

# The Herald

Saugatuck Congregational Church

September 2016



**Sunday, September 4th.** We will return to a single, 10am worship service in the sanctuary.

**September 11, 10 am—WELCOME SUNDAY, Blessing of the Backpacks and picnic to follow!** Mark your calendar and bring a friend! All-ages worship, games and Church School registration. *Photos of 2015 Welcome Sunday*



## SCC Welcomes Dana Johnson in her new role as Director of Children's Ministry



The Christian Education Board is thrilled to welcome Dana Johnson in her new role as Director of Children's Ministry. Dana earned a B.S. in Education from USC and a M.A. in Education from California State University in Los Angeles. She has served SCC as a Sunday School teacher for almost twenty years, as a Christian Education Board member for six years and is currently a volunteer HS Youth group leader and mission trip expert! In addition, she recently completed training in Vermont as a facilitator for adventure education, teambuilding and leadership.

Dana is looking forward to building and supporting a Christian Education program that meets the needs of our current pre-K through 8th grade population. Her "out of the box" and "hands on" approach to Christian Education are well received by our youth and we are looking forward to the energy, dedication and energy she brings to all areas of programming. We are so fortunate to be working with her and know how much she already loves our children!

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## Water, School Desks and Following Jesus

Water, school desks and following Jesus – these are the things on my mind, this week! Yes, I spent vacation by the ocean (at Acadia National Park and on Cape Cod), admiring the play of light on water, wading in tide pools, and applauding the antics of a pod of Atlantic White Sided dolphins and several humpback whales (on Stellwagen Bank, off the coast of Cape Cod). And yes, our children went back to school this week, each of them starting at a new school, with all the adventure that implies. But that's not all.

Over the course of the last three months, I've had the joy of celebrating ten baptisms, including adults, babies, toddlers and teens. I have poured water on people in our sanctuary, in our Memorial Garden, in the Sound at Compo Beach and in a pool in Matanzas, Cuba. Over and over again I have said, "The Spirit of God be upon you, child of God, disciple of Christ, member of the Church!"

Then, last week, I sat at a desk in a sunny classroom at Yale Divinity School, surrounded by a roomful of seminary students and a smattering of other clergy. I was there because Saugatuck Church will serve as a supervised ministry site this year. We are excited to welcome seminary intern Thomas Burke, who will spend the year contributing to and learning from the ministries of Saugatuck Church. After the class, I chatted with Thomas and two other interns about the year ahead. Together, we talked about the importance of discernment – listening for the ways that God wants us to live our lives. Yes, each of these young men is considering a vocation in ministry, and yes, we often speak of 'call' as belonging to those who feel led to be ordained as clergy. But I'm actually interested in exploring how *each* of us is called. What does God have in mind for us?

I sometimes introduce the prayer of confession on Sunday morning by saying, "Whatever God intends us to be, we haven't become that, yet." I say it because I believe that God has a vision that includes each of us, maybe even relies on each of us to contribute our individual gifts and graces.

So I've been wondering: What does it look like, concretely, to follow Jesus – in our work and our relationships, in the way we shop or eat or make big decisions? How does faith influence the choices we make and the way we exercise our gifts? It's the question that lingers after every baptism, the one that's on every seminarian's mind, and the one that's on my mind this season.

## High School and Middle School Youth Group Kickoff

On Sunday, August 28, approximately 25 5<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade kids got together to kick off the youth group year. We played Wiffle Ball, manhunt, sardines and more on the front lawn and enjoyed a fine dining pizza experience on the front steps. You'll be happy to hear we rose to the challenge of finishing the 5 lb. box of Twizzlers! At 8pm, middle school students went home and the high school kids got ready to sleep. (hahahaha) If you believe that, I have some swamp land in Florida to sell you! We had a fantastic time playing games and solving the problems of the world over midnight snacks.

