

New Pictorial Directory!

BEGINNING SUNDAY, MARCH 20, you can make your appointment to be photographed by Olan Mills, here at First Church, for our **long-overdue new pictorial directory!**

There will be afternoon and evening times on the **weekdays of May 10, 12, 13, 24, 26 and 27**; plus morning and afternoon times on **Saturday, May 14**.

There are **three ways** to make your appointment. **Please see Pastor Deryk's full-page letter on page 2**, for details.

Our coordinator is **Anne Kelly** (at right).

Help us to better connect with each other in this crucial way!



FROM THE SENIOR MINISTER

IN PSALM 24, David asks a question that is for all mankind: *Who can stand in God's Presence? Who can ascend the holy hill and stand before God?* David

knows that God is not a mere mortal but is the Almighty Creator of the Universe, who owns everything. So, who can stand in His Presence? Who is worthy to worship Him?

David's answer might surprise you. Although everybody may worship Him, not everyone will receive God's blessings. Who is the one who will receive God's blessings and be considered righteous in His eyes (verse 5)? David states that it is those who love others, those who treat others with fairness (clean hands) and with pure motives (pure heart).

By the sound of it, David seems to be espousing a relationship with God based on works. That is where verse 6 comes in. David tells us that the people who live in proper

relationship with others are those who seek the face of God. **Seeking the face of God means being in deep, intimate relationship with Him.** Often when we read in the Old Testament the phrase "in His Presence," it literally means "before His face." So we seek God's face by being in His Presence.

Moses' relationship with God sums it up well, in Exodus 33:11: "Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend."

Getting back to the psalm, David is telling us that the fruit or outcome of seeking God's Presence will be seen in how we treat those around us. Our relationship with God

is connected to our relationship with others.

We are in the season of Lent, the season when we strive to walk close to Jesus as He heads to the Cross. *This Lent, instead of focusing on what we can give up, let's focus on going deeper with God.* Let's seek His face. Let's spend more time in His Presence.

And, as we seek His face, let's long for Jesus, our King, to enter into our lives, our church, and our community (verses 7-10).

—Pastor Deryk



New Website!

Your church website, firstchurch.org, has been rebuilt from the ground up. Its clean new look is paired with crisp, inviting content for a certain "wow" factor.



Our goal is to faithfully project an image of First Church as a vibrant community of Jesus followers who love God, love one another, and make disciples. The site is intended to draw people who are searching for a church home while also providing a more useful and user-friendly resource for our own family of faith.

First Church staff members have been creating—and are constantly updating—their own ministries' pages, helping to keep this website current and reliable.

Please explore! The home page starts with a repeating slideshow of several large images. By clicking on one before it fades into the next, you (or a visitor) will be taken to expanded information. And Pastor Deryk's welcoming video introduces our church (all of us!) to visitors.

Go deeper—through the main tabs, the Quicklinks, and the various forms of our calendar. Check out the Ministries (with new photos!), Resources, and even the new "About Us" area! May this website bring glory to God and hope to its visitors.

Dear First Church Family,

It's been way too long. Our 2005 pictorial directory has lost most of its usefulness. Imagine what a fresh new edition will mean for our community of faith here at First Church!

Olan Mills is coming again to photograph as many of you as wish to be included. The photography will take place on a variety of dates in May (see front page), with afternoon, evening, and even Saturday appointments, in either the Church Parlor or the Morgan House Drawing Room.

On any Sunday (except Easter), **please sign up in the Wells Area** for the time that suits you best. Or you may sign up online at www.signup.olanmills.com, or by calling Olan Mills at 1-800-866-2263.

If you haven't signed up by **May 1**, an Olan Mills representative will contact you from their office in Tennessee to see if you'd like them to help you schedule a time. (Your caller ID will read "Church Directory" and show a 423 area code.) Olan Mills will also give you a reminder call about two days before your appointment.

When making your appointment, *try to select the earliest available date that works for you*. If you can come in the afternoon, that will help us, but evenings and Saturdays are great as well.

