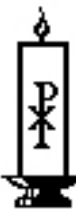


## From The Pastor



In February I will be attending an Educational Seminar sponsored by the Alban Institute. The Alban Institute was founded in 1974 as a major resource for American congregations facing the challenges of a changing society. While today's challenges are even more pressing than they were three decades ago, the opportunities have never been clearer for congregations to be vital communities of faith, health, and leadership. Alban stands at the forefront of knowledge and experience regarding congregational vitality and positive trends across denominations and faith traditions. The work of the Institute is helping shape the strong congregations of tomorrow. Throughout the past twenty-three years, I have attended many Alban seminars focusing on different topics. This seminar is designed to help congregations strengthen ways of managing the work of boards, clergy and staff. It draws on innovations in the larger world of nonprofit boards by thinkers such as Richard Chait, John Carver and Frances Hesselbein. Dan Hotchkiss, the seminar leader, will focus on the conviction that the art of governance in congregations is about creating a balance between ministers, staff and the governing board. It is about the partnership tools needed for ministry together. A healthy governing body in a congregation starts with clearly defined roles and authority and succeeds when lay and professional leaders do ministry together, in collaboration, as partners. Dan Hotchkiss believes that when congregations seek guidance for discernment and dialogue around issues of planning, visioning and governance such partnership emerges. Dan Hotchkiss is well known for his creative approaches and sensitive understanding of the human and institutional dynamics within congregations. His next book is tentatively titled *Ministry Together: The Art of Governance in Congregations*. I will be attend-

ing this seminar with my friend and colleague, The Rev. Jim Adelman, Senior Pastor of The Garden City Community Church in New York. The seminar will be held in Scottsdale, Arizona, from February 2 - 6. I look forward to sharing my newly gained insight when I return.

Also...as we look forward to gathering as a worshipping community during the season of Lent, I share the following:

Recently I read an article which supports something I have believed for many years. According to a study in *Annual of Epidemiology*, people who attend religious services tend to be healthier than those who don't. More specifically, weekly religious service goes have a lower risk of illness and perhaps even death than those who never set foot inside a place of worship. This report, although recent, is only the latest in a series of studies exploring the connection between health and spirituality. Not surprisingly, the benefits extend to mental health as well. People who identify themselves as "spiritual" reveal lower rates of depression. So is going to church healing? I would say that it is and these recent studies support my belief primarily because those who attend religious services of some kind, on a regular basis, tend to take better care of themselves. Some of the benefits of going to worship at church, a mosque or synagogue is that the one who attends is more socially integrated, which might mean they have more friends and acquaintances and a better support system to help them cope with stressful life events. Many researchers also believe that the bottom line is that there seems to be a strong connection between the mind, the spirit and the body. Improve one, and you have an effect on the other. Praying, meditating or attend-

ing religious services may not cure a disease, but those activities may help you feel better and create a more positive outlook on *life*.

This information affirms what I have believed for many years. I believe our Church offers anyone who attends worship or any other activity - a warm hospitality, an embracing fellowship, a theology of hope and love and acceptance, and an engaging way of understanding God's presence in everyday life. I can't speak for you, but that makes me feel pretty good. See you in Church!

*With Love,*



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## Worship Schedule

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Feb. 1 <sup>st</sup>  | Communion<br>Message: Power to Do<br>Mark 1:21-28<br>Annual Meeting during Worship              |
| Feb. 8 <sup>th</sup>  | Message: Source of Strength<br>Mark 1:29-39   |
| Feb. 15 <sup>th</sup> | Message: Compassionate Community<br>Mark 1:40-45  |
| Feb. 22 <sup>nd</sup> | Intergenerational Worship<br>Message: Sense of the Sacred<br>Mark 9:2-9                         |
| Mar. 1 <sup>st</sup>  | Communion - First Sunday in Lent<br>Message: God's Loving Paths<br>Psalm 25:1-10                |
| Mar. 8 <sup>th</sup>  | Second Sunday in Lent<br>Message: Always Close<br>Psalm 22:23-31                                |
| Mar. 17 <sup>th</sup> | Third Sunday in Lent<br>Message: Beautiful Law<br>Psalm 19                                      |
| Mar. 22 <sup>nd</sup> | Fourth Sunday in Lent<br>Festival of Hymns<br>Intergenerational Worship<br>Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 |
| Mar. 29 <sup>th</sup> | Fifth Sunday in Lent<br>Message: Deep In Our Hearts<br>Jeremiah 31:31-35                        |

