



+ From the Pastor +

"There is a sweet spot between the known and unknown where originality happens; the key is to be able to linger there without panicking!"
~ Ed Catmull, Pixar.

I heard this quote at a workshop I attended in January on "Leading in a Liminal Season." "Liminal" is a wonderful word which comes from the Latin word for the threshold of a doorway, the place where you move from one room to another or from outside, inside. Today "liminal" means that spot between the known and the unknown, an edgy place full of both promise and uncertainty.

Many, many people say that the whole Christian church is in a liminal place right now. Much is changing, the old ways no longer suffice. Young people are not going to church, nor are most of their parents. Churches no longer have the financial resources they need, while many are burdened with buildings too large for their congregations, and way too expensive to maintain.

And yet many surveys of people of all ages note that most people feel the tug of something bigger than themselves. Many describe themselves as SBNR: Spiritual But Not Religious. The flaws of institutions, the exclusive politics of many churches, and the refusal of many of those institutions to update their practices, the way every other institution in American society has changed, keep folk out of churches, but they still yearn for connection: with people, with however they define "God," with opportunities to love their neighbors.

This could be a time we lament, a time we fear failure, a time when "change" becomes equal to "loss." Or, it could be a time, as liminal times often are, when we stand on tiptoe, excited to see what might come? What do we need to get rid of that is holding us back and weighing us down? What new wonders is God's Spirit whipping up for us? As the writer Otto Scharmer says, it is a time of "letting go and letting come."

At our retreat on March 2, we are going to enter fully into liminal space, that "sweet spot where originality happens." We are not planning to "fix" something, but rather to linger in a place where we begin to discover why God needs us here and now, and most importantly, how? We will take the insights from our last retreat and move another step forward, still seeking guidance on "where forward is," as Larry says. I'm excited about what we might discover together, and I hope you will be, too.

~ The Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,
Transitional Pastor



FEBRUARY 10 @FAITH UCC: EVERYONE, COME WORSHIP!

We can't stress how important it is that everyone come over to Faith UCC at 2030 Main St. in Hartford at 10:00am on February 10 for a joint worship service with Center, Immanuel, and Faith to celebrate Faith's 200th Anniversary! Faith was born out of Center church, and they particularly wanted us to be part of their remembrances. Shelly will speak, our choir will sing, children are especially welcome. The service will be slightly longer than our usual service, and will end with a large reception. There is a small parking lot and free street parking all around the church. If you need a ride, please contact Shelly.

YOUNG ADULT MEETUP, February 19!

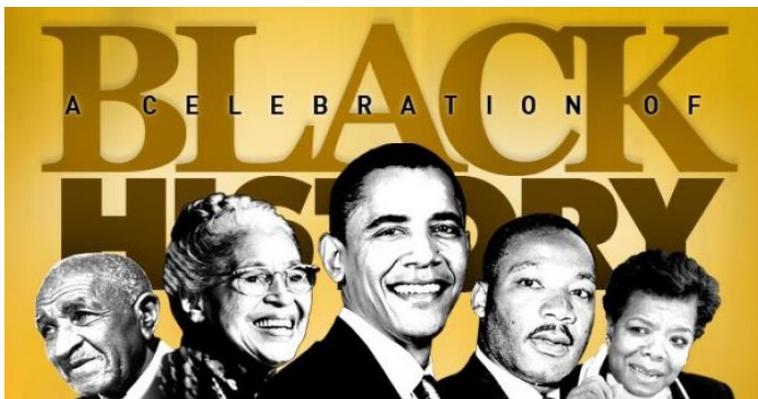
We'd like to gather the "over 21 and under 35" members and friends of Center Church for a meetup on Tuesday, February 19 at Republic at the Linden, corner of Capitol and Main, at 6:00pm. RSVP to Shelly if you know you can come!

PAT ANDERSON MEMORIAL SERVICE

A memorial service for long-time Center member Pat Anderson will be held in the Spring. We will keep you informed. Please continue to keep the Anderson family in your prayers during this difficult time.

MEETING MINUTES REQUESTED

Attention all Team Leaders! Please remember to send all meeting minutes to Marie so we may share with CET members at their monthly meetings, as well as to keep a record on file in our Church Office. Thank you.



BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT CENTER CHURCH

In February, we will honor Black History Month in several ways at Center Church. On February 10, we will worship with the oldest African American Church in Hartford, Faith UCC. On February 17, our worship service will be led by lay members of Center Church and will feature a presentation on the history of African-Americans at Center Church by Robin Roy, with special music from the choir. From February 3-March 10 (except February 10), we will have a special Adult Faith Formation program after worship each week looking at African-American poets from Colonial days to the present, culminating in a special presentation by Frederick-Douglass Knowles, Hartford's current Poet Laureate, on March 10. That morning, we will have a potluck after worship at the Church House, and Mr. Knowles will join us for a reading and presentation at 1:00pm. You won't want to miss this! Children and teens are most welcome!



THANKS TO OUR JANUARY COFFEE MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS!

