



*THE CIRCLE CHURCH NEWS*  
*February 2015*

*North Madison Congregational Church*  
*1271 Durham Road*  
*Madison, CT 06443*

From Pastor Jim . . .

Once in a while life requires us to make a major decision: change jobs, retire, choose a college, quit playing a sport, enter Confirmation, marry, end a relationship, join a church, have a child, let a child become independent, move into a retirement home, downsize, follow Jesus...

As a person of faith you probably want to discern God's Mind about your decision: What might God be trying to reveal to you? It would be nice if God's Mind and Will were nice and clear. But that usually isn't the case.

On Sunday, January 18, I offered a sermon entitled, "Speak Lord, for Your Servant Is Listening" (based on John 1:43-51; 1 Samuel 3:1-10) in which I shared a story from my own life where I struggled several years to discern God's Mind for a major decision. Toward the end of the message I shared six points that helped me. A number of people have asked for them again. In addition, a podcast of every sermon message is now available on the church's website. With a simple "click" of the computer mouse you can listen again anytime.

**Six Points to Help Discern God's Mind for a Decision**

1. **Have Faith** – expect God's guidance.

- Theologian Fred Craddock puts it, "Revelation in the biblical sense is never open and obvious to everyone. There is always about it a kind of radiant obscurity, a concealing that requires faith to grasp the revealing."
- In 1 Samuel chapter 3, the old priest Eli, taught the young Samuel to listen for God "voice" and how to respond. God "speaks" in many ways. Be on the lookout.

2. **Calm / peace** – God usually doesn't call us to make a major decision when we are in crisis, but rather in a place of calm.

- A helpful acronym: H.A.L.T. – Don't make a major decision if you are Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired.

3. **Particular** - God calls us to particularities rather than to generalities.

- Theologian Diane Roth wrote, "The word we receive is never general, always particular – and it is a good word but not necessarily an easy one. God will not just tell us to forgive people; God will send us to forgive a particular person. God will not tell us just to love people, but will send us on a particular mission of loved – embodied."
- Our "Getting Focused with Purpose" initiative is about exactly this: what *particular* impact is God calling NMCC to have in our wider community?

4. **Taps into your passions and natural talents** – God rarely calls you into a major new thing that requires extended use of things you aren't naturally good at and have no interest in.

5. **Persistent** – if the Holy wants something for you, She will persist. Sometimes annoyingly so.

6. **Validation** – circumstances will tend to support the path God intends. You'll find the energy required to embrace this new thing is less than the energy required to continue resisting it. It becomes the path of least resistance. In addition, those who know you well and truly want the best for you will tend to support this new path.

Yours in Faith,  
Pastor Jim

## Included in this Newsletter:

### **Getting Focused with Purpose Christian Education**

Children's Church - Junior Youth Group - Senior Youth Group - SYG Mission Trip

### **Missions**

Columbus House

### **Fund Raisers**

Grocery Card Fundraiser

### **Get Involved / Stay Connected**

Fire in the Kitchen Concert - Ash Wednesday - Eagle Watch - Nominating Committee Expo -

Yoga- Children's Pageant DVD - Church Cancellations -

Online Giving Now Available - Help Us Get the Word Out on Facebook - Photos Wanted -

Coffee Hour and Flower Sponsors Needed

### **In the News and Noteworthy**

Fire in the Kitchen - Morgan Werth - Devon Piekarz - Sanna Stanley

## - Getting Focused with Purpose -



**Getting Focused With Purpose (GFWP):** GFWP is a process designed to help us effectively link the internal with the external by matching the gifts/talents of NMCC with the needs of the wider community. In theological terms, what particular impact for the Gospel of Jesus Christ is God calling us to make in our wider community?

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, after worship, 51 of us lunched in Fellowship Hall and, led by Sandy Dickson, explored our many talents and gifts and began to consider how we might be able to share these with the wider community. The activity was conducted by the "Engagement" team.

Six groups of 7-8 rotated through six stations, compiling on easel pads each participant's heartfelt contributions and opinions regarding six questions.

- What about this congregation made you want to join / attend this church?
- What have you heard visitors, friends, and neighbors say about our church?
- What do you value most about this congregation that keeps you here?
- What activities do you engage in that make you feel most connected to God (in or out of church)?
- What activities do you engage in that make you feel most-connected to this church?
- What talent do you think God wants our congregation to share with the wider community?

