

First Congregational United Church of Christ in DC

GABRIEL'S HORN

March 2011

(9 Gabriel Horn editions left until our move into 10th/G)

**A Just Peace, Open
and Affirming,
Multiracial and
Multicultural
Congregation
Intentionally
Inclusive...Expect
the
Unexpected**

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GOODBYE

by Peter Dennebaum

Dear First Church,

Always when it comes to the point of saying good-bye the music of "Time To Say Good-bye", by Andrea Bocelli and Sarah Brightman gets into my ear (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbN0g8-zbdY>). We usually don't understand the Italian lyrics, but the music expresses so much that we just need to dive into the music to understand what it is meant.

We depart now. For you and for me a new chapter will be opened. From all my heart I wish you:

Faith - that God guides you with trust and peace to the new identity you are looking for.

Community – that you talk with each other and listen to each other: across all ages, commissions and groups within the church – to find where your heart is!

Mercy – that you don't feel the burdens to carry everything anymore yourself; that you can hand over with the time more and more responsibility to new generations, that the leadership gifts of your wonderful staff can get optimal used in this transforming process of the next years.

What a wonderful opportunity for you to find for your heritage a new future!

I thank you for the love and all the wonderful hours we shared! The work we did together was unbelievable important; it has been an exceptionally deep and intense journey together!

God bless you, First Church! The future is waiting for you!

Peter

On March 6, 2011 First Congregational Church/UCC says God Speed to The Rev. Peter Dennebaum. The mutual decision to go our separate ways came in January when The Rev. Dennebaum's departure from FCC was announced. Over the last year, we have appreciated Peter's gifts of enthusiasm and energy and his spirit filled contribution to worship. We wish him well as he seeks a position that matches his gifts and call to ministry. We pray for him as he starts on his journey and send him off with this and our blessing: **May the road rise up to meet you, may the wind be ever at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face and the rain fall softly on your fields. And until we meet again, May God hold you in the hollow of his hand."**

Nan McConnell, Moderator, First Congregational Church/UCC

COUNCIL CAPSULE



There was a joint meeting of the newly elected Council, Commissions, Committees, and Task Forces on February 6, with supper provided by Nan. After the meeting was opened by Nan, we had a discussion of options for proceeding with staffing needs, etc., facilitated by resource leaders The Rev. John Deckenback and The Rev. Susan Henderson. Following this there was a time for commission breakouts, with Council members sitting in on the different commissions. A lot was accomplished in a short time! We then came back together and the breakout groups reported to the whole group. Council met briefly following this.

On February 22, Council met for a full meeting. First we attended to Council business: a detailed Treasurer's report from Lucille and reports from Commissions with lots of ideas, including encouraging participation by our young people in the worship service. Kim has made a spreadsheet of things we need to do, including due dates, for a smooth move back to 10th and G, and we discussed this. Communications were discussed, including the need for some improvement in the design, accuracy, and inclusiveness of the web site. Finally, we had a report from Peter, who is well pleased with the new Council structure. We discussed with him what loose ends we need to plan for after his final Sunday, for example the German choir that is coming in October.

Barbara Hayes

As First Church moves through a transition in pastoral leadership starting March 6, concerns and questions should be conveyed to our "Transition Connectors." FCC's three former moderators - **Randy Herrick-Stare, Ellen Bushmiller and Dale Ostrander** - have agreed to serve as liaisons between concerns from members and ensuring they are referred to the appropriate place for discussion and response. The Connectors will be consulted regularly so feedback is timely and responsive.



Nan McConnell, Moderator



NEWS FROM AROUND THE PARISH

by Joan King

We will be honoring and saying goodbye to **Peter Dennebaum** on March 6 and celebrating his ministry with us. As to his future plans, he is planning to take courses on interim ministry in March which may open new opportunities for ministry. We all pray for his success and happiness in the future, wherever his life and ministry take him.

