



April 18, 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.”

Top Ten Signs Your Senior Pastor Might Be Watching Too Many Cop Shows on TV



10. He proposes to the Deacons that the Unison Prayer of Confession be replaced with a Lineup.
9. He refers to the Confirmation Class as Probies.
8. He no longer visits or calls people. He reaches out.
7. Whenever he wears his robe, he grumbles about being back in the bag.
6. He instructs the Stewardship Committee to round up the Perps, Skels, and Mopes who haven’t turned in pledges on time.
5. Every time he visits the hospital, he examines patients for petechial hemorrhaging.
4. He demands that the church staff start calling him “Lou.”
3. Instead of telling dull stories about when he was in seminary, he reminisces about his days back at the Academy.
2. He stops in the middle of baptisms to document medium velocity spatter.
1. He ends every newsletter column with... See you at the precinct!

Michael S. Bennett
Senior Pastor

A Time for New Beginnings

by Dwight Shepard, Moderator

It is with great pleasure that I write to tell you we have reached an agreement on a new one-year contract with our senior pastor, The Rev. Michael S. Bennett. This opens a whole new world of opportunities for all of us at First Church – opportunities for all of us to grow together as Christians.

As you recall, late last year, negotiations on a contract were suspended as church leaders worked on a plan to help Pastor Mike reinvigorate his ministry. My predecessor, Carlo Centeno, in consultation with the Church Council, set up a Minister's Advisory Panel (MAP) to work regularly with Mike. After Don Wesson was elected chairman of the Board of Trustees, and I as your Moderator, it became clear to us that the best way to help Mike work with MAP was to make sure he was on a firm footing so that his immediate future was not in doubt. To achieve that end, we signed a contract that took effect April 1.

For the next year or so, Mike will meet regularly with MAP members Bruce Keator, Nola Kulig, Carole Mazzarino, Don Murphy and Gerry Overstreet to address some of the concerns parishioners have expressed. MAP has already met a number of times, and working with Mike, has established a number of positive goals. There is still a lot of work to be done to set these goals in motion. However, none of this will work without the support and faith of the congregation.

How can you help? The best way is through your prayers. Pray for this process to be fruitful. Pray for your senior pastor. Pray for the members of the committee and pray for the future of our church. It is up to each and every one of us to spiritually support this process.

Another important way to help is to keep the lines of communication open. If you have a concern about the direction of your church, don't keep it to yourself. Share it with Mike, Associate Pastor Beth Boisvert, members of MAP, Don Wesson or me. If you're particularly pleased with something, or notice progress, tell us that, too. Talk *with* people, not *about* them. The best way to affect change is to communicate your desire for it.

About a month ago, MAP's chairman, Gerry Overstreet, announced he had set up an e-mail address that anyone could use to express his or her opinions. At last month's Church Council meeting, Gerry reported that the committee had not yet received any comments at that address. What can the committee infer from this fact? Not a lot. So here is your chance! If you want to communicate directly with the committee, send an e-mail to the following address: FirstChurchMAP@verizon.net. Communication to this address will go directly to Gerry, and not through the church office. If you don't have access to e-mail, you can always send a letter addressed to MAP in care of the church office or speak directly to any of the committee members. There have already been some positive changes, and with your support, there will be more.

If all goes as planned, Mike will be on a sabbatical by this time next year. He has been with us for about eight years, and under the terms of his past contracts, he was entitled to a 120-day sabbatical after 6 1/2 years. Other events in the life of the church have caused him to voluntarily put off his sabbatical twice. This is an overdue commitment we have to him. It is my hope that Mike and MAP will get a lot done in the next few months, and he will be ready for a period of rest, relaxation and study after the February, 2011 annual church meeting. But, there is a lot of work to be done before that, and I urge all of you to support this process.

Now, let's move onward and upward!

First Church Bell Heard in Haiti

by Mark Pohlman, Haiti Committee

On Saturday, March 27, 2010 the sound of the First Church bell was transmitted by cell phone to Haiti to be heard at the start of a memorial service honoring the people killed January 12 in the collapse of the CONASPEH headquarters building in Port-au-Prince. Most of those who perished in the building were nursing students. It took almost two months for the clearing of the rubble in order to get an accurate accounting of those who died. After a short prayer by Senior Pastor Mike Bennett the names of the 17 people were read, each followed by the ringing of the bell. The President of the United Church of Christ, headquartered in Cleveland, and other church leaders were on attendance at the memorial service.