Please participate! **You are so important to this church.** And the directory is yet another way of helping us to stay connected as "a community of Jesus followers who love God, love one another, and make disciples." All we ask is that you would have your picture taken and make a selection for the directory.

Here are a few details from Olan Mills:

- You only need to come to the church **once** for both photography and portrait viewing. (*Please allow an hour for your appointment.*)
- Every participating family/household that selects a pose for the directory will receive a free directory and a complimentary 8 x 10 Custom Natural Portrait. There is no obligation to purchase additional portraits.
- If you wish to purchase extra portraits, they come with a 100% satisfaction guarantee and are delivered in 3-4 weeks. Olan Mills will have portrait calendars for sale as well. Dress formally or casually, as you wish. Please see the information brochure at the sign-up table for more details.

Questions? Please speak with our volunteer in the Wells Area or email **Anne Kelly**, our coordinator, at annemkelly@mac.com.

I look forward to seeing everyone in the new directory!

May God bless you with His wonderful Presence,



Deryk Richenburg



LENTEN FOCUS

Here at First Church, we want to continue moving forward with our mission of being a *community of Jesus followers who love God, love one another, and make disciples.*

Our first priority as disciples is to grow in our relationship with God. We are to be a people who *seek God's face.*

What does seeking His face look like? In short, it means being in His Presence. It's reading His

Word, spending time with Him in prayer, worshiping Him with His people.

During this season of Lent, we are given the opportunity to seek His face. Use this period to *ignite your relationship with Him.*

David tells us in Psalm 27:8 that God is calling us to seek His face. Let us respond together with David,
Your face, Lord, I will seek.

LENTEN SERMONS (listed at right) focus on helping us, through selected Psalms, to draw closer to God—through Lent and beyond. The sermons also may be heard starting the same afternoon at www.firstchurch.org.

MIDWEEK LENTEN SERVICES are centered on the theme of seeking God's face, continuing **through April 13**, from 6:30 to 7:10 p.m. **each Wednesday.** They are another opportunity to draw closer to God—through worship, fellowship, Bible teaching, prayer, and Holy Communion. For those who wish to remain until 8:00 p.m., we are further exploring that evening's topic and practicing something of what we learned.

QUIET DAY—**Saturday, April 9**, will be a day set aside for us to get away from all the noise and distractions of everyday life and to have a focused time of listening to God. There will be guided periods in the Meetinghouse for seeking God together, and times for finding other spaces at the church for smaller groups, personal prayer, and other suggested approaches. *Watch for more information.*

DERYK'S BLOG—**Every Wednesday noon**, starting March 9, look for a new post on Pastor Deryk's blog that will further enhance your understanding of this all-important theme—in a most compelling way! Simply go to pastorderyk.blogspot.com.

SERMON SERIES FOR LENT

Seek His Face

MARCH 6

A River of Restoration

Pre-Lenten Message by Tessa Afshar

Psalm 25

MARCH 13

Fainting and Feasting on God

Message by Deryk Richenburg

Psalm 63

MARCH 20 — Missions Sunday

A Passion for the Kingdom

Message by Dr. Stanley Allaby

(Not part of the *Seek His Face* series)

MARCH 27

Pursuing Joy

Message by Deryk Richenburg

Psalm 16

APRIL 3

Focused and Triumphant Faith

Message by Michael McDowell

Psalm 27

APRIL 10

A Deep Hope

Message by Deryk Richenburg

Psalms 42 and 43

APRIL 17 — Palm Sunday

Hosanna!

Message by Deryk Richenburg

Psalm 118:19-29

Elizabeth Sunshine Offers Book Signing

Our own **Elizabeth Sunshine** has published a book of her exquisite Christ-centered poems and hymns, written during a four-year period. Some have been sung by our congregation during worship services. All are inspiring, worshipful, and written with great beauty and depth. **Transforming Light** can also serve as a collection of profound Lenten devotions.

