



Embracing God's Presence,
Serving the City,
Building Upon Our Heritage

NEWS

Volume XXX, No. 1

January/February, 2014

THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN HARTFORD

A member of the United
Church of Christ (UCC)

CENTER CHURCH
60 Gold Street
Hartford, CT 06103

Church Office Hours:

Monday thru Friday,
8:30 am to 4:00 pm

Summer Office Hours:

Monday thru Friday,
9:00 am to 3:00 pm
(July thru Friday before Labor Day)

Phone: (860) 249-5631

FAX: (860) 246-3915

www.centerchurchhartford.org

Sunday Worship Service:

10:30am

Summer Worship Service:

9:00am & 10:00am

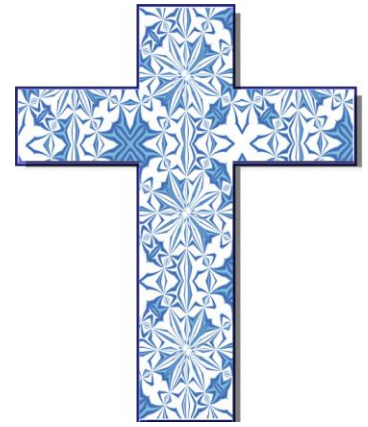
(First Sunday in June through
the Sunday before Labor Day)

The Center Church Staff
wishes you
and your loved ones a

HAPPY & HEALTHY
NEW YEAR!



From the Minister



Dear Family,

Happy New Year! I hope you had the opportunity to spend time with friends and loved ones this season. I hope you received plenty of hugs and kisses. If you did not, there are plenty of opportunities here at Center Church to receive much love. There are dozens of arms available to hold you. There are many hearts ready to love and support you.

We often we lose sight of the basics in the midst of all of the details. Who are we? Why do we do what we do? We are an urban church. We are a loving church. We are a committed church. We are open and affirming. Rich in diversity. We serve the city. We honor our heritage. We seek to be inclusive in worship. We seek to pray more. We seek to be spiritual and religious. We are a church of extravagant welcome.

We are blessed with many resources. We are blessed with an extraordinarily talented and committed staff. We seek to be a blessing to others. We celebrate God's presence among us. Gratitude is a faith practice we seek to exercise. God has sustained us for 381 years. We are strong and resilient. We are vulnerable and, yes, wounded.

I invite you to add to this list. Who are we? What is at the core of our identity? What is God calling us to? As you reflect on these questions, listen to your heart. I ask that you email me your reflections.

In the year 2013, we did some significant - and often difficult - work. If we are faithful to God's call, a lot more needs to be done. Let us keep each other in prayer. Let us remember who we are during the dark hours. Let us celebrate and dance whenever possible. Let us serve others and worship God with all of our hearts. Most importantly, let us remember that through it all, God is in the house. Adelante!

My wish for you this year is one of prosperity, peace and joy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Damaris D. Whittaker". The signature is fluid and cursive.

(Rev.) Damaris D. Whittaker
Minister



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1/6 Gregory Norsigian
 1/8 Richard Piatti-Rios
 1/16 Bruce Bidwell
 1/17 Sandra French
 1/23 Xyon Iyomi Sanders
 1/29 Dimekwan French
 1/29 Adalina Valdes
 1/31 Sarah Gale

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

2/4 Josephine Newell
 2/6 Mark Fisher
 2/11 Paul Bobbitt
 2/17 Gregory Norsigian
 2/20 Jonas Otte
 2/25 Peter Fairbairn
 2/27 Curtis Anderson
 2/27 David Maclean

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

1/23 Kathleen & Robert Davidson

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

2/4 Sara & Richard Markham
 2/18 David & Nancy Maclean
 2/21 Van & Lucille Parker

+ IN OUR PRAYERS +

Curtis Anderson, Marilyn Beste, Carolyn Bidwell, Debbie Downes, Robinson Buck, Jayne Chase, William Cornwall, Hulon Geter, George & Gladys Hernandez, Cecelia Jackson, William Jackson, Pamela Libby, Janice Lombardi, Christine MacDonald, Gabriela Smith-Rosario, Sally St. Amant, Greg Sanders, Sabrina Sanders, Alicia Selders, Norman Stanley, Victoria Ververis, the City of Hartford, the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, the First Church of Christ in Hartford, and the State of Connecticut



CHURCH MEMBERS & FAMILY NEWS BULLETIN BOARD

Births, Weddings, New Members: None.
Baptisms: Adalina Inocencia Valdes (11-10-13)
 Dimekwan Edward Buell French (12-22-13)

CALL TO THE 381st ANNUAL MEETING

The **381st Annual Meeting** of The First Church of Christ in Hartford/Center Church will be held on Sunday, February 2nd, 2014 immediately following a Potluck Luncheon and the reading of the year's History.

