

**SUMMER
2016**



The First Congregational Church in Bloomfield - United Church of Christ

The Wintonbury Spire

Paul Claudel, French poet and diplomat who lived in the first part of the 20th century is quoted as saying

**"JESUS DID NOT COME TO REMOVE SUFFERING
OR TO EXPLAIN IT...
HE CAME TO FILL IT WITH HIS PRESENCE"**

The latest shooting in Orlando Florida has left many of our hearts confused, sad, and disappointed. Innocent lives with the potential of great futures have been lost violently; families and relationships have been broken and are now suffering great losses. Communities are in pain, searching for unity and solidarity! Our nation is wounded in the same way that many of us are wounded!

In the midst of this reality many are responding with compassion and calling all of us to fight hate, to stand for justice, to be supportive of those who are alive and in pain, to express our love to all. We are called to BE PRESENT!

Late Maya Angelou said it so well...
Challenging us to be more present
when she said...

"BE A RAINBOW IN SOMEONE ELSE'S CLOUD"

That is our challenge as a Congregation, help us to be
exactly that...

*"A Rainbow in the life of others"
...A rainbow of hope...A rainbow of love!*

**MAY GOD BLESS YOU, YOUR FAMILY,
OUR COMMUNITY AND WORLD!**

Pastor Ed

ENJOY A SAFE AND HAPPY SUMMER



PASTOR ED'S

*"Sparks of challenges and information
for you and your love ones"*

*"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, I do
not give you peace as the world gives to you. Do not
be troubled... or be afraid"*

(Gospel of John Chapter 14 verses 25-29)

MAY GOD BLESS YOU WITH PEACE!

PEACE THAT BLESSES OTHERS!

PEACE THAT TOUCHES OTHERS WITH LOVE!

PEACE DEEP IN YOUR SOUL!

**PEACE OF KNOWING THAT YOU
AND YOUR LIFE
ARE IN GOD'S HAND!**

I HOPE YOU HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

- *Read a good book...*
- *Enjoy nature... enjoy life...*
- *Do something for yourself...*
 - *Trust in GOD!*
- *Be a rainbow in someone else's cloud!*

PEACE & BLESSINGS

Blessings
COUNT THEM ONE BY ONE



Summer Schedule

Deacons On Call

July 3 - July 9:
Ursula Dang; Anne Weaver

July 10 - July 16:
Oz Gibbs, Dee Hart

July 17 - July 23:
Dee Hart; Anne Weaver

July 24 - July 30:
Janet Swan

July 31 - August 6:
Janet Swan

August 7 - August 13:

August 14 - August 20:
Ursula Dang

August 21 - August 27:
Oz Gibbs; Dee Hart

August 28 - September 3:
Dee Hart; Anne Weaver

Deacon Contact Information

Ursula Dang 860-502-7408
lvdang1@aol.com

Oz Gibbs 860 729 6793
ozgibbs@aol.com

Dee Hart 860-573-8443
hrmdawn@yahoo.com

Janet Swan 860 242 8978
jssahs@sbcglobal.net

Anne Weaver 860-966-0786
annerw1935@gmail.com

Church Office Hours

July 5 – August 26

Monday – Thursday 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

Fridays **CLOSED**

Summer Worship Schedule

July 3 – September 4

If you have a Pastoral need, please contact a “Deacon on Call” listed to the left. This information will also be noted in the bulletin each week.



JULY 3 to SEPT 4 - 9:30 am
SEPT 11 - Rally Sunday 10 am
SEPT – 18 (Fall/Winter Schedule)
Resume 8am & 10 am Services



**First Congregational
Church Child
Development Center**

Now open enrollment for the Fall School Year
2016-2017



Refer a friend or family member to
our wonderful program

Contact Shantel Bremmer @ 860-242-0183

To teach is to touch a life forever!



Hunger Action Team (HAT) Member
A Hunger Action Team is a group of individuals and organizations, working in collaboration, to end hunger in a designated community. Members include individuals struggling with hunger, local businesses and food donors, town government, nonprofit organizations, the faith community, the school system, and concerned individuals. They begin by asking “Why people are hungry in our community and what can we do to make it better?”

For further information please contact one of our Community Network Builders: Beatrice Maslowski at bmaslowski@foodshare.org or 860-286-9999 x180, Jim Palma at jpalma@foodshare.org or 860-286-9999 x124.



SPECIAL SUNDAY SERVICES

- September 11, 2016** Rally Day
- October 2, 2016** World Communion Sunday
- November 20, 2016** Thanksgiving Sunday
- November 27, 2016** First Sunday of Advent
- December 11, 2015** Cantata
- December 18, 2016** Christmas Pageant

Loaves & Fishes*

Loaves & Fishes serves a meal at the soup kitchen on the second Tuesday of every month. The meal is prepared in the kitchen here at church on Monday the day before. The dates between now and Rally Sunday are:

July 11 & 12 & August 8 & 9

**Call Karen Blanchard or Deborah Huebner if you would like to help!*

**JOIN US IN OUR WEEKLY
EXERCISE CLASSES.**

***Tuesday and Friday
mornings
9:15-10:15am***



News For Kids, Youth, & Families

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY WAS FABULOUS. GREAT JOB!

