

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!

February 5, 2006 FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY 9:30AM

'Our kingdoms go' is the necessary & unavoidable corollary of 'Thy kingdom come'. For the more there is of self, the less there is of God. The divine eternal fullness of life can be gained only by those who have deliberately lost the partial, separative life of craving & self-interest. -- Aldous Huxley --

PREPARING TO WORSHIP GOD

The Prelude *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* J. S. Bach
The Welcome/Welcoming One Another
Church Family Announcements
Music for Meditation *Eternal Truths – Unseen Realities* Daniel Pinkham
Lighting of the Candles Acolyte: *Lauren Casarella*
(Acolytes needed: please call Kim Cassarella: 860-621-5412)

PRAISING GOD

The Call to Worship
PASTOR: We gather today to praise and worship the one and only living God!
PEOPLE: Let us turn away from the gods that we create, from our preoccupation with the things of this world, and from all things that draw our allegiance from God.
PASTOR: Let us, instead, ponder eternal truths and unseen realities.
PEOPLE: Let us open ourselves to the healing touch of Christ, who casts out the demons within us, freeing us to worship the one and only true God.

*Hymn of Praise: #439 *A Mighty Fortress Is a God* Ein' Feste Burg
*Prayer of General Confession (unison)
O God of all times, places and people, we confess our self-centeredness and arrogance. We have been pre-occupied with earthly pleasures, made gods of things that are not God, and failed to trust and worship You alone. Forgive us, O God, and open us to Christ's healing touch, that we might find the newness of life and fullness of life that He has promised to all who are faithful. Now in the silence, hear our personal prayers of confession.
*Prayer of Personal Confession (in silence)
*Response: #745 *Holy God, Holy and mighty One, Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon us.*
*Assurance of Forgiveness

HEARING GOD'S WORD

Scripture Lessons JOHN 1:35-46 & MARK 1:21-28
Sermon **PICKING A WINNER !** Rev. Dr. Gordon E. Ellis
*Hymn: #176 *"Silence! Frenzied, Unclean Spirit"* Authority

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Prayers of the Church & Lord's Prayer (using *sins*)
Presentation of Our Offerings & Tithes
Offertory Anthem: *O Rest in the Lord* Hal H. Hopson
O rest in the Lord; wait patiently for Him. And He shall give you your hearts desire: And fret not yourself for evil ones; Commit your way to Him and trust in Him. (Ps.37:1,5,7)
*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

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Invitation
Prayer of Consecration
The Sharing of the Bread & Cup
The Prayer of Thanksgiving
*Hymn: #450 *O For a Closer Bond With God* Beatitudo
*Words of Parting (unison)
Let us go forth celebrating that Christ frees us from bondage to the demons within and the "gods" without, that we might follow and serve the one true God, who offers us fullness of life.
*Benediction
*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: *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* Helmut Walcha

PLEASE JOIN US DOWNSTAIRS FOR COFFEE & CONVERSATION

Ushers: Members of our Board of Deacons **Greeters:** Bill & Karen Andres and Katherine Andres
Coffee Hour Hosts: Deborah Leggett and Rick & Pat Diego
Flowers: In observance of Scout Sunday from Troop #32, which meets in our church.
To provide flowers in memory/honor of a loved one/event, please sign-up on Memorial Hall *FLOWER CHART*.
Several March dates are open.

Joys & Concerns for Prayer: Hospitalized: Jeannette Faitella. Clive Greenough will have surgery on 2/16. Pat Livingstone will have surgery on 2/27. We continue to pray for Diane Lamb; Matthew Plourde; Andrea Sinclair; 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.
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SOUPER BOWL OF CARING TODAY: Our youth will receive this special *Super Bowl Sunday* offering to help alleviate local hunger following each service TODAY. Please help!
USHERS NEEDED: Would you usher **1 Sunday/month at 9:30AM** starting in March? Training provided. Substitutes available. Get to know more people! Sign-up next to Gordon's office TODAY.
JIM COLE IN CONCERT: Jim Cole, the James Taylor of Christian music, is known around the world 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 sing 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** (\$5/under 18) from Church Office. **DON'T MISS IT !**

YOUTH MISSION TRIP SPONSORS: Would you like to be a sponsor for our February *Youth Mission Trip* to Washington, D.C. Youth will be at *Coffee & Conversation* TODAY and NEXT Sunday.

MOVIES THAT MATTER is **THIS Friday, 2/10, 7:00pm**, featuring **Fiddler on the Roof** (sing-along). Sue Meissner & Clare Lindsey will lead a discussion of *Fiddler on the Roof* NEXT Sunday, 2/12, 7:30pm, in rooms #201/202. Join us for discussion whether you watch movie at church or home.

FUTURE Movies: **March 10 (7pm)** *Life is Beautiful* with **discussion** on 3/12, 7:30, led by Sharon Vocke & Clare Lindsey; **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 for these *Movies That Matter!*

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) & *Branches* (our *T.G.I. Sunday* worship band & singers). It's **Saturday, March 11, 7:00pm**, in our **Meetinghouse**. A free-will offering will be received for *Southington Social Services*.

