

How will our church go forward?



Facing the future

by Laura Moorehead

As you will see below, Central Village Congregational Church is about to embark on the New Beginnings program. You may be wondering why we are doing this, why we need this, why we can't just keep on keeping on as we have done for years. We have money in the bank, people still come to church every Sunday, what's wrong? I'd like to offer my perspective on why I feel this is a necessary step and why everyone should join in the discussion. Because, at the end of it all, it will be our decision. We as a church family have to decide what our future will be.

I was one of the four CVCC members who attended the initial seminar on the New Beginnings program and I did not go to it with a positive attitude. From my experience, businesses that are in the business of evaluating and offering advice are a waste of money. I've seen one too many bad recommendations come from such companies when they just don't understand the real problems

that need to be solved. But after hearing the background, the track record and the ideology of the company that was running this program, I did a 180. I felt honesty, a commitment to doing what God would want, and a real dedication to helping churches do what they need to do to survive. Their answers weren't what I would have considered superficial band aids such as adding a rock band to service or a flat screen panel that we could view PowerPoint presentations on. That's what I expected to hear. Instead I heard a group of people that had been there, done that with Jesus in mind, and had real solutions to real

problems. Granted they were often hard solutions but is the right path always the easiest? Usually not. If it were, we would have figured that out ourselves long ago.

The single statement that struck me the hardest during the seminar was simple, yet when I heard it, it made all the sense in the world. The presenter said churches that are in trouble nowadays have a common mindset — "we need to get back to the way it was."

The thought in my head was "Yes, we say that all the time. We do! We need to get young people interested

See Forward, p. 4

What help can New Beginnings give?

by Bob McLevy, Moderator

"What is God calling your congregation to do and be in this time and place?"

This was the question posed by the Crossroads Ministry as part of the "Come and See" event attended by Scott and Laura Moorehead and Bob and Sue McLevy. This event was held in early January by the Connecticut UCC for the purpose of helping Connecticut congregations to determine their future and alternatives that may be available.

Details and the offerings by Crossroads were brought before the Council and at the annual CVCC meeting, which included questions and responses concerning the information.

It was concluded that with dedi-

cated participants, this opportunity was a positive direction to invest time and money. After submitting a detailed application, CVCC was notified that we were accepted as one of ten churches to enter the "New Beginnings" program.

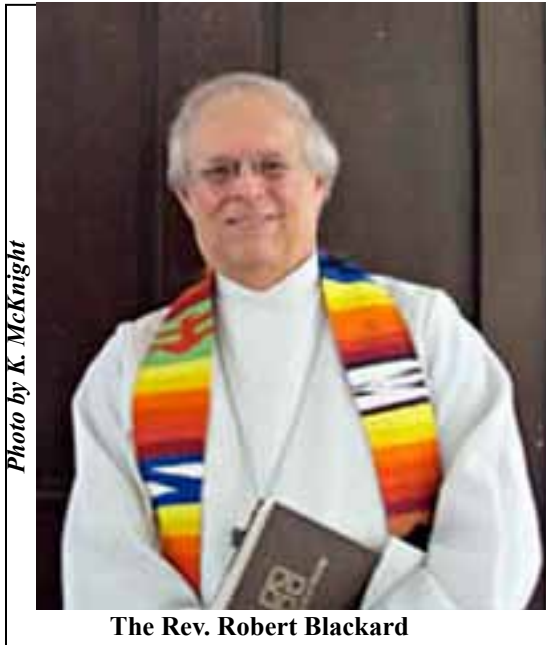
With committed participation this will enable our congregation to determine the best use of our limited time, resources and shrinking number of people.

New Beginnings will work with our congregation to decide what are the possibilities for our future and the steps that we should take to move toward those options.

