

# The Spire

Congregational Church of Somersville  
United Church of Christ

January 2009

Happy New Year ☺ Happy New Year ☺ Happy New Year

## Annual Meeting

Our church's annual meeting (preceded by a pot luck supper) will be held on Saturday, January 24; supper at 6 PM and meeting to begin at 7 PM. All members and friends of the church are invited to attend. Reports from officers and boards will be reviewed; officers and new boards will be elected and we'll vote on the proposed budget for 2009. We'll also hear and consider any other business that may come up. Remember, we are all ministers of this church and all opinions and voices matter. Be sure to bring a dish to share and place settings(s).

Transportation can be arranged for those unable to get to the church on their own; please call the church office to make a request (749-7741).

Officers and board chairmen are to submit written reports to Ruth by Sunday, January 11.

Also, as we have done for the past several years, a roll call will be taken at the start of the meeting; members should be prepared to respond with a verse of scripture. Anyone unable to attend the meeting is encouraged to return a verse of scripture to be read in his/her absence.

I/we will be unable to attend the meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Please read this verse in my/our absence.



Member(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Return to Ruth Bruch, Cong'l Church of Somersville, PO Box I, Somersville, CT 06072

## From the Pastor's Desk ..

Friends in Christ,

I write with the news of a new addition to our home at 18 Maple Street. Jeffrey Alan Lepre, Jr. joined our family officially on Monday, December 29<sup>th</sup>, though he had visited a few times the previous week and some of you met him in church on Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup>. I know that many of you have been praying for Eric and me as we have sought to add a child to our family by adoption. Thank you for your prayers!

Jeff, a nine year old boy from East Hartford, is eagerly anticipating returning to live with his father, whom he loves very much. While Jeff's mom and dad are seeking to be reunited with him, they are having difficulty complying with the state's requirements since they both struggle with addictions and other issues. The state's permanency plan for Jeff no longer includes him being reunited with his parents, but if they are able to get better and properly care for him, he may go home to them. We plan to parent Jeff until his own biological parents are able to resume their role or we will be his "forever family" if circumstances allow and require us to do that. We still covet your prayers!

The changes in our household prompt me to make two observations:

1.) First, Paul writes that when Jesus came to us, God gave us "a spirit of adoption as children of God". As such, we became "fellow heirs with Christ" to God's family inheritance. I can newly appreciate the power of those comments. In my limited experience, the decision to adopt requires a profound commitment on the parent's part long before bonding and intimacy runs both ways. Sometimes the adopted person does not want to be there and he or she may resist the new relationship in ways both passive and active. But the covenant of God with us eternally remains in effect anyway, often in spite of ourselves.

2.) Second, our church has been so supportive of our decision to seek an addition to our family and I want to be sure to convey how much that has meant to us. I am so thankful for the power of our fellowship to encourage, uplift and strengthen one another. I'm not sure we realize how much the prayer and care of the community of faith can mean; you are agents of divine mercy to us and to one another.



May you and yours also be blessed in ways large and small in 2009, and may our church continue to grow in faith, hope, and love.

Faithfully yours,

*Graham Van Keuren*

## Thanks to ..

.. all who volunteered to take on “service opportunities” during December.



.. those who gave to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mile Missions during December by supporting local food pantries and the Giving Tree.

.. everyone who contributed to the success of the Holiday Ham supper.

.. all who helped decorate the church for the holiday season.

.. those who spread some cheer with their caroling

.. the pageant coordinators, participants, those who set up and dismantled the set.

## Thanks from ..

Roy Miller .. “Dear Graham & carolers – Joyce, Ruth & I very much appreciated your wonderful singing on the 18<sup>th</sup>. The joy you brought with your smiling faces and beautiful voices is a gift. It is so nice that you remember the “older” members of the church and visit them and deliver such a personal gift. It truly helps lift the spirits in this holiday season. Wishing you all a very happy new year.”

George & Judy Liberty ... “Once again carolers helped to make Christmas special. We are so grateful for their gift of song and good cheer. When we count our blessings, being a part of this community of faith is the greatest. God bless you.”



