OFTENTIMES PEOPLE MISS the multiple ways that Jesus taught those around Him. Yes, He verbally taught His people who He was and how we are to live in the Kingdom. But He also taught people by the way He lived His life. Christians often use Paul as their role model on how to live (great role model, by the way). But what about Jesus?

The writer of Hebrews commands us in 12:2 to fix our eyes on Jesus so that we can see how He lived. And it’s not just about watching and admiring Jesus. It is also about imitating Jesus.

As you fix your eyes on Jesus as He walks the path to the Cross, what do you see in Him that you can imitate? Maybe it’s His willingness to take on the Cross. Or His desire to spend quality time with His disciples in the midst of all of it. Whatever it is that you see, make it a part of you.

This Easter, let’s fix our eyes on Him.

― Pastor Deryk
Gifts of the Generous Life

Last month we talked about what the Bible says about giving to the church. We know that we are called to give—there is a minimum, but God wants us to give generously. We also know that God promises to abundantly bless our giving. Our next question usually is: What does that blessing look like?

More Joy!

The first thing that happens when you give generously is joy! Everyone who has given a heartfelt gift to someone they love knows exactly what this verse is talking about:

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”
—Acts 20:35b (ESV)

The giver receives the greatest blessing, not the recipient. There is a joy in giving generously that can’t be found anywhere else. It is a gift beyond price, and your soul rejoices every time you do it.

More Faith!

Giving generously builds and strengthens your faith.

To give generously, you must take a little from the things you saved for yourself and give it to someone else. God knows that you are putting Him and the men and women He loves above yourself and that you are trusting in Him to provide all your needs. Our example is the widow, in Mark 12:42-44, who gave all she had. She trusted in God completely to apply this verse to her life:

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all that we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us...
—Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)

The more you trust God, the stronger your faith grows.

When we know the truth of that verse in our hearts, we no longer think of giving generously as a sacrifice. We become the “cheerful giver” that Jesus talked about.

Better Relationships!

All the people I know who are generous have great relationships. They are not buying friendship, but their generous spirit pours out of them in all ways into others, and that generous spirit helps to build wonderful relationships. Those who lack such a generous spirit are unable to nurture the special bonds shared by people who give more freely.

Who wouldn’t want more joy, more faith, and better relationships? We all would.

But there is more good news to being generous! When we give and God blesses us, we have had a small part in His blessing. What an awesome gift! Take advantage of the opportunity to give generously and have God bless it, and you won’t be disappointed. In fact, if you have the same experience as me, you will wonder why you didn’t do it sooner.

If any of you have been blessed with more joy, more faith or better relationships as a result of your giving, please let us know your story. If you are inspired to do so, we ask that you submit a brief story (one or two paragraphs) to antonhertle@cox.net as a testimony to God’s grace being active in your life—name, optional—from youth or adults.

—Anton Hertle

Photo: Jim and Linda Johnston
April 6, 2011

Dearest Friends,

It is with mixed emotions that I write this letter.

I am saddened to tell you that I am resigning my position as Director of Children’s and Family Ministries, effective June 5, 2011.

Over the last three months, God has clearly guided me to understand that I have completed what He has called me to do here at First Church. During the past 24 years, I have seen Him work mightily in the lives of many and have seen His faithfulness displayed. There are so many of you that I will miss working with, as well as the relationships we have built. It has been a joy to watch many infants grow into adulthood and follow Luke 2:52, one of my favorite verses: *And Jesus grew in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and men.*

Although I am sad about leaving this awesome body of believers, I am excited about what God has prepared for me as the next step. I have accepted a position at South Congregational Church in Hartford. There I will be building a new program and continuing my passion to work with inner-city children and their families.

I pray, and look forward to, building relationships between our churches. God is great, and He has great plans for the greater Hartford area, to bring more of His Kingdom here.

With deep love and gratitude for all of you,

Vicki A. Huffman
It’s the 30 Hour Famine!

