



☞ THE BEACON LIGHT ☞

✝ MARCH/APRIL 2017 ✝

First Congregational Church of Riverhead

An Open and Affirming United Church of Christ

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☞ PASTOR'S NOTE ☞

Dear Friends and Members of our First Congregational Church,

It was a day or two before Ash Wednesday, yet when I read it, I thought, "What a wonderful thing to recall as we journey through Lent." Even now that we're a few weeks into the season, I still think it quite wonderful, and most appropriate, as even for several of us the Lenten journey also includes an ecumenical focus.

What I read was a short daily devotional written by the Rev. Talitha Arnold, a UCC Pastor in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She entitled her piece, "How goes your soul?" The piece itself wasn't particularly profound, but she did well in immediately pointing to the source of her musings. It lay with John Wesley. He, however, phrased the question a bit differently.

The Rev. John Wesley, ordained an Anglican minister, is credited with founding the Methodist tradition in the mid 1700s. His followers met in "class meetings," small gatherings led by lay people that focused on the spiritual disciplines of prayer, support, study, and accountability. As Pastor Arnold explains, these meetings served as "the 18th century version of the small group, peer counseling experience." At the beginning of each of these gatherings, every person in the group would be asked, "How is it with your soul?"

How is it with your soul? Still today, I find it a powerful question and a wonderful Lenten theme. Delving into the musing, I discovered a host of articles and solid thinking offered by bloggers and theologians, and people like all of us. Among the more useful items was this from the Rev. Teddy Ray, a young Methodist minister in Lexington, KY:

This is a tough question. A lot of us don't even know how to answer it today. At its heart, it's asking about your experience of God's grace and presence in your life.

I remember a week when one of my men started by saying, "My soul is good! God has really given me a sense of peace this week." And then he went on to describe a terrible week. He had some serious family issues, a rough week in school, and bad medical news for a friend. But it was well with his soul. He talked about the ways that God was carrying him through.

Here's an example on the other side. One week someone started by saying, "Well, my week has been just fine. Work is good. Things at home are fine. But it's not well with my soul." He went on to talk about a general restlessness, distraction from any sort of Christian practices, and noticing himself being short-tempered with some people.

Oh yeah. Soul health is a tricky thing. We register our physical and mental health considerably better and when things really begin to get serious, we know what to do. Yet soul health is something that can just slip away without us paying it too much mind. That is until we find ourselves wondering how is it that God feels so far away, or worse yet, crying out, "God where are you?" Here's a little reminder: If God feels far away, guess who moved. 2 Chronicles 15:2 reminds us: "The LORD is with you, while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you abandon him, he will abandon you."

We know that there are things to help us feel better physically and mentally. We're all better off when we actually make an effort to do them. Yet both physical and mental health are transient. Your soul is eternal. As even the eternal transcends the temporal, your spiritual health will go a long way to support your mental and your physical well-being.

For better soul health, pray daily. Pray at meal time, morning time, bed time. Pray. Join us Wednesday evenings for our ecumenical Lenten journey; each week we have a service at one of the area churches at 7:00pm. Join us for Bible study Friday mornings or do some on your own. I'd be happy to support you in the study, and perhaps could give you some insight there. Join us for worship and fellowship, Holy Week and Sunday morning. Church is very good for the soul; everyone can do with some good prayer time, plus the witness it provides is important for others, and it is what God would have us do. And once the weather gets nice, which surely will happen for Spring never fails to come around, you're always welcome to sit in our garden. You're welcome to work in it, too. That's also good for the soul.

In closing, I leave you with these words of the second verse of the 3 John: "Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul." Blessings

~ Pastor Sean

❧ WORSHIP ❧

With thanks to many, our Sunday services continue to be wonderful offerings to our church and community. It's been particularly nice to see a number of visitors of late who help us to shine well with our extravagant welcome. We are who we are becoming. As a reminder, communion is served each first Sunday of the month, and healing prayer is offered every second Sunday. Be sure to join us for a blessing.

