

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

Welcome to *The First Congregational Church of Southington*. Ours is an **Open & Affirming** congregation dating from 1724 & worshipping in our present Meetinghouse since 1830. One of the larger, more vibrant *United Church of Christ* churches in New England, our church's 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 our church to be an accepting, caring, non-judgmental community, where faith is renewed, lives are transformed, & power for positive living is received. It's a church **where the Spirit is alive & miracles happen!** Welcome!

**March 18, 2007**      **FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT**      **9:30am**

*Jesus is holding up a mirror to us in this parable & the face in the mirror is our own. But the mirror is also a window through which we can see deeply into the heart of God with its infinite love for us....* -- Robert W. Stackel --

**INFANT & TODDLER CARE BY ADULTS DURING ALL SERVICES IN CHURCH NURSERY**

**PREPARING TO WORSHIP GOD**

Prelude      Two Chorale Preludes      Johannes Brahms  
The Welcome/Welcoming One Another  
Church Family Announcements  
Music for Meditation      *O God, How We Have Wandered*      Alan Stout  
Lighting the Candles      Acolyte:

**PRAISING GOD**

The Call to Worship  
PASTOR: Sisters and brothers, come back from the far country, from the separation of sin or the exile of self-contempt.  
PEOPLE: **No matter how grave our sins may be, or how burdensome they seem, God longs to welcome us home, love us and forgive us!**  
PASTOR: God asks us simply to accept forgiveness and then extend it to others.  
PEOPLE: **Let us worship God, who awaits our return with lavish love.**

Hymn of Praise: # N-8 (*Worshipbook*)      *I Will Arise and Go to Jesus*      Arise  
\*Prayer of General Confession (unison)  
Holy God, we long for abundant life, fullness of life, yet we are enslaved by old habits, past dispositions and accustomed patterns. Forgive us and free us from them, O God. We also know that our inability to accept and extend forgiveness keeps us from living full and meaningful lives. Help us learn the art of forgiveness, that we might be able to both receive and extend forgiveness, and have the new life it offers us. 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**

Anthem      *Almighty and Everlasting God*      Orlando Gibbons  
Children's Message  
*Children & Teachers Exit to Church School*  
Scripture Lesson      Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Sermon      ACCEPTING & EXTENDING FORGIVENESS      Rev. Dr. Gordon E. Ellis  
Hymn of Reflection: #202      *O God, How We Have Wandered*      Passion Chorale

**RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD**

Prayer of the Church & Lord's Prayer (using *sins...*)  
Presentation of Our Offerings & Tithes  
Offertory Trio      *Satisfied* (Mary Decroce, Christine & Allyson Massi)      Nancy Walters  
\*Doxology      *All things are Yours: we make that true when we return our gifts to You, And so we give, and so we share, in Christ's strong name expressing care.*  
\*Prayer of Dedication  
\*Hymn: #208      *God Loved the World*      Rockingham  
\*Words of Parting (unison)  
Let us go forth striving to be a people of forgiveness, accepting it and extending it, seeking to follow the example of the compassionate and loving father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son.  
\*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."  
Music for Contemplation:      *O God, How We Have Wandered*      Johannes Brahms

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

**Ushers:** Gail Fulop; Gary Cooper; George Moore; Judy Chatfield, Hardice Jones, Ray Dischino & Tim Lockwood  
**Greeters:** Joe Yevich and Beverly Ryan      **Coffee Hour Host:** Melinda Baumgartner  
**Flowers:** Given in memory of Joey and Andy, her brothers, by Nelly Lazariel.  
**Our Flower Chart to provide flowers in honor/memory of loved ones is now available in Memorial Hall.**

\* \* \* \* \*  
**Joys & Concerns for Prayer:** Hospitalized this week: Betsy Mauri, Alan Beaudoin & Betsy Roberts. We pray for Donna Blakey & family, grieving the death of her mom. We continue to pray for Diane Lamb; Sue Parsons; Alan Beaudoin; Pat Diego; John Zigmont; Mary Carter; Janet Crocker; Betsy Roberts; Maureen Curtis; Pat Livingstone; & our Stephen Ministers & care-receivers.  
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**THE EXONERATED:** Our adaption of *The Exonerated*, directed by John Baker (who recently toured with *The Sound of Music*) comes to **Peace Café** on **March 30 & 31, 7:30pm, & April 1, 2:30pm**. It chronicles the stories of 4 wrongly-accused death row inmates. Infused with poignant music, it's a thought-provoking start to Holy Week, as we remember another death row inmate, Jesus! Space is limited; get **free tickets** at *Coffee & Conversation* or from Shelley Nyren (860-628-2523 or [shelnyren@sbcglocal.net](mailto:shelnyren@sbcglocal.net)). Free-will offering at event. Due to adult themes & language, play is not recommended for children under age 16.