How does New Beginnings work?
Phase I March 9, 2011, Church Assessment at CVCC Meetings

See New Beginnings, p. 4

Get to know our guest in the pulpit



The Rev. Robert Blackard

by Kathy McKnight

While Pastor Jean recovers from knee-replacement surgery, we are fortunate to have the services of the Rev. Robert Blackard to fill our pulpit. Pastor Blackard has been with us a number of times before and we feel we've come to know him fairly well. His sermons are always informative and inspirational, delivered with an occasional touch of humor that we enjoy. He's been asked to be with us for several more weeks until Pastor Jean is strong enough to return.

Pastor Blackard is a retired Lutheran minister, having served most recently in Brooklyn's St. John Lutheran Church for 22 years. Since his retirement he fills in at several area churches, averaging about twice a month. Until just last month, he was also employed in Security at the Mohegan Sun. Pastor Blackard says his job involved mostly answering questions from casino patrons, the

most frequent of which being "Where's my car?" You may wonder how anyone could answer that question given the multiple parking garages and lots available. Believe it or not, there are answers!

Pastor Blackard grew up in Illinois. He studied music education in college and later enjoyed playing trumpet with the Greater Killingly Community Band for almost 20 years. While still in college, Pastor Blackard began to feel the call to ministry. After graduation he enrolled in the Luther-

an seminary in Chicago. Realizing he was not an "urban person," he transferred to the only rural Lutheran seminary in the USA at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Ordained in 1972, he served churches in Corning, New York, and Salem, New Hampshire, before coming to Connecticut.

Pastor Blackard lost his wife just a few years ago, and now lives on his own with a cat for company. He has fond memories of previous pets and recalls once having a very vocal mynah bird. Whenever the phone rang, that bird would immediately call out his daughter's name! And when the dog barked, the bird would scold, "Knock it off!"

His daughter now lives in nearby Canterbury. Her husband is a teacher and she keeps busy caring for her three children, while working in customer service for a high-end moving company. One of her loves is the cho-

reography she does for local schools and for the Bradley Playhouse.

Besides family time, Pastor Blackard enjoys music, especially the dance music of the 20's, 30's and 40's, old time radio and reading.

Presently, he is adjusting to his second retirement, this time from the Mohegan Sun job. Amidst the financial challenges, arranging health insurance, etc., he has kept busy with his Sunday services and "shoveling snow ... shoveling snow ... shoveling snow ..."

Hopefully we are all done with that for a while!

*Please
pray
for —*



1st Lt. Shaun Bailey

Jill Brumfield

Ken Brumfield

Jeanne Cofske

Al Cornell

Julia Credit

Suzanne Credit

Joan Johnson

Richard Mailloux

Heather Macbeth and

Co-workers, Julie and Melinda

Bill McCusker

Pastor Jean McCusker

Pat Soriero

Ryan

Convalescent Home

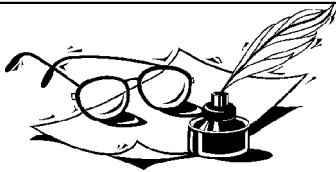
Gussie Burns, Villa Maria

Hazel Opperman, Village Manor

Richard Taber

Family and Friends of

Jan Bird



A Time for Reflection

Dear Friends!

We all live by the calendar. We use planners and date books from January through December. They remind us of the places we need to be, and the things we need to do. They also mark the passage of time. Who of us has not looked longingly at the approaching March page and its promise of the lessening of winter?

The church also follows a calendar, with its seasons marked and dated. I have mentioned in church that this year contains as long an Epiphany season as the church provides for — eight weeks plus Transfiguration Sunday.

Ash Wednesday is March 9, and opens the season of Lent. These 40 days plus Sundays become a spiritual journey that leads us to the sacrifice and death of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross. But the grand finale comes with Easter morning and the joy of Jesus' resurrection.

Lent reminds us daily that our lives are not our own. We recall that each Sunday as we recite a Prayer of Confession. We speak in the presence of each other and tell God that we know what He knows — that we are “sinful and unclean,” and that we sin against both Him and each other “in thought, word, and deed” and “in what we have done and left undone.” We are glad that everyone else is reading the same thing, because we really don't want the person standing near us to hear us admitting to that!

