



THE GOOD NEWS *from the Belfry*



a Monthly Newsletter of the
First Congregational Church of Haddam and the
Higganum Congregational Church
United Church of Christ



in the 2019th Year of our Lord

The Season for Rebirth, Renewal and Regrowth



Higganum Congregational Church
First Congregational Church of Haddam
Returned mail to
P.O. Box 215
Haddam, CT 06438

Address Service Requested
Church websites: higganumchurch.org and haddamchurch.org

MARCH WORSHIP SERVICE – Sundays at 9:30 a.m. at Higganum Congregational Church
Christian Education and Child Care provided during most Sunday Worship Services

Dear Higganum and Haddam Church Friends,
Greetings from your new interim pastor! I am looking forward to our time in God's service together.

Some 'fun facts' about me:

- I'm an American Baptist minister who graduated from Colgate Rochester Divinity School in 1993, and turned 50 this past November.
- I have been married for 27 years this May to John, a UCC minister and Marriage and Family Therapist, and we live in West Hartford with our high school senior. Our elder child is in college in Maine, my parents live in Texas, and John's father is in Florida.
- This will be my 12th interim or development placement, and over the years I've served an additional three or four congregations providing temporary or sabbatical coverage. I have ministered mainly in American Baptist churches, but also in an Episcopal Church (starting a youth ministry program), at Haddam Neck Covenant Church across the River, and recently at Beneficent Congregational Church, UCC, in Rhode Island.
- Especially when my children were young, I often worked in ministry part-time and/or was "bi-vocational," working in a secular job at the same time. Two somewhat unusual 'other' jobs I held were selling shoes and being a driver's helper for UPS; I also taught as an adjunct for six years at Quinnipiac. I most enjoy ministry, though, and in particular the opportunity to see how the Spirit is at work in local congregations.
- My hobbies beyond church include vegetable gardening, soup- and bread-making, and occasional travel. We are currently in the process of preparing to think about selling our house, so you'll likely hear me talk about repair projects and organizing our 'stuff' as well.

As we begin our work, I would ask for your help. I would like to get to know you a bit and to listen for the express and implicit goals you have for this time of transition. I hope you will sign up for one of the small group "Cottage Meetings" scheduled in March so that your perspective and insights can be included, and

participate in the all-church History Timeline Exercise following worship on March 17th. My goal is 100% participation! (See additional information on Pg. 5).

On March 6th we also move into the holy and reflective season of Lent. I am grateful for this annual opportunity to "draw near to God" so that God "will draw near to [us]" (James 4:8). That evening at 7 pm our members are invited to attend the service of Ashes at the United Methodist Church in Haddam. Understanding that it's short notice, I would like to invite any who are able to join me for a Lenten Bible study and discussion on Tuesday mornings during Lent (Pg. 6).

Thanks to all those who already have been so welcoming as I have been getting settled in and started up, including my new colleagues Eric, Stephanie, and Amy. I am excited to share this 'in between time' with you all.

Blessings, Pastor Madsen-Bibeau

Worship Schedule

Sunday worship services will be at **9:30 am** at the following locations

March	Higganum Congregational Church
April	First Congregational Church of Haddam
May	Higganum Congregational Church
June	First Congregational Church of Haddam

Child Care provided during Sunday Worship Service

INTERIM PASTORS SCHEDULE

Pastor Michelle's usual days in Haddam/Higganum will be Tuesdays and Thursdays, with office hours mirroring those of the Office Administrator those afternoons. Michelle often will work from home on Wednesdays, and is available at mmadsenbibeau@gmail.com or by cell at 860-597-4223. Friday will be her usual day off, and Mondays and Saturdays will 'flex' to

accommodate scheduled meetings/programs and to allow for visitation.

Please contact Pastor Michelle with pastoral care emergencies even on her day off; if she is not able to respond immediately, she will hear your voicemail or see your email shortly.

Pastor's Scheduled Meetings & Programs, March 2019

Friday, March 1st 12-2pm

Together in Ministry Meeting, Southington

Wednesday, March 6th 12-1:20pm

Yale Seminary Lunch and Lecture, New Haven

Thursday, March 7th 12-1pm

Racial Justice Ministry Book Club (Zoom)

Thursdays, March 14th-28th 7pm

Islam Lecture Series at First Church, West Hartford

Saturday, March 16th 8am-3:30pm

Super Saturday, Wilbraham, MA

Submitted by

Pastor Michelle Madsen-Bibeau

SUNDAY HOSPITALITY SCHEDULE

The Committees responsible for hosting the fellowship hour after Sunday worship service for the upcoming few months is as follows:

March **Diaconate**
(at HCC)

April (bat FCCH)
(at FCCH)



To be sure there will be coffee and treats after each service, members of the assigned committees are asked to update the sign-up sheet in the normal places at each Church.

