

Advent and Christmas at First Church

Wednesday Advent Communion Services — Dec. 5, 12 and 19 — 6:30 to 7:10 PM

Christmas Concert — Sunday, Dec. 9 — 4:00 and 7:00 PM

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services — Monday, Dec. 24 — 6:30, 8:00, 9:30 and 11:00 PM

"Happy Birthday, Jesus!" Party (age 5 thru grade 3) — Monday, Dec. 24 — 6:30 to 7:30 PM



A COUPLE recently told us they were expecting. The joy on their faces was priceless.

They couldn't wait to tell their family.

I'm sure this Advent will be like no other. They will be able to relate to the story of Mary and Joseph in a new way. They will understand in part how Mary and Joseph were

feeling when Jesus kicked inside the womb.

Expectation. What blessed good news. It is always good news, yet sometimes we are thrown off kilter—like Mary and Joseph.

What do we do when God gives us an expected gift we don't really expect?

Just because a gift is unexpected, doesn't mean it doesn't come with joy. I'm sure if you ask another couple—the Majewskis, who are expecting twins—they will tell you what a wonderful gift they've been given. Yes, it was unexpected, just as Jesus was to Mary and Joseph. But it's joyful nonetheless.

Like the Majewskis, like Mary and Joseph, I believe God is giving us something unexpected, something new. God is birthing something in us. He is giving us a great gift.

We might not see it yet. But just like a baby, God's gift is growing. Eventually, we will see His wonderful gift.

In the meantime, how should we respond to God's unexpected gifts?

Just like a couple waiting for a child to be born—with joy and holy anticipation.

—**Pastor Deryk**

You Are Part of a Caring Congregation!

One of the best ways to tell that our congregation cares is by our commitment to **Stephen Ministry**, an important way that we express God's love to those around us.

Is God calling you to take a more active role in Christian caregiving? Then Stephen Ministry may be just what you're looking for. You can attend a 15-minute **informational meeting** after the 8:45 or 10:30 services on **December 2 or 16**. To find out more, call **Wayne Luman** at 860.529.1575, x203.

Advent Sermon Series



Grace: The Very Heart of Christmas

First Sunday in Advent
DEC. 2

Message by Pastor Mike
Text: John 1:1-18

A Loving, Singing Warrior

Second Sunday in Advent
DEC. 9

Message by Pastor Deryk
Text: Zephaniah 3:14-17

Joseph: It's a Wonderful Life

Third Sunday in Advent
DEC. 16

Message by Pastor Tessa
Text: Luke 2:1-7

Jesus: The Name Above All Names

Fourth Sunday in Advent
DEC. 23

Message by Pastor Deryk
Text: Isaiah 9:2-7

The Sound from Mount Crumpit

Christmas Eve: 6:30, 8, 9:30, 11
MONDAY, DEC. 24

Message by Pastor Deryk
Text: Luke 2:8-14

A Long Wait

First Sunday in
Christmastide
DEC. 30

Message by Pastor Deryk
Text: Luke 2:22-35

Christmas Silver Tea

Our annual **Christmas Silver Tea** will be held on **Wednesday, December 12**. The Women's Fellowship extends a warm invitation to women of all ages to share in this lovely tradition at First Church.

The delightful Silver Tea will be held in the Worship and Fireside Rooms, beginning at 12:30 p.m. with a time of worship, followed by **Christmas carols with the children of the First Church Nursery School**.

Following the program, tea, punch and delicious cookies will be served. Please feel free to bring a friend to share in this most enjoyable and heartwarming experience! If you plan to attend, please call **Evelyne** at 860.529.1575 x208 by December 10. (If you forget, walk-ins will still be welcome.) And homemade cookies would be appreciated!

WOULD YOU HELP DELIVER PLANTS?

Christmas "Angels" are needed to deliver the lovely memorial plants from the Meetinghouse to our homebound members and friends after Christmas. Please sign "Angel" after your name in the Friendship Register or call **Sybil Lyon** at 860.633.2840, and come to the church on **Wednesday, December 26**, between 9:00 a.m. and noon, to pick up your assignment. (Call the church office if you have signed up but find you are unable to help that day.)

ANGEL TREE CHRISTMAS — Will you help make Christmas more meaningful to a child of a prisoner? Due to an extremely

low number of children being able to attend the Angel Tree Christmas Party this year, we are canceling the party and focusing the volunteer effort on purchasing and delivering the gifts to the over 100 children we are supporting this year. As a result, there is a huge **need for volunteers to deliver gifts** to families in Hartford and many surrounding towns before Christmas Eve. For details, contact **Wendy Parker** at 860.371.0367 or wendysparker@gmail.com.

