A Letter from the Pastor

Dear Friends,


These are the prayers for our world we pray together in this holy season of Advent.

Each Sunday, we come together to worship. To praise God. To remember God’s promises. To look forward in faith. And to pray.

I think it takes a lot of courage and a lot of faith to come together week after week and say YES! To hope, peace, joy, and love.

We look around at this broken world; at the violence, the poverty, the suffering, yet again and again we gather as a community of faith and say YES! to God.

Some call that crazy. Well, I have crazy faith in our God. I have crazy faith in the God who comes to us as a tiny vulnerable human baby and brings with him hope, peace, joy, and love. I have crazy faith in the God who plants seeds of hope, peace, joy, and love into each and every situation; each and every life. I have crazy faith in the God who says that WE, as the body of Christ, can BE hope, peace, joy, and love for each other and all the world.

In this season of Advent, as we move toward the miracle of Christmas, let’s proclaim our crazy faith in the God of hope, peace, joy, and love. Let’s say YES! to God.

See you at Church!

Love, Jen

Christmas at First Church

Christmas Eve, Tuesday, December 24
5 pm, Family Service with Pageant
Come to see Angels, Shepherds, Magi and the Holy Family.
Visit the Holy Family and bring your prayers to God.

10pm, Service of Lessons and Carols
Candlelight, music and readings from the Gospels tell the Christmas Story. Find the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love that abound on Christmas Eve.

Christmas Day, Wednesday, December 25
11 am, Informal Worship, Sanctuary

Sunday, December 29
8:15 Chapel Service with Holy Communion
10:15 am, Lessons and Carols Service, Sanctuary
"May God...who reached out in love and surprised you with gifts of unending help and confidence, put a fresh heart in you." 2 Thessalonians: 2:16-17

Members and friends walked forward during both the 8:15 and 10:15 services on Sunday November 3rd with their Annual Giving pledge to the 2014 Church Ministries and Outreach budgets. We have received pledges of $330,934, totaling 69% of our goal of $480,000. Please join the 150 families who have already submitted their pledge. Any questions or concerns? Contact Beverly Catchpole, Annual Giving Chair, via annualgiving@firstchurchfairfield.org or 203-259-8396 x14.

Thank you for your gifts which enable our ministry and enrich our life together!

“God surprised us with gifts... and gave us a fresh heart”

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**Alternative Gift Market**

December 1, 8 & 15

Come to the Alternative Gift Market after worship in Wakeman Hall the first three Sundays in December

- you can
- give the ultimate gifts...
- life and sustenance!
- Make Donations
- in honor of friends and family to
- Church World Service
- Connecticut Food Bank
- Heifer Project International
- Questions? Contact

Kathy Bennett, kathyb_kgb@yahoo.com

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**Soup Kitchen Saints**

Join the team
Wednesday, December 11th, 7pm in the Wakeman kitchen as we prepare food for 200 people at Merton House.

Contact Patty Gregory
pzarra@optonline.net or 203-333-7789

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**2 Christmas Caroling opportunities to share the joy of Christmas**

Come bring the joy of the season to the residents of the Carolton Convalescent Hospital. Warm the hearts of dear ones and have your own heart warmed, too.

On **December 15th** join us at 2:00 pm in the Winsor Room at the Carolton on Mill Plain Road. Aymeric will be there to play the piano for us and it will be great fun!

Questions? contact Cheri Evan at cevan@firstchurchfairfield.org.

On **December 22nd** share the love and good cheer of Christmas with some folks who can’t get out for worship. Join the second annual Christmas Caroling Party on Sunday, from 4:30-6:30! We will meet in Wakeman Hall at 4:30 for some cocoa and to get organized before heading out to carol.

See Wendy Muschett on Sundays in Wakeman Hall to sign up or email her at wendymuschett@optonline.net.
Sandy Hook Commemoration

Remembering Their Names

Fairfield Town Observance of the Anniversary of the Killing at Sandy Hook Elementary School and Witness against Violence

December 15 @ 4 pm
Town Hall Green

It is hard to believe that nearly a year has passed since last December and the tragedy at the Sandy Hook Elementary School. You are invited to mark this solemn anniversary at an Interfaith Commemoration sponsored by the Fairfield Clergy Association be held at the Town Hall Green on Sunday, December 15 at 4:00 pm, followed by a reception. Join with members of the Fairfield community in remembering the children and adults who died that day and to stand and pray for a nonviolent future for our children.

Confirmation goes to NightWatch at St. John the Divine

On Friday November 15th, Jen and David along with our 6th grade confirmation class, their parents and mentors took an overnight trip to St. John the Divine in New York City. We walked the labyrinth, prayed, sang, played, explored the beauty of St. John the Divine and shared communion at midnight in the cathedral.

What a wonderful adventure we had!

CHRISTMAS is a favorite time of year for most of us. Unfortunately, for many of our neighbors this is not a joyful season. If you would like to help make Christmas memorable for some children who are less fortunate, we will again be doing our Angel tree.