The purpose of this meeting is:

- to receive and act on reports and a proposed 2014 budget;
- to elect officers and leaders for the coming year; and
- to transact any other business to come before the meeting.

~ Kathleen Gourlie,
Clerk



2013 ANNUAL REPORT SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Calling all board and committee chairpersons! Kindly submit your 2013 Annual Report **by Tuesday, January 17th**. Please submit your report electronically to Marie Ferrantino, Office Administrator, at marie@centerchurchhartford.net. Thank you!

HANDS ON HARTFORD'S MANNA PROGRAM

The MANNA pantry is running seriously low on **TOILETRIES** such as bar soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, shaving cream, deodorant, skin lotion, and hand lotion. Please drop off items at either of our buildings, and we'll make sure the items get to those who need it most. Thank you for your generosity.



FIRST THURSDAY TAIZÉ

Come to the Meeting House on the Thursday, February 6 for a meditative Taizé service. Our monthly Taizé services will include prayer, silence, candle lighting, and run about thirty minutes in length. We will begin at 6:00pm. The Meeting House will remain open until 7:00pm for silent prayer and reflection.

ADULT EDUCATION SERIES:

Sundays beginning January 12

at 8:45am in the Church House Parlor

The adult education class will resume on January 12. We will continue with the series from Diana Butler Bass on *Embracing Spiritual Awakening*, in which she addresses the dynamics of experiential faith. One religious leader made the following observation about *Embracing Spiritual Awakening*:

Embracing Spiritual Awakening invites participants to examine and understand the changing cultural landscape in North America. Is the oft-heard critique of declining numbers in congregations simply a canard of those who would prefer a world of families with many children and stay-at-home mothers, or is it the consequence of increasing ethnic and cultural and religious diversity around us? Or is it something else? Diana Butler Bass leads a discussion of what is meant to be spiritual, to be religious, and how Christians today might be grace-filled witnesses to the reality they know and experience.

On January 12, we will have a brief recap and pick up with session four. Please see Alvin Thompson if you have any questions.



As we begin another year together, we thank our many volunteers who devote their time, talent, and treasure to keeping our many ministries going. We thank you for your generosity and compassion!



WFSB-TV/CHANNEL 3

EARLY WARNING NETWORK

Please note that Center Church is registered with WFSB-TV's Early Warning Network for church event cancellations due to weather conditions. Worship and other church-related events will be canceled only in extreme weather conditions, particularly if there is a City of Hartford parking ban in effect. Tune into Channel 3 (or check their website) for the latest information.

From the Church Library

NEW BOOKS FOR THE NEW YEAR!

(Selected from the *New York Times* Best Books of 2013 and Best Sellers Lists)

Winter is a great time to catch up on your reading. We have the latest best sellers in stock – stop by the library and select your next adventure!

NON FICTION:

1. *The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft and the Golden Age of Journalism* by Doris Kearns Goodwin (Simon & Shuster).
2. *The Cancer Chronicles: Unlocking Medicine's Deepest Mystery* by George Johnson (Knopf).
3. *The American Way of Poverty: How the Other Half Still Lives* by Sasha Abramsky (Nation Books).
4. *Knocking on Heaven's Door: The Path to a Better Way of Death* by Katy Butler (Scribner's).
5. *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* by Christopher Clark (Harper).
6. *The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America* by George Packer (Farrar).
7. *My Beloved World* by Sonia Sotomayor (Knopf). Memoir by the most recent justice appointed to the Supreme Court.



FICTION

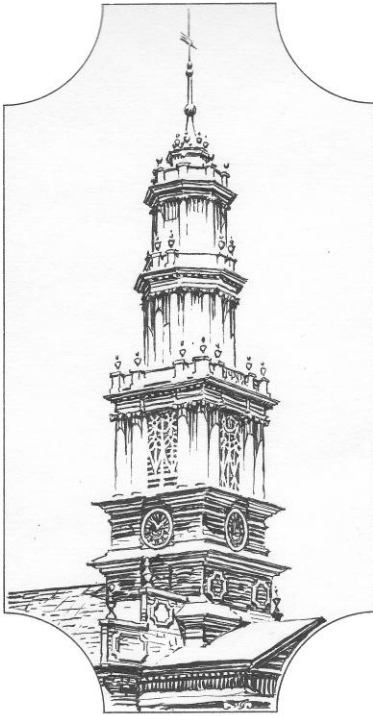
1. *The Orphan Master's Son* by Adam Johnson (Random House) 2013 Pulitzer Prize winner; "...a young North Korean navigates the country's repressive hierarchy."
2. *The Twelve Tribes of Hattie* by Ayana Mathis (Knopf); "...a brutal and poetic allegory of a black family beset by tribulations after the Great Migration to the North."
3. *The Good Lord Bird* by James McBride (Riverhead). 2013 National Book Award winner; "...narrated by a freed boy slave who passes as a girl....risky portrait of the radical abolitionist John Brown in which irreverence becomes a new form of homage."

