

New Times for Worship Services

STARTING SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, our traditional services will take place at **8:45 and 10:30 a.m.**, with the Wind service also being changed, to **10:30 a.m.** By reducing the traditional services from three to two, our worship will be enhanced and we will be brought closer to the unity we all desire.

Much thought and prayer have gone into this decision, as well as discussions and surveys. Our wonderful Deacons met this past Tuesday, January 3, to finalize the details (see page 3).

Gratefully, we have seen how receptive and adaptable our parishioners are to this positive step as we begin the new year!

Upcoming Sunday Sermons

JANUARY 8

Blessed in Order to Bless Others

Message by Deryk Richenburg

Text: Genesis 12:1-3

* * *

Ephesians Sermon Series



God is restoring His family through the glorious work of His Son. As His children, we are to be good stewards and use His gifts to bring about unity in the family. We are to walk like Jesus and show off our Father in everything we do.

JANUARY 15

The Divine Mystery

Message by Deryk Richenburg

Text: Ephesians 3:1-13

JANUARY 22

A Steward of the Mystery

Message by Deryk Richenburg

Text: Ephesians 3:1-13

JANUARY 29

The Mystery Revealed in Prayer

Message by Michael McDowell

Text: Ephesians 3:14-19

NEW YEAR'S DAY

can be a life-changing day. My friend decided to do something about his balding head—he shaved it. I jumped at the opportunity to do something life-giving—I went swimming in the ocean like a polar bear.

Many people make decisions at the beginning of the new year to enhance their lives. They set goals, they make resolutions, they look forward to a new year with hope. Most people choose to improve their health like losing weight or deciding to eat better. Others will have financial goals in mind. Some even have relational goals.

What concerns me in my life and in yours is whether we have goals and hopes for our souls. What are the resolutions we can make so that our spiritual life will be better?

Take some time and ask yourself some important questions. How is God inviting you to go deeper? How can you walk closer to Him this year? Is He asking you to sacrifice something for Him? Is this the year that you pick up one of the Bible Reading Calendars and begin to read His Word daily?

I have set some of my own spiritual goals this year. I want to be more relational this year. Being relational to me is at the heart of being a disciple. I want to grow in my relationship with God by praying more. I want to connect more with my mentors to see how they will guide me in my life with Jesus. I want to meet with more people that I can disciple. Even more importantly, I want to spend more quality time with my family.

Those are some of my goals this year. What are yours? What is God calling you to resolve to do this new year?

—Pastor Deryk



Winter 2012 Adult Classes

For details, full descriptions and contact information, please visit www.firstchurch.org/allclasses or call **Arlene** at 860.529.1575, ext. 211.

NOTE: Starting February 5, Sunday classes will begin at **8:45 a.m.**

SUNDAYS

DISCIPLES IN PROCESS — Sundays at 9:15 a.m. Beginning a study of **Genesis** on **January 8**, using a book by J. Vernon McGee. Facilitated by **Janice Johnson**. *Morgan House Oak Room.*

COUPLES' CLASS — Sundays at 9:15 a.m. Our new theme, **Crazy Love**, begins **January 8**, guided by Francis Chan's 10-week DVD study. Led by **Steve and Lisa Peery**. *Morgan House Drawing Room.*

THE LIFE OF MOSES — Sundays at 9:15 a.m., ongoing. This is a study of Moses, a fascinating man shaped by God. Hosted by **Greg and Ellen Gilson Voth**. *Morgan House Chestnut Room.*

GENESIS — Sundays at 9:15 a.m., ongoing. Looking at the biblical patriarchs, we are examining the text of Genesis in detail. Taught by **Dr. Glenn Sunshine**. *Fireside Room.*

TUESDAYS

AN INVITATION TO THE PSALMS — For women — Tuesdays from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. This great collection of songs and prayers expresses the heart and soul of humanity. Facilitated by **Faye Smith**. *Church Library.*

TUESDAYS OR THURSDAYS

MEN'S MORNING BIBLE STUDY begins Colson's DVD series **Doing the Right Thing** on **January 17** (*Fireside Room*) for Group 1 and **January 19** (*Conference Room 1*) for Group 2, both from 6:45 to 8:00 a.m., led by **Bill Lynch** and **Jon Vining**.

