



THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF DARIEN  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

# Parish Columns

APRIL 2014

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## Shaking Things Loose

In my first years as a pastor, I visited my grandfather right after Easter Sunday. Sitting in the backyard of a cool Michigan spring, he waxed melancholic at how many young people had missed the high, holy day. Where I felt relieved to have survived it, he began to cry gently, brooding over inner riches they'd never know. In his 80s, Bapa could see the big picture. It struck me how very much he cared.

Things haven't gotten better since then, but worse. David Brooks recently wrote about how hostile many young people today are toward religious belief. When asked their impression of the devoutly faithful, words come up like "out of touch" or "hypocritical" or "old-fashioned." Is it just me, or do you also observe a big gap between how we experience and share our faith, and how outsiders perceive it?

Brooks quotes Rabbi Abraham Heschel: "Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement ... get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal ... to be spiritual is to be amazed."

That resonates deeply within me. And yet I must also acknowledge that matters of faith can harden into something less liberating, even something dull, insipid, or oppressive. Here faith devolves into "an heirloom rather than a living fountain." So what legalistic streak runs through human nature that faith so easily ossifies into something cold, rigid and unambiguous, into some flattened version of truth? That faith gets distorted like this is more remarkable considering how fervently scriptures oppose it. We set up for deep mystery, for dynamic engagement with God and one another, and find ways to lower the ceiling, and make it about rules.

But that is not the dominant note, and we must say more. As I look at you, I see a faith marked by both fervor and doubt, clarity and confusion, empathy and rigor. I see mystery and ambiguity, a search for hopefulness and honesty about despair. I see something as rare and beautiful as the human spirit seeking to discover our God-given gifts and to channel them in ways that please God and also satisfy us.

And if any season would break us open like this—in the best possible sense—and break us loose for great things, it is Easter. The drama is the highest highs and lowest lows, or actually, the reverse order. This time is complex and unique. It's a prism through which—with Bapa—I wish more could experience life in Christ.

St. Augustine said about loving God: "There's a light I love and a kind of embrace when I love my God—a light, voice, odor, food, embrace of my innerness, where my soul is floodlit by light which space cannot contain, where there is sound that time cannot seize, where there is a perfume which no breeze disperses, where there is a taste for food no amount of eating can lessen, and where there is a bond of union that no satiety can part. That is what I love when I love my God."

From where I sit, I see this rare light shining through you. May our light so shine!

Peace and grace,

## THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF DARIEN

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### PARISH COLUMNS STAFF

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### SUNDAY SERVICES

8:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.  
Church School and child care available  
during the 10:00 a.m. service

### CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

## All Church Beautification

Sunday, April 12

Early Bird: 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Help us make everything look beautiful for Palm Sunday and Easter.

Come when you can (between sporting and other events) to make the Church look great.

Can't come? Can you help at other days or times? Shop for supplies at Home Depot or take away debris to the dump at the end. Or write a check for \$50 or \$100 to help us buy plants, seeds and mulch. (to First Congregational Church of Darien – memo – beautification)

Bring your own gloves and gardening tools.

To do list: Weed, transplant, plant, fix beds, mulch, pick up trash.

Please let me know how you'll help: Wyn Lydecker – 203.655.6968  
or [wynlydecker@gmail.com](mailto:wynlydecker@gmail.com)

Sponsored by the Board of Stewards and the Women's Association  
Green Goddesses

## In Brief...Church Announcements

### Mystery Dinners

- Next mystery dinner is coming in May! Watch for further details.

### Childcare at Easter Services

- We will be offering an optional childcare for children in Grade 3 and younger during both the 9:00 a.m. service and 11:00 a.m. service. They will be watching a children's version of the Easter Story, doing some arts and crafts, and playing games. At both services, there will be an adult volunteer and two paid teens so please, come one, come all and join the festivities!

### 3rd Grade Communion

- The 3rd graders in our Church will receive their First Communion on Sunday, April 6.

# Holy Week—Schedule of Events

## Palm Sunday, April 13

Sunday, March 24 commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem preceding his passion. It has become a tradition in our Church to have the children pass out the palms during worship service. This year, the children will process around the Meetinghouse, in a Palm Parade and distribute the palms during the final hymn. The children will be walked down from Church School to the Meetinghouse for the parade. Any questions or comments, please contact Kate Nelson at [KNelson@uccdarien.org](mailto:KNelson@uccdarien.org).

## Maundy Thursday, April 17

On Maundy Thursday we will remember how Jesus transformed the Passover with a Scripture readings and Holy Communion, starting at 7:00 p.m. (Due to the quiet, contemplative nature of this service, we find that it works less well for small children.)

