

1 Samuel 7:3-17  
Acts 9:19b-31  
Psalm 29

Samuel guides Israel to peace  
Barnabas introduces Saul/Paul in Jerusalem  
The voice of God upon the waters

**H**ow can UCC health and human service ministries help teenagers whose families are unable or unwilling to provide adequate care for them? In Bismarck, North Dakota, CHHSM member Charles Hall Youth Services has found one answer in experiential learning—adventures like canoe trips, and ropes courses, that are fun and safe, but also challenge youth to push themselves emotionally, physically and spiritually.

“The idea,” explains Denis Montplaisir, manager of training and program development “is to give kids hands-on opportunities to learn new skills in practicing community, social skills, taking directions, teamwork, dealing with challenges, handling stress and change. The most important aspect is not to just do the activity, but to reflect on what they’re learning about themselves and the group, and then transfer those lessons back home to the rest of life.” At Charles Hall, success comes when a teen chooses a challenge, steps into the unknown, and learns to communicate, explore and to trust.

**P R A Y E R :**

*Creator God, our soul's delight, your voice thunders over the waters, liberating the future from the past. In the Spirit's power and the waters of rebirth, Jesus was declared your blessed and beloved Son; may we recall our baptism, and be disciples of the Anointed One. Amen.*

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**C**ollege Avenue UCC, Fresno, has sent multiple care packages to U.S. troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan as a way of showing compassion and mercy for soldiers even while advocating for peace and a speedy end to the war in Iraq. Angela Garcia, who began the project, wrote in The Lookout Post, “Could I live with myself if I heard a report in the media and realized that I knew someone who had been killed and I had done nothing? Was there anything that I could do to help our soldiers and still remain true to my conviction that war is wrong?” Research led Angela to <[www.booksforsoldiers.com](http://www.booksforsoldiers.com)> where she learned how and what to send. After sending 11 packages, she began a regular correspondence with an army reservist that made her prayers for peace and for soldiers concrete. The church’s Peace and Justice Fellowship committee is now expanding this outreach project.

**P R A Y E R :**

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# Where is the Child?

Isaiah 60:1-6  
Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14  
Ephesians 3:1-12  
Matthew 2:1-12

Nations come to the light  
All shall bow down  
The gospel's promise for all  
Christ revealed to the nations

**H**ave you ever laughed so hard that your side hurt? Have you ever seen someone auction off a spaghetti dinner? Have you ever climbed a magical mountain that can melt away all your worries? Can you imagine doing any or all of these things in a place of worship? Well,

the youth at First Parish UCC in East Derry New Hampshire have, and they can't think of any other church they'd rather attend.

One aspect of a successful church youth program is activities. All those involved enjoy the experience thoroughly. When asked why, one youth explained that it is mostly the people, both adults and youth, who make her feel she is with family. “I would rather go to youth group than go to the movies with my friends,” said another member of the group.

The adults at First Parish take youth ministry very seriously, and the church prides itself on the exceptional programs for its newest generations. The purpose of the youth ministry committee, which consists of both youth and adults, is to plan the religious education of the students and to make the experience enjoyable for them and the teachers. One aspect of a successful church is youth activities. At First Parish, it is both the youth and the adults who make us feel we are with family.

First Parish Church is a perfect place for youth to grow up.

**P R A Y E R :**

*Radiant Morning Star, you are both guidance and mystery. Visit our rest with disturbing dreams, and our journeys with strange companions. Grace us with the hospitality to open our hearts and homes to visitors filled with unfamiliar wisdom bearing profound and unusual gifts. Amen.*

## January 7

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1 Kings 10:1-13  
Ephesians 3:14-21  
Psalm 72

Gifts to Solomon from Sheba  
Knowing the love of Christ  
Prayers for the king

The anagram for The Near East School of Theology, Global Ministries partner in Beirut, was perhaps never so aptly applied than in the summer of 2006 during the month long war between Israel and Lebanon. The NEST indeed became a sanctuary for those displaced by the violence and a distribution center for relief aid. Mary Mikhael, school president, was outside of Lebanon when the conflict erupted and struggled to get back home to Beirut while others tried desperately to escape. Both Mary and Alison Stendahl, missionary to Turkey, ask prayers for this region – especially for the children. Hatred, fear and mistrust based on religion and ethnicity are destroying their hope and limiting their horizons. Pray for these children – our hope for any chance at future peace.