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**ANNUAL MEETING  
DURING  
10:15AM WORSHIP  
FEBRUARY 1, 2009**

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## Ash Wednesday Service

### February 25<sup>th</sup> - 8pm

Throughout the years this service has become very meaningful for many of us. It is a time to have our spirits lifted with moments of prayer and quiet reflection upon the scripture lesson and readings shared. We also share Holy Communion and find strength and renewal in the Bread of Life and Cup of Love. We encourage you to begin looking toward Jerusalem by worshipping with us on Ash Wednesday.



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## Early Morning Lenten Worship

Pastor John Livingston will be leading four early morning worship services during the season of Lent in March. These services will begin at 6:30am and last for a half hour. There will be time for quiet reflection and contemplation, personal prayer and the hearing of scripture. The services will be offered on Wednesdays, March 4, 11, 18 and 25.

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## Lenten Meditation - March 24<sup>th</sup>

Associate Pastor Carla Dietz Carroll and John Carroll will lead an evening of prayers, reflections and sharing on Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup> from 7 - 8:30pm. All our welcome.

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## Easter Memorial Flowers

The Altar Committee reminds members they may contribute to the Easter flower fund by calling the Church Office at 866-1415. Please bring or mail memorials and contributions to the Church Office by Thursday, March 19<sup>th</sup>. Your loved ones' names will be included in the Order of Worship at our Easter services.

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*Festival of Hymns  
On Sunday, March 22<sup>ND</sup>  
During morning worship,  
the choirs, bells, brass and Congregation  
will share the joy of hymnody.  
A Festival of Hymns: The Writers Tell  
their Stories will be a service of sing-  
ing, ringing, with the composers and  
poets, in their own words, explaining the  
history of some of our greatest hymns.  
The word of God in song. Mark your  
calendars for this all-church, spanning  
the ages, rafter-lifting Sunday in song.*

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## 2x4s Tuesday Luncheon

The 2x4s meetings are held the **SECOND AND FOURTH Tuesdays** in the Meeting House **EXCEPT in JANUARY, FEBRUARY AND SUMMER MONTHS**. The social hour starts at 11:30am and lunch follows at 12:00 noon. On the **SECOND** Tuesday lunch will be provided; on the **FOURTH** Tuesday bring your own lunch. Coffee and dessert are always provided. Donations are most welcome to help defray our expenses. Everyone is welcome no matter what your age.



**March 10 and 24**  
**Entertainment TBA**



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## Faith-in-Film Ministry

Our Faith-in-Film series offers movies that make your heart sing and laugh and perhaps cry a bit. Join others in the lounge at Hill Top Homes on Sunday afternoons at 2:00pm to share the film, refreshments and discussion.

### February 8<sup>th</sup> - August Rush

It's almost Valentine's Day and a time to celebrate love! In **August Rush**, a boy's love of music reunites him with the love of the parents he seeks. One reviewer said, "Your hearts will be singing and your spirits will soar!"

April 19<sup>th</sup>      Something the Lord Made

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## Winter Barbecue - March 1<sup>st</sup>



Join us for the Social Committee's Winter Barbecue during Fellowship Hour on March 1<sup>st</sup>. Delicious hamburgers and hotdogs along with beverages will be provided by the Social Committee. Please sign up in the Meeting House to bring a favorite

side dish or dessert. For more information, call Ellen Steese at 849-0392.

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## Easter Baskets

This is a wonderful Lenten Outreach project for the entire family to participate in. Please fill an Easter basket with small toys, candy and books and return to the Meeting House by April 5<sup>th</sup>. Baskets will be distributed by The Family and Children's Agency.