(A number of people who couldn't attend this event submitted their responses to the questions via email. We invite yours too if you if couldn't participate. Your voice is important! Please email them to [Jim@JimLatimer.org](mailto:Jim@JimLatimer.org).)

When, after this activity, Pastor Jim asked for responses, the comments were truly uplifting. Among these were an appreciation as to the collective acceptance of (indeed, appreciation of and respect of) our diverse opinions. We recognized the many activities in which we engage as both individuals and groups. It was wonderful to get to know better the members of our group.

Sandy will compile the many words and phrases coming from the six topics and attempt to "nuggetize" the themes that emerge. These will be communicated, perhaps in next-month's newsletter, and will be combined with reports from the "Discovery" Stream team as we continue the GFWP Initiative.

Many thanks to those providing the food and to the many who came together and grew closer by participating in this important GFWP activity.

Please feel free to contact Pastor Jim or any of the team leaders listed above if you have further questions or comments.

By way of background, five "streams" (teams) were established in November of 2014 to guide us through the overall initiative. Both the leadership and the membership of these continue to evolve.

- Project Management - Roberta Hanlon and Tom Lauher, leaders
- Discovery (exploring and defining the needs of the greater community) - Jim Farrales and John Gallops, leaders
- Engagement - engaging the Congregation in the Process - Peter Haff and Jim Latimer, leaders
- Communication - Roberta Hanlon and Peter Meier, leaders
- Measuring Success - John Nassif, leader

Several additional members have already agreed to participate in one or more of these teams. Your participation on one of these five teams is encouraged. Just contact one of the leaders.

## -Children and Youth Ministries -



**Children's Church *preschool - 8th grade*:** Thanks to the many volunteer teachers, our children are greeted with love, care and loads of fun filled Sundays when they enter a Children's Church classroom. We are currently running three classrooms: preschool -1<sup>st</sup> grade, 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grade, and 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Current Rotation - Discovering God Everywhere:

Jan 11, Jan 25, Feb 1, Feb 8.

February 15 - NO Children's Church downstairs. Please enjoy this opportunity to worship as a family upstairs.

Next Rotation:

Feb 22, March 1, March 8, March 15

You will find our children experiencing **Communion** with the entire congregation as an extended church family and on these Sundays there will be no Children's Message.

During the remaining Sundays, you will discover the talents of an entirely different group of volunteers from our congregation. Members are stepping forth and offering moving and personal messages for our children during the **Children's Message** portion of our worship service and we are so appreciative of their talent and passion for providing for our children!

Please email either Rene Chin at [2bachin@comcast.net](mailto:2bachin@comcast.net) or Karen Murphy at [timmurphy6050@att.net](mailto:timmurphy6050@att.net) to ask questions, receive emails or VOLUNTEER to help with our lovely group of children.



### **Junior Youth Group 7th and 8th graders**

**January** - Our first gathering of the new year found the teens cooking for members of our congregation. They made savory meatloaves and zucchini muffins from scratch. They put their stamp on their products as they labeled the food and placed in our freezer for Deacons to distribute as needed. Music was blasting, giggles were heard, and new skills were discovered.

A truly solidifying activity that the teens are begging to do again!

Our next dates to gather together are:

Feb 20: activity and details will be emailed out shortly

March 20: activity and time TBA

April 24-26 Mission Trip to Boston, MA.

Please email either Rene Chin at [2bachin@comcast.net](mailto:2bachin@comcast.net) or Karen Murphy at [timmurphy6050@att.net](mailto:timmurphy6050@att.net) to be added to the email distribution list OR for any questions about our next event.

### **Senior Youth Group 9th - 12th graders**

**December** - The Senior Youth Group celebrated Christmas with dinner together followed by a Yankee Swap. There was minimal swapping due to the inexperience of the SYG at a Yankee swap however the most sought after gift was a large cereal bowl, Life cereal and a quart of milk. The gift that nobody could give away was two Tide Sticks. A huge **Thank You** to Mrs. Shea, Pastor Jim and Mr. Murphy for chaperoning the event.

**January** - Our first meeting for the year started with a discussion on new things. New Year's resolutions, trying new activities etc., however introducing a new game to the SYG failed and that resulted in playing their favorite game - Human foosball.

