



April 19, 2009

# 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.”*

## A Note From the Moderator

I hope Easter brought to you and yours a renewed sense of spirit and peace for what feels to be extremely trying times. Spring has redemptive powers, which allow us to step back and take stock of what’s really important and relevant. When you add the Holy Spirit, then “importance” can take a step back from “relevance.” And here’s why: we tend to look at many of our tasks as important, as something that can not be put off and because of that perspective, we multi-task to no end, often running over other things that may seem trivial or even insignificant. Stop and re-read that sentence. Now add the power of God and faith to your roster of to-dos. The gravity of certain tasks remains important, but not as relevant to the journey with God. That which felt less significant now has taken on a new light.

Pastor Mike is on his way to recharge his batteries. It is time away where he can step out, albeit briefly, from his 24-7 role as a minister. Unlike most of us, he has only one day off a week, and even then his minister’s “beeper” is still on. We want Mike to burn bright, not burn out! I am grateful to many of you who e-mailed, called and chatted with me expressing support for his rejuvenation time. This goes double for the church council, the trustees and church staff who helped champion this for Mike. After all, we’re all here for each other...we are the church.



In Christ,

**Carlo Centeno**

Moderator

### An Invitation to Church Council

Church members are welcome to attend any church council meeting and to sit in during the first 15 minutes or so to express concerns, ideas, prayers, events, etc. Upcoming dates for church council meetings are Wednesday, May 27 and Wednesday June 24 at 7:15 p.m. See the calendar on the church website ([www.firstchurchlongmeadow.org](http://www.firstchurchlongmeadow.org)) for further dates.

# Members Attend CONASPEH Supporters Conference

by Mary Friedman, Haiti Committee

**P**iti piti zwazo fe' nich." This is a Haitian proverb that says, "Little by little the bird builds its nest." Another piece of the nest was built at the second CONASPEH conference held in Indianapolis March 29-31. Five First Church members attended the meeting along with the Reverend Pastor Patrick Villiers, President of CONASPEH (National Council of Spiritual Churches of Haiti) in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti and our Global Ministries missionary, Rev. Patrick Bentrrott. Dr. Mark Pohlman, Dr. Lucy Cassells, Rev. Kelly Gallagher, Pedge Daniels, and Mary Friedman joined the representatives from UCC and Disciples of Christ churches from Tennessee, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Kansas. Members of the Augusta Church in Indianapolis, who are planning their first trip to Haiti in June, also attended for the first time. All the former missionaries in Haiti were also present.

Each group shared its individual experiences in Haiti, their hopes for the future, and joined together for song, meals, worship, and prayer. The group heard from various offices of Global Ministries to better understand their functions. They emphasized the three-way partnership between the local churches, CONASPEH, and Global Ministries. Pastor Patrick Villiers shared progress that CONASPEH has made recently including their congress in February followed by the march for justice and equality, the final completion of the roof on the four-story building in Port-Au-Prince, as well as the establishment of three other regional theological centers. The hope is that eventually there will be a center in each of Haiti's ten regional districts so that pastors will not have to walk long distances for training in the capital. Patrick announced that last week he signed a document with President Preval in which the Haitian Government recognizes CONASPEH as a "Public Utility". This long awaited recognition will allow CONASPEH to receive government funds and to be able to import goods tax-free. For the future, Patrick stated that the biggest priority is the completion of the purchase of a six-acre parcel of land adjoining the CONASPEH school property. Their dream for this land is to build a university-level training facility for young people in administration and other fields, provide a conference center for CONASPEH, and build guest rooms for visiting students. \$47,000 remains to be raised in order to purchase this property.

Attendees at the conference were reminded of the significance of CONASPEH's logo which is an upside-down tree. This symbolizes that the roots of our faith are in God but the fruits of that faith are here on earth.

The next trip to Haiti is planned for November, 2009.

