

Lent, Holy Week and Easter

SUNDAY, APRIL 10

A Deep Hope

Text: Psalms 42 and 43

Message by Deryk Richenburg

With Holy Communion

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13

Final Midweek Lenten Service, 6:30 to 7:10 p.m.

Worship, fellowship, Bible teaching, prayer,
and Holy Communion

PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 17

Hosanna!

Text: Psalm 18:19-29 • Family Sunday

Message by Deryk Richenburg

Family Sunday

MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 21

Tenebrae/Communion Service at 7:00 p.m.

Meditation by Tessa Afshar

Tenebrae is the Latin term for *shadows*. It is a service of Scripture lessons accompanied by the gradual extinguishing of lights—a unique, beautiful observance of the Last Supper.

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 22

Good Friday Service, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Meditation by Michael McDowell

Be in God's House in observance of Jesus' final moments on the Cross. There will be an opportunity to place your concerns "at the foot of the Cross."

Twenty-Fifth Annual Memorial Concert, 7:00 p.m.

PLEASE SEE BACK PAGE FOR CONCERT DETAILS

SATURDAY, APRIL 23

Family Easter Celebration, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

PLEASE SEE BOTTOM RIGHT

GLORIOUS EASTER SERVICES SUNDAY, APRIL 24

Traditional Services in the Meetinghouse:

7:30 • 9:00 • 10:30 • 12:00

Wind Contemporary Service, Keith Jones Hall:

11:00 AM

He Still Rolls Stones Away

Text: John 20:1-10

Easter Message by Deryk Richenburg

At All Five Services

Learn more at firstchurch.org/Easter

He is Risen! Come, rejoice, worship God, and begin living the Resurrection Life!

If convenient, please choose the 7:30 a.m. or 12:00 service to help us accommodate everyone. *And remember—there's extra parking at the Keeney Center, just a few doors south!*

Also: **SUNRISE SERVICE at 6:00 AM**

On "Cemetery Hill" behind the Meetinghouse.

Easter Message by Todd Willard

Music by the First Church Brass Ensemble

EASTER BREAKFAST at 6:30 in the Fireside Room. Reservations: **Suzanne** at 860-529-1575, ext. 212. Suggested donation is \$4; family, \$10; free for children age five and under.

SUNDAY, MAY 1

Disciples on the Road to Emmaus

Text: Luke 24:13-35

Message by Deryk Richenburg



OFTENTIMES PEOPLE MISS the multiple ways that Jesus taught those around Him. Yes, He verbally taught His people who He was and how we are to live in the Kingdom. But He also taught people by the way He lived His life. Christians often use Paul as their role model on how to live (great role model, by the way). But what about Jesus?

The writer of Hebrews commands us in 12:2 to **fix our eyes on Jesus** so that we can see how He lived. And it's not just about watching and admiring Jesus. It is also about imitating Jesus.

As you fix your eyes on Jesus as He walks the path to the Cross, what do you see in Him that you can imitate? Maybe it's His willingness to take on the Cross. Or His desire to spend quality time with His disciples in the midst of all of it. Whatever it is that you see, make it a part of you.

This Easter, let's fix our eyes on Him.

—**Pastor Deryk**

Family Easter Celebration: Craft, Eggs & VeggieTales!

Join us in Keith Jones Hall, **1:00 to 3:00 p.m.** on **Saturday, April 23!** We'll color and decorate eggs, make a family craft, and enjoy the awesome new **VeggieTales** show, ***Twas the Night Before Easter***. Bring your own hard-boiled eggs; we'll supply the rest (\$5 per person, with a \$20 family maximum), including a snack. Plus, *every child will take home a goodie bag!*

Please sign up on the poster in the Wells Fellowship Area on **either Sunday—April 10 or 17**—or by calling Children's and Family Ministries at 860-529-1575, ext. 208. Don't miss this fun and meaningful time, which helps to prepare our children for Easter joy!

Easter Volunteers Needed

Children's Ministries will need **35 people to help with child-care** during the 7:30, 9:00, 10:30 a.m., and 12:00 noon traditional services, and the 11:00 a.m. Wind service. We want to provide a wonderful experience for the littlest ones through five-year-olds. Would you consider worshipping at one service and serving at another? Please call **Marcia** at 860-529-1575, ext. 208.

Annual Meeting Reminder

Notice has been given that our **Annual Meeting** will be held in the Meetinghouse on **Sunday, April 10**, at 12:30 p.m., following the 11:00 a.m. worship services. Annual Reports are on the tables, available to pick up.

