



"As we stood together to express our sorrow that nine church people in South Carolina had been murdered by a white man full of hatred, we remembered other times at Saugatuck, flags put out to honor soldiers who had died in Iraq and Afghanistan, flags for young girls kidnapped in Nigeria. And, we remembered that cold November night when our town stood together with us after our church fire." Martha and Larry Aasen Photo by Lynn U. Miller, Westport News

Photo and caption by Lynn U. Miller for Westport Now . Tonight on the lawn of Westport's Saugatuck Congregational Church, nine candles were lit to remember nine lives extinguished by hatred. Attendees at tonight's Westport interfaith vigil for the victims of the Charleston shootings link arms to sing "We Shall Overcome" Lynn U. Miller for WestportNow.com



Prayers and Candles to Extinguish Racial Hatred

By James Lomuscio

Members of the Interfaith Clergy Association of Westport and Weston and TEAM (Together Effectively Achieving Multiculturalism) Westport also led the approximate 125 who had gathered in singing "We Shall Overcome,"

and everyone held hands, softly swaying in the balmy, late light of summer.

And they prayed. They prayed for the lives lost in a hail of bullets during a service at the Charleston, S.C. Mother Emanuel AME Church on June 17th. They prayed for the victims' families. And they prayed for colorblindness in the wake of the

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racial hatred that reportedly drove the white supremacist suspect Dylann Roof, 21, to do the unthinkable.

“God should be colorless,” said Rabbi Jeremy Wiederhorn of the Conservative Synagogue of Westport Wilton and Weston and Interfaith Clergy chairman. He urged those assembled to work “to extinguish the fires of hatred.”

Other clergy who spoke, offering prayers and reading psalms included: the Rev. Allison Buttrick Patton, pastor of Saugatuck Congregational, the Rev. Andrew Varga of St. Luke’s Roman Catholic Church; Assistant Rabbi P.J. Schwartz of Temple Israel; the Rev. Debra Haffner of the Unitarian Church; the Rev. Edward C. Horn, pastor of the United Methodist Church, and the Rev. Whitney Edwards, pastor of Christ & Holy Trinity Episcopal Church.

Harold Bailey, TEAM Westport chairman, Westport First Selectman Jim Marpe and Weston First Selectwoman Gayle Weinstein also spoke.

“We are holding a peaceful gathering on the grounds of a church, a hallowed place within our community where we all feel safe and included,” said Marpe. “Sadly, we are here because that statement cannot be made with certainty elsewhere in this country.” “In recent years, we have joined together too often to remember, mourn and pay our respects to those who were simply living their lives and who gave the ultimate sacrifice,” he added.

For many, the vigil was painfully reminiscent of a similar one held in December 2012 for the 26 victims of Sandy Hook Elementary school shootings. In terms of gravity, it seemed no less unnerving that Charleston is 800 miles away from Westport compared to Newtown, 15 miles.

“To me this does not make sense,” said Weinstein. “A house of worship is just that, it’s a sanctuary. It’s a place to get that unconditional love no matter what.” She also said that as a political leader she would work “to make sure we pass laws, so this senseless gun violence stops.”

Haffner read the names and gave snippets of the lives of each Charleston victim as Bernicestine Bailey lit each candle.

“We gather today with our hearts broken,” said Haffner. “We mourn today the loss of the nine murdered in the sanctuary of Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, and we hold them in reverent memory.”

As the ceremony concluded, Patton urged all present “to have those hard conversations” about race. “Let us do that good work together,” she said.

James Lomuscio, Westport Now

“The whole Interfaith Prayer Vigil for Charleston was moving, but was made especially powerful by the naming of each victim as a candle was lit. We heard a wee bit of each one’s Story, thus making the loss more personal. As a community of faithful, we held hands and sang “We Shall Overcome. I pray that this may indeed come to pass.” Janet Canning,

Photo by Lynn U. Miller, Westport News





We've Got Good News!