Please greet **Elizabeth** in the Wells Fellowship Area, on **Sunday, March 27**, following the 9:15 and 11:00 a.m. worship services, where copies of her book will be available for purchase and signing; it is also available online at <http://BIT.LY/i3JtPy> (but you will save 33% at the signing!).



AFFIRM Singles at South Park Inn

In preparation for their visit to South Park Inn, a Hartford homeless shelter, on Saturday, March 5, AFFIRM Singles members spent a Friday “fun night” making close to 100 chocolate roses for the adults and children at the mission. In addition to a hot meal, “late-night” snack bags were also distributed to those visiting the mission. The bags were filled with PB&J sandwiches, an apple, an encouraging Scripture verse, and Christian coloring materials for the children.



AFFIRM Singles meets **Friday evenings** at 7:00 for fellowship, dinner, a Christ-centered talk by ministry leader **Herbert Symmes**, group discussion, and the monthly “fun nights.” We encourage all singles over the age of 18 to bless us with their presence and receive the blessing of Christian fellowship as well. For details, visit www.firstchurch.org.

Seder Dinner

Come and celebrate an incredible Seder experience with your family of faith on **Friday, April 15**. The Seder is a Jewish ritual feast that marks the beginning of Passover (our dinner is a few days earlier). The focal point is a retelling of how the Lord set the Israelites free from slavery in Egypt. Jesus celebrated the Seder. More importantly, many of the symbols used in this festival are especially profound in light of Good Friday and Easter, only a few days away.

Rabbi Paul L. Saal (photo), Vice President of the Messianic Jewish Rabbinical Council and faculty member of the Messianic Jewish Theological Institute, will lead us in this traditional Passover Seder, a sacred drama that points to Jesus’ own provision for salvation. Experience what it truly means to be “Abraham’s Seed” (Galatians 3:29). And have a few laughs in the process!



This part of our program, which includes the traditional Seder plate and a teaching on the significance of each symbol, begins promptly at 6:15.

A mouth-watering lamb dinner and dessert, prepared by our talented **Judy Carson**, follows at 7:15. The evening ends at 9:00. For practical reasons, those attending are respectfully asked to come to both parts of the evening.

Women’s Ministries is thrilled to provide this opportunity for men, women and teens to gather together and have fellowship, eat great food, build up our roots in Christ, and prepare for Holy Week. This is also a wonderful opportunity to invite friends and neighbors who might not be ready for a church service, but might enjoy a good meal and companionship, as well as the fascinating presentation by Rabbi Saal. Tickets are \$14 per person. We regret that we are unable to provide childcare. Due to the nature of this gathering, we would not recommend it as appropriate for young children.

We are able to accommodate 180 people. We hope to see you there!

Easter Joy!

First Church is beautifully decorated with flowers on Easter Sunday, due to the generosity of the congregation. You may add to the joy of the Easter celebration by making a memorial contribution to the **floral decorations** or to the **Memorial Fund** (please check one). Suggested donation is \$35.

This completed form and check (payable to “First Church of Christ”) should reach the Church Finance Office **no later than Wednesday, April 13**.

The following (in italics) will appear in the Bulletin:

In loving memory of: _____

Given by: _____

Your phone number: _____

PLEASE PRINT • USE ADDITIONAL PAPER IF NECESSARY

Marla and Brian Darius at Seniors’ Luncheon



A Seniors’ Ministry Luncheon is set for **Wednesday, March 30**, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., in Keith Jones Hall. This will be an opportunity for prayer and praise, fellowship, an inspiring program—and a tasty luncheon catered by **Judy Carson**. The program will feature **Marla and Brian Darius**, who will share their experiences from a recent medical mission trip to Haiti. Cost is \$8 per person.

Please sign up with **Kathy Rodriguez** by Wednesday, March 23, at 860-301-6263 or k.rodriguez@comcast.net. All seniors are welcome!

