



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

NEWS

Volume XXX, No. 5

September/October, 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)

Rally Sunday is September 14!

Are you...

CALLED TO TEACH?

Want to grow in your faith?

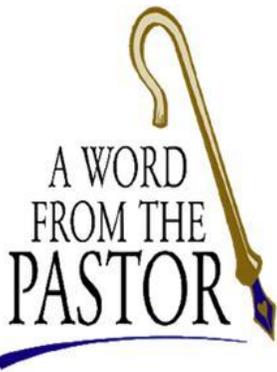
Want to help kids form their spiritual foundation?

Teaching Church School is simple!

- ✓ It only requires a TWO (consecutive) week commitment
- ✓ You will be teaching in "teams", with one or two other co-teachers
 - ✓ Simple Lessons and Activities
 - ✓ Share Your Own Gifts and Talents
 - ✓ Training and Support Provided

No previous knowledge or experience required!
**Just excitement, a joy for sharing God's love and willingness to try
new things!**

More Info Contact Jana Priestley, Director of Faith Formation:
jana@centerchurchhartford.net



“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.” ~ Romans 12:12

Dear Family,

What a summer! I pray yours was filled with wonderful times and adventures. At the Church House, it seems like summer never came, as the “slow days” everyone speaks about eluded us. So, I am convinced that this “slow summer” business is an *urban legend* at Center Church.

I am happy to report that we are finally reaching a point of compromise and agreement with the City of Hartford as it relates to the relocation of Gold Street. We will keep you apprised of the outcomes once we receive confirmation. In the interim, please feel free to contact me or our moderator, Luciano Valles, Jr., with any questions or concerns.

As it relates to outreach, we continue to think about ways to be more effective. We have a vision of not only doing charity, but also engaging in models of ministry that would empower the community and individuals. In that spirit, this summer we formed a partnership with Trinity College, and offer a wood working class: *The Puerto Rican Tiple Workshop*. We sponsored two scholarship students. The class filled up quickly and it was comprised of people from *all walks of life*: diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, economic status, and so on. At the end, we all built an amazing instrument.

I was one of the participants, as I wanted to immerse myself in the experience, and I am happy to report the class was a success! **We look forward to a continuous relationship with Trinity College, and we will welcome their new president, Joanne Berger-Sweeney, at Center Church on Sunday, October 5, 2014.** Looking toward the future, we are gearing up for a new year. Church School is buzzing with activity, and we are working diligently to plan, what we hope, will be a meaningful fall season. Many wonderful and exciting things are happening this fall. Make sure you look at the calendar and stay connected!

It is easy, with all the buzz of the activity and, frankly, the difficulties that we face doing this work, to lose sight of the vision. We are a church with the guiding principles that are summarized as follows:

- Celebration God’s Presence
- Serving the City
- Honoring Our Heritage

Let us keep each other in prayer. Let us keep our country in prayer. In the aftermath of the incidents of Ferguson, Missouri, I invite us to find our **prophetic voice** and stand for justice for those who suffer discrimination and injustice, because that is honoring our heritage, that is serving the City, and that is celebrating God’s presence.

May God continue to hold you and give you peace.

Faithfully,

(Rev.) Damaris D. Whittaker,
Minister





SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 9/2 Joyce Peroza
- 9/2 Deborah Tuthill
- 9/5 Bryan Denman
- 9/6 Peter Austin
- 9/7 William Jackson
- 9/8 Joyce Buckingham
- 9/9 Thomas Lombardi
- 9/12 Violet St. Amant
- 9/13 Lawrence Roeming
- 9/16 Kaitlyn Thomas
- 9/20 Gail Canzano
- 9/20 Grace Otte
- 9/21 Joseph Bradley
- 9/22 Isys Belton
- 9/25 Cecelia Jackson
- 9/27 Valerie Thaxter-Grant

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

- 10/1 Angela Taveras
- 10/4 Janice Lombardi
- 10/9 Sara Markham
- 10/9 Jennifer Morales
- 10/11 Taline Norsigian
- 10/11 Erich Faust
- 10/12 Dana Geter-Walker
- 10/13 Lynn Schwartz
- 10/13 Shepherd Holcombe, Jr.
- 10/15 William Gourlie
- 10/16 Jane Macomber
- 10/18 Willie Mae Geter
- 10/21 Kathleen Davidson
- 10/23 George Hernandez
- 10/23 Dermot Piattirios
- 10/27 Terrance French, Jr.
- 10/27 Gabriel Mainardi
- 10/29 Shirley Sanders

