

COLUMNS

First Congregational Church East Hartford, Connecticut
Over 300 Years of Ministry!



December 2008

Sunday Schedule

- Dec. 7** *Second Sunday of Advent*
10:00 a.m. **Morning Worship & Sunday School**
11:15 a.m. **White Gift Rehearsal**
- Dec. 14** *Third Sunday of Advent*
10:00 a.m. **Morning Worship & Sunday School**
11:15 a.m. Library Committee
3:00 p.m. Koinonia II
6:00 p.m. **White Gift Pageant**
- Dec. 21** *Forth Sunday of Advent*
10:00 a.m. **Morning Worship & Sunday School**
11:15 a.m. Wassail Bowl
- Dec. 24** *Christmas Eve*
6:30 p.m. *Christmas Eve Worship in Chapel*
10:30 p.m. *Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship*
- Dec. 28** *First Sunday after Christmas*
10:00 a.m. **Family Worship**
No Sunday School
- Dec. 31**
7:00 p.m. *Family Game Night & New Year's Eve celebration*



The **Senior Choir** rehearses each Wednesday evening at 7:30 p.m. and on Sunday morning at 9:00 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.

EHIM

East Hartford Interfaith Ministries
Human Needs Fund Office
Beth Harlow, Coordinator

Saturday, December 6, 2008

Holiday Fest

First Church Participates!!



Pancake Breakfast

8:00-10:30 a.m.

\$4.00 in advance/\$4.50 at the door
\$3.00 for picture with Santa

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

For reservations, call *Louise* at 528-3133.



Fourteenth 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.



Fourteenth 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

4:30-6:30 p.m.

\$7.00 pp/\$12.00 for 2
\$5.00 senior/ \$5.00 pp-3 or more

No reservations are necessary. Continuous serving. Everyone is welcome. (1/2 of the proceeds to benefit FCC Food Bank.)



Coffee Hour - Everyone is invited to Coffee hour following worship. Members of **Guild** and **P.Y.F.** are serving for the month of December.



The **Board of Christian Education** will not meet in December.

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

The **Board of Deacons** will meet Monday, December 8 at 7:00 p.m.

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

The **Board of Trustees** will meet Thursday, December 11 at 7:00 p.m.

Guild – W.E.B. will have their Christmas Luncheon on Tuesday, December 9.

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 18 at 6:15 p.m. for their Christmas Dinner.



Youth News

Junior Youth Fellowship (JYF) is a youth group for students in grades 6-8. We meet on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month from 11:30 a.m. -1:00 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 6 Senior High and JYF 4:00-5:00
Live Nativity during the candle light carol sing.
Dress warm!

Sunday, Dec. 7
No JYF – White Gift Rehearsal

Sunday, Dec. 21 Senior High and JYF
No JYF meeting
6:00 p.m.
Christmas Caroling

Dec. 7 Children will begin in worship before going to their classes.
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. A snack will be served to the children in the scout room before rehearsal begins.

Dec. 14 Children will begin in worship before going to their classes.
5:30 p.m. Children come for costumes.
6:00 p.m. White Gift Pageant

Dec. 21 Children will begin in worship before going to their classes.

Dec. 24 6:30 p.m. Family Worship in the chapel led by a church family.

Dec. 28 Family Worship, No Sunday School Activity packets and books for the children will be available on the glass case in the rear of the sanctuary. Child Care to age 5 will be provided in the dining room.

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 GIFT PAGEANT** on December 14th at 6:00 p.m. will go toward Elon.

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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 December 21st. This offering can take many forms – 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 Pastor's Corner

Eat Well and Get Enough Rest

So, Ted, looks like First Church is going to have another busy Holiday season.

Sometimes I think it's too busy.

Well, you have like, what, three of four events?

Actually, if you start with the Fair on the 22nd of November and end with New Year's Eve Family Night, there are twelve: Holiday Fair and Dinner, Thanksgiving Dinner for the alone or homeless in East Hartford, Thanksgiving Baskets to our homebound members packed and delivered by church families, Pancake Breakfast with Santa, Outdoor Live Nativity Tableau, Outdoor Candle Light Carol Sing, Boy Scout Spaghetti Dinner, White Gifts Pageant, Youth Christmas Caroling to the Homebound, Christmas Eve Family Worship, Christmas Eve Candle Light, and New Year's Eve Family Night. That list doesn't include any special presentations during Sunday morning worship in Advent. It also doesn't include our outreach projects for the season—the Wish Tree for residents of the Homeless Shelter, the Riverside Gift Box, the gifts selected and bought for two East Hartford families in need financed from the proceeds of the Pancake Breakfast, and support for Elon Children's Home through the White Gifts collection. Many of these activities require significant planning and preparation and time.

You saying you have to work too hard? It does sound like it all requires more than one day a week!

Yes, I know, very funny, but I was thinking more of the other staff and everyone else in the church. It's extraordinary how many volunteer hours the members and friends of First Church put into our mission and ministry this time of year. The church is smaller than it used to be but it sure is as vital as ever, if not more so! I don't know where there is a 21st century downtown congregation doing more to bear witness in its neighborhood to the Living Christ and reach out to its neighbors through loving service in Christ's name!

Do you think God wants you to be so busy now? I thought Christmas was about peaceful feelings and family events.

I think that sure is part of it. We need to be careful not to lose sight of that through all our activities at church. For sure we could not do as a church all that we do if not for everyone's help. I am so proud of this congregation sometimes I could burst.

Well, wait 'til after the new year to do that. There is too much to do before then.

Good point.

Ted

Live Nativity

The Live Nativity will be Sat. Dec. 6 and once again coincides with the East Hartford Holiday Fest. Participants for the Live Nativity are needed for 1:00, 2:00 and 3:00. The Junior and Senior High Youth will participate at 4:00. Approximately 10 participants are needed for each hour. They include: Mary, Joseph, 3 wise men, 3 shepherds, and 2 angels. The sign-up sheet can be found in the dining room by the Prayer Wall.



Wish Tree

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. 14 so they may be delivered to the homeless shelter in time for Christmas.** Thank you for your generosity!



White Gift Pageant

Sunday, December 14 at 6:00 p.m. Join us as we witness the miracle of Jesus' birth. Our Sunday School children will recreate the nativity story with their own enthusiasm and energy. 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 7 11:15-12:30 in the sanctuary.

Wassail Bowl will be served on Sunday, December 21st during Coffee Hour. Each week the Board of Deaconesses provides the refreshments. Please be generous with your donations to the *Coffee Fund* in the basket on the table in the dining room.



*6:30 p.m.

There will be a **Christmas Eve Family Worship** service in the chapel at 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 24, 2008. 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 a church family.

*10:30 p.m.

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



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.

Remember those who have recently moved away.

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



Christmas Memorial

This year in addition to Christmas poinsettias part of your donation will go to the East Hartford Human Needs 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 Human Needs Fund. The cost of this donation will be \$ 11.00. 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 10th.

Jessie, Chairman,

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

- In loving memory
- In honor
- In celebration

Of: _____

By: _____



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!!!

Library Notes

Christmas
December 25, 2008

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



Annual Report

Annual Report information is due in the church office no later than January 11, 2009!! Every board, committee, club and scouts are asked to submit a report. Remember, what you submit is part of the history of First Congregational Church.