Children's Sunday was GREAT! The young people of our church were truly amazing as leaders of worship on Sunday June 12th. FCCB is very proud of the young people in the church community. From the Welcome to the Final Hymn the young people did a beautiful job giving praise to God and giving the congregation a little piece of what they had learned this year in Sunday School. Children you did a great job! I would like to Thank Chante' Wilson for Nursery Care and Lisa Jaffery for her teaching support this year. They have taught the children all year long with much dedication and support. They are so wonderful with the children. Their faith influence and steadfast love for God truly shines through. Thank you to the Faith Formation Team for your hard work this year too. Your support and fun loving nature is a wonderful part of the Christian Education Ministry in the church. Here is the Synopsis of Children's Sunday this year.

Children's Sunday June 12, 2016

Children's Sunday is a very special Sunday in our church year. It is the Sunday that our Sunday School children lead the Worship Service. This Sunday is a Sunday to celebrate the children and participate in their Faith Formation. Faith Formation takes place in worship and in every aspect of church life.

This year's theme is Unity. The Children did learn a lot about Unity this year. Each Sunday they experienced the scriptures that were used during worship. They would listen to the Children's message and then continue to Sunday School and learn even

more about the scripture. Each Sunday we had class all together. Most of the stories we shared in Sunday school focused on the love that we have in Unity with God and others. The children read together, played together, and did a craft together. This year we also implemented Communion Sunday. The children came back to worship to have Communion in Unity with the church community and their family.

The Preschool, Kindergarten, First and Second Graders will present the Call to Worship today. Our young children will be leading the congregation in words of faith and helpfulness with Unity to all God's People. Please join in the Call to Worship with our young friends.

The Second, Third, Fourth & Fifth Grades and High School are leading the Worship service for us this morning. They also will be sharing with us Poetry that speaks of Unity in Faith, with God, the Church, with Jesus and each other. Each student volunteered to do each piece of the Worship service and they wrote their own Acrostic Poetry. This is Faith Formation at its finest. We also have great musical talent with us today. Please enjoy as our youngest bring forth their very best in musical talent.

Thank you Lanya for having some of your students join us this morning and thank you Sara Morgan for your gift of piano playing for us today and Susan Haberlandt for being so happy to share her piano duet with us. Our Sunday School Children will also sing for the Offertory. They are great!

All of our Sunday School children have been outstanding this year in learning, growing. They have shared their talents in worship this year, which were enjoyed by all. It truly is inspirational to watch children grow in faith and truly we have a lot to learn from

our young people as we grow in our faith as well.

Let us celebrate each child as they grow in faith for this is a Sunday that our children shine with God's hope, God's joy, God's peace and God's love and they do it in Unity.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

Kevin Blanchard
Scott Blanchard
Emerson Dang
Janelle Hales
Reese Hart
Joshua Markiewicz
Kaitlin Percy
Sean Smith

CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS

Jaiden Alba
Isaiah Clarke
Joshua Clarke
Alex Correa
Amber McKenzie
Kaleb McKenzie

↓ *Check This Out ...* ↓

Summer Schedule

July 3 - Sept 4

Children will receive a Children's Bulletin for use during the worship service each week throughout the summer months.

Save the Date: Rally Day September 11

Sunday School will resume with Rally Day at 10:00am. Have a wonderful and healthy Summer filled with God's blessings and peace.

Enjoy the summer months. Be safe, happy and healthy. Continue to look for God everywhere you go. I am looking forward to seeing you at Vacation Bible School August 15th through 19th. If I do not see you there, I will see you in September on Rally Day September 11th.

God bless you and keep you until we meet again.

Ms. Dorine

Vacation Bible School August 15 - 19, 2015, 9 am - 12 noon

Vacation Bible School Registration Form is included in this Spire. Please *pre-register* your child for Cave Quest
"Following Jesus the Light of the World"
Vacation Bible School,
August 15th ~ 19th from 9:00 - 12:00.
Feel free to invite your child's friends to this awesome week of music, learning and fun!

Fill out a registration form and turn it in to the church office or call 242-0776.

THANK YOU!

① Dear First Congregational Church of Bloomfield

Thanks everyone for the scholarship. It will go towards books and food. Currently I am working at an IT internship at Veeder-Root in Simsbury. Their products involve fuel-paint services, like fuel-pumps and fuel-monitoring equipment, like tank gauges. My job is to do some maintenance on the company websites. I really enjoy my job. Next semester I'll be a senior at Western New England University. It's been a journey and I'm looking forward to the part of my life after school.