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 9/2 Deborah Tuthill & Sarah Schneiderman
- 9/8 James & Lisa Thomas
- 9/11 Harold & Joyce Buckingham
- 9/16 Dennis Morin & David Owens
- 9/17 James & Jane Macomber
- 9/27 Anthony & Karen Sanders

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 10/1 Timothy & Maryanne Sanderson
- 10/4 Sarah & Michael Gale
- 10/9 Katherine Markham & David Feldman



REGULAR WORSHIP SCHEDULE

resumes on Sunday, September 14:

10:30am in the Meeting House



+

IN OUR PRAYERS

Carolyn Bidwell, Joe Carcaud, George & Gladys Hernandez, Pamela Libby, Scott Macomber, Christine MacDonald, Lita Rathnam, Sally St. Amant, Norman Stanley, 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, Baptisms, New Members, Transferred at own request: None

Deaths: Josephine S. Newell (7-18); Sabrina Sanders (8-20)

Weddings: Paul French & Theodora Abronze (8-9)

Historic Walking Tour

The Hartford Preservation Alliance will offer a historic walking tour of Center Church and the Ancient Burying Ground on Saturday, September 20. The tour is free. Church Historian Robin Roy will present a snapshot of our history beginning at 10:00am. Docents will present historical facts about the Ancient Burying Ground.

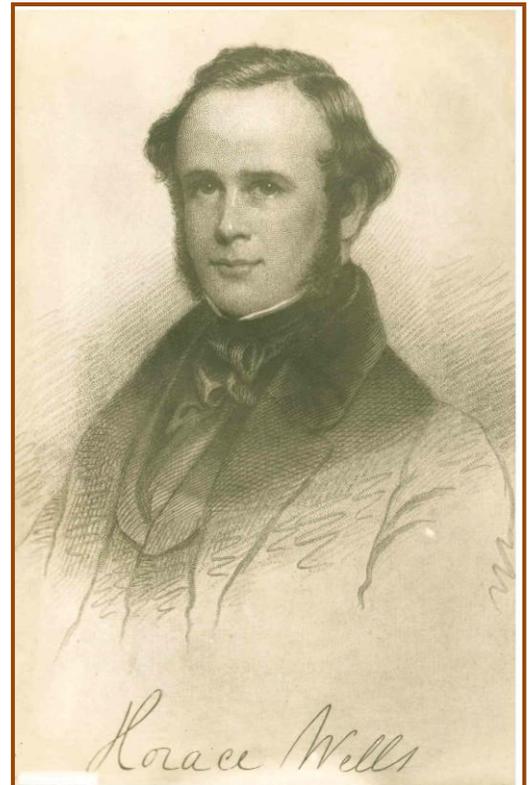
Dr. Horace Wells

The first play in the 2014-2015 season at Hartford Stage is *Ether Dome* and is based on the work of Dr. Horace Wells, Hartford dentist and acknowledged as the “discoverer of anesthesia”. Dr. Wells has a special connection to Center Church. He was a Center Church member!

Hartford Stage will be using a picture of our Tiffany stained glass window in their promotional materials advertising the play. The window was given in memory of Horace Wells and Elizabeth Wales Wells, his wife, by their son Charles in 1903. It is called “Mercy and Truth” and is located on the north side of the sanctuary.

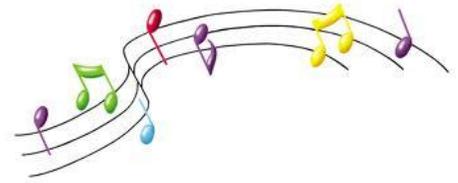
We will be presenting a short program on Dr. Wells after worship on September 21st from 12 to 12:30. We invite you to come and learn more about the man whose vision has touched all of our lives.

Roberta L. Roy, Historian



MUSICAL NOTES

By Jason Charneski



New Faces this New Season

You will see many new faces and hear their voices in the choir this coming year. Please note and plan to welcome volunteer sopranos Amy Ansah and Jane West, soprano section leader Michelle Fiertek, alto section leader Greta Moorhead, and (as of August 17) Warburton Choral Scholars Nadia Briones and Genevieve Clements (I hope to have the other two choral scholars in place by September 10, which will be the date the choir will resume rehearsals).

We also will welcome the return of some whose schedules and travels the past year or two have precluded them from singing: soprano Lesley Morgan Thompson and tenor Bill Warner-Prouty.

I hope to publish more about the new singers in upcoming issues of this newsletter.