The National Spiritual Council of Haitian Churches (CONASEH) was started in 1986 by 50 Haitian pastors. It has grown to 6,600 churches with 1.5 million members, about 20% of the Haitian population. About 1/3 of its churches were affected by the earthquake. The most dramatic loss was that of the 4 story headquarters building which housed a K-12 school, a seminary, a nursing school, medical clinic, and a micro-loan office. Fortunately, CONASPEH was able to purchase, prior to the earthquake, 6 acres of vacant land adjacent to the headquarters and it is there that they plan to resume teaching children in temporary tents. Members of the Haiti committee of First Church along with other churches in Northampton, Wisconsin, Kansas, and Tennessee and nursing schools at AIC and Elms College will continue working with their partners at CONASPEH in the years ahead to help them rebuild.

First Church Welcomes New Comers!

Are you interested in learning more about what it means to become a member of First Church? We would like to invite you to attend two special “Coffees” with our pastors to learn more about First Church:

“Coffee with Mike” will take place on **Sunday, April 11**

“Coffee with Beth” will take place on **Sunday, April 25**

Both events will take place after church in the Buxton Room (1st floor) from approximately 11:15 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Our conversations will include:

- **First Church: What We Believe**
- **Spiritual Journeys: Ours and Yours**

The conversations will begin with your questions, wants and needs. Please feel free to call or email Gay Wesson (567-6287/admin@firstchurchlongmeadow.org) with any of your questions to be answered or any topic you wish to discuss.

If you wish to attend either or both of these “Coffees,” please call the church office (567-6287), so we can plan for you. Child care is available upon request. Attendance does not commit you to joining the church, but anyone wishing to become a member may do so on Sunday, May 2, 2010.

Milestones

In Memoriam

Barbara deGersdorff, March 30

Movie Night with Pastor Beth



Come out and see the film that recently changed the appetites of the Senior YES! youth group. Senior YES! chose “Food” as their focus this year, and as part of their study they watched the movie *Food, Inc.*, which provided them with an eye-opening look at America’s food industry.

In *Food, Inc.*, filmmaker Robert Kenner shows how our nation’s food supply is controlled by a handful of corporations that often put profit ahead of consumer health, the livelihood of American farming families, the safety of workers and the environment. *Food, Inc.* reveals surprising—and often shocking truths—about what we eat, how it’s produced, who we have become as a nation and where we are going from here. Aided by expert commentators such as Eric Schlosser (*Fast Food Nation*), the film poses questions such as: Where has my food come from, and who has processed it? What are the giant agribusinesses and what stake do they have in maintaining the status quo of food production and consumption? How can I feed my family healthy foods affordably?

Pastor Beth will be hosting a church-wide viewing of *Food, Inc.* on Monday, April 26, at 6:30 p.m. in the Buxton Room on the first floor. There will be time for discussion after the movie. *Food, Inc.* is guaranteed to shake up your perception of what you eat!

Mary Jo Maichak to Perform for Women’s Benevolent Society

All Women of First Church and guests are invited to attend the May 7, 2010 annual meeting of the Women’s Benevolent Society. The business meeting will begin at 11:00 a.m. and a catered luncheon will start at approximately 11:45 a.m. The program will follow at 1:00 p.m. featuring a performance by Mary Jo Maichack, national award winning singer and story teller. She will present a program of Classic Folktales for adults. Listeners will enjoy tales strange and wonderful, and Ms. Maichck will sing and play the guitar.

There will be a fee of \$12.00 for the luncheon. Make your reservations by contacting the church office (567-6287/mstevens@firstchurchlongmeadow.org) by Friday, April 30th. Hope to see you there!

History 101 at Friday Evening Fellowship

Are you a history buff, a would-be history buff, or someone who just enjoys an interesting program and good conversation? Then the next Friday Evening Fellowship on May 7 is right for you! First Church’s own Herb Zettl, Associate Professor of History at Springfield College, will give a power-point presentation on “Turning Points in History,” and how we might identify such points. Some of his examples will be ancient, some medieval, some modern. What if one or more of these events had not happened? What would the world be like now? Bring your own ideas along.

Our hosts will be Julie and Mark Pohlman, 165 Converse St. No. 9. Bring a snack to share, and maybe a friend, for a fascinating evening. The evening will begin at 7:30 p.m.

News and Reviews from the Church Library

by Judy Ebeling

A New York Times best seller is a new addition to our church library. *90 Minutes in Heaven* is the true story of minister Don Piper's gripping experience with death and life.

