

Looking for Answers

IT'S HARD to get our minds off the tragedy in Newtown. Evil has invaded our backyard and we are trying to pick up the pieces and figure out what to do now.

Fixing the problems we face is complex. Smarter people than me can figure out all of the issues and solutions. We can look at all of these things, but when are we going to get to the point where we throw up our hands and cry out, "Lord, we need You. You are the only One who can fix the mess we are in."

In 2 Chronicles 20, we read of Judah facing a threat from a vast army. King Jehoshaphat's response guides us. He didn't gather the generals together to come up with answers. He brought all the people together to pray. Why? He knew this sort of problem could not be solved with human answers. It could

only be answered by God. And yes, God answered—boy did He ever!

Similarly, when Moses and the Israelites were up against the Red Sea and the Egyptians were coming, he didn't gather the best and brightest for answers. He turned to God and waited for His answer. Only after receiving that answer did they move forward. No one could have ever guessed the answer would be to walk through the sea.



Continued on page 2

What will help you grow this year as a disciple?

AS WE BEGIN A NEW YEAR, I realize there are many things I could write about. There are exciting things going on at our church. We have more and more people headed out to share God's love in the mission field, both abroad and here in our midst. We are progressing in the work of the Marsh Building, and we are discussing the question of elders. I believe all of these things are helping us move toward our goal of *fostering a grassroots movement of Kingdom communities who love God and love others in profound ways and live to extend His Kingdom.*

However, I would like to begin the year in a different direction, with a question for you to consider.

If you could focus on one thing this year that would help you grow as a disciple, what would that be? Without a doubt, I believe the best thing to help you grow is spending more time with God in His Word so that it may change your life. God desires a deep relationship with us, and the main way He engages with us is through prayer and His Word—the Bible. Our response is not just to read

His Word but to shift our lives so we can be transformed by Him.

This year, I want to add this emphasis so that we can reflect on Scripture more as individuals and as a church. Our new sermon series, **Sweeter than Honey**, is aimed at just that. David says the Word is sweeter than honey and more precious than gold. Why? It's not because it is a book. It's



God's Word, which He uses to help us walk with Him in every way in our lives. I hope this series will open up for you a new way of relating to Him as you hear the Holy Spirit speaking in your life.

Not only will we be focusing on ways to help you engage and reflect on Scripture in your lives, we want to reflect on Scripture

together more in our services. Paul said to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:13, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching." We are going to add this to our services with the expectation that it will enhance our great worship services even more.

Wind — SPEAKING OF SERVICES, our Wind service is growing and we are almost at capacity. What a great problem to have! Still, I would invite you to pray with the deacons and me as we try to discern our next steps in trying to strengthen the Wind service along with all of the other services. As part of this, in April we will begin an evening service focused on reaching a younger crowd. As we get closer, we will be filling you in with more details.

Yoke — FINALLY, I am excited to begin **Yoke** on January 16th. **Yoke** is a class that will help us to understand and live out principles of *being* a disciple and *making* disciples. We will use the Gospel of Mark as our text, and Jesus will be our guide. Hope you can make it. (See page 3.)

—Pastor Deryk

UPCOMING SUNDAY MESSAGES

JANUARY 6, EPIPHANY • *Encountering God in 2013*
Pastor Mike — Text: Matthew 2:1-12

Sweeter than Honey SERMON SERIES

JANUARY 13 • *God-Breathed*
Pastor Deryk — Text: 2 Timothy 3:10-17

JANUARY 20 • *The Fruit of the Word*
Pastor Deryk — Text: Mark 4:1-20

JANUARY 27 • *Sweeter Than Honey*
Pastor Deryk — Text: Psalm 19

Looking for Answers *Continued from page 1*

My point is simply this: the problems we face are God-sized problems. And to fix God-sized problems we need God-sized answers.

There is only one way to seek those answers.

They will not come even when we get the best and brightest holy minds in the room and ask them to come up with answers. Their answers will only turn us further away, because we would be working out of our own strength. Right now, we don't need human thinking. We need a Savior.

Our God-sized answers will come only when we are on our knees seeking Him. And it can't be a quick prayer and let's get

to work. It will have to be holy wrestling and waiting. For only God can fix this problem.

Now is the time for us to stop *thinking* of answers and start *being* the answer. We need to pray and seek Him. I believe if we pray first, then wait for God, we will get answers that we never knew existed. Even more than that, God will miraculously open up the Red Sea.

