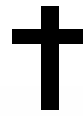


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Treasurer: Joe Braen

Moderator: Jim Arseniadis

Under the Dome

Dunbar United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation
767 Benham Street, Hamden, CT 06514

February, 2012

Jesus talked more about the kingdom of heaven (or kingdom of God) than anything else. The expression “kingdom of heaven” occurs 32 times in the gospel of Matthew. Other New Testament writers say “kingdom of God” (which occurs 19 times in Matthew, 6 times in Mark, 13 times in Luke, and 3 times in John. It occurs 21 times in the rest of the New Testament. Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is “near” or “in your midst.” Usually when we talk about heaven, we mean a place where good people go when they die. In popular thinking, heaven is the afterlife -- the next stop we go to after our time on earth (if we’re lucky). But if you read the Bible, that’s not what Jesus meant by heaven. Jesus said heaven is here now. We might not see it or be in it -- but it’s never far away.

My work as a pastor is to bring this to your attention. I just read a book that Tessa Lavorgna loaned me called “Heaven is For Real” about a four-year-old boy whose appendix burst and he died for three minutes on the operating table, but was revived. When he came out of surgery and was well again he told his father and mother that he went to heaven in those three minutes and saw his grandfather and Jesus and a sister of his who died in childbirth and whom he’d never met on earth. The parents were fascinated about this because they never mentioned his sister to him -- there was no way he could have known about her. And he’d never met his grandfather, or seen a picture of him, but when they showed him the photo album, he recognized the grandfather (though only as a young man because, he said, in heaven people don’t grow old).

This was a fascinating story, and the boy’s father, who wrote co-wrote the book, is also a Methodist pastor, so he has some theological background. But as I read it, I thought something important was missing. When people talked about

heaven, it was just the afterlife. It was the popular idea of heaven as a place people go to if they've been "good" or Christian or "saved." Even though a minister wrote it (who should have known better), he presented the popular idea of heaven as a place -- a destination -- after this life. And most of what Jesus said about heaven describes something we experience here and now -- it's in our midst. Heaven, according to Jesus, is in Hamden and North Haven and Beijing and Baghdad and Paris and Pretoria. According to Jesus, the kingdom of heaven is in our car while we drive on Dixwell Avenue.

We forget that heaven -- God's kingdom -- is in eternity. There's no time, no before and after and present. In our lives on this earth, we're stuck in "time" for a short while, but while we're here, the sacred realm is all around us. Time is a little blip -- particle of sand -- in the ocean of eternity. All of the great mystics and saints saw this. Jesus said we step into heaven every time we love. Whenever we offer food to the hungry, money to the poor, shelter to the homeless, kindness to the distressed -- whenever we offer a gesture of love, wherever we are, we open an invisible door and enter heaven.

We are told in the Bible that there are two kingdoms: the kingdom of this world, and God's kingdom, the kingdom of heaven. And as people who follow Jesus Christ, the kingdom we strive for is heaven -- HEAVEN HERE AND NOW -- NOT IN THE AFTERLIFE. As Christians, our first allegiance is to God and the kingdom of heaven -- over and above our loyalty to our country, our family, our political party -- over above everything else. We can't serve two masters, Jesus said. We can't serve God and something else. That was the first Commandment that Moses delivered from Mt. Sinai, and Jesus reaffirmed it as the most important of laws -- love God first, and then your neighbor as yourself. Nothing else is as important as these.

I talk to or read about Christians who don't understand this -- even though it's the first and most important commandment. Even though Jesus said it again and again. Many Christians still put their country or their finances or their politics above God, above their neighbor, above Jesus, and you see this whenever the issue of immigration comes up. Many Christians say undocumented immigrants are "illegal," and must be arrested for breaking the law and returned to their country of origin. But when we see through the eyes of faith, if we see with our hearts established in the kingdom of heaven, then we would never cause pain and hardship to the people and families who are trying to make a better life for themselves in this country. No, the kingdom of heaven is not near -- it's on top of our heads, it's under our feet, it's filling our lungs every time we breathe. May God crack open our stone hearts, loosen our stiff necks, and give us eyes that see Jesus

Christ in every face. Don't wait for death! Don't wait for heaven! -- but break down the door of God's kingdom with love -- and enter now.

