

# The Spire

Congregational Church of Somersville  
United Church of Christ

February 2009



**Bible Study Thursday, February 12 – 7:00 pm** (submitted by Brent Damrow)

All are welcome to join in a study and reflection on the texts that will be used in worship on Sunday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>. I will lead a discussion primarily regarding the Gospel text (Mark 9:2-9) that describes the journey of Jesus with Peter, James and John up a mountain where Jesus was transfigured before them appearing in dazzling white with Elijah and Moses. This is a story that appears in all three synoptic Gospels and has fascinated Christians for centuries. We will look at the setting and context for the story of the transfiguration of Christ and I will be interested in hearing your thoughts and reactions. Not only do I think that our time together will be fruitful as we will have the chance to reflect on the text that will serve as the main source for preaching on February 22, I will use our conversation to consider the direction the sermon takes.

This is a technique that I learned about in my preaching course last semester and am very excited to experience it. In addition to the Mark text, we may also briefly look at Second Corinthians 4:3-6 and Second Kings 2:1-12. Whether you have ever been to a Bible study before or not – I think that this will be an enjoyable and enlightening time together. It would be helpful if you could read the Mark text before we get together, but it is not mandatory. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me either by e-mail at [brent.damrow@yale.edu](mailto:brent.damrow@yale.edu) or at 617-513-0185.



I will put a sign-up sheet downstairs on the bulletin board just so that I can get a rough idea of the numbers who are planning to participate. I would anticipate that we will be finished with the study around 8:30 or so. You do not have to sign up in order to come – it will just help me to prepare. I look forward to our time together.

## From the Pastor

Friends in Christ,

Regardless of our own personal political persuasions, the events of the recent inauguration of our 44<sup>th</sup> President have been quite wonderful in a few ways:

- The fact that our country has enjoyed more than 200 years of the nonviolent and orderly transfer of executive power is something amazing to celebrate.
- The nearly two million people who peacefully crowded the National Mall in hope and anticipation of witnessing a historic day is something amazing to celebrate.
- The progress in race relations that President Obama's election reflects is something amazing to celebrate.

In response to these developments, I offer the following prayers for your personal use this month:



### A Prayer for President Obama

O Lord, our governor, your glory shines throughout the world. We commend the new administration to your care and guidance, so that we may dwell securely in peace and be directed by your providence. Give President Obama the wisdom and strength to know your will and do it. Help him to remember that he is called to serve all the people and may he be a lover of truth and justice. Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

### A Prayer for the Political Opposition

In every time, God of all truth, you appoint prophets and sages to exhort your people and their leaders to walk in your way. Work through Republicans and our "third parties" so that President Obama and the Democratic majority in Congress may be held to account, refine their views, and work for the common good. We ask this through Christ Jesus. Amen.

I give thanks for our country and for our opportunity to be citizens of this land. May each of us live up to our responsibilities to our fellow Americans.

Peace and blessings,

*Graham Van Keuren*

**Christian Education**

**Thanks to ..**

- .. all who volunteered to take on “service opportunities” during January.
- .. those who gave to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mile Missions during January by supporting local food pantries.
- .. everyone who contributed to the success of the January Roast Pork supper.
- .. all who helped un-decorate the church from the holiday season.
- .. those who served on a Board this past year.



**Thanks from ..**

Denise Hannan and family .. “I want to thank my entire Church family for their kindness and support over the years of illness and especially over the recent loss of Dale. I know I don’t ever have to feel along with the love of this church. God bless each one of you.”

the family of Ginny Longueuil .. “Thank you to all of you for your thoughts and prayers and phone calls during this difficult time. It is so comforting to know how much Mom was loved and how many good friends we have in this Church.

**Opportunities in January**

	<u>Greeters</u>	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Reader</u>	<u>Fellowship Hosts</u>
Feb. 1	Roger & Carrie Carlo	Ed & Lois Sharpless	George Liberty	Deb Robidoux Johanna Karbonic
Feb. 8	Karen & Renee Blondin	Joan Lange Patrick Forbes	Pat Pinney	
Feb. 15	Joan Lange Marge Morgan	George Liberty Everett Baker	Carrie Carlo	
Feb. 22	Syd Cohen & family Patrick Forbes	Wayne & Jen Hare	Geneva Farnham	Karen & Renee Blondin

***Wednesday Bible Study*** (submitted by Rev. Van Keuren)

Wednesday morning Bible study continues to meet each week from 9:30-11 AM in the social room. All are welcome.

