

SUMMER service times start **June 17**. Based on your feedback, the Deacons have decided to again offer two services during the summer: **10:00 a.m. traditional** (Meetinghouse) and **10:00 a.m. Wind** (Keith Jones Hall).

And, as is our tradition, the summer schedule will start on Father's Day (this Sunday, June 17) and end on August 26 (just before Labor Day Weekend), followed by the annual multi-church Cove Service, on September 2.

Our **Wednesday barbecues** will resume on **June 20**! Come join us for delicious food and great company! The BBQ will be served at 5:30, followed by a **new women's Bible study** led

by **Tessa and Cindy**, and a **new summer class for men** with **Pastors Wayne and Deryk** (see back page). Also, **two Family Movie Night Wednesdays** are planned! Watch for details!

If you would like to help with grilling or setup for the BBQ, please contact **Pastor Wayne**.

Two of this summer's opportunities for our young people are **Vacation Bible Camp** and **Summer Camp**. Our goals for each one are summer fun and spiritual growth, and both are truly amazing this year (see back page).

Kids entering Grades 1-6 come to our **summer session of Kids Own Worship, Sundays** in the Youth Room at 10:00 a.m.

SEPTEMBER will see the debut of two major programs at First Church—for us as well as surrounding communities.

MASTERING MOTHERHOOD, a ministry that meets the needs of mamas at all stages of motherhood, is coming to First Church **Thursday mornings** with free childcare, an incredible brunch, professional speakers, and parenting- and women-related small-group book studies.

The kickoff brunch will be **Thursday, September 13**, from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. For more information, and to register, visit firstchurch.org/mm.

TRAIL LIFE USA is a Christ-centered outdoor character development adventure program for boys, and First Church has chartered an official troop—Trail Life Troop 1635—under our Family Ministry by Trail Life USA.

All the fun and adventure will start in September. See more at firstchurch.org/traillife, where you will also find (when the date is set) details on our next **Trail Life Open House**. In addition, you can find Trail Life USA's national website at traillifeusa.com. Still have questions? Email **Mark Charette** at mcharette@gosolidus.com.

NEAR THE END of Paul's letter to the Colossians, Paul asks if they would pray for God to open a door so that he could proclaim the Gospel to others (Colossians 4:3). Paul had seen God opening many doors in his life (Acts 14:27; 1 Corinthians 16:9-10; 2 Corinthians 2:12). He also saw God close some doors so that he could direct Paul through others (Acts 16:6-10).

I believe God wants you to walk through the doors He opens in your life. Jesus invites us to persevere in prayer for these (Luke 11:5-10), and sometimes He opens up those unexpected doors (Revelation 3:8).

God is opening up doors around us for the Gospel and will continue to do so. The hard question for us at times is whether or not we have the courage to walk through them not knowing what is on the other side.



IN THIS ISSUE of *The Spire*, you will read how God has opened up a door for **Pastor Tessa**. She is courageously walking through that door, trusting that God will lead her, moving forward.

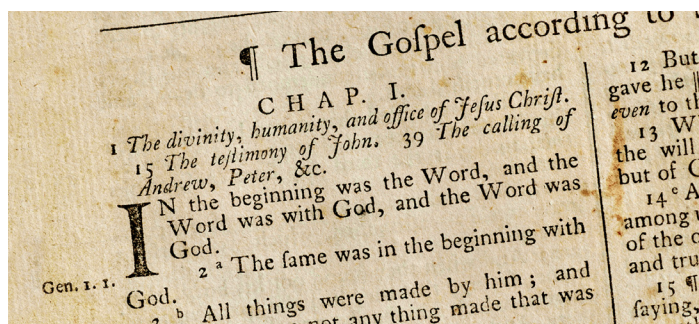
I am so proud of Tessa. I am one of her biggest fans. I have been blessed by her—we all have been blessed by her. God has done great things through her in our midst and He will continue to do great things through her as she is called to this new stage

of ministry. I can't wait to watch what He does!

The summer always provides us with many opportunities for God to open doors with our neighbors. I want to encourage you to develop deeper relationships that God can use to share who He is. He will open doors when we pray. Let's courageously walk through them and watch God work.

—**Pastor Deryk**

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN SERIES



John wrote the gospel to a world that just had its foundation, the temple, destroyed. They believed God had abandoned them. John knows the answer to our life-shifting world—it's Jesus! In Him, we find not just an entrance into heaven but the fullest life possible.

