



THE PARISHIONER

THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, WOODBRIDGE 1738-2020

An Open, Welcoming, and Affirming Church

Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m.

Telephone: (203) 389-2119

Fax: (203) 389-2110

E-mail: office@uccw.org

Website: uccw.org

CT Conference Website: www.ctucc.org

Visit us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/uccwoodbridge

March 2020

Pastor's Column

One day Jesus took Peter, James and John up to the mountaintop. When they reached the summit Jesus's face began to shine like the sun, and his clothes were as bright as a freshly laundered white linen suit. Out of nowhere, the great prophets Moses and Elijah appeared, and stood talking with him. Not knowing what to do, Peter suggested they set up three tents for the luminaries. At that moment, an immensely bright cloud overwhelmed them and a powerful voice declared, "This is my son, the beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" Astonished and full of fear, Peter, James and John fell to the ground. The cloud lifted, and Jesus walked over and touched them. He told them not to be afraid. Together, they walked down the mountain to where the other disciples and crowds were waiting. The Bible calls this story the *Transfiguration* of Jesus. It was only after the resurrection of Jesus that they began to trust the depth and reality of their own experience.

At times in our lives we, too, may have experiences that are overwhelming and inexplicable. I believe I had such an experience one day as I was trudging through deep snow across a wide and open field. Eli and Karen were way up ahead hurrying home to get out of the late, frigid Saturday afternoon. I was out of breath and peeved they had left me behind when I stopped for a moment's rest. At once all sound and motion ceased. The pink and yellow clouds came to rest and the sun stopped on its journey to the horizon. No breeze touched my cheek, and my breathing slowed dramatically. I felt the life-giving rhythm of my heart in a new and mysterious way. Time disappeared. I was no longer a creature moving through the world or separate from it. Everything, the sun, the earth, the air, my heart, even time itself, were one, inseparable and indistinct. In that moment there was neither *then* nor *when*, but simply *now*, brimful with the glorious mystery we name God. Then a small bird slashed across my vision and everything began moving again. I headed back home. I had no idea what had happened, but felt like I had been overshadowed by the Great Mystery. I still can't make heads nor tails of it. But, as I share my story with others, I experience again, a taste of the promised peace surpassing all understanding. Whenever I tell this story I savor again, that exquisite moment when God's grace stood me still and enveloped me in the Love that is *right now*.

Years after, he stood on the mountain top with Jesus, Moses and Elijah, Peter wrote to a church suffering a crisis of faith. Some church leaders were convinced Jesus wasn't really a person at all, but a divine manifestation absent of flesh and blood. They were increasingly persecuted, uncertain and confused, feeling abandoned by Jesus who had not yet returned. Their hope was slipping away. Peter urgently reminds them to trust their own experience. They were given a faith like his own. They knew Jesus Christ created their community of love, where they shared their lives and hope, supporting one another in mutual love and affection. They had been saved by the faith that resurrection was theirs, and Jesus was returning for them soon. Even if the others had doubts about what they experienced, they should trust Peter's. He wasn't selling them a bill of goods, made up of strange myths and wild tales. He hadn't invented a great something from nothing. Peter informed them, that what was seen and heard was the glory of God shining through Jesus. Recognizing the truth and depth of his story, members of the small community believed. They began again to experience God's presence in their lives and bravely shared their stories with others. Even now, we can hear their voices while reading Peter's eyewitness account of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ. We are the heirs of their faith and hope.

(continued)



(Pastor's Column continued)

I believe most folks come to faith, not by well-reasoned philosophical or theological argument, but through the storytelling of others who have experienced the presence of the living God. Whether standing on a mountaintop or in a snow-covered field, whether sitting with a grieving friend or stuck in traffic, these moments are God's gifts that we might live in faith and hope. We may never know what the sharing of our firsthand experience of God's presence may mean to others; we can believe that through our sharing, God shapes us.

In the joy and peace of knowing that Jesus loves us all,
Shepard.



Church Council

At the January Congregational Meeting, in addition to approving both the 2020 Annual Operating Budget and Annual Capital Budget, the congregation re-elected Kit Engstrom for a new 1-year term as Treasurer, and elected Penny Rogers to 2-year terms on the Nominating Committee. Thank you both for your willingness to serve in these important positions. January is also when we elect new members of the Board of Stewardship, but no nominees came forward. In May we will be electing members to most of our committees and boards as well as a Moderator and a Clerk. I

would encourage everyone to consider board/committee service and to let the Nominating Committee (Judi Reynolds, Penny Rogers and Janice Touloukian) aware of your interest. Also feel free to talk with myself or current members of a board/committee to learn more about the function of that board/committee. A reminder, several of the boards and committees are open to friends of the church – those individuals who attend services regularly or who make a contribution to the congregation but who are not members.

