



THE PARISHIONER

THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, WOODBRIDGE 1738-2017

An Open, Welcoming, and Affirming Church

Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m.

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September 2017

Pastor's Column

Reverend Shepard Parsons

Saturday, August 12, 2017

My family and I have just returned from our annual sojourn south to visit family in the little village of Saluda, North Carolina. Karen and I had a great trip down. Taking backroads to avoid Interstate snarl we stopped in a crossroads gas station looking for a map. No maps, and when we got back in our car it wouldn't start. A big man with tattoos and a drawl like molasses offered to give us a jump and pointed us to a shop about nine miles away that would check our battery for free. He didn't seem to notice our Connecticut tag and bumper stickers, though I was very self-conscious. The guys at the auto parts store were equally as friendly. With a new battery, we went on our way.

It is always a joy to visit Saluda. My mom is there, along with aunts, uncles, and cousins. My brother, Rob, and his family live there as well. We experienced the exhilaration of sliding down Turtleback Falls then dropping twelve feet into the pool below. We celebrated a cousin's birthday where the conversation and laughter and love flowed through three generations as we were telling stories and making memories. Our time was short and every moment was a gift.

We made our way home slowly. We stopped at a wonder of nature in Virginia called Natural Bridge: over 200 feet tall and 100 feet wide. It was carved out of rock millions of years ago. As I walked toward the monument I felt I was approaching something more profound than the magnificent bridge towering over me. It had been crafted by the hand of God. We spent the night in the Shenandoah National Park, taking in the steep trails and sliding rocks. In the morning we headed toward Washington, D.C. to spend time with friends.

We didn't have long in D.C. We spent Friday afternoon at the Mall. What I saw made me so happy. People, thousands of people, from all over our country and the world making their pilgrimage to Smithsonian Museum of American History and the flag that inspired the National Anthem; and to the Air and Space Museum to see the machines that took us to the moon. So many people of different colors, ethnic and cultural backgrounds speaking different languages; all ages dressed in the clothes from back home in which they felt comfortable. People opening doors, saying thank you and excuse me, helping exasperated parents and taking pictures for couples, groups and families. When we returned to our friends' home we were met with a fabulous meal and conversation that went far beyond my bedtime. We had planned to leave early in the morning for the last leg of our trip home, but we couldn't resist breakfast and more time with our friends. As we pulled out of the driveway and headed toward I-95, I was filled with gratitude for the mystery of love and the gift of creation God offers us in every moment in every place.



continued from page 1...

As we merged onto the Interstate and settled in for the ride Karen checked her phone. Notice after notice began popping up telling of the violence and death in the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia. How could this be taking place in our country that we love so much? Hate crimes have increased dramatically since the 2016 election. White racist groups, the KKK, Neo-Nazis and other hate groups have been emboldened to attack the most vulnerable in our nation through their violent words and actions. They gathered in Charlottesville bearing arms, shields and helmets with the intention to harm and injure others while sowing their hatred. Our friends in Washington will be celebrating their anniversary in a few weeks. Hearing about our trip to the Shenandoah National Park they made plans to stay in one of its lodges. Yesterday afternoon they cancelled them. One is from India, the other is a Jew.



The outcry against the white supremacists has been swift in condemning their actions. Politicians from conservative to liberal have voiced their outrage in clear and certain terms. However, the responses of some have been ambivalent at best, stating both sides were equally to blame for the violence. Even our president had to be pressured to denounce the hate groups by name. Let's be clear: those bearing Nazi banners and shrouds of the KKK stood on one side of the street and clergy from a variety of faith traditions stood on the other.

Because we believe God is in Jesus Christ reconciling the world unto God's self we know that hatred is evil and to demean and harm others is not the way of our Lord. We know to refuse God's gifts of repentance and forgiveness allows bitterness and resentment to grow into hatred. We know the only way the world will know we are Christians is by our works of love and hospitality toward all.

