

+ From the Pastor +



*"In the midst of new dimensions
In the face of changing ways,
Who will lead the pilgrim peoples
Wandering in their separate ways?
God of rainbow, fiery pillar,
Leading where the eagles soar,
We your people, ours the journey,
Now and evermore."*

~ Julian Rush

In the beautiful service on September 15, we sang this hymn, one of my favorites, though new to some of you. I love it because it reminds us that change happens, always, and we are descended from our Biblical ancestors (and here, our Puritan ancestors) who left homes, wandered the wilderness, and started new nations and new faiths with courage, struggle, and joy. It reminds us that God was with them and ahead of them, and so is with and ahead of us.

That helps, I think, when changes come. Following our last eighteen months of discernment and imagining, prompted by the 2018 Annual Meeting, we are now ready to plan for significant change. That change has to do with our central focus for mission, chosen by you last June. To focus there means we may need to change some of the things we have been doing just because we've always done it that way. Or, it seems like always. It isn't really. So, programs will change.

That change also has to do with buildings. As we explore tenants for the Church House, that will change our ability to use the building as freely as we do now, and may mean some offices get moved around to accommodate our tenant. We are also exploring what it might mean to sell the Church House. We'll keep you posted on all these possibilities, but be prepared for change in our building use.

That change also has to do with staff. Some staff are leaving us within this program year: Logan and Nada. I will be leaving within a year or so. Right now, we have a very large staff for a small congregation. **Are you aware that we currently have THREE full-time and FIFTEEN part-time employees for a congregation with an active membership of around a hundred, whose pledge giving supports less than TWO of the full-time employees?** This will be perhaps the most difficult change of all, as we have gotten used to being able to ask paid staff to do many things that volunteers do in most congregations. And, we like our staff! CET and Personnel will be sharing proposals with you for our 2020-2021 program year, to be reflected in our budget, and we will care for our current staff justly and compassionately with whatever changes need to be made.

I know some of this will not be easy. We may have some conflict over this. I ask that we discuss and act on all of it in the spirit of love and hope, **making sure to pray before we speak**. Exciting things are coming, friends. *"We your people, ours the journey, now and evermore!"*

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,
Transitional Minister

Celebrations

- 10/1 Angela Taveras
- 10/4 Janice Lombardi
- 10/7 Logan Reis
- 10/7 Olive St. Amant
- 10/9 Sara Markham
- 10/9 Dianna Woodard
- 10/9 Jennifer Valdes
- 10/11 Taline Norsigian
- 10/11 Aeniencia Parkes
- 10/12 Dana Geter-Walker
- 10/13 Shepherd Holcombe, Jr.
- 10/15 William Gourlie
- 10/16 Jane Macomber
- 10/17 Ann Theriault
- 10/18 Willie Mae Geter
- 10/18 Claudette Worth
- 10/21 Kathleen Davidson
- 10/23 John Conley Jr.
- 10/27 Terrence French Jr.



- 10/1 Timothy & Maryanne Sanderson
- 10/4 Sarah & Michael Gale
- 10/9 Katherine Markham & David Feldman
- 10/13 Ruth Fortune & David Reynolds



OUR SEPTEMBER COFFEE MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS!

*John Conley, Jr., Priscilla & Terrence French,
Richard Jacques, Steven Lewis, Jamaly Rios &
Family, and Jeff Thomas & family*

ANNUAL PLEDGE SUNDAY

On Sunday, October 27, we will ask you to make a commitment to Center Church. This commitment has to do with how much money you hope to contribute to the church in 2020. This day is a very important time for us to assess how important this congregation is to us, and it will help us as we prepare a budget for you to vote on November 17! Watch for more details in the mail soon.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Death: James Robacker (8/30)

PUBLICATIONS DEADLINES

November Newsletter: Friday, October 25
Weekly E-News & Bulletin: Noon Tuesday

GHIAA: GREATER HARTFORD INTERFAITH ACTION ALLIANCE

What is this? A new faith-based community organizing effort founded by the Christian Activities Council. Fifty faith communities and organizations joined together to identify issues confronting people of Greater Hartford and to research how we can join together to see that they are addressed -- like slumlords in Hartford who get huge tax abatements and let their properties fall into dangerous disrepair, which were the first actions taken by the group.

Center Church has gathered a Core Team (Richard Markham, Ivan Edafiohgo, Logan Singerman, Steven Lewis, and Led Baxter) who have been trained in community organizing. They will help us to become part of research and actions supported by GHIAA. We will pay dues as a congregation to support the lead organizers and organizational expenses. More of us can be trained in basic organizing techniques.

This is the most significant group to form in Hartford in recent years. It will launch on October 28 at 6:30 pm at Welte Auditorium at Central Connecticut State University. We are committed to have thirty folk from Center at the launch. Want to come? Let Shelly, Logan, or one of the core team know, and we will help with transportation if needed.

VISION PROJECT NEXT STEPS

Thanks to the wonderful group of all ages who participated in our worship time imagining on September 8. So many good ideas were generated! The group is now sorting those ideas, sharing some with existing teams, discerning what new teams we might need to bring them to fruition, and making recommendations to CET on staffing and building use based on your feedback. You will be hearing more soon!