**Carolers L-R** –Holly Marek, Pat Pinney, Johanna Karbonic, Mavis Collins, Ed & Lois Sharpless, Graham Van Keuren  
Hidden - Diane & Mark Farnham, Elaine Hancock

## Opportunities in January

|         | <u>Greeters</u>       | <u>Ushers</u>                 | <u>Reader</u>  | <u>Fellowship Hosts</u>     |
|---------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Jan. 4  | George & Judy Liberty | Roger Pease<br>Mark Farnham   | Mavis Collins  | Yvonne Wood<br>Marilyn Hare |
| Jan. 11 |                       | Nick & Carlese Wood           | Dan Scully     | Jack & Mavis Collins        |
| Jan. 18 | Tom & Elaine Hancock  | Ruth Bruch<br>Geneva Farnham  | Everett Baker  |                             |
| Jan. 25 | Geneva Farnham        | Roger Pease<br>Patrick Forbes | Patrick Forbes |                             |

## Christian Education (submitted by Sue Comparetto & Erin Penhall)

### *Christmas Cards*

Don't know what to do with the Christmas cards you got this year? Hate to throw them away because they're so pretty, yet you don't really want to hold on to them? Why not bring them to church for our Sunday schoolers to make use of for various crafts. Cards may be given to Erin Penhall, or left in the social room.

### *Bible Study*

Wednesday morning Bible study will resume on January 7; the group meets from 9:30-11 AM in the social room. All are welcome.

### *Adult/Family Nights*

Christian Education is looking into scheduling pot luck suppers and/or dessert & discussion nights throughout the year. One idea mentioned at Cabinet was to have a picnic and gospel sing on the Green in the summer. Other suggestions are welcome; speak with Erin Penhall or Marj Butler. A schedule will announced in the near future.



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

God plus one is always a majority!  
 If God be for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31

|          | November 2008 | YTD 2008     | Budget 2008   |
|----------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| Pledges  | \$ 4,410.00   | \$ 61,793.50 | \$ 73,000.00  |
| Income   | \$ 11,256.93  | \$120,083.95 | \$ 105,925.00 |
| Expenses | \$ 13,933.95  | \$118,902.38 | \$ 120,788.00 |

**November Collections**

Fundraisers-Designated- Turkey Supper- \$2,122.50

**Monthly missions-**

Christmas Fund—466.00

UNICEF---275.75



As we come closer to the end of the year, our income and expenses seem clearer, yet the numbers do not paint a true picture. Our pledges were lower due to the fifth Sunday of November collection being deposited in December, therefore showing under our December income instead. The YTD income is already higher than budgeted, due to Endowment Input, not real income. The expenses though are exactly what they are.

The income from the November Fundraiser Supper was designated to help with the cost of the tree removal project. Ladies Aid also contributed to this cause. Thank you!

The end of the year financial “stuff” is shaping up well even if we do end at a loss according to the budget. The budget is just a guideline to keep us aware of what is going on, but what really matters is what is going on in our hearts.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Mile of Missions**

We will continue to sponsor a non-perishable food collection through January to benefit the food pantry of All Saints Church. Donations should be left on the table in Wood Chapel.

***Cornerstone***

Four volunteers are needed to assist in serving a meal at Cornerstone Soup Kitchen in Rockville on Tuesday, Jan. 13. We can meet at the church at 4 to carpool down and will return about 6:30. Anyone interested in helping out should speak with Johanna Karbonic.

**Trustees & Property Update**

The trees on the southeast corners of the green have been cut down and tree line between the parsonage and green has been thinned. The next step in planning for a parking area will take place when the Board of Trustees meets and that won’t happen until we elect a moderator at our annual meeting.

**Ladies Aide Society**

All women of the church are invited to the Tuesday, January 13 meeting of the Ladies Aide. We will have our annual review, elect officers and committee for 2009 and make plans for the year. Millie Hare will offer devotions; someone is needed to step up and provide light refreshment as hostess.

***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)



***Ham Supper a Great Success***

A total of 198 dinners were served, including take outs. As always, folks enjoyed the dinner and those who “won” poinsettias were thrilled! Income from the evening totaled \$2138 and included a separate \$100 donation from a friend of the church, a box of Christmas cards was sold and a tip! Proceeds from this supper went to benefit Cornerstone Foundation.

