



GOOD
FRIDAY



easter
SUNDAY



+ From the Pastor +

WORSHIP TEAM NEEDS MEMBERS!

Several of the "Big Ideas" from our retreat involved becoming more creative with our worship services. If you would like to be part of generating and planning these ideas with Shelly, please join the Worship Team which right now only has 5 members! We meet every other month or so, usually after worship on a Sunday. Next meeting is April 28! Talk with Larry Roeming, Andre Keitt, Barbara Sanders, Cheryl Thomas, or John Conley for more information!

Do You Have a Story to Share?

In the old days, they were called "testimonies." Very simply, it is a story where you saw God at work in your life or in the world. Doesn't have to be long, in fact it would help to keep it to 5-8 minutes. We are planning to have a service of testimonies on May 5. If you have a story you would be willing to share, let Shelly know.

Many years ago, when South African blacks were trapped in the unjust apartheid system of government, I heard a South African pastor say that on Easter their church was not crowded at all. But on Good Friday, it was packed. She said that her people understood suffering and pain and unjust courts and dangerous soldiers, quick to use their weapons. The story of Jesus' crucifixion touched them deeply in their own places of pain, fear, and suffering. She said they had trouble with Easter, because they just couldn't see Resurrection yet.

That story stuck with me, because I know that some people right here in Greater Hartford would resonate with those feelings. Maybe even some folk in our congregation. To you I say, come on Maundy Thursday night and enter into this story of Jesus. Come on Friday at noon if you can and walk a procession of lament down Main Street. Remember that God knows your pain and holds you in the midst of it.

I also know that some folk in our congregation readily enter into the joy of the Resurrection as the epitome of the hope that good is stronger than evil. As the psalmist writes, "Joy comes in the morning," especially that morning, unexpected and miraculous. God still acts in the world that way, and if our eyes, spirits, minds, and hearts are open to seeing it, joy floods us daily.

To all of you I say, come on Easter and hear each other's struggles and joys, despairs and hopes, and claim the story of God's bodacious and powerful love as your own. If you cannot see it yet, like Thomas, cling to those who have seen and believe. If you believe wholeheartedly, be on the watch for those who hang back in their alleluias and reach out a hand in support and prayer. We are the Body of Christ: rising and risen. In the words of Bruce Springsteen, "Come on up for the rising!"

~ The Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,
Transitional Pastor

HOLY WEEK



SCHEDULE

As Lent draws to a close in mid-March, we come to the holiest and most meaningful services in our church year. **Palm Sunday, April 14**, we will be blessed with the choir singing the Fauré *Requiem*, as well as our Palm Sunday Procession around the block following worship. Our Easter Egg dyeing party will follow at the Church House. All are welcome!

On **Maundy Thursday, April 18**, at 7:00pm, we will gather around the Communion Table in the Meeting House for a Service of Holy Communion, and the readings and diminishing lights of the Tenebrae remembrance ~ for many people, the single most beautiful service of the year.

On **Good Friday, April 19**, again this year, we will join with other downtown Hartford churches in a procession beginning at 12:00 noon at Christ Church Cathedral at the corner of Main and Church streets. We will stop at Center Church along the way. Come for all or part of our journey with Jesus.

On **Easter Sunday**, you are invited to come early for the Faith Formation program's Easter Breakfast, and then come to Worship at 10:30am, welcoming back the 'Alleluias' with the joy of the Resurrection! Following Worship, we will have an Easter egg hunt in the Ancient Burying Ground for our children.

Join us for these beautiful services, and bring a friend to experience the wonder of worship at Center Church!



THANKS TO OUR MARCH COFFEE MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS!

*Richard Jacques and Lisa DeThomasis,
Catherine MacLean, Chris & Catherine
Maclean, Anne Ostberg, Joe Readon &
Family, and Jeff Thomas & Family*

CAMP CLEAN UP DAY, 4/27

Lend a hand and enjoy a Spring day at Camp Asto Wamah! We begin at 9:00am and end at Noon with lunch provided. Please call the Church Office to register.

SAVE THE DATE – May Meeting!

We will hold a special Congregational Meeting after Worship on May 5! We need to act on some financial matters related to the endowment. More details soon!

WALK AGAINST HUNGER, 4/27!

Logan and the Outreach Team are forming a group to walk together (*The Purple People Feeders!*) Let Logan know if you would like to join us that morning to raise money for programs in Hartford that help feed our people!

Does Your Company Match?



MATCHING GIFTS PROGRAM

The new Not-for-profit being formed to raise funds for the preservation and maintenance of the Meeting House and Church House ("The 1636 Heritage Partnership") is looking for corporations with Matching Gifts Programs! This is *not* a religious organization, but a historic preservation organization.

