

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 12, 2006 SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY 9:30AM

Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where there's a crust of bread. -- D. T. Niles --

PREPARING TO WORSHIP GOD

The Prelude *Adagio in E Major* Frank Bridge
The Welcome/Welcoming One Another
Church Family Announcements
Music for Meditation *God, Our Author and Creator* John Peterson
Lighting of the Candles Acolyte: *Megan Enright*
(Acolytes needed: please call Kim Cassarella: 860-621-5412)

PRAISING GOD

The Call to Worship
PASTOR: We gather to praise and glorify God, who calls us from aimless living.
PEOPLE: **We, who bind ourselves to this world, seek a vision beyond ourselves and our immediate circumstances. We seek meaningful and joyful lives.**
PASTOR: The Good News of Jesus Christ tells us that we are not bound to this world and its values! Christ offers us a new vision and vast possibilities for good.
PEOPLE: **Let us celebrate this good news, and live it, offering God truth and love to all who will receive it.**

*Hymn of Praise: #K-2 (Worship Book) *O God of Vision* Lobe den Herren
*Prayer of General Confession (unison)
Holy God, we dare to come again asking for forgiveness. Too often we have tossed and turned through nights of emptiness, with little hope. We have seen clouds without rejoicing over their refreshing rain. We have confused freedom with license and mistaken humility for weakness. Forgive us, O God, and help to hear and believe the Good News of Jesus Christ, that we might have full, meaningful and joyful lives. Now in the silence, hear our personal prayers of confession.
*Prayer of Personal Confession (in silence)
*Response: *Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.*
*Assurance of Forgiveness

HEARING GOD'S WORD

Anthem *Sing Praise to God* (text of Hymn #6 alt.) arr. Lloyd Pfautsch
Children's Message
Children & Teachers Exit to Church School

Scripture Lesson MARK 1:28, 32-45
Sermon LET'S NOT FORGET THE MISSION! Rev. Dr. Gordon E. Ellis
includes unison reading: *The Purpose of the Church*: #A-1 (Worship Book)
*Hymn: #173 *You Have Come down to the Lakeshore* Pescador de Hombres

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Prayers of the Church & Lord's Prayer (using *sins*)
Presentation of Our Offerings & Tithes
Offertory Anthem: *There is a Balm in Gilead* (Jacqui Maddy) arr. Mark Hayes
*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
*Hymn: #530 *God our Author and Creator*
*Words of Parting (unison)
Let us go forth celebrating the Good News of Jesus Christ and living out our purpose as a church: *to love & worship God; to extend God's radically-inclusive love to all people everywhere; to make more & better disciples of Jesus Christ; & to inspire people & society to become more & more just, loving, compassionate & Christ-like.*
*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: *O God of Vision* John Leavitt

PLEASE JOIN US DOWNSTAIRS FOR COFFEE & CONVERSATION

Ushers: Judy Miller, Doug & Kate Hutton, Joy & Rick White, Kay Dickson, Joe Yevich & Rose Dunlap
Coffee Hour Hosts: Maureen Lyon & Cindy Barley Greeters: Ed & Bonnie Perry & Emily Jepson
Flowers: Given by Kim & Cassandra Byron in loving memory of grandmother, Jeannette Hemenway.
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: We pray for the Weitzke family, grieving the death of Bill's mother, & the Silva family, grieving the death of Barbara's brother-in-law. Hospitalized: Jeannette Faitella & Fran Child. Clive Greenough will have surgery this Thursday. 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; Matt Currao; our Stephen Ministers & care-receivers.
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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 7:30pm!** Tickets: **\$10** (\$5/under 18) from Church Office. **DON'T MISS IT!**
CHECK OUT OUR CHURCH'S WEBSITE, www.firstchurchsouthington.org. You'll love it!

JOHN ARENS TO PREACH NEXT SUNDAY: At 9:30am only, John Arens will preach & lead the bulk of our worship service. A Search Committee from another church, which has been considering John to be their minister, will be here to listen to John. Please join us to welcome & support John.

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*.

MOVIE DISCUSSION TONIGHT: *Fiddler on the Roof*. Join us, 7:30pm, rooms #201/202.

MOVIES THAT MATTER happens again **Friday, 3/10, 7:00pm**, with Academy Award-winning movie: *Life is Beautiful* with a **discussion** on 3/12, 7:30, led by Sharon Vocke & Clare Lindsey. Join us for discussion whether you watch movie at church or home. **FUTURE Movies:** ; **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!*

MAUNDY THURSDAY ACTORS NEEDED: 12 actors/actresses are required for our drama on Maundy Thursday, 4/13. Please contact Crystal Sullivan (860-276-8614 or Kencyriss@sbcglobal.net).

MUSIC OF THE AGES FOR ALL AGES: A CONCERT BY OUR MUSIC MINISTRY: 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, 7:30pm**, in our **Meetinghouse**. A free-will offering will be received for *Southington Social Services*. DON'T MISS IT!

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!

SUMMER CAMP FOR KIDS: Our *United Church of Christ* runs a wonderful summer camp for children & teens at *Silver Lake Conference Center* in Sharon, CT. Brochure & registration are available on-line at <http://silverlake.ctucc.org>. A limited number of brochures are available in our C. E. Office (see Karlene Archambeault or Carole Lantz). Some scholarship \$ available (see Gordon Ellis).

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.

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

NEW BIBLE STUDY: Gordon Ellis & Linda Fernandes-Bailey lead a new *Living the Questions* video Bible study: *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).

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.

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).

SMALL GROUPS

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

MAUNDY THURSDAY ACTORS NEEDED: 12 actors/actresses are required for our drama on Maundy Thursday, 4/13. Please contact Crystal Sullivan (860-276-8614 or Kencyrss@sbcglobal.net).

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.

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, a community-based home repair program that culminates in a 1-day repair event on **Saturday, May 6**, targets homeowners physically or financially unable to maintain their homes/properties. Our local sponsoring team is *The Southington Faith Community*, comprised of volunteers from *First Congregational Church, Plantsville Congregational Church, Mary Our Queen Church, & St. Paul's Church*. Together we do this extreme makeover of someone home. All work, material, & repairs are performed at no cost to recipients. Would you like to help?

SPONSORS & VOLUNTEERS 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. We also seek **volunteers** to work on Saturday, May 6. Sign-up next to Gordon's office.

A Church Family Opportunity to Participate in the Southington Reading Initiative

Following other cities & towns, Southington has initiated a town-wide reading event. People in town will read the same book then discuss it in groups. The book, *Honky*, by Dalton Conley, details the author's experiences growing up as a white minority in a predominately black & Hispanic neighborhood in NYC. Conley will also be at SHS at 7:00pm on Wednesday, March 8, to discuss the book in person.

Given the subject matter, we encourage as many church members as possible to read the book & come to *our own group discussion*. Our discussion is 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. We will discuss our impressions of the book & draft questions for the author during his presentation the next day. Please secure your own copy of the book. The *Southington Public Library* has multiple copies. Sign-up next to Gordon's office to take part in this stimulating program.

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.)

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE LESSON

MARK 1:28, 32-45 At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee. That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him: *Everyone is searching for you*. He answered: *Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do*. And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons. A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him: *If you choose, you can make me clean*. Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him: *I do choose. Be made clean!* Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. After sternly warning him, he sent him away at once, saying to him: *See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them*. But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.