Pennies from Heaven Collection



February – May

In support of our youth going to Silver Lake Summer Camp!

Thank you to all who brought in change in the month of January!
Our collection continues next month at HCC, so keep collecting!

As always, thank you for your support!

MARDI GRAS Pancake Supper

Tuesday, March 5th

5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

FCCH Fellowship Hall



Adults: \$10 Children (under 12): \$5

\$25 Family max (2 adults & unlimited children)

Tickets sold in advance during coffee hour or at the door!

*This event is a fundraiser to help our youth attend
Silver Lake Summer Camp!*

ASH WEDNESDAY Worship

The Higganum United Methodist Church will be conducting an Ash Wednesday service at 7pm on March 6th. All are invited to attend.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Working Group Updates – Sunday, March 3rd following worship

Cottage Meetings – Monday, March 4th, to Saturday, March 16th

Diacurate Meeting – Monday, March 11th at 7pm

All-Church History Timeline Exercise – Sunday, March 17th following worship

Board of Finance – Monday, March 18th at 7pm

Joint Council Meeting

Tuesday, March 19th beginning at 7 p.m.

Council meetings are open to all Church members, however only members of the Council shall have a vote as provided in our Bylaws.

H.C.C. TRUSTEES

As we head into March, we see many things happening! The beginning of Lent with Ash Wednesday on the 6th and Daylight Savings Time starting Sunday the 10th. Of course, next is St. Patrick's Day and the celebrations that go with it on Sunday the 17th. Finally, we turn to the First Day of Spring on the Wednesday 20th! We are hopeful for warm and subtle beginnings as we move towards better days.

“ May the Road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face and the rains fall soft upon your fields. And until we meet again, May God hold you in the palm of his hand. ”
“God Bless Us All!”

NAME THE CHURCH

Several Working Groups were formed to look at areas affected if we were to merge our two churches. One of these groups is looking at potential names for the church. We would like your ideas and suggestions. Please send them to either Dawn Alger, Kristin Battistoni, Patty Blodgett, Cynthia Nicastro or Terry Smith.

*Submitted by
Terry Smith*

NOTE FROM THE DIACONATE

Love was in the air this past February as well as the excitement in welcoming Pastor Michelle Madsen – Bibeau to our church family. The Diaconate voted unanimously in favor of offering her our Interim Pastor position. She started preaching on February 24, 2019. We look forward to Lent as a time to reflect and heal old wounds as we grow together in fellowship. The Haddam Volunteer Fire Department reached out to us again this year, to see if we were interested in participating in their Fire Emergency Open House (Tomi had started our interest in this wonderful community event). Unfortunately, the date they chose, Saturday, April 20, 2019 from 10-1, is during Holy week and the end of school vacation

week, so we had to decline this year. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact HVFD. We offered up our popcorn popper and lemonade mix to help defray costs. The switch to Go Now in Peace as the sung Benediction has been warmly received.

Important Dates for your calendar:

March 6 Ash Wednesday Service at Higganum Methodist Church

April 18 Maundy Thursday Service at HCC at 7pm

April 21 Easter Sunrise Service at 6:30 am at Haddam Meadows and 9:30 at FCCH

Sue Craffey - Head Deacon FCCH

SUMMARY OF DIACONATE FEBRUARY ACTIVITIES

1. We declined an invitation to participate in the Haddam Emergency Services Fair and Open House. The date is April 20, and this is the day before Easter and the last weekend of school break. We felt we would not be able to support it this year. Maybe next year.
2. Participated in final review of the terms/conditions with Interim Minister Michelle Bibeau.
3. Canceled all scheduled Pulpit Supply from February 24th to March 31st.
4. Authorized with some conditions, allocating \$250 from each church to be used for a Security Deposit for a former homeless family in Haddam. The money will come from the community grant that each church received last year. This deposit money will be returned to the donors when the family moves out.
5. Working with local churches regarding the creation of a Community Wide Church calendar.
6. Met with local clergy and lay people to discuss the local divisions within the community that has led to mean spirited dialog at town meetings. We talked about how the church community might help in healing this attitude.

INTERIM PROCESS: HISTORY TIMELINE EXERCISE

Make your mark!

Join Pastor Michelle following worship on Sunday, March 17th, to share our congregations' stories as we create a giant Timeline of the history of the two churches. Listen in worship for more information about this fellowship and learning event!

*Submitted by
Pastor Michelle Madsen-Bibeau*

SUPER SATURDAY – MARCH 16TH

Want to know more about...

- The United Church of Christ
- Children's Spiritual Development?
- Resources for Environmental Justice Work?
- How to Support Refugees?
- Spiritual Growth in Retirement?
- Forty-nine Other Topics?