CHILDREN/ MIDDLE GRADES/ YOUNG ADULT

1. *Africa Is My Home: A Child of the Amistad* by Monica Edinger (Candlewick). Picture book illustrated by Robert Byrd.
2. *This Is the Rope: A Story From the Great Migration* by Jacqueline Woodson (Penguin). Picture book illustrated by James Ransome.
3. *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio (Knopf Doubleday). "A boy with a facial deformity enters a mainstream school." 52 weeks on Children's/Middle Grade Best Sellers List.
4. *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak (Doubleday). "A girl saves books from Nazi burning." 51 weeks on the Young Adult Best Sellers List.

UPDATE from the Property Committee

Revised Steeple Restoration Schedule



- 2014-2016 Capital Campaign
- January-December 2014: Develop revised cost and scope of work (consider single phase to avoid cost duplication and one Capital Campaign)
- May 2014: Begin work on the Connecticut Historical Grant (with help of architect and consultant)
- October 2014: Submit CT Historical Grant Request (\$200,000)
- December 2014: Submit plan to Stewards
- January 2015: Submit plan to Prudential
- February 2015: Submit plan to Congregation
- February 2015: Notice of award of CT Historical Grant
- March 2015: Congregation discuss plan
- June 2015: Congregation votes to proceed
- January 2016: Bidding of sub-contracts
- March-November 2016: Estimated construction period

**HAPPY HOUR to welcome
JANA PRIESTLEY and
NATHAN FOX**



**Friday, January 17, 6:30pm
at the home of Mark Fisher & Luciano Valles, Jr.**

**Please bring an appetizer to share. Wine will be provided.
The entire congregation is invited to attend!**

News from Christian Education

Thank You, Church Family!

Advent Festival was a BIG success!

The combined profits of the Library Sale and SERRV net \$207!!! A check was made out on behalf of Center Church to UNICEF Philippines Disaster Relief. Thank You!!!

Thank you, church family, for all the wonderful goodies for the bake sale! The Youth Group made over \$150 towards their programming! Thank you!!!

A huge thanks to everyone who helped make it a fun day for all! A particular thanks to the Christian Education Committee, Youth Group, Chris Jeffers, Lita Rathnam, Bruce Bidwell, Robin Roy, and Peroza Family for all you did to make the day go off without a hitch!



Lost and Found??

Thanks to all who brought yummy goodies and side dishes to the Advent Festival! All of the bake sale items sold out and we finished all the sides with our baked potatoes....but now we have some containers, bowls and pans who really want to go back to their homes! If you are missing an item, check the table outside the Christian Education office in the Church House to claim it!

Peru Party Fun!!

On November 24th, Christian Education and Warburton Director of Outreach Rebecca Richards hosted an exciting party for the whole Church School about Peru and church mission work. The children learned what mission is through wonderful photos and stories from Rebecca and participated in traditional Peruvian children's games, music with real Peruvian instruments, and made their own Peruvian sand art. To end the day, everyone enjoyed a lovely buffet of Peruvian foods and desserts! It was a wonderful day full of fun and learning about church mission and outreach!



OUR 2013 ADVENT FESTIVAL!



THANK YOU, REBECCA!



Rebecca Richards, our former Warburton Director of Outreach Ministries, left Center Church on December 29 to follow her heart by joining a ministry in Peru. We are grateful for all Rebecca has done to help grow and sustain our many outreach ministries. Below are words of thanks given to Rebecca by Board of Outreach co-chair, Dectora Jeffers, at our December 29 Worship service:

“Today is Rebecca's last day with us - for at least six months. Tomorrow she goes off to Peru in answer to a call she felt deeply touched by when she was there last summer. While with us, she has supervised breakfasts, organized coffees, added Thursday lunches to our schedule when Hands on Hartford could not manage alone to provide them, distributed funds to the needy - there's a very long list that includes scrubbing the kitchen floor!