-Kevin Blanchard



② To everyone at the First Congregational Church of Bloomfield, I'll be a senior this year at Eastern Connecticut State University. Books and other college expenses aren't getting any cheaper so this money is gratefully appreciated. Thank You all again!

- Scott Blanchard



JULY

2016

<p><i>Every Sunday</i></p> <p>9:30 am Worship 12:30 and 7pm - <i>New Birth Community Church</i>, YOGA 4pm</p>	<p><i>Every Monday</i> 7pm <i>Narc. Anon.</i></p>
<p>July 3 Communion Sunday Seventh Sunday after Pentecost <i>Lectionary Possibilities:</i> 2 Kings ; 1-14; Psalm 30 or Isaiah 66: 10-14; Psalm 66: 1-9; Galatians 6: (1-6), 7-16; Luke 10: 1-11, 16-20</p>	<p>4 Church Office Closed</p> 
<p>July 10 Eighth Sunday after Pentecost <i>Lectionary Possibilities:</i> Amos 7: 7-17; Psalm 82 or Deuteronomy 30: 9-14; Psalm 25: 1-10; Colossians 1: 1-14; Luke 10: 25-37</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Loaves & Fishes Preparation on Mon July 11 Serving on Tues July 12</p>
<p>July 17 Ninth Sunday after Pentecost <i>Lectionary Possibilities:</i> Amos 8: 1-12; Psalm 52 or Genesis 18: 1-10a; Psalm 15; Colossians 1: 15-28; Luke 10: 38-42</p>	<p>18</p>
 <p>July 24 Tenth Sunday after Pentecost <i>Lectionary Possibilities:</i> Hosea 1: 2-10; Psalm 85 or Genesis 18: 20-32; Psalm 138; Colossians 2: 6-15, (16-19); Luke 11: 1-13</p>	<p>CHURCH OFFICE HOURS July 5 – August 26: Monday - Thursday 8:30 am - 4:30 pm Friday - CLOSED</p>
<p>July 31 Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost <i>Lectionary Possibilities:</i> Hosea 11: 1-11; Psalm 107: 1-9, 43 or Ecclesiastes 1: 2, 12-14; Psalm 49: 1-12; Colossians 3: 1-11; Luke 12: 13-21</p>	<p>Aug 1</p>



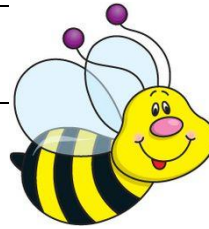
JULY

2016

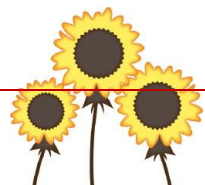
<i>Every Tuesday</i>	<i>Every Wed. 7 pm Alc. Anon. 7 pm New Birth</i>	<i>Every Thursday 10 am Bible Study 7 pm Yoga</i>	<i>Every Friday 7:30 pm Alc. Anon</i>	<i>Every Saturday</i>
June 28 9:15am – 10:15am <i>Exercise</i>	June 29	June 30 7 pm <i>Concert on the Green</i>	July 1	2 11 am <i>Memorial Service for Tim Johnson</i>
5 9:15am – 10:15am <i>Bible Study</i>	<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 10px;"> <p>CHURCH OFFICE HOURS July 5 – August 26 Monday – Thursday FRIDAY – CLOSED 8:30 am – 4:30 pm</p> </div>			9
12 9:15am – 10:15am <i>Exercise</i>	13	14 7 pm <i>New Birth Church Revival 7pm Concert on the Green</i>	15 7pm <i>New Birth Church Revival</i>	16 
19 9:15am – 10:15am <i>Exercise</i>	20 6 pm <i>Glenwood Green</i>	21 7 pm <i>Concert on the Green</i>	22	23
26 9:15am – 10:15am <i>Bible Study</i>	27	28 7 pm <i>Concert on the Green</i>	29	30

