First Congregational Church of Thomaston

Transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Pastoral Letter – March 2019

Dear Friends,

I've got a favor to ask. Last night, I was reading this article, "The Leader's New Work: Building Learning Organizations." As you can tell from the title, it's about leadership and at the end of the article is this quote by Lao Tzu, a Chinese philosopher who lived sometime in the 6th century. He writes:

> The wicked leader is he who the people despise.
> The good leader is he who the people revere.
> The great leader is he who the people say, "We did it ourselves."

I've been thinking a lot about those last two lines, the difference between a good leader and a great leader. A great leader empowers and creates other leaders. A great leader creates space for others to lead. A great leader is a servant. So as I think about this year and our vision "To see people transformed by the good news of Jesus", one of the things that I think we need to do in order to fulfill that vision is to be more intentional in developing great leaders. Personally, I think we already have some great leaders, but I think we need more. I keep thinking of what it would look like for those great leaders to develop other great leaders. So one of the things that I need you to do is pray for our leaders and pray for what it looks like for them to share their leadership DNA with others. Just in case you're new to our church, below is a list of names of our core leaders or council members and their positions.

Moderator – Matt Johnson
Vice Moderator – Don Ferrier
Christian Education Leader – Bob Merchant
Music Ministry Team Leader – Carol Pytel
Outreach Team Leader – Mary Ellen MacMillan
Finance Team Leader – Merv LeMasurier
Deacon Team Leader – Lisa Hulton
Trustees Leader – Mary Beth Johnson

Also, as our church continues to grow, we'll need more great leaders and more people lending a helping hand. Maybe you could be one of those people. On March 17 and 24, we'll be offering CLASS 301. CLASS 301 is one of four classes that we offer to help people grow in their relationship with God, but unlike the other classes, CLASS 301 is a ministry class that focuses on identifying the spiritual gifts that God has given to each one of us. Like all of our Classes, Class 301 is a two-part class, each class is one hour long. If you haven't taken Class 301 yet and you're interested in serving in our church, I'd love for you to come. All you need to do is let me know you're interested by either emailing me at marcusfirstthomaston@gmail.com, talking to me after church, or filling out one of our communication cards on Sunday and just writing "YES – 301" on it.

I can't wait to see what God has in store for us.

Pastor Marcus

Youth Group News March 2019

God is at work all around you ~ He desires relationship with you ~ Listen, God speaks to you ~ Walk in obedience ~ Follow the Holy Spirit

Our first in the series of **YOUTH FUN NIGHTS** took place February 1st. We had 12 teens and A LOT of FUN!!!

Join us **APRIL 12th** for our next **YOUTH FUN NIGHT!** Open to everyone grades 7-12.

If you enjoy interacting with teens or pre-teens, I would love to get together and share ideas about youth group and your possible role in it.

March YOUTH GROUP SCHEDULE :
(both groups meet at the church)

Jr. Youth Group is for grades 4-6, we meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays from: 4:00 – 5:30pm

Sr. Youth Group is for grades 7-12, we meet on Friday nights from: 7:00 – 9:30pm.

All are welcome!

When the Love of Baking
Becomes … *Baking with Love*

The Sr. Youth Group has had a long tradition of baking cupcakes for Valentine's Day. This year, Angelia Cocchiola and Kaylyn Barberet turned that favored tradition and their love for baking into an opportunity of blessing.

The girls were able to spread their love to the clientele of Torrington's soup kitchen and two homeless shelters after baking 164 cupcakes and 5 dozen cookies.

A special thanks to Holly Sechow for frosting and decorating the cupcakes and Nathan H. for providing music during this bake-a-thon

DISTRACTIONS… DISTRACTIONS….DISTRACTIONS…

We all have them. Things that pull us off-task.

Last weekend's Youth Conference was not only designed to help our teens *identify*, *single out and think about* their distractions but also realize what they are being distracted from.

As a group, our areas of concentration were: finding light in the darkness, relationships, the challenges of leading, and what does it look like to be an influencer of the Good News.

The main session speakers did an amazing job embedding mental images of what it means to be a son or daughter of the King of kings.