***Lenten Services***

One-half hour contemplative Lenten services begin on Ash Wednesday, February 25th, at 7PM. These services will continue every Wednesday in Lent until Holy Week, when the Maundy Thursday service will replace the Wednesday evening service. Please plan on attending in order to help you observe a holy and meaningful Lenten preparation for Easter. Evening activities on Wednesday in Lent are requested to begin after the conclusion of the service.



***Adult/Family Nights*** (submitted by Judy Liberty)

The adult series of movies or discussion with pot luck dinners will resume this month. Subjects and dates will be announced soon. Please join us whenever possible.

**Report of the Treasurer** (submitted by Sydney Cohen)



**TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART.  
DO NOT RELY ON WHAT YOU THINK YOU KNOW.  
PROV 3:5.**

	December 2008	YTD 2008	Budget 2008
Pledges	\$10,310.00	\$72,103.50	\$ 73,000.00
Income	\$ 18,097.45	\$138,181.40	\$ 105,925.00
Expenses	\$ 15,963.19	\$134,952.47	\$ 120,788.00

**December Collections**

Fundraisers-Designated- Ham Supper- \$1,952.00- went to the Cornerstone Foundation

**Monthly missions-**

Cornerstone- 280.00  
UNICEF---17.40- Total 335.65

The above Bible verse is one of my favorites. As treasurer, it is difficult to trust in the Lord sometimes, when you are looking at numbers that do not always look healthy. Though I admit, that at the end of each month, this past year, there was always something left over. This is why we cannot rely on what we think we know, even if it is pretty plain in black & white.

This Church ended the year with a gain of \$3,228.93, which is far better than we had budgeted. True, some of this was due to the input of the Endowment Fund, but it was the unexpected donations that were a surprise blessing! Also, the overall pledges were a testament to the faith giving individuals of the church community. 2008 was indeed a blessed year for our Church! Thanks be to GOD!!

#### Missions (submitted by Gen Farnham)

Missions would like to share this note of appreciation with the congregation. "Dear Friends, Thank you for your continued support and very generous donation of \$2232.00 to the Cornerstone Foundation. I am so grateful that during the past cold spell we were ready and able to help those who sought shelter from the frigid weather. To provide a clean warm bed, a hot cup of coffee, a warm coat or a pair of winter boots is a blessing. I wish that you could see their expressions of relief when they know they have a bed. As you know the shelter clients come to the kitchen for their meals. The "thank you" that we hear is so heart felt you wish you could do more. Please know that none of this could take place if it were not for your support and that of people like you. Thanks you for caring and sharing. You have made a difference. Peace & blessings .."



#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Mile Missions Collections**

Our annual collection for the Souper Bowl of Caring will be taken on Super Bowl Sunday, February 1.

Gen Farnham will deliver a mission moment during worship on February 8 to give us information on the 2<sup>nd</sup> mile of missions for the remainder of February ~ Silver Lake.

#### Ladies Aide Society (submitted by Barbara Baugniet)

All women of the church are invited to the Tuesday, February 10 pot luck luncheon (beginning at 12 noon) and meeting of the Ladies Aide. Bring a dish to share and place setting. Linda McEwen will hostess the afternoon. Officers and committees will be installed.

#### **Hygiene/Health Kit Collections**

There is a dire need throughout the country and world for Hygiene Health Kits for those hit by natural disasters. A collection box is in the social room for your donations. Please contribute: bath size bars of soap, combs, nail clippers, toothbrushes, band-aids and baggies. Please pick up any of these items as you are able and help us help those who are faced with devastation.



#### Fundraising Suppers (submitted by Ruth Bruch)



#### **Roast Pork Supper Recap**

There was plenty of snow on the ground and snow was in the forecast for January 17 – the day of our Roast Pork Supper. Roads, however, remained fairly clear throughout the day and precipitation held off in Somers until the middle of our second sitting. We did lose a few folks who were hesitant to come out, but we ended up with a good crowd and most seats were filled. Income (including bake sale) was \$1787.00 and our expenses were \$242.44.

#### **February 14 Valentine Supper**

The entrée for this supper will be something new and different for us; we'll be preparing baked stuffed shrimp that will be served with tossed salad, baked potato, mixed veggies, homemade rolls and breads, beverage and chocolate torte. As always, we will offer two sittings: 5 & 6:15 PM. The cost for this supper, however, will rise to \$15 for adults (3 shrimp) and \$8 for children (2 shrimp). Reservations are now being accepted and should be made by calling the office at 749-7741 or emailing [somcong@aol.com](mailto:somcong@aol.com). *Because our costs will be higher for this supper, we are asking anyone who helps during the supper and who eats afterwards to pay \$5 for his/her meal.*

There are still a number of opportunities for contributing to this dinner; (ie lettuce, bags of frozen mixed vegetables, dessert, Ritz crackers, etc) please check the sign up sheet in the social room or inquire by contacting Ruth at the office. Remember, the more we can contribute, the less our expenses are resulting in greater proceeds to help our church budget.