AUGUST

2016



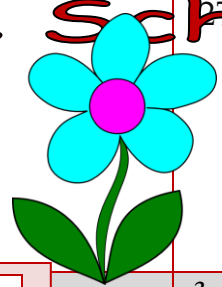
<p><i>Every Sunday</i></p> <p>9:30 am Worship 12:30 <i>New Birth Community Church</i></p>	<p><i>Every Monday</i> 7pm <i>Narc. Anon.</i></p>
<p>July 31 <i>Lectionary Possibilities:</i> Hosea 11: 1-11; Psalm 107: 1-9, 43 OR Ecclesiastes 1: 2, 12-14; Psalm 49: 1-12; Colossians 3: 1-11; Luke 12: 13-21</p>	<p>Aug 1</p>
<p>August 7 Communion Sunday Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Times <i>Lectionary Possibilities:</i> Isaiah 1: 1, 10-20; Psalm 50: 1-8, 22-23 OR Genesis 15: 1-6; Psalm 33: 12-22; Hebrews 11: 1-3, 8-16</p>	<p>8</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> <p>Loaves & Fishes Preparation on Mon Aug 8 Serving on Tues Aug 9</p> </div>
<p>August 14 Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Times <i>Lectionary Possibilities:</i> Isaiah 5: 1-4; Psalm 80: 1-2, 8-19 OR Jeremiah 23: 23-29; Psalm 82; Hebrews 11: 29-12:2; Luke 12: 49-56</p>	<p>15 9 am to 12 pm VBS</p>
<p>August 21 Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Times <i>Lectionary Possibilities:</i> Jeremiah 1: 4-10; Psalm 71: 1-6 OR Isaiah 58: 9b-14; Psalm 103: 1-8; Hebrews 12: 18-29; Luke 13: 10-17</p>	<p>22</p>
<p>August 28 Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Times <i>Lectionary Possibilities:</i> Jeremiah 2: 4-13; Psalm 81: 1, 10-16 OR Sirach 10: 12-18 OR Proverbs 25: 6-7; Psalm 112; Hebrews 13: 1-8, 15-16; Luke 14: 1, 7-14</p>	<p>29 Resume M-F work week 8:30 – 4:30</p>



AUGUST

2016

<i>Every Tuesday</i>	<i>Every Wed. 7 pm Alc. Anon.</i>	<i>Every Thursday</i>	<i>Every Friday 7:30 pm Alc. Anon.</i>	<i>Every Saturday</i>
2 <i>9:15am – 10:15am Bible Study</i>	3	4 <i>7 pm Final Concert on the Green</i>	5	
9	10	11	12	13
16	August 15 - 19 9 am - 12 noon			21
				
23	Vacation Bible School			27
30	<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> <p>CHURCH OFFICE HOURS July 5 – August 26 Monday – Thursday FRIDAY – CLOSED 8:30 am – 4:30 pm</p> </div>			3





JULY BIRTHDAYS

Al Forster	July 10
Jean Turek	July 10
George Merrow	July 13
Jerry Jones	July 14
Shaun Mathews	July 21
Flossie Havens	July 27
Betsy Reed	July 28



AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Roger Bunker	Aug 2
Joshua Clarke	Aug 2
Isaiah Clarke	Aug 2
Joshua Markiewicz	Aug 8
Elaine Nelson	Aug 13
Andrea Mercer	Aug 26
Cecelia Simmons	Aug 28



Joel & Marnie Clark- 48 years July 27
Charles & Cindy Walker- 2 years Aug 30



- *Andrew Johnson and family on the loss of his dad Tim Johnson.
- *Carol Johnson dealing with health issues.
- *Keep Calvin and Estelle Cole in your thoughts and prayers. Calvin is at Bloomfield Center for Nursing and Rehab, Estelle is home. Cards and calls are appreciated.
- *Carol Wolcott, would appreciate cards, calls.
- * Michael Edwards, praying for release.
- *Prayers that God will speak to us and through us as we seek God's leading and vision for our Church.
- *Family & Friends of All Soldiers Who Have Fallen In Iraq & Afghanistan.
- *Our friends at Community Solutions, Inc., that God will support them as they find new opportunities and hope for the future.

Doris Ahrens	~	Charlotte Babcock
Julie Cato	~	Gladys Dunbar
Charles Miles	~	Elaine Nelson
Madge Edwards	~	Hicksbert (Lloyd) Grant
Faye Smith	~	Adele Wright

VBS Registration Ages 4 – 11 First Congregational Church in Bloomfield

August 15 – 19, 2016, 9 am – 12 noon

Families, please complete **one form per child** and
return to 10 Wintonbury Avenue, Bloomfield, CT, 06002.

Last Name _____ First Name _____ Age ____ Grade in Fall ____

Date of Birth month _____ day _____ year _____ male _____ female _____

Child's address _____

Parent/Guardian name _____

Parent/Guardian phone number(s) _____

Person(s) to be contacted in case of emergency _____

Name phone Relationship to Child _____

Name phone Relationship to Child _____

Does your child have any medical condition(s) that we should be aware of? (allergies, medications, etc.) If yes, please describe: _____

Siblings who will also be attending VBS: _____

My child would like to be in class with the following friend(s) _____

I would like to volunteer to help with _____

The undersigned gives permission to his or her child to participate in the above named activity and releases First Congregational Church in Bloomfield, its officers, employees, and agents from any liability whatsoever for any injury or death to person or loss or damage to property sustained by the undersigned for any member of his family, in attendance, and the undersigned agrees to defend and indemnify First Congregational Church, its officers, employees, and agents from any liability or loss they might sustain by reason thereof.

