Reflections from the Senior Minister

Cyril of Jerusalem, writing in or around 350AD, imagined that Jesus on the Cross amounted to ‘God stretching out God’s hands on the Cross to embrace the ends of the world,’ reflecting the belief of many early Christians that it is ‘at the foot of the Cross that we learn from God how hospitality is to function.’

Admittedly, Protestants do not usually associate the Cross or the Crucified Christ as symbols of hospitality or models of welcoming behavior. When we do reflect on the Cross, we tend to follow the traditional notion of atonement theology, which understands the death of Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins.

All well and good, of course, except that such understanding seems to have done very little to stop us from sinning. Indeed, if Jesus’ death is an atoning sacrifice, one would like to believe that it serves some enduring effect.

As we enter the season of Lent this year, we will do our best to offer one possible alternative to the theology of atonement; one that is rooted in the hope that in the Cross of Christ, we might find something new and perhaps more tangible in terms of how we view the presence of God in the world and how the Crucifixion and the Cross invite us to find new ways of practicing extravagant hospitality and gracious welcome as demonstrated in God’s great act of sacrifice and self-offering.

If this seems like weighty stuff, consider that it was no less so for the people who followed Jesus during his life. Which is why he taught using parables, stories that met people in places they could understand more easily but that drew their imaginations into a deeper sense of how God acts in the life of the world. So throughout Lent, we will be using the parables of Jesus to draw ourselves into a deeper understanding of how the Cross can be for us a symbol of God’s own hospitality and how it may serve for us as a way of directing our own practice of being welcoming, both as individuals and as a church.

We will begin on March 1st with the Parable of the Prodigal Son; which might just as easily be titled the Parable of the Prodigal Parent. Familiar as this story is to many of us, the power of the parables lies in their capacity to broaden our understanding of God with each new reading. The Father’s willingness to give everything—his wealth, his dignity, his deepest longing—to welcome home a wayward child offers some insight into the way in which God relates to each of us, wayward creatures as we can often be.

The lavish, perhaps even reckless, manner in which the Father welcomes home his lost son imagines welcome as an act begun with putting the welfare of another ahead of our own. It affords us the opportunity to consider a fresh way of experiencing the Cross; one that serves to reshape our own lives as we seek to be faithful to God in our own ways of living in the world.

Peace, Todd
Healing Prayer is offered the last Sunday of every month. Come to the chapel after worship Sunday, March 29. Members of the healing ministry will be there to greet you, ask you simply, “How can we pray for you?” and share in a time of prayer, laying on hands if you wish. Let yourself be surrounded by caring souls and held in God’s loving presence through prayer. You are also welcome to come and sit for awhile in the peace of the chapel. Or, if you would like prayer at any other time, please let Rev. Sarah know and we will arrange to pray with you at a convenient time and place.

Community Conversation on Race
Sunday, March 8
7:00-8:30 pm
Come join these ongoing conversations. We are leaning on the book So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo to guide us. This month, the topic will be: Why am I always being told to “check my privilege”? (Ch. 4) Join the conversation!

Movies with a Mission
Sunday March 1
5:30-8:00 pm
Pizza, popcorn & beverages served
Conversation to follow movie
After their village is destroyed and their parents killed by Northern militia, Sudanese orphans make a difficult journey to a refugee camp in Kenya. Thirteen years later, the group gets the chance to settle in the U.S. They are met in Kansas by Carrie Davis (Reese Witherspoon), who has been charged with finding them jobs. However, seeing how adrift they are in 20th-century America, Carrie endeavors to help them in rebuilding their shattered lives. *Recommended for grades 4 and older

Family Date Night – March 14
Come spend meaningful time together! We will share a meal and then break into individual family units for a guided activity designed to playfully build skills of self-expression, listening and loving one another. All expressions of family are welcome!
Saturdays 6 – 8 pm
April 18; May 9
*To attend, register a week ahead with Rev. Sarah Vetter at svetter@fccmadison.org

Exploring a Full Life
Join us for casual gatherings building friendships and examining a life worth living.
Fridays, 7-9 pm
April 24, May 15, May 29
Come to as many as you can. Refreshments will be served.
*Ideal for people in their 30s-50s
Conversations will lean on the book Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in our Busy Lives by Wayne Muller. You may enjoy reading the book but it is not necessary to attend.
Registration required. RSVP to svetter@fccmadison.org
**GIFT TO THE CHURCH & SALE OF THE BRADLEY ROAD PARSONAGE**

A few months ago, we received a call from the daughter of the late Alan and Doris Lang with some very exciting news. Her mother wished to make a considerable gift to First Congregational Church in memory of their many years here as members. They raised three children here, who were active in the Church School and Youth Group. Alan himself taught Church School during his first few years at FCCM, and in honor of all this, Mrs. Lang desired that her gift go towards providing new gathering and classroom space for our growing Church School and Youth Group communities.

So we are in the process of imagining how we might update both the Undercroft to better serve our Church School and the STMR room in the basement of the Church House to serve as dedicated youth space.