We walked away with these two strong messages, "*TIME is the main ingredient in a successful relationship*." and This is what the LORD says: *"Stop at the crossroads and look around. Ask for the old, godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls*". Jeremiah 6:16 (NLT)

Thank you for your prayers,

The Sr. group wanted to revisit the **"God's Not Dead"** series and would like to invite anyone in grades 7-12 to join us!

So come… Friday nights, at the church, from 7pm – 9:30pm

*"I have **no greater joy** than to hear that my children walk in truth. 3 John 1:4"*

Just a friendly reminder, we will turn our clocks **ahead** this week!

Wednesdays 6:30 pm
March 6-April 17 (We will not be meeting April 3)

Join us on Wednesday evenings during Lent for our Lenten Soup Supper. Our hope for the event is to both prepare ourselves for Easter and reach out to the people in our community who are less fortunate.

We are currently working with “The Story” on Sunday morning with the children. The Story is the bible in chronological order and age appropriate. We’re excited to be working with the children and watching them grow with the knowledge of our Lord.

Deb Sehow is now teaching the 4-6 grades on Sunday morning. Virginia, Aimee, and Bob are teaching grades 1-3, Matt and Vickie are teaching nursery with the AWANA program.

The Parents with children are signing their children in before church, with each child receiving a # that matches with their parent, so when the parents pick up their child the # must match. We are meeting upstairs in the Kids church wing. We will not be utilizing the auditorium. The “Children’s space” building team has met and discussed possible changes in our space to meet the current needs and the needs we will face in the future.

Get connected by being a part of one of our 8 small groups that meet at different days and times during the week. Go to our website or call our church office (860-283-5765) for more details.

Day	Time	Location	Who's it for
Sunday	8:45-9:45 am	Church	**Everyone**
Sunday (2nd & 4th)	4:5:30 pm	Church	**Everyone (Childcare Provided)**
Tuesday	6-7:30 am	Church	**Men**
Tuesday	6:30-8:00 pm	Off Campus	**Women**
Wednesday	6:30-8:00 pm	Church	**Everyone**
Wednesday	6:45-8:00 pm	Off Campus	**Women**
Thursday	6-7:30 am	Church	**Men**
Thursday	9:30-11:00 am	Church	**Women**

Puggles Corner:

Every Sunday from 10:00 am to 11:15 am (end of service), kids between the ages of 2 and 3 meet for Puggles. We'd love for your kids to join us. We meet downstairs in the Fellowship Hall.

(Children under the age of 2 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian and older children between the ages of 4-5 are welcome to attend with teacher approval.)

For more information, contact our Puggles Directors, Matthew and Victoria Hopkins at fccawana135@gmail.com.

Deacon Ministry

The deacons last met on 2/11/19. We reviewed the response to a mailing 3 months ago to church members that have not been seen in at least 1+ years. We received only 1 response. Pastor Marcus is now composing a follow up letter and the deacons will address inactive members after this is sent. Our goal is to maintain an accurate membership list without discouraging former members from returning, but likely we will be requiring former members to go through Marcus' class for potential members.

The deacons will host the Lenten Soup Supper on March 13th.

The Christmas Eve offering was $336.00. This will be divided evenly between Bill Frost, Jim Sitrling and Gordon Vought and mailed out.

Our church insurance company has recommended background checks for volunteers and new employees.

We continue to discuss monthly members/regular visitors we haven't seen for a couple weeks or more and new visitors.

The evacuation drill will be on March 17th.

We continue our study of “Crucial Conversations”.

Deacon’s Fund

Each Communion Sunday, we have envelopes in the pews for the Deacon’s fund. This is a fund whereby Pastor Marcus can give assistance to those in need from our church and community. Please see a Deacon for more information.

(Lisa Hulton, Valerie Barkus, Linda Ferrier, Craig MacMillan, Mark O’Brien or Sandi Welch)

Class 301 Discovering Your Gifts
March 17th & 24th 11:30 am-12:30 pm

In CLASS 301, you'll discover your S.H.A.P.E. You will discover the unique gifts God has given to you. In this class, we'll begin the process of identifying your gifts and places where you can use them.

If interested in attending, write “Yes 301” on a communication card and place in offering plate or call Pastor Marcus (860-283-5556)

There will be a discussion at a future Gathering about locking the downstairs entry doors during church service. The doors would be locked at about 10:10 AM. The purpose is to protect the children and church members from possible intruders at times when our awareness is low.