In the event I cannot be reached in an EMERGENCY, I hereby give permission to the Emergency physician to hospitalize, secure proper treatment for and order injection, anesthesia, or surgery for my child as named above.

Signed _____ Date _____

Insurance Company _____ Policy Number _____

OR

I do not wish to have Medical Treatment or Transportation for my child until I have been contacted by emergency personnel.

Signed _____ Date _____

By signing this registration form you agree that any photographs taken of your child at or during this event are the property of First Congregational Church in Bloomfield and may be used in future publications.



FCCB Council Meeting Minutes June 15, 2016

Attending: Carolyn Delgado (Chair), Priscilla McCatty, Scott Goetjen, Clay Hart, Pastor Ed, Coleen Dobo. **Absent:** Carol Wilson

Opening: The Meeting opened with dialogue about the mass shooting at the LGBTQ club in Orlando with an impassioned agreement that as a church we need collectively and individually to (1) advocate for changes gun laws and (2) take a stand by being visible and partnering with like-minded groups in supporting social justice for LGBTQ people.

May minutes were approved.

Stewardship Update: A reminder letter will be sent to the 18 people who pledged last year and have not responded just yet. With the pledges accounted for and projection of responses that have typically come in, it is anticipated that we will be about \$20,000 short from last year. This will have significant negative implications for funding ministry teams.

2016-2017 Slate of Officers and Team

Leaders: With an eye on the constitution and the composition of the first slate under the new governance structure elected on November, 2014; Carolyn D is not eligible to remain on the slate for the coming year as Chair. There is a potential candidate for this position that will be presented in the annual meeting for vote. After an open discussion, it was agreed by all that no Council Member is eligible for the settled pastor search team to avoid any potential conflict of interest. As such, Clay H will vacate the member-at-large council position. Council reviewed that there are many ministry team leader positions without a candidate to present for vote at the annual meeting. There was considerable discussion and brainstorming of good people for the positions and all have an identified potential candidate except the Child

Development Center liaison position. Council Members will continue the recruitment process.

Pastoral Search Team Update: Clay highlighted initial activities of the search team. After the 9 search team members were commissioned at the June 12, 2016 church service, team members met to orient and arrange a first formal meeting. The first meeting was held this week on Tuesday, June 14 and a team structure was chosen. There will be a Chair (TBD), Secretary (Cecilia Simmons), and Spiritual Mentor (Michael Riley). The next meeting of the team is on June 28 when a Chair will be selected and the important task of creating a church profile will be initiated. Oz Gibbs has agreed to scribe the profile which will be approached as a living document of the historical development of the church, current status, and strategic plan for the future. Recognizing the critical role that the church profile will play in recruitment from potential candidates locally, nationally, and even internationally, the team will seek consultation in multiple formats from church members and attendees, including informal dialogue at church gatherings, organized listening circles, second hours, and focus groups. Input from all sectors of the congregation from youth to the homebound will be sought. Team members are functioning from the philosophy that their role is to be servants of the congregation to bring together everyone's input in the decision-making process.

Pastors Report: Pastor Ed introduced the standard form used to share information with family members who are planning a memorial service for a loved one. There was a discussion of the suggested family donation for staff who dedicate time to the service (e.g. music, maintenance, administrative tasks). It was agreed that the role of administrative assistant for memorial services is part and parcel of the general responsibilities of that

position. Pastor Ed reported on a very thorough process he undertook in creating staff performance evaluations, including meeting with staff, staff self-assessment, seeking input from 2 different lay members of the staff's strengths and growth opportunities. Pastor Ed emphasized that transparency and staff involvement were critical aspects of the evaluation process. After the council membership is chosen at the annual meeting, the Council Vice-Chair will join the Pastor in future evaluations, review job descriptions in light of the new governance structure, and, by September 2016, will ensure that each staff member has chosen objective and measurable goals for the coming year.

Child Development Center: Council reviewed a submission by the CDC for traditional bi-annual staff incentives and it was agreed by majority vote to provide incentive to each CDC staff member representing 0.014% of that staff member's annual salary.

Review of Budget: A summary review of the 2015-2016 ministry team budgets revealed the following: Music is over budget, Mission is on budget, Christian education is under budget. There were unexpected repairs required this past year. Fortunately, snow removal and heating monies were under used so we came out reasonably even.

The 2016-2017 budget will be presented for vote at the annual meeting. Given that pledges are coming in lower than last year by a substantial sum as noted above, the projected disbursement to ministry teams will be negatively impacted. To present a balanced budget to the congregation at the annual meeting required that cuts be made to line items in the Boards of Christian Mission, Music, and Facilities Management. The data highlights that in order continue funding programming at the same level as last year, there needs to be an increase in income.