## Good Friday, April 18

Beginning at 6:00 a.m., by longstanding tradition, the Church family will read the New Testament all the way through from the pulpit Bible. Individuals and families may sign up for one or more twenty minute blocks throughout the day until midnight. A sign-up sheet can be found in Parish Hall.

Also on Good Friday, people from all over Darien will gather at our Church at 10:30 a.m. to carry a large cross through town. There are several "stations" along the way and you can join us or leave at any point. (We will be easy to find!) This is a wonderful and meaningful experience for old and young alike. The procession of laypeople and clergy will continue to St. Luke's Episcopal Church, where the community Good Friday worship will begin at 12:00 noon. Worshippers may come for part or all of the service, which lasts until 3:00 p.m. Reverend Rosenberger will be the first one preaching, and his message will be "Forgive Them Father, for They Know Not What They Do."

## Easter Sunday, April 20

This year's Easter sunrise service will return to Stephen Mather Cemetery (southeast corner of Brookside Road and Stephen Mather Road) at 7:00 a.m.

Our 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. Easter worship services will be identical, and will be designed with families in mind. Choral music, flowers, and balloons will underscore the joy of the day. Children will remain in the Meetinghouse for the entire service and, if desired, childcare will be available for children (2nd grade and younger) in the Circle Room and care for infants will be available in our Nursery. We hope families will enjoy worshipping together on this sacred day.

An Easter egg hunt will take place after the 11:00 a.m. service. Children to gather in front of the stage in Parish Hall.

## Easter Flowers

You may order Easter flowers by filling out this form and including your check for \$30.00 to First Congregational Church and note "Flower Donation" on the memo line. (Due by Friday, April 11). A list of the flower dedications will be printed in the Easter bulletins.

I would like \_\_\_\_\_ Easter plant(s). Enclosed is my check for: \_\_\_\_\_ (\$30.00 each)

In Gratitude of/for                      In Celebration of/for                      In Honor of                      In Memory of

(circle one of the above and write name here:) \_\_\_\_\_

Graciously Donated by: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\* Please note: \_\_\_\_\_ I will be taking my flowers.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I will not be taking my flowers, so please donate it in my/our name.

## 11 Brookside Road (formerly The ABC House) Committee Holds Inaugural Meeting

At its March meeting Church Council was pleased to note the team of Church members who came forward to volunteer their time in considering the future space needs of the Church community and how 11 Brookside Road (formerly The ABC House) can help fill those needs. Church Council appointed the following individuals to the 11 Brookside Committee - Terry Brewer, Karen Hansen, Ray Hodil, Ellen Kirby, Debbie Parnon, Bob Sinche, Barbara Thorn, and Wendy Ward. To guide their activities, Church Council provided the following:

### Charge to the 11 Brookside Road Committee

The purpose of this committee is to research and create a list of viable options for Church Council to consider for future use of 11 Brookside Road, currently known as the ABC House. The FCC of Darien Church Council charges the 11 Brookside Road Committee with the task of researching through various means, including surveying the Congregational body, the possible options for use of, what is currently known as the ABC House located across the street from the First Congregational Church of Darien on Brookside Road. A list of viable use options should be created in time to present to Church Council and the Board of Stewards at their September 2014 meetings.



Given its charge and time frame, the 11 Brookside Committee held its first meeting on March 24 to outline its schedule and begin accumulating needed information; the Committee also elected Bob Sinche, former Chair of Stewards, as Chair to guide the Committee's activities. They agreed that the first step in the process is to survey Church Council, Committees, Staff and Members to form a consensus on the future space needs of our Church. Combined with the upcoming sale of the condo at Rowayton Woods, we have a unique opportunity to rejuvenate our Church campus and meet the space needs of our Congregation for the decades ahead. If anyone has thoughts on future space needs of our Church family, please contact Debbie Parnon at [Dcsp1@aol.com](mailto:Dcsp1@aol.com), Bob Sinche at [rsinche@aol.com](mailto:rsinche@aol.com) or any other member of the Committee. There will be an 11th Hour meeting on Sunday, May 4 to discuss preliminary findings of our surveys.

## Care, Communicate, and Connect to Build Our Church Community

The Board of Christian Ed and the Deacon's Membership Committee are spearheading an initiative to broaden and enrich our Church community. The purpose of the initiative is to ensure members of our Church community feel connected with those they already know and can build new connections with those they don't know so well. We recognize this is important especially in light of the constant addition of new members and the evolving needs of current members.

