



The Bellringer

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First Baptist Church of Mansfield

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First Baptist Church of Mansfield Celebrating 200 Years!

The First Baptist Church of Mansfield has been the center of organized Baptist worship in the Town since the early years of the 19th century. Under the leadership of Rev. Joshua Bradley of Rhode Island, the first church building on this site was begun in 1807 and completed in 1808. The Baptist Church of Spring Hill was recognized as a regular Baptist Church in "gospel order" by an ecclesiastical council convened in Mansfield on October 16, 1809 at the request of the members. At that time the Rev. Neimiah Dodge of Lebanon, Connecticut extended the right hand of fellowship to 37 members (11 Brethren and 26 Sisters). The Rev. Abel Palmer preached a sermon from Genesis 45:24. The church voted to join the Stonington Association in 1810. Rev. Bradley, the first of 37 pastors of the church, served for one more year to help the church become established,

and then Rev. Jonathan Goodwin was called as minister from the church in Lebanon, Connecticut.

The present church building, replacing the original meeting house, was dedicated in 1875. The original Conference Room was added in 1895, the Christian Education wing was dedicated in 1965, and the Conference Room was greatly enlarged in 1980. Plaques in the Conference Room list the names of the first members and all of the pastors who have served us.

Over the years, the church provided many ministers and missionaries to the denomination, carried out numerous programs in the community which are now the responsibility of the Town Department of Social Services, and organized a local library, in addition to maintaining an active Christian Education program.

As we survey our past two centuries with pride, we look forward to a third century of doing the Lord's work in this place.



First Baptist Church of Mansfield

- - *Established 1809* -
- *A Word from the Pastor*

I was driving through the UCONN campus last week with a lot of things on my mind, "half listening" to the radio when a woman won a five hundred dollar prize for calling in to the station for something. As you can imagine she was very excited about it. The announcer interviewed her and they talked about how she might spend the money. I did not hear the specifics of her answers because I started to think about what I might spend that money on if I was the one who won five hundred dollars. Toward the end of the interview she said something that caught my attention and has stuck in my mind ever since. She ended by saying, "now my family is going to have a good Christmas".

Is that what makes a good Christmas? What will make a good Christmas for you and your family this year?

I'm glad she was feeling positive, because it certainly helps to have a positive, optimistic outlook to start the season. I do not think there is one thing that will make a good Christmas. It is more like making your favorite cookies or cake with a recipe that has many ingredients. Sometimes you can substitute an ingredient or experiment with something new and different. Gifts might be one of those ingredients for a good Christmas. But they don't have to be all the gifts we see advertised on TV or in the catalogues. The homemade ones are even better.

Another ingredient is being with people who are special to us and celebrating together at home and away. Another ingredient may be the traditions we associate with the Christmas season. Doing some of the same things we always do, and trying to create some new traditions this year. A very important ingredient is our church and celebrating our faith in the gift of Christ and the various ways we do this throughout Advent.

The one single ingredient that is absolutely necessary for a good Christmas is Christ. He is not something that can be ordered from any catalogue, or found on any website. He can not be bought in any store or mall anywhere. You do not have to win five hundred or even five dollars from a radio station to find him. What will make a good Christmas is remembering that everything we do this time of year is for the purpose of celebrating God's gift of Jesus Christ with gratitude.

II Corinthians 9: 15 simply says of the grace God has given us in Jesus Christ..."Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift."

Thanks indeed.

Paster Ken

Bell Choir

The holiday season is in full swing and we need you to help ring along the year with our set of beautiful bells! Our church is in need of those angelic instruments and eager to start the bell choir for the Easter season. If you are interested in joining or directing the bell choir, there will be a brief meeting after church on **Sunday, January 4, 2009** to discuss future plans. I hope we can join together and bring another contribution to our church and God.

Warmly,

Ally Austin and
The Music Committee



Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees are reviewing suggestions made at the Quarterly Business Meeting on Sunday, October 26, 2008. We are currently looking into a phone card for long distance calls, investigating fuel and insurance costs, and potential saving for garbage pickup. The Trustees have started to turn off the electric hot water heater during the week. Arrangements will need to be made to turn on the hot water heater for special events that need hot water. The heater should be turned on at least two hours before hot water is needed.

The shingles on the south side of the Christian Education wing will be replaced during the first half of 2009. Prescott Spencer has agreed to continue mowing the church lawn

in 2009, however, Ron Nichols is retiring from keeping the grounds trimmed. If you have the time to help with this church maintenance please speak with a trustee.

The deadline for 2008 Annual Reports January 11th!!

The reports will be made available on January 18th.

Please remember to help save heating and electrical costs by turning off lights and turning the heat down in the Christian Education wing rooms. If you notice something that needs repair or will help the church save maintenance costs please speak to a Trustee.