Respectfully submitted by c dobo 6/26/16

ANNUAL REPORTS

Annual reports are due by August 26, 2016. Please forward your report electronically to Andrea in the church office. Reports do not need to be long or wordy. They are meant to highlight the accomplishments and work of staff, ministry teams and the preschool during the 2015-2016 church year.

Andrea is coordinating this effort and will organize the individual reports in a final document. Please contact her if you have questions.

A Quick Update from the

Annual Meeting

The proposed slate and the preliminary budget for 2016-2017 was approved at the annual meeting of the church held on June 26, 2016. A final budget will be completed over the summer for presentation at the fall budget meeting. (Date to be determined)

Over the summer months, Council will update the church family regarding the fiscal challenges we face and potential ways to address these.

If you have questions or recommendations, please talk with one of the Council members. (Ron Robinson, Coleen Dobo, Priscilla McCatty or Carolyn Delgado)

We welcome your ideas and thoughts!

Annual Meeting Told Revival Lies In Justice Work

by Tiffany Vail

WEST HARTFORD (06/14/2016) -- Attendees to the 149th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference June 10 - 11 were called upon to revitalize their churches by working for justice.

"There ain't no closet prophets," said Bishop Yvette Flunder, the keynote speaker. "Come out! Get in trouble, make trouble, be trouble until righteousness rains down like water; justice, like water."

Flunder said the entire world is listening for the sound of Pentecost, for a justice message to come from the United States that is greater than the "continual vitriol" that has been such a part of the current presidential election.

"This election is a game changer," she said. "We've never seen anything quite like this. Now, we need the voice of the United Church of Christ to step into this and have something to say."

Flunder told the meeting that churches will find revitalization when they come out of their buildings and step out on to the "front line of change."

"A lot of division in the church comes from the discontent of our not using our energy for the reason God has given it to us," she said.

"Church fights happen because people are not doing Kingdom work. What we're doing is expending our energy trying to sustain an institution. It takes a lot of energy to sustain an institution, but if you take that energy and turn it outward and start doing the work in the street, you don't have to worry so much about bricks and mortar. God will take care of the bricks and mortar as we take care of the work of ministry."

Earlier in the day, at the clergy luncheon honoring pioneer female clergy who broke into the ranks of male-dominated ministry,

Flunder said the church today needs "aggravated prophets, agitated prophets."

In his address, Conference Minister The Rev. Kent J. Siladi joined in the call to get loud for justice.

"The Spirit is inviting us to be bold in these times in which we live," he said during his address. "There is a troubling cultural narrative that is swirling around us."

"We cannot or should not sit idly by and be silent about what we hear and see every day that troubles our souls and leaves us in a state of anger, lament and grief," he said.

Siladi suggested that instead, the UCC in Connecticut can create a new legacy built on moving from a culture of fear to one of love; moving from independent to interdependent bodies and together moving from "gathering in" to "sending people out to make our communities, our state, our nation and our world a more just, loving and compassionate place."

Interdependence was another theme of the meeting: on Saturday afternoon, delegates divided into small groups to discuss the idea of the Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island conferences federating or merging or in some way working more closely together. They submitted questions which were then addressed by Siladi, Massachusetts Conference Minister The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, and Rhode Island Interim Conference Minister The Rev. Barbara Libby.

Some questioned whether a merger is already a "done deal;" others said they could not judge the idea without knowing more particulars about finances and staffing.

Antal gave assurances that a decision to merge has not been made, and said it would be premature to even discuss what staffing looked like before delegates have gone through a discernment process to decide whether this is an idea they want to pursue.

Siladi agreed, but also challenged delegates to think about what staff positions could be created with a combined budget that cannot be created now.

"What would a staff look like if we were to do something new?" he said.

The three conferences will hold a joint Annual Meeting next June, where they likely will be asked to vote on whether to continue toward some type of joining together.

Toward the end of the gathering, The Rev. Walter Pitman of the United Church of Christ in Southbury challenged the three to "give us a statement of purpose" to bring to their churches.

And once again, talk turned toward justice.

"We are the church the world needs now," Siladi said. "Together we can make southern New England a more just, compassionate place."

"That'll work," Pitman said.

Annual Meeting Speaks Out On Restrooms, Minimum Wage, Greenhouse Gases

by Tiffany Vail

Delegates to the 149th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference called on churches to provide gender neutral restrooms, support a \$15 an hour minimum wage and take action to reduce greenhouse gases. They also voted to increase the per capita rate paid by churches to the Conference setting from \$8 to \$10 in 2017.

Gender Neutral Restrooms Resolution Approved

Delegates approved a resolution that recommends all future Conference annual meetings be held only in facilities with gender neutral restrooms, and called on the churches of the Conference to "consider creating a more perfect welcome" by designating such restrooms in their own facilities.

This makes the Connecticut Conference the first regional body of the United Church of Christ to make such a commitment for its

meetings, according to the Open and Affirming Coalition.

