

Financial Meeting to Include Vote on Affiliation

Judy Franzen, Church Board president, has officially called the annual Financial Meeting of First Church of Christ for **Sunday, June 5**, in the Meetinghouse, immediately following the 11:00 a.m. worship services. All church members are urged to attend.

The agenda will include a discussion of, and vote on, the proposed 2011-2012 budget. Please watch for the proposed budget

on our website—firstchurch.org—after May 18, under *Resources/Documents*. For a printed copy, or if you have questions, call **Linda Jackson** at 860-529-1575, ext. 220. Also, a vote will be taken on whether or not to become affiliated with either or both of the committee-recommended associations. For details, see related articles in this issue and visit firstchurch.org/affiliation.

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.

MAY 1All Services

*Disciples on the
Road to Emmaus*

Message by Deryk Richenburg
Text: Luke 24:13-35
With Holy Communion

MAY 8All Services

What God Wants You to Know

Message by Lucinda Secrest McDowell
Text: 2 Peter 1:3-8,12,15

MAY 15.....Traditional

MAY 22.....*Wind*

No Perfect People Allowed

Message by Todd Willard
Text: Matthew 7:1-6

MAY 15.....*Wind*

MAY 29.....Traditional

Revenge

Message by Deryk Richenburg
Text: Genesis 45:1-15

MAY 22.....Traditional

MAY 29.....*Wind*

Why Bother to Worship?

Message by Michael McDowell
Text: Psalm 95

JUNE 5.....All Services

Who Leads the Church?

Message by Deryk Richenburg
Text: Daniel 7:9-14
With Holy Communion



FROM THE SENIOR MINISTER

It was on Maundy Thursday, just hours before His death, that Jesus prayed for His disciples and for us. In that prayer Jesus prayed to our Heavenly Father

so that we would be unified. His exact words in John 17:23 are: **“I in them [disciples] and You [Father] in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as You loved Me.”**

Jesus prayed that we would be unified like the Trinity is unified. And this was not just a prayer but a command as well. Jesus wants us to be unified. He wants us to be one so that we can reflect who God is.

This command from Jesus should be enough for us to move toward unity, but there is more motivation for us as well. Jesus says in the later part of the verse that our unity will reveal to the world two very important things about God. First, our oneness will reveal that Jesus came to this earth. Second, our unity will show that we are loved by God.

In other words, people will see our unity and be so overwhelmed with how countercultural it is that they will say, “Only a Savior who loves His people can bring about that. Jesus must have come,

because there is no other way to explain their love for one another.” Our unity has a powerful evangelistic effect.

We are to strive for unity and move toward oneness. What does this look like in our lives? As individuals, we are to strive toward working *for* peace, not *against* it. We are to look for ways to bridge our differences rather than find reasons for splitting. As a congregation we are to move toward oneness when we make decisions—decisions like the one coming up next month.

We will always have differences. Thus we must listen to one another so that we can learn from one another’s opinions. We can have differences and still be unified. We can love one another when we do not share the same opinions. Unity should be one of our big values—like truth, love, and worship.

Finally, this text obviously speaks toward our discussion around affiliation. It is a strong argument for affiliation; however, affiliation is not the only way to work out this text in our church. We are not to move toward independence but toward unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ,

however that looks. Above all, no matter what decision we make as a congregation, we must move toward unity so that we can reveal the love of our Father in sending Jesus.

—Pastor Deryk



Affiliate? Or Not?

First Church members will vote during the annual Financial Meeting (June 5) on whether to affiliate with either or both of two Congregational organizations, the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC) and the Evangelical Association of Reformed and Congregational Christian Churches (EARCCC), or to remain independent.

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. Audio recordings of the

meetings will be made available online and at the church, mainly for those who cannot be in attendance.

For details, and for links to useful information and websites, please go to www.firstchurch.org/affiliation. Also, be sure to visit the affiliation **information table** in the Wells Fellowship Area on any Sunday, and pick up a printed brochure.