We have God-sized problems. We need God-sized answers.

—*Pastor Deryk's 12/19 blog post*
From pastorderyk.blogspot.com

Our wonderful new members,

who joined our family of faith on December 9, are (back row) **Mary Javaji, Rahul Mudimala, Matthew Burke, Kevin O'Neal, Lori Labbadia, Debbie Morrow, June Fontes, Steven Tuers**, (middle row) **Karen Smyth, Glen Smyth, Courtney Morrow, Angela Tuers**, and (front row) the **Lienau family: Jeffrey, Camille, Sadie, John, Ava, and Marianne**.



Soap and Toothpaste Needed for Haiti

Soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes will be carried on the Haiti Medical Mission Trip departing January 27; please see firstchurch.org/Haiti for specifics, and leave your items in the collection box in the Wells Area by **January 20**. The team includes **Marla Darius, Chris Darius, Dickie Hopper, and Diane Krause**. *That Web page also shows samples of exquisite note cards—with Marla's photography—now offered in the Wells Area to raise mission funds.*



D.R. Mission Trip Meeting, January 8

This year's intergenerational mission trip to the Dominican Republic is set for **July 12 to 20**. The team will work on construction projects and conduct medical clinics, along with food distribution, evangelism, children's programs, 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 the Morgan House Drawing Room on **Tuesday, January 8**, from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m., for an informational and team meeting. Pizza will be provided. Contact **Dana Crompton** at 860.635.1530 or dcrompton@sbcglobal.net for more information and also to be placed on our email distribution list.

Crochet or Knit Dolls for the D.R. Mission!

The 2012 Dominican Republic Mission Team needs **hundreds of dolls** to distribute to children on the sugar cane fields.

The pattern is simple and the rewards great. A link to the pattern is given at firstchurch.org/DR.

If you can help by making one or more dolls, please contact **Joyce McNamara** at 860.436.2923 or jedanfor@juno.com.



Elder Board Proposal Article 3

First, an apology — The Elder Subcommittee wants to apologize for some incorrect information. We had been told by someone that we formerly had an elder model of governance. After doing more research, we realize that that was not entirely true. The church originally organized under a ruling Elder; however, they did not continue in that form of governance. Again, we are sorry.

So far, we have talked about what an elder is, what an Elder Board looks like, the differences between an Elder Board and our current Church Board, the advantages of the elder model, and why we are proposing to move there. Now let us turn our attention to its effects.

Learn much more by visiting firstchurch.org/elder. Recently added is a link to answers to questions raised during our informational meetings.

How will this affect me?

Finding a church leader to contact will be easier.

Because there will be less leadership turnover, it will be easier to find someone in a leadership position. Also, under the current system, most people have to call the church or check the Annual Report to determine which member of the Church Board would be most appropriate to speak with about an issue.

Direction, doctrine, and conflict resolution will be more consistent.

As we discussed in the last article, gaps were created in our operating structure when we discontinued our relationship with the United Church of Christ. Now there will be clear lines of authority and responsibility, creating a more stable and effective church.

There will be less administration and bureaucracy.

Installing an elder model will streamline church administration, allowing you to live out your service to Christ in the church and community more effectively.

How will this affect how the church works?

Leaders will focus on direction, doctrine, and conflict resolution.

Since committees will no longer have a board seat, the leaders of the church will focus on direction, doctrine and conflict resolution. They will provide oversight on church activities..

The Nominating Committee will have limited changes.

The Nominating Committee will no longer need to vet and recommend candidates for the President or Member-at-Large positions on the Church Board. They will still need to recommend candidates for all other positions (deacons, committee chairs, moderator, etc.).

Almost nothing else changes.

Deacons currently report to the Church Board; under the new system, they will report to the Elder Board. **Paid staff members** still report to the Senior Minister, who will be a permanent member of the Elder Board. **All committees** will report to the Elder Board. Their structure or mission won't be changed.

Pastor Deryk's *Yoke* Class to Begin Jan. 16

When Jesus asks us to take His yoke upon us, He means that we are to follow His teaching and His ways. It means being a disciple.

Yoke is a class that teaches us about discipleship, using the Gospel of Mark as a springboard. We will gather in the Meeting-house on **Wednesdays**, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. All are welcome! For details, please call **Marilyn** at 860.529.1575, x213.

Prayer Shawl Ministry Celebrates 10 Years!

