

The Herald

Saugatuck Congregational Church

February 2012

Volume 14, Issue 2

Dear Members and Friends of Saugatuck Congregational Church.



What words can express how Craig and I felt as we drove home from Westport on Sunday afternoon, January 22... So *many* words! Here are just a few that we shared with family and friends in the days following Candidating Sunday: Welcomed, embraced, energized, excited and deeply moved... And here are a few words I have used to describe all of you: gracious, thoughtful, hospitable, hopeful, engaging and excited!

This process has felt very Spirit-led to me. As I said to one colleague, it feels like God has been introducing us to each other. Of course, there is so much more to learn; important, sometimes challenging work for us to do together and amazing ministry for us to share. But for now, I am enjoying the introduction, the sense of anticipation and the warm welcome you extended to Craig and me – which leads me to the two most important words: “Thank you!”

Thank you for inviting me to serve with you in ministry; *thank you* for trusting the faithful work of the Search Committee; *thank you* for extending your hands to Craig and (in absentia) Tobey and Ian and for drawing us into the life and culture of Westport with your stories and insights. *Thank you* for what you’ve already shared about your individual hopes and struggles. Thank you for your tears and for your laughter. *Thank you* for feeding us, body and spirit, over those two days!

I trust that these next three months will pass swiftly. In the mean time, would you do this? Continue to pray for our congregation in this time of transition. I will be asking God for guidance, for open heart, eyes and ears to discern God’s purpose; please do the same. Collectively, we might listen for the ways that God is calling us to move forward. I will see you in May!

Grace and Peace,

Alison

Pastor Search Committee

Candidating Sunday

It is our great pleasure to announce that Saugatuck has a New Pastor! At a Congregational Meeting after the 10:00 service on Sunday, January 22, Reverend Alison J. Buttrick Patton was called to become Saugatuck’s next Pastor in a unanimous vote by the members of the congregation attending the meeting. Alison was recommended to the congregation with consensus of the Search Committee. She will start in her position at Saugatuck on May 1, after she fulfills the terms of her current contract at First Church Simsbury in Simsbury, Ct..

Alison has profound gifts of mind, heart, and spirit and ministers from a core of commitment and joy. Energetic in her ministry, she is passionate about missions and social justice. Those of you

who were at Candidating Sunday, were able to hear Alison’s sermon and experience her strength in preaching.

Reverend Alison J. Buttrick Patton- Our New Pastor

Alison has served at First Church Simsbury as Associate Minister for Parish Life and Outreach since 2007. Her responsibilities in Simsbury have included worship leadership, mission support, pastoral/congregational care, adult education, and new member support. She has launched a lay caregiving network and overseen a local, affordable housing rehab effort. She lists mission trips to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, MS; four annual women’s retreats; work with the Welcome Church Ministry Team and leadership of the Stewardship Team among her other First Church ministry highlights.

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Continued . . . The Pastor Search Committee

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Alison is also active in the wider United Church of Christ. She will serve as the conference preacher at the CT Conference Fall meeting in 2012 and has co-lead high school camps at the Connecticut Conference summer camp, Silver Lake Conference Center, in 2010 and 2011.

Prior to being called to First Church in Simsbury, Alison was Dean of Community Life and Director of Admissions and Recruitment at Chicago Theological Seminary for eight years. While working at Chicago Theological Seminary, Alison also served as an interim co-pastor at the Peoples Church of Chicago, a small, diverse, urban congregation on Chicago's north side. Alison preached and led worship, hosted 'urban immersions' and ministered with homeless residents in the neighborhood.

Born in 1970 and raised in New England by two UCC ministers, Alison graduated from Bates College in Maine in 1992. Following graduation, she spent a year in Chile as a Global Mission Intern through the United Church of Christ's Wider Church Ministries Board. On returning to the States, Alison worked as a Resident Organizer in a low-income neighborhood in Hartford for two years. She received a Master of Divinity from Chicago Theological Seminary in 1999.

Alison is married to Craig Patton, who also grew up in New England and attended Bates College. After marrying in Hartford, Ct. in 1996 they moved to Chicago so Alison could attend seminary. They lived in Chicago for 11 years and had two sons, Tobey and Ian. Craig is a stay-at-home Dad and a writer. Tobey (age 9) received his first baseball glove when he turned 2 and never looked back. He loves reading, math, nature, writes stories, plays bass in his school orchestra, and is a Webelos in Cub Scouts. Ian (age 6) loves stories, puzzles, science and building, talking to people and climbing... everything. He is a Tiger in Cub Scouts. The whole family loves reading, hiking, exploring, and playing games together.