Peter Byrne reports that, on March 13, **Karen Byrne** will be installed officially as the Pastor of Winslow Congregational Church, UCC, Winslow, Maine. The preacher will be our own **Barbara Brown Zikmund**.

Cynthia Hobbs writes: "We're thriving in Jamaica. The children are quite settled and their Jamaican accents and expressions are very cute. **Dylon** is in 1st grade and learning to read. **Liam** and **Jessica** are in pre-K and also learning to read (they start them early here!). All are taking swimming lessons at school and have become little fish in the water. **Edmond** has found his niche, working on art projects and riding his bike through the mountains. He has logged in more than 1,500 miles. People shout, "Go White Rider" as he breezes by!! I work long hours but the work is very satisfying, both in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. Need to escape the long winter? Come to Jamaica!



“P.S. We enjoy staying in touch through all the FCC e-mails. Makes us feel like we're still part of the family.

“P.P.S. We survived Liam's broken leg and his 8 weeks in Miami (last May - July). **Bonnie Ponwith** was wonderful, bringing home-cooked meals, carting Ed to the grocery store, taking Ed and Liam on an outing to the Miami aquarium, etc. It was nice to have the support of the extended FCC family. Liam is back to normal, running and jumping. You would never know he broke his leg!”

Patrick Darling-LaGamma earned his brown belt in Tae Kwon-do this month. He had to know many forms, spar and break boards. The judges reported that they were very impressed with his effort and how much progress he's made over the months.

The Council, the Worship Commission, the Music Committee, and all First Church members are pleased to welcome **Gary Fitzgerald** as Music Director for First Congregational Church. His resume is most impressive, and we look forward to enjoying all of his talents.



IN OUR PRAYERS: **Irving Gordon** succumbed to his multiple myeloma on Sunday, February 27. He died as he wished, at home with **Polly**. Irving asked that, instead of flowers, he (and Polly) would like contributions to be made to First Congregational Church -- his adopted church home. A memorial service will be held at FCC at 2:30 on Sunday, March 13. We keep Polly and Irving's families in our prayers.

A memorial service to celebrate **Phyllis Evans'** life will be held at First Church on Saturday, March 19th at 2:00.

Pat Ashbrook is recovering from hip replacement surgery in Sibley Memorial Hospital, and she is progressing well. She thanks everyone for their cards and well wishes and plans to be back home to her apartment soon. **Brooks Pumphrey** is still recovering in the Hebrew Home of Greater Washington, on Montrose Road in Rockville. **Bonnie Hardy's** daughter Melissa, age 31, had her third heart surgery at Johns Hopkins University Hospital. She is now recovering at home and will be back to job searching very soon.

ON THE MOVE: **Peg Lorenz** spent a week in Sarasota, Florida visiting Jan Lilnehan. “Basking in the warm sun was a welcome treat. Jan sends regards to those who knew her when she and Jack were active in the church.” **John, Carolyn, and Graham Marsh** went skiing for a few days recently. **Meg Maguire** will be spending nine days in California visiting her son, his family and several old friends. “Reve Maguire (2 1/2), accompanied by her cute little brother Jack (11 months), provides nightly entertainment, with dancing, giggling and clever things to say.” **Oley and Sally Olson** will be flying down to Rio March 3 to board a cruise ship which will take them to Montevideo, Uruguay and Buenos Aires, Argentina and back to Rio, arriving home March 19.

SERVICE SATURDAYS: First Church members reached out to the community again in February, as a small group of First Church members took Valentines Day greetings to residents of the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Northwest Washington, DC. **Kim Darling, Barbara Hayes, Meg Maguire, Dale Ostrander, Kay Rodgers, Priscilla Waters, and Lloyd, Amy and Brianna Dugan** participated.



