

The Judea Journal

The First Congregational Church, UCC ,
An Open and Affirming Congregation of the UCC



Gifts of the Dark Wood

By the Rev. Cheryl Anderson, Pastor

“...the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan;...” Mark 1:12-13a

GIFTS OF THE DARK WOOD

“In the middle of our life’s journey, I found myself in a dark wood where the true way was wholly lost.” That statement begins Dante’s “Divine Comedy,” a more than 14,000-line epic poem on the soul’s journey. The tension between the pronouns says it all: Although the “I” belongs to Dante, who died in 1321, his journey is also part of “our life.” We will all find ourselves in a dark wood one day, the poem suggests.

It sounds a little like mid-life crisis, but the “dark woods” we find ourselves in on life’s journey take many forms. The death of a loved one, loss of a job, divorce, serious illness, addiction, leaving home for whatever reason, ending a career – any of life’s struggles or transitions can land us in “a dark wood where the true way was wholly lost.”

Dante’s “dark wood” was exile. After a charmed youth as a leading poet and politician in Florence, Dante was sentenced to exile while on a diplomatic mission.

In the first years, Dante wandered around Tuscany, desperately seeking to return to his beloved city. He met with fellow exiles, plotted military action, connived with former enemies — anything to get home. But he never saw Florence again.

And yet Dante could write “The Divine Comedy” only because of his exile, when he accepted once and for all that he would never return to Florence. Before *Continued on page 2*

Sunday School

The first two weeks in February will be used to finish our exploration of justice and what it means to be the hands and feet of Jesus. After talking about environmental justice and what we can do in our homes and communities to be better care takers of the earth, we will conclude by sharing all that we have learned and helping our church to become more green!

As Lent begins, we will switch our focus to journeys. We will learn more about Jesus’ story, explore our own, and inquire about others. We will create our own story books,

curate a Sunday School art exhibit, and interview our fellow church members. Join us in the Sunday School classroom as we celebrate the Lent and Easter seasons and learn more about Jesus and our Church!

~ Carrie Loyd
Sunday School Teacher &
CE Superintendent

Worship Schedule February

- Feb 4 - 10:00 am Worship Svc**
- Feb 11 - 10:00 am Worship Svc*
- Feb 18 - 10:00 am Worship Svc*
- Feb 25 - 10:00 am Worship Svc*

* Sunday School and Childcare Available

** Children in Sunday School room in Parish House during the entire service

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1302, the year of his expulsion, he had been a fine lyric poet and an impressive scholar. But he had yet to find his voice. Only in exile did he gain the heaven's-eye view of human life, detached from all earthly allegiances, that enabled him to speak of the soul.

Our worship series for the season of Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14, will focus on the "Gifts of the Dark Wood," and the way the experiences we most want to

avoid in life – like uncertainty, temptation, emptiness, or failure – can turn out to be markers on the trail to our true self.

This month we will complete our worship series on "Working for Justice" with a sermon on the power of one voice on March 4, and a February 11 sermon and coffee hour presentation by Imam Usman Akhtar from the Danbury Mosque.

We will begin our Lenten series on Sunday, February 18. Come and join with companions as we walk a path through Lent that winds through the Dark Woods of life.



Cheryl

Pastor.cheryl@firstchurchwashingtonct.org

Environmental Stewardship Meeting

WHEN: Friday, March 2, 6-9 PM

(Movie starts at 7 pm)

**WHERE: First Church Parish House
6 Kirby Road, Washington, CT**

**WHAT: Pot Luck Supper and Movie
"Bag It! Is your life too plastic?"**

REGISTER: Contact Terri Tibbatts or the church office for more information or if you plan to attend dinner, movie or both.

(Note that movie is 1.5 hours and so may be a bit tedious for children under 10 unless they are pretty mature. There is no "bad" language, though.)

This gathering will kick off an environmental initiative in this church. Please join us!

DEACONS OF THE MONTH: ANNE MARIE DAVENPORT AND AL TROWBRIDGE (FEB)

DATE	USHERS & GREETERS	WORSHIP ASSISTANT	WELCOME ANNOUNC'M'TS	NURSERY	SUNDAY SCHOOL	COFFEE HOUR
FEB 4 COMMUNION	Susan Jahnke*, Conrad Weeks, John Lintner and Al Trowbridge	Dan Lovallo	Dan Lovallo	TBD	Carrie Loyd	Deb Swigart & Esslinger
FEB 11	Alyssa, Caroline and Lee Parsons	Carole Glintenkamp	Judie Gorra	TBD	Carrie Loyd	John & Susan Loyd Turner
FEB 18	Jack & Jane Boyer	Trish & Katie Grinnell	Dan Lovallo	TBD	Carrie Loyd	Brady & Grinnell
FEB 25	Michael & Abigail	Kate	Wayne Hileman	TBD	Carrie	OPEN

♦ *The Communion server marked with an asterisk is assigned to bring the bread.*

If you are scheduled and cannot do it for some reason, please make arrangements for a replacement and then notify Karen in the church office.

COFFEE HOUR HOSTS ARE NEEDED for dates marked "OPEN". Please sign up on the list(s) on the bulletin board in Wersbe Hall (near the kitchen) or email or call the office (860) 868-0569.



If you are new to hosting, ask about the guidelines document also posted on the board and also on our website!