## Haiti Scholarship Fund Drive to Begin April 26th

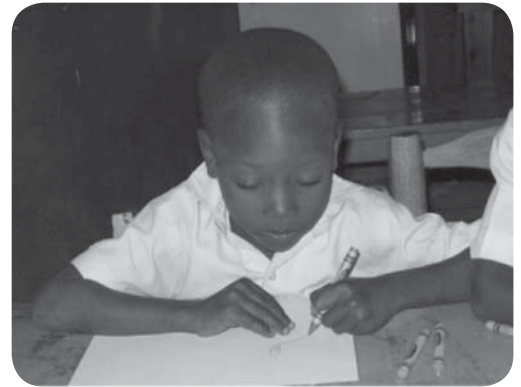
**O**n Sunday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, following the morning service, come and hear our own Peter Santos, retired Longmeadow history teacher, talk about the fascinating, complex, and often tragic early history of Haiti. The following Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Father Leo Hoar, former chaplain at Springfield College and seminary classmate of ex-president Aristide, will continue the discussion as he shares his insights on recent Haitian history and the current political status. These two talks will kick off this year's Haiti Scholarship Fund Drive.

The 115 students, who have been able to attend school because of our previous scholarships, still need our help. CONASPEH with its 6000 churches, ministers, nurses, and students have become a very significant voice and hope for the poor and disadvantaged of Haiti. We continue to benefit from the examples of their faith, their love for each other, and their priorities.

The five youth from First Church who visited Haiti in March have already felt the "mark of Haiti" on their lives. They will be hosting a Haiti Scholarship fund raising dinner in Bailey Hall on Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> (see page 3), at which time they will be sharing their stories and a slideshow presentation. Please attend, contribute, and stay connected with Haiti.

## Haiti Dinner Fundraiser

Come experience a Haitian dinner prepared and served by members of the Senior YES youth group on Saturday, May 2 at 6:00 p.m. The menu consists of pumpkin soup as an appetizer, chicken and rice and dessert. A kids menu will be available and nothing will be spicy! A slideshow presentation from the recent youth trip to Haiti will be shared after dinner. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children (maximum of \$40 for families) and will be available at the door. Proceeds will be donated to the Haiti scholarship fund. Please call the church office (567-6287) for reservations.



## Loaves & Fishes

First Church members have been preparing meals for the homeless, by way of the Springfield soup kitchen known as Loaves and Fishes, for many years. These people who contribute to Loaves & Fishes are unsung heroes. Their names don't appear anywhere as a part of a board or committee and there is no real vehicle for saying, "Thank-you". They make a great contribution to community mission, only their contribution doesn't appear in any church giving record. But that's not why these people contribute to Loaves & Fishes. They are "doers of the Word," living their faith in a tangible way.

Each month, one First Church member makes sure that the proper number of meals find their way to the Springfield church where the meal will be served. Each month a dozen or more First Church members assemble casseroles or buy vegetables or make/buy brownies. On the second Sunday of each month a church board, committee or group is responsible for getting the meal together and for helping to serve that meal. Since some of our church committees now have only four members, we need to add some new groups to our list in order to have two groups work together if needed. Do you have a suggestion?

While there isn't room to thank all the folks who cook and donate food, here is a big thank-you to the twelve people who are monthly coordinators for 2009: Julie Pohlman, Diane Peluso, Pam Stewart, Beth Whiteford, Janice Patel, Kelly Kalia, Maribeth White, David Bell, Shirlee Fassell, Ellie Plaus, Leslie Frank and Maria Duncan.

Nancy Marshall (567-0043) is in charge of the Loaves & Fishes program at First Church, and she is always looking for new people to help. One person can't possibly know all our First Church members so she needs input from new people who would like to volunteer. Contact Nancy with any questions about the program. On most Sundays, there is an insert in the worship bulletin where you can sign up to cook. If you aren't a cook, you can sign up to donate vegetables or brownies, or you can write in at the bottom that you'll drive the meals to the Springfield church, or help serve the Sunday meal, or be a monthly organizer, or have questions answered. If all else fails, call the church. They'll always steer you in the right direction.

