

**Welcome! Thank You for Worshiping With Us Today!**

Welcome to the First Congregational Church of Southington, dating from 1724, & worshiping in this Meetinghouse since 1830. We are one of the larger, more vibrant United Church of Christ churches in New England. Our purpose is to love & worship God; extend God's radically-inclusive love to all people everywhere; make more & better disciples of Jesus Christ; & inspire people & society to become more & more just, loving, compassionate & Christ-like. You will find here an accepting, caring, non-judgmental community, where lives are transformed, faith is renewed & power for positive living is received. Welcome!

January 29, 2006

**LAITY SUNDAY**

9:30AM

Our most important and fundamental task as Christians is to learn God's story. All our Christian beliefs, experiences & actions are dependent upon our internalization of God's story, that is making God's story our story. -- John H. Westerhoff, III --

**PREPARING TO WORSHIP GOD**

The Prelude (Sue Zoni, piano)  
The Welcome/Welcoming One Another  
Church Family Announcements  
Music for Meditation *I Love to Tell the Story* Emma Lou Diemer  
Lighting of the Candles Acolyte: *Karla Maddy*  
(Acolytes needed: please call Kim Cassarella: 860-621-5412)

**PRAISING GOD**

The Call to Worship **Arthur Hansen**  
LEADER: We gather to hear about the story of our faith  
**PEOPLE: about God's mighty acts, about the brave deeds of prophets and heroes, and about the noble work of persons who live out a commitment to Christ.**  
LEADER: We seek to immerse ourselves in the story of our faith  
**PEOPLE: by striving to find our role within it, by interpreting it anew as it touches our spirits and circumstances, and by allowing it to change us.**  
LEADER: We hope to be ongoing participants in the story of our faith  
**PEOPLE: as translators of love into action, as creators of justice and peace, and as characters who confront life with a true sense of devotion.**  
**UNISON: In worshipping God and listening to each other, we celebrate the story of our faith.**

\*Hymn of Praise: #522 *I Love to Tell the Story*  
\*Prayer of Invocation (unison) **Arthur Hansen**  
O God, as we worship You, lead us into life in all its fullness. Help us to worship with all we are and have. Let our laughter and our tears be instruments of prayer. Let our loves and our delights fly out in a sky-parade, painting our world and our worship with color and sound. Make our doubt the clay from which we shape our faith. Let our fears boil within us until they emerge as shining hope. And let the Light of the World be born in us until we radiate the love that is Christ. Amen.

**HEARING GOD'S WORD**

Anthem: *God Gives Us Hope* (Mustard Seeds Children's Choir) John Horman  
Children's Message **Brett Powell**  
*Children & Teachers Exit to Church School*  
Scripture Lesson MATTHEW 5:13-16 **Arthur Hansen**  
Meditations **I LOVE TO TELL THE STORY!**  
**Tori Hickerson Joe Yevich Cristy Shamus**

**RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD**

Prayers of the Church & Lord's Prayer (using *sins*) **Gloria Gelpke**  
Presentation of Our Offerings & Tithes **Michon Nocera**  
Offertory Anthem: *Be Thou My Vision* Bob Chilcott  
\*Doxology: *Praise God from who all blessings flow! Praise God, all creatures here below!*  
*Praise God above, you heavenly host! Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost!*  
\*Prayer of Dedication **Michon Nocera**  
\*Hymn: #531 *God, Speak to Me, That I May Speak*  
\*Words of Parting (unison) **Michon Nocera**  
Let us go forth shining our light in all the dark places in the world and telling the story of the great things God had done and continues to do in our lives.  
\*Benediction **Michon Nocera**  
\*Response: (join hands) *Blest Be the Tie That Binds*  
*Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love. The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.*  
Postlude: (Sue Zoni, piano)

**PLEASE JOIN US DOWNSTAIRS FOR COFFEE & CONVERSATION**

**Ushers:** Bill & Maureen Lyon, Kristin Sabatino, Diane Lamb, Sandi Reed and Al & Barbara Stanco  
**Coffee Hour Hosts:** Rose Dunlap and Ralph & Meredith Mann  
**Greeters:** Damian & Dawn Cambacini and Laura Crowley  
**Flowers: 1.** Given in loving memory of their parents, William & Margaret Stucky & Rita Gagnon by the Gagnon family. **2.** Given by our *Faithful Friday Folders* in loving memory of Lucille M. Gemmell.  
**To give flowers in memory/honor of a loved one/event, sign-up on Memorial Hall FLOWER CHART.**  
**Joys & Concerns for Prayer:** We pray for the Kalat family, grieving the death of Andrea's mother, & the McCarty family, grieving the death of Rich's grandmother. Hospitalized: Andrea Sinclair, Clive Greenough, Jeannette Faitella. We continue to pray for Diane Lamb; Matthew Plourde; Judy Costa; Maureen Curtis; Pat Diego; Janis Leger; Dorothy Greenough; Mary Lou Thompson; Donna Morin; John O'Connor; Matthew Currao; Pat Livingstone; our Stephen Ministers & care-receivers.

