

The Messenger

April 2011



The United Methodist Church, Clinton, CT
Pastor M. Craig Fitzsimmons



God

... is not far from each one of us.

Acts 17:27, NRSV



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Our mission statement

We celebrate the presence
of the Holy Spirit;
being and making disciples of Christ
by sharing God's gifts
through word and deed.



We will spend most of the month still in the season of Lent. Easter is just about as late as it can be this year. While every year we have the same amount of time in the Lent-Easter cycle, it seems as though it is longer this year. I have been enjoying our Tuesday evening Bible studies. I hope my sermons have fed off of those discussions and have taken the passages even deeper for us. The lessons of course build up to the reality of Holy Week and the death of Christ on the Cross. We all know that the cross was not the final word, that God spoke the definitive word on Easter – resurrection. However, in order to get there, we have to go through the cross.

I was reminded of a story that Clarence Jordan, the founder of Koinonia Farm near Americus, Georgia, told. Koinonia Farm was set up to be an interracial community before anyone knew what civil rights were all about. Jordan himself was a pacifist as well as an integrationist and thus was not a popular figure in Georgia, even though he came from a prominent family. The Koinonia Farm, by its very nature, was controversial and, of course, it was in trouble. In the early 1950s Clarence approached his brother Robert Jordan (later a state senator and justice of the Georgia Supreme Court) to ask him to represent legally the Koinonia Farm. They were having trouble getting LP gas delivered for heating during the winter even though it was against the law not to deliver gas. Clarence thought Robert could do much through a phone call. However, Robert responded to Clarence's request:

“Clarence, I can't do that. You know my political aspirations. Why if I represent you, I might lose my job, my house, everything I've got.”

“We might lose everything, too, Bob.”

“It's different for you.”

“Why is it different? I remember, it seems to me, that you and I joined the church on the same Sunday, as boys. I expect when we came forward the preacher asked me the same question he did you. He asked me, ‘Do you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior?’ and I said ‘yes.’ What did you say?”

“I follow Jesus, Clarence, up to a point.”

“Could that point by any chance be – the cross?”

“That’s right. I follow him to the cross, but not on the cross, I’m not getting myself crucified.”

“Then I don’t believe you’re a disciple. You’re an admirer of Jesus, but not a disciple of his. I think you ought to go back to the church you belong to, and tell them you’re an admirer, not a disciple.”

“Well now, if everyone who felt like I do did that, we wouldn’t have a church, would we?”

“The question,” Clarence said, “is, ‘Do you have a church?’”

There is no church without the cross. There is no church without the resurrection. There is no church without disciples who are willing to follow Jesus even to the cross, walking in the way of our Savior. I hope and pray that we are walking on that way and providing a witness to Him.

As John White said, “A good witness isn’t like a salesman; emphasis is on a person rather than a product. A good witness is like a signpost. It doesn’t matter whether it is old, young, pretty, ugly; it has to point the right direction and be able to be understood. We are witnesses to Christ, we point to him.

I pray that our Lenten/Easter walk will strengthen our discipleship and witness.

Shalom,
Craig



Lent and Easter Schedule

April 3, 10 am	Fourth Sunday in Lent, Communion
April 5, 7 pm	Tuesday Bible study
April 10, 10 am	Fifth Sunday
April 12, 7 pm	Tuesday Bible study
April 17, 10 am	Palm Sunday
April 19, 7 pm	Tuesday Bible study
April 21, 7 pm	Holy Thursday
April 22, 7 pm	Good Friday
April 24, 6:30 am	Sunrise Service
April 24, 7:15	Easter breakfast
April 24, 10 am	EASTER

A Month of Services

April 3

Greeters
Ushers

Infant/toddler care
Acolytes
Sound coordinator
Camera operator
Worship leader
Lectionary scriptures

Sermon
Communion steward
Fellowship time

Fourth Sunday in Lent One Great Hour of Sharing

Barbie and Ken Archer
Evelyn Scaglione, Sharon Minick,
Gay McPhee, Ellen Hoyt, Lynda Larson
Linda Symmes

Tammy Drena
Lisa Sutherland
Mickey Brown
1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 23;
Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41
Pastor Craig Fitzsimmons
Dottie Sprague
The Dollahites

April 10

Greeters
Ushers

Infant/toddler care
Acolytes
Sound coordinator
Camera operator
Worship leader
Lectionary scriptures

Sermon
Fellowship time

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Sally Cotter, Ginny Burr, David Moore,
Lyle Cubberly, Andrew Dupre
Linda Symmes

