



**NEW  
CLASSES!**

**MARCH ADULT FAITH  
FORMATION SERIES**

On March 3 and 10, we wrap up our series on **African American poetry**. On March 17 and 31, we will focus on **Shelly's sermon series and the body of Christ**. On March 31<sup>st</sup>, we will be joined by **Cori Mackey of the Christian Activities Council** to talk about the wider body of faith communities in greater Hartford. All of these gatherings will begin at 8:45am. On April 7, also at 8:45am, we invite you to **come to the Library** at the Church House for a special conversation with our Librarian and Church Historian (Robin Roy and Bruce Bidwell) about the treasures of our library and how you can make use of this great hidden resource! Sneak peak into April 28 and following --- we will read and discuss **Kate Bowler's book *Everything Happens for a Reason, and Other Lies I've Loved!*** See next month's newsletter for more on this series.

*+ From the Pastor +*

The image many people use to describe Lent involves letting go of something, giving up something, doing a housecleaning of our spirits and lives. It's actually a good idea, and many people are now discovering its blessings through the work of designer (not theologian) Marie Kondo, who advocates letting go of anything that doesn't give you joy! Thrift shops are overflowing with the stuff people are cleaning out of closets and dressers.

In the case of Lent for Christians, it's not about getting rid of what doesn't give **us** joy, rather getting rid of what doesn't give **God** joy, which might actually be the same! Letting go of bad habits, of fear, of hate, of negative relationships, of old grudges, of self-hurt. What is it you are planning to let go?

In the same way, we are in a season of discerning how Center Church may give God joy into the future, which means we also are considering what we might need to give up or let go, do a housecleaning of our life as a church, our activities, our property, our stuff, our everything. In the same way that it is hard to do this in our own lives and homes, it is hard to do it as a faith community.

And yet, God calls us to give up not so we may remain empty, but so that we may be newly filled with what will ultimately be more satisfying, more joyful, more faithful. And we don't yet know what that is. We all need to work together to discover what it might be.

Right now, we are in the midst of this liminal (look up the word if you don't know it as it is a marvelous concept) time. Lent is 6 weeks long, and we are meant to go slow and careful in our spiritual discernment this season. Those of you who attend the retreat will hear this quote from one of the executives at Pixar studios, a place where a new film can take years to develop. "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.

Whatever we imagine might happen here at Center Church, for God's sake, literally, don't panic. Something wonderful is already germinating here, and God's Spring will reveal it. We need to be getting ready and looking out for it!

~ The Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,  
Transitional Pastor

## **NEW FAITH-BASED ORGANIZING EFFORT IN HARTFORD**

You may have read or heard recently about the work of the Christian Activities Council to call slumlords to account and get tenants of substandard housing some relief. That work is being done through CAC by a new organization that is seeking to gather faith communities together to become a moral force to make our region a more just and equitable place. Would you like to be part of an effort like this? Center Church is building a core team to work with this new (as yet unnamed) community organizing effort. If you want to know more, join us on March 12 from 7:00-9:00pm at Congregation Beth Israel, 701 Farmington Ave, West Hartford. Please let Shelly or Logan know if you are planning to come.



### **HARTFORD'S POET LAUREATE AT CENTER!**

Join us on Sunday, March 10 for a reading and conversation with Frederick-Douglass Knowles, Hartford's first Poet Laureate! We will begin with a potluck at 12:30pm and then talk at 1:00pm with Mr. Knowles about poetry in the African American tradition and his poetry in particular. You won't want to miss this! Bring a friend!



### **MARCH MUSIC & ARTS EVENTS**

**HOT CAT JAZZ BAND** in Worship on Sunday, March 24, 10:30am

**JAZZ GREAT NAT REEVES & FRIENDS IN-CONCERT** on Sunday, March 31, 4:30pm (reception to follow)

*...and coming in April*

**REQUIEM** by Gabriel Faure performed by the Center Church Choir, soloists, and Chamber Ensemble at Worship on Palm Sunday, April 14, 10:30am



### **THANKS TO OUR FEBRUARY COFFEE MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS!**

*Led & Nancy Baxter, Terrence & Priscilla French & Family, Jamaly Rios & Family, and Jeff Thomas & Family*

### **ALL-CHURCH RETREAT: YOUR ATTENDANCE IS CRITICAL SATURDAY, MARCH 2!**

A reminder: We meet at Newington UCC, 1075 Main St. Newington, from 9-2, lunch included. Your voice needs to be heard!

### **PAT ANDERSON MEMORIAL SERVICE**

A memorial service for long-time Center member Pat Anderson will be held on Saturday, April 13 at 11:00am. Please continue to keep the Anderson family in your prayers during this difficult time.