The Annual Church Business Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 27th. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.

Your attendance at the annual meeting is very important.

Board of Christian Education

Our staff person, Lauren Petrucci, will be leaving us after 2 1/2 years. Her last Sunday will be December 14th. We have enjoyed having her with us and wish her luck in her future endeavors in child care.

We are looking for new staff for our nursery but in the meantime will need a short list of volunteers. Short, to maintain consistency for the kids, and there are 2 or three teens willing to volunteer. However, we do need several more adults willing to rotate or substitute. Please see Susan Figueroa as soon as possible so that we can get a working schedule going. Just a note—we shared lunch and decorated the Christmas tree and made crafts at the Advent Event on Nov. 30th.



Our Sunday School is excited to be working on getting our library back in business!

If you have any bookshelves, comfortable reading chairs, or an area rug that you are no longer using, we would love to take them off your hands!

Among other things, we are planning a "Book of the Month" type display for the Fellowship Hall, and electronic list of books, and hope to create a space of inspiration and learning that will encourage our young people to carry God's

peace out of our Church and into the world.

Please see Jen Bradshaw or Susan Figueroa if you have any suggestions or donation for our Library project.

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF MANSFIELD
Minutes of FALL BUSINESS MEETING
 Sunday, October 26, 2008

The meeting was convened at 12:55 pm with 26 members present.

Opening Worship: "Expecting Excellence" I Corinthians 3:10-15, Led by Lee Salina, Moderator.

Read Minutes from Special Business Meeting, September 7th: whereby the Deacons recommended Rose and Brian Nilson, Olivia Baker and Ethan Fulton for membership. Minutes approved.

REPORTS:

Pastor: Pastor Ron gave a workshop at ABCCONN's Discipleship Fair, vacation Nov. 2-9, planning meetings for Stewardship and Youth Mission trip, Mid-week Bible study to begin again soon, looking at alternatives for health insurance.

Financial Secretary, no report

Assistant Treasurer and Treasurer: Meradith McMunn presented report, no discussion.

Trustees: Meradith McMunn noted work being researched for South Wall, Sanctuary Roof, and Stained Glass Windows. No discussion

Deacons: Pete Bradshaw, continuing work. No discussion.

Christian Education: Susan Figueroa, VBS went well, Next year's VBS may have FBCM historical theme, Women's Bible Study 4-week session beginning 10/26 and second 4-week session in spring. Currently have Sunday School classes covering all ages from Kindergarten through Adult. Advent Event will be Nov. 30, No SS or Youth Choir on Dec. 28 or Jan. 4. Planning to use Sunday School Mission Monies from this year to revive and refurbish our Church Library. No Discussion.

STANDING COMMITTEES:

Nominating - no report

Music: Laura Austin for Ally Austin - Youth Choir planning Christmas Musical, *Radio*

J.O.Y. for Dec. 7 during worship service, Adult Christmas music also planned.

Financial Examining: Lee Salina - all found to be in order, no discussion.

Ushering - no report

Communications - no report

Flower - no report

Missions: Joy Erickson - America For Christ, Spring '08, One Great Hour of Sharing, current, World Mission to begin soon, RMMO to be in January '09. Laura Austin mentioned World Mission Conference in Sept. was great. No discussion

Memorial Gifts- no report

Pastoral Relations: Bill McMunn, have met several times this year, continuing work - no discussion.

Stewardship - no report

Church History: Bill McMunn, three events: Nov 2, bicentennial banner unveiling; Nov. 8, 8:30 am breakfast w/Mr. Kerry Holloway discussing early Baptists in CT; Nov. 14, 7:00 pm Mansfield Historical Society presentation, small fee. Working on plans throughout 2009.

OTHER COMMITTEES AND GROUPS:

Social Committee: Lee Salina, have helped coordinate several functions through the year, and have several more coming up. Working w/ Ladies Aid, have map of kitchen cupboards ready for use.

Safe Church Committee: Susan Figueroa, continuing to develop and revise safe church policies.

Ladies Aid Society: Patty Geissler, have helped with several events throughout the year, Butter Braid fundraiser due in Nov. 2, working on cookbook for bicentennial celebration.

Emma Gardiner Missionary Society:
Dottie Rose

ABCCONN Delegates - no report

Windham Area Interfaith Ministry Delegates: Ed Austin, Walk for Warmth coming up.

Northeast Association - no report

Missional Church Project: Terry Yana-way, described reasons for the project, ideas they have developed and progress made: Looking at possible after school reading program in Mansfield.

Pierce Home: Bill McMunn, noted less funding to be provided from State of CT this year, would appreciate any assistance to make up for lack, particularly visiting residents would be very welcome.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM SPRING BUSINESS MEETING, APRIL 27, 2008:

1. Motions to amend the Church Constitution (exact wording can be found in Clerk's records or request copy from Clerk):

A. To change the requirement of membership for the Nominating Committee (Section 3. a.) - short discussion, clarified why the motion was made. Motion Carried.