Equally exciting is the upcoming sale of the **Bradley Road house**. As you may recall, a vote of the congregation at an annual meeting approved the sale of the property 2 years ago, but we held off on the sale to make the home available to Bill and Ann Clemmons after their home was lost to fire. Bill and Ann anticipate moving into their restored home this spring, and so we will proceed with the sale of the parsonage in March or April. We understand that members of the church have expressed some interest in the house; and before we sign a contract for its sale, we would welcome any questions or inquiries from interested members of First Congregational Church. If you are interested in more details, do not hesitate to contact Cathy Hopkins, Properties Chair at cwhopkins14@gmail.com.

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**March Youth Dates**

**Sunday, March 1**
12:30-2:30 - grades 4-5 OWL  
2:30-4:00 - grades 5-6 OWL  
12:30-2:30 - grades 7-9 OWL at NMCC  
5:30—7:00 —Youth Group Movie Showing “The Good Lie”

**Sunday, March 8**
12:30-2:30 - grades 4-5 OWL  
2:30-4:00 - grades 5-6 OWL  
12:30-2:30 - grades 7-9 OWL at NMCC  
5:30-7 pm — Confirmation Class

**Sunday, March 15**
5: 30—7:00 grades 7-9—Youth Group

**Sunday, March 22**
12:30-2:30 - grades 4-5 OWL  
2:30-4:00 - grades 5-6 OWL  
12:30–2:30 - grades 7-9 OWL at NMCC  
5:30-7 pm — Confirmation Class

**Sunday, March 29**
12:30-2:30 - grades 4-5 OWL  
2:30-4:00 - grades 5-6 OWL  
12:30–2:30 - grades 7-9 OWL at NMCC  
5: 30—7:00 grades 7-9—Youth Group

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**Connection**

*A Ministry for Motherhood*

Gather with other mothers for support, laughter, life-lessons and fun.

This group meets three times a month on Wednesday mornings, 10am – 11:30 in the Church Parlor and one time a month 6pm-7:30 – the last Tuesday of the month somewhere out as a social.

**March Gathering Dates**

Wednesdays, March 4, 11, 18 - Church Parlor @10 am  
Tuesday, March 31st — RJ Julia @ 6pm  
Contact Laura Jarvis for more information at laurajarvis@live.com
Here's where to get the latest scoop on what’s happening musically in the church! For even more information, call Nathan at: (203) 245-2739, ext. 14.

HANDBELLS FOR EASTER

After taking January and February off, the handbells are going to get back in action to prepare for Easter Sunday. This is open to anyone twelve or over, even if you’ve never touched a handbell in your life! We rehearse for four weeks and then play the following Sunday. All you need is a sense of rhythm, the ability to count to four (sometimes six), and a sense of humor. The dates are:

- **Wednesday, March 18th, 6-7 pm**—rehearsal in balcony
- **Wednesday, March 25th, 6-7 pm**—rehearsal in balcony
- **Wednesday, April 1st** (no joke!), **6-7 pm**—rehearsal in balcony
- **Wednesday, April 8th, 6-7 pm**—rehearsal in balcony
- **Easter Sunday, April 12th**—play in church

FIVE FRIDAYS LENTEN CONCERT SERIES

For the 14th year in a row, Music at the Meetinghouse will be presenting FREE lunchtime (12:15-12:45 pm) concerts during the last five Fridays of Lent. The public is invited to bring their lunch into the sanctuary and enjoy a half-hour organ recital. The organists are:

- **March 13th: Jeremiah Mead**, student at Juilliard
- **March 20th: Nathaniel Gumbs**, Yale Director of Chapel Music
- **March 27th: Douglas Green**, organist at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Norwich (retired)
- **April 3rd: Simon Holt**, organist at the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme
- **April 10th: Nathan Bayreuther**, organist here at the First Congregational Church of Madison

BUS TRIP TO ST. PATRICK’S CATHEDRAL, NYC

All are invited to an organ recital by our Director of Music Ministry, Nathan Bayreuther, at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City on **Sunday, March 29th** from 3:15-3:45 pm. He will play exciting and inspiring pieces by Alexandre Guilmant, Johann Sebastian Bach, and others. The organ itself has five manuals (keyboards) and over 9,000 pipes. It is one of the most famous organs in the United States.

A coach bus will leave here at the church at 11:45 am, drop us off at St. Patrick’s, and depart St. Patrick’s at 4:00 pm to return to our church. Feel free to bring your lunch to eat on the bus. The cost will depend on the number of people participating. Please sign up on the Music bulletin board in Angela Hubley Hall or e-mail her at alisonhubley@gmail.com to reserve your spot.
MUSIC AT THE MEETINGHOUSE
PRESENTS

THE GLENN MILLER ORCHESTRA

SAT. APRIL 25, 7 PM

TICKETS: WWW.FCCMADISON.ORG
**Easter Dedication Form**

It is a tradition at FCC to decorate the Meetinghouse with Tulips or Daffodils. You may purchase one (or more) using this form. Be sure to indicate whether you wish to take the plant home with you, after the 10:00 a.m. Easter service, or that the Deacons may deliver it to someone in our community in need of cheer., or give it to Wally to be planted on Church grounds.

