

TOP STORIES

SBCC Welcomes New Pastor, the Rev. Shannon Rye Wall

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By Jean Dunn

Published:
Wednesday, September 8, 2010 6:23 AM EDT

SOUTHBURY — Members of South Britain Congregational Church recently welcomed the Rev. Shannon Rye Wall as their new settled pastor.

Rev. Wall graduated from Yale Divinity School in 2008. As part of her studies at Yale, she served as a ministerial intern at Pound Ridge Community Church in New York.

She also taught scripture reading and sermon delivery at Yale and spent several months as a full-time chaplain intern at Norwalk Hospital.

Ordained in 2008, she was associate pastor at First Congregational Church of Darien for two years, serving a congregation of more than 700 members.

Married and the mother of three, Rev. Wall came to the ministry at mid-life, having experienced two prior careers.

After earning an MFA at New York University, she worked as a professional actress for a number of years, appearing "Off-Off-Off Broadway" and in productions at regional theaters.

When family responsibilities made a life in the theater impractical, she embarked on a business career, becoming a marketing executive and business writer for a management consulting firm. She also co-authored two business books.

Her path to the ministry was precipitated by what she calls "three life-crisis events in a row."

Coming to the realization that "life can be short," she determined to do something meaningful, something important.

"The church had become very important to me during that time of my life," Rev. Wall told Voices.

"It became my hope and my home.

"I thought about the skills and background I had, and thought the ministry might be a natural way to put that experience to use. I wanted to help the church to be a hope and a home for other people."

When embarking on her clergy job search, her very first interview was with members of the Search



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The Rev. Shannon Rye Wall, the new settled pastor at South Britain Congregational Church, is committed to making worship a lively, inspiring experience that involves people of all ages. She also looks forward to becoming involved in hands-on outreach projects and collaborations with other local faith communities. (Dunn photo)

Committee at South Britain.

By all accounts, what followed was a sense that each had found exactly what they were looking for.

"I felt the description of what this church was looking for was in line with my strengths," said Rev. Wall.

"I liked the size of the church, the fact that it was a healthy church with a vibrant community, a place where people feel like family.

"I got a real sense of that from the Search Committee," she said, "and I've found it to be true in the month I've been here."

Rev. Wall began her ministry at SBCC on August 1.

"I've been so impressed by how people here care for one another, how they welcome new people," she said.

"I feel it's a really friendly, healthy church."

In the weeks since her arrival, the new minister has demonstrated an easy rapport with children.

"I'm very committed to having people of all ages involved in worship," she affirmed.

"I want the church be a place that kids want to come to."

Rev. Wall said she was very interested in making worship "a really lively and inspiring Sunday morning experience."

She is also excited about getting involved with hands-on outreach and missions work in Southbury and surrounding communities, and in working on joint projects with other local faith communities.

"I have a background in strategic planning," she added. "That might come in handy at some point down the road."

She has spent these first weeks visiting church members who reside in nursing homes and assisted living communities, and others who find it difficult to get to church.

She has visited Town Hall, meeting with the town's Social Services director to learn how the churches and that agency can work together.

She has ventured out and about, learning about Southbury, figuring out "the wilds of Heritage Village."

"I've found everyone to be very friendly," she said, "from the folks at the Post Office to Tony next door at the South Britain Store.

"I love the physical beauty of the place," she added. "Driving up the road to this church every morning, seeing that perfect New England church across from the little country store, it makes me really happy."

Rev. Wall said she has enjoyed learning about the ongoing traditions of the church, such as the upcoming Apple Festival, set for Saturday, September 18.

"It's really been great seeing how much fun people have getting ready for that," she said, "seeing how much work they put into it, and how much people look forward to it.

"For me, it'll be a nice way of meeting more people in the wider community."

Rev. Wall is looking forward to meeting new people this Sunday, September 12, which is Rally Day at SBCC.

Sunday school registration will be conducted before and after the 10 a.m. worship service. Children will be dismissed at 10:15 a.m. to begin their first day of classes.

Following the service, all are invited to stay for a continental breakfast.

South Britain Congregational Church is located on Route 172 at East Flat Hill Rd. Sunday worship takes place at 10 a.m., year-round. All are welcome.

Those seeking additional information may call the church, 203-264-5890, or visit www.southbritainchurch.org.

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