Lent is our current season, and midweek Lenten services are offered every Wednesday at 7:00pm. The services are offered and led by the Riverhead Clergy Council, and a variety of local Christian churches take turns hosting them. Three such services remain in the season:

- Wednesday March 22 at Old Steeple Community Church, UCC
- Wednesday March 29 at St. John the Evangelist, Roman Catholic Church (note: that begins at 7:15)
- Wednesday April 4 at First Congregational Church of Riverhead



Then we're on to our Holy Week and Easter services. With help from our Sunday School children, palms will be distributed at our Palm Sunday Service, April 9. Maundy Thursday and Good Friday will be celebrated at 7:00pm with our sister UCC congregations. We're at Old Steeple Community Church on Maundy Thursday, April 13, and at Baiting Hollow Congregational Church on Good Friday, April 14.

Come Easter (April 16), we will again offer Easter communion at our Easter Sunrise Service at the western edge of Grangebél Park. This year the early service will be at 6:30am. Our festive main Easter Service is at 10:00am as usual, and will be followed by a time of fellowship with some "breads of the world."



You can order your Easter lilies at any time between now and noon on Palm Sunday. The cost of each plant is \$12. Plants can be dedicated "In memory of" or "In honor of" any of your loved ones. You can place your order in the offering plate, or call, mail, or drop it off at the church office. Just be sure to place the orders by noon on Palm Sunday so they can be acknowledged in the bulletin.

❧ STEWARDSHIP ❧

The Stewardship Chairman and the Trustees thank all those members and friends who returned their pledge cards. Those who pledged allowed us to prepare a realistic budget for 2017. Please be diligent in honoring your pledge so that our budgetary commitments can be met. Thank you.

~ Dave Gruner

☞ FELLOWSHIP/SOCIAL ☞

Coffee hour after church is a fine time to relax and visit with fellow worshippers. Volunteers are always needed to provide something to eat along with some coffee and tea, especially as the cold weather has swept in. You need not bake -- store-bought treats are fine. The signup sheet is on the kitchen door in the Fellowship Hall, and there are regularly plenty of dates to choose from. Thanks to all our hosts and hostesses out there!

The fellowship committee is hosting a covered dish potluck on Sunday April 2nd, immediately following Sunday worship. Your cooked contributions are appreciated. If you have any questions, please speak with one of the committee chairs: Jane Jones or Carrie LaCombe.

☞ CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ☞

Thanks to Ginger Duvall for arranging the Sunday School schedule and for prepping the Spring 2017 curriculum. Many hands make light work and Jane Jones, Jane Kulesa, Sandy Gruner, Shelly Walker and Sue Hubbard are pitching in to help out on Sundays with the children.

We had a super Souper Bowl on February 5th. The children, with the help of A.J. Lacombe collected approximately 75 cans of food to donate to the Long Island Council of Churches food pantry. Monetary donations totaled over \$80.00, also to be donated to the food pantry.

On March 5th, Lenten Banks were distributed to the congregation. Monies collected will be used by the children to shop for items needed for the Long Island Council of Churches food pantry. The banks will be collected on April 23rd and the children will shop with their parents and Jane Jones on May 7th. Banks are still available in the rear of the sanctuary.

Children's Day will be May 21st and the children will be presented with Sunday School pins and certificates. Coffee hour will be make your own ice cream sundaes with lots of fixings.

During the Lenten season, adult Christian education will meet on Fridays from 10:00-11:30 in the parish hall. The Book of Judges will be studied during those sessions.

~ Susan Hubbard

☞ FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE ☞

The committee met to brain storm fundraising needs and ideas that would not drain the volunteer power and pocketbooks of the congregation while bringing in needed funds for capital improvements.

All methods of fundraising, beyond pledges, offerings and memorials will fall under the committee umbrella for mere purpose of coordination and communications. Therefore, all recurring fundraisers like the quiche luncheons, card party and yard sale will be part of the committee.