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## "For Everything there is a Season. . ."

Ecclesiastes 3.1

### Births:

--A son, Thomas David Maggio,  
to Laurie and Joseph Maggio

### Baptisms:

--Stella Kadin Silver,  
daughter of Heather and John Silver  
--Miles Joseph Duke Salvati,  
son of Alison and Joseph Salvati

### -- Deaths:

--Natalie Harding  
--Helen Toth

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## Spring Food Drive

Beginning on February 1<sup>st</sup> the Board of Christian Outreach will conduct a Spring Food Drive for the Christian Community Action Food Pantry in South Norwalk to help them restock their shelves. Items desperately needed include **CANNED** foods (fruits, vegetables, soup, stews, juices) peanut butter, pasta, rice. Please bring food bags (double bag, please) to the Meeting House by Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup>.



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## White Doves

The Board of Christian Outreach would like to thank everyone who contributed this Christmas season to our annual White Dove program. Your generosity brightened the holidays of 137 children from 62 families. Specially thanks to our coordinator, Patti Palmer and her assistants: Chris McDonagh, Neville Peltz and Corinne Collins.

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## The Beads Are Gone!

The Youth Group, with the help of Diane Glover, Deacon, took on a wonderful project called "Bead for Life." It was started by a group of impoverished Ugandan women. The women make beautiful jewelry of paper beads which they hand roll. "Bead for Life" is now a global project, helping these women raise their families out of extreme poverty. The Youth Group sold beads, bags, cards and music CDs during Fellowship Hour throughout the Advent season. Over \$2,500 was raised and sent on to the women who make the beads. Special thanks to Hallie King and Rev. Carla Dietz Carroll for all their help and support.

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**April/May Newsletter Deadline**  
**March 5, 2009**

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## Associate Pastor's Study

Let's talk about Lent. For some of us Lent is a time when we remember our past faith tradition practices. We remember giving stuff up that we loved like chocolate, red meat or "adult beverages." These small sacrifices have meant a lot to us and were helpful in delineating the special time of contemplation, which Lent signifies. It also showed us how strong we are in our resolve when we put our minds to it. Sacrifice is hard but always rewarding. If sacrifice is not your bag however, here are some other suggestions for you to practice during Lent (Wednesday 2/25 – 4/11)

**Obtain a Lenten Calendar** and follow along as we proceed through the season - there are a number of calendar resources in my office for you.

**Keep it Simple** - what are ways that you can cut out some of the unnecessary things and superfluous activities in your life?

**Make Room for Quiet** – we are so plugged in to our music, our computers, our PDA and MP3s. Unplug some time every day and just listen to the quiet.

**Eat Simply** – during Lent give yourself the gift of warm soups, salads and bread. See how much of the sugar, fat and processed foods you can eliminate from your diet.

**Volunteer** – if you are so inclined, Youth Group, Church School and the Board of Christian Outreach can always use your help. Or find a local agency or person to help.

**Forgive** – C'mon, you know you are not happy with someone. Give yourself the opportunity to forgive them and offer an olive branch of love.

**Come to Church** – aside from our regular Sunday services there are a number of added times to worship during Lent: Ash Wednesday, John's early morning prayer services, a Tuesday evening Lent Meditation, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Bring a friend with you.

**Journal** – every day, jot something down you noticed or reflected upon during Lent. You can write as little as a sentence or as much as pages of poetry. It is up to you.

**Breathe** – take this time to slow down a bit and just breathe.

God Bless you on your journey through Lent. I would love to hear about your experiences. My door is always open to you.

## Calendar for Christian Education

- Feb. 1** Souper Bowl Sunday, Annual Meeting, Communion (5<sup>th</sup> Grade and up stay in Worship)
- Feb. 8** Regular Church School for all
- Feb. 15** One Room Church School
- Feb. 22** Intergenerational Worship
- Mar. 1** Church School for PreK – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade (observe Communion) 5<sup>th</sup> grade and up also stay in Worship
- Mar. 8** Regular Church School for all
- Mar. 15** Regular Church School for all
- Mar. 22** Regular Church School for all
- Mar. 29** Intergenerational Worship

## Sunday Morning Adult Bible Study

at 9:00am, except on February 1 and March 1 held at 11:15am. No Bible Study on February 8. Adults 18+ are welcome!

