

The Clerical Caller

A monthly publication of Covenant Congregational Church of West Hartford

FEBRUARY 2012

“That’s How The Light Gets In”

A colleague of mine named Dick Lucco, wrote an article for the *Covenant Companion* many years ago entitled, “The House of Grace.” In the article Dick talks about his grandmother, Grace, and how she demonstrated grace to him before he even knew what it was.

Grandma Grace would sit Dick on her lap when he was a young child and read to him for hours on end, and he never forgot the warm touch of her hand as she rubbed his head. He knew that he was her favorite grandchild (as an adult he discovered that each grandchild believed they were Grandma Grace’s favorite!). When Dick was only eleven, his father died and Grandma Grace was there to comfort him as no one else could. Thanksgiving was always at Grandma Grace’s house, and there was always room at the table for everyone. And the joy that he experienced at his grandmother’s house was like nothing else.

Dick compares his experience of grace at his Grandma’s house with the church, in these words: *“My hope and prayer is that the church can be like Grandma’s house. A place where people can experience grace before they can name it. A gracious space where people can know they belong. A place where they can hear grace’s voice and feel grace’s hand. A community where grace’s comfort and grace’s joy are real. A table where there is room and everyone is welcome. A grace filled place. A gracious space.”*

I share the same hope and prayer. Grace is the essence of the Christian faith and is the one thing that sets us apart from all other religions. The church must be a place of grace or it has nothing unique to offer the world. Gordon McDonald has said, “The world can do almost anything as well as or better than the church. You need not be a Christian to build houses, feed the hungry, or heal the sick. There is only one thing the world cannot do. It cannot offer grace.”

But how do we experience grace and grow in grace in our local church? I believe that we find grace in the

church not by looking for the perfect church but by embracing the broken church that we find ourselves in. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a powerful book about Christian community called, *Life Together*. He suggests in the book that one of the best things that can happen to anyone participating in Christian community is disillusionment. When we lose our illusions of the perfect church and embrace our imperfect church community—that’s when the grace of God flows freely.

I know how easy it is to be frustrated by the church. It drives me crazy when brothers and sisters in the Lord hurt each other so often and so deeply. I get so frustrated when people are perpetually late or so often irresponsible. I don’t understand why people come to worship so infrequently. It pains me when I see young people who have been so loved by the church turn away and have nothing to do with it anymore. I can get so easily frustrated, and I’m sure there are many in the church who share my feelings.

But then I look more closely at my own imperfections and I am driven to my knees. I know that I am a deeply flawed individual full of sin and deeply in need of God’s grace. And I know that it is only when I am on my knees that God’s grace flows.

Listen to these words by Leonard Cohen from his poem, “Anthem:”

Ring the bells that still can ring, forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in.

Thank God we are cracked, broken people and communities for that is how the light of God’s grace gets in. Let’s embrace our brokenness and allow the grace of our Lord to fill us to overflowing. That’s when our churches will become houses of grace!

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Tom

Second Saturday Men's Breakfast and Fellowship

Saturday, February 11th, 8:00 am

Please join us for breakfast and fellowship and please feel free to invite a friend. Let us know you are coming (for a food count) by e-mailing or calling the church office. (whcoventant@yahoo.com) (860-521-2269)

We hope to see you there!

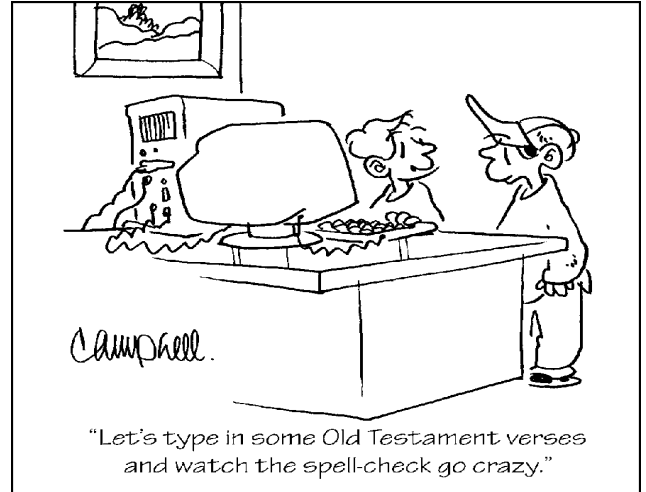


Church Bulletin Bloopers

“The church will host an evening of fine dining, super entertainment and gracious hostility.”

“Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our community. Smile at someone who is hard to love. Say ‘Hell’ to someone who doesn’t care much about you.”

“This evening at 7 PM there will be a hymn singing in the park across from the Church. Bring a blanket and prepare to sin.”

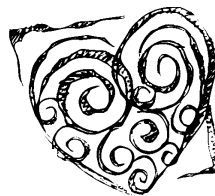


February

- 1 Christopher Adams
- 4 Dawn Sundman
- 20 Mary Lamont
- 22 Mary VanDerMeid
- 26 Phil Fry

**Sunday Brunch
February 26th**

This is a wonderful way to enjoy a good meal and great fellowship. We hope you will make this a priority, bring a dish to share, and join the ‘brunch bunch’ on the last Sunday of each month.