Included in the business of the Meeting will be the election of officers, a Moment of Memory, and other appropriate matters—as well as a vote to determine whether the June vote for affiliation/non-affiliation should require a 2/3 margin or a simple majority. **The affiliation/non-affiliation vote will be taken during our Annual Financial Meeting, on Sunday, June 5.** Please see related article below.

The Question of Affiliation

First Church members will vote in June on whether to affiliate with either or both of two Congregational organizations, the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC) and the Evangelical Association of Reformed Congregational Christian Churches (EARCCC), or to remain independent. First we need to ask: What would affiliation or non-affiliation mean for First Church, which in 2004 ended its relationship with the United Church of Christ?

The vote to affiliate will have little effect on life at First Church

whatever the result. We remain free to run our affairs in the Congregational way, whether or not we affiliate.

Aligning ourselves formally with one or both of these groups would place us in a covenant relationship with other congregations. This would provide a measure of accountability and expand opportunities for ministry with other churches, as well as reconnect First Church with its more than 300-year history of being part of an association. Whether we affiliate or not, we remain free to pursue relationships with other churches or organizations. Currently, First Church has non-covenantal relationships with Vision New England, Willow Creek, the Mission Consortium, and local churches.

Neither potential affiliation raises concerns over theology or practice. Should we affiliate and problems arise in the future, we would need to decide whether to continue the affiliation. If we do choose to affiliate, we should be prepared to devote some financial and other resources to support the organization(s).

To help clarify the choices, we will have meetings on the **Wednesday nights of May 11, 18 and 25, and June 1**, with speakers from the EARCCC and CCCC, as well as Black Rock Church, an independent congregation.



FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST NURSERY SCHOOL

is accepting registrations for the 2011-12 school year.

Tours are available during school hours.

Please call 860-529-1575 to sign up for a tour or for information, and be sure to visit www.firstchurch.org.

Gifts of the Generous Life

Last month we talked about what the Bible says about giving to the church. We know that we are called to give—there is a minimum, but God wants us to give generously. We also know that God promises to abundantly bless our giving. Our next question usually is: What does that blessing look like?

More Joy!

The first thing that happens when you give generously is **joy!** Everyone who has given a heartfelt gift to someone they love knows exactly what this verse is talking about:

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." —Acts 20:35b (ESV)

The giver receives the greatest blessing, not the recipient. There is a joy in giving generously that can't be found anywhere else. It is a gift beyond price, and your soul rejoices every time you do it.

More Faith!

Giving generously builds and strengthens your faith.

To give generously, you must take a little from the things you saved for yourself and give it to someone else. God knows that you are putting Him and the men and women He loves above yourself and that you are trusting in Him to provide all your needs. Our example is the widow, in Mark 12:42-44, who gave all she had. She trusted in God completely to apply this verse to her life:

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all that we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us... —Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)



SIXTH IN A SERIES ON FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

The more you trust God, the stronger your faith grows.

When we know the truth of that verse in our hearts, we no longer think of giving generously as a sacrifice. We become the "cheerful giver" that Jesus talked about.

Better Relationships!

All the people I know who are generous have great relationships. They are not buying friendship, but their generous spirit pours out of them in all ways into others, and that generous spirit helps to build wonderful relationships. Those who lack such a generous spirit are unable to nurture the special bonds shared by people who give more freely.

Who wouldn't want **more joy, more faith, and better relationships?** We all would.

But there is more good news to being generous! When we give and God blesses us, we have had a small part in His blessing. What an awesome gift! Take advantage of the

opportunity to give generously and have God bless it, and you won't be disappointed. In fact, if you have the same experience as me, you will wonder why you didn't do it sooner.

*If any of you have been blessed with **more joy, more faith or better relationships** as a result of your giving, please let us know your story. If you are inspired to do so, we ask that you submit a brief story (one or two paragraphs) to antonhertle@cox.net as a testimony to God's grace being active in your life—name, optional—from youth or adults.*

—**Anton Hertle**

Photo: Jim and Linda Johnston

April 6, 2011

Dearest Friends,

It is with mixed emotions that I write this letter.

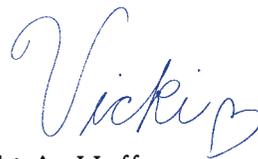
I am saddened to tell you that I am resigning my position as Director of Children's and Family Ministries, effective June 5, 2011.

