



August 1, 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.”*

## Memories

“We never really know another person, thought Graham. We have only memories. If we really knew them, we couldn’t bear it, so we have only memories.”

—from *Driftless* by David Rhodes<sup>1</sup>

Summer is a great time for reading and I’ve just finished a wonderful novel that probes the complex community and religious connections in the aptly-named rural town of Words, Wisconsin. The more we get to know another person, it seems, the more that a sort of distance also arises between us. We are connected—in millions of ways—and yet each of us stands in a certain personal isolation.

In the novel, the town of Words loses a quiet and private farmer who, nonetheless, seems to be the very heart and soul of the community. Nobody knew him very well, but his deeds and (few) words touched and shaped many other lives. As the community comes together to grieve, people struggle to understand the full scope of the loss.

At the time I was reading this book, our church community hosted an unusually large number of funeral services. At each of these services, we took time to share memories of the one who had died. Sometimes the memories are small—almost trivial—but somehow they are vital. Our memories are the way we sum up the person’s life and present it to God.

Our memories are incomplete and partial, but they are a gift from God. It is good for us, as a community and as individuals, to take some time to remember those who have gone before. It is also good for us to be actively engaged with our friends, family, and church—creating memories (now) that will sustain us (later) in the future.

See you in church!



Michael S. Bennett  
Senior Pastor

<sup>1</sup> Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2009. Kindle Edition, location 4373.

## Mark Your Calendars!

Picnic Sunday will be held on September 12. This marks the beginning of the new program year at First Church. Faith First church school classes will meet, and we will have an all-church picnic under the tent in the courtyard after worship. Join us!

## A Visit from Rev. Patrick Bentrrott

The truth of the matter is...they need us very badly, but we also need them.” So said Global Ministries’ Haiti missionary Patrick Bentrrott at the conclusion of his sermon at First Church on Sunday, July 18. The gospel reading on which his sermon was based was Mark 10, verses 17-27. The rich young man asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus tells him to sell what he owns, give the money to the poor, and follow him. The young man goes away, grieving. Patrick focused his sermon not so much on the first part of Jesus’ answer as the part about following him. This would mean spending lots of time with people on the edges of society, people the rest of the world had forgotten. Patrick told the story of carrying his adopted Haitian son Solomon in his arms to a guest house to check on the safety of a church group visiting from Tennessee shortly after the earthquake struck Port-au-Prince last January 12. On the way he met a Haitian father carrying his dying daughter in his arms. The man asked him to help him flag down transportation to a hospital, not realizing that the hospitals had closed their doors. Patrick remembers this event as making so clear to him that we all are truly members of the body of Christ in a very real and concrete way and to find eternal life, to be truly transformed we all need each other badly. He thanked our congregation for our prayerful, personal, and financial longterm support for the CONASPEH mission in Haiti.



It was with smiles, hugs, and a few misty eyes that Patrick was welcomed back to Longmeadow on Thursday, July 15. The Haiti Committees of First Church and the First Churches of Northampton welcomed Patrick at a potluck dinner at Mary and Matt Friedmans’ . This was the first time that most of us had seen Patrick since



the earthquake . Patrick and his wife, Dr. Kimberly Bentrrott, were able to leave Haiti two weeks after the quake with their two adopted Haitian children, Solomon and Valancia. They found both children in an orphanage in Port-au-Prince. Solomon had been living with Patrick and Kim, and they found Valancia shortly before the quake. She weighed less than ten pounds at 14 months and was suffering from intestinal parasites and malnutrition. Patrick’s desktop wallpaper is a picture of a now chubby, smiling, toddling Miss Valancia, quite a contrast to the pictures of her when they first found her at the orphanage! Their apartment in the Delmas section of Haiti’s capitol collapsed, as did the CONASPEH headquarters, school, and clinic where both Bentrrotts worked. They came back to the U.S. to try to heal and to get their children well and strong before returning to their work in Haiti. Unfortunately, the U.S. government is not permitting them to return to Haiti as a family. Despite the fact that both children are legally adopted, they have not been granted citizenship as is usually the case. The path to citizenship could take up to two years. For this reason, the Bentrrotts have made the difficult decision to resign from Global Ministries and move back to Denver to seek jobs. They have found a little cabin about 45 minutes west of Denver. Kim will most likely work with an underserved Hispanic population in Denver. Patrick is hoping to maintain ties with Global Ministries and perhaps lead groups who want to visit Haiti. He is also very interested in working with Haitian orphanages.