URGENT FOOD BANK NEED

— Due to the recent need for food in areas affected by hurricane Sandy, the shelves have been largely depleted, and food donations are now down as well. *One in every six children in this country goes to bed hungry!* We must help them and so many others who are in dire need. There is a **white wooden box** in the Wells Fellowship Area for your gifts of nonperishable food items. Monetary donations are also greatly appreciated, with checks payable to First Church of Christ, memo "Food Bank." Call **Howard Page**, at 860.563.3275, with any questions or suggestions.

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 the church's Facebook page—[facebook.com/FirstChurchPage](https://www.facebook.com/FirstChurchPage), and also, if possible, on our main phone line recording (860.529.1575). In addition, we publicize churchwide closings on

Channels 3 and 30, and radio station WTIC (1080 AM and 96.5 FM). You may also check online at wfsb.com, nbconnecticut.com, or wtic1080.com. Occasionally, some ministries may make their own decisions; when in doubt, please be sure to contact your ministry leaders.

Priceless Pancakes!

This Saturday, December 1, from 9:30 to noon in Keith Jones Hall, the Saturday Men's Prayer Breakfasters will be hosting a **Pancakes with a Purpose breakfast** as a fundraiser for our Haiti mission trips in December and beyond, through First Church and Bethesda Evangelical Mission. Sausages, orange juice, milk, coffee and tea will also be served.

Proceeds will help the team members go and serve, and to buy food, school supplies and toiletries for Haitian orphanages and also the BEM church in Brefette, the poorest section of Les Cayes, Haiti. These children otherwise would not have any Christmas celebration! Our December **"Children's Christmas Dinner" trip** is set for December 15 to 22.

So, please, help to give joy and hope to hungry hearts and bellies!

Team members will serve at the December 1 breakfast and will share previous mission experiences and photos.

If you have not yet obtained your ticket, **please call Lisa Breglio** to let her know you will attend; tickets will be available at the door. The donation is \$4 for one person, \$7 for a couple, and \$10 for a family. Lisa can be reached at 860.563.1659.

Snow Jam Weekend Nears!

January 18 to 20, all in grades 5–12 may join us for an awesome weekend at Singing Hills in Plainfield, New Hampshire, with snow sports, skating, wild games—and time to discover what it means to be a follower of Jesus! Call **Pat** at 860.529.1575 or **Todd Willard** at ext. 205.

BOOK SIGNING: Glenn Sunshine's *Portals*

In the Wells Area on **Sunday, December 9**, respected First Church teacher **Glenn Sunshine** will sign copies of his latest book, ***Portals: Entering Your Neighbor's World***, which he wrote at the suggestion of the late Chuck Colson. Copies will be available for purchase.

Portals offers a lively and valuable discussion of seven of the worldviews that shape American culture. Intended primarily as a guide for Christians to understand their neighbors, this book can benefit anyone interested in bridging the divide between competing worldviews and entering the mental world of those around us.

Glenn, a longtime member of First Church, is a professor of history at CCSU and an instructor in the Centurions Program, a worldview training course of BreakPoint.

Retired? Join the Belles & Beaux Handbell Choir!

For those of retirement age and available to rehearse on Tuesdays at 11:00 a.m. (and able to read music), this choir offers a delightful opportunity to create musical joy with and for others. If you are interested, please call the Ministry of Music and the Arts at 860.529.1575, x209.



Christmas Joy!

Our Church is filled with **poinsettias** during the week of Christmas, due to the generosity of the congregation. **You may add to the joy** by making a memorial contribution to the **floral decorations**. **Suggested donation is \$35.**

This completed form and your check (payable to "First Church of Christ") should reach the church's Finance Office by **Tuesday, December 11**. Either mail them to First Church or place them in the drop box located just outside the Finance Office.

This information (except phone number) will appear in print:

In loving memory of: _____

Given by: _____

Your phone number: _____

PLEASE PRINT • USE ADDITIONAL PAPER IF NECESSARY

Midweek Advent Services

The Heart of Advent

Every Advent season is enriched by our very special mid-week services of prayer and Holy Communion, offered in the Meetinghouse **Wednesday evenings from 6:30 to 7:10.**

This year our **first** Advent service, on **December 5**, will begin at 6:30 with the usual Advent and Christmas carols, Communion and prayer, but will also provide an extended opportunity (following Communion) to remain for a season of prayer that will conclude at 8:00 p.m. Worshipers are free to depart after Communion at any time.