Name: ___________________________ Phone: ___________________________

Please print my dedication as follows:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Please check one of the following:

___ I wish to pick up my plant **after** the 10:00 a.m., April 12th worship service
___ I prefer a Deacon to deliver my plant to someone in need of cheer
___ Plant on Church grounds

Please make your check of $10.00 (for each plant) payable to:

The First Congregational Church marking it “Tulip or Daffodil”

You can drop this form with your check in the offering plate, bring it by the office or mail it.

*Forms and payment must be in the church office by Friday, March 27th*

*The last day to order Tulips or Daffodils is Friday, March 27th*

*(Please print clearly all information)*

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**Wednesday Bible Study**

10 am and 7 pm

Join us to read and engage scripture. No experience with the Bible is necessary. All questions, comments and thoughts are more than welcome. Join us as often as you wish or as your schedule allows. See Rev. Todd for more information.

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**Men’s Group**

All are welcome no matter where you are on life’s journey. As always feel free to come when and as you are able. Our weekly Tuesday morning Mens Group welcomes your input and meets in the Parlor at 8:00am. Coffee is always available. Our discussions and study over the next few weeks will be centered around the book of Acts. If you have any questions or new ideas for a book to study or discussions, please feel free to contact Colin at colin@reevefamilyct.com.

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**Soup Kitchen**

March 7, 8-11am at First Congregational Church of Old Lyme

Please join us in volunteering your time or donated items.

You can access Signup Genius at [www.signupgenius.com](http://www.signupgenius.com) to do both. We will be collecting perishable and non-perishable goods in the main kitchen @ FCC Madison the Friday prior to the event or Saturday (the day of) before 6:00am. If you have any questions please contact Erin Byxbe @ 314-489-6760.

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**FCC Book Club**

The March book selection is *Queen Bee* by New York Times bestselling author Dorothea Benton Frank. Join us at 1pm on Thursday, March 12th in the Church Parlor to share thoughts about this endearing novel of family, friendship and love.

Email Lori Charette lchar@comcast.net to reserve a copy of the book.
Memorial Garden Search Continues

During the last few years, the Memorial Garden Committee has been working to update its contact list for all those interred in the Garden. In some cases, we have no next-of-kin contact information. In other cases, we have a contact person listed in our records, but we have not heard anything from this contact person in several years. We have exhausted all of our resources, including our church database, so we are now asking for your help.

If you have current contact information for any of the individuals listed below, please call 203-245-2739, x10 or email mainoffice@fccmadison.org the information to the church office. Thank you to all who responded to our efforts to update or confirm their next-of-kin contact information. The following list has been revised accordingly, as of 2/11/2020:

Barbara/Roy Anderson  
Jean/James Bensen  
Edwards/Babs Boyton  
Elvira Buchanan  
Arnold/Magorie Carlson  
Marlin S. Clark  
Anthony/Virginia Cosenza  
Delphine Dortenzio  
Martha J. Eckel  
Elanor/William Forsythe  
Harold/Ruth Fowler  
Garber Family  
Gennette Family  
Eve/Naomi Harris  
Christianna/Robert Herr  
Elizabeth/Donald Holmes  
Jane/Alton Kamens  
Marion/Allan Koerner  
Margaret/Kenneth Lane  
Richard Lockwood  
Margaret/Malcolm MacGruer  
Louise MacIntyre  
John/Oline Marvin  
Emily McParland  
Grace/John Merwin  
Barbara/Douglas Miller  
Florence Morse  
Edythe/Arthur Nelson  
Margaret/J.R. Nelson  
Edythe/Arthur Nelson  
Margaret/J.R. Nelson  
Jennie Robinson  
Rosenthal, Paul  
Marilyn/Robert Schumann  
Betty/Fred Shepard  
Jeannette/Roger Smith  
Elizabeth/ Marshall Soars  
Edward Sorensen  
Marion/Gerald Taylor  
Margareth van Straalen  
Johannes van Straalen  
Van Zandt Family  
Barbara/Max Weicks

Welcome! Bienvenue!

We are happy to welcome David, Rosita and Gracia to CT, and pleased that their long journey from The Democratic Republic of Congo to Angola, then Brazil, and all the way up through Central America and Mexico is over. Many thanks to all who came out to welcome them at the bus station, threw a baby shower for Gracia, and are working to help them get settled, acclimated, and equipped for life ahead!
Sunday Worship

10:00 a.m.

In the Meetinghouse
Communion Served
First Sunday of Each Month

Our Worship Service is broadcast on Madison Access TV Channel 18, Sunday at 12:00pm and 10:00pm, check their listings.

Sunday School

Children begin worship in the sanctuary and then are invited to move to Sunday School classes after a Children’s Time

The Rev. Todd C. Vetter
Senior Minister

The Rev. Sarah Vetter
Minister of Community Life

Phone: 203-245-2739
Fax: 203-245-3341
E-mail: mainoffice@fccmadison.org
Website: www.fccmadison.org
Facebook: First Congregational Church of Madison, CT
Church Office Hours:
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday - Friday