

**FEBRUARY
2016**



The First Congregational Church in Bloomfield - United Church of Christ

The Wintonbury Spire

GREETINGS TO ALL...

To you...whose love for this Church is expressed in strong involvement,
To you...who in the midst of pain still join us in worship,
To you...who have memories of Church life that inspires and challenges your journey,
To you...who have decided to join our community of faith
To you... who call First Congregational Church in Bloomfield, UCC...MY CHURCH!

TO YOU, WE EXPRESS GRATITUDE FOR YOUR LOVE AND COMMITMENT
MAY GOD BLESS YOU AND YOUR FAMILY AS WE CONTINUE TO BUILD
A HEALTHY...VIBRANT...CARING COMMUNITY OF FAITH

As your Pastor I would like to tell you...*the best is yet to come!* In partnership with the leaders of our Congregation and our Ministry Teams we want to affirm that 2016 promises to be an inspirational, challenging and good news year. I would encourage all of you to explore creative ways of staying connected to our Church, of supporting our ministries and to use your creativity in inviting this community of faith to be *the best it can be!* Please feel free to contact me, your pastor, at any time with suggestions, ideas, spiritual or physical needs, visitation invitations, etc. Remember that I have been called by GOD to be a blessing in your midst...I am enjoying my interim ministry, honestly... I LOVE IT AND LOVE YOU ALL!

*"For those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength
They shall mount up with wings like eagles"
Isaiah 40:31*

Pastor Ed



PASTOR ED'S *Desk*

Are you aware that when I preach 20-25 minutes it is a result of hours of research and spiritual discernment!

I learn so much from my research, I get so much inspiration and blessing. Then, I must turn volumes of information and inspiration into 20-25 minutes. I feel blessed by the opportunity that First Congregational Church in Bloomfield provides me so I can keep growing and serving our beloved Congregation... "Gracias".

I will use this **SPIRE Corner** to share information. I invite you all to grow with me as we share ministry! I hope my reflections will inspire you to research and like me, ***grow and rise and rise!***

HARRIET TUBMAN was an American bondswoman who escaped from slavery in the South to become a leading abolitionist before the American Civil War. She was born in Maryland in 1820, and successfully escaped in 1849. Yet she returned many times to rescue both family members and non-relatives from the plantation system. She led hundreds to freedom in the North as the most famous "conductor" on the Underground Railroad, an elaborate secret network of safe houses organized for that purpose. In 1844, Harriet married a free black man named John Tubman. Little is known about John Tubman or his marriage to Harriet. Any children they might have had would have been considered enslaved, since the mother's status dictated that of any offspring. Araminta changed her name to Harriet around the time of her marriage, possibly to honor her mother.

Dr. JAMES W.C. PENNINGTON (1807-1870): At 19 he escaped from slavery. After learning to read and write and gaining education that he paid for himself he became the first black person to graduate from Yale University where he was asked to sit in the back of the room and ask no questions. He was ordained a Congregational Minister and in 1840 served as the Pastor at Faith Congregational church in Hartford, CT. Dr. Pennington was an abolitionist and an American delegate to the Second World Conference on Slavery in London. Rev. John Hooker bought his freedom from his

former master. He wrote and published the first history of blacks in the United States in 1841 *The Origin and History of the Colored People*. **I invite you to research more and to share with your loved ones...**

BLACKS HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR WAY OF LIFE, SUCH AS:

-The metal oven rack, the egg beater, attachment for the space shuttle, bicycle frame.

-Railroad railway signal, street car fender, railway switch.

-Benjamin Banneker-first African American inventor: crop irrigation system.

-Henry Blair: seed planter, enabled farmers to plant more corn faster with less labor.

-George Washington Carver: discovered hundreds of new uses for crops-creating new markets for farmers.

-Frederick M Jones: held over 60 patents, specialized in refrigeration.

-Lewis Howard Latimer: invented incandescent light bulb with carbon filament.

-Do your research and be proud of the contributions made by our Black Sisters & Brothers in the USA and the world.

I LOVE THIS POEM...Maya Angelou, 1928 - 2014 ... Still I Rise

(This is only a portion of the poem...Google the rest...)

*You may write me down in history,
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt,
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*

*You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air... I'll rise.*

*Out of the huts of history's shame, I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain, I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.*

*Leaving behind nights of terror and fear, I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear, I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise, I rise, I rise.*

News For Kids, Youth & Families



February is a wonderful time to show love. The Sunday School will be showing love by decorating Cupcakes to support a Covenant to Care Birthday Party. We will decorate cupcakes during Sunday School time on February 14th and then sell them during coffee hour, for \$2.00 each. Come to coffee hour and buy a cupcake or two to support the Sunday School's mission to show love for children in need of a celebration

ASH WEDNESDAY is February 10th This begins our Lenten Journey. The Children will be given an activity to bring home on Sunday February 7th. It is called the "Way of the Cross" They will color in a part of the cross each day during Lent as they choose daily to give something up or do something extra such as a chore or do something for someone in the home as a Lenten practice. Help your child develop a Spiritual Practice during Lent this year.

Thursday Bible Study with Pastor Ed and Dorine will continue through Lent. Our focus will be on Lent and how we can deepen our Faith and Theological understanding.

