

WPC - A BRIEF HISTORY

In the early 1960's 11 Presbyterians began as an informal gathering in homes for study, song, prayer and a strong sense of mission to the larger world. This gathering quickly grew beyond a single house into the American Legion Hall, and subsequently into the music room and gym at Cider Mill School before moving to the Parish Hall on the current WEPCO campus. In November, 2004, following a capital campaign which fully-funded its construction, WPC dedicated its sanctuary to the worship of God

From its very inception, there have been two principal passions.

Our first passion is to share with others the blessings God has so generously lavished upon us. The clearest expression of this is WPC's initial—and continuing--commitment to mission. In our 45 years, Wilton Presbyterians have built a church manse in Kenya and initiated the CROP Walk in Wilton. We have visited prisoners at Sing Sing Prison and refurbished the houses for Pivot Ministries' drug rehabilitation program in Norwalk/Bridgeport. We have sponsored volunteers in mission to Maine and South Africa and 8 candidates for ordained Presbyterian ministry. We have sent letters to prisoners through Amnesty International and led a Walk for Peace in Wilton. We have urged open conversations about the role of homosexual persons within the church and lead a bi-annual seminar on human sexuality to our 7th-8th graders. We take some 30 senior high youth on a mission trip each February to help feed the hungry through soup kitchens. And we have been privileged to seed, both with money and time and talent, two Wilton community projects: A Better Chance and Wilton Commons.

Our second passion is to share our Christian faith openly with other people. WPC is a community who welcomes people wherever they are in their religious journeys and who initiates relationship with other religious communities. In 1971 WPC and St. Matthew's Episcopal Church formed our current Joint Venture, sharing a common facility, common church school, common youth ministry, and occasional common worship services. This has been followed since 9/11 by a series of initiatives culminating in common worship with two separate African-American Christian churches in South Norwalk in ecumenical services and with Jewish and Muslim religious communities in inter-faith services.

FOCUS PROJECTS

- Served 500 meals to senior citizens at Ogden House and 1,400 meals to working poor at Manna House;
- Provided 8 of 28 Board members for A Better Chance of Wilton, a resident academic program for male minority scholars (that in the fall of 2008 will expand to include a residence for female minority scholars);
- Provided 3 of 20 Board members of Wilton Commons, an affordable congregational living facility in Wilton with assisted living services available;
- Provided school supplies, Thanksgiving meal baskets, and Christmas gifts for more than 50 foster children through Covenant to Care;

- Helped rehabilitate homes along Mississippi Gulf Coast through 6 Katrina recovery Teams (over 25 volunteers total, 2005-2008) and homes in rural Maine through 26 MATE work camps (about 25 volunteers each year) since 1982;
- Donated more than \$15,000 to more than 30 area relief agencies through its Gift of Christmas, an annual special offering since 1992;
- Donated, through its congregational mission funds, \$20,000 toward support of such local agencies as
 - A Better Chance of Wilton – a residential academic program for minority scholars at Wilton High School
 - Mission at the Eastward – a work camp to rehabilitate homes in south central Maine coordinated by a consortium of 11 Presbyterian churches.
 - Domestic Violence Crisis Center – a program for shelter and counseling for victims of domestic abuse
 - Two docudramas regarding the civil rights era—*My Soul Is A Witness (2006)* and *Jackie, Vi, and Lena(2007)*—for the Wilton/Norwalk Community
 - Operation ELF – a program to provide Christmas gifts for the family of a National Guardsman serving in the Iraq War;
 - Elderhouse – an adult day care and program for seniors in Norwalk
 - Americares – a one-day housing rehabilitation blitz as part of Americares' Homefront
 - Pivot Ministries – a Christ-centered program for drug and alcohol rehabilitation
- Sponsored annual interfaith worship at WPC with Jews from Temple B'nai Chaim (Georgetown) and Muslims from American Institute for Islamic Studies (North Stamford)
- Initiated combined interracial worship with Grace Baptist Church in South Norwalk.