If your company has a Matching Gifts program, we would like to have the name of the person in charge, so that we might apply to be on their list of approved recipients. Please contact Joe Bradley at JosephB477@gmail.com.



MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

Baptisms, Confirmations, Births,
Membership Transfers, Weddings,

Joined: None

Death: Joyce Peroza (3/17)



PUBLICATIONS DEADLINES

May Newsletter: April 25

Weekly E-News: Each Tuesday

Sunday Bulletin: Each Tuesday

Celebrations

- 4/1 Priscilla French
- 4/2 Susan Hayes
- 4/2 Daniel Theriault
- 4/2 Katherine Markham
- 4/4 Luke Salls
- 4/5 Elizabeth Ververis
- 4/10 Amiyah Jones
- 4/13 Tucker Salls
- 4/13 Ariella Wagan
- 4/14 Jorgette Peroza
- 4/15 Rosemary Arcieri
- 4/15 Dectora Jeffers
- 4/16 Nancy Maclean
- 4/16 Leila Sipes
- 4/19 Alice Norsigian
- 4/22 Jory Johnson
- 4/24 Robinson Buck
- 4/25 Nancy Baxter
- 4/25 Jade Peroza
- 4/26 Efrain Agosto
- 4/28 James Thomas

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

On March 23, we said farewell to long-time Center Member Joyce Peroza. Her Easter breakfasts at Center were the stuff of legend! She will be missed. Our sympathy goes to her family, including Center members Jorgette Peroza and her granddaughter, Justice, as well as Debbye Rucker-Grumley.

On April 13 at 11:00am, we will celebrate the life of Pat Anderson, who died last November. Pat once served as our Christian Educator here and worked tirelessly to serve the children of this church. Come, remember, and praise God for her life and service.



EASTER FLOWERS MINISTRY

Would you like to give the gift of Easter flowers in memory or honor of a cherished loved one? Look for our order form in the Sunday bulletin, weekly E-News, or our website's homepage. Please submit your order by Wednesday, April 17.

NEW ADULT FAITH FORMATION OPPORTUNITIES!

On April 7, Robin Roy and Bruce Bidwell will lead a tour and conversation about our unique Church Library at the Church House. If you have never been in the library or are unaware of all the books available for you to borrow, you won't want to miss this gathering! Again, before worship at 9:00am.

After Easter, we will be holding a series of discussions on the book *Everything Happens for a Reason and Other Lies I've Loved* by Kate Bowler. A chaplain and professor at Duke Divinity school, she was diagnosed at 35 years old with stage 4 colon cancer. This caused her to reassess what she had been telling people about being a person of faith facing serious illness or death. The book is a reflection on what she learned. Extremely helpful piece for all who have friends or family dealing with illness or tragedy in their lives! Let us know if you would like us to order a copy of the book. Stay posted for class times.



**Center Church Choir, Soloists and
Chamber Ensemble present:
Requiem by Gabriel Fauré
PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 14
10:30 AM**



A REMINDER FOR PARENTS & FAMILIES

Please remember that our Joyful Noise Children's Choir rehearses every Sunday at the end of their Sunday School classes in the Church House second-floor Choir room. Please make every effort to have your children attend each week.

The Joyful Noise Children's Choir will sing on Easter Sunday, April 21.

Moving Forward Together



ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

On Sunday, March 24, about 40 people gathered (out of a membership of about 160, by the way) for our Annual Meeting, most of which was spent determining the priorities we choose for defining our mission as a church into the future. We prioritized the “big ideas” from the retreat, and the one with the most support was “*Putting Center Church back in the Center of Hartford.*” The group at the retreat defined that this way:

PUT CENTER CHURCH IN THE CENTER OF HARTFORD: SPIRITUALLY, SOCIALLY, MORALLY, ETHICALLY

- Establish a system/network for collaboration and communication with neighbors (businesses, churches, institutions, politicians, etc.)
- Be the resource and share the resources for ministries that serve all our neighbors
- Get to know our neighbors/Identify who they are
- Establish a team with this focus to develop an action plan
- Establish an action plan team to implement
- Hire a staff member to direct and get us engaged
- Create a dialogue with millennials and GenZ

The CET will review and make recommendations for moving ahead, but are **particularly interested in building the team suggested!** If you would like to be part of this team, please speak to Rev. Shelly or Cheryl Thomas.



EXPLORE YOUR SPIRITUALITY!

Center Church offers spiritual direction to enhance your life's journey and to help you more deeply connect to the Spirit. The season of Lent is a perfect time to reflect on your relationships with God and others. Contact the Church Office for more info.

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, 8:30am to 4:00pm

Summer Office Hours: Monday thru Friday, 9:00am to 3:00pm

Library Hours: Wednesdays, 10:00am-Noon, or by appointment.

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