"The United Church of Christ is the last hope for those who need a generous heart." – Connie Schultz, Syndicated Columnist

Connie Schultz was one of three keynote speakers to take to the podium at General Synod, the bi-annual national gathering of the United Church of Christ (UCC) held in Cleveland June 26-July 1. Schultz described members of the United Church of Christ as "lamp lighters" and said it's our job to stir up "a little necessary trouble" on behalf of those who need justice, mercy and love.

Paul B. Raushenbush, Executive Editor of Global Spirituality and Religion, The Huffington Post urged us to be a public witness, using all our tools, including social media, to convey our commitment to diversity and inclusion. "The internet is too wonderful, too powerful, too dangerous" for the UCC to sit it out, he said. "I know it feels messy and inadequate and frustrating, but keep going. I can testify that you are literally saving lives."

These are powerful words: that we, and our church family, the United Church of Christ, have an important role to play in the wider community. We get to spread the word that 'religious' doesn't have to mean 'judgmental'; and 'churchy' need not be boring! We get to demonstrate that following Christ is all about welcoming one another, discovering the image of God in our neighbors, and working together to create God's beloved community. At least – that's one way I summarize the Good News. That's the message I think we need to shout from the roof tops!

What would YOU say? What Good News do you have to share – about our church, about your faith and how it guides you? I know: That's not a question we typically ask; it sounds a little, well, pushy, right? Faith is something we practice in private...

On the other hand: I suspect that you are a part of this church community because in one way or another, you've been inspired, challenged, blessed, encouraged, strengthened, pushed or pulled in new directions – maybe even closer to God. We've all got stories to tell. If somewhere along the way, you realized that being loved by God and welcomed into faith community has made all the difference, then why keep that to yourself? There is so much hurt in the world. There are so many folks who are scared, lonely or isolated; there are so many of God's people who have been denied human dignity or the opportunity to thrive. They need hope and we know where to find it. As one friend put it: If you know where the water is, why *wouldn't* you tell those who are thirsty?

Too often, those on the margins of society have been told that the Church is *not* a welcoming place. Too often in the public sphere, religion gets equated with one brand of conservative politics, harsh judgment or exclusive policies. That's not my Christianity. If it's not yours either, then we've got the joyful task of inviting folks to check out who we *are*!

My sons sometimes talk about the assumptions their friends have about what it's like to have a minister for a mother. Those friends ask if my sons are allowed to swear, or if they have memorized the Bible. As we laugh about this over dinner, I suggest that they could describe the things we DO do, inspired by our faith – like recycle, raise a garden, buy Fair Trade products and speak up when someone is using racist or hurtful speech. I have a new mug on my desk that I got at Synod. It reads: "Be the Church: Protect the environment. Care for the poor. Forgive often. Reject racism. Fight for the powerless. Share earthly and spiritual resources. Embrace diversity. Love God. Enjoy this life." That's not a bad way to summarize the Church, either.

However you describe those connections between your faith and your life, I'd like to challenge you to find ways to share them with others, ways to say, "*This* is what it means to me, to be a Christian. *This* is what matters most. *This* is what I call Good News!" In Connie Schultz' words: *you* may just be the last hope for someone who needs a generous heart.

Thank you, beloved Saugatuck Church members and friends, for sharing this journey, and for being willing to explore what it means to be Christian together, as we go.

Grace and Gratitude, Pastor Alison

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Musings from the Moderator: July and August 2015

Count your blessings today, tomorrow and always, and let us Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

1 Thessalonians 5:18, In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

There is something about attending worship at Compo Beach that makes me really concentrate on counting my blessings. The beautiful blue sky, the puffy white clouds, the songs of the seagulls and the bright summer sun all remind me of how blessed I am in this world. I truly feel the presence of God there each week as I bury my feet in the sand and sing joyous hymns.

But church business of late hasn't always focused on counting blessings. Unfortunately, we have reached a place on our journey where we are challenged about making decisions which are difficult. Our resources are not keeping pace with our needs – and we are finding ourselves coming up short. Anxiety mounts as we question the way we do business, and if we are doing the right thing. We ask more of our leaders; but question their choices. It truly is a time of trial.