Below are articles written by the Affiliation Education Committee to present two different points of view. Members of this dedicated committee are **Dana Crompton, Paul Marks, Sam Rodriguez, Joyce Senn, Glenn Sunshine, and Jon Vining**.

The Case for Affiliation

The primary argument against affiliation is that it is unnecessary. We can do everything we need to do without affiliating. And on one level this is so, if you assume that, all things being equal, independence is superior to affiliation. But such a conclusion springs from a shortsighted focus on the immediate interests of First Church—apart from the bigger question of the church at large as the body of Christ at work in the world.

Jesus tells us that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Rather than focusing only on what First Church will or will not get from affiliation, we should ask what opportunities affiliation may provide us to give to other congregations as a way of enabling God to be glorified. To be sure, we are involved with other congregations informally, but we have the potential to be-

come a very important “lighthouse” church for Connecticut and all of New England, especially for small congregations that are looking for help and leadership. Affiliation makes First Church much more visible for those congregations, and provides a level of responsibility to others and accountability in accord with how Scripture tells us we should deal with each other.

Throughout history, God’s dealings with humanity always have been ratified by covenants, and we in First Church of Christ ask our members to covenant with us when they join the church. Why, then, should we balk at forming a covenant with other churches with which we agree in faith and practice?

Another argument made against affiliation is that we would need to put resources of time and money into the affiliation. As

a matter of integrity, this is true, though the amount is up to us. As it is, we already devote these kinds of resources to our informal associations; why is it a problem to commit similarly to support churches with which we are in covenant relationship?

As Jesus made His way to Gethsemane, He prayed that we, who believe in Him through the word of the apostles, would be one just as Jesus is one with the Father. He prayed that we would be brought into complete unity (John 17:20-23).

The question for us is, will we better express that unity by keeping First Church independent with only informal relationships with other churches, or by adding to those informal relationships by joining hands in covenant relationships with churches that are compatible with us in theology and organization?

The Case for Remaining Unaffiliated

First Church has been unaffiliated for several years since leaving the United Church of Christ. During that time, our ministry and outreach have diversified and thrived. Although affiliating with a congregational association would not necessarily interfere directly with those ministries, the indirect impact could detract from our existing work and from First Church’s ministry direction.

First Church has developed relationships with a variety of local, regional, national, and international ministries, including Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church, the Connecticut Missions Consortium, Vision New England, the Willow Creek Association, and the mission trip to the Dominican Republic. We support the work of Prison Alpha, Angel Tree, Samaritan’s Purse, Hartford City Mission, Camp Hope, and many others. We also participate in such national ministries as the Stephen Ministry and Celebrate Recovery. Further,

First Church has a vision for outreach that involves developing closer relationships with churches in the area, including, particularly, urban churches in Hartford. All of this points to the wide range of First Church’s non-covenantal affiliations and demonstrates that covenantal relationships are not necessary for us to have a vibrant and wide-ranging ministry in collaboration with other churches and ministries.

This range of collaborative ministries puts First Church squarely in the center of one of the most important trends in the American church today: the growth of unaffiliated churches that give up permanent denominational and other covenantal affiliations in favor of more dynamic ministry partnerships tailored to the specific vision and calling of the churches.

Covenantal affiliation carries with it certain costs, which would necessarily have an impact on our existing relationships. If we affiliate, we would make financial con-

tributions to the association(s) we join. Where would that money come from? At a time when our financial resources are already stretched thin, which ministries would have to give up part of their budget to support the affiliation? And would it be possible to expand our ministry in the direction of the church’s vision if we also have to put money into the affiliation?

In the same way, affiliation would divert not only money but also focus and energy from our existing ministries and new ministry directions toward the 4Cs and/or EA. While these may be worthwhile organizations, the basic question is whether this is the direction we should choose for our church, or whether our existing ministries and direction are the better fit and choice for First Church. Since our current approach has developed out of the life of the church, we need to devote ourselves to these efforts rather than diverting time, energy, and money into other directions.