The Youth Group will be collecting your spare change for Souper Bowl of Caring on Super Bowl Sunday February 7th. They will be holding Soup Pots for you to give your spare change at the exits as you leave church. The proceeds of this Fund Raiser will be going to Bloomfield Social Services. Many youth groups will be collecting money around our Nation and giving their proceeds to their local food banks. Each Youth Group will then enter the total amount collected into the National Total collected

@ www.souperbowl.org. Check out our FCCB page on this website and see how we did in our collection and then you can see how the nation did in helping stop hunger. Help us end hunger. This is our 6th year collecting and over the years our total collection is \$1,100.00 Great job FCCB! Thank you for your support.

Sunday School

February 7th Communion Sunday
Sunday School for Preschool ~ 9th Grade
and Communion
February 14th Sunday School for Preschool
~ 9th Grade Fellowship Hall decorating
cupcakes
February 21st Sunday School for Preschool
~ 9th Grade
February 28th Sunday School for Preschool
~ 9th Grade

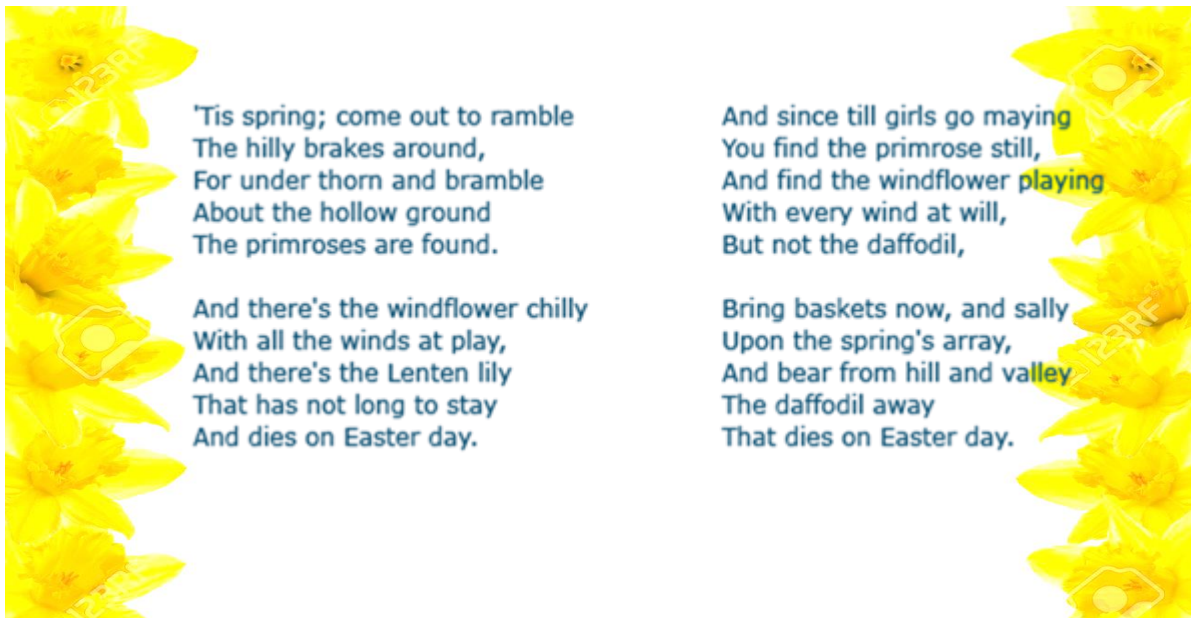
Youth Group Schedule

February 7th Collect for Souper Bowl of Caring
after worship 11:00
Youth Group 4:00~5:30 Souper Bowl Sunday
Counting Party and Soup
February 21st Youth Group 4:00~5:30 TCBY
Lent Lily



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING coin banks will be distributed on February 21st during Sunday School along with a *Giving Calendar*. Please donate to this wonderful collection to help those around the world that are in need. Communion Sundays are an important part of our Worship and our Children will be joining the table at the time of Communion on February 7th and for all Communion Sundays. After the Inspirational Moment the children will go to Sunday School and then we all will return for Communion during the hymn. Please look for your Children so that they can join you for this special time and sacrament for the Church community.

The sight of pale yellow-tinged daffodil buds pushing up through the cold soil is an encouraging signal that winter is retreating. In ecclesiastical circles especially, the daffodil is sometimes known as the Lent Lily, and tradition says that the flower will open on Ash Wednesday and die on Easter Day – a tradition immortalized in A.E. Housman's poem "The Lent Lily":



Happy Birthday First Congregational Church

SAVE THE DATE!