Over the last three months, God has clearly guided me to understand that I have completed what He has called me to do here at First Church. During the past 24 years, I have seen Him work mightily in the lives of many and have seen His faithfulness displayed. There are so many of you that I will miss working with, as well as the relationships we have built. It has been a joy to watch many infants grow into adulthood and follow Luke 2:52, one of my favorite verses: *And Jesus grew in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and men.*

Although I am sad about leaving this awesome body of believers, I am excited about what God has prepared for me as the next step. I have accepted a position at South Congregational Church in Hartford. There I will be building a new program and continuing my passion to work with inner-city children and their families.

I pray, and look forward to, building relationships between our churches. God is great, and He has great plans for the greater Hartford area, to bring more of His Kingdom here.

With deep love and gratitude for all of you,



Vicki A. Huffman



It's the 30 Hour Famine!

On **Friday and Saturday, April 29 and 30**, high school and eighth-grade students will be participating in this year's **30 Hour Famine**, an annual Youth Ministries event. Students and adult leaders go thirty hours without eating as a way of demonstrating awareness of those throughout our world who do not have access to the food and clean water that we sometimes take for granted.

This is an international youth movement to fight hunger.

As part of the experience, students seek out sponsors who make financial contributions to **World Vision** (www.worldvision.org), a Christian organization that serves those in developing countries through a variety of programs. During the famine, students will study, play, and serve the community through a wide range of service projects.

Be sure to check out the **Facebook page** "World Vision's 30 Hour Famine" and the **website** www.30hourfamine.org.

If you are a student in grades 8 through 12 and are interested in being a participant in this year's Famine, **or to learn how you can sponsor** one of our participants, call **Marcia** at 860-529-1575, ext. 208.

Spring Work Day and Picnic, May 7!

Spring Work Day will be held at First Church on **Saturday, May 7**, meeting at the red barn at 8:30 a.m. First Church of Christ has a tradition of pitching in and getting our landscaping in shape all in one day—this is that day!

Projects include raking, weeding, mulching, minor painting, and window washing. Wheelbarrows and rakes are welcome. All you need to do is sign up at the display in the Wells Fellowship Area and bring some work gloves, along with a healthy appetite for the picnic lunch provided. Questions should be directed to **Bob Keleher**, at 860-529-1575, ext. 299.

Seder Dinner: Friday, April 15

The **Seder** is a Jewish ritual feast that marks the beginning of Passover and includes a retelling of how the Lord set the Israelites free from slavery. Many of the symbols used in this festival are especially profound in light of Good Friday and Easter.

Beginning at 6:15, **Rabbi Paul**



L. Saal, Vice President of the Messianic Jewish Rabbinical Council, will illuminate this sacred drama, which points to Jesus' own provision for salvation. A delicious lamb dinner, prepared by **Judy Carson**, follows at 7:15. Tickets are \$14 for the entire evening.

For a much fuller description, please see page 4 of the *March Spire* (available at firstchurch.org, under Resources).

Last October's Ravi Zacharias Talks To Be Broadcast on WIHS

Christ, Christianity and the Culture of Our Time: Is Christianity Still Relevant?—last fall's extraordinary presentations at First Church by theologian and author **Ravi Zacharias**—will be aired in three parts on radio station WIHS, 104.9 FM: part 1 on **April 13**, part 2 on **April 14**, and part 3 (the Q&A session) on **April 15**. Each part will air three times on its assigned day: 1:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., and 8:00 p.m.

Support the Youth Mission Work Camp Team!

RENT-A-CREW — \$60 for a two-hour minimum and \$30 for each additional hour "rents" you a crew of one adult and two teen workers. Weekend appointments **begin May 7**. Day and evening hours available for raking, weeding, minor painting, gutter cleaning, attic/cellar/garage cleanup, window cleaning, and hedge clipping. Call **Youth Ministries** at 860-529-1575, ext. 208, 303, or 205.

MOTHER'S DAY PLANT SALE — Tables will be set up on the church's front lawn, with impatiens, marigolds, petunias, hanging baskets, herbs, and more—on **Saturday, May 7**, from 9:00 to 2:00; and **Sunday, May 8**, after the 9:15 and 11:00 services. Questions? Call **Ted and Carol Willard** at 860-568-0660.

WOULD YOU DELIVER PLANTS?

Easter "Angels" are needed to deliver Easter plants from the Meetinghouse to homebound and bereaved members and friends. Please sign up on the Easter Angels poster in the Wells Fellowship Area, or call **Janet von Wodtke** at 860-659-2638, and come to the church on **Monday, April 25**, between 9:00 and 11:30 a.m. to pick up your assignment. For more information, please call Janet.