B. To include the Social Committee as a Standing Committee (Section 3. I.) - short

discussion. Motion Carried. Suggestion to call to verify coffee hour is presented particularly when special guests or guest minister are present.

C. To change the name of the Church History Committee (Section 3. k.) - short discussion, clarified reason for name change. Motion Carried.

2. Asked: Any further old business? None presented.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Presentation of the 2009 Proposed Budget - some discussion.

READING AND APPROVING THE MINUTES OF THIS MEETING

Minutes read, motion made to approve, motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Closed in Prayer by Pastor Ron.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Figueroa
Clerk

Youth Mission Trip News

The leaves have fallen and it is time for winter coats and mittens. Next summer seems a long time away! But the Mission Trip Youth and Leaders are already thinking about the Mission Trip in 2009! Five youth and four adults met on Saturday, November 15th for an organizational meeting. There was lots of good discussion about the trip and brainstorming about fundraising ideas. There are plans in the works for a Jewelry Show, Spaghetti Supper and Car Wash. We will also continue to return empty cans and bottles that are provided by the congregation. Here is the list of those responsible for redeeming them over the next few months:

December	Dellon
January	Warren
February	Adrienne

March	Matt and Sara
April	Kelsey B.
May	Clare
June	Morgan
July	Evan
August	Jeannette

We are very thankful for the church's support of our trip and are excited about planning for next year. Our next meeting will take place early in January.

Mark your calendars for the Youth Mission Jewelry Show Fundraiser coming the end of **January or early February of 2009**. We are making arrangements with Silpada Jewelry and Jeweled Innovations to offer a wide range of women's and some men's jewelry at the fundraiser.

Ladies Aid Society

Our annual **Butter Braid Sale** went very smoothly this year. Butter Braids and Classic Cookie breaks in many delicious flavors were available for purchase in November. We sold a total of 112 products and through sales and donations we earned a profit of about \$500.00. Thank you to everyone who helped us by buying and selling. Next year we are entertaining the idea of selling Lyman Orchard frozen pies through the same Fundraising Group. Let us know if you have a preference!

Speaking of delicious food, recipes, recipes, recipes....we have been asking you to share your favorites for quite some time now. The deadline for submissions is now quickly approaching. If you have a special food that you like to make and folks like to eat, please share the recipe with us. We would love to hear where the recipe came from, why it is special, or something about the person who made it so deliciously. ***Please share two, or three or four or more recipes with Nancy Flynn or Jill Stedman-Myette by Sunday, December, 7th.***

On a housekeeping note, if you are someone who has very kindly taken the "in need of washing" linens home after a coffee hour or event at church, please remember to return

the linens! We have recently had to replace all the dish washing cloths and many dish drying cloths as they had disappeared! If you come across any church cloths among your own or find the blue mesh bag that we used to use to transport them please return them to the church kitchen. Thank you.

Our annual meeting will be held on **Sunday, January, 11** after the worship service. We will have a Pot-Luck salad luncheon to be followed by the business meeting. Items of business to be discussed include: 2009 fundraising events, 2009 church projects, Kitchen supplies, Cook Book project and other anniversary events.

The DEADLINE for recipes for the Ladies Aid Cookbook has been extended to SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2009. We need to collect 200-300 mouth watering recipes to create our 200th Anniversary Cookbook. Please look through your recipe file and send in your family favorites or tell your spouse/mother/father/friend what recipe(s) you have enjoyed and ask them to send it in for the Ladies Aid Cookbook. We need to "Get Cooking" on this project, your recipes are needed!

Emma Gardiner Missionary Society

We would like to thank everyone who donated and helped us complete our White Cross requests for the South Providence Neighborhood Ministries! These materials, Christmas needs, clothing, recreation needs, and many other important needs were most welcomed when delivered the end of November. It is quite a blessing to view the faces of the volunteers and employees as the many boxes and bags were carried to their storage areas! Happiness abound at this very busy ministry. God bless you all for being so

caring and generous.

There is no meeting of Emma Gardiner Missionary Society in January! Meetings resume in February! February 3rd at 2pm "Children in Poverty" March 3rd "Break the Chains: Slavery in the twentieth Century."

ABW Save the Date: February 15, 3pm

American Baptist Women's Mid-Winter Celebration to be held at the Essex Baptist Church in Essex, Connecticut

Church Women United

Human Rights Celebration

Sunday, January 25, 2009

(Snow date: Feb. 1st)

St. Joseph's Church
99 Jackson Street, Willimantic

4:00pm service followed by reception

"Seeking Shalom"

Shalom is a peace that relates to a total personal, communal, national, and worldwide way of life that supports and benefits all of creation. At this time, a person(s) working for peace, whether it be in individual's lives and circumstances or peace for the world will be honored.

