

## Senior Minister's Report to the Board of Trustees

January 2016

We continue to have strong attendance at our worship services and religious education classes. As I become more comfortable with the style of worship here, I will be working with the worship associates and Ed Thompson on improving the flow and depth of our worship experience.

Mary Collins and her RE Council have been working hard to improve our program. In an effort to reach out to more families and meet the needs of busy parents, Mary has instituted a series of half hour meetings between the services to hear from parents about their concerns and engage them in a discussion of a topic related to our monthly theme. Overall, we are pivoting the program to be more responsive to families and encouraging them to participate fully in the life of the church.

Speaking of themes, this is the third month of using a thematic approach to our ministry overall. Our church is part of the "Soul Matters" circle, a cooperative effort of over a hundred churches, including Stamford and Danbury, to direct our religious exploration towards a common theme. The theme for December was communion. The theme for January is resistance. Each month our program staff and volunteers will have access to an online resource of readings, ideas and worship material that we can use to direct our attention to the theme. Right now, we use these themes to direct our worship and music ministries. In time I hope to involve our small group ministry and lifespan religious education program in this approach as well. Both these groups are already beginning to align themselves with the themes. There is an added advantage to working cooperatively with the Stamford and Danbury congregations in this regard.

We will be training eight new pastoral care associates over the next several months. Thanks to Luke Garvey, our principal trainer, Jim Franzek and Tom Hearne for their reaching out, recruiting and training these folks. This will bring our PCA team up to well over twenty. In order to adequately use these skilled volunteers we will be discussing how to liaison the PCAs with our circles and small group ministry. I am still observing and evaluating our small group ministry. This will take time to improve.

I am pleased to report that our social justice outreach continues to stretch. I am leading folks to protest gun violence at the National Shooting Sports Foundation this Monday. I will continue to extend our call to love and justice in the wider community.

Respectfully Submitted, Rev. Dr. John Morehouse