The Search Process during the past year

The Search Committee began its discernment in January 2011. The process included an assessment of the congregation, which was done through a survey in February and March. Over 200 members completed the survey and it provided information for the committee to complete the Saugatuck Church Profile, the 30 page document sent out to prospective candidates. Our Church Profile was finished in May. Through June and July, the committee met to review new profiles (résumés) from candidates and listen to sermons. In August we began interviews with prospective candidates. Through the late Summer and Fall, we continued to review profiles, meet with candidates and visit churches to listen to live sermons from candidates. During the search we received more than 120 profiles. By early December, we had narrowed our search to a few candidates. We first met with Alison in September and at our last meeting with her in December, we knew we had found the right person to lead Saugatuck Church into the future.

The Search Committee and our Congregation

We thank you, the members of Saugatuck Church, for your patience, input, guidance and prayers. During the year of the search, we have always felt supported by you.

Each member of the committee- Elizabeth Baldwin, Russ Breneman, Russ Bulkily, Andrea Cross, Larry Robinson and Sara Walsh- brought their unique gifts to this effort and worked tirelessly on the search. I respect each of them immensely and thank them for being on this journey for our church and with me. I also thank their families, and my own, for parting with us for hundreds of hours during this process.

So now it is time to provide our full support to our new pastor, Reverend Alison J. Buttrick Patton, when she joins us in May. A summary version of her Call Letter, the covenant our church has entered into with her as our Pastor, is available in the church office at 319 Post Rd. East. We look forward to everyone welcoming her and her family when they join us in May as we embark on a new chapter in Saugatuck's 180 year history.

Mary Jean Koster, Chair, Search Committee

If you would like a copy of Alison's sermon, copies are in the church office at 319 Post Road East and on the website in the sermons section. www.saugatuckchurch.org



from the desk of Howie Tobak, Transition Minister

*O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you;
Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.*

I will bless you as long as I live;

I will lift up my hands and call on your name.

Psalm 63:1a, 3-4

Our church family is constantly changing. People come and go. Babies are born. More often than not, children grow up, leave the nest, and eventually establish homes of their own. Some commit themselves to one another; others return; some retire. Loved ones and friends among us come to the end of their lives. People move into our community and into our hearts; others leave, moving on to new residences, new life experiences, new opportunities. Such are the many paths we travel in the course of our days. In the span of the past 24 months you and I have shared in ministry here at Saugatuck, and since before I arrived you knew I would leave when the Search Committee had completed its charge and a new minister was called to serve among you. With the calling of The Reverend Alison J. Buttrick Patton as your pastor, that time has come.

I thank God for the providence that brought us together, and for the grace that has sustained us, through both joy and turmoil, during this interim time. In the redeeming work of our collective ministry, I know that I have been transformed, and I pray that you have received such blessings as well. You and God, together, have accomplished much during this interim time. And while there is ever more to be done, I trust that God will continue to guide your paths even as God has guided mine, as we strive in faith in our respective endeavors, and as you embark on this next chapter in your ministry, in the name of Jesus Christ.

As for me, I will be celebrating my final service of worship with you on Sunday, February 19th, and will conclude my ministry with Saugatuck Congregational Church on that day. Shortly thereafter, Betsy and I will be moving to western Michigan and to new ministerial opportunities.

In closing, I pray that you may continue to abide the coming days and weeks in all faith, hope and love, with courage, spirit and prayer, seeking ever and anew the ways in which to witness to the promise of God's mercy among you, keeping the cross ever before you, that your every endeavor on behalf of God's people may fill your days with joy and your nights with peace. And as the days proceed into years, may God bless you and keep you; may the Word of God console you, and may God's Spirit remain ever a source of joy in your midst.