## "Pantry Walk" Scheduled for May 3

Open Pantry's annual walk-a-thon, "Pantry Walk," will take place on Sunday, May 3rd beginning at at 1:00 p.m. from Riverfront Park in Springfield. This is a great opportunity for First Church folks (or groups) to show their support for our nearby neighbors in need. The walk follows the trail along the Connecticut River and is not strenuous. Bring your dog and kids! This effort helps our most vulnerable neighbors in the Springfield area receive food, shelter, and much needed assistance. (There are usually also cool t-shirts available!) Get pledge sheets from Kim Kennedy at 746-6241 or e-mail [walk@openpantry.org](mailto:walk@openpantry.org).

## Lenten Dinners Enjoyed by All

Bailey Hall was the place to be every Wednesday evening during Lent. All of the five lenten dinners were attended by record numbers of diners (photo 1), who enjoyed food, fellowship and activities. Our first “Irish Night” was a huge success, featuring a

1.



2.



corned beef dinner followed by Irish dancers (photo 2). The Board of Children's Ministries sponsored two potluck dinners, the second of which featured the making of

3.



‘Resurrection Eggs,’ a dozen plastic eggs each of which holds a symbol describing part of the Holy Week story (photo 3). “Italian Night” featured Italian food, music, a slideshow and a miniature Trevi fountain (photo 4). A huge thank you goes out to the food service committee, including church administrator Maura Stevens who planned, cooked and served many of the meals (photo 5). We all look forward to many more such spirited evenings here at First Church.

4.



5.



## News and Reviews from the Church Library

by Judy Ebeling

Did you know that the United Church of Christ is a ‘Just Peace’ church? The book defines ‘Just Peace’ as the integration of friendship, justice, and common security from violence. If you are interested in knowing more about this subject, check out the Justice and Mission section of your church library for the book, *A Just Peace Church*, edited by Susan Thistlethwaite.

A section of the book that interested this reviewer was the topic covered in chapter 6, “Living in the Presence of the Spirit.” This chapter is full of wonderful, creative suggestions for using symbols such as a child lighting a peace candle as the congregation prays for world peace. The author also suggests different ways we can pass the peace of mind to each other like giving your neighbor a flower or writing your prayer on a piece of paper and placing it in a collection of peace prayers. Our church could have a peace prayer box for members to enter their prayers. If you read this book and feel that one of the suggestions should be brought to the attention of our church leadership, place your idea in the library suggestion box. We love hearing from you.

# Christmas on the Green Fair a Rousing Success

by Eleanor Santos, Christmas Fair Chair

It seems every time we turn on the TV we are bombarded with bad news, and it can get pretty depressing! So here is some fabulous news of the Holy Spirit at work. As you are well aware there was a great outpouring of participation in our Christmas on the Green church fair. I am sure that if, one Sunday in church, we asked everyone to stand who made or contributed items, worked preparing and setting up for the fair, worked the day of the fair, cleaned up and put away after the fair, and of course SHOPPED at the fair, we would have very few folks left sitting down! It was indeed a whole church effort, involving all ages. Much was accomplished: folks went home smiling broadly with bargains and beautiful hand crafted items having had a very pleasant experience shopping, visiting, and relaxing over lunch entertained by seasonal music. What fun! What great hospitality! We had many attendees from outside our own church community. Several of them commented on the wonderful spirit that pervaded the atmosphere of the fair.

As a result of all that effort the fair realized a net profit of \$13,098!! It was with great joy that the Women's Benevolent Society recently met to decide on the dispersal of these earnings. Amounts ranging from \$200 to \$2100 were assigned to these various destinations: Our Church's Wider Mission (a UCC fund), the Western Mass Food Bank, Open Pantry, VNA Hospice, the Springfield council of churches Fuel Fund, ABC of Longmeadow, the American Red Cross, Friends of the Homeless, and the YWCA Women's Shelter. A fund has also been established so that when the need arises, in the greater Springfield area, we can come to the financial aid of those affected by some unforeseen tragedy. A small portion was also put aside for a project here at First Church to support its programs.