## Youth Group Wednesday nights

at 7:30-8:30 on February 4 and 11, and March 4, 11, 18 and 25. We are bumping up against 20-27 Groupers, but there is always room for more. All Middle School-aged people are welcome! Adults encouraged to assist.

## Lenten Meditation

Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, 7-8:30pm in the Meeting House with Carla and John Carroll. All are welcome.

*"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you."*  
*Ephesians 4:32*

I cannot thank Pastor John Livingston enough for his support and help through my ordination process. I am also grateful for the support of the Deacons and the Church Council.

*Carla*

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## Souper Bowl of Caring

Since 1993, the Souper Bowl of Caring has inspired youth to make a difference on hunger. More than 140 million Americans watch the Super Bowl. Imagine the impact we could have on hunger if every viewer gave \$1.00!!!! On Sunday, February 1<sup>st</sup> the Youth Group will ask you to help with a donation. They will be on hand at the exits of our Sanctuary with large soup pots. All money collected will go directly to the local organizations. Please give generously!





## Mission Trip Opportunity!

Join us for an enriching experience through FAST (Faithful Advocates Serving Together at HOMES (Housing Oriented Ministries Established for Service) in Whitesburg, Kentucky. One week mission trips building and repairing homes are offered between June 7<sup>th</sup> and August 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday through Saturday morning for up to 35 people (except for June 21<sup>st</sup> - July 4<sup>th</sup>).

If you are interested, we need to hear from you by April 1<sup>st</sup> and will need your \$40 deposit at that time. Once we have a group of interested people we will pick a week that will work best for everyone. The weeks are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, so if you are interested please let Carla know as soon as possible.

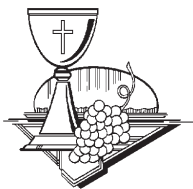
The cost is \$225 per person not including transportation (that will be calculated once we know how many are planning on going). Fee includes all program costs, building materials, daily sack lunch and FAST T-shirt. Planning, purchase and preparation of breakfast and dinner will be the responsibility of each group. Kitchen facilities are available on-site.

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## 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Communion Class Sunday, March 1<sup>st</sup>

An exciting class which is endorsed by the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ provides the children of our Family of Faith with an understanding of the Lord's Supper, and eventually leads them to participate in the sharing of Communion.

This class will be on Sunday, March 1<sup>st</sup> at 11:30am in the Meeting House and is for 4<sup>th</sup> graders. Go to the Winter Barbecue and get something to eat and bring it with you upstairs. The class will observe Communion on March 1<sup>st</sup> and the Special Communion Service will be held on April 5<sup>th</sup>. If your child is interested, please call the Church Office.



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## Thanks from Marsha Hall

Where did 30 years go? When I share with people that I have taught in the Norwalk Public Schools for 30 years and served as Director of Music at UCR for 30 years, I can't believe it. Like Jack Benny, I must have started around 9 years of age. But maybe the fact I know Jack Benny proves my age!



The Sunday you recognized my tenure at the Church was so greatly appreciated. The kind words, beautiful and bountiful gifts and the special fellowship will always remain a special memory. However, the thank you goes beyond that day.

A program thrives only because people are willing to commit to its success. My thank you goes to a congregation always putting music as a top priority -- investment in a fine pipe organ, three octaves of excellent handbells and choir chimes, a yearly budget that supports new music and added instrumentation for major works and special events. Bravo!

I am surrounded by the music makers of the Church, singers and ringers. They make the music. Their music comes from a profound love of God, church and each other. They make special music. Their dedication has sustained me over all these years.

We talk of a Church family, our Family of Faith. I thank you, my faith family of The United Church of Rowayton. Keep up the good work.