*John Conley, Lisa DeThomasis,
Maegen Garthwaite, Richard Jacques,
Joe Readon & family, Larry Roeming,
and Jeff Thomas & family*

YOUR ATTENDANCE IS CRITICAL SATURDAY, MARCH 2!

As we did last June, Center members will again gather in retreat to move forward in our discernment about Center's future in the eyes of God. **DREAM BIG; DREAM SPECIFIC** is our theme, and we hope to come out of the retreat with some major initiatives to bring to our Annual Meeting on Sunday, March 24. We need voices from all our demographic groups to be at this retreat: newer members, long-term members, people of all generations. A children's program will be offered at the same time. We meet at Newington UCC, 1075 Main St. Newington, from 9-2, lunch included. **PUT IT ON YOUR CALENDAR TODAY! THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO HELP US DISCERN HOW GOD MAY BE LEADING US TO POTENTIALLY MAJOR CHANGES TO OUR LIFE TOGETHER!**



MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

Baptisms, Confirmations, Births,
Membership Transfers, Joined,
Weddings, Deaths: None



PUBLICATIONS DEADLINES

March Newsletter: February 22
2018 Annual Report: February 15
Weekly E-News: Each Tuesday
Sunday Bulletin: Each Tuesday

Celebrations

- 2/6 Mark Fisher
2/9 Graeme MacKenzie
2/11 Paul Bobbitt
2/16 Michael Seurattan
2/17 Gregory Norsigian
2/19 Buell French
2/20 Jonas Otte
2/24 Alicia Akers
2/27 David Maclean
- ♥ ♥ ♥
- 2/4 Richard & Sara Markham
2/18 David & Nancy Maclean
2/21 Van & Lucille Parker

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Since our next Annual Meeting will not take place until Sunday, March 24, the 2018 Annual Report will not be published until early March. Please email your annual report to Marie by Friday, February 15.



UCC DAILY DEVOTIONALS

Did you know that the UCC offers daily devotionals that you may receive either via email or text message? Start your day with scripture, insight, and prayer. The daily devotionals are short but powerful tools to inspire you. Sign up today at http://www.ucc.org/daily_devotional.

A snowflake
is one of God's most
fragile creations, but
look what they can
do when they stick
together!

OUTREACH NEWS

When it comes to Center Church, our buildings might be built in Hartford, but our impact touches lives from all around the world.



This is Ms. Mayra, who came to Connecticut from Puerto Rico after being hit by a car and needing medical treatment. Her scooter recently fell into disrepair and she needed a replacement in order to function, but couldn't afford the price. Fortunately, the church was able to connect her with the NEAT Center of Assistive Technology at Oak Hill, which refurbishes scooters and sells them at minimal costs. Now, she is mobile and rolling again.



This is Nekoko, a young woman the church outreach funds have been supporting for the last three years, as she moves through her studies in Tanzania. She just graduated from secondary school and is about to move to advanced secondary school following completion of national exams. She wrote in a letter to us, *"I would like to say thanks to you very much because of your generosity and your love. You are my big supporter....I promise that I will not let you down."*

If you are looking to be part of the impact here in Hartford, please consider signing up for one month of this year to serve as the team leader for Center Church's Sunday Community Meal. We serve the first Sunday of the month at 5:00pm. I can work with you to complete the team, get ingredients, and other supplies. You can contact me at lsingerman@cchartford.org or call at 860.292.0776.



FAITH & FAMILY DAYS!

We are working with the Hartford Yard Goats to arrange for tickets for one of their Faith & Family Days this year! The tickets would include admission to a game, with discounts on food, drinks, and merchandise. Look for an update soon.

SAVE THE DATES!

March 2: Follow-up All-Church Retreat at Newington UCC: *Dream Big, Dream Specific* (snow date: March 9)

March 6: Ash Wednesday/Lent begins

March 24: Annual Meeting of Center Church: Elections, Program Planning



Faith Formation

PREPARING FOR NEW ADVENTURES

Our Faith Formation Team at Center Church has been exploring possibilities for new patterns in learning for children and youth. At the present time, our church school has been using materials from Spark House in a rotation model which offers a wide variety of methods - art, drama, cooking, science, games - for engaging one central text for a month at a time.

There are a number of elements we've noticed over time which suggest being able to develop opportunities for worship and service using an expanded line-up of texts and themes would be more relevant and engaging.

All of this, alongside the backdrop of the vast changes in our world and our church over the past 5 years, have encouraged the Team to find some new curriculum for Sunday learning. Stay tuned for more exciting information about the options we're pursuing! Information on specifics is being assembled and we'll provide information soon - when a survey comes your way by email or a phone call seeks your input or attendance, we hope you'll be a part of making these transitions. No matter what age or stage, youngest to senior high, all younger disciples are beloved learners here at Center Church!

With appreciation,
Pastor Nada Sellers,
Acting Director of Faith Formation



Spiritual Direction

Have you considered spiritual direction to enhance your faith journey? To learn more, contact the Church Office or email info@cchartford.org.

NEW YEAR NEW LOOK!

We continue to rebrand using our new logo and colors. This includes a revamping of our website as well. Look for more changes soon!

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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Meeting House Photo on cover page: The Rev. Rochelle A. Stackhouse