Dear Family of Faith,
271 families have signed up to have their picture taken for the **First Church Pictorial Directory**. My goal is to have 400. I believe we can accomplish this goal, **but I must have your participation.**

Olan Mills has made it very easy for you to schedule an appointment. You can do so at www.signup.olanmills.com or by phone with Olan Mills at 1-800-866-2263. **And after each service**, every Sunday, my team of volunteers will be at the sign-up table in the Wells Fellowship Area. Stop by to ask questions and find a date and time that works for you.

Available dates are **May 10, 12, 13, 14, 24, 26 and 27, plus June 2, 3, 4 and 16.**

Thank you to all the volunteers who have signed up to help! This project would not be moving forward without you. I still need volunteers for the **June** photography sessions, so please contact me at annemkelly@mac.com. This is a great way to meet members of our family of faith!

Thank you all in advance for helping make the First Church Pictorial Directory a huge success.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you in the directory.
 —**Anne Kelly**

Annual Missions Golf Tournament

Our Fifth Annual Missions Golf Tournament will be held at Blackledge Country Club in Hebron on **Saturday, June 11**. This scramble tournament begins with registration at 7:00 a.m. and a shotgun start at 8:00. Proceeds will support the First Church summer mission trip to the Dominican Republic. Register early for this great event—we anticipate that it will sell out.

GOLFERS: Cost includes continental breakfast, 18 holes with cart, contests (with prizes!) including longest drive and closest to the pin, a barbecue lunch after golf, a great time of fellowship, and a tax deductible contribution to support the mission trip.

SPONSORS (companies, individuals, small groups) are also needed to help support the tournament and are recognized in the program and on a sponsor sign.

For links to golfers' and sponsors' brochures and to last year's photos, visit firstchurch.org/golf. Or find details in the Wells Area or through **Dana Crompton** at 860-635-1530 or dcrompton@sbcglobal.net.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP — Join us in the Fireside Room at noon on **Wednesday, May 11**, for a "Build Your Own Salad" luncheon. Catered by Judy Carson, all the salad ingredients and dessert will be provided; cost: \$6. Following lunch, there will be a special program. If you plan to attend, please call **Judy Tatters** at 860-529-5362.

PANDAMANIA in Children's Ministries! That's the theme of our **Vacation Bible Camp** summer program, **July 18 to 22**, when children will learn that "God is Wild about You." Plus, they'll have an amazing time with crafts, games, songs, and much

more! Registration is open for those from age 4 through completed fifth grade. Older children, and adults, can volunteer and get in on the fun as well. Forms are available on our website and from the receptionist.

PASTOR MIKE McDOWELL will be approaching 20 years of ministry at First Church on December 1. Therefore, this summer—June 6 to September 6—he will be away on a sabbatical. This will provide a special opportunity for prayer, reflection, study, connecting with family, rest, renewal and drawing closer to the Lord. Mike welcomes your prayers for this important time.

New Nominating Committee Starts Early

The Nominating Committee's official duty is to present a list of nominations for open positions such as those filled recently—including seven on the Board of Deacons and two Church Board youth members-at-large. **This work requires input from the congregation!**

Consider this: In the 2011-12 church year, in addition to finding Spirit-filled people to serve as Deacons, the committee will also need to fill several positions on the Church Board, including (but not limited to) chairpersons of Finance and Property, Inreach, and Outreach, and an adult member-at-large.

We have been blessed to have wonderful servant leaders in these roles, but, unfortunately, they must step down this coming year. According to the Church By-laws, each may serve only two consecutive two-year terms, after which they are not eligible to serve again until a lapse of one year.

Do you know of someone you believe would be a good candidate for one of these positions? Do you feel God is calling for **you** to serve? If so, please give it prayerful consideration and then use the form below to submit name(s) and relevant position(s) directly to one of us on the 2011-12 committee, at any time. Or you may place the form in the marked submission box in the Wells Fellowship Area. The next time we will be asking for input will be in September. Meanwhile, thank you for partnering with us in this important work.



2010-11 Nom. Committee members: (seated) Susan Giliberto, Carl Braren, Lisa Shattuck, (standing) Dick Franzen, Carol Chase, Dennis Dostert, Janice Kooken, (not shown) Tim Penn, and Bill Lynch.