Open and Affirming: 20-Year Anniversary Events October 24 and 26

Please mark your calendars now for what promises to be Spirit- and community-filled events on Friday, October 24 and Sunday, October 26, to celebrate Center Church's 20 years of being an Open and Affirming congregation.

On Friday, October 24, at 7:00 p.m., we will present in concert Well-Strung, a string quartet (whose members are gay), that has garnered national attention for its innovative programming that combines classical, pop, show, and movie tunes around the narratives of the members' lives. Well-Strung has performed on *Today* and *Good Morning, America*, and at many LGBT events nationwide. Admission will be via tickets (available for purchase after worship or via a call to me in the office, beginning September 14): \$15 for students and seniors (general seating), \$25 general seating, and \$40 for premium seating. Persons who have a "Let's Go Arts!" card will be able to purchase two general seating tickets for \$40. Please invite your friends to what will be an evening of good music, entertainment, and community.

On Sunday, October 26, we will be honored to have with us in worship and in the pulpit The Reverend Mel White. Mel was for many years Jerry Falwell's assistant, all the while struggling with being gay, married to a woman, and a father. Mel's journey is chronicled in his book, *Stranger at the Gate*. Mel was for many years a leader of SoulForce, a group of gay and lesbian Christians who visited campuses of evangelical colleges as a means of supporting young men and women at those institutions who wanted a safe vehicle through which to come out. Most recently, Mel and his son, filmmaker Mike White (a graduate of Wesleyan University), were a team on CBS' *The Amazing Race*.

Please plan to be a part of this celebration weekend!

Music and the Arts at Center Church 2014-2015 Season

Please watch your U.S. mail for materials about the new season of Music and the Arts at Center Church. I am not aware of many concert series in the United States that can claim they are in their 193rd year! A quick primer of events:

(please see next page)

Friday, October 24, at 7:00 p.m. – Well-Strung
(see article about Open and Affirming Anniversary Events)

Friday, December 5, at 7:00 p.m. – Simon Thomas Jacobs, organist
Celebrating 60 years of the Roberts Memorial Organ with works by Bach, Duruflé,
Franck, and Messiaen.

Sunday, December 14, at 10:30 a.m. – The Alturas Duo and The Center Church Choir
Presenting *Navidad Nuestra*, Ariel Ramírez's folk drama of the Nativity based
upon some of the rhythms and poetry of Latin America, within the
morning service (Lessons and Carols).

Friday, February 20, at 7:00 p.m. (snowdate of Feb. 21) – Boston Brass
An eclectic program of classical, jazz, and much more, including
the audience choosing what will be played on the second half of the concert!

Sunday, March 15, at 10:30 a.m. – Michelle Canning and Rough Edges
Bluegrass and folk within the morning service and in a 45-minute concert
following the service.

Sunday, April 19, at 10:30 a.m. – Hartford Stage at Center Church!
Pianist Mona Golabek will share, within the morning service, some of the music and stories from
her production at Hartford Stage of *The Pianist of Willesden Lane*. The subject matter is the
Holocaust, which will dovetail quite well to an observance of the 100th anniversary of the
Armenian Genocide.

Please plan to attend these events and support this important outreach to the community!

October 2014

World Communion Sunday

Sunday 10/5

No Church School

Join Us for a Family Worship Service

Board of Christian Education Meeting

Sunday 10/19

12:10pm in Church House

Open and Affirming Celebration

Sunday 10/26

No Church School

Join Us for a Family Worship Service

BIBLE SUNDAY

All Church School Students will be
presented with their own Bible in
worship

Sunday, September 28th

If you would like your child to receive their own, new,
Bible for use at home and in Church School, please
contact:

jana@centerchurchhartford.net

Or Call Jana

860-249-5631 (ext. 14)

September 2014

Church School Clean Up

Saturday 9/6
9am-12pm

Board of Christian Education Meeting

Saturday 9/6
12pm-1:30pm

Rally Day!

Sunday 9/14

Church School Begins with Sankofa Kuumba African Drumming and Dance
Workshop

Blessing of the Backpacks

Sunday 9/21

Join us in worship to receive a drawstring backpack with school supplies and a
blessing for a safe and educational school year!

Bible Sunday

Sunday 9/28

Please email jana@centerchurchhartford.net to reserve a new Bible to be
presented in worship for all kids in PK to 12th grade.