With fondness and affection,

Howie Tobak

February 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Worship 10am at Temple Israel, Child Care, Church School & Fellowship Hour			1 9:30-11am Bible Study at Carolyn Meyer's home 3 St. George Place	2 8:30 Men's Group at Elwood Betts 7:30-9pm Chancel Choir Unitarian Meetinghouse 7:30pm Membership	3	4
5 10am Worship Service Temple Israel. Child Care, Church School & Fellowship Hour Souper Sunday Youth Mission Alleluia Choir after Church School	6 7:30pm Boy Scouts	7 7pm Personnel at CLASP Homes 246 Post Rd. East 7:30 Missions	8 9:30-11am Bible Study at Jim Goodenough's home	9 8:30 Men's Group at Elwood Betts 7:30-9pm Chancel Choir Unitarian Meetinghouse	10	11
12 10am Worship Service Temple Israel. Child Care, Church School & Fellowship Hour Valentine Party Alleluia Choir after Church School 6pm Confirmation at Mathias home	13 7:30pm Boy Scouts	14 3:30-5pm Valentine's Day Tea at Christ & Holy Trinity Church 7:30 Deacons	15 9:30-11am Bible Study at Carolyn Meyer's home 3 St. George Place	16 8:30 Men's Group at Elwood Betts 7:30-9pm Chancel Choir Unitarian Meetinghouse 7:30 Trustees 7:30 C. E. Board	17	18
19 10am Worship Service Temple Israel. Child Care, Church School & Fellowship Hour Heifer Deadline Howie's Last Sunday	20 7:30pm Boy Scouts	21	22 9:30-11am Bible Study at Carolyn Meyer's home 3 St. George Place	23 8:30 Men's Group at Elwood Betts 7:30-9pm Chancel Choir Unitarian Meetinghouse	24	25
26 10am Worship Service Temple Israel. Child Care, Church School & Fellowship Hour Alleluia Choir after Church School	27 7:30pm Boy Scouts	28 6:30 Nominating 7:30 Church Council	29 9:30-11am Bible Study at Carolyn Meyer's home 3 St. George Place	Annual Congregational Meeting on March 18th. Reports from Boards & Committees are due asap.		

From The Moderator



One Foot In Front Of The Other

I'm writing this on Sunday night, after our very successful Candidating Weekend, Worship Service and Congregational Meeting, at which we called Alison Buttrick Patton as our new Pastor. Everyone I spoke with among the very large crowd at the Fellowship Hour after our Meeting was happy and, I think, excited about our choice and about the Church, perhaps more excited than we have been in a while.

I believe that from here we can see the progress we have made and steps ahead, by which we will have pulled ourselves back together as a vibrant Church community.

- Last summer we hired our new Music Director, Heather Hamilton and then our new Director of Christian Education and Youth Ministries, Bruce III.
- This fall we revised our By-laws and governance structure, effective with our Annual Meeting, to fit our current needs.
- Today we learned that our Stewardship Drive will come in ahead of last year in dollars and perhaps even in pledging units.
- Also today we called a new pastor.
- In March we will have our Annual Meeting.

And in May Pastor Alison will join us.

Of course I have omitted one major recent event, one which by comparison to all this progress seems like just the opposite – the fire at our Church, which could be seen as the most daunting, disruptive, destructive event in our entire history. However, I choose not to see it that way. Over the last several weeks I have felt and heard and seen what I think is a true rebirth of the spirit of Saugatuck. I see and feel an optimism, a can do attitude. It is as if that spirit has actually come from the fire itself.

I admit that I have had several moments of discouragement during this past year. But I have always felt that this was what we had to do: to put one foot in front of the other, to maintain our "forward progress" (can you tell I'm watching the Giants-49ers game?).

In thinking about this article I looked at Michael Hendricks's article from last January. In it he described a story Ted Hoskins had told about a moment when he expressed to his father his doubts about becoming a pastor, saying that he told his father, "I don't know if I can become a preacher. I don't believe this and I don't believe that." His father's response: "You've told me what you don't believe, Ted. Tell me what you do believe."

What I've seen in the past month is that we are not focusing on what we don't believe, we are focusing on what we do believe and we believe in Saugatuck Congregational Church. Now all we have to do is put one foot in front of the other.

Jeff Boak, Moderator

From the Deacons

Sing unto the Lord a new song!

Psalm 96.1

In the survey of the congregation at the beginning of the settled pastor search process we were asked to identify what for us were the three most important faith experiences or events in the history of the church. We think that if we were to answer that question today many of us would include the events of January 21 and 22 at Temple Israel (of all surprising places!) as one of them.