### ***Before and After Pictures***



*First HS Youth Group meeting will be on September 7<sup>th</sup> from 7-8:30. Join us!*



Wiffle Ball . . . A favorite with the Youth Group

### **Tears and Cheers"-September 19<sup>th</sup> 7-9pm**

Oh the irony of preparing your kids to leave the nest, and then wondering if we couldn't delay the departure for a bit longer. It's time to celebrate the victory with Moms (and Dads if you'd like to join us) who can relate to the dilemma. Mark your calendars for Monday, September 19<sup>th</sup>. We'll meet at Stephanie Martenson's home to create a care package for the kids and answer the question; How can we be so sad to send our kids off to college one minute, and so happy that our kids have left for college the next? Details to follow...([Dana21@optonline.net](mailto:Dana21@optonline.net) for more information)



## SCC Saugatuck River Cleanup September 25<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm Riverside Park (427 Riverside Avenue Westport

**SCC's high school youth group is organizing a mission project to help clean up our waterways. All are welcome and we hope you support their efforts!**

Partnering with Save the Sound, our team hopes to remove over 500 pounds of trash from our river! Over the last 10 years, Save the Sound has helped organize hundreds of coastal cleanup events that have brought together more than 17,000 volunteers who have removed 137,500 pounds of trash from 500 miles of waterfront.

**Sobering Stats** (decomposition rates for marine debris): **glass bottle** (1 million years), **plastic bottle** (450 years), **aluminum can** (125 years) **foam cup** (50 years), **plastic bag** (15 years)

Stephanie Martenson, SCC's Youth Group



### The Baldwin Family

Matthew, the family carpenter/engineer; Elizabeth, the idea lady; and with assistance from Lindsey & Abigail, have made 2 plant boxes for the entrance to Saugatuck Church.





**In early August, we signed a contract with Johannes Klais Orgelbau company of Bonn, Germany for the purchase of a pipe organ.** After



months of planning with the Music Ministry Team led by our Music Director, Heather Hamilton, and Brad Peterson, we have finalized the specifications for a 2 manual, 33 stop, 26 rank mechanical-action instrument. As background, Klais is a fourth generation organ builder founded in Bonn in 1882. Locally they have built organs for First Congregational Church in Fairfield; the Presbyterian Church in Irvington-on-Hudson; and Interchurch Center in New York City.

Final details for the organ were agreed by members of the Music Ministry Team, and a small group of Saugatuck members at a meeting with Philip Klais in June. This interactive meeting was very exhilarating as Philip shared his vision and the specifications for the organ, and impressed us all with his passion and commitment to build the right organ for Saugatuck.

Regarding funding a handful of very generous contributors have provided and pledged funds that cover the contract price of \$628,600. We have paid a 30% deposit of \$188,600, and in return have received a bank guaranty protecting the church from default. We estimate an additional \$100,000 will be required to cover electrical, carpentry, and installation. We hope to extend our fundraising to our broader church community and welcome any size gift to assist in making this exciting venture a reality.

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***For one magical evening in August***, Saugatuck Church was transformed into a virtual Lincoln Center. The occasion was High 5, a fundraiser by Beechwood Arts, a Westport based charity focused on promoting the arts across all creative genres and generations. Highlighting the evening was Joshua Bell, one of the world's most celebrated violinists, who has performed with the New York Philharmonic, for 3 U.S. Presidents, and the President of China. Joining Josh was his good friend, Westport's own Frederic Chiu, an extraordinary pianist, and co-founder with his wife Jeanine Esposito of Beechwood Arts.

The nearly full house audience was captivated by Bell playing his 1713 Huberman Stradivarius violin and Chiu playing a very special Yamaha piano brought in for the evening. Music from Beethoven, Gounal, Pucci, and Sarasate filled our sanctuary. An additional highlight was a stirring operatic performance by soprano Larisa Martinez, accompanied by Bell and Chiu, of "Quando me'n vo" from La Boheme.