\* \* \* \* \*  
**CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR PASTOR THIS TUESDAY:** Join Gordon Ellis in rooms #201/202 at either 10am or 7pm THIS Tuesday for conversation. He wants to hear your joys, concerns, criticism, suggestions, hopes, fears & dreams regarding your church & its ministry, programs & missions. He'd also like to hear your thoughts about our proposed **Open & Affirming Statement.**  
**SOUPER BOWL OF CARING NEXT SUNDAY:** Our youth will receive this special Super Bowl Sunday offering following each service NEXT Sunday to help alleviate local hunger. Please help!  
**JOIN US TONIGHT TO DISCUSS THE EXONERATED:** 7:30pm, room 201/202. All welcome!

**MOVIES IN THE MEETINGHOUSE** happens again on **Friday, February 10, 7:00pm**, with the movie, **Fiddler on the Roof** (sing-a-along). Sue Meissner & Clare Lindsey will lead a discussion on *Fiddler on the Roof* on Sunday, February 12, 7:30pm, in rooms #201/202. Join us for discussion whether you watch movie at church or at home... **FUTURE Movies: March 10 (7pm) *Life is Beautiful*** with discussion on 3/12, 7:30, led by Clare Lindsey & Sharon Vocke; **April 21 (7pm) *The Scarlet & the Black*** with discussion: 4/23, 7:30pm, led by Gabe Selmi & Alice Niemczyski & **May 12 (7pm) *12 Angry Men*** with discussion: 5/14, 7:30pm, led by Gordon Ellis & Sue Meissner. JOIN US! **JIM COLE IN CONCERT:** Jim Cole, the James Taylor of Christian music, is known across the globe for songs like *Humble Yourself as a Child, Master of My Heart, Every Generation, & In Bethlehem Tonight*. **Mark your calendar:** Jim Cole will be with us **all day on Sunday, March 26**. He'll share songs alone & with our choir or band at all 4 services, then offer a wonderful, Spirit-filled **concert** in our **Meetinghouse at 7:00pm!** Tickets: **\$10** (from Church Office). **DON'T MISS IT!**

**QUIET WORSHIP IN THE STYLE OF TAIZE** is offered **EVERY Tuesday, 6:30-7:00pm**, in our **chapel**. It includes 10 minutes of silence, along with scripture, prayers & simple choruses. Join us! **MUSIC MINISTRY CONCERT:** Our church is blessed with a fantastic music ministry! Join us to hear all of our musical groups: Senior Choir, Mustard Seeds Children's Choir, The Celebration Ringers (handbell choir) and *Branches* (our *T.G.I. Sunday* worship band & singers). It happens **Saturday, March 11, 7:00pm**, in our **Meetinghouse**. A special free-will offering will be *Southington Social Services*.

### **Proposed Open and Affirming Statement**

(to be voted on by the congregation at our Annual Meeting of the Church on Monday, June 19, 2006)

We, the members of *The First Congregational Church* of Southington, Connecticut, hereby declare ourselves to be an open and affirming congregation. We accept the challenges and joys of Christian faith, a faith profound enough to embrace even uncertainty. We struggle with the difficult issues of our day, understanding that God's Word touches and guides us as a congregation and as individuals.

With God's grace, we welcome and affirm the total identity of all people as beloved children of God. We are a congregation that seeks to break down the barriers of prejudice, declaring respect for the worth and dignity of all persons, embracing differences in age, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic status, and physical, emotional, and mental capability. We also recognize and affirm loving, committed, and diverse families. We actively welcome all people to become members of our church and to share fully in our church's life and leadership, ministry and fellowship, worship and sacraments, and responsibilities and blessings.

(Watch for educational & discussion opportunities coming soon.)

## **SMALL GROUPS**

*All small groups are open to everyone, whether or not you've ever attended before.*

**DRAMA MINISTRY GROUP** plans &/or participates in church dramas & musicals, including brief worship dramas. **Next meeting: Monday, February 20, 7:00pm, in the Meetinghouse.** For info, call Crystal Sullivan (860/276-8614).

**CRUZ'IN CONGOS TRAVEL CLUB:** Watch for more *Cruiz'in Congos Travel Club* plans soon!

**QUILTS FOR CHILDREN IN NEED GROUP** meets **every other WEDNESDAY, 10:00AM**, room #207, to sew quilts to comfort children in need. No need to sew; you may cut, piece or tie. **Next meetings: February 1 & 15.** For more info, call Carole Lantz.

**2 PARENTS & TOTS GROUPS:** **Tuesdays & Wednesdays, 9:30-11:00AM**, Fellowship Hall (under Meetinghouse). More info? Contact Lisa Christensen (860-276-0235). Fun for kids; fellowship for parents!