Women’s Luncheon to Feature Kathy Cooper

Women’s Fellowship will meet on **Wednesday, April 13**, for a luncheon catered by **Judy Carson**. A presentation on scrapbooking, by **Kathy Cooper**, will follow. Kathy is a personal photo organizer who also helps with scrapbook creation. During this presentation, she will concentrate on creating beautiful scrapbook pages from digital images. All women are warmly invited to join us in the Fireside Room at 12:00 noon. For reservations, call **Judy Tatters** by Monday, April 11, at 860-529-5362.

Annual Meeting Called for April 10

Notice is hereby given that the **Annual Meeting of First Church of Christ in Wethersfield** will be held in the Meeting-house on **Sunday, April 10**, at 12:30 p.m., following the 11:00 a.m. worship services. Moderator **Henry von Wodtke** will preside, and Church Board President **Judy Franzen** will report to the congregation. Annual Reports will be on the tables, available to pick up, **starting Sunday, March 27**.

Included in the business of the Meeting will be the election of officers, a Moment of Memory, and other appropriate matters.* (Financial matters will await the Annual Financial Meeting, on June 5.) Along with those in positions of leadership, all members of First Church are urged to be present, as we move into the future, seeking God's will.

● AFFILIATION/NON-AFFILIATION INFO AND VOTE

The Church Board has voted to begin the education process for the congregation on **the question of affiliation/non-affiliation**. A committee has been selected to work on this issue, with three members of the Board and three members from the latest committee, which brought the final report of the Denominational Affiliation Committee to the Board.

After the congregation has been fully educated in all aspects (through a series of meetings in May), **a vote will be taken at our Annual Financial Meeting, which will be held on June 5, 2011**. Please keep this committee in your prayers as they work to bring this important matter to completion.

***NOTE: A vote will be taken at our Annual Meeting, on April 10**, to determine whether the June vote for affiliation/non-affiliation should require a 2/3 vote or a simple majority. Please pray about this as well.

Silent Auction and Talent Show

The popular annual **Missions Talent Show and Silent Auction** will be held on **Saturday, March 26** (auction at 5:00, show at 7:00 p.m.). Tickets are available now! Suggested donation is \$20 family/\$8 individual in advance, or \$25 family/\$10 individual at the door. See any 2011 Dominican Republic mission team member or call **Marilyn Danielson** at 860-529-1575, ext. 213.

We'd still like more talent acts and items to auction! New and like-new items; store and restaurant gift cards; golf clubs; crafts; furniture; homemade dinner, yard service and babysitting coupons; baskets, jewelry, art, etc., are joyfully accepted. Be creative! See the sign-up sheet in the Wells Area or contact **Penny Crompton** at 860-635-1530 or dcrompton@sbcglobal.net.

Missions Weekend Is Here! Saturday, March 19

DINNER — Join the Outreach Committee for a **free chicken dinner** in Keith Jones Hall at 6:00 p.m., as we celebrate our First Church missionaries. The delicious dinner will be prepared by Judy Carson. **Dr. Stanley Allaby** will speak on "Things I Learned Visiting Mission Fields," and our missionaries serving in western Asia will also speak. Learn about local outreach opportunities and short-term missions to Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and enjoy worship music and testimonies.



Sunday, March 20

WORSHIP & INFO — The Outreach Committee will take part in all four worship services, with **Dr. Stanley Allaby** presenting the message "A Passion for the Kingdom." Dr. Allaby is passionate about missions and has dedicated his life to growing mission opportunities and support. He served Black Rock Congregational Church in Fairfield for 41 years as senior pastor, where he oversaw explosive growth in their annual missions program and budget. Dr. Allaby also served on the board of Serving in Mission, with 20 years as its chairman, and was instrumental in the creation of the Connecticut Mission Consortium. The Consortium consists of 10 area churches, including First Church, that come together to financially support full-time international missionaries and share ideas and practices to promote God's Kingdom. Following each service, visit the various Outreach & Missions informational tables set up in the Wells Fellowship Area.

LUNCHEON — After the 11:00 services, a luncheon will be served in the Fireside Room. Join us at 12:30 for a light lunch and spend some time with Dr. Allaby and our western Asia missionary family. There will be short presentations and a Q&A period. Suggested donation is \$5 for the lunch.

