

Hilltop Hallelujah

September 2019

Volume 8, Issue 2

All-Welcoming From the Inside Out

By Pastor Mike

As individuals and institutions, we are bequeathed both poverty and gifts. Our vitality is contingent on becoming aware of, befriending, and using both toward an integrated, fruitful life. We often try to minimize or eliminate our poverty while maximizing our gifts, and yet the best-balanced life recognizes the way those two are interwoven and need to work together. This is a vulnerable, risky, but necessary enterprise, if we want to live a life of growth and freedom.

Dr. Terry Nelson-Johnson

Friends, I want to share with you my vision for what it looks like to be and become an all-welcoming church family. As I mentioned in the sermon last Sunday, this is the first focused conversation I have begun to take up with our Leadership Team, and I want to be open about my approach. I begin with this quote by Terry Nelson-Johnson. Though his name suggests him the product of an egalitarian Swedish Covenant marriage, he is, in fact, a Catholic, trained by Jesuits among others. He is also my spiritual director and one of my favorite people on the planet.

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Hilltop Preschool and Daycare



The new school year has begun! Welcome to all the new families that have joined the Hilltop family this fall. We are so excited to get to know your family. We are truly grateful that you have chosen Hilltop for your child's preschool and/or daycare.

School age parents, if your child will not be getting off the bus here on their scheduled days, please call to let us know; this saves time by not having to call the school or parents to find out where the child is.



If you would like to receive emails from Hilltop about important events coming up or to get our monthly newsletter electronically, please be sure to leave your email address with Ms. Laura (3 year old teacher).

Please remember that Hilltop is a "nut free" center. We have a few children with nut allergies and to

keep all the children safe in the center please read labels on your child's snacks to make sure no nuts are accidentally brought in.



The Connecticut Department of Early Childhood Education has made it a requirement for all children aged 6-59 months attending a daycare center must receive at least one dose of influenza vaccine now through December 31st. All Children aged 6-59 months who have not received their vaccination against influenza previously shall receive 2 doses of vaccine the first influenza season that they are vaccinated. Children who have not received the flu vaccine by December 31st must be excluded from child care for the duration of flu season



(continued on page 2)

(Senior Pastor's Message, cont. from page 1)

What Dr. Nelson-Johnson gets at in this quote lies at the heart of my vision for an all-welcoming church family. Being and becoming all-welcoming, as Jesus is, does not begin by focusing on the exterior issues that are necessarily raised when we talk about welcoming all. I wish it were that easy, but the reality is—and the recent history of the Covenant Church bears witness to this—that seeking to change one another's minds about external issues brings us no closer to a lived reality of inclusivity. Instead, it sequesters us to the tired old binaries that keep us divided: liberal or conservative, mainline or evangelical, Democrat or Republican, Us or Them.

Instead of giving our collective energy to the exterior, I envision creating together an environment that is all-welcoming *from the inside out*. This requires bold self-examination, transparency and vulnerability, being willing to face questions like:

- What aspects of my life do I hold back from my church community, or even from God, lest I be found out to be a below-average Christian?
- Are there aspects of my own life that I do not welcome? Can I accept myself for who I really am and present that person to God?
- How have I experienced the transformative power of God's grace in my life, mending the broken parts, healing the wounds, strengthening my weakness?

These kinds of questions can be quite unsettling, for they lead us to an exploration of our poverty and threaten the illusions we create to convince ourselves (and others) that we are good and worthy people. But to be and become a truly all-welcoming person and community requires that we are in touch with our poverty and are willing to open ourselves up, brokenness and all, to God's redeeming love. When we do this together, and we begin to experience the healing we long for, we not only deepen our communion with God and the church, but we expand our capacity to love and accept others who are also broken, just in different ways.

Thus, I return to Dr. Nelson-Johnson's quote. To grow increasingly as an all-welcoming church family, we must bring both our poverty and our gifts to the Lord and to the church. If we check our baggage at the door, we create a decidedly *unwelcoming* culture, one that accepts only our gifts, not our poverty. In this case, we force each other to hide the unwelcomed parts of ourselves and live as disintegrated people. But if we can become aware of, befriend, and use both our poverty and our gifts, we can live a life together full of growth and freedom.

Therefore, in the coming months, the planning of our life together will not be focused on the issues raised when talking about inclusivity, things like class, race, politics and sexuality. Instead, we can expect opportunities to open ourselves up to God's healing and renewal. We will share stories of brokenness and healing, doubts and trust, poverty and gifts. We will learn to lament hardship and stand firm in Christ's love. All along my prayer will be that we, as individuals and a community, may be and become all-welcoming from the inside out.

(Daycare Director's Message, cont. from page 1)

(through March 31st) or until they receive at least one dose of the influenza vaccine. Once your child has had their flu vaccine, please bring in their updated immunization record or the slip the doctor/nurse gave you indicating the date your child got the vaccine.

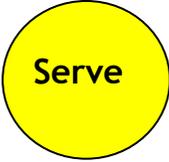
As a thank you to all our parents for entrusting us with the care of your child/ren, breakfast will be on us on Friday, September 20th. You can either come a little earlier than drop off time and enjoy a nice home-cooked breakfast with your child or children. Or if you are in a rush, there will be to-go containers for you to pack breakfast to enjoy when you get to work!