JUNE 10: John 1:1-8

Deryk Richenburg

JUNE 17: John 1:9-13

Deryk Richenburg

JUNE 24: John 1:14-18

Wayne Luman

JULY 1: John 1:19-34

Deryk Richenburg

JULY 8: John 1:35-36

Tessa Beauregard

JULY 15: John 2:1-12

Tessa Beauregard

SEPT. 2: Multi-church service at Wethersfield Cove Park

JULY 22: John 2:13-25

Deryk Richenburg

JULY 29: John 3:1-21

Wayne Luman

AUG. 5: John 3:22-36

Deryk Richenburg

AUG. 12: John 4:1-45

Wayne Luman

AUG. 19: John 4:46-5:18

Deryk Richenburg

AUG. 26: John 5:19-47

Deryk Richenburg

June 13, 2018

My dear First Church family,

The prophet Daniel once said about God: “He changes times and seasons; He removes kings and sets up kings” (Daniel 2: 21). I dare say that applies to pastors as well. Seventeen years ago, I began to serve in this beautiful congregation as an associate pastor. For seventeen years, I have worshipped alongside you, learned with you, hurt with you, rejoiced with you, and come to love Jesus more deeply than ever. That season has now drawn to a close. I sense God has called me out of parish ministry and into a very different way of serving Him. I am not leaving you to go to another church. I am leaving parish ministry to fulfill my call as a writer.

As my church family, you have walked with me through all the changes in my life. You are the ones who have celebrated and rejoiced with me as God opened unimaginable doors. I cannot tell you how much I treasure you. John and I have prayed for some time about this decision. God had promised us that when the time came, He would make it unmistakable. I take that promise very seriously. Calls are sacred duties. You don’t just take off the yoke because you want to, and you don’t hold on to it because it gives you personal satisfaction. You obey. We have come to that unmistakable point. God has blessed us with opportunities for ministry outside the church’s walls in a wider way than we could have imagined. We now know without a doubt that God is asking us to leave what we love and embark on a new path.

First Church is my home church. It’s my family of faith. I love every part of her: her people; the faith that rises up out of you; the perseverance in hard times; the prayers that linger in the prayer room; the Word that has been preached faithful and true for unbroken ages; the loving community we can be; the fellowship of saints that weaves us together. It has been an honor to serve with the staff we have. Every single one of them has been a joy to know and work with. I feel the same about our volunteer leadership, the people who have to make the hard decisions and spend sleepless nights over those choices. I believe in this church, in its place in the Kingdom, in its call to fulfill an important spiritual role in New England. So, although I am leaving as a pastor, John and I hope to remain with you as members.

I stop working at FCC on July 15. But my last sermon and formal goodbye will be on Sunday, September 16. John and I will take a season away from FCC to give me (and you) time to adjust to the fact that I no longer serve as a pastor. But in time, we hope to return and share the chairs and pews with you, simply as members.

It has been a privilege to serve you for seventeen years. I am thankful for every one of you. With King David I can say, “My times are in Your hand” (Psalm 31:15a). That is a truth we can anchor our lives to as a church and as individuals.

“Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all” (2 Thessalonians 3:16).

Affectionately and always yours,



Tessa

Report from the Executive Board — Member Update

Did You Know?

Thanks go to the 156 members who took their time to attend the Annual Meeting and learn about current challenges facing our Church. Your gathering was equal to 52% of those who worshiped with us on April 29, and the total of 156 was 43 more than the group that attended last year's Annual Meeting.

We also wish to thank the more than 40 members who shared their time by thoughtfully completing the Financial Preference Survey. We appreciate the information and the expression of your preferences. Some of your questions and suggestions indicate that we need to share additional information to resolve some misunderstandings.

Let's begin with the matter of **attendance**. Regrettably, the average weekly attendance at First Church has been following the path of many churches in America. Our attendance decline began near the end of Don Morgan's pastorate and continued through Jey Diefell's era and on into Pastor Deryk's ministry. Our average weekly attendance in 1996 was 813 (traditional only); by 2009 the average was 649 (by then, traditional and Wind); and by 2014 the average was 477. That trend continued through 2017, when average attendance was 329. Finally, in 2018, we see a hint that this trend may be reversing. Through the first 19 weeks of 2018, the average weekly attendance has increased by nine from the 2017 weekly average and stands at 338. During 2017, a total of 700 individuals attended services, gave to First Church, or did both.