Yours, in this tiniest blip of time on the sea of eternity,
George

If you or someone you know would like a call or a visit, please contact Rev.
George Manukas at 287-8106 or revonweb@sbcglobal.net



Family and Friend February Celebrations!!

Lindsey Chicoine is celebrating her 19th Birthday on February 4th!!

Dan Chicoine will be 16 on February 12th!!

Trent Liseo will be 15 on February 7th

Dunbar UCC Open and Affirming/Mission Statement

We, the members of Dunbar United Church of Christ, want Jesus to be the center of our lives. Our mission is to practice the New Commandment that Jesus gave us: to love one another as he has loved us (John 13:34). We seek to follow God's will by loving our neighbors, friends and enemies alike. We seek justice for all.

We celebrate the image of God in every person. As an Open and Affirming Church, we welcome all persons into the full life and ministry of our church, and affirm that the grace of God, known especially through Jesus, is a gift meant for people of every race, color, age, ability, and sexual orientation. Worship, leadership, ministry, and employment are open to all.

We are on a journey of faith and invite all people to join us. No matter the church or community where your journey began, you are welcome here.

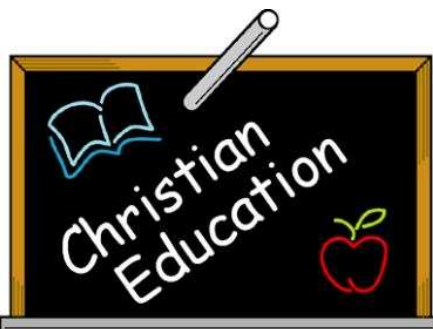


Missions

Missions are starting the new year welcoming Lois Kasaruskas, Jennifer Shettleworth, Charles Walters and returning star Donna Burkbackler! We would like to thank Nancy Braen and Olga Dryfoos for their service and support for the past three plus years; they will be missed!

We voted in January to send a donation to the Somers Congregational Church for their rebuilding mission. They lost the entire 170 year-old church in a fire last month and are trying to raise money to rebuild this historic church. We will have a Missions meeting February 5 right after church to discuss sponsoring a Crop Walk and other needs coming up. Hope to see all the team there and anyone is welcome to attend!

Debbie Laffin



The board of Christian Education would like to welcome its new members and say thank you to all its departing members. The children will continue to put into practice the lessons of Jesus Christ as we learn about them in Sunday school. For the next few weeks we will be making Valentine's Day cards for area convalescent homes. We hope to bake and decorate some cookies as well to send along with the cards.

Consider volunteering to teach Sunday school. No experience is necessary and we provide all the materials. There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex. You do not need to be a member of the board of Christian education to teach Sunday school.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Braen.



Women's Fellowship

It's Valentines season and that means cookies! We need anyone and everyone to make cookies for our seniors and our servicemen! Please make whatever kind you like and drop them off at church **Sunday, Feb 5** or **anytime before Wednesday, Feb. 8, 9:30 a.m.** We will be filling bags with cookies, candy and Valentine cards made by our kids on **February 8 at 9:30 a.m.**

We will have a work meeting on February 22 to start making reusable bags for Hamden Earth Day(They have had such success with these bags they called and asked if we would be willing to make them again.)

Women's Fellowship is holding a **rummage sale on Saturday, April 21 from 9:00a.m. to noon.** We need volunteers to help set up on Friday, April 20 in the late afternoon, before the sale Saturday morning, and for packing up at noon on Saturday. Anything we don't sell will be donated to Big Brother/Big Sisters. Women's Fellowship is hosting coffee hours in March and May, if you could help with any of these Sundays please let me know.

Thank you, Debbie Laffin

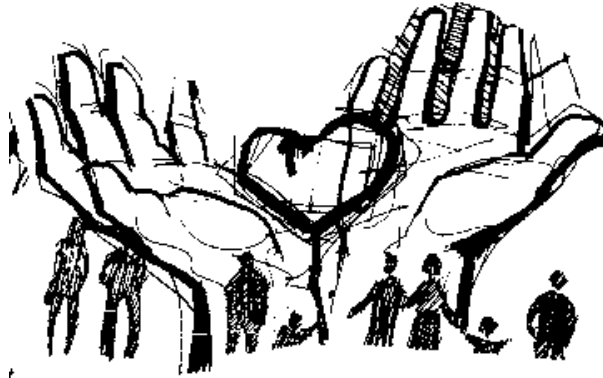
Just a Reminder:

Any member of our church can attend any of our board, committee, or council meetings.