As a first step in understanding how members could feel better connected and cared for by our Church community, we will be hosting a series of 11th Hour casual lunch gatherings (dates to be determined) geared to various demographics of the Church. We hope members stay after Church to take part in the discussions most relevant to your situations and needs from the Church. We want to hear what you think, what you are looking for and how you want to be connected to your Church community. Broad participation will ensure we best meet the needs of all.

Dates will be publicized through Flash, Sunday bulletins and in Parish Hall. Please direct questions, comments or if you have an interest in helping with this initiative to Debbie Parnon, [dcsp1@aol.com](mailto:dcsp1@aol.com).

## Board of Outreach News

### Introduction to Neighbors Link Stamford

The Board of Outreach has always kept its ear to the ground for Charities new and old that may be in need of assistance. We recently interviewed a new Charity that we truly believe will win your heart for local mission work; Neighbors Link Stamford.

Neighbors Link Stamford (“NLS”) opened June 12, 2011, and is an affiliate of Neighbors Link Northern Westchester, which is a successful 12-year-old nonprofit organization in Mount Kisco, NY. Neighbors Link has developed a strategic plan to replicate its mission and successful programs in other interested communities. Stamford is honored to be the inaugural partner in this endeavor. While the name and programs are similar to those of Neighbor’s Link Northern Westchester, Neighbors Link Stamford is led and operated by members of the greater Stamford community. Neighbors Link Stamford’s purpose is to strengthen the whole community by actively enhancing the healthy integration of immigrants. NLS goals span 3 areas relative to immigrant integration:

- EDUCATE (English language, computer and other classes);
- EMPOWER (connect individuals and families with schools, health, legal, law enforcement, and other vital services); and
- EMPLOY (develop job skills and a worker center to match day workers with available jobs).

NLS is pleased to have reached more than 2,400 Stamford-area immigrants to date, but we recognize that there remain some 22,000 recent immigrants in Stamford alone (source: US Census) whose integration needs have not yet been addressed. The majority of our clients work in service jobs in Stamford and its neighboring towns, including Darien and New Canaan. In Stamford alone, immigrants comprise 37% of the city’s total population.

Neighbors Link Stamford will be the happy recipient of our work for In May We Help. Look for upcoming news on our family ‘Music Theme’ dinner we will be offering for everyone on May 23.

## Easter Ham Dinner through Open Door Shelter

The Board of Outreach will be working with Palmer’s Market to provide an Easter Dinner to local families. Our Church will be adding the groceries to complete an Easter Dinner for 125 families in the Fairfield County area through the Norwalk Emergency Shelter. We need 10 to 14 capable hands on Thursday, April 17 from 8:30 - 11:30 a.m. to help us pack and distribute this wonderful feast. The sign-up sheet to assist will be in Parish Hall or contact Bob McGee at [rmcgee03@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rmcgee03@sbcglobal.net). Very fulfilling work in the Lenten Season!

## FoodFirst FoodFirst FoodFirst - April 6

On Sunday, April 6, don’t forget FoodFirst Sunday and place your donations at the front of the Church at our Communion Table.

## Open Door Shelter - April 24-25

Our Church prepares a meal for the Open Door Shelter once a month! If you are interested in helping others, this is a great way to start and we can always use the extra hands. Please contact Heather Raker at [Hraker@optonline.net](mailto:Hraker@optonline.net).

Cooking and Serving this month will be as follows:

Cooking: Thursday, April 24 – 8:00 a.m. at First Congregational Church of Darien’s kitchen  
Serving: Friday, April 25 – 11:45 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at Norwalk Emergency Shelter

## From the Desk of Teri Manning ...

We're Going On A Bear Hunt...or maybe a trip to the zoo, or Florida, or wherever our imaginations take us. Shall we make some tickets? Shall we pack some bags? Before you know it, the chairs are lined up, two rows separated by an aisle. A heated discussion takes place for



who will be the driver/pilot/captain and who will take the tickets and who will make the announcements.

Mrs. Trager painted an airplane on a couple large boxes, we found some

headphones and the children took it from there. Many of them have been on some pretty amazing trips recently – Cancun, Turks and Caicos, Disneyworld – and then there's always the Bear Hunt!



## Youth Group Ski Trip

What a trip! Best ski conditions in the Northeast in years! All 26 of us, 19 youth and 7 adults, could not have planned this any better. Food, fun, camaraderie ... it doesn't get any better than this! Make a plan to come with us next year, you really won't forget it.



## Youth Group Quick Calendar

**April 8: 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.**

Serve Dinner at New Covenant House

**April 13: 6:30 p.m.**

High School Youth Group meeting

**April 27: 6:30 p.m.**

Middle School Youth Group meeting in the Youth Room.