In 2002, I suggested to Caring Ministries Director Joan Deifell that we start a Prayer Shawl Ministry, modeled on one I had read about and investigated, which was held at St. Patrick St. Anthony Church in Hartford. Joan was interested, but was even more excited about adding this new program when I told her I would be willing to run it. Visit firstchurch.org/shawl for the full story!

Our first meeting was held in January 2003. We have about 13-15 knitters, some of them charter members. We have given away hundreds of shawls, mainly to comfort those who are dealing with health or grief issues, and some baby blankets as well.

Every monthly meeting begins with a prayer of blessing, usually includes a no-talking period, and closes with a prayer of ded-

ication (written for us by Pastor Tessa), spoken over the finished shawls. At home, we pray privately over our knitting—sometimes quite specifically, if we know who the recipient will be.

We meet on the **first Tuesday** of the month, **September through June**, at 6:30 p.m., in the conference room behind Reception. We always welcome new knitters. The atmosphere is relaxed and peaceful, and while we knit, we share stories, concerns, and joy.

Interested? Please call me at 860.529.7821, or just join us at a meeting. I always feel uplifted by these wonderful women.

—**Elaine St. Onge**



Opportunity Knocks

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

We all find great comfort in this Scripture:

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

—Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)

It is a great assurance that the God of the universe takes personal interest in each one of us. Beyond being made in the image of the Most Holy God, we have a special place—a unique destiny—in His plan for eternity.

If God has a plan, shouldn't we have one also? Of course, we all have plans. But in this letter we want to talk about a special type of planning—*service planning*.

Service is as essential in our Christian walk as care for God's creation or taking care of our family. All are foundational to being good stewards for God.

Unfortunately, most Christians equate the word "stewardship" with finance only—*stewardship=money*—but this stewardship letter is not about money; it is about service. So we would like you to think about planning your service to God's Church. This service comes under the category of Caring for Our Neighbor.

We say that "we are a community of Jesus followers who love God, love one another, and make disciples." As a community, we live, we work, we play, and we worship—*together*. We are all parts of one body and are interdependent. We cannot be the community that God wants for us if we don't support and help each other. By selflessly serving each other, we serve God.

For most of us, we don't think about working in the church until someone calls and asks for help. But a better way is to *plan* our service. *What interests you? Is there something you really enjoy doing? Do you feel gifted by God in a particular*

way? Where do you think you can make a difference?

One way to start planning is by seeing where God is already working and in what ways you would be best suited to join Him in that work. You will enjoy browsing First Church's valuable "Opportunities to Serve" listing, either in printed form (there is a submission box in the Wells Area) or online at firstchurch.org/serve.

We know you're busy. We all seem to know how to fill our 24-hour days—most of us would like to have an extra hour or two every day in order to get everything done! We understand. But we also know that everyone has time and money for the things they put first.

What we are suggesting is that you put your service to our community in Christ's Church higher on your priority list. Intentionally make time for it and adjust your weekly schedule.

It really doesn't matter *what* you do, as long as it is appropriate for *you*. Everyone who serves provides value. *What* you do isn't as important as doing *something*.

I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.

—Edward Everett Hale

I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish humble tasks as if they were great and noble.

—Helen Keller

While not expecting anything in return, you are nonetheless rewarded by the deep satisfaction that comes only from serving in Jesus' Name. Service satisfies your soul. Will you seek the opportunity that God has already planned for you?

—Your Stewardship Team

The Centurions: A Worldview Focus

First Church is hosting the New England chapter of the Centurions, a worldview training program started by Chuck Colson eight years ago. Centurions study Christian Worldview with the objective of changing the culture for the good.

Subjects include worldview concepts, worldviews held by other religious and secular groups, church revival, starting a worldview movement, and changing the culture. The curriculum follows the national program developed by Chuck Colson. Currently there are over 800 Centurions worldwide.

In addition to two weekend residencies, the Centurion candidates meet on the first Monday of each month for one year to discuss books and articles on worldview and to analyze films as to worldview content. Candidates also participate in a Christian worldview devotional. On a typical Monday night, fifteen candidates meet at First Church and four out-of-state candidates call in on a conference line.

Candidates are required to develop a teaching project and study making disciples in the context of worldview issues. Nineteen candidates from several states in New England will be commissioned in May 2013 and will become certified by the Colson Center for Christian Worldview as Centurions.

Centurions **Glenn Sunshine, Jon Vining, Bill Lynch and Doug Van Veldhuisen** are the local leadership group.