I don't need to tell you we live in scary times, but remember, these are the very times in which God is present with us, loving us, comforting and encouraging us. I don't need to tell you we live in troubling times, but remember: God is in the chance encounter, the helping hand, the power and simplicity of Creation, the backroad, the simple meal; those we love (and those we don't), conversations shared, stories told and memories cherished. I don't need to tell you we are not alone, for God is with us in Jesus Christ, whom the Romans tried to silence and God raised from the dead.

In joyful expectation of God's coming realm of love and justice,
Shepard

MEETINGHOUSE RESTORATION UPDATE, AUGUST 2017

After an extended delay, our \$50K matching grant application was signed by the Connecticut Attorney General's Office on July 24, 2017. This allowed us to proceed with our plans to hire contractors to repair the plaster ceiling and structure in the Meetinghouse. Last week, our choice, the renowned John Canning & Company from Cheshire agreed to do the plaster ceiling work, and the trustees approved their contract on August 4. Canning began their work the week of August 7 and expect to be finished by mid-September.

The next step will be to obtain bid and permit-level specs and then to place a request for bids at the DAS for the needed structural repairs.

A meeting of the Historic Meetinghouse Restoration ad hoc Committee will be held after Sunday church services at 11:15 AM on September 17, 2017. The agenda will be to review work done and to plan for the next steps in the restoration. All are invited to attend.



Church Council

September is upon us again, and as always we look forward to the start of the new Church School year on Rally Day, scheduled this year for Sunday, September 10, when we will welcome back Morgan, the school teachers, and the students. We also welcome back Shepard and members of the congregation who have been away for some part of the summer. In recent years, September has become the beginning of an autumn church social season which you will find announced elsewhere in this issue. New this year is being in the middle of renewal to our Sanctuary. The repairs to the ceiling are under way as I write, and soon after the ceiling is stabilized, work should begin on structural issues that need to be addressed. As we enter the month we are holding Sunday services in the Parish House with the hope to be back in the Meetinghouse by Rally Day. I am grateful for the work that Joyce Simpson and the Trustees have done in making these repairs happen.



While Council did not meet in August, we did pass two motions via email. One was to act on the recommendation of the Nominating Committee and appoint John Womer to a three year term on the Personnel Committee. The second was to appoint Ethel Crosby as a second representative from the Board of Music to the Music Search ad hoc Committee. That committee is currently taking applications to fill the organist position now that Faye Chen is staying on as the director of the senior choir. I welcome both John and Ethel to these new positions and thank them both for their willingness to serve.

In September we hold one of our three regular congregational meetings as called for in the Bylaws. This important meeting is scheduled for September 24, following the Sunday service. At the meeting Trustees will present and the membership will vote whether to approve the 2018 Preliminary Budget so it is important that everyone attend. The congregation will also vote to continue the work of the church between January 1, 2018 and approval of the final Annual Budget at the January Congregational Meeting. We are still without a Clerk, so if anyone would like to try out that position they can see me about taking the minutes of the congregational meeting.

Council will meet on Monday September 11, one week later in the month than usual due to Labor Day.

I look forward to seeing all of you in the coming month.

Bill More, Moderator



Men's Fellowship

Annual Spaghetti Dinner

The annual spaghetti dinner sponsored by the Men's Fellowship is Friday, September 22. We will start serving at 6:00. The menu includes spaghetti, meat sauce, vegetarian sauce, salad, rolls and cake for desert accompanied by appropriate music. An offering will be collected to defray the cost and to support our church youth camping adventures. Please come and invite your friends. Good food and good fellowship will be enjoyed by all.



Annual Food Drive

Our annual food drive supporting Spooner House in Shelton will kick off with the spaghetti dinner on September 22. Gifts of food and money can be brought to church or dropped off at the parish house through October 22 which is the date of the annual Harvest Lunch. This Men's Fellowship program is important to our outreach efforts. The food should be non-perishable and without expired expiration dates. See the October Parishioner for more information on the Harvest Lunch event.