On Friday, July 16, a morning meeting was held at the church to discuss the future of the CONASPEH nursing program. A teleconference call enabled the group to talk with Dr. Kim Bentrrott. Associate Professor of Nursing at American International College, Ayesha Ali, met with the group .

On Friday evening members of First Church and the Northampton Churches gathered at the home of Julie and Mark Pohlman to hear Patrick tell his story and show his pictures of Port-au-Prince post quake. Jean-Claude Gerlius, a Haitian gentleman who has been active with our Haiti Committee since the earthquake, spoke to the group about Haitian history, and he and Patrick highlighted some of the historical causes of Haiti's suffering. They emphasized the need for all non-governmental organizations in Haiti, including churches, to recognize that Haitians are the ones who should control their own destiny and to partner with them to help them achieve their goals. This is at the heart of the "co-mission" ideal of CONASPEH.

On Saturday Patrick journeyed up to Northampton to spend time with the folks from the First Churches there and to present a program to them from 5:00 to 6:30 pm.

Patrick was back at First Church to preach on Sunday morning. After church Patrick presented a different slide presentation and talk about Haiti and the work of CONASPEH to a group of parishioners and visitors in the Buxton Room. During this program the Co-Director of CONASPEH, Rev. Patrick Villier, called from Port-au-Prince and everyone was able to listen on speaker phone as Patrick Bentrrott translated his message to us from Creole. He told the group that they have begun rebuilding the elementary school which he said would house approximately 1500 students, more than twice as many as attended previously. This is needed because so many schools were lost in the quake. He also said a director for the nursing program had been found and the school would recommence in September.



Patrick and his wife Kim, as those folks who have spent time with them in Haiti and followed their blog know, truly embody the radical message of Jesus: that peace, justice, and full, abundant life are meant for ALL God's people and that true Christian witness is achieved by the radical emptying of ourselves on behalf of others. This is what we saw so clearly in the Bentrrotts' work with CONASPEH in Haiti. Their impact on us will never be forgotten.

## What Can You Do to Help?

Pray

Support Global Ministries

Educate yourself about Haiti: Read books about Haiti, follow Kim and Patrick's blog "Adventures in Life" at [kimandpatrick.blogspot.com](http://kimandpatrick.blogspot.com) (available as a link off of the First Church homepage: [www.firstchurchlongmeadow.org](http://www.firstchurchlongmeadow.org)), or keep up with real news from Haiti at [www.haitian-truth.org](http://www.haitian-truth.org). You can also check [globalministries.org](http://globalministries.org) and partners in health websites and click on the Haiti link.

Write letters to Representatives in Congress about the Help Haiti Act of 2010 (H.R. 5283). There is also a bill in the senate. Information and links to Senators and Congresspeople are on Kim and Patrick's blog.

# Planning for Pastor Mike's Sabbatical

by Dwight Shepard, Moderator



Senior Pastor Mike Bennett passed an important milestone in June. On June 20, he began his ninth year as senior pastor of The First Church of Christ in Longmeadow.

When Mike first came to First Church, he was promised a 120-day sabbatical after 6 1/2 years. Events such as the departure of our former associate pastor, Curt Preston, caused him to postpone his sabbatical twice. Now that Beth Boisvert is on board as our new associate pastor, the time is right to start planning for Mike to take the sabbatical he was entitled to 2 1/2 years ago.

On March 1, 2011, Mike will begin a four-month sabbatical following the theme of "Family, Friendship and Faith Formation." We are seeking a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., of Indianapolis, Indiana, in order to help the sabbatical be as rewarding as possible for both Mike and the church. We won't know until November whether we have received a grant, but we know from the application process that grants are awarded for "rest, relaxation and study."