Our next dates to gather together are:

Jan 31: Bowling at East Haven AMF

Feb - no meetings (scheduling conflicts)

March 1: at the Church

March 28 or 29: TBD

The Senior Youth Group is a part of the NMCC family and is open to all high school students that are willing to have some fun, volunteer helping others and open to spiritual based belief discussions. SYG meets twice a month at the church and during the summer goes on a week-long Mission trip. If you are interested in being a part of the SYG or have any questions please contact: Jeff Chin ([jrchin5@comcast.net](mailto:jrchin5@comcast.net), cell:203.901.3498) or visit the SYG webpage at <http://northmadisoncc.org/youth/senior-high-youth-group/>.

## Mission Trip



**NMCC Senior Youth Group Mission Trip:** This year the SYG will be traveling to Blue Knob, PA from July 26 to Aug 1 for their annual mission trip. We will be working with *TeamEffort* and helping the impoverished. If you are in high school and interested in going, please contact Jeff Chin ([jrchin5@comcast.net](mailto:jrchin5@comcast.net), cell: 203.901.3498).

## - Missions -

### Columbus House



**Columbus House - 2015:** Help us keep the spirit going! We serve our hot breakfast the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday every month - youth are always welcome and add extra sparkle for our residents. What's involved? Sign up to purchase and cook eggs (9 dozen), toast (8 large loaves and spread), OJ (5 gallons plus 75-100 cups), potatoes (20 pounds) or sausages (150). We try to carpool or you can meet us at Columbus by 6:30 am so help prepare and serve to 60 to 80 residents. Minimal clean up involved. And you always leave feeling that you've made a difference. If you have any questions, please contact [Peter Meier](#) (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday teams) or [Roberta Hanlon](#) (4<sup>th</sup> Saturday teams).

## - Fund Raisers -



**Grocery Card Fund Raiser:** Feed the church when you buy groceries using grocery cards purchased at NMCC. Grocery cards are available every Sunday morning after service in fellowship hall for Stop and Shop, Robert's, Big Y, and Shop Rite. Buy these grocery cards from us to use at the grocery stores where you normally shop. You pay face value, your grocery card is worth face value, and NMCC earns five cents on the dollar of every grocery card you purchase. It's really that simple! We're looking for volunteers to help sell cards after church. Please contact Calvin Price at [wildwood9@msn.com](mailto:wildwood9@msn.com) or 203-245-8566 if you're able to help out.

## - Get Involved / Stay Connected -



There are so many ways to get involved in making NMCC a vibrant community not only through the work of the Missions Committee but helping out, sharing your skills, learning new ones enjoying the fellowship that naturally follows through working on projects together. Visit our "[Get Involved](#)" web page for ongoing news at [northmadisoncc.org](http://northmadisoncc.org).



### Fire in the Kitchen Concerts:

**The Revelers Big Mardi Gras Party - February 7, 7:00 pm:** The Revelers, New Orleans biggest super-group of Cajun/Zydeco and swamp pop music comes to the Fire In The Kitchen Concert Series for a big Mardi Gras party! The Revelers combines the talents of two legendary groups, the Pine Leaf Boys and the Red Stick Ramblers, and use their musical superpowers to unleash a torrent of fun. Combining old-school Cajun and Zydeco, they throw twists and turns to make a unique sound that's worshipped down on the Bayou. Right after visiting Madison, they'll be

going back down south to headline at Mardi Gras.

Even better, there's a free workshop at 3:00 pm, where you can learn to swing a dance the Bayou way. Get those chops ready for your own Mardi Gras party! We'll keep the side room open for a full-on dance hall, the main room for regular concert seating, and have Ashley's custom blend of Bananas Foster ice cream after the show. Adults, \$30, kids high school and under, \$5.00. For reservations or information call 203-668-3735.



**The John Jorgenson Quintet - Saturday, March 7, 7:00 PM:** It's the return of multi-Grammy winner John Jorgenson. He'll be bringing his award-winning Gypsy jazz quartet for a night of high-octane jazz. It's the music of Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grapelli, but played with such verve that many consider John the world's greatest guitarist. Those who know John know his place in music history: a founding member of the Desert Rose Band, guitarist for Elton John's touring band for years, founding member of the Hellecasters, and the

man chosen to play the legendary Django Reinhardt in the movie about Django. His band is equally accomplished, and those who have seen John at the Fire In The Kitchen concert series previously know that this is some of the most astounding music one will ever hear in a small venue. Adults \$25, kids high school and under, \$5.00. For Reservations or information, call 203-668-3735



**Ash Wednesday - February 18 at 7:00 PM:** Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season of Lent with a reflective Ash Wednesday worship service that inspires us to consider the meaning of our lives and call us to recommit to our own personal spiritual growth during the days leading up to Holy Week and Easter. Come join us for this special service.