In my tradition — Lutheran — we make a big deal out of the tandem concepts of Confession and Absolution. I have been with you all long enough to see readily that you do, too.

Your Prayer of Confession is always followed by the statement of the Good News of God's Mercy. “God has promised that as we confess our sins, so He grants us the forgiveness of them — all for the sake of Jesus His Son, who died on the cross that we might have that forgiveness.”

Lent is a time of self-examination



and preparation. Many churches used to emphasize the idea of everyone giving up something during Lent as a reminder of the sacrifice that God made in His Son for all of us.

I worked with a fellow who is Roman Catholic, as is his wife. This is New England, so what else is new?! They both attend church every Sunday, but I think his wife practices more of the “at home” aspects of their church than he does, although he participates in those practices to support her. Anyway, a few weeks ago, he and I had a conversation about Lent, and he mentioned that his wife always gives up something for Lent. He said, “I hope this year she gives up something I don't like.” I broke out laughing, and told him that was really a very funny comment. He wasn't as convinced of the humor in that as I was, because he knew that whatever she chose to give up, he would be giving it up for the Lenten

season as well.

Many of us don't do that anymore. Some of us even use Lent as a time to take on something to add to our spiritual journey, such as setting aside time every day for prayer and reading from the Bible, or joining a Bible study group, or participating in a community ministry as a witness of thanks for God's great gift to us in His Son. I guess the idea is that Lent should not be “business as usual.”

Ash Wednesday is March 9. Passion/Palm Sunday is April 17, Maundy Thursday is April 21, Good Friday is April 22, and Easter morning is April 24. Mark those days on your calendar, and please fill in those in between with something that draws your attention to your life as a constant daily journey with God.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Blackard

The Rev. Robert Blackard



Special Meeting

Wednesday, March 9 • 7 p.m.

**Purpose: to meet with the
New Beginnings group to
start the journey**

Refreshments will be served.



New Beginnings—

Cont'd from p. 1

with the Pastor, Regional Pastor, moderator and church officers to inspect and review the building, financial status, local area, missions and current strengths. After this on-site assessment there will be a meeting with the congregation between 7 and 8:30 p.m. **It is very important for all of our members to attend.** Coffee and dessert will be served.

Phase II April 29–30, First Church, West Hartford, CT A cluster event will be scheduled with the Pastor and 5-8 lay leaders, together with all ten participating churches. Here we will receive our assessment reports from the Crossroads ministry. Interpretation and training will follow.

Phase III – Local scheduled meetings (May-July) Lay leaders will present to the congregation the options and provide guidance through the discernment process. The entire congregation will need to decide what direction God is calling us to take.

Phase IV – (September?) After this decision for a New Beginning is adopted, our Regional Minister will work with the pastor and key leaders to identify available mission planning resources and potential coaches to assist the congregation in living out our decision.

Information and progress will be posted on the bulletin boards. Please call or email with questions or comments.

Bob McLevy, Moderator

860-774-7429

robertmclevy@sbcglobal.net

Forward

Cont'd from p. 1

again. We need a Sunday School that is the size it used to be. We need a dedicated group of people — like Elmer, Lois, Gussy — that will stick with the church no matter what.” But as the presenter quickly pointed out We Are Never Going To Get Back There. We have to face the fact that this is a different world. People, especially young people, have a totally different attitude towards life and how church fits into it. Church is a secondary thought on a Sunday, something that is just one more thing in a too busy weekend, and we aren't going to convince them otherwise. There is no longer a family tradition of children going through Sunday School, growing up, getting married in the church and having children who stay. Children move away and find their own church and we can't do anything to keep them here. People drive to church now, they don't walk, so our parking lot is a big problem and we aren't going to easily change that. The price of fuel oil is now costing us around \$700 a month in the winter to heat the church and we aren't going to easily change that. People in town don't feel a dedication to their hometown church. Often the building is seen as a pretty place to have a wedding, not a vital part of a community.