**For either the dinner or the luncheon (or both),
if you see this in time to call by Friday, March 18,
please make your reservations by calling
Marilyn Danielson at 860-529-1575, ext. 213.
Otherwise, walk-ins are welcome!**

Furthermore...

BROWN BAGGERS BOOK CLUB — On **Monday, April 4**, we will gather for a lively discussion of **John MacArthur's *The Truth War: Fighting for Certainty in an Age of Deception***. All are welcome to attend—even those who have not yet read the book. So brown-bag your dinner and plan to join us in the Morgan House's Sycamore Room, at 6:30 p.m. This group meets on the **first Monday of each month**.

The reading for our **May 2** gathering is *The Way of a Pilgrim and The Pilgrim Continues His Way*, a 19th-century Russian work in which the narrator describes his journey across Russia while practicing the *Jesus Prayer*. Choose any one of the many English translations to read. Questions? Call **Linda Papertsian** at 860-257-7566.

BLOOD PRESSURE READINGS — The **Parish Nurse Ministry** offers free blood pressure readings after each Sunday worship service, in the Caring Concerns Room (behind the Reception Area), on the **second Sunday of each month**. Nurses who would like to help, please call **Joan Haines**, at 860-529-2281.

DIAL-A-MESSAGE IS BACK! — A new encouraging message is provided every weekday by Caring Ministries and can be heard at any time by calling 860-529-1785.

BASIC MONEY MANAGEMENT is a **five-Tuesday class** that began **March 1**. Even if you have not yet attended, please join us for the final two sessions—**March 22 and 29**—from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in Conference Room 1 (behind the Reception Area). Led by **Anton Hertle**, the class is subtitled "Money 102 for Christians" and is designed

for those who want to get better control of their finances. For more details, call **Marilyn** at 860-529-1575, ext. 213.

COUPLES' CLASS BEGINS NEW TOPIC — Would you like a fresh breeze to blow in your marriage? Do you long for a marriage where intimacy and communication are a reality instead of a dream? Join the Couples' Class as we explore ***Experiencing God's Dream for Your Marriage***—a topical DVD series by Chip Ingram examining God's design for marriage, with practical instruction to help you make your marriage what God desires it to be. We meet **Sunday mornings** at 9:15, in the Morgan House Drawing Room.

This new topic just began on March 13; be with us whenever you can. For more information, please contact **Lisa or Steve Peery**, at 860-757-3853.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." He said to Him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" and

he said to Him, "Lord, You know everything; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." (This He said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this He said to him, "Follow Me."

—John 21:15-19 (ESV)

Jesus believes in us. He has entrusted us with the work of His Kingdom. And He has promised to lead us into that work. Will you follow Him?

EMPOWERMENT

Jesus loved Peter. There are so many examples in which He demonstrates His love for Peter that I don't have room to list them all. In my opinion, the encounter in John 21, which takes place after Jesus' death and resurrection, is one of the most profound demonstrations of Jesus' love for him.

It is a beautiful conversation. It is so different from the conversations we encounter in our world today. Despite the pain Jesus must have felt from Peter's earlier denial, His response to Peter after His resurrection is so contrary to the culture in which we live.

Have you ever wondered what Peter thought about himself between the hour when he denied Jesus and this moment when he stands face to face with his resurrected Savior? I think there were significant feelings of guilt and shame residing within him. He must have felt worthless and without purpose.

Jesus' solution to the condition of Peter's heart is empowerment. In a way that is almost poetic, Jesus asks Peter three questions, one to parallel each of Peter's three denials. After sharing a meal together (have you ever noticed how frequently Jesus' ministry takes place around a table?), Jesus turns to His disciple and asks him, "Do you love Me?" "Yes" is Peter's response. "Feed My lambs," Jesus tells him. Two more times Jesus and Peter have this interchange. And finally Jesus leaves him with the words, "Follow Me."

Jesus' way of discipleship revolved around empowerment. He never allowed His disciples the opportunity to be passive participants in the work of the Kingdom. Why is empowerment the method He chose? Empowerment communicates a message of worth and value. When we

feel worth and value we feel motivated to move forward.

