



## First Congregational Church

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Reported by ZOLTAN TOMAN, for the First Congregational Church Council

Event: Oratorio, When: Sunday, April 13, 2014 at 4:00 P.M.

Dr. Joe Utterback, DMA, professor of Music at Sacred Heart University the last twenty years, composer of modern and traditional jazz music, composer, arranger and adapter of religious and secular music, known in the United States and throughout the world, has thoughtfully composed and arranged a rhythmic and spirit-lifting program for the 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Town of Stratford.

72 years ago Miss Louise Miller, then music director/organist of the First Congregational Church of Stratford, instituted a music tradition which has grown to include choir members from churches all over town, and vocalists from many neighboring towns. This program was held yearly on Palm Sunday, and is known today as the Palm Sunday Concert. The music director at First Congregational has historically always been the arranger of the Oratorio. The present choir director is Dr. Joe Utterback. He has carried on this tradition since 1996, when he began at First Congregational.

The Concert will open with Gabriel Fauré's "Requiem" as the first half of the program. A suite of six pieces will follow in the second half, arranged and composed by "Dr. Joe" : "Prayer," "Way-Faring Stranger," "Deep River," "Epitaph," "Cometh Spring," and "We Are Not Alone." These six pieces reflect the struggles, achievements, and enduring hope of the Town's people throughout the ages. The music gives strength and courage to a people battered by forces over which they have little control. Over-riding these things is a sustaining hope for the future, under the guidance of the Creator.

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Baritone Tom Woodman, and tenor Michael Jovovich, Allison Fay, soprano, and Carol Woodman, alto, will sing the principal parts in the program, and talented Joshua Toman will accompany on the flute.

Galen Tate will accompany the entire choir on the Austin pipe organ, and Dr. Joe will play the Yamaha grand piano, while conducting certain pieces in the program. All are welcome. For more information, call Dr. Joe at 203-386-9992.