During our visit, a Korean War Army Vet shared his story about helping the Third Division cover the Marines' fateful retreat from the North Korean "Frozen Choson Reservoir." His account of firing against overwhelming Chinese forces breathed life into the story of General Chester (Chesty) Puller shouting, "Retreat Hell! We're just attacking in another direction." **Kay Rodgers** also had a riveting discussion with a former German Prisoner of War. These brief exchanges enriched our understanding of history, and in

return, gave each man the opportunity to share a precious fragment of his life story, and validate the importance of his sacrifice for our freedom.

The Christian Education Commission is in the early stages of thinking about how to capture veteran's memories for the joint Smithsonian Folk-Life/Library of Congress Veteran's History Project. We feel that such a program will help to strengthen intergenerational ties, as well as reinforce our congregation's commitment to "just peace." Would you be interested in such a program? The members of the CE Commission welcome and look forward to hearing your opinions and ideas. Please share them with **Nancy Withroe, Sandy Sorenson, Bonnie Hardy** or **Priscilla Waters**.

Our next service opportunity will be March 19th at 9am. We will be cleaning up a DC park on behalf of Washington Parks and People. The exact park will be identified a couple weeks before, so keep your eyes open for an announcement of the exact location. In the meantime, please RSVP to **Kim Darling** (kdarling@sagcorp.com) if you are interested in participating, and she will forward you information when it comes in. Other dates: April 9th, Anacostia Watershed Clean-up; April 30th, DC Schools Serve-a-thon.

EXPLORING OUR FAITH An Intergenerational Event on February 27, 2011

By Bonnie Hardy



“I think we are trapped in a dungeon,” remarked a young First Church learner as he negotiated the narrow turns of the Catacombs of the Franciscan Monastery in Washington, D.C. This past Sunday, led by Ellen Bushmiller and the CE Commission, our intergenerational learners carried a prepared “I Spy” list of questions from Priscilla Waters. Spying symbols and answering questions we made our way together.

Gerald, our tour guide and Roman Catholic faith interpreter, guided twenty-one participants from First Church as we toured the worship space and catacombs.” It is a REPLICA,” Gerald reminded us as he slowly opened the doors to the narrow stone steps underneath the sign which read, “Bethlehem.” After turning the first corner, Gerald whispered, “Use your imagination to think about what it would have been like to be walking up this way to the Roman coliseum to meet a crowd of 50,000 people who hoped to see you eaten by wild beasts.”

Pointing to the walls, Gerald showed us how early Christians communicated with each other, by drawing pictures with secret symbols, rather than speak openly about their faith. Each room held another depiction or

relic, including the skeleton of a six year old child clothed in a dress, including a mask and small sandals. “This child reminds us of all of those who have suffered abuse,” reminded Gerald, pointing to the small remains.

The grounds of the monastery also invited exploration. Many young ones enjoyed skipping along the paths, while other children and adults pondered the architecture and signage surrounding the rose garden. A carving labeled “The Third Order,” caught the eye of several inquisitive learners. After Googling we learned that The Third Order included both men and women in early Christianity who claimed to wear the habit and participate in the great works of the monastery by being attached to the religious group, without living within the monastery walls.

Our tour concluded with a visit to the gift store. The children of First Church voted to leave a donation of their offering money in the basket as they thanked our guide, Gerald, for his engaging leadership.

Exploring Our Faith often includes informing ourselves about the faith of others, by connecting with the roots of the past as we move forward to God’s call for our future. You are invited to join us in our next adventure. Plans are in the works and will be announced in the CE weekly e-letter.

The combined commissions of Christian Education and Social Action are planning a youth nurture for April which will center around the unrest in the Middle East with particular attention paid to Libya. In preparation, we invite all who may be interested to attend the discussion, "Faith, Values, and Foreign Policy: U.S. Leadership in a Changing Middle East," led by Madeleine Albright and James Baker on Thursday, April 7, 6:30 p.m. at the National Cathedral. The cost is \$10. This will most likely be a popular event, so advanced ticket purchase is advised.

