

May 30, 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.”

What Should I Wear To Church?

What should I wear to church? There was a time, within memory of some of us, when there was a simple answer to this question. If you were a man or a boy, you should wear a suit and tie. If you were a woman or a girl, you should wear a dress. There was a rationale for this, though it was seldom expressed. Everybody just knew what to do. The idea behind the norm was that we should “look our best” for God.

That idea can still work today. It is perfectly appropriate for a man to wear a suit, or a woman a dress, in order to “look his or her best” for God. But today there are other ideas that also work. We live in a time of multiple options when more credit is given to individual intentions than rigid social norms. What matters is not so much what you wear to church, but the spirit in which you wear it. So...

- You might wear a golf shirt and shorts to worship in the spirit of re-creation and renewal. This might also be a way of honoring God before you head right out to the course after church.
- You might wear your favorite jeans and flannel shirt because wearing that makes you feel most authentic and like your true self. And sharing one’s true self with God is a wonderful act of worship.
- You might wear bright colors because you want to express joy and gratitude for the

vibrancy of Creation. (Or muted colors because you want to remind yourself of God’s subtlety.)

- You might wear your soccer uniform because you’ve made time for church before you meet the obligation of a practice or a game.
- You might wear sweat pants and a tee shirt because you’ve been feeling down and that’s all you’ve got the energy to wear. Making that effort to be in church will be welcomed and honored by God.



You get the idea. There is no one answer. The key is in the intention—which is usually not visible. Dressing for church may very well say something about how we present ourselves to God. But it doesn’t just say one, standard thing. It says something unique to each person and each specific time in his or her life.

I’m always grateful for the variety I see when I look out at the congregation on Sunday mornings. Whatever you are wearing, I’m just glad you are here.

See you in church!

Michael S. Bennett
Senior Pastor

Congratulations Beth!

On Saturday, May 15th, a large contingent of First Church members and friends travelled to Broadway United Church of Christ in New York City to witness the ordination of Associate Pastor Beth Boisvert. Those in attendance were warmly greeted by the Rev. James Campbell of Broadway United. We were treated to a beautiful reflection by the Rev. Dr. Barbara Lundblad of Union Theological Seminary, during which she paid witness to Beth's spirit. She told us the story of Beth's seminary project, when instead of taking the well travelled path of writing a paper filled with footnotes and citations, Beth chose to create a set of stoles - each of which displays a different "season" of the church year. We then witnessed Beth answer



the examination questions, and we proclaimed her worthy of ordination. The Rev. Freeman Palmer from the New York Conference of the UCC then led us all the laying on of hands and declared her ordained. Beth was then presented, among other things, with the red pentecost stole (left) that she made herself and can now proudly wear! Senior Pastor Mike Bennett also presented her with the gift from First Church of a green stole (for 'ordinary time') to help complete her year of stoles (right).



The service was followed with a light reception at the church, with time for fellowship and congratulations. It was a joyous event, and reminded us all how blessed we are that Beth answered the call to become our Associate Pastor.



Introducing The Reverend Elizabeth Ann Cates Boisvert

What does it mean to be ordained?

Ordination is the rite whereby the United Church of Christ through an association in cooperation with the person and a local church of the United Church of Christ, recognizes and authorizes that member whom God has called to ordained ministry, and sets that person apart by prayer and the laying on of hands. By this rite the ordained ministerial standing is conferred and authorization given to perform the duties and exercise the prerogatives of ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ.

You Are Welcome Here

by Dwight Shepard, Moderator

Perhaps you've heard the ad on the radio that says, among other things, "No matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here." This is the message of the United Church of Christ, and it has just as much significance here at The First Church of Christ in Longmeadow as it does at any other UCC church.

Here at First Church, we have our own set of bylaws that specify how the church is to be run. The bylaws call for the creation of a Church Council that is the church's chief legislative body. The bylaws state that the council "may act for the Church in any matter where the Church has taken no action to the contrary, and where there is no requirement in these bylaws that action shall be taken by the church." Such an issue has arisen that needs the attention of the entire church.

Many Congregational churches have adopted "open and affirming" mission statements that make it clear everyone is welcome regardless of race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation or political affiliation. It is intended to make gay people, in particular, feel welcome in light of the fact that some Christian churches still exclude members of that community, or, at least, do not allow them to take Communion.

At some point in their journeys, many churches vote to adopt an open and affirming statement that makes it clear they do not discriminate against anyone. This is often a lengthy process because churches that consider taking this step want to make sure they have carefully discussed with their members the needs and benefits of adopting such a statement. If a church decides it wants to be recognized as "open and affirming" it takes a vote of the full congregation.

At the April Church Council meeting, the Council voted, "To empower the Board of Mission and Social Concern to form a committee to formalize a process of discernment to study what it means to be an open and affirming church."

So now the dialogue begins. In the coming months you will hear about the establishment of a special committee which will hold meetings to explain the process. Elsewhere in this issue of Church on the Green, you will find a statement from Mary Friedman soliciting members to serve on this committee that is being created by the Mission board.