CTUCC YOUTH REVIVAL

Sunday, May 15 at 3:00 PM

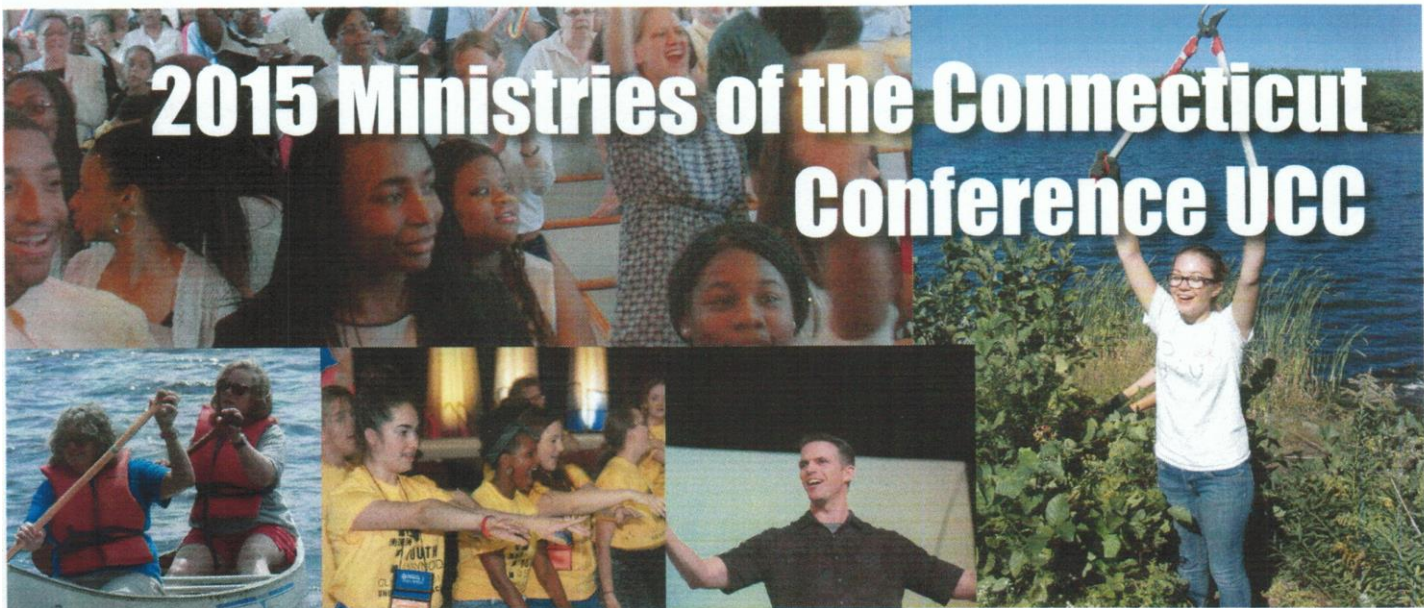
**Liberty Christian Center International 23 Vine
Street Hartford, CT**

Revival Preacher
Rev. Da Vita "Day" McCallister
ACM for Leadership and Vitality

The Youth Revival is a Racial Justice Ministry Event



For more information contact Debby Kirk, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
debbyk@ctuucc.org 860.761.7103 www.ctuucc.org



2015 Ministries of the Connecticut Conference UCC

Leadership

Leaders engender trust.

Leaders have fun.

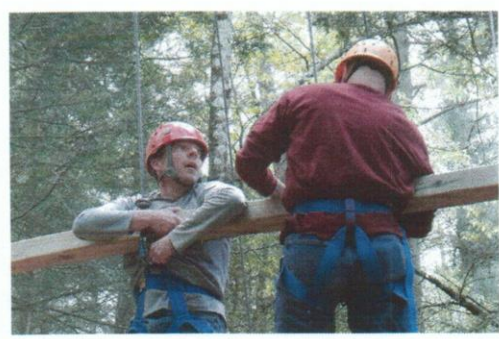


Leading & Learning Together

- Over 450 joined with MA & RI leaders to learn at Super Saturday in March
- 384 inspired by UCC President John Dorhauer Annual Meeting in October
- CT, MA, & RI Boards of Directors vote a "Season of Discernment" considering future ministry together.
- Hundreds of Giv2 youth worked over a thousand service hours
- 54 pastors placed as leaders in installed or bridge positions
- 119 total attendance at "Saints" retirees gatherings
- Clergy workshops draw over 300 total participants

Ministries at Silver Lake Conference Center

- 927 young people learned leadership through 37 conferences
- 95 deans, 175 counselors, and 7 chaplains led, nurtured, and inspired
- 46 dedicated summer staff sang, cleaned, ran, protected, and mentored the conferees
- 11 took a mission trip working with Simply Smiles
- Clergy Camp returned to raise leaders' spirits
- 3,233 people attended 117 weekend programs, including 8 created by Silver Lake
- 63 churches and 3 associations in four conferences gave \$58,376.90 to support conferees
- The second Fancy Camp Gala raised \$10,700 for Silver Lake programs and \$3,193 for scholarships



Racial Justice Ministry

- CT Women of the UCC raised \$11,000 for Racial Justice Ministries
- 40 now certified as Racial Justice Ministry Facilitators
- First Lay and Clergy Training offered in November
- 11 local trainings completed
- Expanded Joseph Clemmons Job Training Program

Leaders love God and love people.

Leaders experiment and learn from mistakes.

Leadership with Partners

- Delegations visited partners at CEDECOL in Colombia and the Kyung-Ki Presbytery in South Korea
- CTUCC/Kyung-Ki Partnership renewed for another five years
- 59 staff & delegates, including 12 youth & young adults, participated in General Synod in June
- 44 from 11 congregations attended Youth at Synod, joining RI/MA/CT delegation of over 80

Leaders are self-aware.

