

December 2011

Sunday Schedule

- Dec. 4** *Second Sunday of Advent*
10:00 a.m. **Morning Worship & Sunday School**
11:15 a.m. **White Gift Rehearsal**
- Dec. 11** *Third Sunday of Advent*
10:00 a.m. **Morning Worship & Sunday School**
11:15 a.m. Library Committee
11:30 p.m. Missions Meeting
3:00 p.m. Koinonia II
6:00 p.m. **White Gift Pageant**
- Dec. 18** *Fourth Sunday of Advent*
10:00 a.m. **Family Worship**
Christmas Cantata
6:00 p.m. JYF and PYF Christmas Caroling
- Dec. 24** *Christmas Eve*
7:00 p.m. *Christmas Eve Worship* in Chapel
10:30 p.m. *Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship*
- Dec. 25** *Christmas*
10:00 a.m. **Family Worship**
No Sunday School
- Dec. 31**
7:00 p.m. *Family Game Night & New Year's Eve celebration*



* 7:00 p.m.

Join us for a

Christmas Eve Family Worship service in the chapel at 7:00 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 24, 2011. The Family Worship time is an earlier service open to everyone. It is geared to young families, but is enjoyed by all who attend. The service will be led by the *Murdzek* family. There will be music, dance, and joyful celebration.

* 10:30 p.m.

Candlelight Worship with **Communion** in the sanctuary.

Holiday Fest

Friday December 2, 2011

“VOICES LLC”

7:30 p.m.

At First Church in the Sanctuary
Will perform a concert of Holiday music.

Saturday, December 3, 2011

First Church Participates!!



Pancake Breakfast

8:00-10:30 a.m.

\$5.00 at the door

The proceeds from this event will once again be used to benefit East Hartford families this Christmas.

The **Senior Choir** rehearses each Tuesday evening at 7:00 p.m. and on Sunday morning at 8:45 a.m. unless otherwise notified.

Children's Choir and Youth Choir rehearse immediately following morning worship on Sundays (11:15-11:30 a.m.) unless otherwise announced.

Bell Choir rehearses from 11:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.



Seventeenth Annual Live Nativity

1:00-5:00 p.m.

As part of Holiday Fest Weekend, this event features live farm animals in the courtyard. Come and view our church members standing in tableau representing the holy family and their visitors.

Paul Bissacia - Piano Concert

“Classic Christmas - Jazz Christmas”

2:00-4:00 p.m.

Seventeenth Annual

Carol Sing

4:30 p.m.

The community is invited to gather around the Live Nativity in the courtyard of First Congregational Church for a Candlelight Carol Sing of traditional Christmas favorites.



Boy Scout Troop 1 Spaghetti Dinner

4:30-6:00 p.m.

\$7.00 pp/\$12.00 for 2

\$5.00 senior/ \$5.00 pp-3 or more



Coffee Hour - Everyone is invited to Coffee hour following worship. Members of **Board of Deacons** are serving for the month of December.

The Board of Christian Education

will not meet in December.

The Board of Missions will meet Sunday, December 11, at 11:30 a.m.

The Board of Deaconesses will meet Monday, December 5 at 1:00 p.m.

The Board of Deacons will meet Monday, December 12 at 7:00 p.m.

The Board of Stewardship will meet Thursday, December 8 at 7:00 p.m.

The Board of Trustees will meet Tuesday, December 20 at 7:00 p.m.

W.E.B.

Women Empowered and Blessed is a group comprised of members of the **Guild**, the **Business & Professional Women's Group** and **Mother's Club**. All women of the church are invited to attend.

W.E.B. will meet on Thursday, December 15 at 6:15 p.m. for their Christmas Dinner.



Youth News

Saturday, Dec. 3

4:00 - 5:00 p.m. Live Nativity. JYF and PYF during the candle light carol sing. Dress warm!



White Gift Pageant

Sunday, December 11 at 6:00 p.m. Join us as we witness the miracle of Jesus' birth. Our Sunday School children will recreate the nativity story. This service is sponsored by the Board of Christian Education and will be followed by a time of fellowship and light refreshments of cocoa and cookies. Everyone is invited to attend. Rehearsal for our Sunday School children for this

presentation will be:
Sunday, December 4 11:15-12:30. A snack will be served to the children before rehearsal begins. Please plan to attend this rehearsal.

distribute the proceeds to all, as many as had need. Day by day, as they spent much time in the temple, they broke bread from house to house, they ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the good will of all the people. Acts 2:43-47

The Pastor's Corner

We Are The Church
(and we acted like it)

Sometimes the need for ministry gives little warning. Who would have thought that a foot of snow would fall in October and we moderns would need to do without electricity for a week or so? It was bad enough without our internet and television, but no light or heat either and for many of us no phones!

Well, if you were a member or friend of First Church, support is here! First of all, the church never lost electricity! For some reason, the way the electrical grid is designed, this southwest corner of the intersection of Connecticut Boulevard and Main Street was an oasis of power; power of two types really, electrical and spiritual, neither of which can be seen but both of which can be so surely felt.

So some of our members fired up the stove and oven in our just-renovated-in-time-kitchen, and up to forty others brought food that was quickly thawing and warming at home, and they all shared it together! For the entire outage week, lunch and dinner could be had at the church for anyone who came, bring what you would or could, and sit and get warm for a while and eat with your friends. It might remind us of the depiction of the first generation church in ancient Jerusalem where in the book of Acts it is recorded that they—

All...were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and would

Our church building also served as an overnight shelter for a few of our members and friends who just wanted a warm place to spend the night. There was no turning anyone away from this inn!