**MOVIES THAT MATTER** will be offered on the big screen with surround sound on **THIS Friday, 3/23, at 7:00pm, in Peace Café**. The movie, *Jesus Camp*, will be shown, followed by a discussion led by Sue Meissner & Clare Lindsey. Child care (\$3/child for the evening) will be offered & refreshments will be available. All are welcome! Suggested donation: \$2/person. Our April movie will be ***Brokeback Mountain*** on Friday, **April 20, 7:00pm**, with discussion leader, Rich Szulczewski.

**LENTEN NOONDAY SERVICES:** Join us for a special 30-minute Lenten service at 12:00N each Wednesday through April 4 in our Chapel. This week's worship leader is **Rev. Cyndie Holden**. Lenten luncheons in Memorial Hall follow each *Lenten Noonday Service* for just \$3. ALL welcome!

**HOLY WEEK VIGIL:** Sign-up today for our *Holy Week Vigil*, when people will be in our chapel 'round the clock' (Maundy Thursday, 4/5, 9PM, through Easter Sunrise, 4/8, 6AM) for 1 hour each, worshipping, praying, meditating on behalf of all of us. Sign-up next to Gordon's office today!

**SUMMER CAMP:** Our *United Church of Christ* runs a wonderful summer camp experience for children & teens at *Silver Lake Conference Center* in Sharon, CT. Brochure & registration is now available on-line at [www.ctucc.org](http://www.ctucc.org) (click on "Silver Lake"). We also have some scholarship assistance available. See Karlene Archambeault or Carole Lantz.

**NEW MEMBER SEMINARS:** Those wishing to officially join our church are invited to **attend one New Member Seminar, 7:00-9:30PM**, rooms #201/202, either **Tuesday, April 10 OR Wednesday, April 11**. Once you have attended one, you may join at any of our 4 services **Sunday, May 6**. Register for your choice by signing-up next to Gordon's office or calling our Church Office (860/628-6958).

**WEEKDAY PARKING:** When you come to church during on weekdays, 8am – 5pm, please be aware of the 2-hour parking limit in the municipal lot next to the church. Though we own the land, we have leased it to the town, so we must obey the signs. Actually it's to our advantage because it keeps spaces open for us. Previously Branford Hall students often filled them up for the day.

**EASTER BASKETS:** We provide Easter baskets for D.C.F. kids through *Covenant to Care*. TAKE basket(s) following all services TODAY (OR use your own). FILL basket(s) with Easter goodies. Return full basket(s) to Memorial Hall by Palm Sunday (4/1). Questions? Call Cathy Andrini (860/620-9782).

**BUY A BUTTERFLY:** Our children will sell paper butterflies (\$1) following our 9:30, 11:15 & 6:00 services thru 4/1. Butterflies will be hung in church on Easter in memory/honor of loved ones & money will support next year's *Youth Mission Trip* to Mexico.

**NURSERY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED** especially for during our **6:00pm** service on the **3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of each month**. Adults & teens needed! Please call Beth Winne (860-621-6159).

**SOUTHINGTON COMMUNITY SERVICES** needs canned fruit. Please leave donations in our *Mission Hope Chest* in the Narthex. Thanks!

**HABITAT FOR HUMANITY WORK DAY:** Our next work day is **SATURDAY, 3/17** (& 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!

**NEW COVENANT TO CARE NEEDS:** Kitchen table & chairs, mattresses (full & twin), bedsheets, pillows, bedroom sets for adult & a 5-year old. **ALSO needed** (as always): Placement packs for all ages, including: **Infant & Toddler** (baby blankets, pacifiers, bottles, onesies, washcloths, wipes, sippy cups, diapers, toothbrushes, baby rattles/teethers, infant formula, baby food, baby cereal); **Preschool** (toiletries, wipes, color books/crayons, hand/body lotion, combs/brush, stuffed animals, small toy, books, small packaged snacks); **School Age** (backpacks, markers, deodorant & other toiletries, pens/pencils, books, clothes, etc.). Items may be left in our *Mission Hope Chest* in the Narthex. For more info, call Kim Rees (860-621-7768). THANKS!

## **MORE ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**DVD'S OF WEEKLY WORSHIP:** Gabe Selmi records weekly worship for our Church Library. Usually he records whichever service is convenient, but with prior arrangements, he record a specific service for you & provide you with a copy (such as when your child is being baptized). Call Gabe (860-620-9587).