Leaders embrace the unknown.



Environmental Justice

- Second Environmental Justice for All Retreat for Youth of Color
- Over 500 conferees experienced Earth Avengers sessions at Silver Lake
- Composting at Silver Lake diverted 2.5 tons of food waste from landfill
- Launch of Eden Fund for non-carbon fuel investments
- 10% of CTUCC churches have received a Green Church Award
- Partnered with Inter-Religious Eco-Justice Network

Leaders are passionate for what they believe in.

Staff Arrivals

- Michelle Hughes, Associate Conference Minister for Transitions
- Alan Munshower, Assistant Director of Silver Lake Conference Center
- Lynn Boettger, Chef/Food Manager at Silver Lake Conference Center
- Andrew Wicks, Bridge Executive Director of Silver Lake Conference Center

Staff Departures

- Bob Slagel
- Tim Hughes



Telling the Story

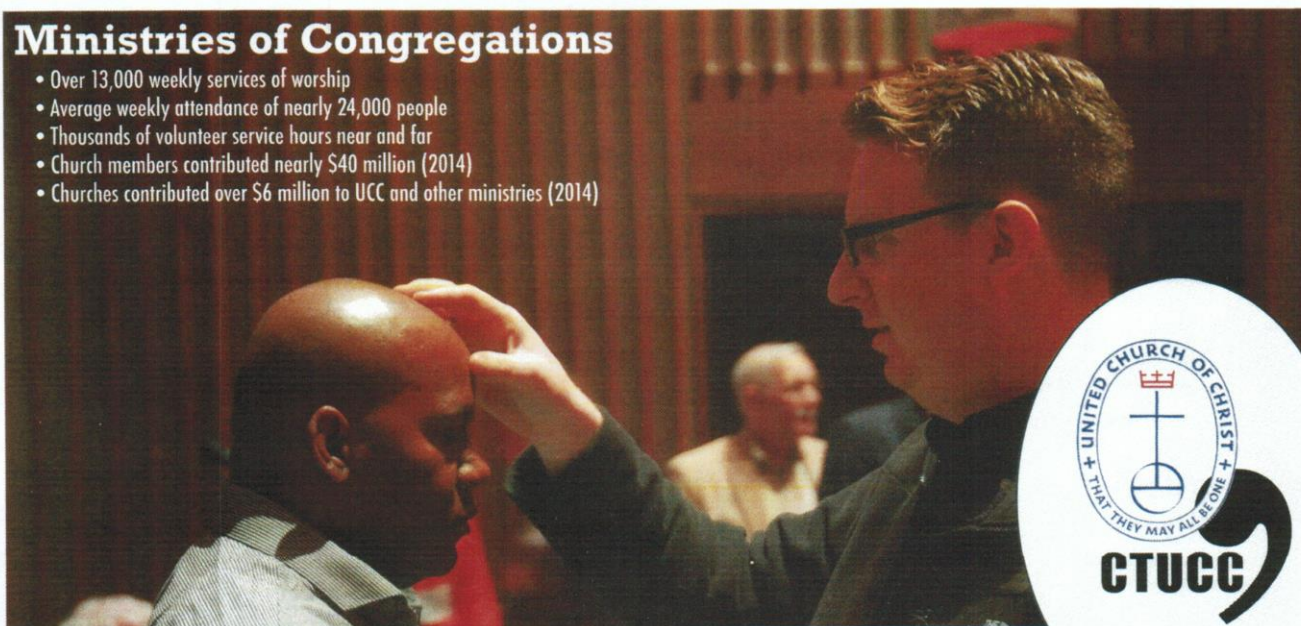
- Vantage Point included six-episode series on interdependent ministries
- 36 Connecticut writers contributed 52 Spirited Wednesday reflections
- CTUCC published 200 stories to a redesigned CTUCC.org
- @CTUCC on Twitter has over 1,000 followers
- CTUCC ConferenceCast turned 5 and has over 200 weekly downloads

Leaders develop competencies to read and adapt to the culture in which we live and find ways to authentically speak the Gospel truth.



Ministries of Congregations

- Over 13,000 weekly services of worship
- Average weekly attendance of nearly 24,000 people
- Thousands of volunteer service hours near and far
- Church members contributed nearly \$40 million (2014)
- Churches contributed over \$6 million to UCC and other ministries (2014)



The Connecticut Conference United Church of Christ • ctucc.org • 125 Sherman Street, Hartford, CT 06105 • 860.233.5564



Parish Care – Volunteer Signup

Please fill out a volunteer form and submit to the church office as soon as possible. If you have any thoughts you'd like to share or need more information, please contact Pastor Ayala or one of the Parish Care Ministry Team members listed below:

Karen Blanchard (chair) – 860-424-7868
Ursula Dang – 860-242-7547
Anne Weaver – 860-966-0786

Marnie Clark – 434-409-0386
Connie Robinson – 860-521-5129
Trudy Barnard – 860-627-7417

I would like to volunteer and be part of the Parish Care Visiting/Calls Ministry

Name:

Address:

Tel.

_____ Email _____

I would like to volunteer and be part of the Parish Care Rides to Church Ministry

Name:

Address:

Tel.