MOPS — All mothers of preschoolers are invited to our next monthly meeting, on **Thursday, May 5**, 9:15 to 11:15 a.m., in the Fireside Room. The theme will be **MOPS Wit and Wisdom**. Join us every first Thursday for food, fun and fellowship! Questions? Email **Maria Zematis** at mszematis@yahoo.com. To register for childcare, call **Karen Christensen** at 860-257-1299 or 860-604-0636.

FOOD BANK — The Wethersfield Food Bank

serves many who are in dire need. Donations of **nonperishable food items** may be left with the church receptionist. **Financial contributions** are also highly appreciated. They help to obtain the most-needed items. Simply place them in the Offering plate on Sundays—in cash, or a check payable to First Church of Christ with the memo "Food Bank." Questions? Call **Howard Page** at 860-563-3275.

KNITTERS/CROCHETERS are needed by the **Dominican Republic Mission Team**, to create dolls for children. For details and a simple pattern, contact **Joyce McNamara** at 860-436-2923 or jedanfor@juno.com.

D.R. MISSIONS GOLF TOURNAMENT!

Save the date—**Saturday, June 11**—at the Blackledge Country Club in Hebron. Registration is at 7:00 a.m., shotgun start at 8:00, and lunch to follow. Brochures are available in the Wells Fellowship Area. Questions? Contact **Dana Crompton** at 860-635-1530 or dcrompton@sbcglobal.net.

BROWN BAGGERS BOOK CLUB

will meet **Monday, May 2**, in the Morgan House Sycamore Room, at 6:30 p.m. Brown-bag your dinner and join this group for a lively discussion of *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*. Questions? Call **Linda Papertsian** at 860-257-7566.

NEW PICTORIAL DIRECTORY — On any

Sunday (except Easter), you can make your appointment in the **Wells Fellowship Area** to be photographed by Olan Mills in May, here at the church, for our long-overdue pictorial directory! Or you can make your appointment online, at www.signup.olanmills.com, or by phone with Olan Mills, at 1-800-866-2263. **Have you been attending First Church but are not yet a member?** Please don't hesitate to sign up—you are already part of our family of faith!

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL — April activities and special events

can be found on the **April postcard** for each level, under Youth (from Ministries) at firstchurch.org. Just scroll to the bottom and click the link!

PARENTS of middle and high school students

— Our **parents' newsletter, Connections**, will now be made available online at firstchurch.org as a downloadable PDF. We will also have printed copies available in the Wells Fellowship Area.

BOOK OF LIFE

ENTERED ETERNAL LIFE

Helen (Bradley) "Fran" Wright,
March 9, 2011

Frank Herbert Morris,
March 12, 2011

*Our Church unites in an expression of
heartfelt sympathy to their families.*

BAPTIZED

Gavin Kenneth Rafala, son of Salvatore and
Jessica (Wood) Rafala, March 13, 2011

Love never ends.

1 Corinthians 13:8a (ESV)

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 May issue of *The Spire*, which will be mailed and emailed on May 4, must be submitted to Dave Gilbert by noon on Friday, April 22, at daveg@firstchurch.org or 860-529-1575, ext. 225.

DATED MATERIAL
Mailed April 6, 2011

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Good Friday Memorial Concert

April 22 • 7:00 PM

Messiah

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

Parts II and III

First Church Choir and Cantata Singers • Pilgrim Youth Choir
Festival Orchestra • David Spicer, Conductor



SOLOISTS

Nancy Andersen
Linda Henderson
Anne Graczyk-Druce
Adrienne Milics
Christopher Dukes
Ryan Burns
Stewart Battle

Messiah, first performed in Dublin, in 1742, is most assuredly Handel's best known choral work. The libretto was selected from Scripture with great care by Charles Jennens, an admirer and acquaintance of Handel. Our choirs sang Part I of *Messiah* for our Christmas Concert this past December.

The concert will be a profoundly stirring and meaningful experience for those presenting the music, and equally so for those in attendance. Why not in-

vite neighbors and friends to join you for this event on the holy night of Good Friday? Childcare will be provided for those up to the age of 8, and an offering will be received.

If you would like to make a *special* gift of support in memory of a loved one, in recognition of one still living, or in appreciation of a ministry that has especially blessed you, call the Ministry of Music and the Arts at 860-529-1575, ext. 209; the deadline is Monday, April 18.