I don't know about you, but when I think of a sabbatical, I think of the seven-month leave college professors often get when they are given the opportunity to work on an intense project of special study. A pastoral sabbatical is a little bit different. Pastors don't have jobs with regular hours like many people do. They work weekends and are always on call. Pastors may get a day off during the week, but often have to catch other time off when they can get it. A pastoral sabbatical is intended to give a pastor a clean break from his or her congregation. Yes, it gives the pastor a time to do some study, but it also gives the pastor a time to decompress -- to sit back, relax, go to another church, and maybe hear how someone else preaches for a while.

While Mike is gone, we will not simply be waiting for his return. We will be hearing from Pastor Beth, some guest preachers, and holding small group sessions on Family, Friendship and Faith Formation. We will be leaning on Beth a little more heavily than usual to keep church functions operating, but will also be giving her lots of support. We'll be talking more about the exact plans later. The important thing that everyone should know is that this will be a time of spiritual growth not just for Mike and his family, but for us.

Plans are just in the beginning stages, so it is hard to say at this point exactly what will be going on while Mike is away. We will fill you in more once we know whether we have received the grant. We have high hopes that this will be an exciting time for First Church, and will give Mike some time to take a fresh look at his ministry here.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask Pastor Mike, Pastor Beth, Don Wesson or me. In the meanwhile, we will continue working on a plan in conjunction with the Church Council and the Board of Trustees.

## Next Trip to Tanglewood Planned for August 1

Our first trip to Tanglewood on July 11 was a glorious event. The next one will be on Sunday, August 1, when Yo-Yo Ma will be the soloist for the Elgar Cello Concerto. Also on the program are the Sibelius Karelia Suite and Pictures at an Exhibition by Mussorgsky.

The grounds open at 12 noon and the concert begins at 2:30 p.m. No reservation is needed. Cost of a lawn ticket is \$19. Just bring a dish to share, your own place setting and beverage, and a lawn chair. We will assemble under the big tree behind the posts marked 14 and 16. For more information or to arrange for a ride call Ardie McEathron (596-6662).

# News and Reviews from the Church Library

by Julie Pohlman

Have you ever wished that you could have an overview of the beliefs of Christianity? As a child living within a Christian culture it's easy to miss this overview. You may have learned the Bible stories, memorized some prayers and practices but, as an adult, may not quite know many of the reasons for why and how everything fits together.

The book, *To Begin at the Beginning*, by Rev. Martin Copenhaver, PhD can help you in this regard. To quote the author, *To Begin at the Beginning* is a “basic introduction to the Christian faith and practice.” Copenhaver is a United Church of Christ minister, so what he writes is particularly relevant as to what First Church tries to teach and practice.

Copenhaver begins with the Old Testament and God's covenant with Israel, giving much historical and cultural background. He then proceeds to explain how Jesus' approach and teachings evolved as a first-century Jew living in Palestine. He boldly and openly tackles the basic question of Jesus' bodily resurrection, the belief that is paramount to the Christian religion. He stresses the importance of why Christianity is a strongly communal religion “from first to last.” It cannot be practiced alone. He explains the significance of baptism and its development, styles, and meaning. He delves into the mystery and practice of communion.

Finally, after discussing Christian theology, culture and history, Copenhaver ends with a chapter on “Doing Faith”—really practicing what we believe.

*To Begin at the Beginning* is a book that really puts together what Christianity is. And it is a book I that want in my personal library—for reference, for re-reading, and for reassurance and inspiration.

## Milestones

### In Memoriam

Sally G. Olmstead, March 23, 1918 – June 30, 2010

Edmund S. Childs, 1917 – July 6, 2010

Beverly G. Bulkley, 1931 – July 12, 2010

## First Church is on Facebook

First Church now has a fan page on Facebook. You can find us by searching in facebook for First Church in Longmeadow, or by clicking on the “Find us” link on the homepage of our website: [www.firstchurchlongmeadow.org](http://www.firstchurchlongmeadow.org) (shown below). Fans of First Church get weekly updates on the latest news, and also get to read the Church on the Green newsletter before it arrives in their mailboxes. Check it out and become a fan!