PREACHING:

A Lenten Journey: “WALKING INTO EASTER” with GORDON FORBES



During six of the next seven Sundays, the Reverend Gordon Forbes will be our preacher. Gordon was senior minister of Westmoreland Congregational UCC in Bethesda for 17 years. Recognizing that we are on a road to return to our new building and that we are a congregation in transition, we have invited Rev. Forbes to help us explore the biblical story about two disciples who walked the road to Emmaus long ago..

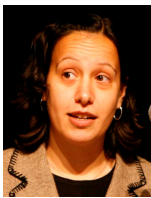
Sermon Series Theme: “Walking into Easter”

- March 13 “In the Dark” Matt. 4:1-11 and Luke 24:13
- March 20 “Incognito” John 3:1-18 and Luke 24:13-24
- March 27 Guest preacher Felix Carrion, Coordinator of the UCC Still Speaking Initiative
- April 3 “Broken, Shed, Healed” Luke 24:28-32
- April 10 “Take a Breath” Ezekiel 37:1-14
- April 17 “What Kind of King?” Matthew 21:1-11
- April 24 EASTER “He has Gone before You.” John 20:1-18

Gordon Forbes was born in Buffalo, NY, lived briefly in Albany, and then Detroit Michigan. He has led a checkered religious life as a Presbyterian, Lutheran, in a Jesuit High school, graduating from a conservative Christian prep school, and attending a college founded by Congregationalists. He was ordained 1959. His wife, Janet, is a certified religious educator and a graduate of Yale Divinity School. They are parents of three children, Christopher, Jeffrey and Lora—and the grandparents of four. Gordon is a published poet and has played in 20 musicals and several other dramatic plays ranging from Death of a Salesman to the king in

Camelot. He currently serves on the Board of the *Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation*, is a spiritual companion for five persons, and is a hospice visitor. He and Jan are members of Christ Congregational UCC of Silver Spring. We are blessed to welcome Gordon to the First Church pulpit and to help us during our season of transition.

Felix Carrion, Coordinator for the UCC *Still Speaking Initiative* (<http://www.ucc.org/god-is-still-speaking/>), will preach on March 27th. Felix is known to some First Churchers from his days as a staffer in the Office for Church Life and Leadership or for the leadership he provided for the implementation of the UCC's multi-racial multi-cultural initiative. He's preached at First Church in the past -- ask Barbara Hayes about his "God's Big Stew" sermon -- and is known throughout the UCC for his outstanding preaching and organizing skills. Felix will be in town for Ecumenical Advocacy Days (<http://advocacydays.org/lobby/lobbydayask.php>) which brings people of faith to DC to be inspired and equipped to speak boldly on a wide range of peace and social justice issues.



WANT MORE POWER AND LIGHT? When the non-profit environmental education/advocacy group called **Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light** is mentioned, people take notice. In marketing circles, a clever name means a lot. With its office in the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, GWIPL works with Christian, Jewish, and Islamic congregations and others to envision a profound connection between environmental and spiritual concerns, and to act together – across religious differences – to make that vision real. Specifically, GWIPL provides environmental education in congregations, offers practical suggestions for saving energy and going green, and mobilizes advocacy for responsible local and national policies and practices.

The FCC Social Action Commission chose GWIPL to receive our Second Sunday Offering on **April 10** and, with the Green Action Committee, designated that Sunday to be FCC's Earth Sunday. GWIPL Executive Director Joelle Novey will speak in the Adult Nurture on **March 20**. She will report on her efforts among hundreds of congregations. She will also challenge FCC to make the most of our mission as a congregation with a new LEED certified church.

INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING AT THRIVE DC? It has become increasingly difficult to round up a critical mass on the first Wednesday of the month, so the First Church volunteer group (all five of us!) has decided to give up our regular gig and volunteer as individuals. If you are interested in volunteering for either the morning (by far the most rewarding) or evening program, please contact Nathan Mishler, volunteer coordinator at Thrive DC and he can fill you in about dates and times. Nathan's email is: volunteer@thrivedc.org and his phone number is (202) 503-1528.