Ally Gates
Mickey Brown
Raegen Riley
Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130;
Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45
Pastor Craig Fitzsimmons

April 17

Greeters
Ushers

Infant/toddler care
Acolytes
Sound coordinator
Camera operator
Worship leader
Lectionary scriptures
Sermon
Fellowship time

Palm Sunday

The Attanasios
Dennis Scaglione, Bob McLeod,
John Pope, Gerald Cotter, Alan Anderson
Linda Symmes

Jonas Thelin
Dan Attanasio
Alex Attanasio
Matthew 21:1-11; Psalm 118
Pastor Craig Fitzsimmons
Laura, Dad, Alex and Alaina Attanasio

April 21, 7:00 pm

Ushers

Communion steward

Maundy Thursday

Rachel Benisvy, Haley Parent,
Jonas Thelin, Alex Attanasio,
Megan Lohutko
Gay McPhee

April 22, 7:00 pm

Ushers

Good Friday

Evelyn Scaglione, Sharon Minick,
Gay McPhee, Ellen Hoyt,
Lynda Larson

April 24, 6:30 pm

**Sunrise Service in the Gazebo
Clinton Town Beach
Waterside Lane**

Back to the church for





EASTER

April 24

Greeter
Ushers

Debbie Anderson
Sally Cotter, Ginny Burr, David Moore,
Lyle Cubberly, Andrew Dupre
Linda Symmes

Infant/toddler care
Acolytes
Sound coordinator
Camera operator
Worship leader
Lectionary scriptures

Lisa Sutherland
Mickey Brown
Laura Attanasio
Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118;
Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-18
Pastor Craig Fitzsimmons

Sermon

District United Methodist Women's Spring Day Apart

Sharon Noisette-Jenkins will speak at the Spring Day Apart in Nichols UMC, 35 Shelton Road, Trumbull, CT. The day's theme is: *Women of the Bible - Our Sisters-Mothers on the Journey.*

Registration and coffee begins at 9:00 and the program begins at 9:30 on April 9. Your cost - \$8.50 for lunch will be paid by the UMW. Child care will be provided.

The registration deadline is April 2 so please see Sue Alexander in the Church Office, 860-669-8396, as soon as possible to get our reservation in on time.

CROP Walk

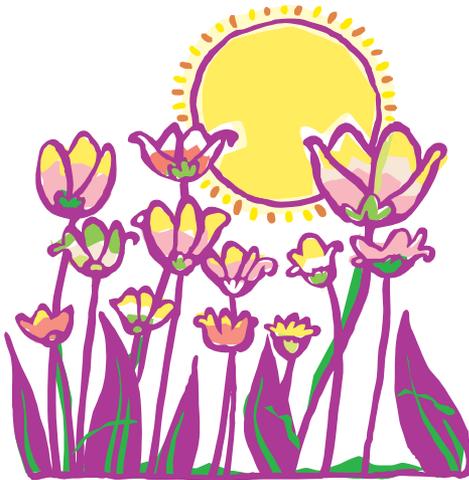
Join us Sunday, May 15, 2011 at 2:00 p.m. in Old Saybrook. The CROP Walk is sponsored by Church World Service. The purpose is to help feed the hungry worldwide and locally. Last year our church had twenty-five people walk, raising \$1,256. 25% of all money collected stays on the Shoreline for the food banks and soup kitchens. It was a fun day for children, dogs, babies in strollers, and everyone.

This will be the 20th Anniversary of the Valley Shore Interfaith CROPHunger Walk at First Church of Christ (Congregational) in Saybrook. They provide water and goodies for all attending. It is a great day of fellowship made even better because we are helping to make lives better for those with less.

Would you like to walk with the CROP Walk this year? If you would, please see Beverly Jones or Arline Johnson for a donor envelope so you can ask people to sponsor you as you walk. She will give out the envelopes beginning April 10. Again 25% of the money will stay locally for the Soup Kitchen. Please participate and help us combat hunger. Thank you.

Ellen Hoyt
The Missions Committee

Order your Easter plants using the form on the back of this page or in the envelopes provided with Sunday bulletins. Thank you!





Churchyard Cleanup Day

On April 9 from 9 am till noon, the Board of Trustees will sponsor a Spring Cleanup of our grounds, much sanded and ignored through the winter. They have decided to make this an outdoor affair, so bring your gloves, rakes, shovels, clippers

In case of rain, we can still work on the 16th to have the lawns and gardens looking good for Easter.

