

THE CHURCHMOUSE



Newsletter of The First Congregational Church, Canton Center, CT

July / August 2011



From the Pastor

Rev. Rushan Sinnaduray

At the beginning of June as I sat there listening to members of our confirmation class reading their faith statements (which are published inside this issue of *The Churchmouse*) I couldn't help reflecting on what it means to have a maturing faith. The thing is the world needs our most mature faith so acutely right now. Our own life feels like it is in free fall some days. Relationships falter. Dreams are lost. Plans change. Even our theology keeps changing.

Our personal faith in the midst of this free fall is a little like Alice in Wonderland. When Alice falls down the rabbit hole, her dress puffs up like a parachute and she wonders if she fell far enough whether she would burst through the centre of the earth. If she did, where would it, and would the people all be upside down from her perspective?

Think about it. After all the change and upheaval you have experienced, you will think nothing of future life challenges. It is as if your clothes are puffed up and protecting you from the fall. You are learning to see life from a new perspective, maybe even upside down.

There is a lot to be said for a new perspectives that come from taking a leap of faith. Your life is a leap of faith, but faith in who or what?

Faith for the Hebrew people wasn't so much faith in an external savior God. It was faith in the word or law of God, which is the cosmic story. It was faith in the ever evolving ebb and flow of life, full of mystery, change and survival against all odds. They took many leaps of faith. They gained wisdom and courage. They kept moving.

Faith in Jesus' teaching starts small and grows, always grows. It is like a seed. It grows and it matures. The New Testament says that when combined with works, faith is perfected. To me that means that when your life actions match your highest purpose, your deepest belief in the flow and connectedness of life, you are living by faith.

Sharon Salzberg, one of the leading teachers of eastern meditation in the world today, has a nice way of describing

the maturing of faith. She differentiates between bright faith, verified faith and abiding faith.

Bright faith beams at the possibilities of life. It is pure optimism. Many children have bright faith. Bright faith is appropriate for children. For adults, bright faith can come close to blind faith. Mature faith is never blind. The problem with blind faith is that even though faith can move mountains, you need to see which mountain needs to be moved.

Verified faith includes a memory of past survival and achievement. It is learned wisdom. Verified faith works closely with doubt. Doubt is not the opposite of faith. They are two sides of one coin. Doubt sharpens faith, and faith affirms doubt.

Abiding faith is unwavering in the face of change. Abiding faith doesn't expect life to remain stagnant. It is in tune with a purpose that doesn't depend on circumstances. It is one with the flow of life. It manifests in whatever way is effective in the changing circumstance.

Whatever your circumstance, take the advice of Joseph Campbell - "Jump. The chasm is not as wide as you think."

Let me end with a short practice that you can do on your own as you take time to relax and reenergize this summer. Make yourself comfortable, close your eyes and picture your current life and faith challenges as a chasm between two cliffs. It's challenging and intimidating, but it's a jumpable chasm. Say these words (from Psalm 46:10) to yourself-

Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am.
Be still and know.
Be still.
Be.

Now jump. The chasm is not nearly as wide as you think.

Blessings and peace for a wonderful summer,

Rev. Rushan



Christian Education News

Sarah W. LeGeyt

Director of Christian Education & Youth

*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a **wind** from God swept over the face of the waters. Genesis 1:1,2*

Creation started with wind. Wind is moving air. No, we can't see the wind but we can see things that it moves. Wind is the invisible carrier of God's creation. Wind can be powerful. Like the invisible wind, God is always moving and working through us. This summer, focus on the wind with your families. The cool ocean breeze, the wind in a sail, a flying kite, a waving flag, leaves dancing, and seeds floating are all reminders of the air we need to live. Let the wind remind us of God's breath on us and how He continually moves through us.

Church School Missions. This past school year the children did a great job supporting their missions. We raised \$445 from weekly offerings and the Talent Show for the *Canton Food Bank*. We delivered over 20 bags of non-perishable food items and extra Easter treats to the Food Bank. We also gave 25 Literacy Packs, which included a storybook and new PJ's, to **Covenant to Care**. The JYF filled 17 Easter Baskets for Covenant to Care. Thanks to all who donated.