Meet Our Staff



Rev. Cheryl Anderson, Pastor
Carrie Loyd, Christian Ed Superintendent
Jesse Ofgang, Organist
and Principal Musician
Peter Armstrong, Treasurer
Karen Esslinger, Admin. Assistant
Al Trowbridge, Sexton
Ministers: All the Members

HOLY COW! You have until Feb 12 to complete the survey

On January 27, via email our members and attenders were invited to complete the Church Assessment Tool (CAT), an on-line instrument that will help leaders gauge the strength, vitality, and trends in our church. The information gained from this assessment will be valuable in helping the leaders of the First Congregational Church of Washington as they plan for the future.

If you need a paper copy, please call or come to the office, and we will provide one for you along with a self-addressed stamped return envelope.

Your voice counts! The response period will close on February 12 so be sure to complete it as soon as possible. Many thanks,

The Pastoral Search Committee

The Council's Corner

Council Members

Cheryl P. Anderson, Pastor 860-868-0569, ext 11
Trish Grinnell, Moderator, 860-799-0190
Tony Vengrove, Vice-Moderator/ Stewardship,
860-799-0054
Peter Armstrong, Treasurer, 860-921-7152
Millie Johnson, Christian Ed
Wayne Hileman, Deacons, 860-868-7235
Steve Wadelton, Finance, 860-868-9822
Jim Esslinger, Missions Interim, 860-919-5207
John Lintner, Personnel, 860-868-0019
Lee Parsons, Trustee, 860-946-7798

Next Quarterly Meeting : March 25

Pastor Cheryl works Wednesday through Sundays.
Daily schedule varies based on congregational needs.
It is best to call for an appointment.

Church Office Hours

Karen - Mondays and Wednesdays, 1 pm—5:30 pm
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 am—1:30 pm

Peter - Mondays and Fridays, Noon - 3 pm
Wednesdays, Noon—4 pm

(860) 868-0569 or admin@firstchurchwashingtonct.org

Flowers and Steeple Lighting Memorials

Flowers

- Feb 4 In celebration of the rich lives of Estelle and Howie Bronson,
given with love from their children
Feb 11 In loving memory of Tom Kaczynski, Sr., given by Karen and Jim Esslinger
Feb 18 and 25 **OPEN**

Steeple Lighting


Feb 4, 11, 18 and 25 **OPEN**

Flowers are \$68 per week. Steeple Lighting is \$25 per week.

If you wish to sponsor flowers or steeple lighting at any time during the year to honor or remember someone or something, please contact Karen in the church office to check date availability.

Call (860) 868-0569 or email to: admin@firstchurchwashingtonct.org



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>February</h1>				1	2 10 am - AA Meeting 6 pm - NB Pot Luck Supper	3
4 10 am Worship w/ Communion 1 pm Comfort Shawl Project	5 9 am - Gunnery Meeting (MH) 3:30 pm - Girl Scouts (PH) 6:30 pm - Single Life Discussion	6 9:30 AM - AA 12:15 pm -Rotary 6:30 PM- NB Divorce Support	7 10:30 am - Book Study 5:30/ 6:30 Compassionate Communication	8	9 10 am - AA Meeting 6 pm - NB Pot Luck Supper	10
11 10 am Worship / Chancel Choir 11 am Teen Talk & Confirmation Class	12 9 am - Gunnery Meeting (MH) 3:30 pm - Girl Scouts (PH) 6:30 pm - Single Life Discussion	13 9:30 AM - AA 6:30 PM- NB Divorce Support	14 10:30 am - Book Study	15 Noon - LSA Clergy Lunch & Comm. On Ministry 6:30 PM Council Meeting	16 10 am - AA Meeting 6 pm - NB Pot Luck Supper	17
18 10 am Worship / Praise Band 11 am - Worship planning meeting 1 pm Comfort Shawl Project	19 3:30 pm - Girl Scouts (PH) 6:30 pm - Single Life Discussion	20 9:30 AM - AA 12:15 pm -Rotary 6:30 PM- NB Divorce Support	21 10:30 am - Book Study 7:00 PM - Prayer Group	22	23 10 am - AA Meeting 6 pm - NB Pot Luck Supper	24
25 10 am Worship 11 am - Deacons 5-7 pm Youth Group	26 9 am - Gunnery Meeting (MH) 3:30 pm - Girl Scouts 6:30 pm - Single Life Discussion	27 9:30 AM - AA 6:30 PM- NB Divorce Support	28 10:30 am - Book Study			

February Birthdays	
3	Douglas Urquhart
7	Inaya Shariff
8	Conrad Weeks
9	Dimitri Willert David Behnke
10	Anne Marie Davenport
18.....	Abbie Gorra

February Birthdays	
20	Susan Jahnke
22	Judie Gorra, Leslie Lintner & Sarah Osborne
24	Susan Loyd Turner
28	Andrew Grinnell Drew Werkhoven

Want to get more involved with your church??
 Tell us what you love to do and we'll do our best to match you up with activities that ring your bells! Complete the Time and Talents form that is now available online, or contact the church office for a paper or PDF version to be sent to you.
http://www.firstchurchwashingtonct.org/page/time_and_talents_profile

Deadline for Judea Journal content is Thursday, February 22.
Submissions of news from our members is encouraged! Call or email the church office if you have any questions.

The First Congregational Church, UCC
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 Phone: 860-868-0569
 E-mail: admin@firstchurchwashingtonct.org
 Website: www.firstchurchwashingtonct.org
 Prayers for self and others: www.firstchurchwashingtonct.org/prayer.php