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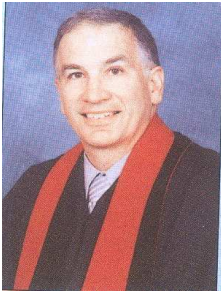
THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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Thots From Tom



As I write this, we are less than a week from Christmas, and two days from the winter solstice. Winter is just about here. As I shared in my sermon on Sunday, December 17, I am not a winter person. I dislike the cold, having experienced too much frostbite as

a child working a paper route in the harsh northeastern Ohio winters. Consequently, as an adult, my feet and hands are easily chilled without proper insulation, and sometimes, no amount of sock layers will keep my feet from literally freezing.

However, in the midst of the deep winter, and the coming of the winter solstice, I take heart. I take heart because our two solstices provide us with a unique paradox. With the birth of summer on June 21, and the heat of summer stretching before us, each day after that will be shorter, foreshadowing winter. Similarly, and conversely, with the first day of winter, on December 21, with the depth of winter stretching forth for the next three months, each day after that will begin to be longer, foreshadowing winter. So with a sort of tormented logic that only my mind can understand, I feel sad on the first day of summer, knowing that each day after marches me closer to the dreaded winter; and I feel happy on the first day of winter, knowing that each day after marches me closer to the warmer days that I cherish and love! So at this time of year, with the winter solstice, I celebrate what is to come: more daylight and the promise of summer!

I share all of this, and my sort of “seasonal neurosis” because this meteorological cycle so mirrors that of the cycle of life itself. Out of death comes life; and out of life comes death, a cycle that

is constantly repeated in life, and is so prevalent in our faith.

As you read this, we are in the final days of Christmas (I observe the 12 days, unlike our retail establishments, which have already moved on to Valentine’s Day). We look forward to the twelfth day of Christmas, the Day of Epiphany, which is January 6. On this day, legend has it the three Wiseman approached the baby they beheld in a rude cave in Bethlehem, recognizing him to be the long-promised Son of God, the Messiah.

After the observance of the birth and epiphany (revealing) of the Son of God, we journey a few short weeks later to the season of Lent, a season lasting six weeks, where we prepare spiritually to observe the passion and death of Christ, and then, his resurrection. The season of Lent serves again to remind us that out of birth comes death, and out of death, comes life.

In another cycle of death and birth, we recently bade farewell to the year 2006, and have welcomed in the birth of a new year. The years fly by, or at least so it seems to me. We look ahead to the promises of this new year, and the events yet to unfold, in our lives, and in our church. Much that is familiar, and much that is new, will be manifested in the year about to unfold. I hope that the year brings you much that is blessed and fulfilling.

As we look at January, the month is full of events. Confirmation classes begin on Wednesday, January 3; and we will have our annual jazz service on Sunday, January 14. Our budget hearing will be held after worship on January 21. Our annual meeting will be held on Sunday, January 28. We will use a format similar to the meeting of 2006. In that format, we will have a brief worship service, and then hold our annual meeting, followed by lunch. We should be finished with lunch shortly after 12 noon.

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Additionally this month, we are encouraging people to bring a friend to church for the jazz service. We hope to continue to grow our membership, and by holding occasional "Bring A Friend to Church" Sundays, perhaps we can do that.

On a personal note, I thank you for all of the Christmas cards and gifts that Lois and I received from so many of you. Your love and remembrances made our holiday observances all the more enjoyable. Thank you!

I wish you all a happy and fulfilling new year!

Peace,

Tom

MUSIC COMMITTEE

The Music Committee would like to thank everyone who made Plum Pudding such an enjoyable evening. A special thank you to Eric Gallmon and Jed Dolde for operating the dishwasher.

HEARTBEAT DIXIELAND JAZZ BAND

The Heartbeat Dixieland Jazz Band will provide the music for our



morning worship service on January 14th.

NEW ENGLAND CHAMBER CHOIR

The New England Chamber Choir will be performing on Sunday, February 18th at 4 pm. Refreshments will be served following the performance.

COUNCIL CHATTER

As we begin a new year, I would like to thank our at large Council members for their service. Thank you Mel Barlow, Sue Binge, Jerry Gerkey, John Hage, Deb Robinson, and our secretary Martin Bartel. I am pleased I can count on not only your attendance but also your valuable input on Church matters.

At our November meeting we revisited the issue of our connection to Covenant to Care. Through CTC our Church has maintained a relationship with the Family Advocacy Group of Middletown. In recent months CTC has proved inexplicably non responsive to our offers of help. Debra Robinson, who has been acting as our liaison to CTC, has worked out a situation where we will work directly with the Family Advocacy Group of Middletown. This direct relationship seems to be a much better situation, as Debra was able to quickly establish a new relationship with a caseworker. Debra collected items for two single parent families over the last several weeks.