This celebration is open to all!



World Day of Prayer

Friday, March 6, 2009

"In Christ There Are Many Members, Yet One Body"

Douglas Manor
103 North Road, Windham Center

9:45 am Gathering, 10:15 am Worship

AND

First United Methodist Church
29 Puddin Lane, Mansfield Center

6:00pm Soup Supper, 7:00pm Worship

Getting to Know Our Church Family

Pastor Baker asked if I would be willing to write "short" biographies of members of our church. My experience in this area has been with the Ashford Senior Center and Jensen's Rolling Hills newsletters and has been received with much anticipation and appreciation. We hope it will generate enthusiasm and a better communication among us all.

JUDY CONLAND. Judy was born in W. Springfield, MA but brought up in Arlington, VA where her father worked for the Federal Government during WWII. She has two sisters. When it was time to select a college it was University of CT and majored in Physical Therapy. However, during her Freshman year she met Henry and they were married before her Junior year. Her husband became an apprentice machinist and eventually started his own successful business. Judy was a stay at home Mom doing payroll and other chores for the family business. They have three daughters. Judy went back to college in her 30's to get a degree in English and History. She enjoyed mostly working as an office temp and it's diversity.

The Conlands have lived in Coventry and moved to Mansfield in 1972. They enjoy visiting their second home in Minocqua, WI throughout the year. Their family including four grandchildren all live in the area. One daughter is a Social worker at Rockville Hospital. One works at Perception House and one is also a stay at home mom.

Judy has been active in the First Baptist Church of Willimantic and she too recently transferred membership to the Mansfield church. Her greatest interest has been serving on the ABC of CT both state and national boards. In the 1990's she followed Ed Austin on the national board as a Connecticut representative.

BARBARA McSWEENEY. One of five children (4 daughters and 1 son) born to Robert and Grace James of Willimantic. She attend Windham schools and graduated WHS in 1937. Her first employment was an errand girl at American Thread. Five years later Mrs. Verna Hurley of Hurley's Boy's Store called

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Music Committee



As I write this, the Youth Choir and other church family member and friends are busy preparing for our intergenerational musical "Radio J-O-Y" being presented at Sunday Worship on December 7th.

This delightful musical retells the nativity story through songs and stories of those who shared in the glorious event of Christ's birth.

Many weeks of preparation have gone into the presentation of this production. It is a new Christmas musical published by Chorister's Guild, a Christian organization devoted to excellence in music.

Many, many thanks to all who have contributed their time and talents to make this sacred and fun time a success.

Grace Riesen



(Continued from page 7)

and offered her the position as bookkeeper. 57 years later in 2001, (when the doors closed at Hurley's_ Barbara retired and still misses the "perfect job" she loved all those years. Her husband became part owner of Hurley's after serving in the military in WWII.

The McSweeney's had 4 children, 3 daughters and 1 son (a daughter died at 9 years). Her daughters now live in Ma and FL and her son in Kansas City, MO. There are 5 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren all keeping in close touch with Grandma.

Barbara likes to read, play bridge and at one time dealt in antique collectibles. She has been extremely active in the First Baptist Church of Willimantic all her life just as her parents were. After much soul searching, she decided to move her membership to the Mansfield "mother" church in 2008. A good decision for all of us to be sure!

JEAN ALCORN. I was lucky to be the first born (only 3 of us) to a loving Mom and Dad in the small Town of Washington, CT in the year 1924. My Mom had 4 sisters all bringing their husbands to the same town, so we had many good times as a big extended family. My Dad was born in Stockholm, Sweden and came to this country at the age of 19. We did get to see his family for a few months in 1934 just as things were uneasy all throughout Europe. No flying back then! Mom and Dad met in our small church and remained active until he died at 70 and Mom at 101!

I have lived in Denver, CO, Santa Monica, Ca, Ashford and Storrs, CT. An interesting career working for Douglas Aircraft in Personnel, Secretary and Registrar to the Headmaster at the Gunnery School in Washington and Washington and University of CT for over 25 years. My husband, Paul, taught grammar school in the Storrs area for many years. He died in 1981 at the age of 55. I have 3 great artistic daughters and one (handsome) good son! Four grandchildren all living far away so my contacts have been limited over their

Church Family News

Our own Melissa Rood was fantastic in the production of *Godspell* that was performed at the Storrs Congregational Church in November. She played her part with energy and enthusiasm. Her beautiful voice shone! Well done Melissa.