And, we will run a *bake sale* during the supper; please bake some cookies, bars, breads, cakes, pies, etc. We always sell out!



### **Looking Ahead**

Our March 14 supper will be corned beef.

### **This & That**

- *Board chairmen* with ended terms are reminded (per our Key Policy) to **turn in their church key** to Ruth in the office so keys can be reassigned.
- *Fellowship hosts* are needed for 2009. Light refreshment (a beverage - coffee, punch, cider, etc - and a light snack will suffice). Please sign up in the social room if you are willing to take on this opportunity. Anyone who stays for fellowship time is urged to take advantage of this opportunity.
- Boards are reminded to be sure the office gets a copy of *meeting minutes*; office staff will be responsible for posting a copy on the board in the social room.
- We'd still like to communicate via *email* with our church members and friends. If you have an email address, please share it with us at [somcong@aol.com](mailto:somcong@aol.com).
- The Spire is being posted on our new church website [www.somersvilleucc.org](http://www.somersvilleucc.org) and emailed to church members and friends.
- Any individual or Board wanting to be on the *February Cabinet agenda* should notify Graham, Ruth or Ray by February 5.



Just a  
Reminder...

### **Obama refashions America's old-time (civil) religion**

News analysis by Daniel Burke and Kevin Eckstrom Religion News Service  
WASHINGTON — Seeking to revive a dispirited nation, President Obama on Tuesday (Jan. 20) told Americans to get religion — civil religion.

“We remain a young nation, but in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things,” Obama said, quoting St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, in one of the few explicitly Christian references in his address.

Although at times Obama adopted the cadences of the black church that he called home for 20 years, he borrowed little of its content.

Instead, Obama’s inaugural address, like that of previous presidents, drew heavily on what scholars deem America’s civil religion: the transcendent ideals laid out in the Declaration of Independence and other foundational documents.

Those ideals are often assumed — but not always said — to be divinely inspired or granted. On Tuesday, Obama seemed to channel the spirit of President John F. Kennedy, who reminded a nation in 1961 that “the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God.”

“The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit,” Obama said, “to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness.”

America’s civil religion has been a fixture at inaugural ceremonies since George Washington’s, when the peaceful transfer of power at the high altar of American politics takes on an almost sacred air. Obama drew on Washington and other American icons as exemplars of banding together for the common good, a key tenet of civil religion.

“Throughout his speech he is challenging us to be ‘We the people,’” said the Rev. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, professor of African-American studies at Colby College in Maine.

But Obama’s unique personal history and the perils of the present moment added new elements to America’s old time religion, said Martin E. Marty, the religion scholar and former professor at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

“In talking about civil religion, you make a great deal of the power of the nation to do things,” Marty said. On Tuesday, “there was a twist; it wasn’t that the nation is perfect ... but that we have failed to live up to our ideals.”

Author and religion scholar Diana Butler Bass said the speech’s strain of modesty was a break from the past.

“This is very different from what you would have heard in the civil religion of the 1950s, which was a more jubilant exultation of American rightness, that we’re a chosen people,” Bass said. “This speech had much more of a ‘We’re an almost-chosen people.’ This is the kind of civil religion that Lincoln is famous for.”

The speech was also, she said, a classic example of the liberal Protestant tradition that Obama embraced through the United Church of Christ, a view of “an American future that is based on humility and inclusion rather than triumph and elitism.”

Though Obama said American ideals “still light the world,” he suggested they’ve been hidden under a bushel as the government tried to keep its citizens safe from terrorist attacks. American beliefs — particularly tolerance and diversity — are more effective than American bullets in fighting terrorists, Obama said.

“For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus — and non-believers,” he said.

Despite a handful of overt religious references, Obama’s nod to “non-believers” reflected the journey of a man whose parents were religious doubters, who didn’t find faith until he was an adult, and whose extended family practices diverse religions.

“The fact that he mentioned non-believers leads me to think that he is cognizant of not leaving us out,” said Lori Lipman Brown, director of the Secular

Brown was also heartened at Obama’s pledge to “restore science to its rightful place,” a veiled reference to criticism that religious ideology trumped research during the Bush administration — especially in the field of bioethics.

In a further break with his predecessor, Obama told “the Muslim world” that “we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect.”

Still, the bulk of Obama’s speech was addressed to Americans. The challenges may be new, he said, but the “values on which our success depends ... are old.”