Reminder: Hilltop will be **closed** on Monday, September 2nd for Labor Day.

Ms. Laura

OPPORTUNITIES TO



Communion: September 1, 2019			Brian & Dale Chiffer
GREETERS	USHERS	READERS	
Sept. 1 Dale Comstock	Brian & Dale Chiffer	Jenn Hite	
Sept. 8 Barbara Damon	Jim & Jenn Hite	Bob McNaughton	
Sept. 15 Shari Pekarovic	Jordyn & Nicole Pekarovic	Brian Chiffer	
Sept. 22 Dale Comstock	Sally Huggins, Bob McNaughton	Jim Hite	
Sept. 29 Lorrey Hamilton	Barbara Damon, Laura Winoski	Julia Cunningham	

PICK OF THE LITTER

Pick of the Litter, POTL, is September 21, 9 AM !

On the third Saturday of the month, we gather at Pierson Park to tidy it up for residents and visitors. We provide all the tools for clean-up, but if you have a leaf blower not electric, that would be handy! And there will be refreshments!



We hope to find a family or group of friends to be responsible for just one month; in that way, we all get a chance to help! There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex.

COFFEE TIME

Rather than have one or two volunteers provide refreshments for Coffee Time, this summer has been a "community effort"! Coffee Time has been purely "pot luck" this summer and we have enjoyed whatever people brought to share!

So, should we continue this format? Summer officially ends on Sept. 23!

Let us know what you think!





PROGRAMS At HILLTOP

As we get ready to enter into the fall season, and activities at Hilltop ramp up, I wanted to remind you of opportunities to participate in the music programs of the church. The two ongoing groups are:

Celebration Ringers – an enthusiastic group of ringers who would welcome new members! If you read music a bit – or are willing to learn a little – consider joining the handbell choir. We ring at worship 2-3 times during the year and sometimes provide a little something extra during worship at other times. The time commitment is minimal. We start rehearsing 3-5 weeks before the performance of a piece. Rehearsals are Sunday evenings at 6:15 p.m. Ages 10 (mature)-Adult



Sunday Singers - This is an informal group made up of anyone in the congregation who likes to sing but isn't ready to commit to a full-time choir. We sing a contemporary praise song during worship from time to time. You just need to carry the tune – experienced singers add in some harmony. Once a song is chosen, you receive a link to a YouTube performance so that you can learn the melody. Then, we gather for rehearsal at 8:30 a.m. on the scheduled Sunday morning. That's it. One rehearsal! So, watch for calls through the year for Sunday Singer participants and sign up!



If you play an instrument or are a solo singer and would like to share your gift with the congregation, please don't hesitate to speak to me about the possibilities.

Questions about any of the music groups? Get in touch!
 Carolyn Johnson, Director of Music or carerjoh@yahoo.com



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Lucielle Stromberg	9/2
Sandra Aloï	9/6
Jonathan Beatty	9/17
Rebecca Chiffer	9/19
Dave DeStefano	9/21

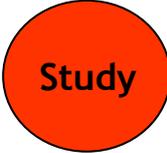


Heather & Tim Misterka September 20



Let's Talk Let's Talk

OPPORTUNITIES TO



Study

CHILDREN'S CHURCH

Like the Sermon? Didn't like the sermon? Let's talk!

Beginning on September 8th, from 11:00-11:45, we will discuss the Scripture and sermon from that morning. No homework or pre-reading is required for this Sunday School format! Just grab your coffee and return to the sanctuary with your questions, insights and openness to other perspectives!

Ms. Mel will also resume Children's Church on September 8. Children through second grade are invited to leave worship just prior to the Pastor's Message and head downstairs for a lesson planned just for them!

They can be picked up downstairs following worship. On Communion Sundays they return to the sanctuary prior to Holy Communion.

MOPS Frequently Asked Questions



How many people do I need to cook for? The meal is typically dinner for 8-12 adults (moms and helpers). That might sound like a lot, but they are all pretty light eaters. We have typically had more food than we've needed! One casserole is plenty.

What time does the meal need to be served? The moms and children arrive and eat between 5:30PM and 6:00PM. The meal can be dropped off earlier in the day with instructions to heat, or brought hot and ready to serve.

What do I need to provide? The meal can be pretty simple; an entrée, and salad, or a salad as an entrée. It could be soup, a casserole, crock pot meal or pasta. The moms are not picky and are very appreciative. The only request is that the food not contain nuts. We have the requisite paper products, but a beverage is always a nice addition. The children are fed by the Daycare.

What if I can't prepare a meal, but want to help? People have given donations so that we can subsidize the cost of preparing a meal, for those who need it, or so that we can purchase a meal (pizza!) when no one is available to cook.

MOPS will resume on Tuesday, September 10 and continue every two weeks thereafter. You can sign up to help in the narthex.

COOKIE WALK

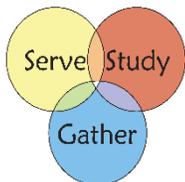
and Holiday Fair

Saturday
December 7, 2019
9 AM – 12:00 PM

Please let the church office know if you'd like to help!



Preschool and Daycare
82 Hicksville Road
Cromwell, CT 06416



Circles of Life in Christ