A fellow pastor once raised a unique and powerful point drawn from the story of Jesus walking on the water toward His dis-



ciples. As he reflected on Jesus' question to Peter, "Why did you doubt?", his conclusion wasn't that Peter doubted Jesus but that *Peter doubted that he could become more like his rabbi Jesus.*

Jesus came to empower you and me to live as His disciples. Mark 6:7-13 illustrates perfectly just how much Jesus believed in those He invested Himself in. After the disciples had been with Him for some time,

Jesus sends them out to do what they have been watching Him do.

My favorite part is in Mark 6:30-31. After the disciples return, Jesus says to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." This is the other side of empowerment. Empowerment involves both entrusting others with responsibility and creating a space where those who are sent out can return to unpack or process what they've experienced.

Empowerment is also at the core of what it means to be the Church. We have all received salvation so that we might all live as active ambassadors of Jesus' message of reconciliation. We do this by living a **missional and incarnational life** within our immediate contexts.

Missional means that we are passionate about communicating the Gospel and seeing the Kingdom of God advance.

Incarnational means that we communicate this in a way that others can receive. *We do so by being aware of where others are at, engaging relationally with depth and authenticity, and empowering them to move along the road of discipleship.*

Jesus was missional and incarnational with Peter. In John 21, Jesus presents Peter, yet again, with the grace of the Gospel (missional) and does it in a way that meets Peter's specific needs at the time (incarnational). This is the posture required of us if we are to be disciples who empower others to become disciples.

Jesus believes in us. He has entrusted us with the work of His Kingdom. And He has promised to lead us into that work. Will you follow Him?

—Pastor Todd

YOUTH MINISTRIES NEWS

the REVOLVE tour For Girls, Grades 6-12

The Revolve Tour—“Dream On”—is coming to Hartford, and First Church has reserved a block of tickets! The Revolve Tour is a one-of-a-kind inspirational weekend for 6th- through 12th-grade girls that combines great bands and speakers with real, relevant messages in a high-energy event. It will happen at the XL Center in Hartford, **Friday night and Saturday, April 1 and 2.** For details about The Revolve Tour, visit their website at www.revolvetour.com. Tickets through First Church are available on a first-come first-served basis. If you are interested in reserving your ticket, call **Marcia McCann** at 860-529-1575, ext. 208.

Youth Missions Fundraisers

This summer, a team of high school students and adult leaders, will be traveling to **Elizabeth City, North Carolina**, to partner with Group Workcamps for a week of love and service to the surrounding community.

We will be holding two fundraisers to help cover the expenses for this trip. On Mother’s Day weekend, **May 7 and 8**, there will be a **plant sale** on the front lawn at First Church.

We will also be organizing teams that will be available to help with any of your **spring clean-up needs**. If you’d like to reserve a team or learn more about this fundraiser, please call **Marcia McCann** in the Youth Ministries office, at 860-529-1575, ext. 208.

High School Guys

On **Monday, March 21**, the High School Ministries team will launch a **new group for all high school guys**.

The group will meet twice a month at the home of **Ted Willard**—on the **1st and 3rd Mondays**. We will gather from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. for pizza, fun, and a time to challenge one another to grow as followers of Jesus. For details, call **Todd** in the Youth Ministries office, at 860-529-1575, ext. 205.

The Way, Friday Nights

Beginning Friday, March 18, our High School Youth Group “**The Way**” will be moving to a weekly schedule.

The Way will meet **every Friday** from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the Youth Room. This group is open to all high school students.

For more on Youth Ministries happenings, visit www.firstchurch.org.

Giving to the Kingdom of God

FIFTH IN A SERIES ON FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Everyone has time and money for the things they put first. Our calendars and checkbooks mirror our priorities.

This is the article that most of you have been waiting for. *Should I give to the church? And if so, how much?*

Why should I give to the Church?