There will also be a discussion at a future Gathering about purchasing a screen and projector to replace the television currently being used in the sanctuary.

The Council is beginning to discuss the practical application of leadership development by encouraging team leaders to add new members to their teams and by seeking to mentor and develop those who will become team leaders after they have served their time. The present team leaders will use the training that has been provided by Marcus for leadership development to guide them in this process.

All Church Gathering
1st Sunday of the month 11:15 am

On the 1st Sunday of the month we have an extended coffee hour in the Fellowship hall immediately following worship service. This time will be used to inform the congregation on what’s happening within the church and to dream and address any questions/concerns you may have. We encourage you to attend to hear the latest on what’s going on in our church.

Submitted by Merv LeMasurier

Treasurer of Collections Report
Team members reviewed the January 2019 YTD Income Report that shows the following:

	Actual	Budget	Favorable
Operating income	$16,036	$15,281	$755

Treasurer's Report:
The team reviewed the detailed January YTD Profit and Loss report which showed actual operating expenses of $12,927 vs budget of $17,583.

The Permanent Fund Team Report:
The January 2019 YTD report showed the following:

Beginning balance:	$ 328,364
Deposits	0
Disbursements:	(650)
Fees:	(1,013)
Market value gain:	15,749
Ending balance:	$342,450

Ray Crannell is the newest member of the Permanent Fund Committee.

Members of the committee met with the church's financial advisor Chris Thompson on 02/05/19 to review the investments. Chris was notified that the church has approved withdrawing $8,000 from the Parsonage fund during the year and an additional $5,000 as needed during the current year to support any needed capital improvements.

The committee shared with Chris that structural work will need to be done on the church steeple, in the near future, at a cost that may exceed $30,000. Chris suggested setting aside a chunk of money to have it available on short notice.

Outreach Ministries

Through the Outreach Committee, our congregation continues to support Campus Crusade for Christ, ICM- the Snells, Lion of Judah, Mitimingis, Kids Alive International Ministries, Compassion International, Acts 4, Child Care for our nursery, and weekly advertising in the Waterbury paper. Outreach has also added a monthly donation to the Thomaston Community Pantry.

Church outreach has also sent a donation to Joni & Friends International which is a Christian ministry with a camp in New Hampshire that ministers to families that have children with physical and mental handicaps.

If anyone would like a copy of the Jesus Film for adults or children, please let outreach know. We will supply the film that can be passed on to a friend.

In March, on a date to be announced, Jay & Cathy Fredlund will give an informational meeting at the Covenant Church. They will speak about a mission trip to Kids Alive in Guatemala (Jay & Cathy are members of the Covenant Church; Cathy is Bill & Marg Berg's daughter). The trip is still in planning stages. Jay is looking at the week of Nov. 11th or 18th. The trip will be 7 days and includes 2 of traveling. Church Outreach will help support anyone who commits to the trip. Kids Alive provides Christian Care for young girls who have been sexually abused and shelters them from continued abuse.

Outreach is also prayerfully gathering information on other domestic missions for 2020. UndergroundCT is under consideration as well as mission trips sponsored by the 4C's. We are waiting on the LORD with what will be right for our church family.

Our next meeting is on Thursday, March 11th @ 7:00 p.m. Bless you all for all you do in the name of the LORD.

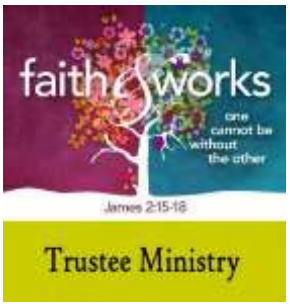
Respectably submitted, Mary Ellen, Chair of Outreach

Please remember BASKET OF BLESSINGS March 10th

The Outreach team will be collecting non-perishable items on Sunday, February 10th during "Gifts and Offering"

BASKET OF BLESSINGS
What is it?

On the second Sunday of each month, Outreach team members walk behind the ushers collecting offering, with a large basket. They are collecting non-perishable items to be given to the Thomaston Food Pantry to help folks in our area who may be struggling. Any donation is very much appreciated. Thank you for helping us, your Outreach team show our love to the community.



It's Spring!!! Soon!!!