But I suggest that we all stop for a moment and count our many blessings – and truly praise God from whom all blessings flow. Saugatuck Church is abundant with blessings: our newly restored building; a talented and loving pastor; a congregation of kind, generous people; mission partners who appreciate all of our support; and a growing population of children who are the future of our church.

Let us all join together on this current journey – and concentrate not on what we don't have – but what we do have. ***In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus...***

Peace be with you,

Priscilla Long, Moderator

From the Stewardship Committee:

Thank you to all who responded to our special mailing requesting financial support to continue our work in the church and community and to make up for the large 2015 budget gap.

Now, after being a 'church without walls' we are enjoying our beautiful rebuilt church. However building maintenance costs are higher and our membership is lower. It was a long 3 years and several of our members left for other churches and many of our old-timers died. Now we are entering the phase of rebuilding our congregation. While rebuilding our church was done by skilled craftsmen, rebuilding our membership will be done by us—the congregation and our pastor.

Your contribution will help us to change the financial deficit and still allow us to continue our faithful service to our members and community. If you have not made your contribution, it is not too late.

Let's all join together and 'rebuild' our church and membership.

Jane Mangold, Stewardship Committee

Fall Preview

Here's a peek at some of what's being planned for the fall
Mark your calendars now!

PRAY and PRAISE

Return to 10 am worship, September 6, Saugatuck Church Sanctuary

Welcome Sunday and Blessing of the Backpacks! September 13, Great Front Lawn
All-ages worship, potluck picnic, games *and* hands-on mission project (see below)

Mission Trip worship, Sunday, September 20, 10 am – led by our high school youth. Come hear the stories about their fantastic and inspiring mission trip

World Communion Sunday, October 4 all-ages 10 am worship

Blessing of the Animals: Sunday, October 4, 2-4 pm - Great Front Lawn

Guest Preacher, Sunday, October 18th – the Rev. Martin Copenhaver, president, Andover-Newton Theological Seminary, UCC minister and author of *Jesus is the Question*

LEARN and GROW

Bible Study begins Wednesday, September 9 with Rev. Patton and continues every week, 9:30 – 11 am.

Women's Spirituality Group begins Sunday, September 13, 5-6:30 pm and continues second and fourth Sundays.

Confirmation Launch for 8th and 9th graders, Sunday, September 27, 4 pm. Location TBA.

"What's so important about church?" with **Rev. Martin Copenhaver**, public lecture, October 18th, 12 noon – 2 pm, including a light lunch

DO and GIVE

School Supply Collection, September 13, Welcome Sunday hands-on mission project: We'll gather school supplies to donate to Bridgeport classrooms – watch for details!

Saugatuck River Clean-up, Sunday, September 20 after worship. All ages welcome!

GATHER and PLAY

Thin Places Project - Art Opening: Friday, September 25, 6-8 pm, Hoskins Hall.

Men's Retreat at Silver Lake Conference Center, Saturday, October 3 through Sunday, October 4 – for details see Willie Salmond williamsalmond121@gmail.com or Frank Basler frank.basler@gmail.com .

All Hallows Event, Sunday, October 25, 4-6 pm, Evergreen Cemetery and the Great Front Lawn – make a memorial, children's parade, games – all ages welcome

Got something you'd like to help organize in the fall? Ideas welcome! Contact Rev. Alison Patton.

Time Away: Rev. Floyd-Marshall will be away during the month of July, for rest and renewal. Rev. Patton will be away during the month of August: co-leading a 5th-6th grade camp at Silver Lake Conference Center, then taking rest and renewal. Rev. Patton will be back in the pulpit on September 6th.

When your 2014 mission trip takes you to Navajo reservation in New Mexico, it's not surprising that the first question of the 2015 mission trip is "***Why did God call us to Portland, Maine?***"

On June 21st, 16 youth led by Alex Floyd Marshall and 4 adult chaperones traveled to Portland, Maine for a mission experience that would entitle working in a soup kitchen, serving children and families from a refugee population around the world that had settled in that area. Each night as a way of processing our days experience we would meet and answer the Question of the Day.