For the remaining two Advent services (without the extended prayer time described above), a different member of our family of faith will speak briefly at each service—**Heart-to-Heart**—focusing on inspiring stories from their own lives.

Pastor Mike invites you join us for all three of our 2012 Advent services.

On **December 12**, our Heart-to-Heart speaker will be **Dickie Hopper**, who joined First Church in 2006 after moving from New Hampshire. She came to faith as an adult in a small-group Bible study. Dickie is grateful to God and First Church for her recent progress in developing a closer relationship with Jesus, especially through difficult situations this past year, and for the growing privilege to follow God's call for her to participate



Dickie Hopper

in mission trips. Dickie and her husband, David, raised five children, and she now has 13 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Our second speaker, on **December 19**, will be **Annette Baser**, who has been attending First Church for three years, joining about 18 months ago. She is an artist (painter) and is Teaching Director for the CBS (Community Bible Study) class in Avon. Annette will share how God became so much bigger and more loving and trustworthy during a tough couple of years. She will



Annette Baser

explain how, in God's economy, He has taken the downturns of her life and is reinvesting them into wonderful gains.

2013 D.R. Mission Trip Info Meeting Set for December 12

First Church is very pleased to announce the **eighth intergenerational mission trip to the Dominican Republic**, set for **July 12 to 20, 2013.**

The team will be doing construction projects and conducting medical clinics, along with food distribution, evangelism, programs for children, and more.

This is a life-changing trip both for the people we serve and for the team members. No specific skills are required—if you have an interest, God has a plan for you!

If you would like to know more about this opportunity, please join us in Room M-7 on **Wednesday, December 12**, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., for an informational meeting. Pizza will be provided.

Please contact **Dana Crompton** at 860.635.1530 or dcrompton@sbcglobal.net for more information and also to be placed on our email distribution list.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

6:30, 8:00, 9:30, 11:00 PM

CHRISTMAS EVE at First Church is an unforgettable experience. We light our chandeliers, and the Meetinghouse is full of the joy Christ's Birth brings! **Pastor Deryk** will



give us an uplifting message—**The Sound from Mount Crumpit**—and the music will be truly glorious!

Plan to be with us for this holy moment of celebration, and invite family, friends, and guests to be with you in God's House that evening—at **6:30, 8:00, 9:30 or 11:00.**

*Childcare is provided during the 6:30 p.m. service for ages 5 and under, and our 15th annual **Happy Birthday, Jesus! Children's Party** will be held separately during that service (see below).*

Happy Birthday, Jesus! Party

During the 6:30 service, children from age 5 through grade 3 are invited to the Fireside Room for a celebration of the Birthday of our King—with games, crafts, Christmas carols and birthday cake! (Those in grade 4 and up are encouraged to attend church with their families.)

NOTE: Anyone who can attend one of the later services and **help with the party** during the 6:30 hour should call **Evelyne Castiglione** at 860.529.1575, x208.

Help is also needed for childcare for preschool and younger during the 6:30 service, for whom age-appropriate activities are planned. Won't you lend a hand on this special evening when so many visitors come to our church?

Caroling on the Broad Street Green

Also, don't miss the ever-popular **caroling on the Broad Street Green**, a community-wide event led by First Church Pilgrim Fellowship, with brass accompaniment and a brief message by **Todd Willard**. There will be candles and song books for everyone! It is a joyous gathering at **5:00** on Christmas Eve!

Former Senior Minister Jey Deifell Honored with Minister Emeritus Status

The Church Board recently voted to bestow the honor of Minister Emeritus of First Church of Christ to the **Rev. J. Jey Deifell Jr.**

Pastor Jey was Senior Minister at First Church from 1996 to 2009 and now resides in retirement with his wife, Joan, in North Carolina.

We would like to honor Jey in this capacity, as he has touched many lives within our congregation through his years of ministry in our midst, and beyond.

Please be with us on **Sunday, February 3**, when a presentation will be made to Jey during the 10:30 traditional service, followed by a reception for him and Joan in the Wells Fellowship Area. All are invited to attend!