Time for Spring cleaning with our next **Day of Service** to spruce up our church for spring. Families encouraged, everybody welcome. We have jobs for all.

March 30,2019 9am~12pm then lunch provided.

Please see Mary Beth, Judi or Marcia know what you'd like to do!

Women's Fellowship will not meet until April when hopefully all snow is gone. However, the Tuesday morning ladies will continue to meet, weather permitting to assemble health kits and other projects. Coffee and fellowship are always good, too! If you're interested, just show up on Tuesday morning around 9:30am and they will put you to work!

Before you know it, it will be spring cleaning time. Collect your unused "stuff" and bring it to the church. Women's Fellowship will be having our Spring Tag Sale on Saturday, April 27th from 9am – 2 pm.

The money raised from our tag sale allows us to help support our church events/projects and several community organizations. You can drop off your items in the auditorium anytime now.

Please no **large furniture or electronics**. Thank you!

Friday Morning Prayer

(Fridays from 8:30-9:30am in the Sanctuary)

Join us on Friday mornings from 8:30 - 9: 30 am in the sanctuary. We'll be offering another way for you to connect with God. During our time together, we'll be praying for our church, our community, and for each other.

March 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 8:30-9:30 am Prayer time in Sanctuary 11am-12:30pm Ladies bible study in chapel 6:30 pm Sr. Youth Group (grades 7-12)	2
3 8:45-9:45 am Bible Study 10 am Worship Service (Communion) 11:15 am All Church Gathering	4 6:30-7:30 pm Yoga in auditorium	5 6:30 am Men's Life 9:30 am Ladies CFC (Cleaning/ Fellowship/Coffee) 7 pm Worship team Rehearsal Linda Stevens	6 6:30-8 pm Lenten Soup Supper	7 6:30 am Men's Ministry	8 8:30-9:30 am Prayer time in Sanctuary 11am-12:30pm Ladies bible study in chapel 6:30 pm Sr. Youth Group (grades 7-12)	9
10 8:45-9:45 am Bible Study 10 am Worship Service & Kid's Church (Basket of Blessings will be collected) 11:30 International Pot Luck 4-5:30 pm Bible study in lounge 4-5:30 pm Jr. Youth group (grades 4-6)	11 6:30-7:30 pm Yoga in auditorium 7 pm Deacon's meeting Barbara Piscopo	12 6:30 am Men's Life 9:30 am Ladies CFC (Cleaning/ Fellowship/Coffee) 7 pm Worship team rehearsal Gene Geddes	13 6:30-8 pm Lenten Soup Supper	14 6:30 am Men's Ministry Ryan & Angela Grendzisiewski	15 8:30-9:30 am Prayer time in Sanctuary 11am-12:30pm Ladies bible study in chapel 6:30 pm Sr. Youth Group (grades 7-12)	16
17 8:45-9:45 am Bible Study 10 am Worship Service & Kid's Church (Evacuation Drill) 11:30-12:30 pm Class 301	18 6:30-7:30 pm Yoga in Auditorium Linene Simons	19 6:30 am Men's Life 9:30 am Ladies CFC (Cleaning/ Fellowship/Coffee) 7 pm Worship team rehearsal Betty Nedorostek	20 6:30-8 pm Lenten Soup Supper	21 6:30 am Men's Ministry	22 8:30-9:30 am Prayer time in Sanctuary 11am-12:30pm Ladies bible study in chapel 6:30 pm Sr. Youth Group (grades 7-12)	23 Dorothy Whittaker
24 8:45-9:45 am Bible Study 10 am Worship Service & Kid's Church 4-5:30 pm Bible study in lounge 4-5:30 pm Jr. Youth group (grades 4-6) 11:30-12:30 pm Class 301	25 6:30-7:30 pm Yoga in Auditorium Nancy Wilson	26 6:30 am Men's Life 9:30 am Ladies CFC (Cleaning/ Fellowship/Coffee) 7 pm Council Meeting	27 6:30-8 pm Lenten Soup Supper 7 pm Worship Team rehearsal	28 6:30 am Men's Ministry 9:30-11 am Ladies bible study in lounge	29 Norma McQuarrie	30 All Church Work Day 9am-noon Lunch provided
31 8:45-9:45 am Bible Study 10 am Worship Service & Kid's Church						