The story of how the event came together is one of serendipity and hard work. Marcia Harrington received a call in the second week of August from Beechwood inquiring about using our church for their event. They had been planning for some time to use another local space only to discover in the heat of August that it didn't have air-conditioning. Realizing the spectacular evening they were planning and the good cause, we were motivated to help them pull it off. We also viewed it as an opportunity to showcase our church and create a template for future events.

Given that Josh Bell and Frederic Chiu were accustomed to performing in some of the world's top concert halls, Beechwood brought in a professional production company to handle sound, lighting, and recording. A special Yamaha piano was delivered for Frederic. Several florists brought in small trees, flowering plants, and other creative arrangements. A full-service caterer came in, received a special one day use permit from the town, and prepared pre and post concert foods. We worked with them to create a seating plan as each guest had a specifically designated seat.

All of this required extremely close coordination and cooperation between Beechwood and the church. Marcia Harrington, Betsy Gillespie, and Sara Walsh worked tirelessly, including the night of the performance, to ensure a successful event and safeguard our church.

It was a spectacular evening, and Saugatuck shined brightly.

John Walsh, Moderator

## ***Update from "Member in Discernment"***

Dear All,

I am happy to say that I graduated from Yale Divinity School in May and received a lovely reception at Saugatuck on June 26th. I preached that day and it was a real treat to stand in God's presence as seen in the eyes and hearts of those in attendance that Sunday. I am grateful to my Saugatuck family for their support these past four years as I continue to discern my path toward ordination in the UCC. This summer I have spent the bulk of my time in York, Maine and worshiping with the First Parish Congregational Church in York. I had a lot of fun participating in the Village Faire, an annual fund raising event for the church, where I tried my hand at face painting little ones. It was a real hoot! I've also been called to provide pastoral care for a number of folks both here in Westport as well as Maine. God continues to knock on my door in this area, both for sad occasions as well as joyful ones, including a wedding this month (which I am officiating as a Justice of the Peace).

In a couple of weeks I travel to the UCC Member in Discernment Gathering in Cleveland where I will meet fifty other folks who are also discerning their path. I look forward to this introduction to the UCC on a national level and to build relationships for my ongoing and expanding ministry.

On September 6th I begin a new chaplain internship at Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, NY. This will be my third of four clinical pastoral care units that are required to apply for certification as a

board certified chaplain. I have 800 clinical hours completed and another 800 to go before I can start the certification process.

Also in the fall, I will be preparing an ordination paper to submit to the deacons for review before it goes to the Fairfield West Committee on Ministry as the next step in my ordination process. So, that's what I have been up to: studying and discerning and writing and certifying!

I hope you all had a wonderful summer and I look forward to catching up with you this fall.

Grace and Peace,

Linda Bruce



*Following Linda Bruce's worship service, the reception for Linda moved to our Memorial Garden. What a perfect place on a beautiful day to celebrate a special occasion for Saugatuck Congregational Church!*



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## Another Special Occasion—Staples High School Graduation



A Proud Dad

**The Beach Service. . . abounding with enthusiasm, clapping to the beautiful music, feeling good and eager for more music from the Pivot Ministries Choir**



Communion the Beach with Pastor Willie Salmond & Deacon AeRhee Lee

## **2016-2017 Saugatuck Retreats – SAVE THE DATES!**

Once again Men's Retreat will take place at UCC Silver Lake Center from Saturday September 24th leaving from church parking lot at 8.30am to Sunday September 25th. returning to church parking lot after 2pm. A time of sharing, fun, and a small outdoor work project. Don't miss it

The theme for this year is "ANGER. Destructive? Or is some anger constructive? How do we handle anger?" The cost is \$150. Please pay to church office. Checks payable to "Saugatuck Congregational Church" with Men's Retreat in memo line. See you there. Willie Salmond

**Faithbooking: An All-Ages Retreat, January 28-29, 2017, Silver Lake Conference Center, Sharon, CT –** Our lives are a story still being written. Take a weekend away with other Saugatuck Church families and friends to swap some stories, play some games, and listen for the still speaking voice of God in our lives.