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES OF PENANCE: The holiest season on the year, Lent, begins on *Ash Wednesday*, March 1st. We offer 3 brief *Ash Wednesday Services of Penance*, when you may receive ashes. Services are at **7:00AM in Chapel** (30 min.), **12:00Noon in Meetinghouse** (30 min.) & **7:00PM in Meetinghouse** (45 min.). Plan to attend one. A luncheon (\$3) follows the 12:00N service.

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!

CHECK OUT OUR CHURCH'S WEBSITE, www.firstchurchsouthington.org. You'll love it!

VIDEOS OF SUNDAY SERVICES & SPECIAL EVENTS are available in our Church Library.

CHILD CARE for infants/toddlers is offered at all 4 Sunday services in our Infant/Toddler Nursery.

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.)

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

NEW BIBLE STUDY: Gordon Ellis leads a new video Bible study from *Living the Questions* entitled, *Victory & Peace OR Justice & Peace* by historical Jesus scholar, John Dominic Crossan. It will be presented at **7:00pm on 4 Wednesdays, March 8-29**, in **Memorial Hall** as part of our *Lenten Family Nights*, which 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!

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: *Spring Fling to Coopertown, NY* on **Tuesday, May 23; \$65/person**. Choose 2 from these 3: *Baseball Hall of Fame* (with many new features), *James Fenimore Mansion & Art Museum* or *The Farmers' Historic Museum*. Leave municipal lot (next to church) at 7am sharp & return about 8pm. Cost is for transportation & 2 admissions. Call Meredith Mann (860-628-8982) for details OR just send a check with your 2 choices to: Fred Nyren, 276 Carriage Drive, Southington, CT 06489. ALSO: watch for our exciting overnight *Autumn Adventure to Vermont*, coming in the fall.

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 15 and March 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 **2nd & 4th Thursdays** of every month in Memorial Hall. Bring a craft to work on or share. For more info, call Meredith (860-628-8982).

BREAKFAST CLUB meets **THIS Thursday, 8:00-9:00am**, in Memorial Hall. A full breakfast is always only \$1. Our speaker is our own Shelley Nyren on *The Benefits of Physical Therapy*. JOIN US!

MEN'S BREAKFAST CLUB, breakfast & conversation for men, **meets monthly on Saturdays, 9:00-11:00am, Memorial Hall.** **Next meeting: Feb. 25.** For more info, call John Arens (203-573-8195).

MORNING WOMEN'S GROUP: ALL women are invited to a *Valentine's Day potluck luncheon* on Tuesday, 2/14, 12:00N, in Memorial Hall. Bring your favorite dish; beverage & dessert provided.

SMALL GROUPS

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

HEALTH KITS FOR DISASTER RELIEF? The do-it-yourself *Church World Service* kits will be available in Memorial Hall & Chapel from TODAY through Sunday, February 26, with a return by date of March 5th (Return to Memorial Hall.). These kits were used extensively for disaster relief in the Gulf Coast, New Orleans and most recently in Pakistan. Would you fill one or more kits for us? THANKS!

COVENANT TO CARE: Carseats needed for family in need: 2 toddler seats (for 11 mos. old & 2.5 yr. old) & a booster seat (for 4 year old). Call Kim Rees to help out (860-621-7768). Thank you!

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.

EVERY DOLLAR FEEDS KIDS OFFERING ENVELOPES are available next to 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 Info? Call Beverly Simpson (860-621-6217).

TWIGS CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S CHOIR, for grades 1-8, rehearses 1st & 2nd Tuesdays of each month, 6:00-6:45pm in our Meetinghouse, & sings on the 3rd 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 3rd 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.

SPONSORS 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!

A Church Family Opportunity to Participate in the Southington Reading Initiative

Following similar events in cities & towns across the country, Southington has initiated its own town-wide reading event. People throughout the town will read the same book then come together in groups to discuss it. The planning committee for Southington (which included John Ryan) selected the book, ***Honky***, by Dalton Conley. The book details the author's experiences growing up as a white minority in a predominately black & Hispanic neighborhood in NYC. An added benefit of the event is that Conley will be at Southington High School at 7:00pm on Wednesday, March 8, to discuss the book in person.

Given the subject matter, we would like to encourage as many members of the congregation as possible to take part by reading the book & coming to ***our own group discussion***. Our discussion will be held at **7:00pm on Tuesday, March 7** in **room #204**, led by Chuck Miceli, who also grew up in an ethnically diverse neighborhood in NYC. At the discussion we will share & discuss our impressions of the book, as well as draft some questions to ask the author during his presentation the following day. Please note that you will need to secure your own copy of the book. The Southington Public library has multiple copies to loan. Please sign-up next to Gordon's office if you'd like to take part in this stimulating program.