At present we are preparing for the annual



**YOUTH2GETHERKLUB
(Y2K)**

January Calendar
Wednesday January 3rd
and
Wednesday January 17th
5:30-6:45 p.m.
Bring \$3 for pizza

Women's Potluck

Monday January 8th
6:30 at the home of
Nancy Dolde
10 Bevin Blvd
Bring a dish to share!

Little Caesars

Pizza, Pies and Cookie Sale!
Orders will be taken on
Sundays January 7-21
Pick up will be
Wednesday January 31
From 5:30- 7:00 p.m.
Proceeds benefit Seeds of Hope 2007

Some Reminders!

***Seeds of Hope will meet after church on
January 7

***Confirmation class will meet 6:00 7:00
on January 3, 17 & 31
(bring a bag dinner- juice provided)
With Mentors 7:00-8:00 on January 31

Rummage and Bake Sale

to support
Seeds of Hope 2007
Saturday January 20
9:00-1:00
Gently used Clothing, Linens,
Books, CDs, DVDs and
household collectibles will be offered!
Come on down and get some good stuff!
Pre-sorted donations can be left on the stage.

Kudos Korner

Once again there were numerous church mice at work during December! Thanks to everyone that helped out in all sorts of big and small ways including, but not limited to:

Ron and Lynn Hastings, Joanne Kneeland, and Sue Carr for decorating our sanctuary for the Advent/ Christmas season.
Jesse Hazen for providing our sanctuary Christmas tree and Peter Aarrestad for getting and setting up the beautiful tree.
Thanks to Eric Gallmon for handling the dish washing duties during our Plum Pudding Festival.
Maggie Jackson for stepping in to play bells at the a last moment!
Special thanks to Chris Schrager and her assistants- Kim Cordiero and Jodi Brazal for creating our



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wonderful Christmas story play “Away From the Manger”.

Thanks to Denise Wojick and Rae Strickland for baking the cookies for the children to decorate during coffee hour.

Thanks to Art Marsden and Todd Schrage for their hard work during the Fall, of sanding, prepping and painting the choir pew.

To David and Evan Selger for replacing the faucet in the children’s bathroom.

Jerry Gerkey for replacing the outdoor electrical plug on the sign on our front lawn.

Helping Hands

Be sure to let Jill Walker (267-7180) or the church office know if you or someone you know of from our church family is in need of some helping hands. Volunteers are available to provide meals, rides to appointments, babysitting, help with simple household tasks or projects or simply to come and visit. At times we all are in need of some extra hands so give a call and let us help!

Time to Renew Last Year’s Resolution!

Let’s all start to wear our Name Tags again, or for the first time, so that we can meet and greet each other by name on Sunday mornings. There is a request for a new tag sign on the Church Life Bulletin board in Fellowship Hall. It takes about 2 weeks for a new tag to be placed on the boards in the Narathex.

Note from Editor:

For those who have an article they wish to put into the Chatter, please e-mail the article to me at j.gerkey@sbcglobal.net or leave it in church office by 3rd Sunday of each month.

STEWARDS

Please mark your calendars for the budget hearing scheduled for after church on the 21st of January. That’s the day that my son turns 21: he will be 21 on the 21st! Mark the day!

The Pony Express Campaign has ended, and we raised over \$150,000 in pledges. This is a bit more than last year. Although many of you will remember that we had a second effort last year, and if we compare that effort with our current estimate of this years pledges we haven’t made much of a gain. This means, as I prepare this year’s budget, we will need to build in most of our fund raising efforts from last year.

I am happy to report that Rick Berkenstock projects that we will have closed the budget short fall. He reports that most of our pledge units will have made their commitments. The first time in many years. It is impressive that our church family voted a deficit budget last year of over \$19,000 and we made it!! I want to thank all of you who “stepped up to the plate” to close the gap.

We instituted a number of new fundraisers such as the Spring Fair and the Golf Tournament. These new initiatives along with the Fall Fair, Silent Auction, two dinners, Strawberry Booth, Vendor Fair, Calendar Sales and the parking lot rental during Old Home Day made all the difference. Thank you all. These efforts and more are likely to be needed to continue our on going church work. You will see our new tables in the next month or so and our work on the wall will begin. I am hoping that we can schedule a workday this winter to address some of the outstanding painting and repair needs. Watch for it, your help will make the work go quickly.

I write this just before we celebrate Christmas and as I reflect back on our church year, it has been a good one. Again, thank you all.

Karen Evertson



COSA NEWS

Blood Drive

Every day in Connecticut hundreds of patients rely on donated blood for the treatments they need to improve, or save their lives. Donated blood is used to treat accident and burn victims, premature babies and their mothers, surgery patients, people struggling with sickle cell disease, and cancer patients receiving chemotherapy to name a few.