Our soccer equipment is put to good use in Nicaragua. Thanks again to all who donated soccer gear.



Looking Ahead to Fall...

Beginning this fall, the children will explore the wind of **Creation**. Church School will resume on September 11, 2011. Come at 9:30am to register in your child's classroom. Stay after worship and church school and enjoy fellowship and fun at the Fiesta All-Church-Picnic! Sombreros are welcome!

Workshop Leaders and Shepherds are still needed for the fall. Please contact Sarah at ce@cantoncenterchurch.org if you are able to help.

Teacher Orientation Meeting will be on September 1, 2011 at 7 P.M. We will discuss plans for the year and work on schedules. Please bring your calendars.

Confirmation Class and Parent Meeting will meet on September 18th after worship. Watch for details.

SYF News

Senior Youth Fellowship (Grades 9–12)

Sarah W. LeGeyt and Jim Koplar, Advisors

Mission Trip Update

The SYF will be in Philadelphia from July 24th through July 29th. We will stay at the Summerfield Siloam United Methodist Church. We will work at some or all of the following throughout the week:

Kid's Club: This is a hands-on program for children that takes place in Konrad Square in the Fishkill neighborhood. They will play high energy games, do crafts, skits, songs and interactive lessons.

Urban Gardening: Serving one of the many organizations working to revitalize Philadelphia by watering, weeding and harvesting community gardens.

Food Distribution Centers: Work with food center to organize, pack, store and distribute food to the needy.

Salvation Army Locations: Work to organize and distribute clothing at thrift shops.

Senior Visitation: Spend time with seniors of the community and assist them where needed.

We will also experience a mid-week worship service at the Greater Exodus Baptist Church and attend a community cookout.

Keep us in your thoughts and prayers as we venture out into the world to spread God's love and serve others.



About our high school graduates...

Dillon will be attending Tufts, although he has deferred for one year to concentrate on his musical development, with a view to a possible dual enrollment at Tufts and the New England Conservatory.

Matthew will attend University of Connecticut, probably majoring in horticulture/landscape design minor.

Danielle will attend Smith College in Amherst, MA, in the fall.

Emily will be attending Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA, in the fall.

Alex is hoping to attend Berklee College of Music (for piano) in Boston—his plans are not definite yet. **Angel** will attend Boston University in the fall as a freshman.

FAITH STATEMENTS OF THE CONFIRMATION CLASS June 5, 2011

MATTHEW -- A lot of people have a different meaning of the word faith. To me faith is something you have a strong and passionate belief in. The more we believe in something, the more hopeful we are towards that something. Belonging to a church community lets you know that there are people who care about you and will always be there for you for no matter what you need. Confirmation is your acceptance into a new world of faith and god. At my age I am having some difficulties believing in a higher power, but as I get older and more mature, hopefully my faith will mature and it will be easier to accept the stories in the bible.

When I hear bible stories, some of them seem unrealistic and hard to believe that they really happened. This may be just me, but I'm guessing other people may be thinking the same exact thing. For me confirmation has been a long journey, but I finally made it.

TED -- Based on Webster's Dictionary faith is: "something that is believed especially with strong conviction." To me, faith is believing in something no matter what someone tells you. So I have faith in things and I won't change my opinion based on what they say. I believe that there is a God who keeps people believing and teaches them how to live. I also believe that there are parts in the Bible that are too far-fetched and are not real but they teach lessons. It's important to know what I believe in so I know how I want to act or live. This affects me by always having something to look at as a guideline on how to live, such as the Bible. What confirmation means to me is that it's teaching me about how a church works and what it will be like to be a member. I also learned about exploring my faith. This shapes my future by giving me a community I can always go to. I believe in God because I went to church when I was younger and learned about God and believing.