**May 4: 3:00 p.m.**

2014 Youth Mission Trip

This will be an informational meeting about the Summer Mission Trip for all parents and participants who have signed up for the trip. Final payment is due at this meeting.

**Anyone who wishes to join the Youth Group should contact**

**Justin Inners,**

***JInners@uccdarien.org***

## Confirmation News

The Confirmation Class of 2014 is winding down to its final month and we are so very proud of all them! As we head into the home stretch, we are asking our Confirmands and Mentors to make the effort to rally around the development of the Confirmation Faith Statements which will be reviewed at the Confirmation Dinner on Thursday, April 24. We will be asking for the families of the Confirmation Class to help host this dinner in Parish Hall – if interested, please contact Ellen Kirby at [ellenevents@juno.com](mailto:ellenevents@juno.com)

### Dates to Remember

#### Saturday, April 5 – YSOP/NYC - Youth Service Opportunity Project

Our Youth Group and previous Confirmation classes have participated in this program before and it has been a great experience. We will leave FCC at 6:45 a.m. and drive down to the lower east side of Manhattan to the YSOP building. The staff will meet us with NYC bagels and explain our day. We will all be assigned a soup kitchen, food pantry or some experience helping with the less fortunate of NYC. The Staff do a great job of discussing homelessness and the safety of our youth while on this project. We divide into groups and head out to various sites around the five boroughs. YSOP uses all of these organizations regularly.

After several hours of hands-on help, we will meet back at YSOP. The office is close to Union Square and the staff will facilitate a discussion on what we did and what we saw in the facilities. We will arrive back at FCC around 5:30 p.m. It is a truly amazing day and one you and your child will not forget. Great for mentors to join as well. Kids are welcome to bring friends.

#### Sunday, April 6 – FoodFirst delivery to shelters

#### Sunday, April 6 – Final Confirmation Class Meeting – 11:15a.m. in the Youth Room

#### Tuesday, April 8 – New Covenant House – Serving

Please join Justin Inners for an experience serving those less fortunate at New Covenant House this month.

#### Thursday, April 17 – Maundy Thursday

Mentors and Confirmands are welcome to join the Congregation in remembering how Jesus transformed the Passover with a simple supper. Scripture Readings and Holy Communion.

#### Friday, April 18 – Good Friday

“Walk of the Cross” is a great event for Mentors and Confirmands

#### Sunday, April 20 – Balloon Decorating for Easter Sunday

It has been a tradition in our Church for the Confirmation Class to provide the Easter Balloons for decorating the Meeting House. This entails arriving at the Church Youth Room at 7:00 a.m. and assisting with the blowing up, tying strings, and transporting the balloons from the Youth Room to the Meetinghouse until the ceiling is full and festive. A light breakfast for the Confirmands will be provided. Please RSVP to Tracey Berry [tcb@optonline.net](mailto:tcb@optonline.net) if you are interested in participating.

Thursday, April 24 – Confirmation Dinner – MANDATORY for all Confirmands and Mentors as the Confirmands will share their Faith Statements. What they have learned through this process of Confirmation will be very important for families, mentors, and close friends to hear. We are looking for several Confirmation families to take on the role of “hosting” this dinner in Parish Hall. Please contact Ellen Kirby [ellenevents@juno.com](mailto:ellenevents@juno.com) if you are able to help out.

#### Sunday, April 27 – Confirmation Sunday – 10:00 a.m. service

The day has finally arrived when our 21 Confirmands will step up and become official members of our Church. Don't miss it!

## Church Calendar Notes

April 6: 3rd Grade Communion, 10:00 a.m., Meetinghouse

Mark your calendars for this important event for the children.

April 6: FoodFirst FoodFirst FoodFirst, Parish Hall

Don't forget Food First Sunday and place your donations at the front of the Church at our Communion Table.

April 12: Spring Beautification, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., Grounds of the Church

Please join us to weed, mulch, dig out plants, plant new plants, rake, pick up trash, or trim bushes. Bring your own tools, gloves and supplies. All ages welcome! See page 2 for more details.

April 13: Palm Sunday, 10:00 a.m., Parish Hall

April 18: Good Friday, 6:00 a.m. Readings, 10:30 a.m. Walking of the Cross

April 20: Easter Sunday, 7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m., and 11:00 a.m., Mather Cemetery and Meetinghouse

April 24 and 25: Cooking/Serving for Open Door Shelter, 8:00 a.m./11:45 a.m., various

Cook in the Church Kitchen or Serve at the Open Door Shelter. See page 5 for more information

April 27: Confirmation Sunday, 11:00 a.m., Meetinghouse

Join us as we welcome our Confirmands into our Church.

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