The Flynn Family, Nancy, Lawrence and Clare spent the Thanksgiving Holiday in Durham, North Carolina with their daughter, Erin. Erin has been working in Durham since the beginning of the year and has just bought a home of her own. Not only did Erin experience the joys of moving into a new home but she also had the added pressure of cooking her first Thanksgiving meal for her family. Erin's grandmother, Dorothy Lackman has been teaching her the art of making turkey gravy for years, and this year all the training paid off as her father reported "Erin this is the BEST gravy I have ever tasted!" Erin's new address is: 805 Bluestone Road, Durham, North Carolina 27713-1901

growing years.

Life has been kind to me. All the sad things that happened have helped make my "character" and wrinkles! I am blessed with good health, a sense of humor and energy. I knit hundreds of children's sweaters, have started craft and knitting groups and still take Karate lessons (6 years and a yellow belt with a black stripe!). The Good Lord has been with me throughout my long life! I am blessed to have found the First Baptist Church of Mansfield at this point in time.



Christmas Caroling
Sunday, December 21st
After the Worship Service

Heritage Committee Report

Heritage Committee Report Fall Congregational Meeting

October 26, 2008

The first records of Baptists in Mansfield date from the late 1700s. At that time Baptists were considered radical in comparison with members of the established Church of Connecticut, the predecessor of the present-day Congregational Church.

In 1808, the Baptists in Mansfield built their first meeting house on Spring Hill and called a pastor to lead their worship, and on October 16, 1809, the First Baptist Church of Mansfield was recognized by the Hartford Baptist Association. At that time there were 37 members — 11 men and 26 women — whose names are engraved on the plaque here in the Conference Room, beside the plaque listing the names of all our pastors.

During these two centuries many events and shared experiences have bound us together. The lives of Baptists and others in this region have been strengthened and enriched by the efforts of this congregation. Church members have reached out into the community, the state, the nation, and the world, and they continue to do so today.

During the coming months we plan to commemorate our church heritage as we also look to the future. Church boards and committees have been asked to contribute ideas and participants for the celebration. Our 200th anniversary events and activities will include:

A kickoff event, unveiling an outdoor banner announcing our bicentennial celebration, will be held at the conclusion of the worship service next Sunday, November 2, 2008.

The following Saturday morning, November 8, 2008, Mr. Kerry Holloway will present a lively talk on the earliest Baptists in Connecticut. Kerry is the chairperson of the ABCCONN History Committee, a member of the Quaker Hill Baptist Church, and an expert on the earliest Baptists in Connecticut, including the

Wightmans who were among the first Baptist pastors in the state. His presentation will be preceded by a breakfast at 8:30 a.m. with the presentation scheduled to begin at 9:00 a.m.

On Friday, November 14, 2008, at 7:00 p.m., the Mansfield Historical Society will hold a meeting and concert at our church. The program, called "American Harmony: Readings and Music from Colonial New England," will be performed by an ensemble of CONCORA artists, who will entertain us by providing glimpses of life in Colonial New England through readings and music from the period. The readings of excerpts from authentic diaries and letters include vignettes of childhood games, courtship, the effects of war on everyday life, entertainment, and worship. Because of the cost of the program, an admission fee will be collected at the door: \$5.00 for individuals over 12, and \$10.00 for families of three or more. Children 12 and under are free.

Later we plan to have another guest presenter who will re-enact the life and deeds of Roger Williams, the founder of the Baptist Church in America and of the State of Rhode Island, where Williams and his congregation established a colony dedicated to religious liberty. Missionaries from Rhode Island helped to organize the founding of the First Baptist Church of Mansfield and one of them, Jonathan Goodwin, became our first pastor.

We plan to have brief history moments each month during the Sunday worship service, and we invite you all to help by volunteering to present one of them. A sign-up sheet will be posted in the Christian Education hallway.

We are beginning an oral history project, collecting and sharing memories about the church from members and friends.

We are collecting material for a multi-volume church photo album.

We will host a community hymn sing with

Heritage Committee Report Continued

participants in costumes from various historical periods.

The adult choir plans to present some anthems through the year in styles that were popular during the early years of the church.

The American Baptist Churches of Connecticut (ABCCONN) will recognize the First Baptist Church of Mansfield's 200th Anniversary with a special certificate, to be presented at the ABCCONN Annual Meeting in the spring.

We recommend that Vacation Bible School next summer could be based on a historical theme reflecting the early days of our church.

The climax of our celebration will be a special history weekend on the weekend of **October 16-18, 2009**.

Mementos of our 200th Anniversary now in preparation are:

- A First Baptist Church Recipe Book prepared by the Ladies Aid.
- A Church Heritage Photo Album.
- A Memory Book of reflections by present and previous pastors and their families.
- A Church Chronology.
- A History of our Church.

We welcome information and photos from every period. Please think about how you can share in this project, and contact a member of the Heritage Committee. Remember, history is yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Our anniversary celebration is for all ages. Let's get together to praise God for the blessings of our first 200 years on Spring Hill, and pray for guidance in the many years to come.