CHRISTOPHER -- Over the past year, I've learned many things about my faith and what I personally believe in. The different places our confirmation group has been to show me that you don't have to believe every single thing in a religion, and there can be different subgroups of a religion believing in different things. Confirmation has shown me different perspectives of different religions. I've been in a Jewish synagogue, a Buddhist temple, and Hartford seminary learning about Islam. All these religions have showed me that there are different perspectives, and some of these religions are very similar to ours. For example The Buddhist temple showed me about the Buddha, and how you can have lots of peace in a religion, but suffering too. But in our religion, I've learned things like you have to look for God's love, and you have to spend time to worship. You can't just pray a little bit, but you have to commit time.

I believe in God. God is like an old man in the sky. I remember going to class and taking everyone's perspective on who he is. He's some tall skinny guy up in the clouds, but he's always with us. Through your ups and your downs, God is always with you whenever you need him. I believe that you have to take time to pray for him, you can always trust his powers, and you have to allocate your time according to what matters most. God is the one that can always help you out, but he isn't just going to get you things that you want. I wonder why things like natural disasters happen if he's real, but I guess he can't stop everything. The world isn't just good. God protects us, but we have to make an effort to keep him close to us.

MARTA -- When I was younger I didn't have much to worry about, but now that I see all the bad things going on in the world, I question why they are happening. Faith, to me, is security; if you believe in something you can feel safe. The security of your faith can make you feel less lonely and comfort you. I believe we all have a good will that we are born with and that follows us throughout our life. Faith does not shape my future because as time goes by I will shape my faith with my life experiences, through losses and gains. In the future I could chose to believe faith is just a way of maintaining a good will, and the definition of confirmation to me is being accepted for what you believe in, by your friends and family.

Faith Statements, continued

WILLIAM -- In the beginning I really didn't know why I joined the confirmation class; it was mostly because my parents signed me up and drove me there every other Wednesday. But as time went on we went to other houses of religion and I started to realize it was a great opportunity to be doing this. I opened my mind up then and I saw more how other people's religions influenced their lives, cultures and ways of thinking. I started to see many other people's faiths so I began to think about mine.

Faith to me is doing the right thing for other people. My faith is universal, it doesn't even matter if you don't believe in any god but the faith is still there. Every single person in the world has faith even if they don't call it "faith". As much as trusting someone is having faith in them. It is like the golden rule we all learned as a kid, if you do something nice to a person you expect to have them do something nice in return. It all comes back to doing the right thing.

Once I become part of this church, it is a great opportunity to meet new people and expand on my thoughts and feeling toward the world as a whole by seeing people's actions and responses to worldly events. I have used this experience to open my mind and to see what life is like beyond what I have come to know by living in Connecticut.



JOHN -- Faith is having trust in another person. To have faith towards another person is also to believe that they can help you through tough times. They are able to cheer you up when you need it.

Through my faith in God, I believe that everyone can be happy. I often go out of my way to help others. I try my hardest to be nice to everyone, and I make sure that I am not egotistical.

To be in a community of faith means that everyone helps each other. I feel that because I belong to a community of faith I owe it to everyone to give back. My faith in God has changed since I was younger. I feel like I can connect with him now, unlike when I was younger. I believe that God gave us this universe, he created us and many other life forms. In the future I think my belief in God will stay pretty much the same but it still may change.

GRACE -- To me, faith is believing in something that will be there forever. Like believing that the sun will rise every morning, or believing that there is someone up there looking out for you. I believe in God and that he will look after me and help me when I need help or courage... like now because I'm extremely nervous. I know that my faith will shape who I am and who I will become. I think my faith will help me choose from right or wrong like when I see someone who needs help, I help them because Jesus taught me to treat others how I would like to be treated.

For me, belonging to a church means to be surrounded by a community that believes in God and to be near people who will help you strengthen your faith. To me, being confirmed into a church is to have a strong idea of your faith and to make the decision to continue in that faith. I have a strong idea of my faith and I hope that my faith will continue to grow and get stronger.

My faith will shape who I am by the choices I make. For example, I know that I will not join the military or anything that involves a gun because in the Ten Commandments, it says "thou shall not kill" I know that whatever I do in the future, it will probably involve helping others.