For many years now, First Church has used **Endowment Funds** to balance the Operating Budget. In 1992, our total operating budget was \$1,039,215, and 18.3% or \$190,258 was funded by the Endowment. Four years later, the budget had grown to \$1,674,110: this budget included spending of \$337,298 (20.1%) from the Endowment. By 2009, the operating budget had increased to a total of \$2,551,035, just below its high-water mark, but only 3.7% or \$95,000 came from the Endowment. By 2013, the budget was down to \$2,367,313, and \$256,870 or 10.9% was from the Endowment. The 2017-2018 fiscal year budget had been reduced to \$1,566,840, and only \$118,000 or 7.5% was expected to come from the Endowment. The projected 2018-2019 budget has been further reduced to \$1,518,733, with \$162,539 or about 10.7% to be provided by the Endowment.

Several of you suggested that we look toward historical **giving patterns** to forecast the annual giving budget by month. Because the total giving in the operating budget for 2017-2018 was set at the actual giving total for 2016-2017, following the pattern is what we tried to do. We looked at the historical giving pattern and set the projected pattern to follow the earlier trend. We also considered the seasonal patterns from previous periods and used those insights to design the expected giving pattern. Also, Christmas and Easter influence the budgeted giving pattern. Our estimates for December and April (Easter) worked out pretty well, but for the other ten months, giving did not so closely follow past trends.

The leadership is excited about the ministries and programs that are in place and those that will be starting in the fall. The Fi-

nance Team has prepared a **budget** that includes slightly reduced giving expectations, as well as expenses that are lower than the prior year budget. Regrettably, increased spending from the En-

dowment is necessary. This budget reflects two planned retirements (not including Tessa's), the addition of a new organist and choir director, plus a part-time finance clerk, and the elimination of two part-time positions. The actual spending of Endowment funds will depend in part on our actual giving performance; cost containment that depends on campus costs, which are heavily influenced by weather and utility rates; and staffing that eventually may have to be reduced to match our

ability to support those costs. We will be observing closely and will monthly share relevant information with the congregation.

Our Church Makes a Difference

By supporting First Church, you help much more than just the people and facilities that constitute your church home—you also support the Church's outreach. Here are some recent examples:

- A combination of **nearly 20 middle school, high school and adult leaders** participated in World Vision's **30 Hour Famine**—our twentieth year of participation. On Saturday morning these volunteers spent several hours cleaning and helping out at **Trinity Academy in Hartford**.
- The **Forever Young Seniors** and many others continue to provide support for the **Wethersfield Food Bank**. Be sure to thank **Carrie and Wayne Plowman, Jane Lawrence** and **Pastor Todd** for all that they do to facilitate our support of this worthwhile program.

Status Update

- Multiple candidates for our new **organist and choir director** position met with the **Music Search Committee** between May 31 and June 8. A group of more than 25 provided an impromptu choir for the candidates' direction during their visits.
- **Sixteen individuals** covenanted with First Church and united in membership on Sunday, April 8. Welcome to you all. We can't wait to see what plans God has for each of you in our midst!



Our new members are (*seated*) Christopher Hookie, Mike & Joanie Munroe, Richard Staples, Judy Jennings, (*standing*) Amy Carlough, Christopher Casarino, Barbara & Larry Brundage, Gloria Vargas, Andrew Niki, Chuck Lexius, (*not shown*) David Elsner, Annette Jacobs, and Robert & Lynne Lofberg.

BOOK OF LIFE

ENTERED ETERNAL LIFE

Grace Elizabeth "Betty" (Burr) Ruscoe,
May 5, 2018

*Our Church unites in an expression of
heartfelt sympathy to her family.*

BORN

Carter James Henderson, son of Christopher
and Ashleigh (Spicer) Henderson,
May 7, 2018

Gabriel Scott Hodolitz, son of Steven and
Jennifer (Gilbert) Hodolitz, May 7, 2018

Hannah Fern Bird, daughter of Michael and
Amber Bird, May 12, 2018

DEDICATION

Hope Catharine Minerly, daughter of Bryan
and Molly (Chase) Minerly, May 20, 2018



First Church

FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN WETHERSFIELD
CONGREGATIONAL

860.529.1575 | Fax: 860.721.7861
250 Main Street, Wethersfield, CT 06109
firstchurch.org

Email: info@firstchurch.org

The Spire online: firstchurch.org/spire

Summer Worship Times:

Traditional Service: 10:00 a.m.
Contemporary "Wind" Service: 10:00 a.m.

facebook.com/FirstChurchPage

GIVING — For info about e-giving—contributing via a monthly automatic withdrawal from your bank account—call the Finance Office, 860.529.1575 x221. You can also [give online](http://firstchurch.org), at firstchurch.org (the ONLINE GIVING tab).