The Heritage Committee

Nancy Flynn, Meradith McMunn, Bill McMunn

Oral History Project—The Heritage Committee

As a part of our 200th Anniversary Celebration, the Heritage Committee is conducting oral history interviews with members and friends of the First Baptist Church. In preparation for each interview we provide a brief list of questions to think about, such as "*What is your earliest memory concerning First Baptist Church of Mansfield?*", "*What are some of the Church programs and activities you recall?*", and "*Can you recall a good story or humorous event connected with the Church?*" At the time of the interview, we record the responses with a video camera and we take an informal still portrait of the respondent. Most interviews are conducted at the respondents' homes (we do house-calls), but we can go wherever the respondent is most comfortable. Later we will transcribe the responses and edit them for presentation as part of the history of the Church. We are starting with the members who have known the First Baptist Church the longest, but eventually we will include everyone. The most interesting fact discovered so far is that even when several respondents remember the same time period, their specific recollections are quite different with very little overlap. We believe that these interviews will be a valuable record of the people, events, and influences of the Church that we can pass on to future generations.

The Heritage Committee

Nancy Flynn, Meradith McMunn, Bill McMunn

Christmas Eve Candle Light Service

Wednesday, December 24th

7:00 p.m.

Our Stewardship Heritage

In this season of thanksgiving, as Americans and Baptists we give thanks for the blessings in our lives at the present, but also for the gifts of freedom and democracy which we have inherited and for the gift of God's son Jesus whose coming we celebrate in this Advent season.

This is also the time in the life of our church when we are mindful of the gifts we give to ourselves and others through First Baptist Church of Mansfield, and of our commitment to support the teaching and preaching of the gospel, which we affirm in our Church Covenant. On Stewardship Pledge Sunday December 7th, we made a commitment to the support of the work of the church with our financial resources. If you have not received the letter from the Stewardship Committee with the proposed budget for the coming year and a pledge card to fill out and return, ask Laura Austin send one to you. After Pledge Sunday, you can give your pledge card to Financial Secretary John Riesen or mail it to him at the Church.

We have just begun our year-long celebration of the first 200 years of the First Baptist Church on Spring Hill. Our stewardship heritage from our Mansfield Baptist ancestors is evident in the earliest documents. Records dating from the 1700s show the commitment of Baptists living in Mansfield to the support of preaching the gospel even before there was a special building where they could meet.

At that time in Connecticut, Baptists were a society and could not officially call themselves a church, this name being reserved for the State church. All citizens had to pay to support the State church unless they showed proof that they were contributing to the support of another denomination. Baptists met in private homes for worship and to conduct business meetings where they selected a moderator and a Committee to oversee financial matters. They also pledged sums to fund

the preaching of the gospel, to be paid out as directed by the Committee, which corresponded to our present Board of Trustees. A Statement of Faith and Covenant used by Mansfield Baptists and signed by eleven women and twelve men is dated June 13, 1781. This Covenant is very different from the one we use today and we will look at it another time.

Between 1781 and 1794 the Mansfield Baptist Society more than doubled in membership. Below are a transcription and a copy of a pledge letter dated June 22, 1794. Contrary to the system of taxes imposed for the support of the State church, the Baptist Society emphasized free-will giving, where each member decided for himself what he would give, and each has written the amount of his pledge beside his signature. In this document the pledges are expressed in the English colonial monetary system of pounds (£), shillings (s), and pence (d). Beside many of the amounts, the treasurer Captain Eleazar Wright has marked an X to indicate that the pledge has been paid. This document, a single folded sheet of paper, is now preserved in the New York Public Library.

The Radical Servants

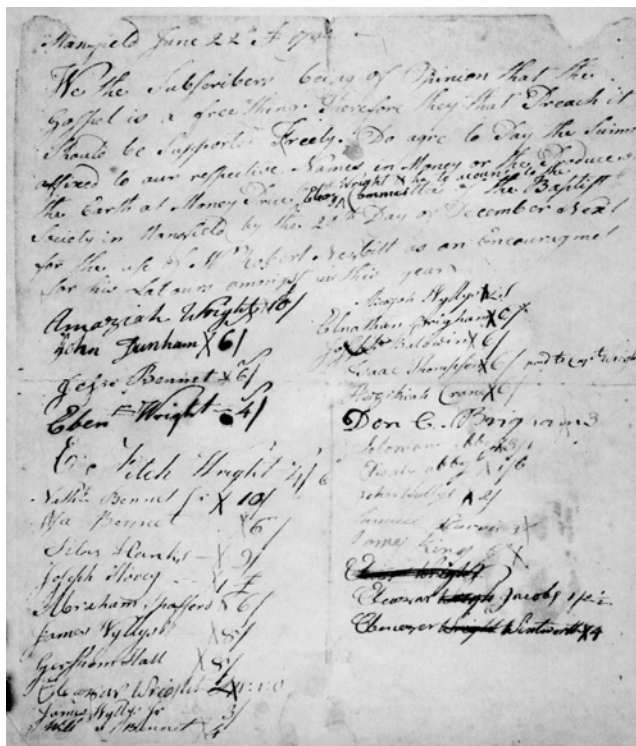
The Radical Servants met for a great night of learning how to toss pizza crust, then we made our own creation to share with each other after they were done. (I still vote on the spicy pizza). We will be having our next meeting a little differently for the month of December. We are going to travel back through time by helping the Baptist Church of Tolland in their yearly event of the Drive Thru Nativity. Bringing Christ back into Christmas is a very important thing. It will also give us the chance to unite with another group of people that want to share Christ with our community. I am very excited about sharing