Christian Education

Morgan Nancy Aery
Director of Christian Education
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Sunday School

Rally Day - our kick-off for the Sunday School year - will be on Sunday, September 10. We welcome back all our families from vacations and summer camps. We hope you'll bring with you friends, neighbors, and family members to welcome into our church family. We will continue in our one room Sunday School room for children in grades K - 8. This year's lessons will focus on the life and teachings of Jesus. Teachers are needed to help co-teach our Sunday School classes. If you are interested in learning more about teaching our children - and learning along side us, please contact Morgan.

If your child is not-yet in Kindergarten, we welcome you to utilize our nursery in the Meetinghouse.



Youth Group

Our Youth Group will hold it's first meeting on Sunday, September 10, from 4 - 6 pm in the Parish House. Youth Group is open to youth in 5th - 8th grade. Friends welcome! We will kick off the year with a meal to share and outdoor games, weather permitting. Meetings will generally be held on the second Sunday of the month from 4 - 6 pm, unless otherwise noted. If your child is interested in participating in the youth group, please contact Morgan.



Confirmation

If your child is in 7th - 9th grade and interested in learning more about a Confirmation class with First Church of Christ, Woodbridge, please contact Morgan or Shepard. We are hoping to have enough interested teens to offer a confirmation class this year.



Weekly Bible Study

Wednesday mornings from 10:00-11:00 a.m. the Deacons and the Rev. Shepard Parsons are holding a weekly morning Bible Study based on the Lectionary. We meet Wednesday mornings for fellowship and study. This is open to the community so bring your friends.

Here is a link to the lectionary: Revised Common Lectionary

<http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/calendar.php>

Look for the year's calendar and the Sunday forward Bible verses are what we discuss.



Choir News

In just a few weeks the Adult Choir under the direction of Faye Chen will be returning to our Sunday worship. I asked Faye for a brief bio that we all might get to know her a little better. Here it is in her own words:

"Faye grew up in Taiwan and comes from a devout Christian family. Her great grandfather was a Presbyterian minister and while her grandfather and father chose different professions, they faithfully served as Deacons, Trustees, and held other leadership positions within their church.

As a musician, Faye has been playing piano since kindergarten and holds a BA in piano performance with a minor in violin performance. After moving to the US from Taiwan, she continued her musical studies in California, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island before settling in Woodbridge, CT in 1986. In addition to being devout Christians, Faye's extended family also includes pianists, opera singers, violinists, and clarinetists. Faye's immediate family (her husband, Eaton Chen, and three grown children) also includes violinists, pianists, and a cellist.

Faye has led our Bell Choir since 2004 and looks forward to continuing to share her musical background with our congregation."

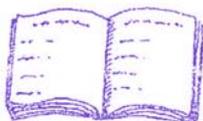
Columbus House Outreach Cooking Schedule 2017

Once again we must thank all our committees for cooking and serving at Columbus House. This ministry of our church happens on the Sunday before the third Monday of every month. Henry Gates has been so generous in shopping every month so that all we have to do is cook on Sunday and serve on Monday! Each committee chairman will receive by email or snail mail instructions and directions approximately 10 days before they are to cook and serve. The following committees are scheduled for September Through August:

Monday, September 18	Stewardship
Monday, October 16	Christian Education
Monday, November 20	Christian Service
Monday, December 18	Music
Monday, January 15	Garden Ad Hoc
Monday, February 19	Hospitality
Monday, March 19	Troop 907 Boy Scouts
Monday, April 16	Church Council
Monday, May 14	Deacons
Monday, June 18	Trustees
Monday, July 16	Men's Fellowship
Monday, August 20	Open to Volunteers



Jesse Hubbard, Coordinator



Marking Life's Passages

Death June 26, 2017 David M. Berchem



The Parishioner

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NEXT PARISHIONER DEADLINE IS WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 20, 2017 (a firm date)