We have been thinking a lot about “candidate weekend”. There was a feeling in the room that Sunday afternoon that we haven’t felt in a long time. It wasn’t just that the long search for a settled pastor was over or that so many of us believe that Alison Patton brings exactly the qualities that are needed right now. Explaining the excitement so mundanely doesn’t begin to capture the many aspects of what was going on among us and within so many of us as the community unanimously called Reverend Patton as the first sole female settled pastor in the history of Saugatuck Congregational Church UCC,

The topic of her sermon on that important day was “Uncharted Territory”, which obviously brings to mind that neither she nor her family know with absolute certainty what is going to happen next. Her sermon reminded us that Sarah and Abraham didn’t either; nor did Simon and Andrew and James and John and all the other first followers. Nor do any of us. Alison’s profound view of this uncertainty is suggested by two of the hymns she selected for her “candidate” worship service: “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah” and “Be Thou My Vision.”

Into this “uncharted” future we are always moving, leaving behind what has been and moving into what is yet to be, accompanied by the Holy Spirit and by one another, praise be to God, and now in spirit and soon in person by Alison’s fresh light. As she has been called as our pastor and teacher, so the whole congregation and each one of us is being emphatically called anew to participate in a shared and as yet “uncharted” ministry responding to God’s vision for Saugatuck’s future.

You sometimes sense more vividly than at other times the active presence of the Holy Spirit. That is what made the Sunday afternoon when we “called” Alison so special and memorable. We all were aware of that. The members of the search committee told us that they felt their process was truly guided by the Spirit and elsewhere in this Herald she writes that it feels like God has been introducing us to one another. That’s the way we feel as well. Amen.

On a much less joyful note we shall shortly be saying goodbye to Howie and Betsy, with great gratitude for their ministry and warmly wishing them all good things as we send them on their way. Thank you and blessings!

Russ Brenneman

There will be a period of time between Howie's leave-taking and May 1, Alison's first day, during which preaching and other pastoral needs will be supplied by a "bridge" pastor arranged by the Board of Deacons. Readers are reminded that our guest preacher March 11 will be Rev. Da Vita D. McCallister, Associate Conference Minister for Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

Music at Saugatuck



Chancel Choir Rehearsal Schedule- Thurs. 7:30-9 at the Unitarian Meetinghouse- Feb. 2, 9, 16

Alleluia Choir Rehearsal- Youth Room at the Temple- Following Church School- Sunday's- Feb. 5, 12, 26

Join the CHANCEL CHOIR for Lent and Holy Week

Rehearsals begin on Thursday, March 1 and will run through Easter. All voice parts are needed. High schoolers welcome too. Email Heather if you are interested in joining.

ALLELUIA CHOIR- is for the youth of our congregation

Currently it is comprised of middle schoolers, but if you can read, come on and give it a try! We are singing music by Michael W. Smith and other contemporary Christian singers. New members welcome!

UPDATE from the DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

The past couple of months have been full of adjustments in the music department. By now you know that we have lost the organ, pianos, robes, music and more. There are other things that were lost in the fire, but one that it could not take away was our voices! We are full of energy and have lots of support from other church communities. Because we are using different music resources, the time to try out the choir is now! Anthems are being selected based on who is coming to sing, the lectionary, and instrumentation (among other things I won't bore you with!). If you have ever wanted to join the Chancel Choir and have not done it, for whatever reason, now is the time. We need you to help us keep our voices strong as we rebuild Saugatuck. Talk to choir members at Fellowship Hour, call/email me, just show up! The choir is a group of caring, loving, talented people who have way too much fun at rehearsals! Hope to see you at rehearsals on Thursday nights, 7:30-9:00 PM at the Unitarian Meetinghouse (we call it the Chalet!) God Bless us all as we work together to rebuild Saugatuck!

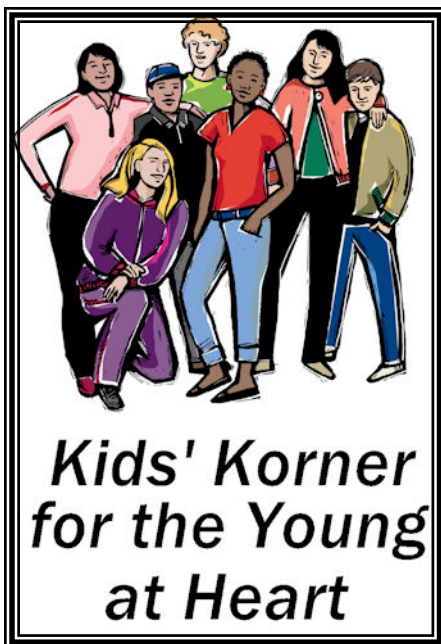
Heather Hamilton

To the wonderful giving members of Saugatuck Congregational Church we proudly delivered all the diapers and other baby gifts to the Norwalk Domestic Violence Center. These gifts were given at the Christmas Eve pageant held at the Synagogue where Saugatuck Church has been holding church services since the fire. Due to your generosity we were able to continue a wonderfully long tradition of giving where giving is needed.