### PRAYER:

*Radiant Morning Star, you are both guidance and mystery. Visit our rest with disturbing dreams, and our journeys with strange companions. Grace us with the hospitality to open our hearts and homes to visitors filled with unfamiliar wisdom bearing profound and unusual gifts. Amen.*

## January 8

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1 Kings 10:14-25  
Ephesians 4:7, 11-16  
Psalm 72

Solomon's splendor  
Gifts according to Christ  
Prayers for the king

Three years ago, St. Mark's Church (UCC) in Kansas City, Missouri dedicated \$4.5 million to build St. Mark Child and Family Development Center. The 20,000 square-foot Center has the capacity for 125 children—infants, toddlers and pre-school aged children.

They are using the curriculum, Connecting with Children, which supports each child's sense of identity in reference to their culture, including integration of family, neighborhood and ethnicity, and their understanding of personal individuality and its positive impact on the world. Children experience elements of their rich cultural heritage through music, dance, drama, painting, and other arts.

The Center helped fulfill the twenty-five year old dream of the Rev. Dr. Sam Mann, pastor of St. Mark's Church. Today, the Center continues to serve the neighborhood and is seeking to build an endowment to ensure the ministry of the Center for years to come.

### PRAYER:

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## January 9

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Micah 5:2-9  
Luke 13:31-35  
Psalm 72

One who is to rule Israel  
Jerusalem that kills the prophets  
Prayers for the king

Connecticut Partners in Education saw a need to support volunteers who serve in our Church Schools but haven't had formal training in Christian Education. In Spring, 2006, we launched "Stepping Stones," a series of evening workshops covering the subjects of Identification of Gifts and Recruitment, Models of Christian Education, and Teacher Training. Over 30 people registered for each of the 3 sessions which began with a light supper followed by 2 hours of instruction and discussion. Seven new workshops are offered for Spring, 2007, with locations spread throughout the state to reach more educators. The program is financed through the cost to the participants of \$10.00 per session.

Inspired by the success of the CE Stepping Stones, the Partners used the model to create "Stepping Stones for Youth Ministry" which drew 60 participants for 3 sessions in January and February, 2007. The Conference is now considering "Stepping Stones for Stewardship Committees."

### PRAYER:

*Radiant Morning Star, you are both guidance and mystery. Visit our rest with disturbing dreams, and our journeys with strange companions. Grace us with the hospitality to open our hearts and homes to visitors filled with unfamiliar wisdom bearing profound and unusual gifts. Amen.*

## January 10

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1 Samuel 3:1-9  
Acts 9:1-9  
Psalm 29

Samuel, a boy, says "Here I am"  
Saul on the road to Damascus  
The voice of God upon the waters

It's fitting that CHHSM member Pilgrim Place, a retirement community for church professionals, has developed an innovative way to serve its community with the most biblical of tools: a harp.

Compassionate Harps, a program of Pilgrim Place, uses a harpist and a trained volunteer to provide live harp music for people who are seriously ill in hospitals, assisted living centers, hospice home centers and skilled nursing facilities. Harp music played by certified harpists who know how to be with the ill in body and spirit has been shown to lessen pain and anxiety, improve sleep and breathing, normalize blood pressure, and regulate heart rhythms.

### PRAYER:

*Creator God, our soul's delight, your voice thunders over the waters, liberating the future from the past. In the Spirit's power and the waters of rebirth, Jesus was declared your blessed and beloved Son; may we recall our baptism, and be disciples of the Anointed One. Amen.*