Easter Chancel Plants

Name _____

In honor of

in memory of

___ Lilies @ \$8.00 \$ _____

___ Hyacinths @ 8.00 \$ _____

___ Tulips @ 8.00 \$ _____

___ Total \$ _____

___ I will pick up my flowers after the Easter service.

Deb, Beverly and John step up

By acclimation, Deb Anderson was elected to chair the Membercare and Evangelism Committee at the Council meeting on March 16. She was asked to serve by the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee - this is a new name for that committee chaired by the pastor.

Beverly Jones is the new chair of the Church Council and has kept the work plans and reports moving as rapidly and smoothly as did Karin Thelin, who preceded her.

John Pope is the new President elected by the Board of Trustees. The Board is responsible for handling all wills and bequests as well as maintaining all the property at 10, 12 and 18 Commerce Street.

Clinton Bike Fest

You needn't be a Clinton resident to enjoy Clinton's very first Bike Fest on the afternoon on May 1. There will be bike rides, music, and many events throughout the downtown area.

Our church will have a table of our own and space for anyone to try riding a PET (Personal Energy Transport) and to contribute to this project. PETs are three-wheeled vehicles propelled by hand and are given to those who have lost the use of their legs due to land mine explosions or natural disasters.

The top photo illustrates how a PET provides mobility to those with greatest needs and least resources. The photo on the bottom shows delivery day in western Africa. \$250. provides a complete delivered PET



Mother/Daughter Dinner

Our annual Mother/Daughter Dinner will be held on May 7th this year. Our own Vera Smith will present "Vera's History of Fans". Tickets will be \$10.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children under 10. Tickets will be available after church beginning April 17th or on weekdays from the church office. If you have a special lady attending with you and would like to honor her with a few words, please see Gay McPhee. Please join us for a great evening for dinner and entertainment.

Soup kitchen pantry needs

The scarcities in the Food Closet at the beginning of April are—canned carrots, canned beets, apple juice and regular or decaf coffee. Items not needed or usable for large crowds will be forwarded to the Food Distribution Site. Thank you for helping your neighbors!

Happy April Birthday to...

Ann Damarjian	4	David Robinson	20
Betty Ann Andrew	9	LaVerne Atkinson	21
Doris Purchase	10	Travis Miller	21
Jeffrey Stevens	11	Johnna Sternberg	25
Emil Reinwald	12	Howard Benisvy	29

Old time games at the Methodist Church

We have a yellowed newspaper clipping without a date, but we know it was before 1960 and around Lent, because of the First National ad for “Lenten sea food” on the back...

Improvement Fund to benefit from card party

A dessert card party will be held for the benefit of the Improvement Fund on March 27 at 8 p.m. in the Methodist Church parlors. The evening will be under the auspices of the Women’s Society of Christian Service, with Mrs. Viola Rice as chairman of the affair.

Assisting her will be: Mrs. Seward Hull Sr. and Miss Gertrude Shailer in charge of reservations; Mrs. Leslie Blake and Mrs. Frederic Raymond, refreshments; Mrs. Glen McBride, prizes; Mrs. Theodore Terray and Mrs. Wallace Huggins, candy; Mrs. Bertram Smith and Mrs. Walter Hull, tables; Mrs. Edna Hyer Pardo, publicity.

This will be a variety card and game party and those wishing to play Scrabble are welcome. There will be lucky number door prizes, also individual table prizes. Tickets are already available and posters are being placed through the town. Interested persons are asked to make up tables for the game of their choice. Refreshments will be served in the course of the evening.

Note that most of the women are only known by their husbands names. We knew them as Helen Hull, Ronnie Blake, Alice Raymond, Alice McBride, Ruth Terray, Kittie Huggins, Laura Smith, Alta Hull.

Japan relief

From Bishop Park's letter...

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The earthquake and tsunami in Japan that occurred a few days ago was of historic proportion and has resulted in the deaths of many thousands of persons. Truly, our hearts are heavy with sorrow and grief. Accordingly, I call upon all New York Conference United Methodists to pray fervently for the people of Japan - for those most directly affected and those who are bringing relief to the sufferers.

I am heartened that UMCOR has been in touch with our mission partner churches and church-related agencies from the earliest hours. Most all of our work there is done in conjunction with the United Church of Christ in Japan, the Korean Christian Church and the National Christian Council in Japan. The new Wesley Center in Tokyo, related to the United Methodist Women, was not damaged and is serving as a homeless center. The Asian Rural Institute, where we train persons from Asia and Africa in sustainable agriculture had considerable damage.

Your offerings for UMCOR and its work in Japan are United Methodism at its very best. Please note on your checks: Pacific Emergency, Advance Special #3021317. 100% of the monies received will go to this effort.

