

February 21, 2010

# The Church on the Green

From The First Church of Christ in Longmeadow, United Church of Christ



*“Embraced by the love of God in Christ, our mission is to love and serve our world. We seek to grow in Christ’s family through our journey—inward toward faith and knowledge, outward toward love and justice—always rooted and nurtured in worship.”*

## Practice, Practice, Practice

The church in which I grew up didn’t “do” Lent. I’m sure the liturgical calendar was noted on Sundays, but as far as I was concerned nothing special happened in between Christmas and Easter except Maundy Thursday. Lent was something the Catholics observed, and it was all about guilt and having to give up things. It wasn’t until I moved to New York City that I got my first taste of the Protestant practice of Lent, at Marble Collegiate Church. The senior pastor there encouraged adding some kind of spiritual practice to our lives, rather than focusing on going without. I received ashes for the first time that year (and one very helpful person on the subway told me I had dirt on my face, not realizing what day it was).

Since then I have received ashes in a few different modes and settings, including a Union chapel service in which we took turns giving ashes to each other, and last year, at a Catholic Mass. Every year I have integrated some kind of practice into my life for those 46 days, from adding a time of prayer every morning to taking away television, each time with the intent of drawing closer to God.

I think using the term “practice” for Lent is apt. In a class on Christian contemplative practices, the professor stressed that we would not improve our meditation skills by reading all the right books and studying scholars’ notes, but by doing it, over and over again—*practicing*.

In the last few years I have come to think of Lent as a gift. We are gifted with the time and opportunity to acknowledge our sins and failures, and God’s continual loving, forgiving presence. We are gifted with reminders of our own mortality and humanity. We are gifted with a season in which we are encouraged to *practice* a deeper relationship with God, to set these days apart from our normal, busy, distracting lives and give God the opportunity to connect with us.



How will you practice Lent this year? What are your current practices that might be getting in the way of your relationship with God (television, worrying, impatience, etc)? What might you add to your life to help strengthen that relationship (almsgiving, acts of kindness, prayer, etc)? And by the way, I recommend that you don’t make the decision by yourself, but instead ask God those questions for guidance.

We might think of Lent as a chance to put a new spin on the old joke: How do we get to the Kingdom of God? *Practice, practice, practice!*

Peace,

*Beth Boisvert*

Beth Boisvert  
Associate Pastor

# Lent at First Church

## Theme: *Gratitude*

Ash Wednesday, February 17, marked the beginning of Lent—a season of self-examination, prayer, fasting and works of love.

The word “Lent” is from the Middle English verb meaning “to lengthen.” In the Northern Hemisphere, the season corresponds with the lengthening of days during late winter and early spring.

During Lent, Christians prepare themselves spiritually for the celebration of Christ’s resurrection on Easter Sunday. The season spans 40 days: the number 40 symbolizes spiritual journeys home, corresponding to the 40 days Jesus fasted in the desert in preparation for his ministry and the 40 years Israel journeyed through the wilderness towards the promised land. The traditional color of Lent is purple. During Holy Week, red is sometimes worn to symbolize the blood shed by Jesus for the salvation of humanity. In some traditions, following Maundy Thursday’s service, the sanctuary is stripped of color and ornament as a gesture which may suggest keeping vigil with Christ on the cross and in the tomb.

### Lenten Adult Study

A study of the book *Lord, Teach Us: The Lord’s Prayer and the Christian Life* by William H. Willimon & Stanley Hauerwas will be led by Pastor Mike on Sunday, February 21, 28, March 7, 14, and 21 from 11:15 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. in the 1st floor Buxton Room. Our discussion will be based on very readable sections of the text (fewer than 20 pages a week!) that will help us to see the relationship between the familiar Lord’s Prayer and the totality of the Christian life. This will be a great opportunity to deepen your faith and strengthen your understanding of a prayer that we frequently pray but seldom consider deeply. Books are available in the church office for \$12.

### Lenten Meals and Services

Please bring a canned or packaged food for Open Pantry!

Note for potluck dinners: Please bring enough of your item (listed below) to feed approximately 10 people. Rolls and drinks will be provided.