**Find us on Facebook**



**First Church of Christ in  
Longmeadow, UCC**

## Children's Ministries

### Faith First Church School Begins 9/13

Sunday, September 12 marks the first day of the 2010-2011 church school year. Children in preschool through kindergarten are welcome to join us in the Pre-K/K room on the second floor beginning at 9:45 a.m., or can be escorted by a parent when the older children are dismissed. Children in grades 1-6 are welcome to begin each week in worship until dismissed to attend our center-based rotational program, called Faith First. In this program, the classes focus on one unit of study for 4 weeks at a time, attending a different "center" each week for three weeks. Centers may include art, drama, story, video, cooking, or computers. For these three weeks the classes will be divided into the following groups: 1st/2nd grade, 3rd/4th grade, 5th/6th grade. The fourth week of each unit will be used as a group review week with all of the children sharing together what they learned. The first study unit will be "Jonah."

Parents of children in this age group will be receiving a letter and registration form soon. Faith First church school is one of the great strengths of this church, and we need your gifts to continue to make it successful. Please return the registration and volunteer sign-up forms as soon as possible so that we can properly plan for the first day of classes.

### Pre-Confirmation Class for 7th Grade

Last year we began having Pre-Confirmation classes for our 7th graders. This class helps our change in youth be better prepared in order to enter into the commitment of confirmation in 8th grade. The Pre-Confirmation class will meet on the same days and times as the Faith First classes, but the areas of study will be different. Incoming 7th graders will receive a separate mailing explaining this class.

**If you have any questions about the above programs or if you do not receive a registration packet by August 15, please contact Director of Children's Ministries Nancy Yesu (567-6287/nyesu@firstchurchlongmeadow.org).**

Youth  
Encountering the  
Spirit



On July 17, seven Youth Encountering the Spirit! (YES!) members along with Associate Pastor Beth Boisvert and volunteer chaperone Carlo Centeno arrived home at First Church following their week-long mission trip with Harvest of Hope in Ashland, VA. During their trip, they helped glean truckloads of tomatoes, a big bag of blueberries, and 263 bags of corn--that's about 19,725 ears! They also spent a day at various local agencies canning vegetables--including some of the corn they picked--for the hungry, helping out at an adult day care, sorting donations at the food bank, and passing out sandwiches to the homeless in a park. The group will present their reflections on the trip to the congregation some time in the early fall. Thanks to everyone at First Church for their support!

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

## August - August 28

Sunday	Mon.	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat.
1 10 a.m. Worship *** 1:00 p.m. Tanglewood	2	3	4 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures	5 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures	6	7
8 a.m. Worship*+	9	10 6:30 p.m. Youth Ministries	11 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures	12 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures	13	14 5 p.m. 2nd Saturdays
15 10 a.m. Outdoor Worship (weather permitting) *+	16	17	18 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 7:00 p.m. Trustees	19 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures	20	21
22 10 a.m. Worship *+	23	24 7:00 pm. Deacons	25 1:00 p.m. Praying the Scriptures 7:30 p.m. Church Council	26 8:45 a.m. Men's DCF 4:30 p.m. Praying the Scriptures	27	28

\* 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*  
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### 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:

## Making Music at First Church

Music is an integral part of our worship services every Sunday. Our hardworking choirs take the summer months off, but are gearing up to start the new season in September. Interested in joining one of our choirs? Mark your calendars for the first rehearsals:

The Chancel Choir (right), which is open to high school students and adults, will have their first rehearsal on Thursday, September 9 at 7:30 pm. The first Sunday the Chancel choir will sing together is September 12.



The Joyful Noyse choir (left), which is open to boys and girls in grades 2 – 8, will have their first rehearsal on Wednesday, September 15, from 4:00 to 4:45 p.m. Joyful Noyse sings during Sunday worship approximately once a month.

The Handbell Choir (below, right), will have their first rehearsal on Thursday, September 30 at 6:00 p.m. If you can read music and are interested in taking part in the Handbell Choir, please contact Music Director John Gerry-Karajanes (567-6287/jgk@firstchurchlongmeadow.org).