I pray for all a continued blessed and holy season of Lent.

Bishop Jeremiah J. Park

Health kits for United Methodist Committee on Relief

Once again the New York Annual Conference will be sending a truck to UMCOR's warehouse. All items must be new. Please bring them to the church office by June 5.

- terry cloth hand towels (from 15 x 25" to 17 x 27" only)
- washcloths
- large sturdy combs
- metal nail files or fingernail clippers
- 3 oz or larger bars of soap (not Ivory, which tends to melt!)
- toothbrushes, adult-size in original single wrapper
- adhesive, plastic strip bandages
- dollars, which can be used to purchase toothpaste at the time the kit is shipped to those who are in need.

Restoration Healing Hope

On April 3 we will celebrate One Great Hour of Sharing along with churches world wide. Our special offering on that day supports the vital work of the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

Jesus teaches us to bring healing and restoration wherever we can. So much of what UMCOR does is about restoration: giving sight to the blind, building up farming communities, helping workers to become self-sufficient and reconstructing places destroyed by disaster.

Fat Tuesday brought smiles

A good time was had by all who came to the Pancake Supper on March 8th. Bob Hale provided initialed pancakes and the Youth Group served them to the happy eaters.



Nan Hawes, Pastor Craig and the Dollahite Family

Stewardship moment

Some weeks ago our family, along with the Attanasios, went to see *The Piano Lesson* by August Wilson at the Yale Repertory Theater. The story of the play revolves around the Charles family's unique piano, which literally carries the scars of their slave history. In the nineteenth century two members of the Charles family were sold by the Sutters (their owners) in exchange for the piano. Another ancestor carved into the piano the likenesses of the slaves who were sold, along with other scenes of family history. The current generation, Berniece and Boy Willie, are the daughter and son of the man who was killed taking the piano back from the Sutter family.

The central controversy is revealed early and the performance very naturally call on the audience to take sides: Boy Willie wants to sell the piano and use his portion of the proceeds to buy the Sutter land and establish his own farm on the site of his family's worst travails. Berniece declares that the piano, because of what it represents in blood and tragedy, will never be sold.

Both sides are compelling, but one begins to realize that neither position can prevail. Boy Willie determined to sell it, finds that even with the help of his strong young friend, Lyman, he's unable to move the piano even an inch. Berniece lets the instrument dominate her home, but can't bear to open it or touch its keys.

I don't want to give away the ending, but you'll be glad to hear that the piano remains a symbol for the family and is restored as an instrument that enlivens the present by an act of uncommon bravery and an act of unexpected acceptance. The playwright's resolution is much more complex and dramatic and transformative than I've made it sound, so it's worth experiencing the play itself.

How does this relate to stewardship? Well, it made me realize once again that we don't each know all the answers because we are part of a bigger mystery. When we are called upon to act, we should activate our best selves. It is only in so doing that we have any chance of escaping what limits us as individuals and as a community.

If you haven't given a 2011 pledge card to the church, please consider doing so now. Thank you!

Kathy Yang
for the Stewardship Committee

United Methodists have appointments & acronyms

They are called apportionments and are approved budget amounts assigned to annual conferences, districts and churches.

The good news is that our church has paid the 2010 apportionments in full and the conference has paid the General Conference (\$8,479,964) in full. The General Conference expenses are for Administration, clergy support, World Service and Conference Benevolences, Ministerial Education, Black College Fund, Missional Priority Fund and Africa University.

If you would like more information on these special funds, please read the issues of The Interpreter or World Outlook to be found in our church library.

Big institutions and industries more and more resort to acronyms - those strings of capital letters, the meaning of which is usually only known by insiders.

The church has many and we hope by now you know a few - like **UMC** - United Methodist Church, **UMYF** - United Methodist Youth Fellowship and **UMCOR** - United Methodist Committee on Relief. Others you may have heard are:

CEU - a continuing education credit for taking a church-sponsored course

CPP - the Comprehensive Protection Plan, which provides benefit payments to surviving spouses and children of clergy and disability payments to disabled clergy.

ERT - Emergency Response Teams - some members were trained in our church, Saturday, March 19.

HPI - Heifer Project, International, which provides animals, seeds and agricultural information to improve lives world wide.

NEJ - the Northeastern Jurisdiction of the church, which reaches from Washington, DC to Erie, PA and from Maine to West Virginia.

OGHS - One Great Hour of Sharing, an offering taken on the fourth Sunday of Lent, which supports the administration of the UMCOR program.

SPRC - the Staff Parish Relations Committee

UMW - United Methodist Women

US-2 - a person who serves a two-year term in a United States mission project.

