

“First Church News” (USPS 196-120) is published monthly from January through December by First Church of Christ, Congregational, 830 Corbin Avenue, New Britain, CT 06052. (Tel: 860-229-3709; Fax: 860-826-7079, e-mail firstnewbritain@snet.net).

Periodicals postage paid at New Britain, CT 06052.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to First Church News, 830 Corbin Avenue, New Britain, CT 06052.

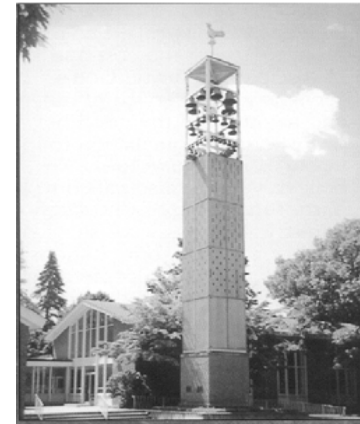
First Church website - www.firstnewbritain.org

First Church News

**First Church of Christ, Congregational
United Church of Christ**

830 Corbin Avenue
New Britain, CT 06052
860-229-3709
www.firstnewbritain.org

June 2010



OFFICE and GALLERY HOURS

Monday - Thursday 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Friday 9:00 am – Noon

PROGRAM STAFF

The Rev. Jack Cook, Senior Minister

Sharon Chamberlain, Coordinator of Christian Education

James Gower, Director of Music Ministries

Sarah Flythe, Coordinator of Youth Programming

Please go to our website, www.firstnewbritain.org for staff contact information

Copies of sermons and additional newsletters are available in the information rack outside the church office.

UPCOMING DATES

- Tuesday, June 1st at 7 pm: Missions and Congregational Life
- Tuesday, June 8th at 7 pm: Diaconate and Worship
- Thursday, June 10th at 6pm: Social and Service Picnic
- Sunday, June 20th: Children’s Sunday and Father’s Day, with a 2nd Hour Ice-cream Social
- Tuesday, June 22nd at 7 pm: Council Meeting

First Church provides worship and education that deepen the understanding and living of the Christian faith to promote spiritual growth, hospitality, and service to others.

GREETINGS FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Friends,

May was a great month for First Church as we engaged in three wonderful “spirit” events—Sneaker Sunday on May 2, our Membership Growth Workshop on May 15, and the Giant Tag Sale on May 22. Not only did these special activities offer community-building, learning, service, and fellowship; but they were all fun and all served one or more of our three identified long-term congregational goals: nurturing our existing membership, focusing our mission/outreach work, and increasing our active membership.

We may think of this as a “church growth” newsletter, because at least three articles reflect on Mike Penn-Strah’s excellent training session on how to grow our church. One of the first assignments he gave us was to break into small groups and answer the question, “Is our congregation *ready* to grow?”

Since then, I have reflected on what I might call the “grammar of growth”—i.e., the verbs and adjectives that we might use about ourselves in relationship to our congregational goal of increasing our active membership.

Our small group decided that we were not yet *ready* to grow, and that’s why we were engaged in this educational opportunity.

We changed the adjective to a verb—“Do we *desire* to grow?” And we all said, “Yes! Every church *wants* to grow!”

But then we asked the really hard question—“But do we have the *will* to grow?” *Will* goes well beyond *desire* to include not just *motivation* but also *action* (which entails some very hard work!).

All of that reminded me of what I used to say in the introductory economics courses I taught in my former life—the law of supply and demand dictates that *price* (just like church growth) is dependent upon two things—*willingness* AND *ability*. Someone may be *willing* to pay a certain amount for a given good or service; but if he or she is not also *able* to pay it, then the good or service will not be sold at that price. And vice versa—a potential buyer may be *able*, but simply not *willing*, to pay the price. Church growth is just the same! We can’t be EITHER *willing* OR *able* to grow—we must be *both* in order to make it happen.

And finally (remember that I began my college career intending to teach foreign languages!), I have concluded that there are three pre-requisite *gerunds* (did you take Latin in high school?) or *present participles* of church growth—*inviting*, *welcoming*, and *nurturing*. You’ll be hearing more about all three and how *all* of us need to *do* and *be* all three in order to grow First Church.

And so, as Mike Penn-Strah said, “It takes an entire congregation to grow a church!” My friends, shall we *grow* our church?

See you in church! Blessings always!
Jack

*Before you read their books,
read their letters...*

In 1973, three imaginative New Britain High School students invited some famous authors . . . J.D. Salinger, Paul Zindel, Maurice Sendak, Thornton Wilder and John Updike to a dinner party...

Leah Wedmore & Linda Wedmore and Leslie Whitaker (daughter of the late Orin Whitaker) sent out their invitations.

Though it never transpired, they have a collection of some of the nicest “regrets” around . . . Just how did J.D. Salinger respond? . . . Paul Zindel? . . . Maurice Sendak?

Now, they reconvene across the miles to share this experience with you!

*Thursday, June 3rd at 7 PM
Refreshments*

*Community Room
New Britain Public Library*

*Main Library 20 High Street,
New Britain, CT 06051 860-224-3155*

COUNCIL CHAIR'S REPORT

“...If we have the desire to grow...”