The first evening we were asked why we came to Portland. The answers were about serving. Summed up in one phrase: "*because we were able and there was a need.*"

We were divided into three groups that rotated to different work locations each day: a soup kitchen to serve breakfast and lunch to 300 guests each meal, kids' club to prepare and serve lunch for local children followed by a Bible lesson, craft and play time, and doing yardwork and light construction for the community through the Portland Housing Authority.

After the first work day we asked, "What did you learn from someone you met outside our group today?" Among the answers "*Don't judge a book by its cover...I met a young man most people would stereotype as a thug who ended up being a super kind and generous man*", "*one homeless man today when asked how he was doing said 'I can't complain'*", "*appreciate everything. Don't take anything for granted. Find happiness in small things.*"

Each service option provided different opportunities to interact with the Portland community. At the Preble Street soup kitchen we had the chance to see up close the effect of poverty, mental illness and substance abuse. Working at the housing authority we were able to improve the living conditions of families making a new place for themselves in our country. It was with the children, however, we were able to make repeated connections and best get to know them individually.



After the second work day we asked "Where did you see God in evidence in our group today?" Among the answers were: "*I saw God today at the soup kitchen watching my friend carry the tray of an old man with a walker to his table.*" "*I saw God using my friend today when I saw him signing to the deaf man at the soup kitchen.*" "*I saw God during kids club when my friend found a way to include a boy who was much older than the other kids in a way that made him feel welcome and valued.*" And finally "*I have seen God in just about everyone today....*"



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2015 Youth Mission Trip to Maine Continued



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Wednesday was beach day! The weather was perfect as we accompanied over 50 local children to a local lake for swimming and other activities. The question that day was "Where did you experience God in something big and where did you experience God in something small?" Answers included, "*Seeing my friend comfort a boy he was sitting next to who had been hit in the eye on the bus and telling him that as soon as we got back to the root cellar he'd get him ice*" "*Watching my friend play hairdresser with a little girl on the beach*", "*Watching my friend let kids dump buckets and buckets and buckets o water on him for a half an hour. That kind of patience is incredible.*"

Thursday wound up with more service during the day and a wonderful community meal provided by a local church and communion for group after two hours of returning to our original question, "Why were we called to Portland?" The answers this time were as follows "*I believe God called me here with this group so I could learn the true definition of love.*" "*I think we were called here so we could experience the uncomfortable in a place that would be comfortable.*" "*To grow closer together as a group through making a difference in the lives of the people who are in need.*"

Heartfelt thanks to everyone at Saugatuck church who supported us and made this powerful mission opportunity possible.

Michael Hendricks & Kim Mathias

Saugatuck Happenings:

A Good Game of Wiffle Ball and a Delicious Dish of Ice Cream



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More about General Synod

If you are curious to know more about what happened at General Synod, you can find full news coverage at: <http://www.ucc.org/news>

If you'd like to review the actions taken by General Synod, you can read any of the resolutions that were approved at <http://synod.uccpages.org/resolutions/index.html>

Check out the photos at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ctucc>

For video coverage, go to: <http://synod.uccpages.org/video.html>

Watch inspiring keynote speeches by:

Connie Schultz, Syndicated Columnist (Plenary 3 Video, at the 57 min. mark);

Rev. Paul Brandeis Raushenbush, Executive Religion Editor for the Huffington Post (Plenary 4 video, at the 46:30 min. mark) and

Winona LaDuke, Founder, Co-Director of Honor the Earth (Plenary 7 video, at the 1:28 min. mark).



Is that our Pastor blowing bubbles at the General Synod UCC?

Photo by Eric Anderson, ctucc

More Photos



** Pastor Alison with her parents at the UCC General Synod in Cleveland, Ohio*

** Saugatuck Congregational Church Nursery School . . . making a delicious lunch*

** Youth Mission trip to Portland, Maine . . . work, study, and play*



FOOD DONATIONS: *There is a chest in the back of the sanctuary for all to drop donations in. This month we are collecting for the Gillespie Center. All non-perishable items are appreciated!*

WANTED: A MISSION STEWARD TO HELP PEOPLE WRITE LETTERS TO CONGRESS ON SUNDAY, OCT. 4



Here's what we'll be doing:

Bread for the World: Have Faith End Hunger

Urging our nation's leaders to end hunger

About the 2015 Offering of Letters: Feed Our Children

Bread for the World is urging Congress to renew our federal government's major child nutrition programs, including those for school meals, summer feeding, and the WIC nutrition program for pregnant and new mothers along with their small children.