**A QUIET CANDLELIGHT PRAYER SERVICE** in the style of Taize is held **EVERY Tuesday, 6:30-7:00pm**, in our Chapel. All welcome & encouraged to attend for quiet, reflective worship.

**JR. C.I.A. (grades 6-8) COSMIC BOWLING:** Saturday, March 24, 6:00pm. Cost = \$10. Sign-up next to Gordon's office & meet at church that night.

**KIDS' CLUB (grades 2-5):** Join us in *Dodgeball City* to continue the adventures of Joseph on Tuesday, March 20, 7:00-8:30pm, Memorial Hall. Please sign-up next to Gordon's office.

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

**Today's Scripture Lessons**

**LUKE 15:1-3, 11b-32** <sup>1</sup>Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. <sup>2</sup>And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, *This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.* <sup>3</sup>So he told them this parable: *There was a man who had two sons.* <sup>12</sup>*The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them.* <sup>13</sup>*A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.* <sup>14</sup>*When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need.* <sup>15</sup>*So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs.* <sup>16</sup>*He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.* <sup>17</sup>*But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger!’* <sup>18</sup>*I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you;’* <sup>19</sup>*I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’* <sup>20</sup>*So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.* <sup>21</sup>*Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’* <sup>22</sup>*But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.* <sup>23</sup>*And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;’* <sup>24</sup>*for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.* <sup>25</sup>*Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.* <sup>26</sup>*He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on.* <sup>27</sup>*He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’* <sup>28</sup>*Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him.* <sup>29</sup>*But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends.* <sup>30</sup>*But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’* <sup>31</sup>*Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.* <sup>32</sup>*But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’*

## Today’s Anthem Text

**Almighty and Everlasting God:** *Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities; and in all our dangers and necessities, stretch forth thy right hand to help and deliver us: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

### Satisfied

1. All my life long I had panted for a drink from some cool spring  
Than I hoped would quench the thirst I felt within.
2. Feeding on the husks around me ‘til my strength was almost gone,  
Longed my soul for something better, only still to hunger on.
3. Poor I was and sought for riches, something that would satisfy,  
But the dust I gathered ‘round me only mocked my soul’s sad cry.
4. Well of water, ever springing, Bread of life so rich and free,  
Untold wealth that never faileth, My Redeemer is to me.

Hallelujah! I have found Him, Whom my soul so long has craved!  
Jesus satisfies my longing; Through His blood I now am saved.

-- Clara T. Williams --

## SMALL GROUPS

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

**CRUISIN’ CONGOS: Family fun day in NYC!** Choose either *The Bronx Zoo* or *The New York Botanical Gardens* on **Saturday, June 23**. Leave municipal lot next to church at **8:00am** & leave NYC for home at **4:00pm**. The cost is \$25 for bus & tip. Admission costs & lunch are on your own. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Send full payment to Fred Nyren (276 Carriage Dr., Southington, CT 06489). Questions? Call Meredith Mann (860-628-8982). ALSO: Save **Oct. 3-4** for our ***Adirondack Foliage Adventure*** with lots of wonderful, fun activities. **See newsletter for details!**

**NOTE CHANGE OF SCHEDULE: OUR R.E.S.T. SPIRITUAL BOOK CLUB** (short for *Reading for Enrichment & Spiritual Transformation*) is led by Rev. Linda Fernandes-Bailey & meets monthly, **7:30 – 8:30pm, room #207**. For **April 29<sup>th</sup>**, please read *God’s Politics* by Jim Wallis. You’re invited to read any or all books & attend any or all monthly sessions.

**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: March 28 & April 11 & 25**. For more info, call Carole Lantz.

**PARENTS & TOTS GROUPS** meet **Tuesdays & Wednesdays, 9:30-11:00AM**, in Fellowship Hall (under Meetinghouse). For info, call 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 & community to foster awareness, communication, educational opportunities & action regarding our role as compassionate Christians living in a small, small world, who take 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, promoting peace, justice, environmental concerns & more. **ALL WELCOME!**

**Next meeting: APRIL 22, 7:30pm, room #204.**

**OUR ADDICTION ASSISTANCE NETWORK** is for individuals/families needing confidential assistance with problem drinking, drug use, gambling, etc. Contact Steve & JoAnn Ray (203-591-1291).

**DRUMMING THE SPIRIT OF LIFE: A DRUM CIRCLE:** Historically people have used the beat of the drum to connect with the Divine. Whether you’ve drummed before or not, this group is for you. Toes tapping & spirit soaring, your heart will beat to the rhythm of the drum. You will fill with energy & want to move. Bring a willingness to participate, meditate & praise God. We have some drums, but bring one if you can (hand drums only). Watch for sign-ups or call Nelly Lazariel (860-426-9368).