As most members know, we are in a state of declining membership here at First Church. We are much like many of our sister U.C.C. churches and many other mainline Protestant churches. Locally, statewide and nationally, membership is on the downward slide.

Last Saturday, May 15, twenty-seven church members gathered in the Fireside Room to listen to Rev. Michael Penn-Strah, the South Central Regional Minister of the Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ. He spoke about our membership woes and what we can do about it.

What can we do? For one, we can invite FRANC. What or who is FRANC (and no, it's not the old French coinage). It stands for:

- Friends
- Relatives
- Acquaintances
- Neighbors
- Coworkers

Think of someone you may work with, or you know socially, or a relative. Invite them to come with you to church some Sunday. Better yet, have them ride in with you. If they say they can't make it on a particular Sunday, ask them the next week. The key is to be persistent! The U.C.C. says that 96% of people that don't attend church WILL attend IF SOMEBODY WOULD ONLY ASK THEM! They may feel a type of emptiness about not going to church, but feel intimidated about going alone.

That's where you come into play. Invite them. Bring them. Stay with them in Church and at Coffee Hour. Invite them back. Follow up and get them back. Again, you have to be persistent.

If you have any questions, see me, Sophie Senk, Joni Anderson-Senk, Martha Moses or Mike Gorzoch, (your Inviters Group) for help.

If we have that desire to grow, we will. It's up to US!

Don Robertson
Church Council Chairperson

THANK YOU

Thank you to all who gave to our Strengthen the Church Collection on Sunday, May 23, 2010. We have collected \$223.00 to date.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES!

Jill Canora, daughter of John and Karen Canora was awarded the degree of Doctor of Pharmacy from the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. The Hooding Ceremony was May 13th and the Commencement was May 14th. Jill will be living in Boston and working at an independent pharmacy in Cambridge.

Alison Duncan, daughter of Mike and Anne Marie Duncan, and granddaughter of Ted and Ann Duncan, received a Bachelors in Communications, with Honors, from Bryant University. She will be pursuing a job in this field.

Carissa Mierzejewski, granddaughter of Lois and Walter MacFarlane, graduated Magna Cum Laude from Keene State College, Keene, NH, with a BA in Psychology, on May 8th.

Philip Pieper, grandson of Lois and Walter MacFarlane, graduated from UCONN, Storrs, CT, with a BS in Business, on May 9th.

We are very proud of all of you!

CE schedule from now until Children's Sunday:

May 30th...Regular class time during worship.

June 6th...Regular class time **and** 11:15 – 12 noon in the sanctuary.

June 13th...Regular class time **and** 11:15 – 12 noon in the sanctuary.

Thursday, June 17th...Sanctuary rehearsal – tentatively

5 – 6 p.m.

June 20th...Arrive at church by 9:15 a.m. **Ice Cream Sundaes following worship!**

Douglas Allen, Julia Allen, Andrew Baker, Travis Lavigne, Gabriella Ortega and Austin Zemsta all had **perfect attendance** for the month of April!

Reminder...deadline for “Detective Camp” registration is June 1st. It's filling up fast!

See you in church,
Sharon Chamberlain
Coordinator of Christian Education

YOUTH GROUP UPDATE

- Carol Cyr and 7 youth from Berlin Congregational participated with First Church youth Aarin Flythe in Rebuilding Together. They had lots of fun and learned the value of building a stronger community.
- Look for more information about the Coffee House, which is planned for October

GET TO KNOW YOUR WORKING GROUPS

Greetings from the Diaconate Worship and Growth Working Group (DWAGWG)

After much publicity and preparation, on May 15th we finally had the workshop on church growth that was led by Mike Penn-Strah. Mike provided some interactive and entertaining activities and some frank feedback for about 30 of our members.

Here are some of the lessons and observations that Mike shared with the group:

- It takes the talent, time and effort of the entire congregation (that means everyone reading this newsletter) to attract and retain to new members of the church.
- The most effective way to add new membership starts by simply inviting and escorting a friend/relative/neighbor/acquaintance to church or a church activity.
- In the perception of guests, there is a big difference between a “friendly church” and a “church of friends”. A friendly church reaches out to guests to make them feel welcome. A church of friends focuses more on each other and is less welcoming to guests.
- Focus our efforts on making our guests feel welcome and build individual relationships with them. If you are at a church activity, give them a job to do that makes them feel like they are making a contribution. If you are at coffee hour, introduce yourself to our guests to make them feel welcome. When is the last time you introduced yourself to a complete stranger at coffee hour?
- Promotion and Publicity: In addition to talking to people about what great things our church is doing and what it supports, we need to use every publicity means possible to tell our story to the community: newspapers, newsletters, our website (needs to be re-built), Facebook, road signs, etc.
- Our church website is, at best, inadequate. It is difficult to find when performing a general search of New Britain churches on the web. It needs to be more up to date, interactive and more informative in order to generate interest to prospective guests/members.
- Attend Sunday Service regularly. Guests like to see a full sanctuary, and you may actually get something out of it yourself.