Trustees News

Kristin Oswald, Chairperson



The Trustees continue to work hard to keep our buildings and grounds and finances in good order. We recently created sub-committees which focus on specific needs of our church and congregation while matching Trustee's "areas of expertise" with responsibilities and tasks to streamline our efforts.

Representatives in each group include:

Buildings & Grounds: **Andy Kerr** (chair), **Skip Alford**, **Phil LeGeyt**, **John Parshley**

Finance: **Kristin Oswald** (chair), **Dave Heyer**, **Tom Owens**

Stewardship: **Loren Grabinsky**, **Beth Lingenheld**

The **Capital Campaign** is now officially three years old (May, 2008 to May, 2011), and we are still hoping to close the pledge gap. Some figures:

Total Amount Pledged = \$585,000

Raised to Date = \$464,758.62 (as of 5/9/11)

Remaining Pledges = \$120,241.38

Completed projects using Capital Campaign Funds:

- Repair & Painting of Sanctuary & Parish Hall exterior, including new windows in front
- Painting of Sanctuary ceiling
- Bat clean-up & prevention
- Parsonage Renovations
- Repaying Church Endowment for the Sanctuary Roof Replacement
- Repair concrete walkways & steps
- Emergency Repairs including replacing the Parish Hall water line, Parsonage well pump and replacing our fire alarm system
- Donation to designated Missions – Silver Lake & Back Bay Mission

We have \$159,111.57 cash on-hand (as of 5/9/11) in the Capital Campaign which we hope can cover our next/remaining two projects which include:

- Installation of Limited Use Elevator and Replacement of Parish Hall roof
- Purchase new organ

Please keep your Annual and Capital Campaign pledges coming. We are very appreciative of your donations of all kinds – time, talent and treasures!



Music Notes

Mary Lou Keefe

Director of Music



Cherry Brook Chimes perform at Riverton Grange May 20

With the beginning of the summer months comes changes in music programming. The Junior and Cherub Choirs have already ended for the school year, and the Senior and Handbell Choirs sang and rang for the last time on Father's Day. The succeeding Sundays will have various musical offerings to please everyone's taste and ear. The Summer Soloist Series starts on June 26th and runs through the end of July.

Summer Soloists

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| June 26 | Lydia Petersen, chimes/ organ duet |
| July 3 | Judy Robinson, vocal soloist |
| | Jim Koplar, guitar accompaniment |
| July 10 | Bob Oswald, electric piano/organ duet |
| July 17 | Paul Stansel, vocal soloist |
| July 24 | Jim Todd, vocal soloist |
| July 31 | Lauren McAllister, oboe soloist |

Looking ahead to fall...

Mark your calendars for **Saturday, October 15**, when the Senior and Bell Choirs will present a benefit concert Entitled Americana: Past and Present featuring various types of music through the decades. A sample of the sort of music we will be presenting is Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy from the 40's and Standing on the Corner, from the 50's. The proceeds will be donated to the Red Cross to help the recent tornado victims. The evening will include a concert and dessert with a few surprises. Stay tuned for further information.

Community Life



Card Ministry Thursday, July 14, 6:30pm

We have made cards for the past several months, now it is time to make some stationary type items for sale at the Harvest Fair in October. Join me for an opportunity to make some great gifts to sell at the fair. There will be a nominal fee of \$5 for the supplies and of course, you will be able to have one for yourself.

*Please RSVP to me at
stampwithlinda@live.com
to ensure I have sufficient supplies.
Linda Solomon*

Welcome to Sally Hartman

who joined our staff on June 13th as the new Church Secretary. She comes from a background of over 20 years in office administration experience. Sally lives here in Canton with her husband Earl and their son Ethan.



Crafters and woodworkers needed to help make toys and props for the church school. We have simple patterns to follow. We need felt banners, wooden figurines, a desert box (mini sand box), an ark, and some sanding and painting done. Great summer project! Please contact Sarah at ce@cantoncenterchurch.org if you can help.