Super Saturday happens only once a year, and it's coming up on March 16th. See the link below for (much) more information, and speak to Pastor Michelle or one of the Deacons if you are interested in attending with a group from Haddam/Higganum.

<https://www.macucc.org/eventdetail/11156586?>

LENTEN SERMON SERIES: “COMPASSION”

During the Sundays of this Lenten season, Pastor Michelle will explore the theme of “Compassion” (“feeling with”) in a series of messages focused on the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings for upcoming Sundays.

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| <u>March 10</u> | Luke 4:1-13 – Entering Wilderness |
| <u>March 17</u> | Luke 13:31-35 – People Watching |
| <u>March 24</u> | Luke 13:1-9 – Visiting the Ruins |
| <u>March 31</u> | Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 – Welcoming Back |
| <u>April 7</u> | John 12:1-8 – Anointing for Burial |

7. Our churches will not host Ash Wednesday Service. The Higganum United Methodist Church will host an Ash Wednesday service.
8. St. Peter's will host an Easter Sunrise Service in their parking lot.
9. We plan on hosting a Maundy Thursday service at HCC as well as the 6:30am Easter Sunrise service at Haddam Meadows.
10. A Pastoral Relations Team will need to be formed to work with our Interim Minister.
11. We need to identify how to improve the quality of the microphone being used at FCCH. A solution is being looked at and may be ready by the end of February.

*Submitted by
Terry Smith, Head Deacon HCC*

COTTAGE MEETINGS

Day	Date	Time	Host
Mon.	3/4	7-8:30pm	Greg Shields Sue Henehan
Thu.	3/7	5-6:30pm	Sue Craffey Amy Harlow @ FCCH
Sat.	3/9	10- 11:30am	Ginny Evensen @ HCC
Tue.	3/12	7-8:30pm	Bruce and Carol Ricker
Wed.	3/13	7-8:30pm	Terry and Carol Smith
Thu.	3/14	7-8:30pm	Jack and Ginny Murphy
Sat.	3/16	7-8:30pm	Sam and Pam Crum

Interim Process: Cottage Meetings

Cottage Meetings are an opportunity for Pastor Michelle to get to know our congregations and for us to ask her questions. Light refreshments will be served following a structured conversation. Each member/friend of the congregation should sign up as a participant for ONE cottage meeting session on one of the signup sheets available at the church (or by calling the Office). If you are not able to attend any of the scheduled Cottage Meetings, please let Pastor Michelle know; additional Cottage Meetings will be scheduled to fill the need.

Submitted by Pastor Michelle Madsen-Bibeau

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY



Tuesdays: March 12th, 19th, 26th and April 9th and 16th

10am at First Congregational Church of Haddam

Pastor Michelle will lead discussion of themes from the apostle Paul appearing in Lenten readings from the Revised Common Lectionary. These are wonderful and likely very familiar passages that we won't be able to fit into our Sunday worship services. Participants are welcome to come for a single session or all five; Pastor Michelle will be happy to email materials to those who are interested.

The themes/passages from which our conversation will 'jump off' are listed below.

March 12th

"No Distinction" - Romans 10:8b-13

March 19th

"Citizenship in Heaven" - Philippians 3:17-4:1

March 26th

"New Creation" - 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

April 9th

"Gains and Losses" - Philippians 3:4b-14

April 16th

"Emptying and Exaltation"- Philippians 2:5-11

Submitted by

Pastor Michelle Madsen-Bibeau

PRAYING FOR AND SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER

Many of us have been in prayer for our colleagues in the United Methodist Church which met late in February to consider options for the denomination going forward as relates to inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals.

For an update regarding votes taken and their likely repercussions see:

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/february/united-methodist-lgbt-vote-conference-plan.html>

To read an Open Letter to the United Methodist Church from UCC leaders Rev. Dr. John C.

Dorhauer, Rev. Traci Blackmon, Rev. James Moos, and Andrew Lang (Executive Director of the Open and Affirming Coalition of the UCC), see:

http://www.ucc.org/an_open_letter_to_the_united_methodist_church_02262019

Please be in prayer for those who are hurting, including LGBTQ+ individuals and allies whose 'church wounds' have been reopened by these recent events, and be prepared to offer support to Methodist friends and neighbors in this difficult time in their denominational life.

*Submitted by
Pastor Michelle Madsen-Bibeau*

ISLAM SERIES AT FIRST CHURCH WEST HARTFORD

The Rev. Dr. David D. Grafton, Hartford Seminary's Interim Academic Dean and Professor of Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations, will present a five-part series on Islam at the John P. Webster Library at First Church, West Hartford, in March and April.