- Wednesday, February 24**     **Family Potluck**, 6:00 p.m. in Bailey Hall. Last names beginning with A-L please bring a main dish, M-S a side dish, and T-Z a dessert. After dinner we will do an activity based on *Gratitude*.
- Saturday, February 27**     **Hunger Awareness Dinner**, 6:00 p.m. in Bailey Hall. , the Senior Youth Encountering the Spirit (YES) members will conclude their “26 Hours of Hunger” fast by serving a hunger awareness dinner. During the dinner, the youth will offer presentations on what they’ve learned about hunger and their experiences with the fast. There is no cost, but a free-will offering will be collected to benefit organizations that work to fight hunger.
- Wednesday, March 3**     **“Pizza and Puzzles” Dinner**, 6:00 p.m. in Bailey Hall. After dinner we will do a puzzle based activity based on *Gratitude*. (Reservations and a free will offering requested. See bottom of page 3 for reservation form.)
- Wednesday, March 10**     **Potluck Dinner**, 6:00 p.m. in Bailey Hall Last names beginning with M-Z please bring a main dish, G-L a side dish, and A-F a dessert. We will play the Gratitude Game following dinner.

Wednesday, March 17

**St. Patrick's Day Corned Beef Dinner and Irish Step Dancers**, 6:00 p.m. in Bailey Hall. Tickets are being being sold for this event: \$5.00 for adults, \$3.00 for children and are limited to the first 100 people. Purchase tickets during coffee hour beginning February 21, or contact the church office (567-6287) for ticket information.


Wednesday, March 24

**Interfaith Potluck Dinner**, 5:30 p.m. in Bailey Hall. First Church is sponsoring this event in cooperation with the Interfaith Council of Western Massachusetts. See flyer below. Please bring a main dish. Reservations are requested. (See below for event information and reservation form.)

**First Church of Christ, UCC  
and  
The Interfaith Council of Western Massachusetts  
Invite you to an evening of  
Interfaith Fellowship, Dinner and Discussion**

Program Topic **"Gratitude: A Christian Perspective"**  
Presented by Pastors Mike Bennett and Beth Boisvert  
Introduced by Dr. Martin Pion  
Interfaith Responses by Rabbi Mark Shapiro  
and Imam Wissam Abdul-Baki

**"Why is prayer necessary?  
Because it is the chief part of  
gratitude which God demands  
of us ..."—Heidelberg Catechism  
(1562)**



**The evenings festivities include:**

5:30 pm Gathering  
6:00 pm Program  
7:00 pm Potluck Dinner

**Salad, bread and dessert are provided.**

**We ask that you please bring a main dish to share.**

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### Lenten Dinner Reservation Form

March 3, Pizza and Puzzles Dinner

number attending: \_\_\_\_\_

March 24, Interfaith Potluck

number attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Please detach this form and return it to the church office, or contact the church office to make a reservation  
(567-6287/mstevens@firstchurchlongmeadow.org).

# First Church Responds to Haiti Earthquake

by Mary Friedman, Haiti Committee

**“No one listens to the cry of the poor or the sound of a wooden bell.”**

This saying is carved on the wooden bells sold by vendors on the streets of Port-au-Prince.

But First Church is listening. Since the January 12th earthquake that demolished most of Haiti's capital and many surrounding communities, our church's involvement in CONASPEH's mission there has gone into overdrive. A special service of prayer and communion was held on



Sunday evening, January 17. There was grief over the loss of so many nursing students as well as thanksgiving for the lives of Patrick and Kim Bentrott and their son Solomon , CONASPEH's head, the Reverend Patrick Villier, his wife Francois, and many other friends who survived. A special offering was taken.

As of this writing checks have been sent to Global Ministries for CONASPEH in the following amounts: \$13,471 in individual donations from church members and friends, \$5,000 from the Board of Missions, and \$1,000 from the Hampden Association of the United Church of Christ. More checks will be sent, as individual donations continue to come in (as of February 8, they totaled \$22,671.43). Dr. Mark Pohlman,

chair of the Haiti Committee, has made a number of contacts with the wider community, including some Haitian-Americans who would like to join in the church's efforts to help. Contact has been made with A.I.C.'s School of Nursing which would also like to help in the rebuilding. At presstime, Mark was planning to a week long trip to Haiti to help out at the CRUDEMS hospital in Milot, about 90 miles from Port-au-Prince.

The church school children are painting a banner similar to the one on display in Bailey Hall which was created by our scholarship students at the CONASPEH school. The banner from First Church will one day hang in a new CONASPEH building in Haiti. The church school has also been collecting and assembling hygiene kits for Church World Service. A prayer calendar for Haiti has been begun, insuring that a member of the congregation will be praying for Haiti each day for a month.

The CONASPEH board has already met on the site of its former headquarters in Port-au-Prince. We join our Haitian partners in remembering that CONASPEH is not a building but an idea--a mission--about faith, education, and empowerment of Haitians to direct their own future. Learning is not lost. Faith is still alive. We will rebuild.