CENTER CHURCH, THE ANCIENT BURYING GROUND, AND WITCH TRIALS

Did you know that the first witch trials in New England happened thirty years before Salem, right here in Hartford? While none of those killed were buried in the ABG, some of their accusers, judges, and town officials were. Join us on October 26 in the Meeting House, beginning at 10:30am with a lecture by local author and expert, Dick Ross, followed by a brief memorial service for those killed and those accused, whose lives were ruined even though they lived; then, an informal walk through the Burying Ground. *Co-sponsored by the Ancient Burying Ground Association and Center Church.*



OUTREACH MINISTRIES UPDATE: HOMELESSNESS IN HARTFORD

The above picture shows cardboard that is neatly piled behind the front Meeting House sign every morning. That cardboard just got done serving as mattresses for the ten people who sleep at the top of the stairs every night. If you look hard enough, you can make out a name in cursive writing - "Mac". That is the nickname of one of the men who sleeps on the steps. He used to work as a contractor and has extensive skills in carpentry. He is writing an article for the *Beat of the Street* newspaper where he proposes that people who are homeless fix up abandoned and vacant properties, and then be allowed to sleep. There are more men sleeping outside than I have ever seen in the past six years. This is largely because a shelter which had seventy beds is closed for renovations. It will be closed during the upcoming winter months, too.

In addition, there are more women sleeping outside than I ever seen. Last week, we tried to get a woman who was seven months pregnant into a shelter. We were told that all of the beds were full in the entire state, as far as Danielson. In the past, they would put a pregnant woman up on a couch or in the waiting room if all of the beds were full. But now, all of the couches and waiting rooms are full, too. Last week, I also met a 64 year-old woman who has been on the waiting list for four months. We couldn't get her into a shelter, either. She is about the age of my mom, and she was sleeping outside when the temperatures dropped down into the 40s. I still cannot completely fathom that.

Another few people I ran into last week were experiencing difficulty because of negligent landlords. One has Section 8, but was forced to move because her landlord wouldn't make the necessary repairs for the apartment to meet inspection. Now, she is struggling to come up with a security deposit required to move. She must move within the next few weeks, because she is running up to her deadline where she could lose her Section 8 voucher. Another woman who contacted the church is having trouble with rats to the point that she and her two elementary school sons do not sleep in their rooms and are afraid to cook in kitchen. She has reported the problem to the City, but an inspector hasn't come out yet. She is afraid to push the issue, because the landlord is a family friend and she isn't sure she wants to risk being put out or experience the fallout with family members. She doesn't know what to do.

Maybe you are feeling the same way, not knowing what you can do with these problems, which seem so vast and complicated. Well, for the stories above I offer you two potential actions:

- (1) Donate winter clothing items to the church. This will help our neighbors who are sleeping outside;
- (2) Join us October 28th at the founding of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA). This is where a group of committed people of faith in the state are organizing themselves to take on systems that result in negligent landlords and homeless pregnant women. It is imperative that as many people show up to the founding on October 28th as possible. We don't have as much organized money as special interest lobbyists, but we can have more organized people. It is this type of organization of people which has led to undocumented immigrants receiving IDs in the State of CT, and the City of Hartford cracking down on absentee landlords and changing their entire housing code. Things can change. Things can be better. But, we have to show up.

~ Logan Singerman,
Warburton Director of Outreach Ministries

WHAT'S NEW

FAITH FORMATION NEWS: WE'VE GOT PLANS!

Get your calendars out and mark them for these upcoming events for children and youth.

On October 14th (Indigenous Peoples' Day), we're heading to **Northwest Park in Windsor** for a day of exploring and learning; check out the flyer in our weekly *E-News* or Sunday bulletin. If you need a ride, please let Pastor Nada or one of the Faith Formation Team know (Nancy M., Alvin T., Priscilla F., Deckie J., or Ileia B.)

Also... **FREE TICKETS** available for the Sonia Plumb Dance Company's matinee performance on November 10th. More info TBA.

In Other News...

Sixteen kids showed up for our intergenerational Worship service on September 8th to help explore the important decisions our church is making about being the church NOW.

Registration for the 2019-20 church school year is underway - please pick up a form and return it to Nada or the office. If you'd like a copy emailed, let me know!

~ Pastor Nada, (860) 249-5631 (x210)

October Worship Schedule!

- October 6: World Communion Sunday
- October 13: Elle Fortune Reynolds' Baptism
- October 20: Guest preacher, Reverend Donna Manocchio of Hands on Hartford shares her experience with us as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of an organization founded out of Center Church, among others (including one of the founders, Paul Bobbitt!)
- October 27: Generosity Sunday: Bring your financial pledge for 2020

NOVEMBER PREVIEW –

- November 3: Founders' Day
- November 10: For All Saints Commemoration; Choir presents selections from several Requiems
- November 17: **SAVE THE DATE: ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING**
This will be an important meeting this year, since we are planning to present some significant changes based on your work on the Visioning Process.
Please put this on your calendar today!



The First Church of Christ in Hartford

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