



The  
**MEETING HOUSE**  
*First Congregational Church*  
*Watertown, Connecticut*

February 2018

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As I write this article, I'm in my study watching the snow gently falling outside, but I can't help wondering when will spring come? If I could make it happen, I'd create a pleat in the space-time continuum so we could move from New Year's to daffodils without the cold, hard days of winter. Alas, it doesn't work that way, maybe for good reason. All those bulbs underground need time for rest and renewal in order to emerge in full bloom---in due season. So I wait, I reflect, and I do my work.

In a way, the season of Lent is like this. Spiritually, it is a time for renewal, reflection and spiritual growth as we do the work of preparation for the full bloom of Easter. If we rush to the final result without paying attention to what's happening "underground" (within), we miss the full depth of what's really going on.

In our Protestant tradition, there are many myths about what Lent is...and isn't. Here are just a few:

**Protestants don't observe Lent.** While the Reformers threw out many liturgical traditions when they separated from the Roman Church centuries ago, many Protestant churches, including our own, have come to value again the seasons of the church year including Advent and Lent. While Advent helps us to recognize the gifts of hope, peace, joy and love in preparation for the birth of the Christ child, Lent helps us to focus on the spiritual practices we need to grow closer to the risen Christ. There are 40 days of Lent, but the season lasts for more than that because it does not include Sundays, which are always "little Easters." Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14.

**Lent is serious, somber, and focuses on guilt and penance.** Lent has a *reflective* quality to it, but modern observance of Lent is no longer a time to focus on penance and guilt. It is a *season* to intentionally focus on our relationship with the living Christ, learn new spiritual practices to grow closer to God, and prepare for Easter. There's no reason this can't include having fun with the family, the faith community, and friends while doing so. Giving ourselves this precious gift of spiritual growth is one of the best things we can do for ourselves and our relationship with God. No guilt there.

**Giving up chocolate won't help me get closer to God.** Absolutely true. Unless your obsession with chocolate is coming between you and God. Fasting is a traditional Lenten practice that offers you the opportunity to "use less of" something in order to clear the way between you and God. Abstinence is another practice in which you "give up" something completely in order to clear that same pathway. Which is right for you? Only you can know that. Modern spiritual practices may not center on chocolate, but may include fasting or abstinence from internet or screen time, practicing charitable giving in a new way, taking a daily walk or praying with a prayer buddy. The key is to find a practice that helps you move closer to God and to PRACTICE it daily. Like exercise. Yes, it's work, but the results are worth it.

Want to learn more? Join us for worship on February 11 for a sermon on **What Is Lent?** And for a program afterward to learn more about **40+ Spiritual Practices for the 40+ Days of Lent.**

And be sure to take advantage of the many opportunities for spiritual growth available this Lenten season. It may look cold and dreary outside, but I promise you that somewhere, deep under that fresh snow, the bulbs are doing their thing. In a few weeks, we will see the results of their daily work. Will you see the results of yours?

In peace,

Cindy

## CONNECTICUT MOBILE FOOD PANTRY

CT Mobile Food Pantry truck will be in our back parking lot on Wednesday, Feb. 7<sup>th</sup> from 2 - 3PM.

### CALLING ALL MEN...

All men are invited to join us for good sessions are held the first and third dates are Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>.



fellowship, study and conversation. These Saturdays at 7:30AM in Trumbull House. The

### THE PAINTED LADIES

The Women's Fellowship painting group (The Painted Ladies) invites you to join us if you would like to learn painting basics or use your existing skills to create handcrafted items for our Holiday Fair. We meet Thursdays 10AM -2PM (or as much time as you can give), upstairs in Trumbull House.

Bring your lunch and enjoy fellowship, fun and learning or renewing your painting skills.

For more information, call May Phillips (203-974-2835, Nancy Zawadzki (860-274-5950) or Lynn Karr-Hasler (860-274-4600).

### Don't forget!

**Desserts First! Sunday, February 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:15AM.** Check out the Lenten Opportunities pull-out for this delicious potluck followed by **40+ Ways to Grow Closer to God on the Journey toward Easter.** Call the church office or email if you plan to attend. All you need to bring is a dessert to share!

### MANY THANKS...

*To the members and friends of the church for all your prayers, cards and "welcome backs" after my recent illness. I appreciated it very much.*

Nancy Harrell

### IN MEMORIUM Charles Greider

**OUR SYMPATHY TO**  
Pam Kosloski on the death of her mother  
Lauren Dassatti on the death of her father

**Deadline for the March Newsletter is Tues., Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>**

## DIACONATE

Many new and wonderful things are planned for our church and our church family this year! The season of Lent is the first. Lent will be a time when we reflect upon our relationship with God but participate in a variety of programs and services that will help us deepen our faith. A full list of all that is being offered is included in this newsletter. We offer a special thank you to Cindy Carr and Jim Robertson for their efforts in planning.

On February 4<sup>th</sup> and again on March 4<sup>th</sup> we will be welcoming new members into our church family. Several members of the Diaconate, along with Cindy, have had a chance to meet with them and share faith stories as well as challenge each other with faith related questions. When people want to join a church it's because they are not only looking for spiritual nourishment, but they are also looking for a place where they feel welcome and wanted. We would like to share some of the reasons these people came to us:

- *We were personally asked to come to church by a member.*
- *We were friends of a member who passed away. When we came to the funeral here we were amazed at how different the atmosphere was and how welcome we felt. We came the next Sunday and have been coming ever since.*
- *We were former Catholics and were disillusioned by the hierarchy and were looking for a place to worship where people were welcoming.*
- *We were looking for a place where our child could learn more about God and right vs. wrong. We also wanted a place where people share similar faith and values.*
- *Our church closed and we were looking for a new church with a strong music program. We found it here!*
- *We were "shopping" for a new church. This church was the first one we came to and we never went anywhere else. Everyone is so warm and welcoming.*

There is a constant theme in these comments. People are looking for a place to worship God and receive spiritual nourishment. Those things can be found in many churches. ***What makes our church special is the PEOPLE!*** It's important for all of us to remember how it feels to be the newcomer and not know anyone. When you see a visitor please introduce yourself, sit with them, and invite them to social hour after the service. The welcome ministry is so important as we look to the future and do God's work!

The Diaconate

## TWO SPECIAL PULL-OUTS IN THIS NEWSLETTER

If you check out your newsletter this month you will notice there are **two pullouts** for you to take out and hang on your bulletin board or refrigerator.

The first is a listing of the **Lenten Opportunities** being offered during the season of Lent. Please read this over as it includes worship services, devotional groups, potluck events and other programs being offered here at our church. It also has a listing of the Watertown/Oakville Ecumenical Lenten Series, **Soup, Socks and Soul** that is being held at different area churches on Wednesdays during Lent.

The second is the **2018 Programs for the Women's Fellowship**. All women of the church are members of the Women's Fellowship and are invited to come to any of the programs being offered. Check out what is going on with this very busy group.

## GENEROSITY

Welcome to 2018! It promises to be an exciting year in the life of our church.

Our Generosity Team, along with Cindy Carr, will be looking at a variety of new ways to raise money during the entire year rather than just during the Season of Giving. We can no longer just rely on pledge income to keep our church alive and doing God's work. As in previous years we will have a theme for the year which will be announced in February.

***If you have an idea please let us know. Also, if you are willing to work on a short term project please let us know. WE NEED THE HELP AND SUPPORT OF EVERYONE !***

The Generosity Team: Jackie Germain, Beverly Nichols, Sandy Skyrme-Cheney, Jamie Terry, Gina Worth