Please visit firstchurch.org/centurions for more information and for the dates of the 2013-2014 class.



Several participants are in discussion at a Monday night meeting of the New England Centurions Program at First Church.

Women's Retreat

APRIL 5-7 • HERITAGE HOTEL, SOUTHURY

SPEAKER PAMELA PALAGYI on *BALANCE AND BOUNDARIES*



ARE YOU READY for a time of strengthening and refreshing? Do you want to hang out with friends, grow deeper in your faith, laugh, rejoice, swim, eat lots of good food that you didn't have to prepare yourself, and let Jesus minister to your soul? Do you want to make new friendships and catch up on your old ones? If you said yes to any of the above, then our **Women's Retreat** is the place for you.

Thanks to overwhelming demand, once again we are holding the Women's Retreat at the luxurious **Heritage Hotel** in Southbury. Known as one of the premier Connecticut hotels, the Heritage Spa and Conference Center is in the Litchfield Hills area, about 50 minutes from First Church.

Our retreat will start on **Friday evening, April 5**, and end on **Sunday, April 7**. Our rate for double occupancy both nights, including two breakfasts and one lunch, is \$246. For those submitting payment by February, the amount is \$239. Also, some partial



scholarships are available for First Church members.

This year, our speaker will be **Pamela Palagyi**, talented Bible teacher, author and pastor. Having once heard Pam speak already, I am thrilled to experience her incredible wisdom and spiritual depth once again.

Pam's theme for this retreat will be **Balance and Boundaries**. Her four topics are **An Abundant Life**,

Living with Godly Passion, Moving Beyond the Potholes, Pileups & Problems, and **Balance and Boundaries**.

For descriptions of those topics, as well as Pam's biographical information, please go to firstchurch.org/retreat.

We hope to see many of you at the retreat next spring. If you have questions, please email me at tessa@firstchurch.org.

Uniquely You Seminar Comes to First Church on February 9!

Watch for details on **Uniquely You**, an enlightening and practical seminar focusing on discovering your giftedness in Christ.

This nationally acclaimed event—hailed by Rick Warren as “one of the best seminars ever!” and “wholeheartedly” recommended by Dr. Charles Stanley—will be offered here **Saturday morning, February 9**, from 9:00 to noon. It is a rare opportunity!

Full details will be available at the church, online, and in the February *Spire*. **To be placed on our email list**, please email **Marilyn Danielson** at marilynd@firstchurch.org.

Last Call for Snow Jam!

January 11-13, all in **grades 5-12** 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! Come and connect with friends and with God. Call **Pat Gilbert** at 860.529.1575 or **Pastor Todd** at x205, or go to firstchurch.org/snowjam for the brochure.

Emeritus Presentation for Pastor Jey

The Church Board has voted to bestow the honor of Minister Emeritus to the **Rev. J. Jey Deifell Jr.**, Senior Minister at First Church from 1996 to 2009 and now residing 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.

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.

Souper Bowl Sunday!

Following each worship service on **Sunday, February 3**, 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 Hartford City Mission.



OUR WONDERFUL THIRD-GRADERS received Bibles during a reception on November 25. In the photo are (front row) **Sophia Gibilisco, Angelina DeLeon, Brooke Arnold, Cory Hookie, Callum Sherry, Nathaniel Daly, Gavin Sherry**, (middle row) **Ryan Beard, John Lienau, KarLeigh Tinker, Warren Stevens, Francis McKee**, and (back row) teacher **Becky Reggero**, assistant **Benjamin Henderson**, and teacher **Ken Bradley**. Not shown are **Gavin Sherry** and **Conlan Wesley**.

Nursery School Registration Begins!



Nursery School registration for the 2013-2014 school year will begin **Monday, January 7**. All classes are a full three hours

long for each session. Both morning and afternoon sessions are offered. For registration packets or to sign up for a tour, call **Pat Gilbert** at 860.529.1575. Registration forms and much more are available at firstchurch.org/nurseryschool.

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

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.

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. Richenbourg 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. 30, must be submitted to Dave Gilbert by noon on Fri., January 18, at daveg@firstchurch.org or 860.529.1575, x225.

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Super Bell XXI: January 27

Exquisite Ringing!

THE HANDBELL CHOIRS of First Church will present their twenty-first annual **Super Bell Concert** at 4:00 p.m. on **Sunday, January 27**. 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 (see 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.