Center Church School Calendar Fall/Winter 2014

DATE	EVENTS	CURRICULUM
Sat. 9/6	Church School Clean Up 9-11am (Childcare available)	
9/7	Teacher Training (Following Worship) 1 hour	
9/14	Rally Day-Church School Begins! Nursery in Church House	Workshop with Sankofa Kumba African Drumming and Dance
9/21	Blessing of the Backpacks in Worship	WoRM 1 Dig into the Bible
9/28	Bible Sunday	WoRM 1 Dig into the Bible
10/5	World Communion Sunday Family Sunday - No Church School	
10/12	Founders Day	WoRM 1 Dig into the Bible
10/19	CE Meeting 12:10pm (Childcare Available)	WoRM 1 Dig into the Bible
10/26	ONA Celebration -Family Sunday- No Church School	
11/2		WoRM 2 Angels Appear
11/9	CE Meeting 12:10pm (Childcare Available)	WoRM 2 Angels Appear
11/16		WoRM 2 Angels Appear
11/23		WoRM 2 Angels Appear
11/30		WoRM 2 Angels Appear
12/7	Advent Festival	WoRM 2 Angels Appear
12/14	Lessons and Carols Family Sunday - No Church School CE Meeting 12:10pm (Childcare Available)	
12/21	Tableau Rehearsal	Tableau Rehearsal
12/24	Christmas Eve Service and Tableau	
12/28	Family Sunday- No Church School	



2014 Stewardship Update

Stewardship? What? It's just barely September!

This might well be your reaction, but a Stewardship Team has been working all summer, planning for a meaningful – and successful, God willing – Stewardship Season.

We hope you agree that these are exciting times for Center Church. We have a strong, skilled, and committed staff; we have a dynamic leader and caring pastor in Rev. Damaris Whittaker. We are richly blessed and have great potential to do God's work with and for our members, in the City of Hartford, and in the world.

New initiatives and ministries are being identified, and we are finding new ways of doing our basic ministries (worship, education, outreach) to be relevant in today's world and for today's (and tomorrow's) Christians. Of course, all this takes money and our church is no exception: our current budget does not allow us to do everything we would like.

As committed members of this community, we know that our generosity makes a big difference. We invite you to participate fully in the campaign we are planning and to prayerfully consider increasing, or making a first-time pledge for 2015. The truth is that it is all of us, and not our endowment or our leadership or our minister, who determine the level of ministry we can support.

Our theme this year is "**Blessed to be a Blessing ... all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.**" –Gen 12:3b. We hope you will consider this verse as the season unfolds. By giving, we provide blessings to others, but we receive a still greater blessing from God.

Highlights of the Stewardship Season

1. **TIMING:** This year the culmination of the campaign will be earlier: **Pledge Consecration will be on October 19.** The Board of Stewards is working to eliminate the difficult timing of financial planning during Advent and the Christmas and New Year holidays.
2. **STEWARDSHIP POTLUCK:** We are planning a potluck on Sunday, September 28 after church. There will be a program highlighting some of our initiatives and program areas that are funded through our budget. Please plan to be there. It should be fun and informative.
3. **WORSHIP:** We are planning a number of Stewardship Moments leading up to Consecration Sunday. This is a familiar and meaningful series of short presentations during worship. We also expect to have special music and messages to highlight the blessings of giving.
4. **ELECTRONIC GIVING:** We are highlighting the availability of direct debit from your bank account as a convenient, secure and reliable method of giving. Information will be provided throughout the Stewardship Season.

Faithfully, Your Stewardship Team

Kay Davidson, Ruth Fortune, Kathy Gourlie, Tim Otte, David Owens



August 13, 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Today I received official notification from our General Minister and President, Geoffrey Black, of his intent to retire early, specifically with the conclusion of the 30th General Synod in June 2015. Geoffrey has graciously agreed to serve until his successor is ready to take office, sometime next summer.

I want to express my gratitude to Geoffrey for his leadership during his time in office - through the challenging and difficult discussions over the governance of the United Church of Christ to the successful transition to a new and unified governance structure. Geoffrey has been tireless in his ecumenical work with both our domestic and international partners. Moreover, he has spoken to the tough issues of our time, whether they are natural or human caused, Geoffrey has been a kind, gentle and thoughtful manager of our affairs in the national setting of the Church. We cannot begin to thank him enough for his service as General Minister and President, as New York Conference Minister, as a national staff member and as a local church pastor.