**Women's Retreat: April 29 – May 1, 2017, Silver Lake Conference Center, Sharon, CT.** Spring in Connecticut is a beautiful time to take time away, together! If you'd like to help plan, email [alison@saugatuckchurch.org](mailto:alison@saugatuckchurch.org)



## Russ Brenneman Honored for his work on Conservation Issues



More than 50 persons gathered today at the Westport home of G. Kenneth Bernhard to honor Westporter Julie Belaga and former Westporter Russ Brenneman for their work in conservation issues in the state. Bernhard, a former state representative, is co-chair of the board of the nonpartisan Connecticut League of Conservation Voters (CTLCV). The group was founded in 1999 by Belaga, who initiated the procedure of scoring and monitoring legislators on their record of voting on conservation issues. *Dave Matlow for WestportNow.com, Westport Now, July 17*

## Baptisms at Saugatuck



Baptism of Corinne Isabella D'Auria, July 17, 2016; born March 16, 2016; Parents Michelle and Matthew D'Auria Godparents: Ernst and Jillian van Orsouw Michelle and Matthew are new members. Corinne is a beautiful little girl. We will enjoy watching her grow up in our church.



Dana Johnson was baptized in Cuba on June 30, 2016.



Yes, this is a baptism at the beach: Tom Long was baptized on July 24, 2016

# Cuba 2016

By Dana Johnson

In the ever accelerating, social media driven world we live in today (especially our SCC Youth), it is easy to get numb to all of the many superlatives that make up the rhetoric of the day. It seems like the smallest move forward is “inspirational”; the near routine somehow “life-changing”; the touching of an inner chord “poignant”; one’s place in humanity “overwhelming”. For the 24 kids in the SCCYG and the 15 adults that accompanied them on our mission trip to Cuba, we discovered in ourselves a *love* that hadn’t been touched before, one that in the end found us incredibly inspired throughout what many of us will remember as, if not life changing, eye opening. Our passion for our fellow man, and for each other in our shared accomplishments and experiences, ascended in ways that touched our hearts and overwhelmed our senses as we immersed ourselves in a culture that is jaw-droppingly different than the one of relative wealth and privilege that we experience every day.

On Saturday, June 25, we spent nearly 20 hours traversing from Westport to Matanzas, Cuba. Along the way, we decided we’d try to note, remember and share with each other, the special moments of each day that in some way touched us. “God moments”—big or small—when something happens via the presence of God...a helpful hand, a kind word, a glorious view, a special and shared laugh. These moments started coming right away!

The core of our trip was relational mission work, and of that we did a fair amount. The three areas of focus on the mission included shared worship and ministry with the local community, lending a hand to a few in the local community struggling with physical handicap, and farming, or maybe more broadly agriculture.



Our ministry experience was enlightening. Our home base was in Matanzas, the city of bridges, about 45 minutes southeast of Havana (when the bridge isn’t out). On Sunday, we divided into 3 groups to join 3 different house churches in worship. We had slightly different experiences at each site. But, overwhelmingly, the common thread was the welcome we received. The Cuban people made room for us, in their worship and in their hearts. The people were tremendously hands-on in their worship, and in their greetings, and we were quickly consumed by the trust that came as a part of that touch. We learned that the pastors build trust and develop a community of believers for two years before they train at seminary. Attending the service was our first peek into the importance of relationships to the Cuban people.

During the week, we visited 6 more house churches. The worship center was *literally* the living room of the home where the family lives. Often times, we could track the growth of the congregation by how many walls had been knocked down (no building code in Cuba...) to accommodate a bigger crowd! The pastors were men who had quit their jobs because they felt called to spread Christianity through the community. In Cuba, which is still “traditional” in their family roles, the wives and children support the husband/father, and this is also true in ministry.