_____ Email _____

I would like to volunteer and be part of the Parish Care Visiting/Calls Ministry

Name:

Address:

Tel.

_____ Email _____

If you have other suggestions on how we can take care of our church, please add to our form below.

FEBRUARY IS

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

What we now call Black History Month originated in 1926,
founded by Carter G. Woodson
As **Negro History Week.**

The month of February was selected in deference to
Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln
who were both born in that month

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

At the **CROSSROADS** of

FREEDOM
and
EQUALITY LN

The Emancipation Proclamation 1863

and the **MARCH ON WASHINGTON 1963**

sunlit path of racial justice.

Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the

Whereas, on the second day of September, 1862, the President of the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free;

March on Washington for Jobs & Freedom August 28, 1963

Designed by Peter Henner for the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute

Happy Valentine's Day

FEBRUARY		2016
<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Every Sunday</i></p> <p>8 & 10 am Worship 12:30 New Birth Community Church</p>		<p><i>Every Monday</i> 6pm Bell Choir 7pm Narc. Anon.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">February 7 <i>8 & 10:00am worship</i> <i>Communion Sunday</i> Transfiguration Sunday</p> <p><i>Lectionary Possibilities:</i> Exodus 34: 29-35; Psalm 99; Luke 9: 28-36</p>		<p>8</p> <p>Loaves & Fishes Preparation on Mon Feb 8 Serving on Tues Feb 9</p>
<p>February 14 <i>8 & 10am worship</i> First Sunday in Lent</p> <p>Lectionary Possibilities: Deut. 26: 1-11; Psalm 91: 1-2, 9-16; Romans 10: 8b-13; Luke 4: 1-13</p> <p>Happy Valentine's Day! First Congregational 278 Years</p>		<p>15 <i>Presidents' Day</i> <i>Office closed</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">February 21 <i>8 & 10am worship</i> Second Sunday in Lent</p> <p>Lectionary Possibilities: Gen. 15: 1-12; Psalm 27; Philippians 3: 17-4: 1; Luke 13: 31-35 or Luke 9: 28-36 (37-43a)</p>		<p>22</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">February 28 <i>8 & 10am worship</i> Third Sunday in Lent</p> <p>Lectionary Possibilities: Isaiah 55: 1-9; Psalm 63: 1-8; 1 Corinthians 10: 1-13; Luke 13: 1-9</p>		<p>29</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">March 6</p>		<p>7</p>

FEBRUARY

2016

<i>Every Tuesday</i>	<i>Every Wed.</i> 9:30am Jump Bunch 7 pm Alc. Anon.	<i>Every Thursday</i> 10:00 am Bible Study	<i>Every Friday</i> 7:30 pm Alc. Anon.	<i>Every Saturday</i>
2 9:15 am Exercise <i>Happy Anniversary Eustace</i>	3 6:00 pm Zumba	4	5 9:15 am Ex	
9 9:15 am Exercise Wednesday Feb 9 Shrove Tuesday	10 7:00 pm Ash Wednesday Service	11 6:30 pm Faith Formation	12 9:15 am Ex	
16 9:15 am Exercise	17	18 1:00 pm Parish Care	19 9:15am exer	
23 9:15 am Exercise	24	25 Fri Feb 26 Spire Party 10:30 am	26 9:15am exer	
1 March	2	3	4	



Lent 2016
Forming our Faith

Ash Wednesday
February 10

Palm Sunday
March 20

Maundy Thursday
March 24

Good Friday
March 25

Easter
March 27

On Sunday, January 24, Imam Sammy Aziz joined us in worship. Imam Sammy Aziz - serves as Imam for Bloomfield Muslim Community Center and PrayerSpark.com. He is a graduate of Hartford Seminary Islamic Chaplaincy program. Recently Imam Aziz has given talks on Islam at numerous libraries and churches across Connecticut including Asylum Hill Congregational Church and First Congregational Church in Bloomfield. Imam Aziz believes strongly in peace between Christians and Muslims. He often refers to the following Prophetic Tradition from Prophet Muhammad pbuh for guidance: "I am most close to Jesus, son of Mary, among the whole of mankind in this worldly life and the next life. They said: Allah's Messenger how is it? Thereupon he said: Prophets are brothers in faith, having different mothers. Their religion is, however, one and there is no Apostle between us (between I and Jesus Christ)."*

****Peace Be Upon Him.***

The following is a poem shared by Yasin Ahmed during worship on Sunday 1.24.16.

*The Jesus of your spirit is inside you now.
Ask that one for help, but don't ask for body-things...*

*Don't ask Moses for provisions
that you can get from Pharaoh.*

*Don't worry so much about livelihood.
Your livelihood will turn out as it should.
Be constantly occupied instead
with listening to God.*