Every five years, Congress must re-authorize the law that funds these programs, which have helped millions of children over the decades. Thanks to the leadership of Bread for the World and its church partners, the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act expanded and improved these programs.

Now is the time to renew these national nutrition programs. Be part of Bread's 2015 Offering of Letters by taking a few minutes to write letters to your members of Congress.

Act Now

We are serving God when we raise issues of hunger and poverty with our government. In this important year of action on child nutrition programs, Congress needs to hear from people across the country that it should invest in children now.

Contact Frank Basler - frank.basler@gmail.com -- if you would like to help with this important offering of letters on Sunday, Oct. 4. Frank will be preaching elsewhere. Thanks so much for considering this!!

WORK DAY AT PIVOT MINISTRIES

On Saturday, June 13, an energized group of Saugatuck members spent a beautiful, sunny morning helping with the reconstruction of a third house on Pivot's Jane Street, Bridgeport, campus. The former crack house was condemned and then donated to Pivot by the City of Bridgeport and is being totally rehabbed.

Three of the Baldwins -- Elizabeth, Alison, and Abigail -- Frank Basler, Paul Betts, Tom Long, Susan Meyer, and Alison Rivard worked in the dilapidated house or helped out in the greenhouse on Saturday!

Everyone was pleased that they found ways to be useful and were delighted to have many opportunities to talk with staff and students about the program and to learn from them about what it is like to talk openly and forcefully about the Faith. Pivot's staff and students are excellent role models for church members like us in two ways: They have allowed God's Spirit to transform their lives, and they show us what it's like to bear witness to God's action in our lives -- something we Congregationalists are often shy to talk about.



Would anyone like to go back again on a Saturday this fall? If so, let Frank know -- frank.basler@gmail.com

SUMMER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Summer Beach Worship

Compo Beach, 8:30 am:

*Bring your own beach chair! June 27 through August 23**

July 12	Green's Farms Congregational Church (UCC) *Baptisms: Auburn Grace Holter & Robert John Boccanfuso
July 19	Norfield Congregational Church (UCC)
July 26	Saugatuck Congregational Church (UCC)
Aug. 2	Green's Farm Congregational Church (UCC)
Aug. 9	United Methodist Church of Westport and Weston
Aug. 16	Norfield Congregational Church (UCC)
Aug. 23	Saugatuck Congregational Church (UCC)



Rain forced our first Summer Sunday beach service to move to the pavilion. Every Sunday through August, church services are held at 8:30 am. All are welcome. Bring a beach chair. Five churches share leadership opportunities: Saugatuck Congregational Church, Greens Farms Congregational Church, Wilton Congregational Church, Norfield Congregational Church and United Methodist Church. The Rev. Ed Horne, United Methodist Church led the first service. In good weather, services are held at the Compo cannons; in inclement weather, they are held in the pavilion.

Westport Now, June 29 2015

Our Church Family

Birthdays

July

1 Tobey Patton
 2 Ina Lozyniak
 6 Betsy Boak
 Susan Pike
 10 Lisa Tantillo
 Freddie Brenneman
 Merry Boak
 18 Linda Bradbury Danner
 19 Alison Rivard
 20 Andrea Cross
 21 Dana Johnson
 22 Rev. John Danner
 27 Judy Puchalski
 30 Marion Leaman

August

4 Abby Baldwin
 6 Joanne Leaman
 9 Malcolm Allen
 13 Janet Canning
 14 Julia Yingling
 15 Russ Brenneman
 16 Katie Wargo
 Alexandra Walsh
 18 Robert Cross
 27 Austen Doolittle
 30 Connie Walsh