Tags will be hung on a Christmas tree outside the sanctuary. Each tag will have the name, gender and age of a child. You can sign up at the table next to the tree on Sundays, December 1 and 8. All gifts will be due back at the church by Sunday, December 15. Your gift will make this blessed holiday special for someone in need.

We wish you and your families a safe, healthy and happy Christmas. Call Kristy Macoy (259-8531) or Marilyn Henry (255-5296) with any questions.

Parish Notes
Baptism
Korsen Majlak
Deaths
Al Beauchemin
Don’t forget items for Operation Hope’s Food Pantry - the most popular and most needed items are: canned ravioli and spaghetti-o’s, macaroni and cheese, canned fruit and toilet paper. The Pantry always needs hearty soups tuna fish peanut butter & jelly.

Put donations in the grocery carts outside the Chapel or Sanctuary.

Help keep the Operation Hope pantry full!!!

Hope for the Holidays
You can help families and individuals, and all clients of Operation Hope, with gifts for Christmas. Clients work with social workers to create a ‘wish list’ of the top 3 items they would like/need this year. Basic necessities such as clothing and winter wear are prominent but toys, games, house wares, etc. can also be included.

If you would like to help contact evieangel@aol.com who let you the size of family or number of adult individuals who need help. New, unwrapped gifts should be dropped off on Monday Dec 9th and Tuesday Dec 10th at St. Anthony’s Church on South Pine Creek Road in Fairfield. A small army of volunteers will check in gifts, organize, wrap and ready for distribution to clients later that week. Thanks!

NAMI Fairfield will hold its First Wednesday of the Month Meeting on Wednesday, December 4, 2013.

It is estimated that between 20% and 60% of patients have schizophrenia that is resistant to treatment. People who fail to respond adequately to pharmacological treatment present an ongoing therapeutic challenge.

In his talk, "Beyond Clozaril: The Management of Treatment-Resistant Schizophrenia", Dr. Jeffrey Vernon, D.O. will explore the causes of treatment-resistant schizophrenia and various strategies for treating even the most difficult and seemingly hopeless cases, including in people who have failed to respond to multiple medications—even Clozaril.

Dr. Jeffrey A. Vernon is the Section Chief for Adult Ambulatory Psychiatric Services and Clinical Director of the Psychiatric Evaluation and Referral Center and Adult Outpatient Psychiatric Clinic at Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, NY.

The meeting will be held in the Eliot Room Library from 7:30-9 pm. It is open to the public, is free of charge, and light refreshments will be served. For more information please call Judy at 203-650-3463.

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that grants us an opportunity to recognize and honor those who have served and continue to serve in lay and authorized ministries of the United Church of Christ.

HOW THE FUNDS ARE USED
The generous gifts of UCC congregations and individuals to the Christmas Fund enabled the Pension Boards’ Ministerial Assistance program to provide some form of assistance to impact the lives of approximately 900 persons during the past year.

CHRISTMAS THANK YOU CHECKS to 500 retired UCC clergy/lay church employees. This special gift at Christmas time reminds these Veterans of the Cross that they have not been forgotten and that the Church is grateful for their service. Gifts totaled $200,000 in 2012.

MONTHLY PENSION SUPPLEMENTATION for 395 lower-income retired UCC clergy/lay employees. Our retired clergy/lay employees relied on this income supplementation for basic needs such as food, utilities, living and/or medical expenses. Since needs exceed the amount received through the Christmas Fund Offering, assistance was also supported by Our Church’s Wider Mission and legacy gifts to Ministerial Assistance. The amount of pension supplementation totaled $1,344,635 in 2012.

QUARTERLY HEALTH PREMIUM SUPPLEMENTATION for 228 lower-income retired UCC clergy/lay employees. These funds subsidized premiums for the UCC Medicare Supplement Health Plan with Rx so that individuals could afford and receive quality health care. Assistance totaled $554,208 in 2012.

EMERGENCY GRANTS for 45 active or retired UCC clergy/lay employees. Sometimes those who serve the Church need our help, and emergency funds are available to assist in covering costs that arise unexpectedly – for example, large medical expenses, or home damage resulting from natural disasters. Emergency assistance totaled $82,718 in 2012.

Please use the Christmas Fund Donation Envelope included in this Herald
The Herald  page  5  December 2013

**Music News**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**THE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK**

COMES TO FIRST CHURCH  
FEBRUARY 9, 2014.

THIS CONCERT WILL FEATURE  
THE ORCHESTRA WITH 
AYMERIC DUPRÉ LA TOUR AT THE  
HARPSICHORD AND THE ORGAN.

TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS TO SAVE THE 
DATE TOO!

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Jen will be traveling to South Dakota from December 4-7 to help host the **Simply Smiles** Christmas Party for our friends on the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Reservation. THANK YOU to everyone who donated toys for the children on the Reservation! Your gifts mean more than you know.