## Haiti Committee Networks With Others To Help Haiti

by Mark Pohlman, Co-chair, Haiti Committee

Through e-mails, personal phone calls, webinars, conference calls, and meetings, the members of the First Church Haiti Committee have been working with others who share the CONASPEH vision of Haitians helping Haiti recover from the devastating earthquake. First Church hosted a February 10 meeting of interested members of the Hampden Association, the Springfield Council of Churches, and the Catholic Diocese to explore ways to share information and coordinate activities. Mary Friedman and Dr. Lucy Cassells spoke on February 16 at a gathering of nursing school faculty and students from AIC, Elms College, U Mass, and others to look at possible long term relationships with the CONASPEH nursing school.

CONASPEH'S 24 year history and First Church's 14 year association with them has resulted in a strong partnership of mutual love and respect, under God, that will guide us in the many years ahead. Please continue to keep Haiti in your hearts, minds, and prayers as we move forward.



## World Day of Prayer

The Women's Benevolent Society invites women and men to join with us in celebrating the World Day of Prayer on Friday, March 5. The program will begin at 11:45 a.m. with a complimentary lunch in Bailey Hall to be followed by a worship service which will last about an hour.

World Day of Prayer is a worldwide ecumenical movement of women of many faith traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer each year on the first Friday in March. Each year a different country serves as the writer of the worship service. This year the WDP committee of Cameroon, Africa, created the worship service. Its theme is "Let Everything That Has Breath Praise God!"

A freewill offering is collected during the service to support global ministries designated each year by the International WDP Committee.

All are invited to participate in this service of solidarity.



## Church Library Update

Since the fall, twenty new books have been added to the church library. Stop by and have a look and you will find everything from the recently released *Jesus Interrupted* to *The Prayers and Poems of Helen Steiner Rice*.

Are you going to be a new chair of a committee? Need suggestions on working with groups? Are you involved with how to increase our membership? Our church library may have your answers. We have some older books on these topics that are particularly relevant for today.

*The Person Who Chairs the Meeting* by Paul Madsen is especially timely as our church committee chairs and members change in March. Madsen discusses leadership styles, how to keep a meeting on track without stifling ideas, and how to handle difficult members or divisive, challenging topics. He stresses the importance of an agenda and the multiple ways to build one. Sound interesting? Check it out!

## A Note of Thanks from Open Pantry

Dear First Church,

*I wanted to send a special thank-you to all the members of First Church of Christ in Longmeadow for your donations in 2009.*

*This past year, your congregation has donated over 7,740 pounds of food! What a wonderful contribution!*

*Your contributions make a real difference for families in need. The year 2009 was particularly difficult for our guests and we have seen many new people come to the pantry for the first time in their lives.*

*Thank you for your continued support, which is essential for Open Pantry Community Services, Inc., to continue its mission in assisting people who are hungry, homeless or disadvantaged to improve the quality of their lives!*

*Sincerely,*

*Candace Larger*

*Program Director, Emergency Food Pantry*

# Children's Ministries

## Peace Camp



The Children's Ministries team at Trinity United Methodist Church at 631 Sumner Avenue in Springfield is planning a week long Peace

Camp this August. First Church Director of Children's Ministries Nancy Yesu has been sharing ideas with the folks at Trinity to help make this camp a success. Some of the activities in the planning phase are peace poles and learning about peacemakers.

The camp is open to all children ages 4 through high school, and we hope that some First Church children will be able to attend. The camp will be held Monday through Thursday, August 9 -12, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:35 p.m. A Children's Peace Festival and Family Night Celebration will be held on Friday evening, August 13, to celebrate the end of camp. Trinity is asking for a donation of \$5 per child for the week.

Official registration for Peace Camp will begin March 1, but we will be pre-registering interested campers in Bailey Hall after worship beginning February 28. Questions? Call Trinity at 737-5311.

## Confirmation Class

### February 28

11:30 a.m. "The Holy Spirit"

### March 13

Cross making workshops, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00n & 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

### March 14

11:30 a.m. "Four Authorities of Faith"

### March 20

Back-up date for cross making.

Youth  
Encountering the  
Spirit



## Senior YES (Grade 9-12)

**Sunday, February 21**

No meeting.

**Friday, February 26-Saturday, February 27**

"26 Hours of Hunger" fast and lock-in

**Saturday, February 27**

Hunger Awareness Dinner.

**Sunday, February 28**

No meeting.

**Sunday, March 7, 6:30 p.m.**

Regular meeting, youth lounge.