Rumi, Mathnawi II: 450-454

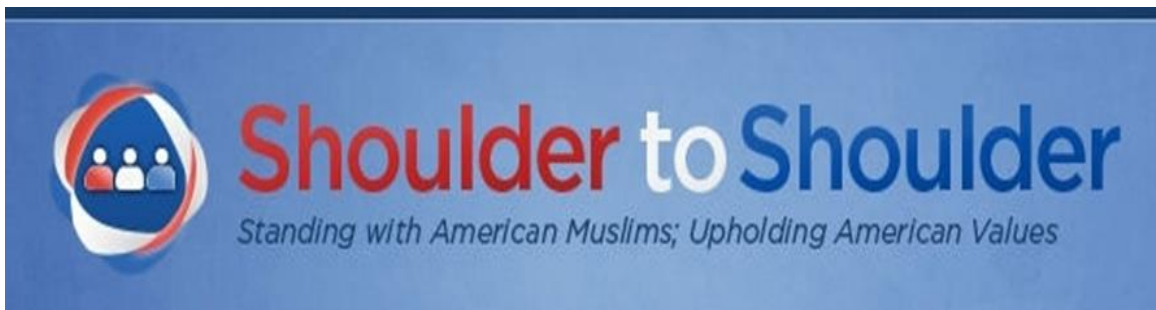
*In love, nothing exists between heart and heart.
Speech is born out of longing,
True description from the real taste.
The one who tastes, knows;
the one who explains, lies.
How can you describe the true form of Something
In whose presence you are blotted out?
And in whose being you still exist?
And who lives as a sign for your journey?*

Rabia al-Adawiyya

*Brothers, my peace is in my aloneness.
My Beloved is alone with me there, always.
I have found nothing in all the worlds
That could match His love,
This love that harrows the sands of my desert.
If I come to die of desire
And my Beloved is still not satisfied,
I would live in eternal despair.*

To abandon all that He has fashioned
And hold in the palm of my hand
Certain proof that He loves me---
That is the name and the goal of my search.

Rabi'a al-Adawiyya, translation by Andrew Harvey and Eryk Hanut - 'Perfume of the Desert'





Happy Anniversary Eustace!



Janelle Hales	Feb 2
Adelle Wright	Feb 2
Janet Swan	Feb 14
Paul Wilson	Feb 17
David Weaver	Feb 19
Trudy Barnard	Feb 20

- *Family of the late Jan Thatcher.
- *Family of the late Cyprien Cyr.
- *Michelle Alves recent surgery.
- *Keep Calvin and Estelle Cole in your thoughts and prayers. Calvin is at Bloomfield Center for Nursing and Rehab, Estelle is in rehab at St Mary's Home, W.H. Cards and calls would be appreciated.
- *Carol Wolcott, would appreciate cards and 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.



David Berg	Jan 6
Bainie Wild	Jan 10
Anne Weaver	Jan 16
Kathy Mathews	Jan 28
Karen Blanchard	Jan 29
Sharon Goetjen	Jan 28

Doris Ahrens	~	Charlotte Babcock
Julie Cato	~	Gladys Dunbar
Charles Miles	~	Elaine Nelson

Please send me names and dates of anniversaries and birthdays for all family- Month & Day



Church Council Minutes 1/20/16

Attendees: C. Delgado, E. Ayala *ex officio*, S. Goetjen, C. Wilson. The meeting opened with a reading and prayer by Pastor Ayala.

Pastor's Report: Three-Kings Sunday was well-received. There is a positive spirit in the church as we move forward with emphasis on community-building. Next Sunday, Pastor Ayala has invited Imam Sammy Aziz from the Bloomfield Muslim Community Center to worship with us. Church staffing is going smoothly. A morning Bible study group with Dorine and Pastor Ed will begin tomorrow. All are welcome! Pastor Ed continues to meet regularly with the Parish Care Team and is trying to do one or two visits each week. He is also involved in the Bloomfield Interfaith Group.

Search Committee: Council reviewed and discussed information from UCC about how to proceed in the "Search and Call" process. Carolyn had prepared for Council's review, a draft of tasks that need to be accomplished to initiate the search process for a settled pastor. An approximate time line for the beginning steps was established. Communication will be sent to the congregation through church email, Spire, announcements, and Sunday bulletins outlining the qualifications needed, and seeking recommendations for those members who might be willing to serve on the Search Committee.

Additional Business: Council needs to add a member to replace Doug Morrill who has recently moved to North Carolina. Recommendations are being sought. The joint Council, Ministry Team and Staff meeting originally scheduled for Feb. 6th has been rescheduled for Feb. 20th from 9-12. The meeting will be to review strategic priorities, see how things are progressing and seek recommendations for planning forward to the end of the fiscal year.

Financial Report: Income - Pledges to date are \$148,000 which appears to be above budget, but is due to some pledges having been paid in full for the year. Music income is up because of recent amounts collected to pay Jason through June. Building income is up because some payments for last year's rents were collected...Most expenses show as being at or below budget because of timing, which will balance as the year progresses. Special music is over budget due to hiring individuals to sing in the choir and the Cantata.

The meeting closed with a Navaho blessing. Next meeting will be March 16 at 7 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, *Carol Wilson*

SAVE THE DATE!!!!

On Saturday, February 20th, from 9-12, a joint meeting of ministry teams, Council and staff will be held. This is a follow-up to the meeting that we held at the end of August. Please mark your calendars. We want to take some time to reflect on where we are and to plan for the remainder of the church year. An agenda will be sent soon.

Carolyn Delgado



Selecting a Search Committee

A search for a new pastor is one of the most important ministries in the church. The selection of Search Committee members is a task that is approached with prayer, sensitivity, wisdom and the awareness that God may be calling certain church members to consider serving in this capacity. The Council is committed to making the task of selecting the Search Committee members a process that is open

and transparent and one that involves the entire congregation. Over the next several weeks you will be receiving information about how each of you can be involved in this important and exciting event in the life of our church.