On Friday and Saturday, April 29 and 30, high school and eighth-grade students will be participating in this year’s 30 Hour Famine, an annual Youth Ministries event. Students and adult leaders go thirty hours without eating as a way of demonstrating awareness of those throughout our world who do not have access to the food and clean water that we sometimes take for granted.

This is an international youth movement to fight hunger.

As part of the experience, students seek out sponsors who make financial contributions to World Vision (www.worldvision.org), a Christian organization that serves those in developing countries through a variety of programs. During the famine, students will study, play, and serve the community through a wide range of service projects.

Be sure to check out the Facebook page “World Vision’s 30 Hour Famine” and the website www.30hourfamine.org.

If you are a student in grades 8 through 12 and are interested in being a participant in this year’s Famine, or to learn how you can sponsor one of our participants, call Marcia at 860-529-1575, ext. 208.

Spring Work Day and Picnic, May 7!

Spring Work Day will be held at First Church on Saturday, May 7, meeting at the red barn at 8:30 a.m. First Church of Christ has a tradition of pitching in and getting our landscaping in shape all in one day—this is that day!

Projects include raking, weeding, minor painting, gutter cleaning, and window washing. Wheelbarrows and rakes are welcome. All you need to do is sign up at the display in the Wells Fellowship Area and bring some work gloves, along with a healthy appetite for the picnic lunch provided. Questions should be directed to Bob Keleher, at 860-529-1575, ext. 299.

Support the Youth Mission Work Camp Team!

RENT-A-CREW — $60 for a two-hour minimum and $30 for each additional hour “rents” you a crew of one adult and two teen workers. Weekend appointments begin May 7. Day and evening hours available for raking, weeding, minor painting, gutter cleaning, attic/cellar/garage cleanup, window cleaning, and hedge clipping. Call Youth Ministries at 860-529-1575, ext. 208, 303, or 205.

MOTHER’S DAY PLANT SALE — Tables will be set up on the church’s front lawn, with impatient, marigolds, petunias, hanging baskets, herbs, and more—on Saturday, May 7, from 9:00 to 2:00; and Sunday, May 8, after the 9:15 and 11:00 services. Questions? Call Ted and Carol Willard at 860-569-0660.

NEW PICTORIAL DIRECTORY — On any Sunday (except Easter), you can make your appointment in the Wells Fellowship Area to be photographed by Olan Mills in May, here at the church, for our long- overdue pictorial directory! Or you can make your appointment online, at www.signup.olanmills.com, or by phone with Olan Mills, at 1-800-866-2263. Have you been attending First Church but are not yet a member? Please don’t hesitate to sign up—you are already part of our family of faith!

WOULD YOU DELIVER PLANTS? Easter “Angels” are needed to deliver Easter plants from the Meetinghouse to homebound and bereaved members and friends. Please sign up on the Easter Angels poster in the Wells Fellowship Area, or call Janet von Wodtke at 860-659-2638, and come to the church on Monday, April 25, between 9:00 and 11:30 a.m. to pick up your assignment. For more information, please call Janet.

MOPS — All mothers of preschoolers are invited to our next monthly meeting, on Thursday, May 5, 9:15 to 11:15 a.m., in the Fireside Room. The theme will be MOPS Wit and Wisdom. Join us every first Thursday for food, fun and fellowship! Questions? Email Maria Zematis at mszematis@yahoo.com. To register for childcare, call Karen Christensen at 860-257-1299 or 860-604-0636.

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL — April activities and special events can be found on the April postcard for each level, under Youth (from Ministries) at firstchurch.org. Just scroll to the bottom and click the link!

PARENTS of middle and high school students — Our parents’ newsletter, Connections, will now be made available online at firstchurch.org as a downloadable PDF. We will also have printed copies available in the Wells Fellowship Area.

FOOD BANK — The Wethersfield Food Bank serves many who are in dire need. Donations of nonperishable food items may be left with the church receptionist. Financial contributions are also highly appreciated. They help to obtain the most-needed items. Simply place them in the Offering plate on Sundays—in cash, or a check payable to First Church of Christ with memo “Food Bank.” Questions? Call Howard Page at 860-563-3275.

