

Psalms 139:1–6, 13–18

Philemon 1–21

Luke 14:25–33

(Scripture in bold print is the focus for the week.)

This week we learn about discipleship from a letter that Paul has written to Philemon. Paul is asking a favor of Philemon but sees it more as one of God's disciples helping another. When we share God's love it can refresh the hearts of

others. The other scripture passages remind us that God sees the value in each one of us, and wants us to use our gifts for discipleship. As followers of Jesus, we help and support one another.

To explore together:

- Talk about doing favors for each other. How does it feel to ask for a favor? How does it feel to offer the favor? How does it feel to accept a favor?
- Create a family help line. Stretch a piece of string across the top of a door frame. Have each family member draw or write something they would like to offer to the family – things such as helping with the dishes, letting someone else choose a TV program, watching a younger sibling, cooking a special meal, helping with a school project. Use clothespins to attach these to the piece of string. Others in the family can take an offering when they need a favor. After taking one, that person should try and add a new one to the line in gratitude for the favor she or he took.

September 16, 2007

Of Great Value

Jeremiah 4:11–12, 22–28

Psalms 14

1 Timothy 1:12–17

Luke 15:1–10

(Scripture in bold print is the focus for the week.)

This week we read stories about being lost, and how God seeks us out and finds us. The people of Judah felt lost, but God does not abandon them completely. Paul writes to Timothy about how he felt he once was lost, but Jesus "found" him.

And we read two stories that Jesus told of how God cares for us, God seeks us out when we are lost. God is like a woman searching for a lost coin, and God is like a shepherd looking for a lost sheep. Jesus is reminding us what great value we are to God. Jesus reminds us to celebrate the God who seeks and finds us, and rejoices with us.

To explore together:

- Talk about how it feels to be lost and how it feels to be found. You may wish to play hide and seek (the person seeking can pretend to be the woman or the shepherd from the Bible). Finish your game with a special snack and give thanks for God's love which seeks us out and always welcomes us.
- Hide some coins around your home. Do not tell anyone else you have done this. Share in the joy when someone finds one of the "lost" coins. When this happens remind them of the story of the lost coin.

September 23, 2007

In Jesus' Name

Jeremiah 8:18–9:1

Psalm 79:1–9

1 Timothy 2:1–7

Luke 6:1–13

(Scripture in bold print is the focus for the week.)

Timothy was a young friend of Paul. Paul was teacher and mentor to Timothy. Paul taught him how to be a missionary and Timothy became a leader within the early church. In today's passage, Paul is urging Timothy to pray for everyone, especially leaders of all kinds. We hear the encouragement, as well, to pray for our leaders that there may be peace.

In the other scripture passages we are reminded to trust in God at all times. It can be difficult to pray for people with whom we disagree. And sometimes it can be difficult to understand everything that is going on. Still, God is always with us.

To explore together:

- Continually praying for peace is an amazing thing to do. Find a map of your city or town, your country or even the world. Once a day, as a family, pray for a place in your town, country or the world. Pray that the people there enjoy peace and that their leaders make good and fair choices. Purchase stickers of doves or draw a dove on the place you have prayed for.
- Encourage family prayer time – at bedtime, at meal time, or at another time that works well. Prayers need not be structured or follow any formula. Each person can be invited to offer a prayer of thanks, and/or to express a concern they have. Remember that things that

may seem unimportant to one person can be very important to another.

September 30, 2007

Generous Spirit

Jeremiah 32:1–3a, 6–15

Psalm 91:1–6, 14–16

1 Timothy 6:6–19

Luke 16:19–31

(Scripture in bold print is the focus for the week.)

All of this week's scripture passages have something to do with money, and all of this week's passages also have something to do with things seeming to be turned upside down. Jeremiah buys land when it seems like a strange time, the psalm promises God's care in the midst of difficult times, and the parable in Luke tells the story of a poor man named Lazarus entering heaven and a rich man being left out.

And, Paul writes that real life is the opposite of pursuing material wealth. Paul encourages Timothy not to get bogged down in day-to-day things, but to remember each moment can be wonderful and to celebrate what the church does. Paul encourages Timothy to be generous and share. Good advice for us, too.