Amazingly, each person who gives blood can help to improve, and even save, the lives of up to three people every time they donate!

COSA is sponsoring a blood drive on **Saturday February 3rd from 8:00 – 12:45. Become a donor!** For more information and/or to schedule an appointment; see the COSA table during coffee hour; or contact Darlene Dainiak (267-1311), or Joanne Morariu (267-6856).

Project Christmas/Christmas Wishes/ Family to Family

Thank you to all who donated toys and warm clothing to help the children in East Hampton and in the Middletown area have presents this Christmas. It was so moving to see how eagerly our church jumped in to help those in need. You truly made this Christmas more special to many families in our community.

Giving Tree

Thank you to everyone who brought in hats, mittens, and gloves. They have been delivered to the Food Bank.

Donations made to Area Ministries

COSA made donations to the following groups or organizations:

Middlesex Hospital Chaplaincy Program
New Horizons Women's Shelter
Mercy Housing
Eddy Shelter
East Hampton Food Bank Fuel Assistance
Interfaith Refugee Ministry
Family Advocacy
Covenant to Care
Seeds of Hope

PARISH NEWS

New Members Received

Five people joined our church on Sunday, December 3. Welcome to all!

Karin Cooke resides in East Hampton with her husband, Tom, and their four children: Max & Maggie, 7 years old; Tommy, 4; and Audrey, 7 months old. Tom is self-employed, owning Cooke Building & Remodeling, since 1996. The family's interests include boating, snowmobiling, soccer, baseball, dance, Tai Kwan Do, and are adding basketball to the list this year! Tom grew up in East Hampton and Karin is originally from Colchester.

Sandra Edwards, newly married to Mark Edwards in June, says she has 3 wonderful children. John and Laura, who are in college, and Christian who is in 8th grade. Sandra was born and raised in Richmond, VA, and lived in North Carolina for the past 20 years. Mark and Sandra love sailing and spending time together with their 5 children.

Debbie Nikolov moved to East Hampton with her husband, Stoyko, five years ago after attending University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. They have two children: Katie, 5, and Alex 3. Debbie

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works as a web programmer at Travelers and enjoys reading and watching college basketball.

Daphne and Robert Schaub moved to East Hampton from Simsbury in 2000. Daphne is with the firm of Robinson & Cole in Hartford. Bob is with Quality Name Plate in East Glastonbury. They have three children, Thomas, 5, Cayla, 11, and Charlie, 15, who have all been active in the town and schools.

Baptisms

Pastor Kennedy baptized two people in December. **Maya Elyse Byrne**, daughter of Michael and Laurel Byrne, was baptized on December 10. **Phoebe Wiekrykas** was baptized on December 17.

Congratulations to all!

Deaths

We extend our love and sympathy to **Art Marsden** and family on the death of his mother, Edith Marsden, on November 28, and to the family and friends of **Albert Bailey, Jr.**, upon his death on December 18.

ANNUAL REPORTS DUE

Annual reports from all boards and committees should be submitted to the church office by Sunday, January 7. Please try to honor the date. Thank you

THANK YOU

I wish to thank all of my church friends who sent cards for a speedy recovery, flowers to lift my spirits, and the prayers from which I really felt the energy. Thank you all and a happy healthy year! In Christian love, Joyce Chamis

WISH LIST

The paper towel dispensers in the church's three restrooms are getting old and rusty and need replacing. They often fail to do their job. New ones cost \$85 each. If you would like to donate a dispenser or contribute towards one, please contact the church office. Thank you!

USHER COMMITTEE

Ushers for the months are January and February are being lined up. Please consider performing this small yet significant duty! If you are interested but have not ushered before; please call either Karen Gallmon 267-4169 or Billie Gerkey 267-9513, and we would be happy to answer your questions. Two ushers are needed each Sunday. So far: January - 7th - Lisa Aarrestad - need one more / 14th - Roger & Cindy Abraham / 21st - Lisa Aarrestad - need one more / 28th - open February - 4th - John & Mitzi Tuttle / 11th, 18th & 25th - open.

If you are available to fill one of these spots - please let me know - give me a call, see me at church on Sunday or sign-up on the sheet that is always posted in Fellowship Hall.

Thank You
Karen and Billie



Save the Date!
The Parish Life
and
Development Committee
cordially invites
all adults to our
Remember When Prom
Saturday March 24
6:00-7:00 p.m.
Pre-Prom Appetizer Party
at pre-assigned host homes
7:00-10:00 p.m.
Dinner and Dancing in
Fellowship Hall
\$18 per person
Look for more information
in the February Chatter