KNITTERS/CROCHETERS are needed by the Dominican Republic Mission Team, to create dolls for children. For details and a simple pattern, contact Joyce McNamara at 860-436-2923 or jenford@juno.com.

D.R. MISSIONS GOLF TOURNAMENT! Save the date—Saturday, June 11—at the Blackledge Country Club in Hebron. Registration is at 7:00 a.m., shotgun start at 8:00, and lunch to follow. Brochures are available in the Wells Fellowship Area. Questions? Contact Dana Crompton at 860-635-1530 or dcrompton@sbcglobal.net.

BROWN BAGGERS BOOK CLUB will meet Monday, May 2, in the Morgan House Sycamore Room, at 6:30 p.m. Brown-bag your dinner and join this group for a lively discussion of The Way of a Pilgrim and The Pilgrim Continues His Way, a 19th-century Russian work in which the narrator describes his journey across Russia while practicing the Jesus Prayer. Questions? Call Linda Papertszan at 860-257-7566.

Seder Dinner: Friday, April 15

The Seder is a Jewish ritual feast that marks the beginning of Passover and includes a retelling of how the Lord set the Israelites free from slavery. Many of the symbols used in this festival are especially profound in light of Good Friday and Easter.

Beginning at 6:15, Rabbi Paul L. Saal, Vice President of the Messianic Jewish Rabbinical Council, will illuminate this sacred drama, which points to Jesus’ own provision for salvation. A delicious lamb dinner, prepared by Judy Carson, follows at 7:15. Tickets are $14 for the entire evening.

For a much fuller description, please see page 4 of the March Spire (available at firstchurch.org, under Resources).

Last October’s Ravi Zacharias Talks To Be Broadcast on WIHS

Christ, Christianity and the Culture of Our Time: Is Christianity Still Relevant?—last fall’s extraordinary presentations at First Church by theologian and author Ravi Zacharias will be aired in three parts on radio station WIHS, 104.9 FM: part 1 on April 13, part 2 on April 14, and part 3 (the Q&A session) on April 15. Each part will air three times on its assigned day: 1:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., and 8:00 p.m.
**BOOK OF LIFE**

**ENTERED ETERNAL LIFE**
Helen (Bradley) “Fran” Wright, March 9, 2011
Frank Herbert Morris, March 12, 2011

Our Church unites in an expression of heartfelt sympathy to their families.

**BAPTIZED**
Gavin Kenneth Rafala, son of Salvatore and Jessica (Wood) Rafala, March 13, 2011

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**Love never ends.**
1 Corinthians 13:8a (ESV)

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**GOOD FRIDAY MEMORIAL CONCERT**
April 22 • 7:00 PM

**MESSIAH**

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

Parts II and III

First Church Choir and Cantata Singers • Pilgrim Youth Choir
Festival Orchestra • David Spicer, Conductor

**SOLOISTS**
Nancy Andersen
Linda Henderson
Anne Graczyk-Druce
Adrienne Milics
Christopher Dukes
Ryan Burns
Stewart Battle

*Messiah*, first performed in Dublin, in 1742, is most assuredly Handel’s best known choral work. The libretto was selected from Scripture with great care by Charles Jennens, an admirer and acquaintance of Handel. Our choirs sang Part I of *Messiah* for our Christmas Concert this past December.

The concert will be a profoundly stirring and meaningful experience for those presenting the music, and equally so for those in attendance. Why not invite neighbors and friends to join you for this event on the holy night of Good Friday? Childcare will be provided for those up to the age of 8, and an offering will be received.

If you would like to make a *special* gift of support in memory of a loved one, in recognition of one still living, or in appreciation of a ministry that has especially blessed you, call the Ministry of Music and the Arts at 860-529-1575, ext. 209; the deadline is Monday, April 18.