VBS - Vacation Bible School

VIM - Volunteer in Mission

Electing a United States President

There are two proposals before our legislators which would guarantee the Presidency to the candidate who receives the most popular votes in all fifty states and the District of Columbia.

The problem is not with the Electoral College or the Constitution, the problem stems from the winner-take-all state statute that Connecticut (and 47 other states) use to award electoral votes to the Electoral College.

Because of the winner-take-all rule, candidates have no incentive to campaign in states they know they will win, or know they will lose. Two-thirds of the states, including Connecticut, get no attention from either party in the general election, so issues of concern in our state are not heard. Two-thirds of campaign events and money got to only six states and 98% to just fifteen states, leaving thirty-five states as spectators, 200 million out of 300 million people are left out.

The U.S. Constitution guarantees each state the power to decide who gets their electoral votes, and states may change the laws concerning the awarding of their electoral votes at any time.

Little things are BIG

I want to thank Roy Alexander for the gift to the church of a digital photo frame. He has already loaded it with numerous pictures of church events to shared at Fellowship Time each Sunday. We also proudly displayed it at the United Methodist booth at the Clinton Expo on March 26th.

Everyone of us has the opportunity to purchase something. For our church that may be little in cost but BIG in the growth of our church.

If this sounds like something you would like to do, simply contact the church office and speak with Roy or Sue. They can tell you of some useful items our church can use.

Thank you in advance and thank you, Roy.

Sincerely,

Debbie Anderson

Membership/Evangelism Committee

Other new contributions to the church are a television and stand contributed by Pete Snyder and a front indoor mat given by Alan Anderson. Thank you so much!

SAA

Church family notes

Dear Friends in Mission,

Thank you for your generous gift to United Methodist Committee on Relief. 100% of your contribution will go to Disaster Response, International, Advance #982450* through The Advance, the designated giving channel of The United Methodist Church. Your gift on March 8, 2011 for \$100. is quick response to meet emergency needs around the world.

Because you gave, UMCOR is able to “be there” and “be hope” on your behalf. UMCOR programs provide food for the hungry, help farmers grow plentiful and nutritious food and support people left destitute by natural disasters and war. Your gifts go a long way to bring healing and hope to people in need. We give thanks for your generosity.

You can find out more about UMCOR’s work by visiting our website at <http://www.umcor.org>. To receive weekly updates about UMCOR’s work, sign up on our website for the UMCOR Hotline, a weekly email about the latest happenings at UMCOR.

This gift will bring hope to those who need it most.

Grace and Peace,

Roland Fernandes

General Treasurer,

United Methodist Committee on Relief &

Shawn Bakker

Associate General Secretary

The Advance

*Pakistan flood relief

Thanks to our bakers

A hearty thanks to those who baked the delicious pretzels for March 6th. The bakers were: Judy LeVesque, Ginny Burr, Bev Jones, Ellen Hoyt, Fern Pope, Karin Thelin, Evelyn Scaglione and Gail Whitney. Ally Gates and Jonas Thelin passed them out to the congregation.

Church cook books

Evelyn Scaglione hosted a great Fellowship Time with hot and cold appetizers d using recipes from the church cook book. She earned \$40 for the church treasury from persons who bought the books!

Thank you, Evelyn!

It will be a joy to see the sanctuary filled with Easter plants on April 24 - the colorful signs of spring and resurrection.

It was no less joyful to see the purple crocus that bloomed beside the back entry to the Kathy Fell Building on March 13. Our perennial garden at home had lavender flowering at the same time. Did we doubt that spring would come?

Back “home” in northern Ohio the biggest sign of spring usually occurred in April when the Lake Erie ice moved toward the Niagara Frontier and we saw blue water again. Before the hard work of planting, mowing or harvesting, we could bask in the warmth and “make plans.”

Easter varies in dates although one would think after 2,000 years we could agree on a Sunday to celebrate our Lord’s resurrection. It comes to United Methodists anytime between March 22 and April 25. Sometimes it is the same day as St. Alexis celebrates and sometimes not.

In the Lenten bible studies we have been trying to see the “blessings” that Jesus provides near the end of his earthly ministry. Easter is referred to as the ultimate blessing and it surely is.

Finding blessings amid snow storms, earthquakes, floods, meltdowns and tsunamis takes a lot of trust and faith, but God’s blessings are there.

It is good for our souls to observe the dark days of Lent, which skip the “little Easter” days called Sundays. And April 24 will be the big Easter day, a big celebration because as Paul told the Athenians, “God is never far from any of us.”

SAA

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