This is not going to be a fast process. The UCC estimates that it can be a year and a half before a church is ready for a vote. Here at First Church, we are taking the first step to consider this issue. There will be no vote until it is clear the issue has been prayerfully considered and discussed by all. The final decision on adopting any such statement will be up to you, the members of First Church.

In the meanwhile, please listen, watch and pray for the Spirit that was in Christ Jesus to be in all of us as we begin examining this important issue.

First Church Member Featured in Art Show

Harriet Atwood is having a solo art show of paintings at the Kent Memorial Library's Pinney Gallery, Suffield, CT! The reception will be held on Thursday, June 3, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and all are invited. Harriet's paintings will hang in the gallery from June 1-28, and can also be seen during library hours. The Kent Memorial Library is at the corner of Main Street and Bridge Street in Suffield (Routes 75 and 513). Parking is behind the library, off Bridge Street.

Annual Haiti Education Fund Drive

by Mark Pohlman, Co-Chair, Haiti Committee

When we fall, we must get up again; this is what makes us strong. We must never stop working for our vision. We will rebuild. It will take a lot of work, but we will move forward because that is our service to each other and to God.” These words were spoken by Rev. Francoise Villier, director of the CONASPEH K-12 school, two weeks after the January 12th earthquake. **On April 28, 2010, classes for the K-12 school resumed under tents and among the trees on the 6 acres of land, owned by CONASPEH, next to where the old school stood!!**

For the last 5 years members and friends of First Church have contributed generously to the Haiti Scholarship Fund Drive which has allowed an additional 115 students to attend school. Knowing now that the K-12 school has reopened since the earthquake, the Haiti Committee, endorsed by the Church Council, is again conducting a fund drive to help these students. The need is even greater this year because many of the parents, who were able to pay tuition in the past, are no longer able to do so. The committee realizes that Patrick and Francoise Villier are in the best position to assess the needs of the school, so the money you contribute this year will go to the general education needs of the K-12 school rather than just for scholarship aid.

Watch for further information about this fund drive in the mail.

Haiti Benefit Concert At First Church

Sunday June 13, 4:00 p.m.

The popular folk singing quartet Rising Tide, led by Bruce Johnson, who often substitutes for our soloist John Thomas, will be coming to First Church to perform a Haiti benefit concert on Sunday, June 13th at 4:00 p.m. The band will be playing folk songs, soft rock, and pop songs from the 1960's and 70's. The concert is free, but donations are encouraged. Bruce and his band are donating all the proceeds to CONASPEH. A \$10.00 donation is suggested. Come and have some fun and support the efforts of these friends of First Church who view CONASPEH as their way to give aid to the Haitians.

Tanglewood Alert

It won't be long until the sounds of music will again be heard in the Berkshires. Our First Church gatherings on the lawn for a potluck lunch and the music of the Boston Symphony are special to many of our church family and anticipated for weeks beforehand. Tentative dates for our annual Sunday gatherings at Tanglewood are July 11, (Mozart and Strauss) and August 1 (Sibelius, Elgar with Yo-Yo Ma, and Mussorgsky). Mark your calendars now and stay tuned for more details.

We Need Your Input!

We all think of First Church as a welcoming place, and we say “All Are Welcome.” There has been much discussion at board and committee meetings about how we can become even more welcoming to the wider community. As one possible way to do this, a new committee is forming to plan a process of discernment for the entire congregation about what it would mean to become an “Open and Affirming” church with the UCC. This means welcoming all people regardless of sexual orientation into our worship. The establishment of this committee was approved at the April meeting of the Church Council. The committee is open to ALL members of the congregation. We need YOUR input to plan a study for the fall and explore resources. If you would like to join this committee, Please contact Mary Friedman (567-7153/marymargaretf@yahoo.com), Pastor Beth or Pastor Mike.

Do You Excel in the Grace of Giving?



Wholehearted and unconditional giving has its source in God who himself gave unreservedly. Because of the awesome love shown to us at the cross, we give. God, abiding in us, enables us to give, for, through Christ, we have his very nature, a giving nature. We become more Christ-like as his love for us and within us opens our clenched fists and breaks down our natural desire to put ourselves first. Then we can experience the joy of giving and excel in the grace of giving. (2 Corinthians 8.7) – Your Stewardship Committee

A Note of Thanks

Dear Women's Benevolent Society Members,

I so appreciate the kind words and gift given to me during the Women's Benevolent Society Annual Meeting on May 7. It was extra special because I have such a big place in my heart for this wonderful group of women. Working at First Church as long as I have means I have so many ovely memories:

Just a couple - Benevolent Society member Jean Gramse (deceased) threw me a baby shower before I had my son Sean, now almost 25. I still tear up when I see photos of that party. After he was born I brought Sean with me to work for the first year of his wonderful life - he slept in Rev. Clarke Schaaf's office (Clarke said Sean inspired some of his best sermons!). The wonderful Benevolent women who sewed layettes for the YWCA young mothers program would come to my office and "demand" Sean be allowed to go to the Benevolent Room. Sallie Bassett would carry him down and he would spend an hour being cuddled and loved while I got my work done without interruption. When I would go down to retrieve him, the ladies would always make a fuss and refuse to give him up. I am sure he was a more happy, peaceful baby because of the affection they gave him.