**PRAYER CIRCLE:** **EVERY TUESDAY, 7:00PM, Church Parlor.** Join us anytime! Leave prayer requests & addresses (card will be sent) in the folder next to Church Office marked, "**Prayer Requests.**"

**SEEDS OF HOPE GROUP** works in & through our church to foster awareness, communication, educational opportunities & action regarding our role as compassionate Christians living in a small, small world & taking seriously Jesus' statement, *Whatever you do to even the least of your brothers & sisters, you do it to me*. The group sponsors forums, speakers, film & book discussions & more. **Next meeting: SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 7:30PM**, in room #204. ALL WELCOME!

**ProCRAFTinators** is a group for those who enjoy crafts. We meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays of every month in Memorial Hall. Bring a craft to work on or share. For more info, call Meredith (860-628-8982).

## **SPIRITUAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES**

**SIGN-UP TODAY NEXT TO GORDON'S OFFICE**

**EXPLORING THE WAY** is a 1-hour, 7-week class introducing the spiritual journey. Led by Bob & Martha Beaudoin, it meets **Sundays, TODAY - 2/26, 10:00-11:00am.**

**FAITH LESSONS FROM THE HOLY LAND** is a video discussion series filmed at sacred sites in the Holy Land by biblical scholar & teacher, Ray Vander Laan. All NEW is ***In the Dust of the Rabbi: Becoming a Disciple***. Gordon Ellis will lead this 3-session experience on what it really means to be a disciple of Jesus on **3 Wednesdays, February 1, 8 & 15 at 10:00 am & 7:00pm, rooms 201/202.**

**NEW BIBLE STUDY:** Gordon Ellis will lead *Living the Questions'* new video Bible study, *Victory & Peace OR Justice & Peace*, taught by historical Jesus scholar, John Dominic Crossan. It's will be presented at **7:00pm on 4 Wednesdays, March 8-29, in Memorial Hall** as part of new ***Lenten Family Nights***, which will also include a potluck supper at 6pm (bring a dish to share), a program for children (*Fun Lenten Crafts for Kids*) at 7pm, & infant/toddler care. Mark your calendar TODAY!

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

**2006 CALENDAR FOR EVERY DOLLAR FEEDS KIDS:** For **\$25** you get a **2006 Wall Calendar** that puts you in a drawing for a weekly *thank you* gift (average value: \$25). Call Church Office.

**RING, RING THOSE BELLS !!** If you have enjoyed the sound of handbells, consider joining our bell choir. Practice is on Mondays, 7:15 - 8:30pm. We'll teach you what you need to know. We ring monthly at 9:30am *Morning Worship*. For more info, call Beverly Simpson (860-621-6217).

**TWIGS CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S CHOIR**, for grades 1-8, rehearses 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesdays of each month, 6:00-6:45pm in our Meetinghouse, & sings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month at either our 11:15am or our 6:00pm service. For more info, contact Crystal Sullivan (860-276-8614).

**INFANT/TODDLER CARE PROVIDERS NEEDED** during 11:15AM & 6PM services. Even 1 Sunday/month will help; *Safe Church* training provided. Can you help out? Please call Beth Crowley Winne after 6:00PM (860/621-6159) or e-mail her at Crowleyba@cox.net.

**HABITAT FOR HUMANITY WORK DAY:** Our next work day is **SATURDAY, 2/18** (& monthly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday). Sign-up TODAY next to Gordon's office! Men, women & teens (16 & over) welcome. If you can't join us to work, please consider providing fuel for the volunteers, **SNACKS**, morning break food for 15-20 people. Call Michael Halloran, (860/426-1304) for more info or to sign-up. Thanks!

## **AMERICARES HOMEFRONT DAY IS BACK !**

### **NOW IS THE TIME TO APPLY !**

**AmeriCares HomeFront Day** is a community-based home repair program that culminates in a 1-day repair event, targeting homeowners who are physically or financially unable to maintain their homes or properties. The *Southington Faith Community*, comprised of volunteers from *First Congregational Church, Plantsville Congregational Church, Mary Our Queen Church, & St. Paul's Church*, is the local sponsoring team & performs the home repairs. All work, material, & repairs are performed at no cost to recipients. If you or someone you know is interested in this amazing, no-cost program, please **hurry and apply** for our upcoming, May 6, 2006, *AmeriCares HomeFront Day*.

### **Applications and Information available:**

Locally at *Southington Social Services*

Online at <http://www.americarehomefront.org>

By phone at 1-(800)-887-4673 (if necessary leave a clear message including your name, address, and phone number).

### **SPONSORS ALSO NEEDED**

Our church seeks businesses/individuals to make financial contributions to our church's portion of the cost. If you can help, please send checks (payable to *First Congregational Church*, but clearly noted *AmeriCares Homefront Day*) to: Gordon E. Ellis, *First Congregational Church*, 37 Main Street, Southington, CT 06489.

**THANK YOU !**