### **MEMBERSHIP UPDATES**

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

Joined: *John Border, Steven Lewis, Margaret Lloyd, & Michael Sieger*



### **PUBLICATIONS DEADLINES**

*April Newsletter: March 22*  
*Weekly E-News: Each Tuesday*  
*Sunday Bulletin: Each Tuesday*

# Celebrations

- 3/2 Alvin Thompson
- 3/2 Ruth Fortune
- 3/5 Roderick Jones
- 3/7 Connor James Thomas
- 3/8 Charles Feldman
- 3/9 Cheryl Sanderson
- 3/9 Roberta Roy
- 3/12 A'drea Parkes
- 3/14 Margaret Allegrini
- 3/17 Julia Thompson
- 3/17 Olivia Otte
- 3/19 Andre Keitt
- 3/26 John Border
- 3/27 Mary Esoian
- 3/29 Thomas St. Amant
- 3/30 Jane Foxall



## OUTREACH NEWS:

### HELPING OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED

What would you do if you were working 35 hours a week, but it still wasn't enough to cover your expenses? This was the case for a woman who came through the church this month. She had fallen behind on bills because her son had surgery. As a single mother, while working full time, she was also going to school online through Charter Oak College pursuing her Bachelor's Degree. The church was able to help her with one bill so that she would have enough money to continue her education.

What would you do if you were receiving food stamps, but it didn't come as usual one month? That was the case for every SNAP (food stamps) recipient in the state of CT during the month of February due to ripple effects of the government shutdown. The state was able to send the funds early in the last 10 days of January to try and circumvent the shutdown, but that meant people would run out of their food stamps much earlier in February than they normally would. We saw this at our Sunday meal on 2/17. At a meal where we normally have 60 people, we had 91! Luckily the volunteers from Church of Christ Newington were up to the challenge and made sure every person got a plate of food.



ANNUAL  
CONGREGATIONAL  
**MEETING**  
Sunday, March 24  
(following Worship)

### SPECIAL WORSHIP EVENTS IN MARCH

Lent begins with **Ash Wednesday, March 6**. We will hold a brief service and distribute ashes at Noon on the porch of the Meeting House (weather permitting).

Sunday, March 10: Shelly begins a **Lenten worship series** on *Becoming the Body of Christ*. Join us following worship for a potluck and to meet and talk with Hartford's Poet Laureate, Frederick-Douglass Knowles.

Sunday, March 24: We welcome back the **Hot Cat Jazz Band** in worship!



### 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 Sunday, March 10 and on Easter, April 21.

## FAITH FORMATION NEWS FLASH!!

Your Faith Formation Team has been hard at work considering a range of new options for our church school year as we begin 2019. Here's a couple of items we'd like to introduce:

1. We are embarking on a new venture in shaping the content of our church school lessons. We will begin shifting in March, to using materials called "Seasons of the Spirit," which is a curriculum published by Woodlake Publishers located in British Columbia, Canada. This is a venerable publisher which developed one of the most innovative and influential church curricula ever, materials entitled "The Whole People of God." (now out of print)
2. There is a lot of wonderful information about the Seasons of the Spirit materials on the curricula's website which can be found here: <https://www.seasonsonline.ca/> Below are some of the basics about Seasons (also called SoS):
3. SeasonsENCORE Sunday school resources are based on the semi-continuous readings of the **Revised Common Lectionary** and follow the familiar, easy-to-lead pattern of Focus, Prepare, Gather, Engage, Respond, Bless, and Reflect. A common Biblical Background page outlines the Bible stories for each week and provides commentary on the scripture readings...
4. As a lectionary-based curriculum, SeasonsENCORE provides Christian education resources for each Sunday of the church year. For the first four weeks of September, SeasonsENCORE users can choose to follow the **Revised Common Lectionary** or the **Season of Creation** readings.
5. We will be using a multiage approach which brings our elementary age children and middler-aged children together with age-appropriate offerings for both. At the same time, this combined approach offers ways to introduce and experience each lesson together, in a larger group. This allows us to benefit from 2 adult leaders helping to guide the group, reducing the required number of adults needed to be leading in different locations.
6. We will also use the SeasonsFUSION which runs alongside the ENCORE lessons and provides content for developing worship experiences for all ages. This will be used to start developing a youth worship service to be shared at the Church House. As we gather from the Meeting House and shift into our own class groups, we'll have the chance to explore aspects of worship and take part in shared leadership. This may be the basis for intergenerational experiences of worship as we continue to look at moving our congregation forward...together!
7. There's a SURVEY on Children's Learning below which we'd appreciate you providing us with some feedback: Please follow the link to a Survey Monkey piece and click to complete. The link is: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/97JX8TF>

*If you have any further questions or feedback to share, please contact Nada Sellers at: [nsellers@cchartford.org](mailto:nsellers@cchartford.org) or (860) 249-5631 (ext. 210.)*



### 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 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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*Garden photo on cover page: Marie Ferrantino (Meeting House Memorial Garden)*