BOOK OF LIFE

ENTERED ETERNAL LIFE

Curtis McLeod, October 28, 2012
Betty Preston, November 3, 2012
Lillian Lewis, November 4, 2012

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

BORN

Olivia Irene Bucci, daughter of Andrew and Sarah Bucci, October 29, 2012

BAPTIZED

Caleb Morgan Coffey, son of Sean and Erika (Thurston) Coffey, October 21, 2012
Nathaniel Asher Slater, son of Jason and Lizbeth (Colon) Slater, November 18, 2012

UNITED IN MARRIAGE

Kevin James McGinty and Jennifer Nadine Gray, September 8, 2012
Stephen Thomas Stallings and Margaret Sarah Secrest McDowell, September 23, 2012
Matthew Edward Labo and Jennifer Lee Cooper, October 12, 2012
Matthew Rader and Elissa Arndt, October 13, 2012
Jesse Mello and Nicole Marie Perkins, October 19, 2012
Ross Allen Massey and Jillian Mary Hockenberry, October 27, 2012

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 Times

Traditional Services in the Meetinghouse:
8:45 and 10:30 a.m.
Wind Contemporary Service
in Keith Jones Hall: 10:30 a.m.

First Church on Facebook

www.facebook.com/FirstChurchPage

Dial-A-Message: 860.529.1785

Uplifting Messages from Caring Ministries

What will you leave behind?

Please remember First Church in your will.

Atessa 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 January issue of *The Spire*, which will be mailed/emailed on 1/2/13, must be submitted to Dave Gilbert by noon on Thurs., December 13, at daveg@firstchurch.org or 860.529.1575, x225.

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Browse the Updated Outreach Gift Shop During Advent!

The Outreach Gift Shop, founded 30 years ago by Meg Barstow and Ruth Truex, has partnered with nonprofit, fair trade organizations like SERRV International and Ten Thousand Villages to reduce poverty through connections with low-income artisans and farmers around the world, helping those in third-world countries to develop and market their products. Also, for all ages, there is a lot to learn here about other cultures!

Your purchases provide opportunity, training, support and a fair income to these men and women—including some new projects:

We continue to sell note cards with photos of children and families taken on our mission trips to the Dominican Republic, to benefit the Feed-A-Family food program. Team members have hand-delivered parcels of food that feed households for up to a month.

We are also selling lovely necklaces hand-made by women from the D. R. batays with

the proceeds going directly to the individuals who make them. And most recently we are selling boxed greeting cards to help support Heydy, the Compassion International child sponsored by our Church School children.

ADDITIONAL ADVENT HOURS

The shop is the first door on the left as you enter the Marsh Building from the Connector. We are open year-round, following the Sunday worship services. Additionally, the shop will be open on **Wednesday evenings during the Advent season**, before and after the two Christmas Concerts on **December 9**, and, upon request, during any special event being held in Advent.

We hope you will visit the Outreach Gift Shop during Advent, Christmastide, and the new year. We're sure you'll find the perfect gift for that special someone in your life. On behalf of all the people we help around the world, thank you for your continued support!

THE HELEN L. REINFRANK CHORAL CANTATA SERIES

Christmas Concert

An encore performance of one of our most exquisite concerts of the past quarter century

We have offered many memorable concerts in what is now my 26th year at this wonderful church!

One program that felt "just right" was the Christmas Concert we presented in 2007. My thought was to get the same brass group and percussionists we had then, and present **the very same program (twice!) this year, on Sunday, December 9**, in our beautifully decorated Meetinghouse.

Not all of the players can be with us—though a few will be—but we still have an outstanding ensemble! *O Holy Night*, arranged by Robert Hebble, was so exceptional five years ago that one of the professional trombonists (who has heard that carol many, many times) remarked that it really got to him. We will sing that, along with *Gloria* by John Rutter, *Gloria In Excelsis Deo* by Daniel Pinkham, *Christmas Day* by Gustav

Holst, and many familiar carols.

After checking the 2007 program,

I was delighted to see that the date we had chosen was December 9—just like this year!

So, invite friends to dinner and then to the concert (or vice versa) and join us for "2007 in 2012" on **December 9, at 4 or 7 p.m.** If you come early for the 4:00 concert, you will also hear the Wethersfield High School Choralaires, directed by Scott Rioux.

An offering will be received. Childcare is provided (up to age 8). You are encouraged to bring a nonperishable food item to be given to our local food bank for those in need.

The first concert is funded by the Reinfrank Choral Cantata Fund, in loving memory of Helen L. Reinfrank (1924-2002).

—**David Spicer**, Min. of Music and the Arts

