



+ From the Pastor +

This month I come to you with homework! As the church begins to look at living into its "Big Idea," one of the things that retreat group identified (as well as the Worship Group) was to talk to millennials (born 1981-1996) and Gen Z (1997-present) people in your life and ask them why they are, or are not, involved in organized religion of any kind (church of any denomination or non-denominational), synagogue, mosque, temple, etc.

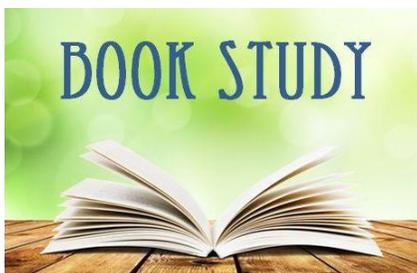
A recent Gallup Poll showed that for the first time in polling history anyway, only half of all Americans are members of a religious organization. The percentage of those not involved is considerably higher among people under the age of 35. Not all of those who are unaffiliated identify as atheists; on the contrary many identify as being "spiritual" or believing in God. They have either been wounded by past negative or boring church experiences, never been exposed to church at all, or simply don't see any value in joining with other people to worship, learn about faith and discipleship, and serve others or run an institution.

The reasons for their lack of involvement are what I would love for you to discover. Talk to members of your family who are not involved in church (and be honest about that; if you force them to come on Christmas or Easter, they are not involved in the church, despite being confirmed or baptized). Talk to co-workers or friends or neighbors (reassure them first that you are not there to strong arm them into coming to Center Church!). Find out if they have had church experiences, what they felt about those experiences, or if they know anything at all about what they might gain and contribute by being involved in a church. Ask them about how they connect with the divine, if they do (music? meditation? nature? other?).

Let me know what you hear. It may help us as we discern how God is calling us to be in the next generation.

~ Shelly

P.S. I will be away for short trips twice in May. May 4, 5, 6 and 7, I will be in Indiana at DePauw University for my son Ben's Junior Recital (Vocal Performance). May 20-21 I will be in Philadelphia for my daughter Leah's graduation from Univ. of Pennsylvania with her Masters in Social Work.



THIS MONTH: SUNDAY MORNING BOOK STUDY

On Sunday mornings in May, we will be discussing Kate Bowler's book *Everything Happens for a Reason, and Other Lies I've Loved*. It's a remarkable look at a chaplain dealing with her own illness and taking a close look at what she really believes about God and faith and struggle. If you'd like us to order you a copy of the book, call the office (\$14). It is available to order online if you'd rather do it yourself. Even if you don't get to read it, come for a stimulating discussion! We will meet from 9:00am-10:00am Sunday morning in the Church House Parlor.



OUTREACH UPDATE

Spring is a joyous time. The leaves start to bud. April showers bring May flowers. But April also brings the end of No Freeze, a four-month period of time where there is an extra facility open to keep people out of the cold, which brings an instant influx to the number of people living outside, and a long wait in line to get into shelter. Last week, a 60 year-old man walked into the WROCC. He had grown up in Hartford, lived in Florida, and had just traveled back. He had nowhere to sleep and was staying on the streets. We called 211. They gave him an intake appointment for May 7th, thirteen days later. Before he goes to that intake appointment, he will not be eligible to stay at a shelter unless literally seen by an outreach worker. That most likely means there will be at least thirteen days where this man will be forced to live outside. He was probably outside during all of those April showers that we got last weekend. Please pray for him, and everyone else currently experiencing this.

As those leaves start to bud, there is something else blooming here at Center Church. The core team for the Greater Hartford Action Alliance (GHIAA) is solidifying -- the core team which will work with GHIAA to take on injustices that result in 60 year-old men sleeping outside. It is not too late to join. Currently, there will be two opportunities to be trained -- one taking place 4 consecutive Thursdays evenings in May (5/9, 5/16, 5/23, 5/30), and the other during a Friday and Saturday in June (6/7, 6/8). If you are interested in being a part of the team, please be in touch with Logan Singerman by emailing lsingerman@cchartford.org or calling (860) 292.0776.



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.



THANKS TO OUR APRIL COFFEE MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS!

*Jamaly Rios & Family and
Jeff Thomas & Family*

BURYING GROUND AND CHURCH TOURS

On May 18 at 11:00am, the Ancient Burying Ground Association is sponsoring a guided tour of the Burying Ground ("Hartford's Oldest Historic Site") and Deckie Jeffers will be offering a tour of the Meeting House that day as well! Come and tell friends to come out and learn more about both historic treasures!