So what is our church going to do?

Our church membership has been slowly dwindling for years. Year after year we spend more money than we take in. Our Sunday School attendance, although better than it was a few years ago, still has only four children. Granted, they are four children to be proud of! And our fundraising outreach is something we are constantly applauded for. We struggle but we survive. Are we doing the right thing or is there a better way? What are other churches doing? What can we do to think outside the box? Can our church do better than just surviving? What can we do to increase membership or should we dedicate our efforts to something else? These are just some of the questions in my head. I hope you have even more. If you feel the same dedication to our church, if you want our church to carry out a mission that would make Jesus smile instead of just fading away, please join us as we take this scary, yet exciting step. It will be a couple of months of time investment, and a financial investment as well, but the time and money invested can be a drop in the bucket compared to the good that can come out of this. I feel that at the end of it all we will be able to breath a sign of relief as, together, we start in a new direction to our church's future. Please join us on March 9 at 7:00 p.m. as we begin our journey.

Change — embrace it

by Erma Macbeth

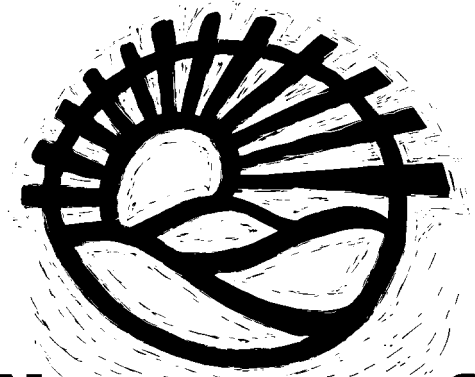
OK! Can you truthfully say that those first few flakes of snow didn't stir an excitement knowing that our world was about to undergo a change into some sort of glistening, fairyland of white? We probably groaned when the wise weather man or woman forecasted snow. We don't want the nuisance part or the work that goes with the change that's coming, and after all, things are fine just as they are. But there is a bit of anticipated excitement. Part of the anticipation and apprehension is enhanced by the fact that we don't completely know how that change will exactly manifest itself. We can watch and periodically check out the latest developments: how much snow, what type of snow, how heavy it will be, how the world will accept it and how it will change that world. We regularly go to the window to check.

No matter how much we LOVE summer's colorful blooms, comfortable recreations, relaxing occupations, or delight in autumn's vibrant colors and pleasantly brisk days, we are still enthralled with this new change that takes over our corner

of the earth changing the status quo. It is clean, white and sparkling at least for the moment. It is beautiful as it covers everything and turns what was our slightly drab world into a work of art, as it clings to the trees and bushes giving them a new decor. We don't like the shoveling and underfoot inconveniences, but we love the change. We will go through much of this same cycle of feeling with each changing season. God miraculously changes our perspectives constantly.

Change is good and necessary in our lives even though we often fight it "tooth and nail" as we say. Our church is in a process of seeking needed change. At times this is going to be difficult to accept. We don't always want change, however we are an aging population for the most part, and unless we want CVCC to die with us, we need to embrace some changes ... maybe do a little "shoveling" to enjoy a new vista. Thankfully we do have some young people who have committed themselves to helping to "young" the church.

We have applied for a program to help us analyze our situation. Its purpose will be to make us think — not all bad! We must analyze ourselves and what we really want for our church, what purpose we want to see for CVCC,



NEW BEGINNINGS
make a new beginning

how we see it fit in our community, and how we want our church to serve not only us but the greater community.