The proceeds from the recurring fundraiser events will continue to go towards the church's general operating expenses. Proceeds from any new fundraiser event will be allocated for capital improvements. The committee came up with a plan for one fund raising project in each of the seasons starting with this spring.

The spring project will be the Long Island Sound Choir Concert on Sunday, May 21, at 2 pm. Nancy Repp is in charge of posters, flyers and ticket sales. Carol Gorman is in charge of a basket auction, and Alice Summerville an ice cream social.

Our summer project is new to us, but we got a lot of advice from Old Steeple Church. With the help of an event planner, we will hopefully hold an Antique Fair on the church grounds. It is really very early in planning to say much more, but this type of event does not require a lot of work for us. We may want to sell some food stuff and we will need people to help the day of the event however.

The fall project has greatest potential for income. It is a cash raffle but much different from last year. We will sell books of 12 raffle tickets for \$10 a book starting in September. We will then have 12 different drawings

dates over a certain timeframe. All winning tickets get returned to the bin therefore every book of tickets has 144 opportunities to win. The winning prizes will range from \$25 to several hundred.

The winter fund raiser will be a Christmas Tea Luncheon chaired by Alice Summerville. As you recall, this type of event calls to mind “many hands make for light work”, but is promised to be a very uplifting festive occasion that will also bring in needed funds. Thank you to the committee for standing up and volunteering to serve and for their help in developing the 2017 fund raising plan (Ron Blake, Marion Stark, Nancy Repp, Jane Jones, Terry Linders, Alice Summerville, Bunny Burns, Mary Merengo).

~ Marion Maino, Committee Chair

~ QUICHE ~

We need volunteers to chop vegetables, make quiches, bake desserts, and drive to deliver lunch for our quiche fund raiser. We need volunteers Wednesday night April 26 and then again on Thursday, April 27. If you are able to help please let Susan Conrad know (631 793-2801 text or call).

~ PUBLIC RELATIONS AND EVANGELISM ~

We met to assess the church website and the possibilities of going forward. Kevin Kentner of Relay Communications has agreed to continue to host the website. We met to try to streamline the website and make it cleaner and user friendly. There are certain things that need to be deleted to make the website protected from lawsuits and challenges. We, as a church, need to take responsibility for the contents of the site to free Relay from responsibility. The new brochure is ready for distribution and it will be distributed before Easter. You are invited to visit the website and recommend it to your friends and neighbors. FCCR.US

~ Sandy Gruner

~ BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS ~

Some of you may have noticed that the sanctuary is nice and bright these days. The old light bulbs were updated recently to longer lasting energy efficient LED lights with the help of Mr. Alan Hubbard. Thank you to all of the volunteers who came down Tuesday February 28th to assist with the thorough cleaning of the sanctuary and bathroom. A recommendation has been made for a new cleaning company, which will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees at their upcoming meeting. Thank you also to Mr. Ron Blake and Mr. James Wooten for their assistance with snow removal during the winter months.

As spring approaches, we will be looking into the repair/replacement of the irrigation system in the front lawn with the possibility of also having a system installed in the back yard as well. A list of all the repairs completed in conjunction with the Gardiner Grant and the Capital Campaign is currently being compiled. It is my hope that once all of the repairs have been completed we can move forward with the scheduling a rededication ceremony for some time during the spring. While many repairs have been completed there is still plenty to do to keep our church bright and beautiful.

~ AJ LaCombe

~ BREAD AND MORE I.N.N. ~

Bread and More I.N.N. continues to serve a delicious, hot dinner on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings from 5:30 to 6:30. The dedicated volunteers prepare and serve the meal, and then clean up. The guests are all very appreciative of the meals received.