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**Advent Family Worship**  
4:00pm December 1st

Come join together for a service of Lessons and Carols, a meal, Advent Wreath making lead by David Spollett and a Scavenger Hunt hosted by Faith in Action (youth group 7 & 8 grades) !

Please bring dessert or fruit to share and RSVP by November 25th with Vanessa 203-259-8396 x 12 or sign up on Sunday.
What’s Happening– YOUTH MINISTRY

Fridays

The Loft*, 4-5:30pm, The Community House

*For lgbtq kids and their friends

Sundays

Confirming Our Faith, Grade 6, 9-10 am, in Rhodes Hall

Faith in Action youth group, Grades 7 & 8, 5 - 6 pm, in Rhodes Hall

Senior High Youth Group, Grades 9-12, 6:30 – 7:30 pm, in Rhodes Hall

Questions? Ideas? Call Jen, 259-8396 x15 or jcampbell@firstchurchfairfield.org

December Schedule:

There will be no youth groups December 15
we’ll all go caroling at the Carolton at 2pm.

There will be no confirmation or youth groups December 22 or 29
We’ll begin again on January 5th!

Are you the parent of a lgbtq teenager or young adult?
Do you have questions or worries about your child?
Are you looking for a community of support?

The Loft Parent Group

meets once a week at
The Community House
127 Rowland Rd
From 6-7pm

Join us on these Fridays

September 27, October 25, November 22, December 20, January 24,
February 28, March 28, April 25, May 30

We want to support you in supporting your child!
For more information call Liane at 203.556.1823 or
Jen at 203.543.8108
The Angel Giving Guide: As the holidays near, we often become more aware of the urgency of our neighbors’ needs. On a daily basis, hundreds of kids in Bridgeport need help to succeed in school, or, worse, find shelter care away from their homes. Thousands of adults and their families need to escape poverty and crisis and need access to food or just a second chance. All of these people in crisis need an Angel. The Council’s Angel Giving Guide provides donors with a wonderful vehicle for making gifts to support The Council’s work, while at the same time, showing appreciation for the Angels in their lives. A doctor uses the Tribute gift option to honor colleagues and staff, parents use it to show appreciation for their children’s teachers, realtors in a Fairfield office make a communal gift, area congregations honor their pastors; a Westport businessman does the same for his customers. Please consider making an Angel gift to those you care most about this holiday season and in so doing, help The Council of Churches expand its own mission to leverage hope and change lives. Those you name will receive a personalized note telling them of your thoughtful gift – inside that note will be tucked an ornament proclaiming that your honoree is an angel!

Copies of the Angel Giving Guide are available at www.ccgb.org or pattyjensen@ccgb.org or phoning 334-1121, ext. 243.

Please save this date: Saturday, March 29, 2014: Broadway Cabaret – a FUNdraiser for CCGB at United Congregational Church, 877 Park Avenue, Bridgeport

Children’s Services: Project Learn ~ Turning Students into Scholars

Would your congregation be willing to collect and donate school supplies or recreational/educational items for Project Learn participants? If so, contact Sean Campbell at 334.1121 x 244 or sean.campbell@ccgb.org for information.

Youth Services: Janus Center for Youth in Crisis

The Janus Center is seeking to recruit two additional community Host Home. A Host Home is a family, household or individual who voluntarily opens its home for a youth between the ages of 11-17 years old who is in need of temporary shelter, board and care. Certified Homes will receive a monthly stipend for child care. If you would like to know more information, please contact Dale Holder, Director of Youth Services, at 203 367-8441 x 221 or daleholder@ccgb.org.

Giving a Gift this Christmas

In making a gift at Christmas, you may designate your contribution to beautify the sanctuary, for food for the St. Luke’s/St. Paul’s Pantry or for instrumentalists who will enrich our worship services during the Christmas Season and on Christmas Eve names of those in whose memory or honor the gifts are made will be printed in the Christmas bulletins. Please return this form together with your contribution to the church office no later than Monday, December 16th the deadline for including names in the bulletin on Sunday, December 22nd.

My/Our Christmas Gift is given in memory of

____________________________________________________________________

and/or In Honor of

____________________________________________________________________

My/Our Gift of $_______ is for the St Luke’s/St Paul’s Food Pantry

$_______ is to beautify the Sanctuary

$_______ is for Christmas music

Given by ____________________________________________

Make checks payable to First Church Congregational.

Memo: Christmas Gift
December 2013
Newsletter—The Herald

Deadline for January Herald
December 13th
Send all submission to Cheri Evan
cevan@firstchurchfairfield.org

Three Kings Bazaar
December 6 & December 7

- Friday Night Carol Sing
- Book Boutique
- Basket Raffle
- Crafts
- Lunch
- Bake Sale
- Tag Sale
- Silent Auction

Friday night, 5:30 to 8:30 pm ~ Carol Sing, 7:15 to 7:45
Saturday, 10 am to 3:30 pm ~ Lunch 11:30 – 1:30