Change is good. Saying that — I realize change for change sake is not good. We must purpose our change as we prepare to accept the need for change — a change that will be beneficial to all it needs to serve, young and old, those with whom we agree or don't agree and with whom we may downright disagree. Be ready to change a few ingrained ideas of our own for the greater good. It will be a tough process but a necessary one and we must be prepared to be open-minded and to embrace the fact that the status quo is not going to cut it. We must be open to new ideas, ideas which will help our Central Village Congregational Church to be what it can be which after all is to serve God and not just ourselves. This must be a more lasting change than that snowy countryside that melts away, but we still can enter this new challenge with the anticipation and excitement of a fresh new vitality and life in our church. It will take each and every one of us working toward that goal. BUT ... it's doable!





Hymn

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
 Forgive our foolish ways,
 Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
 In purer lives thy service find,
 In deeper reverence, praise.

by Marge Hoskin

Church member Jane Wuorio's favorite hymn is "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind." It's a classic, with lyrics written by the famous New England poet and ardent abolitionist Quaker, John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892.)

The words in the hymn are a prayer taken from Whittier's lengthy poem "The Brewing of Soma" written in 1872. Soma was a sacred drink of priests in a Hindu sect in India. The priests brewed and drank soma, probably a hallucinogenic, to attempt to experience divinity. Whittier believed the only way to God was the Quaker way, through simplicity and sincerity.

In high school English class, many of us probably read Whittier's most famous poem (it's a long one, too) titled "Snow-Bound." The poem written in 1860 is dedicated to his "household" and describes his home and farm during a New England blizzard of that era.

"And when the second morning shone, /We looked upon a world unknown ... A universe of sky and snow." Sound familiar?

Jane chose a classic hymn

Although the hymn "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" has been sung to several different tunes, the version in our church hymn books was composed by Frederick C. Maker (1844-1927.) Maker, an Irish musician and composer, wrote the music in 1887 for the Congregational Church Hymnal published in London.

"I grew up with that hymn," Jane said. In the late 1930s, Jane and her family moved from Rochester NH to Central Village where her father became Superintendent of the Wyandotte Worsted Company mill, now Central Square Condominiums.

The Central Village Congregational Church pastor at the time was Rev. Oscar Wooldridge and "we had an active group of teenagers at the church in those days," she said. She remembers that downstairs in the church, a coal furnace occupied the center of the room and the present pastor's office was the coal bin.



Happy Birthday!

MARCH

- 5 Heidi Kapszukiewicz
- 8 Brook Price
- 11 Wendy Ormerod
- 11 Joan Johnson
- 24 Emily Shamback 5
- 30 Cookie Ormerod

APRIL

- 1 Jill Brumfield
- 1 Quinn Renaud
- 8 Sarah Exley
- 9 Charlie Shamback 7
- 18 Virginia Winslow
- 27 Jay Lewis

MAY

- 15 Janie Honig
- 25 Albert Exley
- 28 Dale Exley

JUNE

- 2 Jane Wuorio
- 4 Mariena Eaton 4

Kids learn of God's love

by Jill Shamback

In our most recent unit, the Sunday School children have been learning about all the ways that God Loves You, and how he shows us his love everyday. Through the food we eat, the clean water we drink, and the caring people who help us, God is with us. We have been learning about God's love by painting a large, pink



heart and creating and collage of His love in our everyday lives. Please come down and see our wonderful work. We certainly enjoy our Sunday mornings together.

CVCC Annual Meeting Scenes



Photos by K. McKnight



Bob McLevy was elected new Moderator as Scott Moorehead retires to other positions. A new budget was approved after discussion of expenses and dwindling income. Annual reports of officers and committees and minutes of the meeting are available at church.