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Early Pledge Letter

Mansfield June 22nd AD 1794

We the Subscribers being of opinion that the Gospel is a free thing. Therefore they that Preach it Should be Supported Freely. Do agree to Pay the Sums affixed to our respective Names in Money or the Produce of the Earth at Money Price to Elea[zar] Wright & he to account to the Committee of the Baptist Society in Mansfield by the 20th Day of December Next for the use of Mr. Robert Nesbitt as an Encouragmet for his Labours amongst us this year.



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this wonderful adventure with anyone that would like to join us. It will be held on Friday, December 12th from 6:00-9:00 pm. As I get ready for more events I will keep everyone posted.

Have a Merry Christmas everyone and a Blessed day.

Rose Nilson

Amaziah Wright X 10s /
 John Dunham X 6 /
 Jesse Bennet X 6s /
 Eban[eze]r Wright — 4s /
 E[ban]eze[r] Fitch Wright 4s / 6d
 Nath[anie]l Bennet Jr X 10 /
 Asa Bennet X 6 /
 Silas Hanks X 9 /
 Joseph Hovey X 1£
 Abraham Spofford X 6 /
 James Wylllys X 8 /
 Gershom Hall X 8 /
 Eleazar Wright X £1 : 1 : 0
 James Wylllys Jr 3 /
 Will[ia]m Bennet X 4 /
 Elieazah Wylllys X 4s
 Elnathan Brigham X 6 /
 Joseph Baldwin X 6 /
 Isaac Thompson X 6 / paid to Capt Wright
 Hezekiah Crane X 6 /
 Don C. Brigham X 3 /
 Solomon Abby X 8 / 1
 Elijah Abby X 1 / 6
 John Wylllys X 2 /
 Samuel Storrs 3 X
 James King 6 / X

American Baptist Women's Ministries of CT

The American Baptist Women's Ministries of CT is hosting a Mid-Winter Celebration on **Sunday, February 15, 2009 at 3 o'clock** at The First Baptist Church of Essex. The featured speaker will be Rev. Hana Massad. He is the pastor of the only protestant church in the Gaza strip. He has a tremendous personal testimony to the healing spirit of God in a troubled world. Please see Laura Austin if you would like a ride.

Communications Committee

After seven years of producing the Bellringer I have decided that it is time for me to direct my energies in other areas. Working on the Bellringer has been a joy for me as I discovered all aspects of publishing a church newsletter. I have spent many hours playing around with fonts and formats and deciding the best way to present the people and the events that makeup the First Baptist Church of Mansfield. I can't say that I will miss the long hours it takes to pull everything together for a newsletter but, I will miss the creativity and the challenges that publishing the Bellringer have given me.

Our church secretary, Lisa Licata has been working with me over the past two years "*learning the ropes*" of publishing the Bellringer. Please support Lisa as she takes on the additional task of publishing the church newsletter. Since Lisa attends another

church it is up to all of us to send her the information and articles that are needed to put together a good newsletter. The members on the Church Boards and Committees are responsible for making sure "church information" is sent to Lisa in a timely manner. Please remember to send in family news and photos, they make the Bellringer so very interesting!

Sincerely,
Nancy Flynn

The deadline for Board and Committee Reports for the 2008 Annual Report is **Sunday, January 11, 2009**. The 2008 Annual Report will be available on Sunday, January 18th and the Annual Meeting will be on Sunday, January 25, 2009.