They are a great way to learn the "behind the scenes" working of our church. Since many of us come from different churches in our past, it is a great way for new fresh ideas to be presented and discussed.

The different perspectives that we all can offer the church and our church family are extremely helpful to us all. *So please do not hesitate to participate!!!!!!!*

Peace, Jim Arseniadis



DEACONS

The Board of Deacons has had a very busy and productive year! The theme for our year of activities I think could best be summed up in two Christian tenets of faith and healing. We focused efforts on those in need of healing and support in our congregation and the world around us. This included our healing service in December that was new for us and a memorable, moving service; the 1000 crane service for Jordan Jacques and George and I also collaborated on a service focused around my medical mission trip to Haiti. The Deacons also hosted the Vesper and Tenebrae services, the Sunrise Easter service, and the Ash Wednesday service at Dunbar that included Mt. Carmel, Spring Glen and Hamden Plains congregations!

The Board of Deacons incorporated an UCC statement of Faith that was added to the church service every third Sunday of the month and started in November. It appears in the Sunday bulletin for that week and the purpose is to spend a few moments to focus of our mission of Faith.

We also reviewed and updated the current list of active church members and contacts which will be approved after final review during the annual meeting.

The Deacons and many others worked toward making our Christmas Eve service a beautiful celebration this year. I enjoyed the music and worship and thank you to all who participated to make the service a truly special event!

As we go forward into the New Year, I pray for healing, health and faith for all!
Heather Sibley



TRUSTEE

This past year has been pretty busy for the trustees. We welcomed new members (and a few returnees!), created a budget, and completed a number of projects in and around the church. The trustees usually meet the second Wednesday of every month, and we encourage others to stop in and check us out. These are some of our accomplishments:

- We replaced the Parsonage kitchen window.
- Repaired the Parsonage chimney cap and installed a new cover.
- Cleaned Parsonage gutters.
- Trimmed trees at the church and parsonage.
- Power washed front of church and parish house.
- Scraped, primed and painted the front of parish house.
- Replaced deteriorated and damaged double doors into equipment storage shed.
- Painted downstairs church hall.
- Installed electrical outlets outside the church.
- Purchased new chairs and tables for the church hall.
- Repaired dishwasher and leaking kitchen faucets.
- Hosted numerous events, including St Patrick 's Day, Rally Day, etc.
- Repaired fraying carpet in sanctuary.
- Tuned the pianos.

Future projects under discussion include a new kitchen oven, oil/gas conversion, more new tables and chairs and of course, more painting. I would like to thank all the trustees for their hard work this past year, and wish the new board much success in the coming year.

Lawrence Liseo
Outgoing President

OFFICERS

Moderator	James Arseniadis
Clerk	Sandra Kops
Board of Trustees Chair	Lawrence Liseo
Church School Superintendent	
Treasurer	Joseph Braen
Asst. Treasurer	Mark Rosa
Investment Committee Chair	Bruce Detmers Sr.

STAFF

Church Secretary	Geneene Luedee
Sexton	Victor Mitchell
Childcare	Mary Allen and Linda Rua

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Financial Secretary Meg Nowacki

Term to 2013	Term to 2014	Term to 2015
Robert Corona Theodore Endriss Gary Burkbackler	Paul Jacques Bruce Detmers Sr George Braen	Rodd Dryfoos John Kasarauskas Alphonse Jacques

BOARD OF DEACONS

Term to 2013	Term to 2014	Term to 2015
Nicole Jacques Betty Detmers Heather Sibley	Kathy Straka Tom Parlapiano Judy Campbell Jordan Jacques	Nancy Braen Cindy Long Jeffrey Hamilton

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Term to 2013	Term to 2014	Term to 2015
Bel Forte Janet Manukas Taylor Jacques	Ellyn Liseo Olga Dryfoos	Linda Bonadies Sandy Kops