### Eagle Watch Tour: *"And he will bear you up on eagles' wings!"*



How fortunate we are that every year in our state, Bald Eagles make their way down the Connecticut River from colder climes. Winter is the very best time to see them. As part of our Adult Enrichment offerings, Mike DiGiorgio will lead NMCC friends on a land-based tour to see eagles on Saturday, February 28. We will make four stops along the Connecticut River, from Haddam to Essex. Hiking is not required, just short walks from parking lots to overlooks. Mike will bring a telescope, and all are encouraged to bring binoculars. He will point out differences between adults and juvenile eagles, and will also be on the lookout for hawks, Merganser ducks, and seals. If lucky, we may even spot a Golden Eagle!

We'll meet in the church parking lot at 10 A.M. and carpool to the river. Maps will be provided. Afterward, we can stop at Oliver's Restaurant & Taverne in Essex for a warming cup of hot chocolate and/or lunch. *Dress warmly!* And be sure to sign up early in Fellowship Hall. A nominal fee of \$5 per person or \$15 per family will be charged, to benefit NMCC.



**Nominating Committee Expo:** Coming on March 1.....Mark your calendars! In Fellowship Hall after church on Sunday March 1 the nominating committee will be holding a gathering to highlight the NMCC committees, boards and various other volunteer activities that make our church what it is today.

Please stop by to talk to members from these various groups and learn more about the good things we are doing in our church and in the community.

Refreshments and other goodies will be served. Hope to see you there.

For Further information or questions please contact your nominating committee Peter Haff, Dawn Barber, Melissa Blundon, and Stacy and Charlie Shafer.



**“Yoga at the Circle”:** Join us for our next session! Ellen, our much-loved Kripalu trained teacher, is leading us on Monday nights from 6:30-7:30 through March 9 (no class on 2/16). Ellen is wonderful at accommodating a variety of needs and experience levels, so all are welcome, whether you have been practicing for years or are new to yoga. Teens are welcome to join us too. Wear comfortable clothing that will allow you to bend and stretch and bring a yoga mat (a necessity- available at discount stores such as TJ Maxx for about \$15.00). The cost for the seven week session is \$49.00 (\$7.00/class). If you prefer to join us on a walk-in basis, each class is \$9.00. Checks should be made out to NMCC. Bring yourself, bring a friend. All are welcome! Questions: Contact Karen Chapman at (203) 421-4834 or [krchapman@comcast.net](mailto:krchapman@comcast.net).



**Children's Pageant DVD:** Some of you mentioned that you'd like a copy of the DVD from the Children's Christmas Pageant. If you are interested, please contact the office by the end of January, so we can get a total and order them. [office@northmadisoncc.org](mailto:office@northmadisoncc.org) or 203-421-3241.



**Church Cancellation:** Notifications are available on NBC, CBS (WFSB) and ABC (both channel 8 and Mytv9). We will also post cancellations on the home page of our website, [northmadisoncc.org](http://northmadisoncc.org), and on the church answering machine (pending our ability to get into the church to access the voicemail system) shortly after 8:00 am.



**Online Giving:** You can now manage your giving online! Giving online is easy and allows you to set up automatic recurring contributions and view your complete online giving history from anywhere you have access to the Internet. Contributions can be set up to debit automatically from your checking or savings account or your credit card. (Please keep in mind it is less expensive for us to process a donation from your bank account because of credit card fees.)

Our electronic giving program offers convenience for you and much-needed donation consistency for our congregation. Thank you in advance! Simply follow these easy steps:

1. Visit the church website at [www.NorthMadisonCC.org](http://www.NorthMadisonCC.org)
2. Click on the Online Giving tab at the top of our home page (2<sup>nd</sup> line)

3. Click on “click here to donate or pledge”
4. Click on the **Create Profile** button
5. Follow the onscreen instructions to create an online profile and to schedule your recurring contributions.

Scan to pay or give:



**Please Help us Get the Word out on Facebook:** If you have a Facebook page, and you see something on the church Facebook page you like, such as an event or a generosity story, it would really help if you could share it on your page. A lot of people already do this, but we want to remind everyone that it's a great way to add to our visibility and increase publicity. You can add our Facebook page to your friends list too! Thanks for helping get out the word on all the great things going on at our church!