☞ E.S.L. FEEDING THE MIND ☞

Feeding the Mind ended its 2016-2017 session on March 9, 2017. Student attendance was unpredictable during the last month of class for unknown reasons. Illness, weather, or other concerns may have been factors. The students were all very appreciative of the chance to learn and increase their understanding of English. Each student received a certificate during the last class and a copy of the English/Spanish workbook we had used. We provided information to the students for other opportunities to continue learning English at the Riverhead Library and at BOCES. It is hoped that another ESL session will begin in November of 2017.

~ Jane Kulesa

☞ PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY ☞

Half of the women of the Prayer Shawl Ministry have been crocheting throughout the winter. The other half have been in sunny Florida. There are many shawls available. The group invites you to take a shawl to friends or family members who would benefit from one. The group meets on Mondays at a different member's home and share fellowship and fun. Come join us for the fun and needlework. Contact any of us to find the location. The group includes, Jane Jones, LuAnne Seaman, Sandy Daniels, Bunny Burns, Barbara Parsons, Fran Nill, Pat DiScioscia, Ginger Duvall and Marion Stark.

~ Marion Stark

☞ MISSION REPORT ☞

The next special Mission focus will be on One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS). We're scheduled for a Mission Moment in church on March 19th and the special offering will be received March 26th. OGHS is one of four special offerings we receive in the year that help support national programs of the United Church of Christ. (The others are Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, and the Christmas Fund, which along with our contribution to Our Church's Wider Mission make us a church that is regularly 5-for-5). This offering is specifically received to help bring assistance to those who suffer from natural disasters, war, or systemic poverty.

James Wooten is now serving as the deacon tasked with chairing the committee.

☞ VISITATION ☞

The Committee met on March 8th at Sandy Gruner's house to plan for the coming year and needs. We see our role as more than visiting the sick and housebound. We will address the needs of the caregivers. We will also be a helpful conduit to the Pastor to help him better serve the needs of the congregation. If there are needs that you see or know, please contact Sandy Gruner @ 631 722 3248 so that the Committee can respond. With God's Grace in our hands, Thank you.

~ Sandy Gruner

☞ THRIFT SHOP ☞

The Alley Cat Thrift Shop hours are Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00AM – 2:00PM and Saturday 9:00AM – 1:00PM. If you have some time you can devote to this very important income generator for our church please call the church office 727- 2621. Need is really great for Saturdays. If you don't have four hours to devote, that is okay. Coming in for a couple of hours and helping with the merchandise (i.e., cleaning, sorting, displaying) would be greatly appreciated.

❧ LADIES NIGHT ❧

The women of the church meet on the last Thursday of each month. This is an informal get together and the participants vary from month to month. The last couple of months we have met at Pulaski Street Grill (formerly Doc's Tavern). The next meeting is March 30. The giving of separate checks is a courtesy the restaurants provides, making it easier for anyone that keeps to a budget. It is open to all and is a wonderful opportunity for us to get to know each other. If you would like to join us, please let Deedee know by phone (631 369-9379) or by e-mail (deedeenewc@aol.com).

❧ LICC AND LOCAL MINISTRIES ❧

The LICC Riverhead food pantry is located at 220 Roanoke Ave. #3 @ 2nd Avenue. Donations of food, toiletry items, diapers and formula are always appreciated. Their phone number is 631-727-2210.

The Long Island Coalition for the Homeless on April 4 is holding a "Have a Heart for the Homeless" event. It is a candlelight vigil that is featuring musical guests, speakers, haircuts, refreshments and more. It is being held at Farmingdale State College from 6:30 – 8:30. For more information call 631 464-4314.

❧ SOME CHURCH CALENDAR ITEMS ❧

- Every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 5:30-7:00pm: *Bread & More/INN*
- Every Monday and Thursday 6:15-7:45 beginning Nov. 28, ESL: Feeding the Mind
- Every Tuesday and Friday, 7:00pm, and Saturday, 8:00am: *AA (English-language meetings)*
- ALLEY CAT THRIFT SHOP: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:00– 2:00; Saturdays 9:00-1:00

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**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