With love,

*Marsha*

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## Caregiving Ministry

The Caregiving Ministry of The United Church of Rowayton is dedicated to utilizing its spiritual gifts in a shared ministry that provides for the well-being of God's people.

Caregivers are caring Christian friends who listen, understand, accept and pray for and with care receivers who are experiencing the joys and sorrows of life.

If you need the help of the Caregiving Ministry, please do not hesitate to contact Joanne Brown, 655-3713 or Ann DiLeone, 838-3169. All of our Ministry work is kept strictly confidential.

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## A Time for Celebration

by George Albano

Marsha Hall has been around music almost her entire life.

"I was taking piano lessons when I was five years-old," she points out. "My father was really into music and he once had me taking piano, organ, bassoon and voice lessons all at the same time.

"And I've been in a church choir since I was 13."

Fortunately for The United Church of Rowayton, Marsha has been a very big part of the choir here since 1978. In fact, this past November 30 the Congregation celebrated her 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary as choir director with a special ceremony, which carried over into Fellowship Hall where the men and women she directs every Sunday honored her with a song especially prepared for her.

Three decades later, Marsha still remembers her introduction to The United Church of Rowayton. "I came here in 1978 to take a teaching position in Norwalk," she said. "It was the last year Norwalk teachers were ever on strike. So I came here lock, stock and barrel from Michigan to find out as a new teacher I was on strike.

"Once school did start, there was knock on my door and it was Don Emig (pastor at the UCR at the time) and he said I heard you want to be a choir director. Well, we need a choir director. "I always wanted to be a choir director and organist, but he said the Church already had an organist. So I came to Church to check it out and I ended up taking the job as choir director."

A few months later, in December 1978, new organ pipes were installed at the Church.

"So the new organ came in the same year as I did."

And with that, a new and wonderful era of music at The United Church of Rowayton had begun. "That was a gift," recalls Diane Glover, a member of the choir for nearly 40 years. "Nobody knew her at the time, but when she stepped forward and took over the choir, that was truly a gift."

It wasn't long after that Marsha fulfilled another one of her dreams.

"George Rowan, who had been playing the organ at Church for a long time, decided to step down right around Easter in 1979," she explained. "So about five months after I started as choir director I took over as the church organist, too."

"It's kind of remarkable to have been in the position of choir director and organist for 30 years," said Senior Pastor John Livingston. "That's a long



time and to be that dedicated every Sunday is truly remarkable."

But after taking over the choir and assuming the duties of organist, Marsha didn't stop there. "I always wanted a handbell choir," she said. "Bob O'Connor and his wife Jean, who were active members of the Church, had moved to Florida and he decided to donate money for two octaves (bells), and that's how the children's handbell choir started.

"Then about two years ago, I had the idea that it would be really nice for adults to have that experience, too. So we started the adult handbell choir and they really took to it. There a big bell festival in Pennsylvania on March 7 and we're going down there to be a part of it. Everyone's working real hard getting ready."

Marsha always seems to have one or more of her groups on the go, both near and far. On the second weekend of January, the senior choir attended a retreat at a convent in Darien, while in the past they have performed at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

"We sang at Carnegie Hall," Glover reiterated, almost in disbelief. "We never would have gotten there otherwise if not for Marsha."

But directing the choir at Church and elsewhere is only a portion of what Marsha does so well. There's also all the preparation, such as the youth handbell choir rehearsal every Wednesday, and the adult handbell ringers and senior choir who rehearse back to back on Thursdays evenings. "There's also choosing the music to sing and the organ music to play," she said. "Then we get to Church early on Sunday to rehearse again before the service. It's a lot of hours of planning and preparation by everyone."

"She works with John very well, too," Bob Aldrich, another veteran member of the choir, said. "The music program and the words of the songs go with his message and vice versa. They work good as a team. They make a good combination." It's a combination that clicked immediately when John and Judi and their family arrived at The United Church of Rowayton in 1986.