**Photos Wanted:** Our Communications team is looking for your high quality photos of church members and friends at NMCC functions or events. We want to let others know about all the good things going on at NMCC! They will be used in our advertising and publications, like the website, Facebook, posters, newspaper ads, etc. Please deliver them to Carol Anne Bachhuber, either via flash drive or email, [carolanne@mosaic247.net](mailto:carolanne@mosaic247.net). Also feel free to contact her if you have any questions, via email or phone 203-747-4840. Thank you!



**Sunday Coffee Hour/Flower Sponsors Needed:** If you would like to donate flowers for a Sunday, or “sponsor” coffee hour by providing snacks (like bagels, muffins, fruit, cheese & crackers, etc.) or with a monetary gift, please sign up on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall or contact the church office at [office@northmadisoncc.org](mailto:office@northmadisoncc.org).

## - In the News & Noteworthy -



**NMCC and Members in the News:** We often spot an article in the local paper, *Patch* or in other news outlets, and have been posting them on our bulletin and our Facebook page. We'd like to expand the coverage and add a feature about this type of news in the monthly newsletter. Please send or drop off the news articles you find to the office at [office@northmadisoncc.org](mailto:office@northmadisoncc.org) and we'll be sure to include them!

There was a nice write-up in *The Source* and *New Haven Register* Calendar section about Mipso's concert at NMCC on the January 17 for their **Fire in the Kitchen Concert**.

**Morgan Werth** and **Devon Piekarz** were pictured in the January 15 edition of *The Source* as two of the Hand cheerleaders who traveled to London, England over the holiday break to perform in the London New Year's Day Parade.

Sanna Stanley just won a really cool recognition for her writing for children.



### SCBWI | Announcing the Winners of the SCBWI Jane Yolen Award

The SCBWI is proud to announce the winner and honor recipient of the 2014 Jane Yolen Mid-List Author Award. Congratulations to winner Sanna Stanley, writer and illustrator of such beautiful books...

SCBWI.ORG

## Office, Board and Committee Contacts:

Rev. Jim Latimer, Pastor	203-421-3241	Office Managers, Cathy Meier & Jackie Fix	203-421-3241
Director of Christian Ed, Morgan Aery	203-421-3241	Minister of Music, Linda Juliani	860-399-0210
Senior Youth Group Leader, Jeff Chin	203-421-3498	Choir Director, Bill Clemmons	203-421-3484
Circle Nursery School Co-Directors: Donna Perry, Kathy Niejadlik	203-421-0997		

### OFFICERS

Executive Committee Chair, Tom Lauher	203-245-1203
Executive Committee Vice Chair, John Nassif	203-421-5374
Members of the Board of Deacons*:	See Below
Clerk, Eileen McCann	203-318-0068
Assistant Clerk, Eric Piekarz	203-421-8569
Treasurer, John Gallops	860-460-8573
Assistant Treasurer, Calvin Price	203-245-8566
Financial Secretary - Disbursements, Cathy Meier	203-421-8377
Financial Secy. of Receipts, Susan O'Connor	203-457-1559
Asst. Financial Secretary - Receipts, Mike Effenecy	203-457-6901

\* Roberta Hanlon 203-421-4891; Karen Chapman 203-421-4834; Peter Haff 203-203-421-0295; Bruce Whittaker 860-669-5208; Jim Connolly 203-421-1184; Kate Davis 203-421-5848; Dawn Barber 203-457-1868; Sandy Dickson 203-421-1178; Beth Berestecky 203-421-3210

### BOARDS/COMMITTEES

Board of Christian Ed Chair, Rene Chin	203-421-3498
Board of Deacons Chair, Roberta Hanlon	203-421-4891
Board of Finance Chair, John Nassif	203-421-5374
Communications Chair, Roberta Hanlon	203-421-4891
Deacon's Service Chair, Melissa Blundon	203-996-0671
Fellowship Chair, Orlene Gallops	860-339-5844
Human Resources Chair, Holly Francis	203-245-7331
Missions Chair, Dawn Korik	203-298-8574
Music Chair, Eileen McCann	203-318-0068
Nominating Committee Chair, Peter Haff	203-421-0295
Pastoral Relations, Chair, Peter Meier	203-421-8377
Property & Planning Chair, Jeff Chin	203-421-3498
Quiet Ministry Chair, Linda Young	203-457-0723
Stewardship Chair, Jim Farrales	203-421-9323