



September 1, 2015

Friends and members of the First Congregational Church of East Hartford,

Last Thursday afternoon I was walking past our garden when I spotted an older man with a cane poking through the cucumbers. After some simple greetings he invited me to pick some veggies, saying, "it's a church after all. It's what they do." I smiled and introduced myself as the pastor. He was excited to tell me how much he loved the garden, walking to it nearly everyday. As he wandered away munching on a cucumber, I thought, what a delightful blessing of a neighbor.

*Indeed this summer has yielded abundant blessings, in large part thanks to your support of First Church and the many ministries rooted therein.*



In Pocahontas, Virginia 13 young adults from First Church joined with hundreds of other youth from around the country to grow in faith and serve God by repairing houses for those in need. We learned about each other, the holy, house painting, coal mining, and how to stand in solidarity. When one of our youth heard the condemning of homosexuals, our youth group joined together to create rainbow gay pride stickers to silently show support and affirmation of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. As members of other youth groups flocked to receive a gay pride sticker, I thought, what a blessing these young people are.

As part of my continuing education, I was blessed to be included in a unique racial justice training. The Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ has become a forerunner in racial justice, bringing together church leaders from Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut eager to address racism in our world. The training qualifies me to lead "sacred conversations on race" and part one of the racial justice training. I immediately was able to put this training into practice.



At the United Church of Christ Summer Camp, Silver Lake, middle school youth from the suburbs baked communion bread together with youth from the North End of Hartford. As a dean for the "Food for Thought" conference, I mentored youth from across the state through a week of summer fun, cooking adventures, faithful questions, and cultural curiosities. At our closing worship, as the young people opened their hearts and prayed for one another over candles, I thought, how blessed are we to have a beautiful space to nurture the faith of our young people.

My summer concluded with the blessing of a family vacation - complete with ocean waves, ice cream, and dancing (and only one argument!). Filled with the blessings of summer, I'm looking forward to our second year together. It will be different to not have Dennis running around as sexton and the absence of loved ones will surely be felt. The trustees have elected to hire professional companies to cover the sexton's duties. In time, we will discern what ministry God is calling us to use the Woodward house for.

As the school year ramps up, Church Fair preparations lock into full swing, and the leaves begin to change colors, may you be filled with energy and openness to the wonders in store.

In Christ's Peace,

Rev. Kelly Jane Forbush