So I encourage all the women of First Church - JOIN THE BENEVOLENT! The programs are great but the camaraderie is even better!

Also, volunteer to work on the Christmas Fair! The 2009 Christmas Fair earned over \$14,000 to be distributed to area causes! And it is so much FUN!

A joy of my life is having worked with and for my friends - and the Women's Benevolent Society is filled with my friends.

Thank you,

Maura

Book Discussion

Read With Mike! Coffee and Book Discussion
Wednesday, June 2

From 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in the Buxton Room

Join Senior Pastor Mike Bennett for a fun and interesting evening discussing the new book, *This Odd and Wondrous Calling: The Public and Private Lives of Two Ministers* (Eerdmans, 2009). In this engaging collection of reflections on the ministry, two UCC pastors share their insights, humor, and passion.

Order your own copy of the book (available on Amazon for \$10.88) and read it before the session. Why not bring a friend?

Outdoor Worship

Several years ago we began the tradition of moving our worship services outside one Sunday a month in the summer months. We are pleased to announce that the dates for the outdoor services this year will be June 20, July 18 and August 15. Come join us under the tents in the courtyard for these special times of open air worship.



Children's Ministries

Summer Fun Begins June 13

Summer Fun Church School is a one-room Sunday school for children in grades K-6. Older children are welcome to join the class, but the lessons are geared for the younger grades. The theme for Summer Fun church school this year is Peace. Classes will be held in the air conditioned Heritage Room on the Second floor. Children begin in worship and will be dismissed to Summer Fun at the appropriate time in the service.

The Box

Keep an eye out for the return of the Box! This very popular summer tradition will be returning on June 13. The Box is sent home with a child each week, who can draw a picture on the outside, and place an item on the inside. The child then returns the box the following week, and Pastors Mike and Beth will take turns finding out what is inside the box and making up an impromptu children's moment based on the item. The only rules for the items are: no toys, and nothing that bites! Make sure to take your turn with the Box - see if you can stump your pastors with the item you put inside!

Youth Encountering the Spirit

Senior YES (Grade 9-12)

Sunday, May 30

No meeting. Memorial Day weekend.

Sunday, June 6, 5:30 p.m.

End of year picnic at Bliss Park. 8th graders are invited.

Middle YES (Grade 6-8)

Sunday, June 6, 3:00 p.m.

End of year picnic at Bliss Park.

Confirmation Class

June 6: 10:00 a.m. Confirmation Sunday

June 6: 5:30 p.m. Join Senior YES! for the end of year picnic at Bliss Park

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

May 30 - June 19

Sunday	Mon.	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat.
May 30 10 a.m. Worship * NO YES	31	June 1 7:00 p.m. Mission 7:00 p.m. Children's Ministries	2 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 7:30 p.m. Book Discussion with Pastor Mike	3 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 11:00 a.m. Bible Study 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 7:30 p.m. Chancel	4	5
6 10:00 a.m. Worship** * Confirmation Sunday 3:00 Middle YES! Picnic at Bliss Park 5:30 p.m. Sr. YES! Picnic at Bliss Park	7	8	9 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 6:30 p.m. Youth Ministries	10 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 11:00 a.m. Bible Study 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures	11	12 5 p.m. 2nd Saturdays
13 10 a.m. Worship * + 4 p.m. Haiti Benefit Concert	14	15	16 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 7:00 p.m. Trustees	17 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 11:00 a.m. Bible Study 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures	18	19

* 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
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Staff

Senior Pastor The Reverend Michael Bennett
Associate Pastor The Reverend 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: June 3

Virginia or Bust!

Looking for a good way to invest in the future of the Church that will pay dividends for years to come? Want to do something easy that feels good too? We've got just the opportunity for you! Buy Youth Mission Trip Stock! For just \$20 a share you can help our youth get to Ashland, VA for the 2010 Youth Mission Trip. As a shareholder, you will receive many benefits including a postcard and update from Virginia during the trip, as well as the joy that comes from knowing you have played a part in sending First Church's youth to a new place to have new experiences serving God and neighbor!

This year's trip which will take place during the second week of July. To finish out their year of learning about food, the youth will be participating in Harvest of Hope, where they will be gleaning corn. Gleaning is the ancient Biblical practice that involves gathering crops that are left in the fields after harvest. It is hard work and that hard work translates directly into food for the hungry. The gleaned food is distributed through food banks and agencies that serve those in need. It is going to be a very worthwhile and meaningful trip, but they need your help to get there! Shares can be purchased by filling out the form below and sending it into the church office, or you can contact Associate Pastor Beth Boisvert (567-6287/beth@firstchurchlongmeadow.org) for more information.



Name: _____
Address (for postcard): _____
Phone or email: _____
of shares: ____ Amount enclosed: \$ _____