Our church supports a lot of wonderful causes: Friendship Center, food pantry, Thailand orphanage, Re-building Together, MOM's program, AA, Walk for Hunger, children's programs, UCC ministries, etc. It also hosts many inspirational and fun activities including: Sunday Services, Adult bible study, Carillon concerts, Tag Sale, St. Patrick's day social, 8 to eat, Advent workshop, Giant Divot golf tournament, etc. We need to get the word out about what we do and invite people to be a part of it.

Many of us belong to any number of organizations, clubs or groups that are constantly looking for new members. In doing so, we are fully aware of many of the issues that were covered in the workshop. The point is that we already know how to do this, but it takes a little focus and effort on the part of every member to make it happen. As the saying goes “Many hands make light work” and in this effort we need the help of everyone reading this news letter to make it work.

Bill Allen

CHURCH NEWS

OUR FIRST CHURCH FAMILY

- Our thoughts and prayers go out to Judy and Don Robertson and the family of Mary Clapp, who passed away on Thursday, May 13, 2010. Funeral services were held at First Church this past Thursday, May 20, 2010.
- Our thoughts and prayers also go out to the family of Emery (Pat) Patterson, who passed away on Tuesday, May 18, 2010. A private graveside service, with military honors, was held on Friday, May 21, 2010. The family sent a note thanking Jack and Charlie Slate for a beautiful service and thanks the congregation for flowers and prayers. They wrote . . . “Pat loved First Church and his family there”.



SNEAKER SUNDAY

A HUGE thank you to all who walked, sponsored, purchased sneakers, provided lunch, water and rescue efforts, took photos and organized a very successful, 1st annual Sneaker Sunday Walk Against Hunger. We are pleased to be able to present \$1567.00..... to the Friendship Service Center. More folks dealing with hunger in New Britain will now have a meal, thanks to your generosity and our First Church Team. It is, indeed, one way we can do a little to help a lot!

OSGOOD FOOD PANTRY

For the month of June, our collections will be concentrating on shampoo, conditioner, lotion, suntan lotion, soap and powder, etc. Food donations are always needed also.

Thank you. ~The Missions Committee

NEW MEMBER RECEPTION

We hope to receive new members into our family of faith in the near future. If you would like to join First Church at this time (or would like to consider membership), please contact Rev. Cook or call the church office at 860-229-3709. All are invited!

UPCOMING EVENTS



FIRST CHURCH SOFTBALL DATES

- Wednesday, June 2nd, at Osgood Park
- Monday, June 7th, at Osgood Park
- Wednesday, June 9th, at Osgood Park
- Monday, June 14th, at Chesley 3
- Wednesday, June 16th, off
- Monday, June 21st, at Washington Park
- Wednesday, June 23rd, off
- Monday, June 28th, at Chesley 2
- Wednesday, June 30th, at Chesley 3



THE "NICK-NACK PADDYWHACK, GIVE A KID A BACKPACK" PROJECT!

And from here on, will be called *just* The Backpack Project! Beginning **June 6th**, paper backpacks will be for sale following worship. They will be \$5 each and that money will be used to purchase backpacks and school supplies for Rev. Sirirat's orphanage children in Thailand.

At the same time, there will be a large box in the Narthex with a school supply list on the side. In it, we will collect backpacks and supplies for the children at the Wheeler Clinic in Plainville. Those supplies will be delivered at the end of August – in time for the start of the new school year. We'll be helping students both near and far! Thank you in advance for your support,

The Missions Team and Mike Duncan, Sarah Joyce-Grikis and Sharon Chamberlain

SOCIAL AND SERVICE PICNIC

The social and Service Picnic will be held on June 10, 2010 at 6:00 pm, in the Fireside Room. Hamburgers and hotdogs will be provided. Come join us for an evening of fun.

JULY CARILLON CONCERTS

Don't forget . . . Carillon Concerts will be held every Tuesday in July at 7:00 pm. The concert on July 6th will be preceded by a picnic. More information to follow.



SUMMER SUPPERS

WHAT ARE THEY? Summer Suppers are FUN opportunities to get together with other adult churchgoers for food and fellowship. For those that enjoyed the Eight to Eat groups or you missed out last spring, this is a summer version. Everyone will be in a newly formed group.

HOW DO THEY WORK? Sign up either as a single or a twosome. We will organize groups of eight that will get together to eat three times between June and Sept. Your group chooses its own schedule. You can choose to eat in homes or eat out. You can do pot-luck or not. Whatever your group chooses is fine.

HOW DO I SIGN UP? Use the sign-up sheet in the church office, at coffee after church or call the church office by June 13th.

QUESTIONS? Please call Nancy Cook at 357-2419 or Margo Hunt at 674-8397.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!



THE 2010 ANNUAL FIRST CHURCH GIANT DIVOT GOLF OUTING

This year's event will be held Saturday, October 9 at Stanley Golf Course in New Britain. Food and festivities at the church after the golf.

Bring your friends and plan on joining us for good fellowship and a lot of laughs. Proceeds from this event will support the New Britain Food Collaborative and our Thailand Orphanage Mission Project.

More details in the coming month.