The vote to pass the 2020 Operating Budget was not unanimous in part because the budget left some line items underfunded. The budget included pledge income for 2020 of just over \$95,000. We are working on sending out a follow-up appeal and I want to urge anyone who has not yet pledged for 2020 to do so that we can make up the shortfall that led to the underfunded line items and help the church out with our mission. Thank you to Baron Jones and the Stewardship Committee for the wonderful work on the 2020 campaign. Thanks also to those in the members of the congregation who made personal calls encouraging pledging to parishioners who are regular attendees. My gratitude to the Trustees for the difficult work they did in creating the 2020 budgets.

On Sunday March 8, there will be another First Church Renewal session in the Memorial Room after the church service. At this session we will hear from our various boards and committees about their views on the future of their board/committee and of the church, as well as the target audience they feel we should seek out in trying to gather information on the future direction of the church. I encourage everyone to attend. Council will be meeting next on Monday March 2 at 7 pm. in the Board room. Every one is welcome to attend.

Bill More, Moderator

Men's Fellowship

Men's Fellowship will be meeting on Sunday, March 15, following church to continue planning for Spring 2020 meetings and events.

Easter Flower Orders

Lilies! Tulips! Daffodils! Now is the time to order your Easter flowers! Please fill out the enclosed form and return to the office along with your payment. All orders must be submitted **no later than Sunday, March 29**. Order forms are also available in the office..



Holy Week Schedule

April 5 - Palm Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m.
April 9 - Maundy Thursday Service 7:00 p.m.
April 10 - Good Friday 10:00 a.m. - 12 Noon

**April 12 - Easter Sunrise Service and
Breakfast 6:30 a.m.**
Easter Worship - 10:00 a.m.



Electronic Parishioner Second Appeal

We have been discussing ways to distribute this, our monthly church newsletter, The Parishioner. It is currently mailed out to those on our mailing list and posted on our website. We do not mail enough copies to send out as bulk mail anymore, so we have to use the more costly first-class stamps. One suggestion is that you can receive an electronic copy through Email. If you would like to receive The Parishioner electronically, please send an Email to us at FCCW@UCCW.org saying Send Parishioner electronically. The other option is to pick up a copy at the church or continue to receive it in the regular mail. Either way let us know what you prefer, you can call the office or email FCCW@UCCW.org. Thank you for considering this. Cathy Hubbard

Our Church's History

Following the initial "Who Knows?" in last month's Parishioner, some inquisitive people asked "why" and "how" the church got started? Exactly what happened? Last month we stated that the parish of Amity (First Church) was established by the Connecticut General Assembly in Hartford in 1738. But how did they get to that point? Here's the story.

In colonial days the part of New Haven west and northwest of the main town was called Chestnut Hill. At the same time the area in the northern part of Milford including Orange, Woodbridge, Bethany and the present day South Naugatuck (See the map from the Milford Tricentennial book, 1939) was called North Milford. The dividing line between Milford and New Haven started on the shoreline, Long Island sound, and divided the towns to the north. Today, this division line is Milhaven Rd. in Woodbridge. Due to the difficulty of travelling to worship services in either Milford or New Haven, in 1734 the general assembly of Connecticut granted the request of the inhabitants of Chestnut Hill and North Milford the right to "winter preaching" for five years and absolved them from paying taxes during those winter months.

Imagine yourself living in Chestnut Hill or North Milford in the 1730s. The hills were wilderness, back country. They were inhabited by only the hardest descendants of the original Puritan migration. These farmers were totally self-reliant, capable of withstanding backbreaking toil in the most adverse conditions. And they were also believers. They wanted to worship year round. The granting of "winter preaching" in 1734 provided the impetus for the establishment of The Parish of Amity five years later.



Who Knows ?

1) This home (pictured above) is located at 1194 Racebrook Road. Historically significant as the home of two prominent Woodbridge families (Newtons and Baldwins). Parts of the home were built as early as 1740 as a Newton homestead. In this home was born the Reverend A) _____ (1795-1865). He married in 1813 Betsy Baldwin the daughter of Silas Baldwin and Mary Smith. The First Church of Christ sponsored him along with other missionaries to help the B) _____ (name the tribe) in 1821. Unfortunately, Betsy and her infant boy died during the journey west. After being a missionary Reverend Newton was among those who settled San Antonio, Texas. He died in 1865, three years after the death of Samuel Houston. Later the home pictured became the Woodbridge Hunt Club, 1911 – 1930. (Answers on page 5)



Welcome JoAnna Rubino!

It is with great excitement that I welcome JoAnna Rubino onto our staff. She has been working in our office on a temporary basis since October and now has been officially hired as our Office Manager beginning March 2. She is hardworking, creative, welcoming and I am pleased she will be representing us in the front office. But wait, there's more! The Board of Christian Education has called her to be the new Director of our Christian Education program. JoAnna is a person of deep faith. She is an artist and a musician, with a wealth of teaching experience, who brings with her a passion for creating inspiring programs through which our children and youth can learn about our faith and explore it. Welcome JoAnna, we're grateful God has brought us together in service to Jesus Christ!