Thank you ALL, for being such an important part of this endeavor. It is gratifying to put the effort into an event that creates such a blessed opportunity to follow our mission to "clothe the naked and feed the hungry."

## Friday Evening Fellowship Potluck

Fine food, fellowship, and just plain fun will combine when Friday Evening Fellowship meets for a potluck dinner at 6:30 p.m. on May 1 at the home of Carol and Stew Creelman, 105 Greenmeadow Drive.

There will be no formal program, but a time to share your plans for the summer, a book you've enjoyed, or just one another's company. Please give the Creelmans a call at 567-5528 to let them know you plan to attend. FEF is open to all First Church members and friends. Not attended FEF before? This would be a wonderful way to discover the fellowship enjoyed by this group. See you there!

## Blessing of the Animals

On Saturday May 2nd at 2:30 p.m., First Church will hold its first Blessing of the Animals. Traditionally, all over the world animals are blessed around St. Francis' Day, which is October 3rd. This can be a cold time in New England so we are trying ours in the spring!

Francis of Assisi was a wealthy man who gave up all of his worldly possessions to wander around and speak about God's love. He saw God particularly in nature and animals. Pets hold a particular place in our hearts, and are perhaps some of the only creatures that demonstrate for us the kind of unconditional love and acceptance which God offers to us. Anyone with an animal they hold dear is invited to come at 2:30 p.m. with their pet to the front lawn at First Church. All pets are welcome, but please consider the wisdom of bringing aggressive animals, and all animals must be contained by a leash, crate or cage. If you can't bring the animal, then bring a picture and we will spend some time celebrating and blessing them.

Please contact Interim Associate Pastor Kelly Gallagher (567-6287 or [kelly@firstchurchlongmeadow.org](mailto:kelly@firstchurchlongmeadow.org)) with questions.

# Children's Ministries

## Palm Sunday

Interim Associate Pastor Kelly Gallagher asked the



children to help pass out the palms on Palm Sunday, April 5. They took their task to heart, helping to recreate the high spirited chaos that took place in the streets of Jerusalem.

### A Note on Safety

We would like to remind parents that although we want children to feel comfortable coming to First Church, we also want everyone to be safe. Please keep an eye on your children when they are in Bailey Hall, whether for an activity or during coffee hour. Due to many near accidents lately, we are also asking that you do not allow your children to play on the stage. Thank you for helping us keep everyone safe.

### Undy Sundays in May

The Board of Children's Ministries is sponsoring their 6th annual collection of new, packaged t-shirts underwear, and socks during the month of May. Please bring your donations with you to church any Sunday in May and drop them off in the baskets which will be located in the Narthex and the Williams Street library hallway. All donations will be delivered to a local shelter in early June.

### 2 Teachers and 1 Shepherd Needed

Faith First Church School is in need of teachers in the Video and Computer rooms on May 17, 24, and June 7. We also need a shepherd to serve as a second pair of hands for the teacher for the 5/6th grade class the same weeks. The children will be learning "Water Stories." As always, all materials will be provided and the lesson plans are written for you. All you need is a desire to lend a hand in the Christian education of our children. This is the last rotation of the school year before we begin our one room Summer Fun Church School program.



### Senior YES (Grade 9-12)

**Sunday, April 19**

No meeting - school vacation.

**Sunday, April 26, 6:30 p.m.**

Regular meeting, youth lounge.

**Saturday, May 2, 6:0 p.m.**

Haiti dinner and slideshow. Bailey Hall.

**Sunday, May 3, 6:00 p.m.**

Dinner with Middle YES!

**Saturday, May 9**

Canoe trip. Details to be sent home.

### Middle YES (Grade 6-8)

**Sunday, May 3, 4:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.**

Combined meeting with Senior YES! Middle YES! will make dinner for everyone.