"I have to admit that when I began to consider this resolution I had no idea what an issue this was going to be in the news," said Greg Gray, chair of the Conference's ONA Ministry Team. "But we now have the opportunity to be a prophetic voice."

Gray referred to a Kroger's grocery store sign, which has been taking social media by storm, declaring the store has unisex restrooms "because sometimes gender specific toilets put others into uncomfortable situations."

"We, as the beloved community, can do better than a grocery store," Gray said.

Although there was some discussion about the exact wording of the resolution, it passed with overwhelming support.

Minimum Wage Resolution Approved

Delegates also passed a resolution calling on the Conference's Legislative Advocate, and on local church members, to work in support of legislation to raise the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The resolution also asks churches to examine their own compensation to assure all staff are paid at least \$15 an hour by 2019, and it calls on the Conference to make educational resources on the issue available and to forward the resolution to the national General Synod.

David Biklen, of the Immanuel Congregational Church in Hartford, referred to the earlier comment on grocery stores and said "we can make the grocery store itself better" by increasing the minimum wage.

He pointed out that the state's current minimum wage of \$9.60, soon to be increased to \$10, leaves a family of four still thousands of dollars short of the federal minimum poverty level. And The Rev. Damaris Whittaker of the First Church of Christ in Hartford said a two-bedroom apartment in Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven rents for \$1500 - \$1700 a month - unaffordable to someone making \$10 an hour, or \$1600 a month if they are working full-time.

The Rev. Denise Terry, of the East Granby Congregational Church, argued that minimum wage is not sustainable for her congregation or for many small businesses, and said it is not meant to provide a living wage above the poverty line. Terry said there are pastors and other professionals with master's degrees who barely make \$15 an hour, or \$31,200 a year.

Another delegate argued that raising wages for the least skilled and most inexperienced workers would cause all wages to be increased, something not affordable for most businesses, particularly small businesses. He said the poorest people would be the ones to suffer, because their jobs would be eliminated in favor of robots and automation.

Biklen said protections for small businesses have been built into legislation in other states, such as New York, that have increased the minimum wage.

And The Rev. Thea Racelis, of South Congregational Church in Middletown, reminded delegates that those earning minimum wage are not just high school students anymore, but parents with children.

"We're talking about these people as if they are not in this room, in our pews, and in some of our pulpits" she said. "To say that we can't aspire to more than making the bare minimum of the federal poverty line to me is sinful and reprehensible. We are church and we can aspire to more and God's people deserve more."

Resolution On Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Delegates approved a resolution in support of state legislation to rapidly increase renewable energy resources, and to "declare it imperative" that congregations, individuals, businesses and other entities act to reduce their own levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

The resolution calls on the Conference's Legislative Advocate and churches to support the effort of the Governor's Council on Climate Change, which has been charged with developing a plan to meet the state's mandated goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. And it calls on all settings of the

church to support the education of clergy and laity on the issues and to "sharpen the focus on what must be our individual and collective visions of a sustainable Creation for our generation and future generations and the whole fabric of earthly life."

Resolution In Opposition Of Marijuana Legalization Rejected

Delegates declined to approve a resolution that would have opposed the further legalization of marijuana in Connecticut. The resolution was brought by the First Congregational Church of Guilford, citing concern that marijuana is a gateway drug that can lead teenagers down the road to more serious addictions. The church wanted the Conference to speak out on the issue before the Legislature considers law changes to make recreational use of marijuana legal in the state.

But several delegates said drug laws are already used disproportionately against poor, urban, minority residents, leading to mass incarceration, and said they were concerned that this action could be seen as favoring more criminal penalties for marijuana use. Other delegates said the churches should be focused on the opioid and heroin addiction crisis in the state, not on marijuana.

The final versions of the resolutions will be posted on ctucc.org.

Per Capita Rate Increased To \$12 In 2017

In other business, delegates approved increasing the per capita rate churches are asked to pay to the Conference setting from \$8 to \$10 in 2017. Delegates, however, declined to approve a second increase to \$12 in 2018.

Several delegates said that counting members is an old method, and that the Conference needs to look at other ways to raise funds. Some said the increase would be a hardship on their churches. Others, however, pointed out that the rate has not been increased since 2011, while expenses have been on the rise.

Several delegates said it did not make sense to commit to a second increase in 2018, when

the Conference is discussing the possibility of merging with the Massachusetts and Rhode Island conferences, which could change how the budget is structured.

For more on the per capita increase, [read this letter from the Board of Directors](#).

Tiffany Vail is the Associate Conference Minister for Communications.

Special Prayer Requests:

New Requests:

The people of the United Kingdom as they face fear and uncertainty about their future after last week's vote to exit the European Union;
those suffering after a rally in Sacramento, CA turned violent causing 10 people to be injured;
Rev. M. John Arens, Pastor of the New Preston Congregational Church, who will have surgery on June 28;
a prayer of joy for Rev. Betsy Polglase, pastor of Columbia Congregational Church, who had knee surgery on April 20 and is doing well; and
the staff, volunteers, and conferees at Silver Lake Conference Center as they begin Week 1 of the Summer Camp Season at Silver Lake.