"Music was such a part of our lives that it was important to find a Church where the music was given such a high priority," John, who for the last few years has joined the choir on several hymns on Sundays, said. "That was a key thing for all of us and our decision to come here.

"Over the years, Judi and I have also worked with Marsha on other music presentations at the church like Broadway revues and other fun things beyond worship."





With all the extra duties she has taken on, Marsha has gone from Choir Director and Organist to "Director of Music," a title she wears proudly.

"She does an amazing job putting together all the programs and combining all kinds of music,"

Aldrich said. "What sticks out the most is everybody knows she's an absolute professional, yet she has the ability to humanize it. She maintains her professionalism, yet at the same time you feel like she's a part of a family of people who love music.

"She brings a humanistic part along with professional part and that's key," he added. "You can't have either one without the other. It just doesn't work."

"They are my friends, my family, and my support group, everything rolled into one," Marsha said of the 30-plus members of the choir. "And they are very, very supportive of one another. They care for each other, they take care of each other, and they do for each other. It's amazing. It's like a little enclave."

"She has created such a community," Glover agreed. "It's so amazing. It's like being given a free course in music appreciation, learning all about music and singing without paying for it. It's like going to school to be taught the kind of things she has taught her."

And who better to teach such a "class" than Marsha, who is now in her 31<sup>st</sup> year working in the Norwalk School System and finds the time in her busy schedule to teach an academically talented program at the city's four middle schools. Marsha credits her parents for her love and passion of music, and on many Sundays is accompanied by her mother, Joy Hetherington, on piano. "It's been very nice to have her here," she said. "She's very talented and I think it's a treat for everyone. Both my mom and dad were very supportive of my music growing up."

For the past 30 years, she has passed that passion on to countless other music lovers through the choir and other programs at The United Church of Rowayton.

"There's a real magic with this Church and it has to do with the music," she said. "If you like to hear them sing it's because they do care what they sing."

And if the magic with this Church has to do with the music, then the magic behind the music has to do with Marsha Hall.

"She's been a tremendous gift to all of us," Glover said. "She's meant a great deal to this Church."

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## *Silent Auction and Brunch*

*March 29, 2009*

### *During Fellowship Hour*

This is going to be a festive brunch during Fellowship Hour to remember and a fantastic fundraiser for our Church!

Here is a sampling of donations so far:

- Vacation Home in the Netherlands for 1 Week
- Vacation Home in the Bahamas for One Week
- Black Mink Coat w. a Silver Fox Tuxedo Collar
- Afternoon of Skeet Shooting
- Stonewater Spa & Boutique, Greenwich, Connecticut: \$150 Gift Certificate
- Pie of the Month Club from Michelle's Pies
- Kayak Outing
- Day at Roton Point with Lunch
- Golf Outing at Woodway Country Club
- Strad Model John Juzek Violin (made in Prague, Czech Republic (c. 1920)
- 2 Hours of Cocktail/Dinner Party Piano Music
- 2 Hour Photo Shoot by Gillian Marshall
- Lynn Massey Watercolor Painting and a Giclee Print of a Local Scene

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## **The Connecticut Association of United Church Educators**

**presents an event for**

**Church Educators, Pastors, Youth Workers, Parents ... all "Askable" Adults!**

on Saturday, February 7, 2009 (snow date 2/28)

8:30 am – 2:00pm

**UCC First Church of Christ Congregational**  
Schultz Hall, 2183 Main Street, Glastonbury CT  
860-633-4641

Let's Talk About ... Faith, Family and Sexuality

- Come ...hear why faith communities should be in the conversation.
- Learn what we need to communicate - from toddler years through the teens.
- Explore the "how-tos" of sexuality education in the congregation.

**Keynote Speaker: Dr. Kate Ott**

Associate Director of the Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing in Norwalk

### **Workshops:**

From Toddlers to Teens, Becoming an "Ask-able" Adult, Our Whole Lives and Using the Internet in Youth Ministry Marji Hughes

Cost: \$15.00 per person, includes lunch ...

Registration must be received by January 23<sup>rd</sup>

For more detailed information or ride share, contact Carla.

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