“This is the source of our confidence,” the new president said, “the knowledge that God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny.”

## **About our Members & Friends**

### ***Birthdays***



Happy birthday greetings this month go to Ruth Bruch, Andy Cornish, Carlese Wood, Jeanne MacDonald, Jen Hare, David Cohen, Jason Robidoux, Joe Libby, Shelby Farnham, Phyllis Lumb, Dave Pinney, Brett Cleaver, Marilyn Hare, Tony Seibert, Bobby Bourque, Marge Harmon, Lori Arnone, Vic Netten, Amber Peters, Mary Unger, Faye Gately, Tyler Eldridge & Dan Dunn.

Couples celebrating anniversaries in February are Nick & Carlese Wood (52<sup>nd</sup>) and Ralph & Phyllis Lumb (68<sup>th</sup>!)

To all others having a special day in February, we wish you the best. Anyone wanting to share a celebration should contact Ruth in the office.

### ***Wedding Invitation***

Karen and Renee Blondin invite you to their wedding (having already been united in civil union) on February 22, Transfiguration Sunday. The wedding will take place during the normal Sunday service of the Lord’s Day at 10 AM. Though this is somewhat unusual in our contemporary society, through most of church history weddings were normally held as part of the regular community worship. . The total service on February 22 should be an hour and a quarter long, followed by a nice time of fellowship. Please join us as we celebrate the final Sunday of epiphany and share in Renee and Karen’s joy!

### ***Baptized***

Rowan Arlene Penhall, daughter of Chris & Erin Penhall, was baptized in our church on January 25, 2009. Godparents are Kevin Penhall and Sheri Mandirola. Maternal grandparents are Steve & Debbi Twitchell.



## **Congregational Church of Somersville**

### **Vision Statement**

We will be a faith-based church welcoming diversity, empowering the individual, growing in faith and doing God’s work in the global community in unity and love.

### **Behavioral Covenant**

- We will follow a process that includes unconditional listening and time to collect thought, enabling all individuals to comfortably express their opinions.
- Our actions and demeanor will support and empower all participants
- All opinions will be welcomed, reflectively considered and respected.
- Opinions will be expressed with humility, self-control, gentleness, and kindness.
- We will look for common ground as we search for consensus, and we will respect that consensus.
- We will affirm by our works and actions our common goal to serve God.

## Officers and Board Members Elected

### One Year Positions

Clerk	Ruth Bruch
Treasurer	Sydney Cohen
Asst. Treasurer	Johanna Karbonic
Collector	Marge Morgan

### Two Year Positions

Christian Ed.	Marj Butler (thru 2009) Erin Penhall
Missions	Geneva Farnham (thru 2009) Barbara Baugniet (thru 2009) Jean Foster Allison Matczak
Nominating	Judy Liberty Yvonne Wood
Stewardship	Linda McEwen Mavis Collins
Property	Everett Baker Nick Wood

### Three Year Positions

Moderator	Ray Foster
Deacons	Dave Pinney (thru 2009) Lois Sharpless (thru 2009) Wayne Hare (thru 2010) Yvonne Wood (thru 2010) Mark Farnham Elaine Hancock
Finance	Sue Comparetto (thru 2009) Chris Penhall (thru 2010) Al Andrews
Christian Ed.	Lisa Carriere (thru 2009)

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# February 2009

Rev. Graham Van Keuren, Pastor  
 Brent Damrow, Student Pastor  
 Sydney Cohen, Treasurer  
 Ruth Bruch, Clerk/Office Administrator

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Communion Souper Bowl Sunday	2	3 AA 6:15-8:30 PM Deacons 7 PM	4 Bible Study 9:30-11 Choir 7 PM	5 Cabinet requests due	6	7
8 Mission Moment 2nd Mile Missions for Silver Lake	9	10 Ladies Aid Pot Luck Luncheon 12 PM AA 6:15-8:30 Finance 7 PM	11 Bible Study 9:30-11 Choir 7 PM Christian Ed 7 PM	12	13 Supper Prep AM	14 Valentine Baked Stuffed Shrimp Dinner 5 & 6:15 PM & BAKE SALE
15 Cabinet 2nd Mile Missions for Silver Lake	16	17 AA 6:15-8:30	18 Bible Study 9:30-11 Choir 7 PM	19	20 Bible Study with Brent 7 PM	21
22 Spire Deadline 2nd Mile Missions for Silver Lake	23	24 Blair Manor Worship 10:30 AM AA 6:15-8:30	25 Ash Wednesday Bible Study 9:30-11 Lenten Service 7 PM Choir 7:30 PM	26	27 Tom & Elaine Hancock, Webministers	28