To explore together:

- Play a game of imagining that each person were stranded on a desert island. They would have enough food, water, and clothing, but could only have three (or four, or five) other things. What would they take? In talking about this, people have an opportunity to think about the things that are most important to them.
- Talk about the importance of things, and of what you have. Talk about the things that you share. If you regularly give to the church, talk about why you do that, and the importance of giving.



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 (34 out of 52 Sundays)

Total pledging expected for 34 weeks	74,669
Actual pledges paid for 34 weeks	72,613
Percent received of annual pledge	64%
Outstanding pledges at 34 weeks	2,056

<u># of units</u>	<u>% of 91 units</u>	<u>% of pledge paid</u>	<u>months "behind"</u>
49	53%	66% or more	0 (on track)
30	33%	23% - 65%	1 – 3 months
4	5%	1% - 22%	4 – 8 months
8	9%	0%	zero payments made



OPEN TABLE FUND

as of August 27, 2007

*Current Balance Open Table Fund

\$ 797.08

*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*.

FROM THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

I am delighted to accept the position of Interim Director of Christian Education as it is a position that I have held in the past. I am passionate about the educational ministry of the church which I believe encompasses all of our life together as a community of faithful Christians.

My primary focus will be church school. It is said that the children and youth among us are the future of the church. That might be true and it might not. But one thing that I know for sure is that the children and youth among us are the church now, from crib through high school, baptized or not baptized. They need to feel loved and cared for by their church family.

Our church school numbers are small but our church school staff is enthusiastic, talented and deeply committed. We are still in the planning stages for the church year ahead. However, September 16th is Rally Sunday. It is the Sunday when traditionally church school classes begin again and folks away for the summer come back to the Center Church community. It will be a busy Sunday. We begin with breakfast at 9:15 on the second floor of the church house with a joyous extravagant welcome. It is planned for church school staff, church school families, the Board of Christian Education and all who wish to join us and we hope that you do. Church school registration will begin at that time, church school staff will greet their students and church schoolrooms will be opened for inspection. After breakfast church school staff, Board members and church school families will attend morning worship as part of the whole church family. At a designated time, teachers and students will return to the church house and their classrooms.

I look forward to the church year ahead. Scripture tells us many times over to "Fear Not!" We must go forward in faith and not in fear. God is with us everlasting to everlasting.

~ Pat Anderson

WELCOME EVAN HARRISON, NEW WARBURTON RESIDENT!

Evan Harrison will be joining us in September as he begins his Warburton Urban Ministry Residency. Over the next nine months his work at Center Church will involve collaboration with the outreach committee, work with the youth ministry, as well as some worship assistance and preaching. The Warburton Residency will also involve working with Center City Churches, which will enrich his work with Center Church. Originally from North Carolina, Evan graduated in May 2006 with a Master of Divinity from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He comes to us with some church experience, having served as intern for a year at First Presbyterian Church in Frankfort, Kentucky, while in seminary. He and his wife Emily moved to Connecticut in December 2006 and live in Hamden with their cat, Gideon. Emily is currently a Postdoctoral Associate in the Psychiatry Department at Yale University. Since moving to Connecticut, Evan has worked as interim administrator for Interfaith Cooperative Ministries, a nonprofit group in New Haven. He has also filled some of his time volunteering at Columbus House (a homeless shelter in New Haven), and guest preaching on a few occasions. Evan wishes to express his gratitude and excitement to be involved in the life of our congregation and is looking forward to meeting us.

CENTER CHURCH SOUP & SERVICES

July Volunteers: Mark Fisher & Luciano Valles, Jr., Pat & Curtis Anderson, Dan Jace, Justin Dagnon, Timothy Otte, Mary Mattke-Jones

August Volunteers: Trish & Alan Roberts, Valerie Thaxter-Grant, Jim Oliver, George Francis, Pat & Curtis Anderson, Timothy Otte, Mary Mattke-Jones

The above volunteers coordinated, shopped, cooked, served meals, cleaned up, etc. at the Soup Kitchen this summer. If you can help just once a year, please call Curtis Anderson, or Olga Shuter at the Church Office.

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