With Gratitude and Affection...

Many, many thanks to all those in our church family who took part and contributed to my retirement celebration on Saturday, June 18, after twenty-three years as your Church Secretary. I was presented with a wonderful scrapbook, a gift certificate for a stay at the Weston Inn in Vermont, and a generous check. I was so touched to hear the kind words from Jerry Alonzy, Tim LeGeyt, Dr. Evans Sealand and Rev. Rushan. The luncheon was delightful and I can't say enough "thank yous" to the planning committee, which included Sarah LeGeyt, Rev. Rushan, Linda Solomon, Craig and Linda McAllister, Gina Magennis, and Mary Engvall. My working here has been a great experience and I will always remember the talented staff and generous volunteers I have worked with over the years. Faithfully, Jane Watson

Mission News

By David Poleyestewa, Chairperson

Over the summer...



**Covenant to Care
for Children**

Helping Connecticut's Children in Need.

Our social worker is in need of "placement packs" for her clients. These packs provide items needed to care for a child for 24 hrs. They should include clothing and toiletry items for various ages. Missions would like families to donate a bag labeled according to age and sex, or contribute any of the items suggested below. Contact Terry Getchell if you have any questions. Please leave donations in the Missions Box by the church kitchen.

Suggested items for Placement Packs:

- 1) *Pajamas, change of clothing, book or toy, coloring book & crayons, toothbrush/paste for a young child.*
- 2) *Appropriate clothing, diapers, wipes, pacifier, etc. for an infant.*
- 3) *Toiletry items, comb, etc. for older child.*
- 4) *Socks and Underwear - list of sizes and quantities needed on Missions Board.*

Our Mission at the Canton Community Garden

Our plot is coming along with about seven volunteers to help. Raising lettuce, green beans, sweet peppers, zucchini, and tomatoes.

Thank you to those who have volunteered to weed and water.



SCHOOL SUPPLIES

The other items we are collecting are school supplies: notebooks, pencils, crayons, scissors for kids, gluesticks, ruler, lunch boxes with drink canister or bottle. These items usually are featured in August Back to Sale Ads.

Living Our Faith

The Missions Committee met recently to discuss involving the church members in living our faith in mission. One way to help us would be to let us know ways in which you volunteer right now. Email David at dpoleyestewa@snet.net or speak to any of the other members if you see them: **Gary and Karen Adajian, Terry Getchell, Kathy Todd, Martha Stansel, Robert Dyer, Art Mauger, and Susan Noonan.** We would like to know what group or organization you help.

Wider Church Fellowship

By Craig and Linda McAllister, Chairpersons

Upcoming fellowship opportunities:

Friday, July 8 – Rock Cats baseball game (followed by fireworks) – everyone welcome. Sign-up on the bulletin board.

Sunday, Aug. 28 – old-fashioned “Family Picnic” with baseball, volleyball, and good food at Peoples’ Forest in Pleasant Valley.

If anyone has suggestions for future activities please let us know.

Linda and Craig

More about

Harvest Fair – October 1



*Don't forget the Fair when you are making homemade canned goods and crafts this summer. There will be a great variety of crafts, home-baked treats and locally grown goods for sale in addition to the Chicken Pie Supper. We are also looking for 'nicer' items to go along with the handmade quilts (any quilters out there?) for the drawing. Anyone interested in more details, contact the Co-chairs:
Jan Tanner, Mary Engvall, Polly Rice*

Strawberry Festival 2011

The long standing tradition of strawberry shortcake, hamburgers and hotdogs were served up on Sunday, June 19 to celebrate Father's Day. Over 75 church members (and friends!) pitched in to pick, hull, wash, bake, grill, serve and clean up to make this year's Strawberry Festival a great day. A BIG **THANK YOU** goes out to all who helped make this a fun and successful event. The final tally is not complete (we wanted to get this Thank You in before the Church Mouse deadline), but as always the fellowship of working together is priceless!