SAUGATUCK AT PRAYER : Susan Bemus; Russ Brenneman; Ken and Jean Bowden; Pat Doolittle; Rose Jordan; Valerie Latella (MaryEllen Hendricks' mother); Dana Manges (Craig and Lois Gillespie's family member); the Mayer family; Linda Yingling and family, on the death of her Step Father, Richard McAdoo*; wife Ruth Merchant, daughters Marie-elle, Lilly and Madeline and extended family on the sudden death of Matthew Merchant (Jack and Helen Morrrows' son-in-law)*; Kathi Mitchell; Colleen Plantinga; Betty Raila; Kris Schwindeman-Devendorf; Susan Puchalski; Jim Sweeney; Sheldon Thompson (Kathy Ross's father); Margaret Yingling and Etta Young (Tom Long's sister). Please hold them in God's presence and in the light of Christ.

*New additions to our prayer list.



Our beautiful Memorial Garden restored after the fire and cared for by Linda Bruce and her gardening crew; Andrea Cross. Betsy Gillespie, Tom Long, Anne Patterson, Alison Rivard, Alexandra, John and Sara Walsh, Mia Costanza Wiggers and Garden Club fiend, Janice Yost. It is gorgeous. Thank you Team.

Saugatuck Happenings:



Baptisms: July 12th



On July 12th after the beach service, Rev. Alison Patten, SCC friends and members gathered at the water's edge to celebrate the baptisms of Auburn Grace Holter, daughter of Nicole and Bill Holter, granddaughter of Carrie and Ken Lozyniak and Robert John Boccanfuso, son of Michelle and JR Boccanfuso, grandson of Rob and Lorie Lozyniak (both great-grandchildren of Ina Lozyniak.)



A WISE welcome

June 29, 2015

Written by Micki Carter

In an effort to energize UCC congregations to support mentally ill people in their midst, the 2015 General Synod overwhelmingly adopted a resolution Monday, June 29 to develop a network of churches that are welcoming, inclusive, supportive and engaged (WISE) for mental health.

The Rev. Alan Johnson of Boulder, Colo., drove the effort to bring the resolution before the delegates. He is the chair of the UCC Mental Health Network. He is also a former co-pastor at Saugatuck with his wife the Rev. Martie McMane (1995-1999.)

"It began with my son's first psychotic break down from bipolar disease 23 years ago, my own episode with depression and my brother's suicide," he said.

"The sound of silence about mental illness can be profound."

Building on General Synod action in 1995, the resolution encourages congregations to adopt WISE covenants, with support from the Mental Health Network, which will advocate for "all persons with mental illness who are falling through the fraying safety net."

A particularly poignant moment occurred during the debate on the resolution. Eric Kendall of the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference noted that the creation of WISE covenants would go a long way toward creating safe havens for mentally ill people. He then asked everyone who has been affected by mental illness to stand. The number who rose in silence in the plenary hall was mute testimony to the pervasiveness of the disease.

"Research shows that one in four Americans experience some form of mental illness in a given year, although the severity of the disorder can vary widely," according to the background information to the resolution. "One in 17 Americans lives with a serious and persistent mental illness.

"Many people living with mental illness are shunned, feared and discriminated against. As a result, many people with these illnesses don't seek treatment and they don't share their stories with others. Consequently, they are not included in the network of care our congregations normally extend to a member who is ill. They struggle through alone or with the help of a few close family members they trust to keep their illnesses secret."

Johnson said that the goal of the resolution is to encourage congregations to use the resources of the Mental Health Network (including a 12-step plan) to be designated as WISE churches, in the same way that churches become Open and Affirming congregations. "I would love to see 500 WISE congregations out of the 5,000 UCC churches."

Some of the WISE 12 steps involve mitigating the shame and stigma that mental illness engenders. One committee member noted, "As church, we are considered armies of compassion." With rapidly shrinking public services available, "churches are where those who suffer turn."

Johnson encouraged those interested in the issue of mental illness within the church to attend the Widening the Welcome conference Sept. 24-26 at the Marriott Hotel in Hartford, Conn. This conference seeks to help churches become welcoming communities for people who have been touched by mental illness or brain disorder. Further information is available at [ucc.org/widening the welcome 2015 inclusion for all](http://ucc.org/widening_the_welcome_2015_inclusion_for_all)