As we look ahead and move forward, I want to outline the task before us and how I hope to help us accomplish it. I will immediately put together a search committee tasked with the responsibility of recommending a new General Minister and President. With UCCB confirmation, I hope to have the search committee up and running by the end of August 2014. The search committee will require careful, prayerful discernment but will also need to adhere to a tight timeline. The committee will need to collect and review the profiles of those called to apply for consideration. The committee then will need to interview those candidates it considers worthy of the tremendous responsibilities of the Office of the General Minister and President, and it will need to select one candidate and present that candidate at the March 2015 meeting of the UCCB. At that meeting, a two-thirds confirmation vote is necessary to forward the recommendation to the 30th General Synod for call by election in Cleveland next summer. I am tasking the search committee with finalizing its recommendation for UCCB consideration by early February 2015, so the board of directors will have a month to reflect, discern and decide. That's roughly five and a half months from now.

Geoffrey will continue to serve until his successor is prepared to assume his or her new position, sometime after the General Synod. The bylaws require transition to occur sometime within 90 days of the call by election. I ask for your prayers for Geoffrey and his wife Pat, for those who will serve on the search committee and for those who will come before it. I also ask that you pray for our beloved United Church of Christ as we move into the future God has before us.

Yours in Christ,

Bernard R. Wilson

Chair, The United Church of Christ Board of Directors

CENTER CHURCH

Music and the Arts

Autumn 2014

193rd Season

WELL-STRUNG

Friday, October 24, at 7:00 p.m.

"...the hottest thing with a bow since Jennifer Lawrence in *'The Hunger Games.'*" – *New York Daily News*

Well-Strung opens the 193rd season of Music and the Arts at Center Church with a program that synthesizes classical, pop, and jazz, and includes stories that tell of their experiences as gay men. This event begins a weekend-long celebration of the 20th anniversary of Center Church's vote to become an Open and Affirming congregation of the UCC.

Tickets: \$40 premium, \$25 general, \$15 student/senior; holders of the Greater Hartford Arts Council's "Let's Go Arts!" card are entitled to two general tickets for \$40.



SIMON THOMAS JACOBS, **organist**

Friday, December 5, at 7:00 p.m.

Celebrating 60 years of the Roberts Memorial Organ. Presented in partnership with the Greater Hartford Chapter of the American Guild of Organists.

The winner of the 2013 St. Alban's International Organ Competition will perform a concert of works by Bach, Böhm, Duruflé, Franck, Krebs, and Messiaen.

Freewill offering received at the door (\$10 suggested).



THE ALTURAS DUO & THE CENTER CHURCH CHOIR

Sunday, December 14, at 10:30 a.m.

We present *Navidad Nuestra*, Ariel Ramirez's folk drama of the Nativity based on some of the rhythms and traditions of Latin America. It will be offered as part of a Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at Center Church that morning.

Freewill offering to be received.



Center Church
675 Main Street, Hartford

phone: 860-249-5631
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ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES RESUME

on September 14 at 8:45 a.m.! All classes are held in the Church House parlor.

On September 14, which is "Rally Day" for the Church School, the Adult Class will have a morning for reflection. We will look back at what we covered during the past year and share thoughts as to what series, in addition to *The Future of Faith*, would be of the greatest interest in the coming year in light of what is going on in the world around us and within our family of faith.

On September 21, we will start a series using as a resource *The Future of Faith* by Harvey Cox, a professor at Harvard Divinity School. Last spring, we spent time discussing Chapter 1, which we will review. We will then continue with additional chapters.

The following is the central thesis in Cox's book: There is an essential change taking place in what it means to be "religious" today. Religious people are more interested in ethical guidelines and spiritual disciplines than in doctrines. The result is a universal trend away from hierarchical, regional, patriarchal, and institutional religion. Once suffocated by creeds, hierarchies, and the disastrous merger of the church with the Roman Empire, faith—rather than belief—is once again becoming Christianity's defining quality. This recent move away from dogmatic religion is best explained against the backdrop of three distinct period of church history:

- *The Age of Faith*: the first three centuries of Christianity, when the early church was more concerned with following Jesus' teachings than enforcing what to believe about Jesus;
- *The Age of Belief*: marking a significant shift between the fourth and twentieth centuries when the church focused on orthodoxy and "correct doctrine";
- *The Age of the Spirit*: a trend that began fifty years ago and is increasingly directing the church of tomorrow whereby Christians are ignoring dogma and breaking down barriers between different religions—spirituality is replacing formal religion

[If you would like to order a book, please contact Alvin Thompson.]

The deadline for the NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2014 ISSUE
OF CENTER CHURCH NEWS is Friday, October 24th,

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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
Warburton Director of Outreach Ministries: Nate Fox
Director of Faith Formation: Jana Priestley
Librarian: Bruce Bidwell
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Sexton: Thomas St. Amant