BOARD OF MISSIONS AND CONCERNS

Term to 2013	Term to 2014	Term to 2015
Libby Wamser Debbie Laffin	Janet Braen Dale Long Sandra Hurd	Lois Kasarauskas Jennifer Shettleworth Charles Walters Donna Burkbackler Eleanor Forri

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Janet Lavorgna to 2014

Paul Jacques to 2014
Mark Rosa to 2015

COMMITTEES

Budget Committee	Stephen Hurd Chair
Nominations Committee	Bruce Detmers Sr.
Investment Committee	Bruce Detmers Sr Chair James Arseniadis Moderator Lawrence Liseo Church Board of Trustees Joe Braen Church Treasurer Meg Nowacki Committee Member Tom Parlapiano Committee Member Charles Walters Committee Member
Investment Committee Audit	Jennifer Johnson
Pastor Relations Committee	Meg Nowacki Chair Judy Campbell Steve Hurd Betty Detmers Jim Arseniadis
Columbarium Committee	Bruce Detmers Chair Betty Detmers Barbara Walters Bob Corona Charles Walters Ellyn Liseo Ann Watjen
Publicity Committee	Tom Parlapiano Chair Cindy Long
Memorial Gifts	Meg Nowacki Ginny Granquist
Dunbar Corporation	Jeffrey Hamilton President and Secretary Charles Walters, Treasurer Meg Nowacki Kathy Straka Debbie Laffin Lawrence Liseo George Manukas
Sunshine Committee	Ann Watjen
Commitment Committee	Tom Parlapiano Jim Arseniadis

Historical Committee Audrey Linke

Altar Flowers

SUNDAY SERVICE COMMITTEES

Betty Detmers

Chancel and Sanctuary

Felix Mazur
Louise Mazur
Ellyn Liseo
Mark Rosa
Jenni Shettleworth
Kathy Straka
Maria Yoesoep

Sunday Readers

Judy Campbell
Bruce Detmers Sr
Jennifer Johnson
Louise Mazur
Meg Nowacki
Tom Parlapiano
Barbara Walters

At the Organ

Bruce Detmers Sr
Charles Walters
Paul Jacques

New Haven Association

ASSOCIATIONS

Rev. George Manukas
Kathy Straka

Connecticut Conference

Rev. George Manukas
Polly Parmelee
Bruce Detmers Sr Alternate


Women's Fellowship

**SPECIAL INTEREST
GROUPS**

Debra Laffin, President
Debra Laffin, Treasurer
Louise Mazur, Secretary

Spark Plugs

Jim Arseniadis



COFFEE HOUR SPONSORED BY TRUSTEES

February 2012

DUNBAR UNITED

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
						5:00pm Worship Service

5 10:00 Worship Service 11:00am Coffee Hour 11am Missions Meeting	6 6-8pm Girl Scouts (K Seneo) - Hall 7pm Bible Study (Parish House)	7 Valentine's Day 5:30-8:00pm Girl Scouts - Hall (D. French)	8 7:30pm Trustees's Meet	9 7:30pm Council Meeting	10 6-9pm Girl Scouts-Hall (M. Nabors)	11 5:00pm Worship Service
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12 10:00 Worship Service 11:00am Coffee Hour 11am C.E. Meeting	13 7pm Bible Study (Parish House)	14 Valentine's Day 5:30-8:00pm Girl Scouts - Hall (D. French)	15 7:30pm Council Meeting	16 7:30pm Council Meeting	17 5:00pm Worship Service	18 5:00pm Worship Service
19 10:00 Worship Service 11:00am Coffee Hour 11:00am Deacons Meet	20 Dome Reports Due 7pm Bible Study (Parish House)	21 7pm Bible Study (Parish House)	22 7pm Bible Study (Parish House)	23 7pm Bible Study (Parish House)	24 7pm Bible Study (Parish House)	25 5:00pm Worship Service

26 10:00 Worship Service 11:00am Coffee Hour	27 6-8pm Girl Scouts (K Seneo) - Hall 7pm Bible Study (Parish House)	28 5:30-8pm Girl Scouts (D. French) - Hall	29 5:00pm Worship Service
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Dunbar United Church of Christ

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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