### Confirmation Class

**Sunday, April 26, 11:15 a.m.**

Regular classes, youth lounge.

Contact Interim Associate Pastor Kelly Gallagher (567-6287 or [kelly@firstchurchlongmeadow.org](mailto:kelly@firstchurchlongmeadow.org)) for more information on youth activities.

### Milestones

#### In Memoriam

Barbara (Davis) Donahue May 19, 1921-  
March 28, 2009

## April 19 - May 9

| Sunday  | Mon. | Tuesday   | Wednesday  | Thursday   | Friday                                       | Sat.   |
|---|------|---|--|--|--|--|
| 19<br>10 a.m. Worship * +   | 20   | 21<br>7:30 p.m. AP<br>Search Committee  | 22<br>7:15 p.m. Church<br>Council                      | 23<br>8:45 a.m. Men's DCF<br>11:30 a.m. Bible Study<br>1:30 p.m. Worship<br>6:00 p.m. Bell Choir<br>7:30 p.m. Chancel<br>Choir | 24   | 25   |
| 26<br>10 a.m. Worship * +<br>11:15 a.m. Confirmation<br>Class<br>11:15 a.m. Haiti<br>Presentation<br>6:30 p.m. Senior YES   | 27   | 28<br>7:00 p.m. Deacons<br>7:30 p.m. AP<br>Search Committee   | 29<br>3:30 p.m. Cherub<br>Choir<br>4 p.m. Joyful Noyse | 30<br>8:45 a.m. Men's DCF<br>11:30 a.m. Bible Study<br>1:30 p.m. Worship<br>6:00 p.m. Bell Choir<br>7:30 p.m. Chancel<br>Choir | May 1<br>11:45 a.m.<br>Women's<br>Benevolent | 2<br>2:30 p.m.<br>Blessing<br>of the<br>Animals<br>6:00 p.m.<br>Youth<br>Haiti<br>dinner |
| 3<br>10 a.m. Worship * + **<br>1:00 p.m. Pantry Walk<br>begins at Riverfront Park<br>2:30 p.m. Blessing of the<br>Animals<br>4:30 p.m. Middle YES<br>6:00 p.m. Senior YES | 4    | 5<br>6:30 p.m. Youth<br>Ministries<br>7 p.m. Children's<br>Ministries<br>7 p.m. Mission<br>7:30 p.m. AP<br>Search Committee | 6<br>3:30 p.m. Cherub<br>Choir<br>4 p.m. Joyful Noyse  | 7<br>8:45 a.m. Men's DCF<br>11:30 a.m. Bible Study<br>1:30 p.m. Worship<br>6:00 p.m. Bell Choir<br>7:30 p.m. Chancel<br>Choir  | 8  | 9<br>5:30 p.m.<br>Second<br>Saturday   |

\* with Childcare for Infants & Toddlers

+ Faith First Church School K-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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Longmeadow, MA 01106

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## Contact Us

413-567-6287

admin@firstchurchlongmeadow.org

www.firstchurchlongmeadow.org

## Staff

*Senior Pastor* The Reverend Michael Bennett

*Interim Associate Pastor* The Reverend Kelly Gallagher

*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 23**

**email submissions to:**

**deb@firstchurchlongmeadow.org**

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## First Church Facebook: Show us Your Smiles!

Come have your picture taken and be a part of the new photo directory!  
We are taking the pictures in-house, so no purchase is required on your part.



Pictures will be taken on Sunday Mornings,  
beginning April 26  
during Coffee Hour on the Bailey Hall stage

Come as you are, or dress up if you wish

You are a part of First Church!

We need your face in our facebook!

If you would like to use a favorite family photo

instead of sitting for a new one, either bring it into the church office to be scanned and returned,  
or email a digital copy to deb@firstchurchlongmeadow.org.

Sign up sheets for sittings are available in Bailey Hall and in the weekly Sunday bulletins.



Questions? Call Deb Garrity or Gay Wesson (567-6287) or  
email deb@firstchurchlongmeadow.org