Sincerely, your 2011-12 Nominating Committee: **Carol Chase, Dick Franzen, Janice Kooken, Kathy Krozel, Bill Lynch, Tim Penn, Felix Rodriguez, Lisa Shattuck, and Roger Willard.**

Submission to the 2011-12 Nominating Committee for the 2012-13 Church Year

Your name: _____

Person you are recommending: _____

Position: _____

Comments on why this person would be a good candidate for the position: _____

USE ADDITIONAL PAPER IF NECESSARY

FOOD BANK — Now is the time to help the Wethersfield Food Bank stock up on items for the summer, when children are out of school, raiding the refrigerator and cupboards. Food must be available for them and their families, and for so many others who go to Social Services for aid. Statistics show that one in six children in this country go to bed hungry! **We must help.** There is now a **white wooden box in the Wells Area** for your gifts of nonperishable food items. When you shop, if you would pick up just one extra item, it would be a blessing! Kindly contact **Howard Page**, at 860-563-3275, with questions or suggestions.

BOOK OF LIFE

ENTERED ETERNAL LIFE

Claire (Stenner) Matteson Agee,
April 20, 2011

Our Church unites in an expression of heartfelt sympathy to her family.

BORN

Heather Joylin Voth, daughter of Greg A. and Ellen Gilson Voth,
September 24, 2010

UNITED IN MARRIAGE

Arthur Robert McCarthy
and Jill Christine Campbell,
April 16, 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 summer issue of *The Spire*, which will be mailed/emailed on June 8, must be submitted to Dave Gilbert by noon on Friday, May 25, at daveg@firstchurch.org or 860-529-1575, ext. 225.

DATED MATERIAL
Mailed May 4, 2011

PERIODICAL
POSTAGE PAID
at Hartford,
Connecticut

The Spire (USPS 441-830) is published monthly, except July and August, by The First Church of Christ in Wethersfield, 250 Main Street, Wethersfield, Connecticut 06109.

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Parent Education Class

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

—Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (NIV)

As we read in those verses, we are told that the home should be the primary place for Christian nurture. The church and its ministries provided are here to be a support for the spiritual nurture happening in your home.

Because of this biblical principle and our desire for children to worship with their families as early in their lives as possible, a one-hour **parent education class** will be held, called **Deut 6 in Action**.

We will cover how to help your child engage in worship and will offer creative ideas to equip parents to live out the Deuteronomy 6 passage. You don't need to be a biblical scholar to model faith and plant



seeds in your child's heart that God will cause to grow!

This class is offered twice.

Choose **Saturday morning, May 21**, from 10:00 to 11:00, or **Tuesday evening, May 24**, from 6:30 to 7:30, each in the Meetinghouse. Parents of children in preschool and older are invited—no cost, no supplies, just an hour of your time to invest in the spiritual future of your children, led by **Vicki Huffman** and **Marcia McCann**.

OTHER IMPORTANT DATES:

Final Church School classes are on **June 12**; VBC is **July 18-22** (see page 3); Camp Hope is **July 31 to August 6**. For details, go to firstchurch.org or pick up a brochure in the Wells Fellowship Area.

ASOF Winners' Concert

The winners of last September's national **Albert Schweitzer Organ Festival** competition will present a rich and varied program on our Austin pipe organ on **Sunday, June 12, at 7:00 p.m.** You will hear brilliant organ works ranging from the 17th to 20th centuries. In 1908, Schweitzer wrote about the organ, "...the tones do not perish but ascend to God like praise too deep to utter."

Christopher Holman, who took first place in the High School Division (at left in photo), is from Thomasboro, Illinois, and **Simon Thomas Jacobs**, first-place winner in the Young Professional Division, lives in Greenwich, Connecticut.

The experience will be enhanced by closed-circuit projection, allowing all present to view the organists as they play. Following



the concert, attendees will have a chance to meet these two young virtuosi at a reception.

An offering will be received, and childcare will be available (up to age 8).

Plan now to attend this very special event.