Thanks to all those faithful souls who have served first the Dinner Program for Homeless Women and then Thrive DC over the years. Who can forget: **John Mack's** vision and (dare one say) relentless dedication as DPHW's founding father; **Barbara Gerlach** in her baseball cap jiving with Wanda the cook; **Joan King** frying frozen beef livers in very hot fat (it splatters all over!); **Sylvester Jackson** singing along with his Billie Holiday tapes; **Norah Marsh** urging clients to "just try it" when there was something suspicious looking on salad bar nights; **Jennie Hunt** and **Bob Crossley** wearing the hated hairnets while chopping mountains of vegetables for Chef Kevin's stirfry; **Nick McConnell**, tie off and sleeves rolled up, arms deep in a sudsy sink; a pyramid of us perched on the less-than-pristine stairs at 10th and G eating our dinners. So many good memories; so much good work. We can be proud of ourselves and of First Church!



This year **WORLD DAY OF PRAYER**, the worldwide ecumenical movement begun 84 years ago by Christian women, will be held at Vermont Avenue Baptist Church in DC on Friday, March 4th at 10 a.m. Women of Chile have written the celebration, inviting reflection on the meaning of the theme *How Many Loaves Have You? What are your gifts? What can you share?* **Anne Griffis** is a member of the planning committee.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS



Meg Maguire, Tom Dinkelmeyer, Marie Rietmann, Anne Nelsen, Peg Lorenz, Harry Knox, Kate Sparks, Claricia Cummings, Byron Adams, David Greer, Barbara Gerlach

COFFEE HOUR HOSTS FOR MARCH

- 6 Meg Maguire, Dale Ostrander, Judith Oliver
- 13 Nancy Withbroe, Paul Smolinsky, Liz & Lance Warren
- 20 Barbara Brown Zikmund, Joe Zikmund, Nan & Nick McConnell
- 27 Anne & Tom Mascolino, Nora Marsh, Dwight Marsh



CALENDAR FOR MARCH

Sunday, March 6

- 11:00am - Outreach & Membership Commission
- 12:00pm - Bible Workbench
- 12:15pm - Choir Rehearsal
- 1:00pm - Worship Service
- 2:00pm - Fellowship Hour
- 2:30pm - "Goodbye" for Rev. Peter Dennebaum

Monday, March 7

- 7:00pm - Social Action

Tuesday, March 8

- 6:30pm - Council

Wednesday, March 9

- 12:00 pm – Ash Wednesday Worship, Lincoln Temple United Church Of Christ

Thursday, March 10

- 7:30pm - Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, March 13

- 11:00am - Care Of Parish
- 12:00pm - Bible Workbench
- 12:15pm - Choir Rehearsal
- 1:00pm - Worship Service
- 2:00pm - Fellowship Hour
- 2:30 pm – Memorial Service for Irving Gordon

Wednesday, March 16

- 7:00pm - Homecoming Task Force

Thursday, March 17

- 6:00pm - Facilities Commission
- 7:30pm - Choir Rehearsal

Saturday, March 19

- 9:00am - Service Project: Help clean up a park through Washington Park and People
- 2:00pm - Phyllis Evans' Memorial Service

Sunday, March 20

- 12:00pm - Bible Workbench
- 12:15pm - Choir Rehearsal
- 1:00pm - Worship Service
- 2:00pm - Fellowship Hour
- 2:30pm - A Conversation with Joelle Novey

Thursday, March 24

- 7:30pm - Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, March 27

- 11:00am - Christian Education
- 12:00pm - Bible Workbench
- 12:15pm - Choir Rehearsal
- 1:00pm - Worship Service
- 2:00pm - Fellowship Hour
- 2:30pm - Nurture: "God is Still Speaking"

Monday, March 28

- Deadline for Gabriel's Horn

Thursday, March 31

- 7:30pm - Choir Rehearsal