Perhaps the pastor that surprised us the most was a young man who, by night taught us traditional Cuban dances, and by day had started a church for “non-traditional” believers (read LGBT). He was searching for the required 10 members to allow him to pursue training at the seminary, but he acknowledged the progress was bound to be slow. Seeing the level of passion, commitment, and love for their communities that each of these pastor’s clearly held helped us as we reflected on our days and shared with each other the “God-moments” we observed along the way.

Our exposure to the struggles of the handicapped in such a still-developing country as Cuba came as an extension of the ministry work. Our missionary host, Willie Santiago, and his sister, Yodalís, wanted us to meet some of the children and families served by the ministry on his farm where they host a support group for the parents of handicapped children. That led us to visit the homes of three handicapped children in villages far from Matanzas. Of course, the bus and its occupants were the news of the day to each neighborhood, with one woman handing her baby to Mary Ellen Rose. It was an honor for her baby to be held by such a celebrity. We were, in all honesty, treated like celebrities on our visits.

As part of the journey, we entered the home of a teenage boy who was having a difficult day. His grandmother cared for

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him while his mother worked to support the family. Our group sang to the boy and offered a moment of calm in an otherwise difficult existence. And, we came to realize that in their isolated world, the visit from 39 American in a crazy hippie bus, served as a statement of support for the boy, and his grandmother. In fact, our prayers served to strengthen and validate the work of the grandmother.

On our final stop of this leg of the mission, we spoke with a 17 year old boy who had just received a powered wheelchair. Donations from US ministries had provided his mother with a house (2 rooms and probably 200 square feet) last year, but the new wheelchair provided mobility! So key for a 17 year old boy, right? Westport or Cuba, we all know what that chair must have meant to him and we were once again touched by the love shared across nations and faiths. This young man loved baseball (the Matanzas Alligators) and so we serenaded him with "Take Me Out to The Ballgame". We came to Cuba with the desire to "do" and quickly learned how important it is to listen

Beyond the tender moments shared with the handicapped kids, we also visited an orphanage for kids 6-18 years old. Nervous going in about what we might see, we were pleasantly surprised to discover happy, well-adjusted teenagers and kind caretakers who were interested in learning as much about us as we were learning about them! Many of the kids spoke enough English that, combined with our [limited] Spanish was good enough to communicate. Having learned that Cuban kids like a lot of the same things as American kids - music, movies, sports and dancing - we invited them to the fiesta on our final night in Matanzas. As the adults on the trip watched the kids dance, mingle and laugh, I think we all felt our hearts glow in the beauty of the integration of cultures. Fun truly transcends language barriers!

Another aspect of our mission was time spent on the farm. Willie owns an organic farm that has a goal of producing enough food to adequately supplement the weekly food allowances of those struggling with hunger in the nearby villages. We planted coffee, peeled about a million mangoes and successfully moved construction supplies (thanks to Mike Banks' pulley innovation!) for a session of hands-on work. Our joint hope is for Willie's farm to house mission groups in the future, so relationships between Cubans and U.S. service groups can deepen. Away from other Cubans that might not have agreed, politically, with his endeavors, Willie was able to speak freely and we learned about the struggles of the people trying to improve their quality of life and serve those in need. Willie talks...a lot. He is full of passion for his calling, and his homeland, and he hasn't been afraid of making some powerful people angry. A few years ago, he left his home for fear of prosecution and lived in Ohio for the requisite 366 days so he could receive an official asylum status in the US. There were clearly stories that could be told of heartache and suffering. But, Willie told us "I have a thousand reasons to hate, but one reason to love." Talk about a "God-moment"!

In and around the specific mission driven agenda, we were educated on the culture of Cuba and the challenges its people face. And, we were amazed that so many with so little resources had such strong faith, such loving hearts, and were such evidently caring people. We were called to Cuba, not to save these people with our youthful strength, but to listen, to learn and to be present as a statement of support.