WEDNESDAYS

BELIEVING GOD — For women — Wednesdays from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. This Beth Moore DVD study, based on Isaiah 43:10, is subtitled "Experiencing a Fresh Explosion of Faith." Facilitated by **Judy Carson** and **Erika McKee**. *Morgan House Birch Room.*

SACRED RHYTHMS — Wednesdays from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. This six-session DVD study, which began **January 4**, links Christian disciplines to the desires of the human soul. Facilitated by **Pastor Mike** and **Cindy McDowell**. *Worship Room.*

PROVERBS — For women — Wednesdays from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., starting **January 11**, studying this book's divine wisdom with a study guide by Kathleen Buswell Nielson. Facilitated by **Christina Jagel**. *Morgan House Chestnut Room.*

FIRST PLACE 4 HEALTH: Giving Christ Control — Wednesdays from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., starting **January 11**. A life-changing 12-week class, focusing on the Great Commandment. Led by **Suzanne Edgare**. *Morgan House Drawing Room.*

EVERY OTHER THURSDAY

WOMEN IN SCRIPTURE — For women — Every other Thursday, 7:00 to 8:00 p.m., through **May 31**. Discussion and prayer time, led by **Nancy Ryszkiewicz**. *Morgan House Dining Room.*

SATURDAYS

SATURDAY MORNING MEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST — 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. Prayer, discussion of Scripture, fellowship, and a hearty breakfast. *Fireside Room.*



OUR WONDERFUL NEW MEMBERS, who joined our family of faith on Sunday, December 11, are (*standing*) **Annette Baser**, **Eunice Lee**, **Evelyne Castiglione**, **Jillian Hockenberry**, **Kevin McGinty**, **Jennifer Gray**, (*seated*) **Roger Dunn**, **Janine Hewitt**, and **Dori Sargent** with her children.

Annette is an artist and teacher, and she enjoys sharing her testimony; **Eunice** is an R&D manager for Habasit America and enjoys sports and yoga; **Evelyne** is an assistant property manager and likes ministering to others; **Jillian** is a junior planner for the City of Hartford and likes traveling, dancing and cooking; **Kevin** works in security services at Middlesex Hospital and likes gardening and woodworking; **Jennifer** is a juvenile detention officer and enjoys cooking and helping others; **Roger** is a project leader for the Student Conservation Association and is passionate about environmental stewardship and missions; **Janine** works with Hartford Seminary and the Governor's Prevention Partnership and enjoys hiking, song writing and photography; and **Dori** is a counselor and yoga instructor in the New Britain schools and also likes karate, hiking and drumming.

Youth Ministry: Seeing Jesus

We have been challenging our Middle School students to open the "eyes of their hearts" to the reality of God working in the world around them.

Down in the Youth Room (feel free to swing by and check it out) we've created the **Seeing Jesus Wall**. It is a place where students can write down the stories of what God is doing in their lives and what they have seen God doing around them. You will be amazed when you read these stories.

May we all be reminded to open our eyes as we worship and follow a God who is on the move!

—**Pastor Todd**





Pastor Mike's Milestone

It is truly my pleasure to remind everyone that **Mike McDowell** celebrated 20 years of ministry with us on December first.

I continue to be impressed with Mike's love of Jesus and his pastoral heart for all of us. Please thank him with me for his faithful service to us.

—*Pastor Deryk*

D.R. Mission Trip Meeting, January 10

The Dominican Republic Mission Team's 2012 trip is July 6 thru 14. The team will minister to poor Haitians living on the D.R. sugar cane fields, through medical clinics, evangelism, food distribution, children's programs, hospital construction, and love. No experience or special skills are necessary.

The first meeting of the 2012 D.R. Mission Team will take place on **Tuesday, January 10**, at 6:00 p.m. in the Fireside Room. Pizza will be served. A \$100 deposit will secure your spot on the team! Contact **Dana Crompton** at 860.635.1530 or dcrompton@sbcglobal.net for more information.

Soap and Toothpaste for Hatians

Marla Darius and **Diane Krause** are joining a medical mission trip to Haiti, January 22-30, to treat ailments and supply needed items. **Now through January 15**, please place in the marked box in the Wells Fellowship Area any size toothpaste and large, individually wrapped bars of soap. For full details, and photos, please visit www.firstchurch.org/haiti.

Snow Jam 2012 Nears!

January 20-22, all in **grades 5 through 12** are invited to join us for an awesome weekend at Singing Hills in Plainfield, New Hampshire. There will be snow sports, skating, wild games—and time to discover what it means to be a follower of Jesus! Call **Todd Willard** at 860-529-1575, ext. 205, or go to the bottom of one of the **Youth** pages at firstchurch.org and click on the Snow Jam link for a brochure.

Souper Bowl Sunday!

Following each worship service on **Sunday, February 5**, our Confirmation Class students will be collecting nonperishable food items for the Wethersfield Food Bank. Every year we participate in this important nationwide event.



Please help us as we seek to care for our community in this way. Monetary contributions will also be accepted and will be donated to the Town of Wethersfield Social Services.