Thank you,
Karen Needham, Mary Lee Dunn, Art Mauger,
Co-Chairs 2011
Katha Kerr, Arushini Sinnaduray,
Co-Chairs 2012



Our Strawberry Pickers

July/August 2011 Calendar



Meetings and Events

Prayer Shawl Ministry: Monday, July 11, and August 8, 10:00am

Card Ministry: Thursday, July 14, 6:30pm



Boards and Committees

Diaconate: Tuesday, July 5, 7:00pm

Board of Trustees: Monday, July 11, 7:00pm

Stewardship Committee, Monday, July 18, 7:00pm

Christian Education: Monday, August 29, 7:00pm



Summer Ecumenical Worship **10:00am**

Sundays, July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

First Congregational Church, Canton Center
Preacher: Rev. Rushan Sinnaduray

Sundays, August 7, 14, 21, 28

Canton Community Baptist Church
125 Dowd Avenue

Preacher: Rev. Barbara Prescott-Ezickson

The host church provides nursery care during the service and a time for refreshment and fellowship following the service. Offering envelopes will go to their respective churches.

Regular Worship Resumes **10:00am**

Sunday, September 4

Nursery Care provided.
Church School classes do **not** meet.

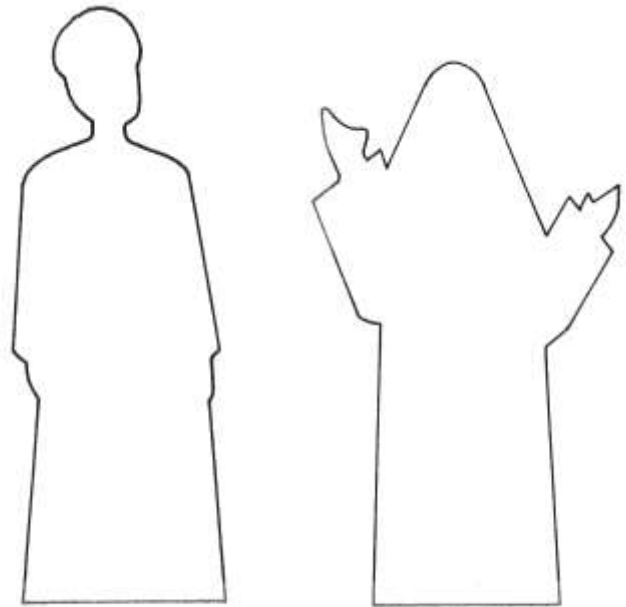
Sunday, September 11

Gathering Sunday – Church School begins
All-Church Picnic after worship

Equipping Our Godly Play Classroom

The Christian Education Committee is looking for woodworkers and crafters to make wooden figures for our new church school program. Opposite are actual size samples of the patterns. We need lots of people of God cut out for the children to play and retell the story with. There are also animals, trees, buildings and more that we need. The Godly Play Classroom we will be setting up will have many of the Bible stories in order around the room.

Purchase a wooden toy story set for the church school, in honor, in memory, or in celebration of someone special. Below is a list of the sets we need. If you are interested, please fill out the form below and submit it to the office.



Godly Play Stories

_____Creation Story \$36	_____Noah's Ark Story \$122
_____Holy Family crèche set \$45	_____Jonah and the Whale set \$169
_____Baptism set with doll \$119	_____Parable of the Good Shepherd \$63
_____The Great Family, Abraham and Sarai \$35	
_____How the Church Tells Time Puzzle (calendar wheel) \$146	
_____Lenten Puzzle \$80	

Miscellaneous items

_____Risen Christ Figure \$18	_____People of God (12 figures) \$34
_____Storage Baskets with covers \$3	_____10" Wicker Tray w/ handles \$5
_____14" Wicker Tray w/ handles \$6	_____16" Wicker Tray w/ handles \$7

Given By _____

(Circle One) In Memory of/In Honor of/In Celebration of _____
 _____ By _____

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**Director of Christian Education &
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ce@cantoncenterchurch.org

Organist/Director of Music:

Mary Lou Keefe
music@cantoncenterchurch.org

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.cantoncenterchurch.org
