

Pastor's Letter of the Week

Happy Easter



April 10, 2017

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Our Vision

Praising God and
meeting
the needs of people
through
worship, study,
outreach
and fellowship,
in the name of
Jesus Christ.

WHAT'S COMING UP

HOLY WEEK HAS JUST BEGUN

There are so many opportunities still this week to fill up your spiritual tank. Easter is coming to a culmination and during this time of year, we tell the story of Jesus, the Good News, from beginning to end.

April 11

Weekly Lenten Prayer Service at 6:30 PM

We will have one more Prayer/Communion/Contemplative Time this coming Tuesday at 6:30 PM, rather than 7:00 PM. Remember that the service is at 6:30 PM because if you come at 7:00 PM, it will already be over.

April 13

Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service at 7:30 PM

Maundy Thursday is the night we remember the Last Supper and the last hours of Jesus's life. We will celebrate Holy Communion. This is a Tenebrae Service, a Service of Shadows. As we tell the story, the sanctuary gets darker and darker. We end with Jesus's death on the cross and we leave in silence. It makes us want to hurry to church on Easter Sunday morning to hear the good news that Christ is risen. This is one of the most powerful services of the year.

April 15

RESURRECTION DAY!

Easter begins with a Sunrise Service at Boothe Park at 6:00 AM. The service takes place in front of the three crosses at Boothe Park. Afterward, we go inside for refreshments. Many in our community love this service. We usually have around 140 people who attend. Then in our Sanctuary at 10:00 AM, we have our traditional Easter Service. Rev. Rawls will be preaching this year. The service ends the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's *Messiah*, which will be sung by our Choir members, as well as anyone else who would like to come forward and join them.

Finish off your Lenten Season and begin your Easter Season with a resurrection of your own. Hope to see you at all of these services.

DAILY LENTEN DISCIPLINES

I hope all of you have received your yellow Lenten Envelopes. If you notice, there is a prayer written on the back of each envelope.

All these prayers were either compiled or written by Mr. Walt Dunbar. They are short, succinct, to the point, and are a wonderful way to point each day in a spiritual direction. My hope is that you will use these envelopes by daily saying the prayer found for each day of the week, and then placing an offering in the envelope. We hope to take up these envelopes on Easter.

FINAL DAY TO ORDER MEMORIAL BRICKS

This Sunday is the final day to place orders for Memorial Bricks.

We are currently at 90 percent of our goal and should net the church over \$6,000. If we reach our goal, the net proceeds to the church will be in the \$7,000 range. Please see Bill Haberlin or drop your orders off in the Church Office.

Memorial Bricks

APRIL 23 HUMOR SUNDAY

On April 23, Rev. Williams and Rev. Rawls will be coordinating Humor Sunday. This is a light Sunday after Easter, during which we laugh, tell jokes, and see the power of humor in the resurrection.

CROP WALK

We have our annual Crop Walk coming up on May 7. Registration is at 1:30 PM and the walk begins at 2:00 PM. The walk takes place at Seaside Park in Bridgeport and spans ten kilometers. Those who walk ask people to pledge a certain amount for each kilometer we walk. Of the money we raise, 25 percent supports programs that feed the hungry locally in our community and the rest goes toward hunger relief across the globe.

This year, we would like to double the number of people walking from our church. If you are interested, there will be someone upstairs in Upper Packard Hall on Sunday who can give you more direction.

Also, you can go to <http://www.crophungerwalk.org/bridgeportct>

for more information.

***IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT
CONCERNING OUR
ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY,
MRS. SANDY O'NEILL***

Sandy O'Neill, our church administrator, had surgery on March 1 for diverticulitis. She will return to the office soon. Keep this wonderful person in your prayers.

COME TO FRANCE WITH US

If you would like to go with our group to France next September, this is the time to let Meg know!

We have a nice group going, but we do still have a few spots left.

This is a trip of a lifetime!

If you are interested, talk to Meg and give her the reservation form and deposit as soon as possible.

Paper copies of the brochure are available at church or Meg can email you an electronic copy.

Invite your relatives, friends or neighbors!



WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

BIBLE STUDY

Every Wednesday at 10:00 AM, there is a Bible study led by Mrs. Bessie Burton. Right now, they are studying different spiritual practices to help you grow in your relationship with God. The study takes place in the Board Room in Upper Packard Hall. People taking part in the group are at all levels of Bible knowledge. You don't need to know the Bible in order to come. In fact, that's why you should come. We can always learn a lot more.

If your are interested in an evening Bible Study, please see Bessie Burton after church. Thank you.

LORD'S KITCHEN

As part of our participation with the Lord's Kitchen, we are accepting donations for toiletries to be distributed during our turn at serving meals. We are looking for things like shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, tissues, and toilet paper. There will be a donation box in the Narthex. If you have any questions, you can call Jean Martire at 203-876-9390.

WHAT JUST HAPPENED

PALM SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE AND BAPTISM





Baptism of Jace Mathew Gerber









75th ANNUAL PALM SUNDAY CONCERT

Over 270 people attended the 75th Annual Palm Sunday Concert. Dr. Joe Utterback directed the community choir in singing a part of Handel's *Messiah*, accompanied by Galen Tate on organ and Bill Pond on trumpet. Allison Fay, Carol Woodman, Michael Jovovich, and Tom Woodman sang solo work in *Messiah*. After this, Dr. Joe moved to the piano and was again joined by Galen Tate, Bill Pond, Allison Fay, Carol Woodman, Michael Jovovich, and Tom Woodman, as well as soloist Jackie Ray, Josh Toman on flute, and Brian Coralian on percussion. Dr. Joe led us in a series of songs he had written for those who died in Orlando, called "Songs for Orlando." There was also a special piece that he and Josh played in memory of Gale Whitmore, called "Summer Elegy," and a piece in memory of Stephanie Zaczkowski, called "Vocalise." The music for Orlando included some older pieces, along with new songs he premiered. It was very moving and somber, but the last song we sang, "Alleluia," had us all on our feet

celebrating. Life goes on.

A special thank you to Dr. Joe Utterback and the beautiful music that comes out of his soul. A special thank you to Allison Fay, who not only sings beautifully, but also coordinates so many things that make an event like the Palm Sunday Concert possible. Another special thank you to Frances Morra and the Music Committee, who planned the reception afterward and are such a support to our music program. And yes, a special thank you to our choir, who make up most of the community choir that sings every Palm Sunday, as well as singing every Sunday.
It was an absolutely wonderful day!



The Palm Sunday Concert Choir sings the Hallelujah Chorus

PONDERINGS

**“I believe in Christ, like
I believe in the sun –
not because I can see it,
but by it I can see
everything else.”**

C.S. Lewis

SERMONS ON OUR WEBSITE

If you're interested in hearing sermons from last week's service, or sermons from the last month, you can find them at our website, firstchurchstratford.org.

IN NEED OF PRAYER



[April 16 Prayer List](#)

QUICK LINKS

Our website: www.firstchurchstratford.org

UCC website: www.ucc.org

Connecticut Conference website: www.ctucc.org

For the March Courier: Go to the church website

JOKE OF THE WEEK



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Calendar

- April 13, 2017 Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service 7:30 PM
April 15, 2017 Easter Bunny Breakfast 10:00 AM
April 16, 2017 Sunrise Service, Boothe Park 6:00 AM
Traditional Easter Worship Service, Sanctuary 10:00 AM
Fellowship Coffee Hour 11:15 AM

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