CENTRAL VILLAGE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH Elected Officers – January 2011

Moderator: Bob McLevy
Vice Moderator: Chris Burton

Clerk: Erma Macbeth
Asst. Clerk: Virginia Winslow

Treasurer: Sue McLevy
Asst. Treasurer: Jana Livernoche

Delegates
Marge Hoskin
Cookie Ormerod
Virginia Winslow

Deacons: 2010–2011
Amos Cornell
Lisa Burton
Len Oberdorf

Deacons: 2011–2012
Jill Brumfield
Bill McCusker
Chuck Shamback

Non-elected Committees/Appointments – January 2011

Christian Education
Jill Shamback, Chair
Jane Eaton
Jay Lewis
Kelly Livernoche
Sue McLevy
Laura Moorehead

Stewards
Jay Lewis
Chris Burton
Bob McLevy
Laura Moorehead
Scott Moorehead
Cookie Ormerod

Church Ministries
Sue McLevy, Chair
Beverly Blais
Jill Brumfield
Marjorie Hoskin
Cookie Ormerod

Building
Scott Moorehead, Chair
Chris Burton
Bob McLevy

Music
Erma Macbeth, Chair
Heidi Kapszekiewicz,
Organist/Choir Director
Kathy McKnight
Alice Oberdorf
Gordon Smith
Virginia Winslow
Mark Brown

Fundraising
Laura Moorehead, Chair
Scott Moorehead
Scott Hopkins
Kathy McKnight

Board of Trustees
Scott Moorehead, Chair
Chris Burton
Jill Brumfield

Communications
Kathy McKnight, Editor
Erma Macbeth
Laura Moorehead

Mission/Social Action
Marjorie Hoskin, Chair
Scott Moorehead

Examiners
Marge Hoskin
Scott Moorehead

Stewardship/Membership
Lisa Burton
Marjorie Hoskin
Jane Wuorio

Looking for effective ways to help others? Marge Hoskin of our Mission Committee has detailed many area programs in this column. Pick one and pitch right in!

Ride in the Great Steeplechase



by Marge Hoskin

Each summer, usually in August, two Northeastern Connecticut non-profit organizations, Perception Programs, Inc. and Windham Area Interfaith Ministry (WAIM) join forces to sponsor the Steeple Chase Bike Tour through the scenic Quiet Corner. This year will be the 20th annual bike tour to raise funds for the two agencies.



Rest stops along the 100 mile, 50 mile, 35 mile and 20 mile bike tours are at area churches (some historic). There's free food, beverages and snacks for participants and the good (and tired) feeling of doing something great for your neighbors.

Of course, you'll need to get in a little training before the big event, which is why we have this article in our March church newsletter.

Windham Area Interfaith Ministries or WAIM is comprised of more

than 35 faith communities. Its office is at 886 Main Street in Willimantic. The mostly volunteer group provides, among other things, clothing and furniture to needy families. WAIM estimates that 40 tons of material goods are redistributed each year. During the growing season, WAIM operates a community garden at Lauter Park in Willimantic with excess food going to Willimantic's food kitchen and area food banks.

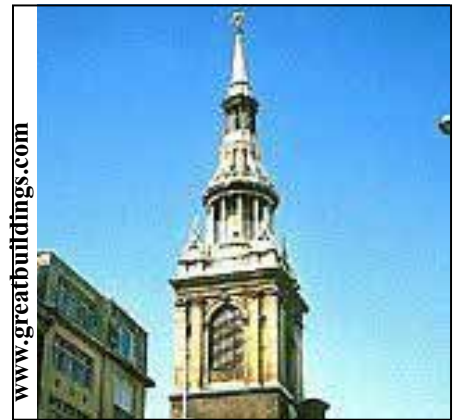
Perception Programs has its headquarters in Willimantic and a satellite office in the Danielson area. The organization offers treatment, case management, education and housing to people with substance use, adults involved in the criminal justice system and people living with AIDS.

Last year there were 400 bicyclists in the great Steeple Chase. More than \$70,000 was raised. For information about the 2011 Steeple Chase, contact Perception Programs at www.perceptionprograms.org.



JAMES (age 4) was listening to a Bible story. His dad read, "The man named Lot was warned to take his wife and flee out of the city but his wife looked back and was turned to salt."

Concerned, James asked, "What happened to the flea?"



Whose idea was this?

by Marge Hoskin

Once upon a time, where there was a steeple, most of us assumed there was a church. Steeples, while they are inspiring, are not architecturally necessary, so where did the idea of the steeple come from?