Vickie Anderson Director of Preschool
Tessa Beauregard Associate Minister
Jey Deifell Minister Emeritus
David Luce Church Administrator
Wayne Luman Associate Minister
Deryk Richenburg Senior Minister
Todd Willard Associate Minister

OUR MISSION

*We are a community of Jesus
followers who love God, love one
another, and make disciples.*

SPIRE DEADLINE

Material for the next issue of *The Spire*, which will be mailed/emailed on Aug. 29, must be submitted to Dave Gilbert by noon on Friday, Aug. 17, at daveg@firstchurch.org or 860.529.1575 x225.

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Compassion Experience

The weekend of **July 20-23**, we will host the free **Compassion Experience**, a journey through true stories of children living in developing countries, such as the Philippines, Kenya, the Dominican Republic and Uganda, including more than 2,000 square feet of interactive exhibit space. For info and a brief video, and to register or volunteer to help, be sure to visit firstchurch.org/compassionevent.

We are also looking for 6-8 people, able to lift around 50 pounds, to assist with setup (July 19) and take-down (July 23). If interested, please email **Drew Shattuck** at CompassionPeru@firstchurch.org for info.

Sing in the Summer Ensemble

The Summer Ensemble—every Sunday, July 9 to August 20—has openings in all voice parts. All ages are invited! If you have a little experience in reading music and would like to sing, you are invited! We meet in the choir loft at 9:00 a.m. to rehearse. You are welcome to sing as many times as you like. Cool and comfortable (appropriate) clothing is recommended. For details, call the Ministry of Music at 860.529.1575 x209.

Summer Women's Study

Tessa Beauregard and Lucinda McDowell will lead *Finding Answers Together*, exploring questions such as *Where is God when I need Him most?* and *How do I love those who are different, difficult and demanding?* Come for any or all of the six sessions, offered in the Morgan House Drawing Room **Wednesdays, June 27 to Aug. 8** (except July 4), 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Tessa will teach the first two sessions, and Cindy will lead the rest. Register and receive materials through **Marilyn** at marilynd@firstchurch.org or 860.529.1575 x213.

Summer Class for Men

Pastors Wayne and Deryk will lead *Following Jesus the Man*. When Jesus lived on this earth, He revealed who God is. He also showed us how to live as men. Explore with us the principles Jesus lived by, and live the life He wants you to live. Be with

us on **Wednesdays, June 20 to August 8** (except July 4), 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. in Room M201 (across from the Prayer Room).

Welcome Josh Arcata!



Family Ministry is very excited to announce our **summer intern, Josh Arcata**. Josh has attended First Church his entire life and was active in Children's and Youth Ministries. He is a 2017 high school

graduate and has completed a year at "City Reach Institute" at the New York School of Urban Ministry. During this past year, Josh was trained in many types of outreach and hands-on ministry in NYC. Josh is "thrilled to be working at the place that introduced me to Jesus as I was growing up, and I really want to provide that same opportunity to meet Jesus for other youth throughout this summer." We know he will!

Vacation Bible Camp Nears!

Sign up now for VBC! *Shipwrecked: Rescued by Jesus* will be **Monday-Friday, July 16-20**, 8:45 to noon. Age 4 to ended grade 5 will laugh, play, pray, celebrate, imagine, give, and explore, for just \$35 per child by June 15; \$40 thereafter. First-time friends are free! Campers & volunteers register at firstchurch.org/vbc. Earlier, help with our decorations—or provide supplies (see Wells Area). Questions? Contact **Di Krause** at dianek@firstchurch.org. Welcome aboard!

A Week at Camp Berea!

Students (completed grades 6 and up), join us for an amazing summer camp, **July 29 to August 4**, at a beautiful waterfront camp with a blob, water trampoline, tubing, ropes courses, skate park, hiking, carpetball, ping pong, and more. Berea's mission is "to change lives for Jesus Christ", with dynamic speakers and powerful worship! Register at berea.org/summer—scroll down and click on "Junior/Senior #3." Questions? Call **Di** at 860.529.1575 x303.