**Sunday, March 14**

Regular meeting, youth lounge.

**YES! NOTE: Pastor Beth is still collecting clean, empty cans for a YES! project. So keep sending them in (until February 26).**

## Middle YES (Grade 6-8)

**Sunday, February 22, 6:30 p.m.**

Regular meeting, youth lounge.

**Monday, March 8, 6:30 p.m.**

Cooking for Loaves & Fishes, kitchen.

**Sunday, March 14, 11:30 a.m.**

Serving at Loaves & Fishes

**Questions on youth activities or Confirmation Class? Contact Associate Pastor Beth Boisvert (567-6287 or beth@firstchurchlongmeadow.org) for more information.**

## February 21 - March 20

Sunday	Mon.	Tue.	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat.
21 10 a.m. Worship *+ 11:15 a.m. Adult Ed	22 6:30 p.m. Middle YES	23 10 a.m. Women's Benev. Board 7:00 pm. Deacons	24 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 4 p.m. Joyful Noyse 6 p.m. Lenten Potluck 7:15 p.m. Council	25 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 11:00 a.m. Bible Study 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 6:00 p.m. Bell Choir 7:30 p.m. Chancel	26 Senior YES! "26 Hours of Hunger" lock-in begins	27 6:00 p.m. Hunger Awareness Dinner
28 10 a.m. Worship *+ Joyful Noyse Sings 11:15 a.m. Adult Ed 11:30 a.m. Confirmation Class	March 1	2 7 p.m. Children's Ministries 7 p.m. Mission	3 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 4 p.m. Joyful Noyse 6 p.m. "Pizza & Puzzles" Dinner 7:30 p.m. Council	4 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 11:00 a.m. Bible Study 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 6:00 p.m. Bell Choir 7:30 p.m. Chancel	5 11:45 a.m. World Day of Prayer Luncheon 6:15 p.m. FEF Women's Retreat Departs	6
7 10 a.m. Worship *+** 11:15 a.m. Adult Ed. 6:30 p.m. Sr YES!	8 6:30 p.m. Middle YES!	9	10 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 4 p.m. Joyful Noyse 6 p.m. Lenten Potluck Dinner	11 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 11:00 a.m. Bible Study 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 6:00 p.m. Bell Choir 7:30 p.m. Chancel	12	13 9 a.m. & 1p.m. Conf. Class Cross Making
14 10 a.m. Worship *+ 11:15 a.m. Adult Ed. 11:15 a.m. Conf. Class 11:30 a.m. Middle YES! (Loaves & Fishes) 6:30 p.m. Sr YES!	15	16	17 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures NO Joyful Noyse 6 p.m. Lenten Dinner Corned Beef & Cabbage	18 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 11:00 a.m. Bible Study 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 6:00 p.m. Bell Choir 7:30 p.m. Chancel	19	20

The First Church of Christ in Longmeadow  
*United Church of Christ*  
763 Longmeadow Street  
Longmeadow, MA 01106

## Contact Us

413-567-6287

admin@firstchurchlongmeadow.org

www.firstchurchlongmeadow.org

## Staff

*Senior Pastor* The Reverend Michael Bennett

*Associate Pastor* Beth Boisvert

*Director of Music* John Gerry-Karajanes

*Director of Children's Ministries* Nancy Yesu

*Assistant Director of Children's Ministries* Deb Garrity

*Program Director* Gay Wesson

*Administrator* Maura Stevens

*Director of Communication* Deb Garrity

Next deadline: March 4

## First Church Directory

The all-new First Church Directory is in the production phase. All of the pictures that we have -- be it ones we took, scanned, or received via email -- have been incorporated. We hope to have it finished by this spring. If you have not yet provided a picture of yourself or your family, you still have time! Please contact Program Director Gay Wesson or Director of Communication Deb Garrity (567-6287) to arrange having a picture taken, drop off a hard copy of your favorite picture in the church office to be scanned and returned, or send a digital copy to deb@firstchurchlongmeadow.org. Please note: the church directory will only be used as reference for members and friends of First Church, and will not be posted on the internet.

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## Youth Mission Trip Being Planned



On Sunday, January 31, members of the Senior YES! youth group held a pancake brunch after the morning worship service. The group setup, cooked, served and cleaned up the meal that was well attended by over 50 hungry diners.

During the brunch, the youth raised over \$800 toward their mission trip to Harvest of Hope in Virginia this July where they will work in fields gleaning food for the hungry, study hunger issues, participate in Christian worship, and have fun. Watch for more information on the mission trip in future issues.