For the 39 of us on the trip, something happened that made the trip more than just a "God-moment". We experienced that certain magic we seek as humans when the connection to one

another is so real, the spirit so animated, and the love is so present. Sharing a quiet conversation about faith over morning coffee, reflecting on the joy of the cool ocean after a hot day of labor, sharing our observations during the debrief each evening, feeling a deep desire to somehow "rescue" those in need, (the families and the animals roaming the streets), and realizing perhaps they don't need "rescue" at all. Maybe all they needed from us was what they received, a little more love and kindness. We opened our hearts to the people of Cuba, and that vulnerability led all of us to bind in a truly magical way, maybe even a life changing way. The night morning we arrived home, the power of the collection of God's moments hung in the air and our 26 hour journey deposited 39 changed individuals into the parking lot at Saugatuck Congregational Church.

We believe that the Cuba mission was one that embodies the spirit of Saugatuck Church, a spirit we might all describe differently, but that exudes a bright flame from its center that we all feel lucky to touch. From each of us that went on the trip, we thank you again for your support. We believe we did the congregation proud in our representation of those that attend Saugatuck and the collective values that we share. A mission trip is not a vacation, but we had a lot of fun. A mission trip is not a cultural experience, though we were immersed in the Cuban culture and are richer as a result. A mission is also not an extended service project, though we did serve. The magic of the mission trip was one I hope all participants would echo: our goal of helping others became an experience that went so deep and touched us in so many ways that we, the participants, are actually the ones who received the biggest gift of all!

We're already looking forward to next year's SCCYG mission trip. Thanks again for your support. Dana Johnson



In early July we welcomed Abilis to our church space. Abilis is a Greenwich based not-for-profit organization whose singular mission is to service developmentally challenged individuals, something it has been doing for over 60 years.

Saugatuck was first introduced to Abilis through contacts at Staples High School Special Education and the town of Westport's Health and Human Services department. The need was to find a local venue for students aging out of special education programs upon leaving high school and reaching the age of 21. This can be a very challenging and difficult time as they leave the well-resourced, supportive environment provided by local school districts like Westport.

Abilis focuses solely on assisting developmentally challenged individual from first diagnosis through all stages of their lives. The activity at Saugatuck is a part of their Life Skills Development program. We provide space ( Green Room, 2nd floor) 5 days a week from 8:00-4:00. The objective of the Life Skills program is to enable participants to function within the local community close to where they live. Each individual has a specially designed program and support based on their needs. Typically they use the Green Room as a base in the morning to plan the day and then go out into the community, e.g., to the Library, to the Senior Center, the Y, the post office, etc., some may have a job. Usually they return mid-day for lunch, and back into the community in the afternoon, returning at 3:30 or so to wrap up.

We have introduced them to the Senior Center, the Gillespie Center, the Playhouse, and are always looking for other places where they might learn, work, or find some other productive activity. They also can usually be found Thursday lunch time in the Hoskins Hall kitchen which is their home-cooked day.

The group varies from 3-9 participants with supervision of 2-4 depending on need. The size of the group also varies by day based on funding which is strained because of cutbacks by the state of Connecticut.

Matt Micelli is the on-site Abilis Coordinator of Life Skills at Saugatuck, along with staff members Jonas, Carlos, Stacey and Andre. Joe, Daniel, Chris, Jason, Myles, Jocelyn and Nick are some of our regular attendees. Stop by, say hello. They love visitors, and it will definitely brighten your day.

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**Forgiveness:** Healing Interpersonal Wounds, Wednesday, September 21 at 7pm, McManus Room., the Westport Library —Explore forgiveness from a religious and psychological point of view with Rabbi Greg Wall, Rev. Dr. John Morehouse and Dr. Janis Abrams Spring. Co-sponsored by the Interfaith Clergy Council and the Interfaith Council of Westport and Weston.

### September Birthdays

2 Mary Ellen Hendricks	3 Michael Helfer
7 Khaliq Sanda	11 Tracy Flood
15 Charlotte Call	16 Marty Hauhuth Steven Yingling
17 John Loeck	
19 Brad Peterson	20 Carla Bowden