December 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 Christmas Musical "Radio J -O-Y!" Deadline Bicentennial Cookbook	8	9	10	11 Adult Choir 7:30-9pm	12 Radical Servants 7-9pm	13 Decorate Christmas Tree 10:30 am Adult Choir Rehearsal
14 Special Christmas Cookie Fellowship Hour Special Christmas Music during Worship Service	15	16	17	18 Adult Choir 7:30-9pm	19 Snow date for Musical 7pm	20
21 Christmas Caroling Soup Kitchen Collection	22	23	24 7pm Christmas Eve Service	25 Christmas	26	27
28 No Youth Choir and No Sunday School	29	30	31			



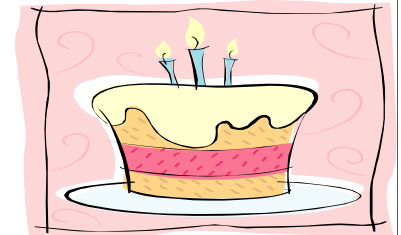
December 2—Will Bigl
 December 2—Chris Salina
 December 5—Jack Gilman
 December 5—Oliver Gilman
 December 5—Laurie Whitehead
 December 6—Betty Geissler
 December 7—Sara Flower
 December 8—Judy Bigl
 December 8—Janice Kopeck
 December 12—Jack Fulton
 December 14—Linda Smith
 December 15—Jeff Bigl
 December 16—Hannah Gilman
 December 18—Jodi Donato
 December 20—Rose Nilson
 December 21—Ava Lee Baker
 December 25—Jesus
 December 26—Kenyon Davisack Gilman

January 2009

Happy Birthday!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Deacon: Karen Watson Trustee: John Riesen				1	2	3
4 No youth choir and no Sunday school	5	6	7	8 Adult Choir 7:30-9pm	9	10
11 Deadline for 2008 Annual Reports	12	13 Executive Board Mtg 7pm	14	15 Adult Choir 7:30-9pm	16	17
18 Soup Kitchen Collection	19	20	21	22 Adult Choir 7:30-9pm	23	24
25 Annual Business Meeting	26	27	28 Deacon's Mtg. 7:30pm	29 Adult Choir 7:30-9pm	30	31

January 3—Allison Erickson
January 3—Ann Salina
January 8—Andrew Gardiner, Sr.
January 13—Charles Anderson
January 15—Frank Wells
January 18—Florence Palmer
January 19—Doug Whittemore
January 20—Nancy Flynn
January 22—Lillian Brookes
January 25—Angel Figueroa
January 26—Robin Whittemore
January 29—Kristen Beaulieu
January 29—Mark Gagne
January 30—Billy Keane, Jr.



February 2009

Deacon: Alice Spencer
Trustee:

Happy Birthday!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3 EGMS 2pm	4	5 Adult Choir 7:30-9pm	6	7
8	9	10 Adult Choir 7:30-9pm	11	12	13	14
15 Soup Kitchen Collection	16	17	18	19 Adult Choir 7:30-9pm	20	21
22 Newsletter Deadline March Issue All-Church Planning Mtg.	23	24	25 Deacon's Mtg. 7:30pm	26 Adult Choir 7:30-9pm	27	28

February 2—Raouf Mama
February 6—David Nilson
February 7—Rich Barry
February 7—Beverly Hamel
February 7—Lindsey Kloss
February 9—Morgan Baker
February 10—Chelsea Flower
February 12—Richard Davis
February 15—Robert Erickson
February 16—Terry Yanaway
February 21—Carol Riesen Bigl
February 23—Thomas Erickson
February 23—Daniel Parker, Jr.
February 25—Henry Bigl
February 27—Gemila Mama





Dates to Remember

Dec. 18—Adult Choir 7:30-9pm

Dec. 21—Christmas Caroling

Dec. 21—Soup Kitchen Collection

Dec. 24—7pm Christmas Eve Service

Dec. 25—Christmas

Dec. 28—No Youth Choir & No Sunday School

Jan. 4—No Youth Choir & No Sunday School

Jan. 8—Adult Choir 7:30—9pm

Jan. 11—Deadline for 2008 Annual Reports

Jan. 13—Executive Board Meeting 7pm

Jan. 15—Adult Choir 7:30—9pm

Jan. 18—Soup Kitchen Collection

Jan. 22—Adult Choir 7:30 -9pm

Jan. 25—Annual Business Meeting

Jan. 28—Deacon's Meeting 7:30 pm

Jan. 29—Adult Choir 7:30-9pm

Feb. 3—EGMS 2pm

Feb. 5—Adult Choir 7:30-9pm

Feb. 10—Adult Choir 7:30-9pm

Feb. 15—Soup Kitchen Collection

Feb. 19—Adult Choir 7:30-9pm

Feb. 22—Newsletter Deadline for March Issue

Feb. 22—All-Church Planning Meeting

Feb. 25—Deacon's Meeting 7:30 pm

Feb. 26—Adult Choir 7:30-9pm



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF MANSFIELD

945 Storrs Road, Storrs, CT 06268

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

www.fbcmansfieldct.com

Worship Service – 10:45 a.m.

Church School—9:30 a.m.

Youth Choir Rehearsal, Sun. 9:00 a.m.

Adult Choir Rehearsal, Thur. 7:30 p.m.



An American Baptist Church