The counselor at the Domestic Violence Center who gratefully received the car load of gifts wants everyone to know how important your generosity is to their program.

Patty Doolittle





As I write this morning from my home office, I am at peace. We all too often become occupied with planning events, encouraging participation, and confirming details, and don't slow down and connect with each other about our journey together. One of my continuing hopes in scheduling youth fellowship dates has been that our youth would want to join me with questions. Why should I choose to do these things with this community? Why Heifer? Why Pennsylvania? What will I gain by walking the Crop Walk? By exploring questions like these, we journey, learn, and experience what faith is together. I pray for **this** journey to be our focus.

February 5, Souper Bowl Sunday

On February 5, Souper Bowl Sunday, I am asking the kids to lead a special collection. We will collect 'dollar' donations which go to purchase needed food and household products at the Gillespie Center. Food donations are so appreciated at the center, but certain necessary things that help complete their needs must be purchased by the staff that knows these ongoing needs intimately. That is what I believe this collection does. I especially encourage HS youth to contact me with regard to helping with this collection.

February 12, Valentine's Party

At our recent Christian Education meeting, the committee decided to request a switch of our obligation to host coffee fellowship on February 12 so we could host a Valentine's Day theme party. This is an event you will not want to miss with lots of fun, food, music, and genuine sharing of love. I will encourage the kids, as well as adults, to make special valentine cards on February 5 that can be exchanged at the party on the 12th. Don't miss this opportunity to tell someone else how much you care about, appreciate, and love them!

February 19, Heifer deadline

At our most recent youth fellowship held to promote the annual visit to Heifer's Overlook Farm, we had only three enthusiastic attendees. So I ask everyone, "Why should we be interested in Heifer?" This organization supports the biblically-centered notion of teaching people how to farm for themselves rather than providing them food. Heifer facilitates the process of placing donated animals with communities, and trains them how to utilize fully the animal's work, byproducts, and whole life. The CE committee decided at our January meeting that we should ask parents and kids to honestly decide well in advance, by February 19, whether they are interested in attending the Heifer weekend on June 8-10 to learn and experience more. If there are less than 10 people the cost of visiting Heifer may substantially prohibit some from participating. Contact Bruce by Email, Bruce@saugatuckchurch.org or phone (860)874-8538 to confirm interest. If it is decided not to attend the weekend event, I could plan a day trip to Heifer for interested kids.

April 29 Crop Walk in Westport

We are partnering with Christ & Holy Trinity once again to make an impact in the Westport community with the Annual Crop Walk on April 29. I really enjoyed showing the K-6 kids whom I taught January 22 just what Crop Walk is, and invited them to participate in this outreach for all ages. Like Heifer but involving the necessity of water for agriculture and so much more in developing communities, this organization engages in helping people overcome obstacles to self-reliance. Moving toward the target date of April 29, the kids will be asking you to make pledges to support their walking the three mile loop which begins at CHT and ends on the front lawn of Saugatuck. This walk becomes an excellent way for us all to walk together in support of a worthy mission.

June 23-30 Mission to Pennsylvania

Finally, there is substantial interest in the mission trip to Pennsylvania on the last week of June. Provided there is no school make-up time required of students, we will leave Saturday June 23 for a minimum of 5 days in the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania. The trip will be a rounded experience with regular physical tasks in which we help local organizations with work projects, enjoy diverse opportunities for recreation, and reflect on specific topics at the end of each day. Whether you are excited to clear a nature trail for the nearby Three Springs Christian Camp, want to ride bikes, canoe, go tubing, or climb the many trails nearby, or look forward to roasting marshmallows in conversation around the campfire, COME! I am planning a discussion about fund-raising events that we will prepare for on Friday, February 3. Time and place TBD. Though many thanks should be expressed to the Martenson family for opening their family cabin and hosting our group, I wanted to keep the cost of this trip reasonable for all families in this year of our future financial unknowns.