She has consistently challenged us to freshen our interpretation of what it means to be a downtown church. Most importantly, she has freely given her compassion, friendship and her buoyant humor in deeply personal ways to members both inside our community and in the larger community around us. Through Rebecca, more people now know that Center Church cares.

We will see her every six months, when she returns to keep her visa terms in order. We look forward to hearing from her, and hope that our cause and hers will intertwine, that her mission and ours come together. Who knows? Maybe on one of these wintry days in the future, some of us will be headed for Peru?

We thank her for all she has done here, not the least of which is her inspiring preaching. We send her off with our love and prayers.”

UPDATE

***We look forward to welcoming Nate Fox,
who will take over the position of
Warburton Director of Outreach Ministries
effective January 1.***

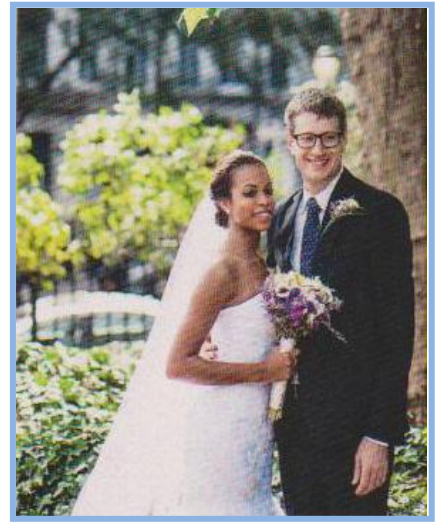
***Nate will be joining the staff on a regular basis
beginning on Thursday, January 9.***

*Thank
You*

*Dear Center Church friends,
Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness
since we first stepped in Center a year ago.
You make us feel included in this welcoming
and loving family. Your support and
excitement about our wedding touched us
profoundly. We're so grateful and blessed to
be a part of your congregation ... our congregation!*

Love,

Ruth & David Reynolds



A special thanks to all who contributed at the auction in memory of Reg for his work at the Food Pantry. This marks the 4th year that this was done. Some even contributed who did not know Reg. Please know how touched I have been by this continued recognition of Reg.

~ Carolyn Arvidson

Introducing...Electronic Funds Transfer Services!



Beginning in 2014, the Finance Office is excited to offer you additional options for the payment of Pledges, for donations to Disaster Relief efforts and for purchases such as Concert Tickets, Auction items and more.

Center Church is now a member of the Vanco Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) system. This system allows the payment of your pledge through equal monthly withdrawals (full or partial years based on when you complete an authorization form and choose to start your monthly withdrawal). Your choice of withdrawal date can be on the 1st or the 15th of the month and your pledge payment can be withdrawn from your checking or savings account, without fees.

An authorization form and instructions for this convenient service is available from the Church Office or via email. Once the office enters your information into the online, secure Vanco site your forms will be stored in a secure file in the Church Office. The authorization remains in effect until you terminate the authorization or change the payment method, the payment frequency or \$ amount. At your request your withdrawal can also be put "on hold" and restarted at a later date. Since participation in the passing of the plate for your pledge payment is an important part of the worship service, cards will be available for pickup in the Narthex that can be put in the plate in lieu of envelopes. These cards signify that you are paying your pledge through EFT.

A website option will be available in the coming months for donations to Disaster Relief efforts and for purchases such as Concert Tickets, Auction items and more. This option will be available to you by accessing the Church's website, following the Vanco [link to the donation form](#) and following the instructions. Using this method requires you to choose your payment purpose and enter your payment information (debit/credit card information, checking or savings, \$ amount). Use of the online service carries a processing fee for your transaction. More information will be coming to you when this additional service is available. Please direct your questions and requests for this authorization form to charlotte@centerchurchhartford.net or call the Church Office at 860.249.5631, ext.18.

The First Church of Christ in Hartford
“Center Church”
60 Gold Street
Hartford, CT 06103

The deadline for the MARCH/APRIL 2014
ISSUE OF *CENTER CHURCH NEWS* is Friday, February 21.

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Senior Minister: The Reverend Damaris D. Whittaker
Minister Emeritus: The Reverend J. Alan McLean
Director of Music & the Arts: Jason Charneski (*on sabbatical leave until January 21, 2014*)
Warburton Director of Outreach Ministries: Nate Fox
Director of Faith Formation: Jana Priestley
Librarian: Bruce Bidwell
Office Administrator: Marie Ferrantino
Bookkeeper: Charlotte Cardone
Christian Education Consultant: The Reverend Barbara Frey
Office Assistants: Frances Burton, Rosemarie Martocchio
Sexton: Thomas St. Amant