He was on his way to Houston when the unthinkable happened. While driving over a narrow bridge, a huge 18 wheeler truck crossed the center line at high speed hitting Pastor Piper's car and crushing it. The man in the truck was unhurt. Pastor Piper was declared dead at the scene of the accident.

What happened afterwards is a remarkable story. Pastor Piper not only describes what he experienced after he died, but he shares in a surprise ending to the book what made him return.

This reviewer was touched by the chapters that took the reader through the process of his long and very pain filled recovery. The lessons he learned in that process speak to all of us about ministry. Those who have been or are going through a recovery process, or those who are ministering to one who is, will be moved by the lessons he learned about the very real dimension of God's love and presence.



Alleluia!

The front lawn of First Church was once again adorned with a visible expression of gladness on Easter morning. Members and friends who attended one of the Easter worship services were given the opportunity to decorate the bare wooden cross with colorful flowers. The cross remained on the lawn for the remainder of the day as a reminder to all of the joy of Easter.



Children's Ministries

The children of Faith First church school are spending the last study rotation of the school year learning about John the Baptist.

The schedule for May will be as follows:

May 2: Family Communion. Children in grades 1-7 will remain in worship. The pre-K/K room will be open.

May 9: No Church school for Mother's Day. The pre-K/K room will be closed. The Nursery will be open for children up to age 5.

May 16: Group activity in Bailey Hall for children in grades 1-6.

May 23: The year in review with Candy Bar Bingo. Please bring a candy bar to contribute to the pot. This will be the last day of church school for the 2009-2010 school year and will be followed by our Make-Your-Own ice cream sundaes year end celebration.

June 6: Summer Fun church school begins. Watch the next issue for more information on our summer church school program.

Birdhouses Wanted!

Over the past several years we have developed a relationship with the Teen Living Center in Springfield. We have provided the teen mothers and their children living at the center with gifts from under our giving tree at Christmas for many years. The center recently contacted us asking for donations of birdhouses and birdseed that they can use in their outdoor space. Can you help? Please bring new or used birdhouses and/or birdseed to the church office for us to donate to the center. Thank you for your continued support of this mission work.

Youth Encountering the Spirit

Senior YES (Grade 9-12)

Sunday, April 18

No meeting. School vacation.

Sunday, April 25, 6:30 p.m.

Regular meeting, youth lounge.

Sunday, May 2, 6:30 p.m.

Regular meeting, youth lounge.

Middle YES (Grade 6-8)

Sunday, April 25, 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Nature walk in Forest Park.

Confirmation Class

May 7-8: Mission Lock-In

May 9: "What Does it Mean for You to be a Christian?"

The Confirmation class recently designed, measured and cut out their own silver crosses. They were helped by Tracy Cavanaugh, a silver jewelry expert from Stow, Mass., who will polish them up and return them to be presented to the confirmands on Confirmation Sunday, June 6.



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

April 18 - May 8

| Sunday | Mon. | Tue. | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Sat. |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|-------|
| 18 10 a.m. Worship *+ Joyful Noyse Sings NO YES! (school vacation) | 19 | 20 | 21 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 4 p.m. Joyful Noyse 7:00 p.m. Trustees | 22 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 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 10 a.m. Worship *+ 11:30 a.m. New Member Coffee with Pastor Beth 2:00 p.m. MiddleYES! 6:30 p.m. Senior YES! | 26 6:30 p.m. Movie <i>Food, Inc.</i> with Pastor Beth | 27 10 a.m. Women's Benev. Board 7:00 pm. Deacons | 28 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 4 p.m. Joyful Noyse 7:15 p.m. Council | 29 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 | 30 | May 1 |
| 2 10:00 a.m. Worship** * Family Communion 6:30 p.m. Senior YES! | 3 | 4 7 p.m. Children's Ministries 7 p.m. Mission | 5 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 4 p.m. Joyful Noyse | 6 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 | 7 11:45 a.m. Women's Benevolent 6:00 p.m. Confirmation Lock-in begins | 8 |

* with Childcare for Infants & Toddlers + Faith First Church School 1-7 ** Communion Sunday - bring a canned or packaged food for Open Pantry

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

Contact Us

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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: April 22

Easter Bunnies Spotted at Pancake Breakfast

The second annual Easter Sunday Pancake Breakfast was a huge success. The morning featured spectacular weather, delicious food, and a festive atmosphere. Over 120 members and friends were in attendance, including a few Easter bunnies! More

photos from Easter can be found on the photo gallery page of the First Church website:

www.firstchurchlongmeadow.org



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