### ***Schedule Set for Dinners in 2009***

Fundraising supper dates for 2009 have been approved by the Cabinet; dates (and tentative entrees) are:

- Jan. 10 – Roast Pork
- Feb. 14 – Baked Stuffed Shrimp
- March 14 – Corned Beef
- April 18 (3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday) – Turkey
- May 9 – Chicken Cordon Bleu
- June 20 (3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday) – Ham ~ Strawberry Supper
- July 18 (3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday) – Chicken Barbecue
- Aug. 15 (3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday) – Roast Beef
- Sept. 12 – Roast Pork
- Oct. 10 – Pot Roast
- Nov. 14 - Turkey
- Dec. 5 (1<sup>st</sup> Saturday) - Ham

Cabinet also approved a price increase .. beginning March 14, we will charge \$11 per adult.

Continued support in the form of donations and physical help from our church members and friends is greatly appreciated as we strive to keep our costs down. Sign up sheets are always posted in the social room about 3 weeks prior to a scheduled supper and reservations are accepted beginning 2 weeks before a supper date. We will also offer a bake sale during some of the suppers ~ cookies, bars, pies, breads, cakes are great sellers.

### ***January 10 Roast Pork Supper***

As this article is written (12/29), the supper is almost two weeks away and we're already full by reservations. The menu will be roast pork, mashed potato, winter squash, tossed salad, homemade rolls & breads, beverage and cake with ice cream. Cost is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children ages 5-10. Take out orders will be available from 5:30-6 PM and 6:45-7 PM. There is a waiting list for both the 5 and 6:15 sittings in case cancellations are received. There are several ways you can assist; opportunities include donations of:

- heads of lettuce (9)
- pints grape tomatoes (5)
- cucumbers (8)
- peppers (6)
- Italian dressing (8 lge.)
- pumpkin bread (4)
- d-caf & regular coffee (1 lge. or 2 small each)
- butter (4 lb.)
- milk (4 gal.)
- yellow cake (13 9x13's)



AND/OR

- contribute toward cost of 100 lbs. potatoes (\$30) – give money to Ruth
- make applesauce (using total of 2 bushels apples)
- help wait on tables
- help dish up salads and desserts
- help clean up
- work in bake sale room (yes, we will offer a bake sale this month)

You can sign up in the social room to fill any of these opportunities – or contact Ruth in the office (749-7741 or email [somcong@aol.com](mailto:somcong@aol.com)). Remember, the more we can contribute, the less our expenses are resulting in greater proceeds to help our church budget.

### **This & That**

- *Board chairmen* ending 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 *January Cabinet agenda* should notify Graham or Ruth by January 8.



## Does Obama need to find a black church to call home?

by Adelle M. Banks

Religion News Service

**WASHINGTON** — President-elect Barack Obama says the historically black church moved him from a skeptic to a believer.

He has spoken appreciatively of its vibrant worship, written about how the black church experience has moved him to tears. And he has credited black congregations for their work in helping the powerless and in speaking truth to power.

But when he officially takes up residence in the White House, will the nation's first black president attend a black church? And, in a larger sense, does it matter if he does or doesn't?

Some observers think he may ultimately choose a black church, given his previous attraction to the predominantly black Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, which he made his church home before the fiery sermons of its senior pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, became a drag on his campaign. Others, meanwhile, say public interest in his church decision may say more about the state of race in America than the condition of Obama's faith.

Noel Erskine, associate professor at Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, suspects the president-elect is considering another black congregation, after his mainly positive experience at Trinity.

"I would be surprised if he wouldn't be looking for one in the Washington, DC, area," said Erskine, whose school is part of Emory University.

Erskine expects black congregations to be part of the Obama family's search "as a continuation of the family's experience of church," including his wife's and his mother-in-law's roots in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

"I feel that they will give as careful a search for church as they gave for the school of the girls," he said. "Perhaps the compromise will be that since they chose a white school for the girls they will choose a black church, Sunday school, for them."

After the controversy surrounding Wright, however, University of Chicago Divinity School professor Dwight Hopkins thinks Obama might choose a black congregation that is in some respects milder than Trinity.

"There are various forms of preaching and, of course, African-American preaching has various styles," said Hopkins, a theology professor who is a member of Trinity. "I could see him and the first family settling in a church in the DC area that would have the same liberal and progressive theological bent but the emotive and bodily

expression of that element might be more toned down, mild in that sense."

Washington has an array of predominantly black churches from which to choose, including Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, Shiloh Baptist Church and Covenant Baptist Church.

But Hopkins said whatever church Obama picks is not likely to be conservative.