Weekly Bible Study

Wednesday mornings from 10:00-11:00 a.m. the Deacons and the Rev. Shepard Parsons hold a weekly morning Bible Study based in the Lectionary. We meet Wednesday mornings for fellowship and study. This is open to the community! Bring your friends!



Adult Choir rehearsals are on Wednesday nights at 6 p.m.

Music News

*If you are interested in joining either group or just want to give it a try, we invite you to join us in the choir room adjacent to the sanctuary.



Bell Choir rehearsals are on Mondays at 7:30 p.m.

Sanctuary Repainting Update, February 18, 2020

The John Canning Company has completed its consultation services for the repainting of the sanctuary. David Riccio, a Canning VP, shared their results and recommendations with the congregation on January 12 in an informative, fascinating, and inspirational presentation.

A final comprehensive written report including renderings and an itemized budget was received on February 14. It is available to interested parties on the church website at www.uccw.org, by email (on request), or as a hard copy at the church office.

The next step will be to provide the State Historic Preservation office the required documents for a 50% reimbursement for the \$10,800 cost of the Canning consultation services.

Soon, the Board of Trustees will scrutinize the proposed budgets, consider making application for another SHPO grant (up to \$100K matching), decide if we will need to do the work in stages, and to decide how best to raise the money necessary to complete the repainting. Persons from the congregation and wider community are welcome to participate in this process. We are most grateful that some have already expressed a financial commitment for this work.

B. Joyce Simpson (trustee)

Thank You!

We had a wonderful Mardi Gras celebration on Sunday February 23. Thank you to everyone who brought toppings and side dishes for our baked potato lunch. Everyone had a great time and the free will offering was donated to Columbus House.



Retirement Reception

A retirement reception for Carole Prescott will be held at the end of April. Date and details to follow.



Volunteering

The Deacons also welcome anyone who would like to usher, donate flowers, or serve coffee, to sign up in the Parish Hall or contact the church office.

Columbus House Outreach Cooking Schedule and Coffee Hour Schedule 2019-2020

Once again we must thank all our committees for cooking and serving at Columbus House. This ministry of our church happens on the Sunday before the third Monday of every month. Henry Gates has been so generous in shopping every month so that all we have to do is cook on Sunday and serve on Monday! Each committee chairman will receive by email or snail mail instructions and directions approximately 10 days before they are to cook and serve. The following committees are scheduled for September through August:

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Monday, March 16 | Troop 907 Boy Scouts |
| Monday, April 20 | Church Council |
| Monday, May 18 | Music Committee |
| Monday, June 15 | Trustees |
| Monday, July 20 | Men's Fellowship |
| Monday, August 17 | Open to Volunteers |



Jesse Hubbard, Coordinator

Women of Faith

A small group of church women (anywhere from 2 to 9 of us) met before church, from late November into January, to talk about and share our faith, and to consider what we would like to do, to contribute, and to explore going forward.

Here are the ideas we came up with:

1. 8:30 am on Sunday morning is NOT a good meeting time!
2. We DO want to explore our faith, enhance our connections to each other, and support our church and its ministry.
3. Some would like to restart the Prayer Shawl ministry. We can do that.
4. Some were interested in having "Faith Partners", specific people you would choose to share your faith with, and thereby grow in faith. We can do that.
5. Some of us would like to become Digital Dames, women who can use our iphones, ipads, and computers to have our faith and our church at our fingertips. We have an offer from Kiku Jones and Cathy Hubbard to lead us in this direction. Bring your laptop to church. Date to be announced. Ladies, we can do this!
6. We had thoughts of an online book club with a "live" meeting at the beginning and end of each book. We can do that.
7. We discussed volunteering at one of the agencies supported by Christian Service, or another place that was in need. We can do that.
8. We considered a study group on the topic of "What the early Christian church has to say to us today." Amazingly similar challenges! We could learn a lot!

*If you're interested in these ideas or have others, contact Penny Rogers, 203-530-2486. We'll start soon.

Who Knows? Answers:

A) Samuel Newton B) Osage Tribe

2 Lay Readers for Worship

We would like to have two lay readers for Sunday morning Worship. Anyone interested, including youth, is encouraged to sign up on the sheet in the church or in the Fellowship Hall.



Marking Life's Passages

Death February 23, 2020 Eleanor Fulton (visiting organist)

The Parishioner
Published monthly by
The First Church of Christ,
Woodbridge, Connecticut

Senior Pastor Rev. Shepard Parsons
E-mail shepard_parsons@mac.com
Pastor Emeritus Rev. Boyd M. Johnson, Jr.
Editor: JoAnna Rubino

NEXT PARISHIONER DEADLINE IS WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2020 (a firm date).