Bruce Ill, Youth Ministries



By Marta Campbell

BOOK TALK

PEACE BE WITH YOU: MONASTIC WISDOM FOR A TERROR-FILLED WORLD by David Carlson

Ten years after 9/11, "... time for Christians to use their power to change the conversation and to ponder Jesus' command to treat strangers as our neighbor and to treat our neighbors not only as ourselves, but as God in our midst."

Seeking a way to do this, Carlson travelled to monasteries and retreat centers around the country and discovered a new- and ancient- basis for peace between Christianity and other religions- especially Islam His deliberate questions and un-

wavering search for meaning (which he posits as the most important search in human life- even more important than security-) led to a call for forgiveness and a blessing for peace.

A LAMP IN THE DARKNESS: ILLUMINATING THE PATH THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES

by Jack Kornfield

A key Buddhist teacher and clinical psychologist, Kornfield offers insights, hope and guided meditations in this book with CD. Comfort for those in the midst of depression, fear or anger is offered and re-assuring quotations are sprinkled through the book. This is Buddhist self-help intended to grow compassion and forgiveness and peace. From the book: "Simplicity, whether chosen or forced upon us, is still a gift."

BETWEEN HEAVEN AND MIRTH: WHY JOY, HUMOR, AND LAUGHTER ARE AT THE HEART OF SPIRITUAL LIFE by James Martin, S.J.

An antidote for those who think religion is so very serious. Father Martin gives many examples of humor and purposeful levity in the stories from the Bible and in the lives of the saints. He reveals comedy in the parables which he says show Jesus to be a man of joy. He suggests ways to use humor to show faith, speak truth, and put things in perspective. He believes that faith leads to joy. And he tells a lot of jokes.

FLUNKING SAINTHOOD: A YEAR OF BREAKING THE SABBATH, FORGETTING TO PRAY, AND STILL LOVING MY NEIGHBOR by Jana Riess

A humorous account of Riess' year-long quest to become more saintly by tackling twelve spiritual practices. She sails into the project, but finds humiliating failure with each practice she tries. Fasting, the Jesus prayer, keeping the Sabbath, giving thanks, Benedictine hospitality, generosity...no success...except the success of realizing that failure itself is acceptable. The tone is breezy, with vivid scenes of trying and trying. The message is more profound than it seems, as Riess explores each spiritual practice and wrestles with her difficulties, and finally regards herself with understanding and compassion.

These books are available at the Westport Library.



**Please Join the
Pastoral Care Ministry of Christ and Holy Trinity Church
For
A Valentine's Day Tea
Feb 14th 3:30-5:00**

Rsvp: Frances Rowland sarowland@aol.com, 203 347-3610

Cc: Joanne Leaman josicarl@optonline.net, 203 226-5725

Dear Saugatuck Friends,

Please mark your calendars in the spirit of ecumenical fellowship and respond to this lovely Valentine's Day invite from Christ and Holy Trinity. We have much to celebrate. Please join the fun!

Joanne Leaman

Board of Deacons

On January 28th a tour of the fire damaged church was held for the church members. The groups were led by John Walsh, Betsy Gillespie and John Loeck. The investigation of the fire has been concluded with no cause found. Apparently when there is a fire of this magnitude the actual cause can not be determined.

Now we can move on. The next step is to remove the remaining roof that was damaged and erect a temporary roof that will permit the church to be protected from the weather. A box will also be built to protect the organ from any further damage.

Members commented afterwards on the enormity of the damage—not only structurally but the many valuable tools used by our church. John Walsh said, “about 41,000 sheets of music were destroyed.”



Photograph by David Matlow, Westport Now

Thank You for

Contributing Money for
Gillespie Center



Thank you to those who contributed money to help with the expense of providing a meal for the Center. It will be a great help to those who have volunteered to do the cooking. This is a mission of Saugatuck, along with other local churches. We are responsible for the 4th and 5th Wednesdays of each month. Call Vonnie at 203 226-5513 if you would like to be involved.

Vonnie Spies



Food Cupboards
are in
Continuous Need

Saugatuck collects and gives food to Bridgeport Rescue Mission, Pivot House, CCA, Gillespie Center and Norwalk Emergency Shelter. Grocery bags can be filled and left in the church office, 319 Post Road East, Westport. This is an ongoing need and our response is critical. *Thanks!*