Included in this edition of the Spire is a description of the commitments for Search Committees. Please read this, consider it prayerfully and be open to how God may be calling you or others in the congregation to participate in the search process.

Council is completing a description of the qualities and attributes that individuals should have to be considered for selection as a Search Committee member. We have also developed a process for actively involving the congregation in making these recommendations to Council. Over the next month information about the process will be made available to the congregation in a variety of ways.

The Search Committee will be comprised of church members in regular standing and will reflect the diversity of our church family. Committee membership will be balanced to include an equal representation of women and men, young and old, new and long-term members and persons involved in the ministries of the church.

Our church is a joyful, vibrant, healthy and spirit-filled community of faith. Let's approach the search and call for a settled pastor with enthusiasm, hope and wonder and be open to God's call in this process. Blessings to all of you!

Carolyn Delgado, chair, Church Council

OUR MISSION

Responding to God's Call, our mission as The First Congregational Church in Bloomfield, United Church of Christ, is to go out into the world proclaiming God's love for all creation, working for justice, bringing Christ's peace and growing in love and faith through service to others. We are a safe and sacred community that welcomes all people and supports each individual journey of faith.

FIVE COMMITMENTS FOR SEARCH COMMITTEES

A Faith Commitment . . . The task of the Search Committee is very simple and very complex. Initially the task is spiritual. Search Committee members make a faith commitment to develop as faith-centered, prayer-directed people of God willing to listen to God in the process of seeking a new pastor. Search Committee members engage in a 4-Way Covenant—a Covenant with their prospective pastor, the congregation, the Conference and Association, and the Holy Spirit.

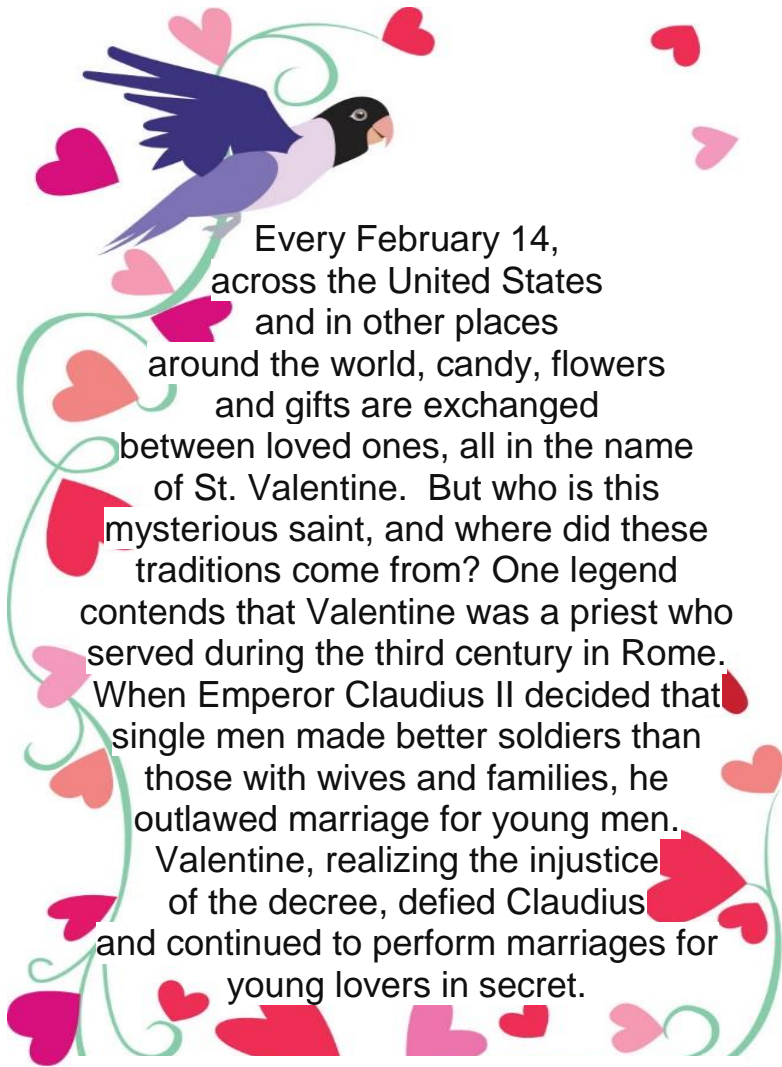
A Time Commitment . . . Search Committee members make a time commitment. By the time the search process is completed (from first organizational meeting to the calling of a new pastor) the committee may have been working together for as little as 9 months or as long as 18-24 months. Initially most Search Committees meet weekly. Once committees begin considering pastoral profiles and scheduling interviews, the frequency of meetings increases. At times the Search Committee must travel to hear prospective pastors preach. All in all, it is a significant time commitment.

A Commitment to Confidentiality . . . Search Committee members make a commitment to confidentiality. Members must not talk about the content of their work. That is to say, the sharing of names of individuals under consideration is a serious breach of process. Even to speak in generalities about location or experience or gender can risk folk guessing who the committee is considering. The congregation must be kept informed at every step of the process. Sharing where the Search Committee is in the process is critical. However, until a final candidate is presented, all conversation about any candidates is closely guarded.