Nursery School Registration Begins

First Church Nursery School registration for the 2012-2013 school year **starts Monday, January 9**. Next year all classes will be a full three hours long for each session. For registration packets or to sign up for a school tour, please call **Pat Gilbert** at 860.529.1575. Registration forms and more are available at www.firstchurch.org/nurseryschool.

Operation Christmas Child Update

A heartfelt thank-you to everyone who packed an Operation Christmas Child shoe box during Samaritan's Purse National Collection Week, November 14-21.

We delivered **373 filled boxes** to the regional distribution center in Bloomfield. Pray that God will meet the physical and spiritual needs of the hurting or impoverished children who receive these gifts.

New Sunday Service Times

Starting Sunday, February 5, First Church will offer two traditional services instead of three. These two services will be at **8:45 and 10:30 a.m.** Also, the Wind service time will change to **10:30 a.m.** to correspond with the second traditional service.

The new times were determined by the Board of Deacons, who took into account average attendance at each service, input provided by the congregation in December at an informal meeting, and the results of a congregational survey about our services. Also considered was the length of time needed between services by the Ministry of Music, for Wells Area fellowship, and to ease parking congestion.

In the survey, the congregation responded overwhelmingly favorably to moving from four to three services—two traditional and one contemporary—affirming that merging the three traditional services into two will serve to enhance our worship experience by having each traditional service fuller.

The Deacons realize that the change in service times will be a difficult adjustment for some, and trust and pray that the new schedule will be a positive change in the life of our beloved Church.

For more information on both the need and the process, please see the insert sheet in the December issue of *The Spire* (accessible at www.firstchurch.org/spire).

—*Nan Green, Chairperson, Board of Deacons*

Looking Forward as God's Church

Greetings, friends,

As we enter the new year, and the blessed and busy season celebrating the birth of our Savior has passed, it is time for us as a body of believers to look ahead on what God is preparing us for at our beloved First Church.

We are so blessed to have pastors who deeply love God and seek to follow His leading. We are also blessed that they love us and seek to continually bring us closer to God by steadfastly preaching of His love, showing us how we are to live as God's children and what the Lord expects of us as we endeavor to deepen our relationship with Him.

As we move ahead, we would be grateful for your prayerful support. Changes have been made to our church experience—changes that we in leadership positions have prayerfully considered before implementing, for the good of First Church.

While we realize that change is sometimes not easy to accept, we are asking you to take this journey with us and to support us with your prayers, attendance and service. Yes, we do have some great challenges, but we believe that God is at work in our midst. Let us all be vigilant to hear His leading.

I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ Himself.

Colossians 2:2 (NLT)

May the Lord continue to bless us all.

—*Judy Franzen, Church Board President*



BOOK OF LIFE

ENTERED ETERNAL LIFE

Muriel Anne (Williams) Sudo, July 2, 2011
Harriet (Buck) Anderson, November 29, 2011
Grace (Webster) Adams, December 12, 2011
Devra (Powley) George, December 16, 2011

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

STORM CLOSINGS

Under conditions severe enough for us to cancel services or close the church, we will post announcements on our website's home page—www.firstchurch.org—and our Facebook page, besides notifying the media and, if possible, changing our main phone line recording (860.529.1575).

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: info@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

Uplifting Messages
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, x218.

Ateesa M. Afshar Associate Minister
Wayne E. Luman Director of Caring Ministries
Marcia J. McCann Dir. of Children's 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 February issue of *The Spire*, which will be mailed/emailed on Jan. 25, must be submitted to Dave Gilbert by noon on Friday, Jan. 13, at daveg@firstchurch.org or 860.529.1575, ext. 225.

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Super Bell XX: January 29

Exquisite Ringing!

THE HANDBELL CHOIRS of First Church will present their twentieth annual **Super Bell Concert** at 4:00 p.m. on **Sunday, January 29**. This beautiful tintinnabulous event features ensemble and individual ringing by accomplished musicians of all ages.

Guest director for this event will be **David Harris**, who directs the Raleigh (North Carolina) Ringers, one of America's most popular handbell ensembles (www.rr.org).

Enjoy our gifted **Carol, Laudate, Campanella, Belles & Beaux** and **Soli Deo Gloria Handbell Choirs**, through the year directed by **David Spicer, Marti Bernardi, and Linda Henderson**; and the very young **Kristal Bell Ringers**, directed by **Joan Hines**, our

nursery school director. Always a high point is the **Henderson quartet—David, Linda, Andrea, and Benjamin**—who will be presenting selections as well.

You will hear English Whitechapel and American Malmark handbells and choir chimes, along with a set of Petit & Fritsen handbells from Holland.

This ever-popular concert is open to the public. A reception will follow. A free-will offering will be received, and childcare is available for those age 8 and under.

You are encouraged to bring one or more nonperishable food items, which we will take to the Wethersfield Food Bank to benefit children and adults in dire need.