Historians note that there were spires as early as the 12th Century, but steeples as we know them today are descended from those built after the Great Fire of London in 1666. Over four days, more than 13,000 homes were destroyed along with many famous buildings including St. Paul's Cathedral and 86 other churches.

Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723) is credited with the single steeple design "large enough for a good ring of the bells." It was simple and straight-forward and soon copied by other architects. Wren himself was Chief Architect for the rebuilding of more than 40 churches after the fire.

When the Sunday School teacher was describing how Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt, Jason said "My Mommy looked back once while she was driving and she turned into a telephone pole!"

C · a · l · e · n · d · a · r

March 9, Wed. Ash Wednesday, Lent begins
 Congregation meets with New Beginnings staff, 7-8:30 p.m.

March 10, Thurs. Church Council meets, 7 p.m.

March 12, Sat. **Adele & Co.** Coffeehouse Concert, 7 p.m.

March 13, Sun. One Great Hour of Sharing Special Mission Offering

April 2, Sat. Public Turkey Supper, Buffet-style 4:30-6 p.m.

April 9, Sat. **Deb Hopkins** Coffeehouse Concert, 7 p.m.

April 17, Sun. Palm/Passion Sunday

April 21, Thurs. Maundy Thursday

April 22, Fri. Good Friday

April 24, Sun. **Easter Sunday**

May 7, Sat. Spring Work Day
 Conference Annual Meeting

May 15, Sun. Deadline for June Congregational Chronicle

May 22, Sun. Pentecost, Strengthen the Church Special Mission Offering

TBA Plans for Spring Yard Sale and another Coffeehouse Concert



Sour Cream Coffeecake

From the kitchen of Bev Blais

Bev made this favorite recipe frequently over the years and brought it to more than one coffee hour at CVCC.

1/4 c. butter or margarine
 1 1/2 c. sugar
 3 eggs
 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla
 3 c. flour
 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
 1 1/2 tsp. baking soda
 1/4 tsp. salt
 1 1/2 c. dairy sour cream

Topping

1/2 c. brown sugar
 1/2 c. finely chopped nuts
 1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon

Combine butter, sugar, eggs and vanilla; beat at medium speed for two minutes.

Mix in flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt, alternately with sour cream.

Spread 1/3 (2cups) of this batter in a greased tube pan.

Sprinkle with 1/3 of the topping. Repeat two more times, ending with topping.

Bake at 350° for 60 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean.

Cool slightly before removing from the pan.

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRONICLE

Kathy McKnight
 Editor

kmcknight@ct.metrocast.net
 564-3616

Erma Macbeth
Marge Hoskin
 Assistant Editors

Laura Moorehead
 Special Correspondent

Bob McLevy
 Director

**Central Village
 Congregational Church
 United Church of Christ**

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRONICLE
C/O 319 Plainfield Pike
Plainfield, CT 06374

**Central Village
 Congregational Church
 United Church of Christ**

The Rev. Jean McCusker

Welcome to Sunday Worship
 and Sunday School
 9:30-10:30 a.m.

Box 267, 33 Main St., Route 12
 Central Village, CT 06332
 (860) 564-3568

<http://centralvillagechurch.com>

March 2011



**Late-Breaking
 News**

Attention Crafters: Shirley Defosse at Central Village Library is sorting through the library's book collection in anticipation of closing. She is donating several like-new craft books to our church. We will put these books back with the craft supplies so that everyone can enjoy them. Thank you Shirley!



If you would like to give altar flowers for Easter, please order by April 10, 2011

Order Form for Altar Flowers

Easter Lilies

Name _____ Phone _____

Number of Lilies _____ x \$10.00 = \$ _____

Optional:

(Circle One) In memory of _____ In honor of _____

By April 10, please give your order with payment to Erma Macbeth.

If you have any questions Call Erma at 860-564-5108.