A Commitment to Openness . . . Search Committees make a commitment to genuine consideration of all candidates. The commitment involves understanding that the gifts, skills, and experience of candidates are primary in determining their ability to serve the congregation.

A Commitment to Consensus . . . Finally, Search Committee members make a commitment to consensus. Members need to be of one mind in recommending their prospective pastor to the congregation. Any unreadiness on the part of any member of the Search Committee can and often does spell disaster down the road. Everyone must be able, with a clear and positive conscience, to support and endorse the individual presented before the congregation.

(Adapted, the Penn Central Conference)



Every February 14, across the United States and in other places around the world, candy, flowers and gifts are exchanged between loved ones, all in the name of St. Valentine. But who is this mysterious saint, and where did these traditions come from? One legend contends that Valentine was a priest who served during the third century in Rome. When Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for young men. Valentine, realizing the injustice of the decree, defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages for young lovers in secret.

Kindness counts

- Make blankets or scarves for homeless people.
- Send a care package to someone who's in college or the military.
- Collect coins for a charity or cause.
- When you can't attend an event, give the tickets to strangers.
- Provide tutoring or mentoring in your field of expertise.
- Offer to babysit or pet-sit for free.
- Send a note of appreciation to someone who's made a difference in your life.
- Share your gifts of music, reading or conversation at a nursing home.
- Donate old sports equipment to schools.
- Give someone the benefit of the doubt — maybe even a family member or yourself!

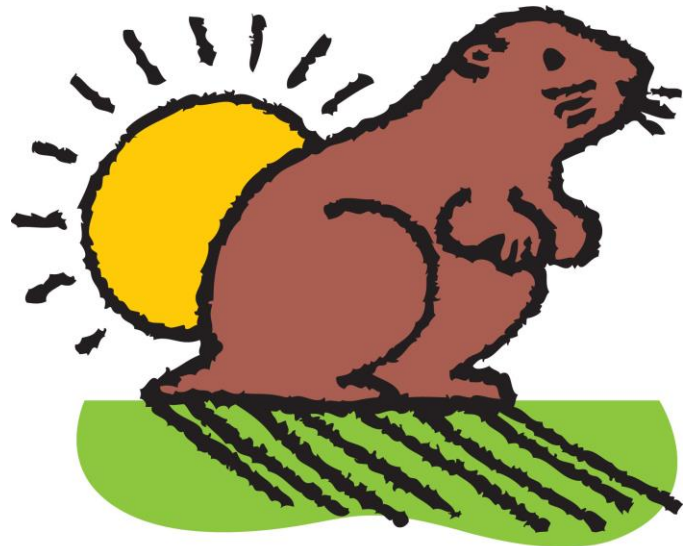
TACKLE



HUNGER

Please remember to support our Youth Ministry with their Souper Bowl of Caring. Sunday, February 7, 2016

FEBRUARY 2



GROUNDHOG DAY



Finally, **3** SIMPLE STEPS TO CHURCH REVITALIZATION

Resolve to revitalize

Church revitalization is a hot topic, and ideas for congregations can bring fresh energy and meaning to personal and family life, too. Consider the following tips:

- Have a clear vision. It's easy to go along day to day without considering what you're moving toward. Beyond the everyday routine, what bigger vision does God have for you? This year, take specific steps toward living that out.
- Ask questions. What gets you excited – even passionate? What issues or situations break your heart? What are you good at? Resolve to use a talent or something you enjoy to help heal hurts.
- Balance history with innovation. Honor your past as God's gift that makes you who you are, but be open to change. Dare to step out in faith for the sake of your life's mission. Try something new in the spirit of the God who's always doing a new thing (Isaiah 43:19; Revelation 21:5).

The best way to revitalize a church might be to revitalize the lives of its individual members!

NewsletterNewsletter.com. February 2016

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

10 Wintonbury Avenue
Bloomfield, CT 06002
Church Office: 860-242-0776
Nursery School: 860-242-0183
Church Fax: 860-243-8035

~ ~ ~ ~ ~
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.

Spire Schedule The Wintonbury Spire will be mailed at the end of each month. Please join us for the “Spire Party” where we stuff, fold, label, seal and stamp the Spire from 10:30 – 11:30 am on a Friday morning.

Spire Parties will be held on:

February 26, 2016
March 25, 2016 April 29, 2016
May 27, 2016 June 28, 2016

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION
Rev. Edwin O. Ayala, Interim Pastor
pastor@firstchurchbloomfield.org
860.242.0776 x 2 860-836-6651

Andrea Davey-Mercer
Administrative Assistant
office@firstchurchbloomfield.org
860-242-0776

Eustace Straker
Minister of Music
straepipes@yahoo.com
860-242-0776 x 3

Dorine DeCarli
Christian Education Director
ce@firstchurchbloomfield.org
860-242-0776 x 4

Shantel Bremmer
Nursery School Director
preschool@firstchurchbloomfield.org
860-242-0183 x 5

Michelle Alves
Building Management
jemmgmt@gmail.com
860.888.1025