SAVE THE DATE!

Congregational Meeting, 5/5

We will hold a special Congregational Meeting after Worship on May 5! We need to act on some financial matters related to the endowment. We need a quorum, so please make every effort to attend!



MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

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



PUBLICATIONS DEADLINES

June Newsletter: **Friday, May 24**
Weekly E-News: Each Tuesday
Sunday Bulletin: Each Tuesday

Celebrations

- 5/3 J. Alan McLean
- 5/3 Alexander Vietzke
- 5/5 Sally St. Amant
- 5/6 James Robacker
- 5/9 Richard Jacques
- 5/11 Timothy Sanderson
- 5/12 Nancy Boone
- 5/14 Claudia Hernandez
- 5/14 Victoria Ververis
- 5/15 Maxwell Otte
- 5/18 Steven Lewis
- 5/19 Garrett Rapsilber
- 5/21 Donald Sanders
- 5/24 Dorothy Wurts
- 5/24 Matthew Thaxter-Grant
- 5/25 Joan McLean
- 5/25 Michelle Hughes
- 5/25 Daniel Otte
- 5/28 Sally Hayes
- 5/31 Lucille Parker



- 5/7 Timothy Otte & Gail Canzano
- 5/8 Paul & Tina Bobbitt
- 5/19 Brendan St. Amant & Shirley Hwang
- 5/20 Alvin & Lesley Morgan Thompson
- 5/26 Donald & Shirley Sanders
- 5/26 Christopher & Catherine Thompson Maclean
- 5/27 Jonathan & Jennifer Otte
- 5/30 Rochelle Stackhouse & P. Gavin Ferriby



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.

*"Hello, sun in my face.
 Hello, you who made the morning and
 spread it over the fields...
 Watch, now, how I start the day
 in happiness, in kindness..."*
 ~ Mary Oliver

NOW

Someone named Ecclesiastes wrote a book in the bible which is known by his name.

Ecclesiastes tells us that there is a time and season for everything and then goes on to list what some

of those times and seasons are but he doesn't refer to the time when you knew you need to

stop driving and get rid of your car. As wise as he was, Ecclesiastes didn't know there was such a thing

as a car and can't be blamed for this omission. He appears to be telling his readers that nothing lasts forever,

so when one season ends, as all seasons do, it's time to be reminded that NOW is always here –

surprising, unbound, fresh in all seasons inviting people to step on board.

~ Van Parker,
February, 2019

Center Church Celebrates "FAITH & FAMILY DAY" at Dunkin' Donuts Park



Yard Goats Baseball Game, Saturday, August 24 Game begins at 6:05pm

We have a supply of 25 tickets available at \$13 each (field box.) Please make checks available to "The First Church of Christ in Hartford", write "Yard Goats" on the check memo, and send to Marie's attention at the Church Office.

Join in for this memorable day!



“BIG IDEAS: WHAT’S HAPPENING NOW?”

On March 24, about forty people met in a Congregational Meeting to discern what our priorities would be in the near future out of the work we have done on two retreats. The Big Idea getting the most support had to do with “Putting Center Church in the Center of Hartford: Spiritually, Socially, Morally, Ethically.”

So, what happens now? How do we move forward with this?

The Visioning Team will have met by the time you receive this newsletter and they will “be the resource and share resources for ministries that serve all our neighbors. Get to know our neighbors.” All of us can be doing this!

Our Second Priority was “Exploring a Different Culture of Worship.” The current Worship Team would love to have you submit ideas, join them for conversations, or volunteer to bring something new to a service. Bob is also open to ideas for music. This one depends on you telling us what is meaningful to you in worship!

SUNDAY WORSHIP EVENTS IN MAY

- May 5: Pastor Emeritus Alan McLean leads worship with testimonies from Larry Roeming and Richard Jacques
- May 12: Special music for Mother’s Day
- May 19: We recognize the choir on their last day until September and also celebrate our children’s faith formation volunteers and students.
- May 26: CAMP SUNDAY! NO SERVICE IN HARTFORD! We all go out to Camp Asto Wamah for a great service and potluck lunch! If you need a ride, please contact the Church Office and we will see that you get there!

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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