"I don't think he's going to give up the liberal and progressive theology," he said. "That's who he is before he came to Trinity in Chicago, when he joined Trinity and after he left Trinity."

Though Hopkins can imagine Obama attending a black church, he cautioned against making too much about Obama, or his feelings about race, based solely on where he chooses to worship on Sunday mornings.

"It's clear that he enjoys (the) black church, he enjoys black worship," said the professor who knows both Obama and his wife, Michelle, professionally. "It doesn't say that he's renegeing or not renegeing."

Nick Shapiro, a spokesman for Obama's transition team, said "what church President-elect Obama chooses is a private decision that he will make."

In his autobiographical books, Obama captured the ethos of the African-American church and what he found attractive about it.

"Out of necessity, the black church rarely had the luxury of separating individual salvation from collective salvation," he wrote in *The Audacity of Hope*. "It had to serve as the center of the community's political, economic, and social as well as spiritual life. It understood in an intimate way the biblical call to feed the hungry and clothe the naked and challenge powers and principalities."

Hearing Wright preach about "the audacity of hope," brought Obama to tears, he wrote in *Dreams from My Father*.

"Those stories — of survival, and freedom, and hope — became our story, my story. The blood that had spilled was our blood, the tears our tears," Obama wrote, "until this black church, on this bright day, seemed once more a vessel carrying the story of a people into future generations and into a larger world."

Whether Obama chooses a black church or not, his choice will be dissected, just as many of his other choices have been and will be, said Eddie S. Glaude Jr., professor of religion and African-American studies at Princeton University.

"No matter what he chooses, where he chooses to attend, his choice is already overdetermined by the legacy, the history of race and

religion in the United States,” said Glaude. “It’s like everything with this presidency. It is freighted with symbolic and substantive significance. ... It’s just uncharted territory.”

### **About our Members & Friends**



#### ***Birthdays***

Those having birthdays this month include:  
Christopher Farnham, Michele Bellafronte, Mae  
Chillson, Miriam Cohen, Erin Tishon, Karen Peck,  
Judy Peck, Deb Robidoux, Andrew Farnham, Jimmy

Graham

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

### **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.

# January 2009

the Rev. Graham Van Keuren, Pastor  
 Brent Damrow, Student Pastor  
 Sydney Cohen, Treasurer  
 Ruth Bruch, Clerk/Office Administrator  
 Tom & Elaine Hancock, Web Ministers  
 Fri Sat

| Sun  | Mon | Tue   | Wed                                     | Thu                            | Fri                       | Sat   |
|--|-----|---|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Congregational Church of Somersville<br>22 Maple St., PO Box I, Somersville, CT 06072<br>860-749-7741 somcong@aol.com (email)<br>www.somersvilleucc.org (website)<br>Worship 10 AM Nursery Care Provided |     |   |   | 1                              | 2                         | 3   |
|  |     |   |   | New Year's Day                 |                           |   |
| 4<br>Communion<br>Cantata<br>De-greening the<br>Church   | 5   | 6<br>AA 6:15-8:30<br>Deacons 7 PM   | 7<br>Bible Study 9:30-11<br>Choir 7 PM  | 8<br>Cabinet Agenda<br>Request | 9<br>Supper Prep. 8:30 AM | 10<br>Roast Pork Supper<br>5 & 6:15 PM<br>& Bake Sale |
| 11<br>Written Annual<br>Reports Due  | 12  | 13<br>Ladies Aid 1 PM<br>Cornerstone 4-6:30<br>AA 6:15-8:30<br>Finance 7 PM | 14<br>Bible Study 9:30-11<br>Choir 7 PM | 15                             | 16                        | 17  |
| 18<br>Cabinet  | 19  | 20<br>AA 6:15-8:30  | 21<br>Bible Study 9:30-11<br>Choir 7 PM | 22                             | 23                        | 24<br>Pot Luck Supper 6<br>Annual Meeting 7 PM        |
| 25<br>Feb. Spire deadline<br>Officer/Boards<br>Installation  | 26  | 27<br>Blair Manor Worship<br>10:30<br>AA 6:15-8:30                          | 28<br>Bible Study 9:30-11<br>Choir 7 PM | 29                             | 30                        | 31  |

For the Young at Heart - Hidden Pictures - Snowy Feast