But what about communication? With phones down and even cell phone use unavailable in the first days after the storm, was everyone doing okay or did anyone need help? Well, if people could not be called on the phone then some people of the church made visits to make sure our aging and home bound members were making it alright!

What a privilege to be the pastor of such a congregation! We all hear the accusation that the church in general is just made up of hypocrites who say one thing and do another. And I admit that we are not perfect, not any of us, but how good we were when Alfred tore our trees and wires apart! And how much love and care is shared among us each day!

Give me church people every time!

Ted



Dec. 4 Sunday School following Children's Moment.
11:15 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Rehearsal for the White Gift Service for all Sunday School classes and their teachers in the sanctuary.

Dec. 11 Sunday School following Children's Moment.
5:30 p.m. Children come for costumes.
6:00 p.m. White Gift Pageant followed by a time of fellowship and light refreshments.

Dec. 18 Children will remain in Worship to enjoy the Cantata
11:15a.m. *Wassail Bowl*

Dec. 24 7:00p.m Christmas Eve Family Worship in the chapel led by the *Murdzek* family.

Dec. 25 Family Worship. No Sunday School

From the Board of Missions

At this time of year we often turn our thoughts to those who are less fortunate than ourselves – especially the children. **ELON HOMES** in North Carolina provides a safe and nurturing home environment for children and teens who, for one reason or another, are unable to stay with their own families. All offerings received at the **WHITE GIFTS PAGEANT** on December 11th at 6:00 p.m. will be used to support Elon.

* * * * *

In 1902 a concerned church member sent the Congregational Church Secretary *William A. Rice* a special offering so that retired ministers would be remembered at Christmas. Since then there has been a **CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING** (formerly known as "Veterans of the Cross") and it will be collected on Sunday, December 18 and Christmas Eve. This resource might provide an emergency check to help a clergy family pay mounting medical bills; a grant to assist an annuitant couple meet unexpected increases for nursing home care; pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retirees. Your gifts to the Christmas Fund Offering are an expression of love and thanks to those who serve us as pastors and leaders in the United Church of Christ.

The entire fall sermon series, *Contemporary Issues in Religion and Morality*, will be printed and available at the beginning of the new year. The sermons will also be available on the church website, www.churchcorners.org. Click the "worship" scroll down and then "sermon archives."



Our church proudly sponsors a **Wish Tree** located in the dining room. Christmas pictures with suggested items on the back are hung from the tree. Please remove the tag and take it with you to remind you what you have chosen to donate. **Place the unwrapped items under the tree by Dec. 11 so they may be delivered to the East Hartford Homeless Shelter in time for Christmas.** Thank you for your generosity!

Wassail Bowl will be served on Sunday, December 18th during Coffee Hour. Please be generous with your donations to the *Coffee Fund* in the basket on the table in the dining room.



Remember to place your Christmas cards to church members only in the boxes below the stairs. Do not place cards for those in convalescent homes or anyone who does not regularly attend church.

Special Thanks to *Pam Douglas*, coordinator, and the *donors* and *volunteers* who helped make our 31st Annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner for the homeless and alone continue in its success. Over one hundred meals were served. See you next year!

"Care & Share" Sunday is the first Sunday of every month when we bring items for Food Bank and it is also Roof Fund Sunday. You will find white envelopes marked Food Bank and Roof Fund in the pews in which monetary donations may be made. All donations are gratefully accepted.

- God will show up in huge ways - ways that money cannot even touch.

Isn't it time to trust God and put him first? Then we'll truly be able to count ourselves blessed. Thanks, Tamera, for the reminders.

Just a reminder...if you have moved, have a new phone number, or your college student would like to receive news from their church in the Columns..... we want to know!!!

EHIM
 East Hartford Interfaith Ministries
 Human Needs Fund Office
Beth Harlow, Coordinator
 (860) 289-4919

Stewardship Board

Giving Back – December 2011

After receiving her pledge letter from First Church, Tamera Ranney was inspired to share her thoughts on tithing that she's learned more about since attending Fellowship Church in Dallas. Her comments and quotes are thought provoking at this time of year and we'd like to share some of them with you.

- Finances are mentioned more times in the bible than heaven, hell or prayer.
- We are not "giving" our tithe to God/the church, but we are "returning/bringing to God what is already his." We do this to receive the blessings of God.
- It's about trust. We trust in God.
- We must make the Lord first.
- Blessed means being on the receiving end of the tangible and intangible favor of God. He will bless our lives in ways money cannot even buy.
- Are you in a position to receive the blessings of God? Only the 1st has the power to redeem the rest. We bring our tithe to God first, so that he does not end up receiving our financial leftovers.



Christmas Memorial

This year in addition to Christmas poinsettias part of your donation will go to the Roof Fund. We will purchase the number of plants necessary to deliver to the ill, bereaved, or homebound members with the remainder of your donation going to the Roof Fund. The cost of this donation will be \$ 13.00. Your check, made payable to the First Congregational Church, should clearly indicate Christmas Poinsettia and placed in the offering plate, given to a flower committee person or mailed to the church office by December 14th.

-----PLEASE PRINT & CHECK ONE-----

- In loving memory
- In honor
- In celebration

Of: _____

By: _____

Library Notes

Christmas, December 25, 2011

C is for **CHRISTMAS**

C is for **Cards** **C** is for **Creche**

C is for **Carols** **C** is for **Cradle**

- ❖ These are Christian symbols prominent in many religious stories about Christmas.
- ❖ Explore reading resources in your Church Library to celebrate this holy season.
- ❖ Examine the Christmas books and videos on display on the Library table.
- ❖ Discover meaning and inspiration in your reading throughout this month.

and

Have a very Merry Christmas,

The Library Committee