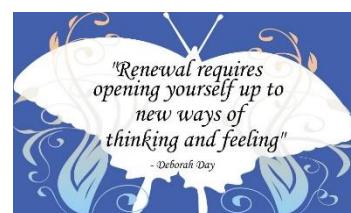
"North American Christians and Islam: Reframing the Views of a Dominant Culture" will take place at 7 p.m. on Thursday evenings during Lent, starting March 14 and ending April 11.

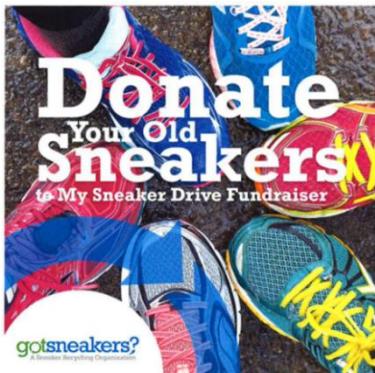
More information including titles for specific lectures is available at

<https://www.hartsem.edu/2019/02/interim-academic-dean-david-d-grafton-to-present-series-on-islam/>

Speak with Pastor Michelle, who lives in West Hartford and hopes to attend most of the series, if you are interested; perhaps we might arrange a meal before or a gathering after.

*Submitted by
Pastor Michelle Madsen-Bibeau*





GOTSNEAKERS? FUNDRAISER

To Benefit HK High School Project Graduation. Please donate unwanted, wearable sneakers (other shoes accepted also, but sneakers raise most funds). This helps our planet by reducing used shoes going into landfills. HK High School earns \$1 for every pair collected to help keep high school graduates safe on their graduation night! Sneakers are sent to help the more than 6 million people in the world who do not own shoes. Please bring them to a designated collection box by April 30, 2019. There will be a designated collection box available in the Fellowship Halls at both HCC and FCCH.

*Submitted by
Theresa Malone*

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

On Sunday, March 31st, our congregations will join others around our country to support the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering. One Great Hour of Sharing is one of the UCC's "Five for Five" offerings. To learn more about this opportunity to share the Love of God in tangible ways, visit <http://www.ucc.org/oghs>.



Neal Blodgett is showing Brayden McComas the Nativity Scene and Noah's Ark that he carved.

Puzzle!

Find and circle these words associated with the Lenten journey to the cross.

colt	denial	kiss	repent
confess	donkey	lots	silver
cross	forsaken	palms	sins
crown	Gethsemane	penance	suffer
crucifixion	Golgotha	Pilate	thorns
death	hosanna	prayer	vigil

E	N	A	M	E	S	H	T	E	G	R	L	W	Y
C	L	E	U	X	B	M	T	H	B	U	C	W	B
N	R	I	K	Y	P	A	T	E	T	I	Y	X	Y
A	V	J	G	A	L	B	R	E	Y	A	R	P	B
N	G	N	L	I	S	N	L	A	I	N	E	D	X
E	W	M	P	R	V	R	D	H	B	N	R	D	F
P	S	O	G	O	L	G	O	T	H	A	B	S	C
D	L	N	R	O	C	N	F	E	T	C	P	E	I
O	T	H	T	C	P	E	K	W	U	O	U	N	D
M	N	S	H	N	P	W	E	D	R	H	F	S	K
U	N	F	O	E	T	K	Y	C	S	G	F	O	E
H	E	C	R	E	V	L	I	S	W	Q	E	C	M
H	V	H	N	C	X	S	O	C	C	J	R	L	O
F	Q	E	S	U	D	H	C	A	Y	M	C		
C	R	U	C	I	F	X	I	O	N	S	R	V	

MEMBER'S CORNER



Do you have a special message to share with your Church family? If so, send it in for the Members' Corner!

MARCH CELEBRATIONS

MARCH BIRTHDAYS



Congratulations and Many More to:

- 1 Autumn Leavitt
- 2 Rebecca Evert
- Ray Pierdomenico
- Owen Hill ('10)
- 5 Margaret Lewis
- Dana Williams
- Andrew Tupay
- Colin Burns
- 6 Bob Murphy
- Frani Strever
- 8 Kari Johanson
- Matt Kravits
- 10 Jonathan Williams
- 12 Hannah DuPree Barton ('11)
- 13 Orion Parks ('09)
- Neal L. Blodgett Jr.
- 14 Michael Burns
- 17 Breck Crum
- 22 Amber Tucker
- 24 Karen Palmer
- 31 Walter Zanelli



From the Editor

From the Desk of the Editor

For a newsletter to be successful, contributions are necessary. I urge you to send in your stories, announcements or anything you think is a good fit for our newsletter to belfryeditor@gmail.com.

All suggestions and ideas are welcome.

Looking forward,
Stephanie Knopf Fitzgerald

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Church Office Hours
Tuesdays and Thursdays
from 2 - 6:30 pm

Please send your announcements to be included in the next edition of the newsletter to
BelfryEditor@gmail.com
by the 20th of each month.