Because God tells us to. Leviticus 27:30-33 is where the principle of giving the first 10% of one’s income (called a tithe) to God’s Church is defined. This is so important to God that if you will honor it, He makes a promise to you in Malachi 3:10-12 (NIV):

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the LORD Almighty. “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the LORD Almighty.”

This is one of the few places in Scripture where God challenges you to test Him, and we should take it *very* seriously.

Why should I give to First Church?

Because Jesus expects us to. Like every other Jew of His time, Jesus would have given to His synagogue. This is apparent in what Jesus said to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:23—He criticized them for giving only a tithe while ignoring the more important matters of faithfulness, mercy, and justice, saying *“You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.”* Jesus’ expectation was to tithe where we worship.

What else does the New Testament say about this?

But most references to tithing are in the Old Testament, some say. As seen above in Matthew 23, Jesus expected Jews to be obedient to the Old Testament concept of tithing. *But aren’t we*

under a new covenant now? Do the old principles still apply? Let’s look at this a little closer. I think this is the key verse:

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

—2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (NIV)

Do you remember the last financial stewardship article, which was on the importance of generosity to our Lord? Generosity is the big point. Generosity adds grace and mercy to obedient giving that allows us to avoid becoming legalistic.

I believe the New Testament standard of giving is higher than tithing. Tithing is just the beginning. If generosity is the standard, and cheerful giving is in the Word, then tithing alone doesn’t really represent the heart for giving and sharing that God is looking for.

Conclusion

God did not command us to give because He needs the money. God commands us to give because it improves each giver.

When we look at all of Scripture, it is obvious that giving, whether tithing alone or (beyond that) giving generously, is very important to God.

Basic truth: We have to let go of what we have in our hand before we can receive anything else.

We can’t receive the full, abundant life that Jesus talks about throughout the Bible if we are hanging on to money. We should release some of God’s abundant monetary blessing back into His Kingdom so it can be a blessing to others.

And Jesus expects us to give to the Kingdom through the church where we worship.

—Anton Hertle

Shape N Race Derby

Our annual Christian Service Brigade "Shape N Race" Derby will be held on **Saturday, April 2**, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., in Keith Jones Hall. For details, please call **Jim Ritter** at 860-841-8399.

CSB is for boys in Grades 1-5. Together with their dads and other mentors, boys get to have fun, learn about God's creation, and grow closer to Him and each other. They do this through games, crafts, Scripture memorization, and stories. Find out more about CSB at csbministries.org.

First Church

FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN WETHERSFIELD

CONGREGATIONAL

860-529-1575 • Fax: 860-721-7861
250 Main Street, Wethersfield, CT 06109
Website: www.firstchurch.org
Email: fcw@firstchurch.org

Sunday Worship

Traditional Services in the Meetinghouse:
8:00, 9:15 and 11:00 a.m.
Wind Contemporary Service
in Keith Jones Hall: 11:00 a.m.

First Church on Facebook

www.facebook.com/FirstChurchPage

Dial-A-Message: 860-529-1785

Messages of Uplift
Provided by Caring Ministries

What will you leave behind?

Please remember First Church in your will.

e-GIVING reduces paperwork and helps keep track of your yearly pledge. For info about contributing electronically via a monthly automatic withdrawal from your bank account, call the Finance Office, 860-529-1575, ext. 218.

- Atessa M. Afshar Associate Minister
- Vicki A. Huffman .. Director of Children's & Family Ministries
- Linda T. Jackson Church Administrator
- Wayne E. Luman Director of Caring Ministries
- T. Michael McDowell Associate Minister
- Donald W. Morgan Minister Emeritus
- Deryk P. Richenburg Senior Minister
- David C. Spicer Minister of Music & the Arts
- Todd E. Willard Associate Minister

OUR MISSION

We are a community of Jesus followers who love God, love one another, and make disciples.

SPIRE DEADLINE

Material for the April issue of *The Spire*, which will be mailed and emailed April 6, must be submitted to Dave Gilbert by noon on Friday, March 25, at daveg@firstchurch.org or 860-529-1575, ext. 225.

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