Continuing Requests:

Rachel Ciba Markowitz, daughter of Michael and Diane Ciba, who is receiving chemotherapy for a brain tumor;
Jennifer DeSimas, Christian Education Director at Avon Congregational Church, who recently lost her mother;
those in Orlando, Florida, grieving or suffering after a mass shooting at a night club which left 49 dead and over 50 injured;
those grieving or suffering due to flooding in Texas, including the families and friends of 3 Fort Hood soldiers missing and presumed dead in these early June floods;
those grieving after Egypt Air flight 804 crashed in the Mediterranean Sea on May 19. All 66 on board are presumed dead;
Rev. Da Vita McCallister, Associate Conference Minister for Leadership and Vitality, and her family as they face a loss and difficult illness in the family;
The Rev. Sara Smith, pastor of United Congregational Church of Bridgeport, and her sister Ellen, who is recovering from a stroke;

Rev. Kelly Hough Rogers, Associate Pastor of the Norfield Congregational Church in Weston, whose parents were involved in a tragic car accident. Kelly's father, Wallace, has died and her mother, Janet, is hospitalized;

Rev. Pat Kriss, Pastor of First Congregational Church in Danbury, who is recovering from an injury;
the people of Ecuador after a devastating earthquake on April 16 destroyed cities and towns, leaving more than 250 dead, an unknown number missing, and thousands injured and homeless;

Michael White, former Operations Manager at Silver Lake Conference Center, who was diagnosed with colon cancer;

Juliane Silver, the daughter of the Rev. Jim Silver of Middletown, who is in dire need of a liver transplant. We pray that a donor will come forward giving the gift of life and a portion of their liver to Juliane;
members and Staff of the United Congregational Church of Tolland as they minister to church and community grieving a tragic loss.

the Rev. Dr. Don Westerberg, Pastoral Counselor in New Milford, who recently received a lung transplant and is recovering;

Ewan, grandson of the Rev. Price van der Swaagh, an ordained minister in this conference, as he is treated for leukemia;

Chacy Eveland, husband of the Rev. Marcia Eveland, pastor of the First Congregational Church UCC of Ansonia, who has been moved to a full-time facility for care of dementia;

the Rev. Mary Nelson, South Central Regional Minister of the Connecticut Conference, whose brother is recovering from surgery;

Alisia Selders, daughter of Bishop John Selders, pastor of Amistad UCC in Hartford, in a new round of treatment for cancer;

the thousands of migrants worldwide who flee from violence and persecution in search of safety;
our ecumenical partners in the Kyung-Ki Presbytery in South Korea;

the Conference's partners working for peace in Colombia amidst violence; **the leaders of this nation**, that they may meet the challenges of the day with insight, wisdom, and compassion; **this nation**, that it may continue its difficult work to end the practices of racism; **those suffering due to the ongoing financial woes of the nation**, be they struggling to meet an unaffordable mortgage, seeking employment, or working to find just resolutions; and those serving or living in war or conflict zones around the world, or where terrorists have struck.

**THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH IN BLOOMFIELD
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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The *Wintonbury Spire*, newsletter of the First Congregational Church in Bloomfield – United Church of Christ, is published monthly to provide information to and about our members and friends. Items received in the office by the 15th of the month may be included in next month’s edition.

Spire Schedule The Wintonbury Spire will be mailed on the last Friday of each month. Please sign up for the “Spire Party” where we stuff, fold, label, seal and stamp the Spire from 10:30 – 11:30 am.

The next Spire Party will be held on: August 30, 2016

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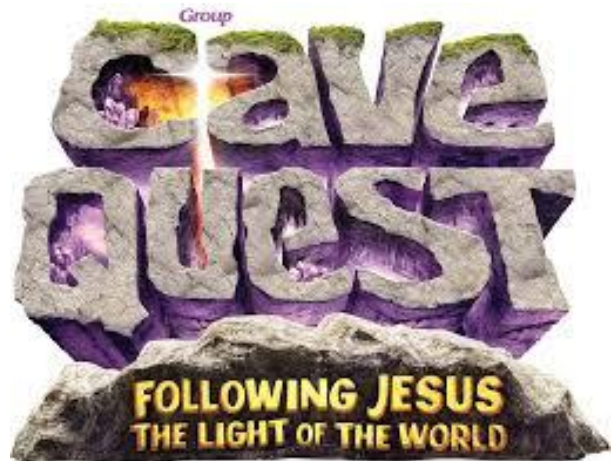
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Vacation Bible School
August 15 - 19
Registration form enclosed