Items can be placed in the wicker basket near the back entrance or on the table in the narthex. The following are suggested for February though any donations are appreciated.

- Sun Feb 5 Cereal
- Sun Feb 12 Fruit Juice
- Sun Feb 19 Canned Fruit
- Sun Feb 26 Tea and Coffee

Through the Bible/ Through the Year

I invite you to take a journey with me. Please join me as I read (and preach) through the Bible. We won't read the entire Bible but important parts of it. We will start in Genesis and work our way through the Bible to the book of Revelation. I will be using John Stott's devotional book, "Through the Bible - Through the Year," as a guide to our journey. I encourage you to buy the book (You can purchase it through Amazon.com from \$4 used to \$14 new) but you don't have to. I will supply the scripture for you to read from week to week. I have used this resource for a while now and believe you will be blessed by using it too.

The Bible is the source of our lives as Christians. We need to stay grounded in it. It is the best way to know Jesus Christ, the Heavenly Father, and the Holy Spirit. It is our essential guide to living as God wants us to live. Please join me in reading through the Bible in the year to come.

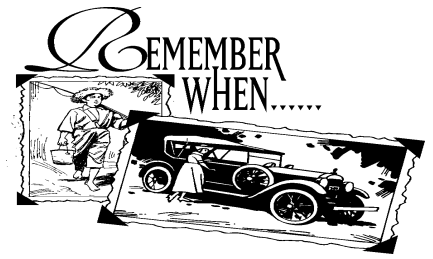
We will start August 28th with the book of Genesis. In the Fall we will spend time in the Old Testament focusing on the life of Israel. After Christmas we will spend time in the Gospels focusing on the life of Christ. And in the Spring and Summer of 2012 we will look at the book of Acts, the Letters and the Revelation, focusing on the life of the Spirit.

I hope you will travel with me in this journey through the Bible and that you will be blessed by it.

First Week: August 28-September 3—Creation—Genesis 1-2:3

TIME CAPSULE

The following are selections from Sunday Bulletins of years past...



Sunday, February 9, 1936 – Tuesday 7:30 – Many of our members have asked for Bible study, and we are glad to comply with this request. The Book of Acts will be studied. All are invited, and we hope that many Sunday School teachers and young people will attend. English will be used.

Sunday, February 16, 1936 – Wednesday 8:00 Brotherhood meeting. The speaker, Mr. Fernley Rae of Mrs. Foster's travel service will show films on the construction of the super ocean-liner, "Queen Mary," Sweden, and an airplane tour over Florida and Nassau.

Sunday, February 3, 1946 – On February 14th we shall meet at 7:30 (or as soon as you can come) to pack boxes for our destitute friends across the seas. Bring everything that you can: clothing of all kinds, bedding, soap, towels, sewing material, shoes, kitchen utensils, canned foods, etc. Also bring rope and cartons. The service of Bible study and prayer will follow.

Sunday, February 9, 1947 – Wednesday, Feb. 19th – Ladies Aid sponsors all day sewing at the Church beginning at 10 A.M.

Sunday, February 26, 1950 – Sunday, March 7, Dr. Theodora Johnson, Medical Missionary to Africa will speak at morning and evening service.

Sunday, February 25, 1951 – Wednesday 6:45 Gra-Y. The progress of this church sponsored program for boys 9 – 12 is encouraging. The leaders are Oscar Auer, Carl Peterson, Alfred Gavert, and Paul W. Johnson.

Sunday, February 7, 1954 – Second Sunday of Youth Week is observed today and members of the Hi-League are participating in the service this morning. We are pleased to welcome Miss Harriet Widman as the guest speaker. Miss Widman is on the staff of the Foreign Missions Department of the National Council of Churches in New York City. The pastor is speaker at services in Jamestown, New York

(The pastor was Carl G. Lugn who served our church from 1947 to 1958.)

Sunday, February 16, 1958 – Ladies Aid Officers: Mrs. Walter Lindell, Chairman; Mrs. Mae Peterson, Vice Chairman; Mrs. Ralph Roberds, Secretary; Mrs. John Lindell, Vice Secretary; Mrs. Karl Johnson, Financial Secretary; Mrs. Carl V. Gustafson, Treasurer.

Phoebe Guild Officers: Mrs. Christie Castendieck, Chairman; Mrs. John Johnson, Vice Chairman; Mrs. George Johnson, Secretary; Mrs. Francis Nelson, Vice Secretary; Mrs. Arvid Johnson, Financial Secretary; Mrs. Eric Peterson, Treasurer.

Sunday, February 14, 1960 – This evening at 5:30 P.M. – Hi-Leaguers meet at the parsonage, 47 Bentwood Road, to go bowling.



February 2012



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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<p>5</p> <p>Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:30</p> <p>Trustee Mtg.</p>	6	7	<p>8</p> <p>Deacons Mtg. 7:30 PM</p>	9	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Men's Breakfast and Fellowship 8:00 AM</p>
<p>12</p> <p>Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:30</p>	13	<p>14</p> 	15	16	17	18
<p>19</p> <p>Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:30</p>	20	21	<p>22</p> <p>ASH Wednesday</p>	23	24	25
<p>26</p> <p>Sunday School 9:30 Worship 10:30 Brunch!</p> 	27	28	29			