



**At the First Congregational Church, UCC of Wallingford, CT,
we have discerned the following vision and mission
for our faith lives together:**

Vision

Our faith – rooted in the compassion and teachings of Jesus Christ – is the foundation of our love for one another and service to the world around us.

We offer a home for those seeking deeper meaning or purpose in their lives through the exploration of Jesus Christ's teachings. The love and compassion found in those teachings commit us to uplift each individual and celebrate our shared humanity.

Mission

We will foster spiritual growth, loving communication, and mutual care, thereby empowering us to confront issues that impact our community and the world, including poverty, isolation, and exclusion.

We commit to developing a nurturing environment where all are loved, valued, and inspired to meaningful participation in the life of the church. Through our Christian faith, compassion, and service, we will dedicate ourselves to making a positive impact on the lives of people in our community and beyond.



The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

23 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT 06492

Church telephone: (203) 265-1691

Church Office Hours: Tues.– Fri. - 9:00am – 2:00pm

Email: officemanager@firstchurchwlfld.org (office)

Website: www.firstchurchwallingford.org



Rev. Meredith Jeffers

Spring has sprung at the First Congregational Church of Wallingford! Outside trees are budding, flowers are blooming, warmth is returning, and fresh fragrant breezes are blowing. Everywhere we look there are signs of new life. With spring comes promise. With spring comes hope.

Spring has come to First Church as we celebrate the hope and promise of the resurrection and as we consider together ways that we might re-energize and reimagine what we are called to be about as a ministry to ourselves, our community, and the world.

We imagine great things for our future with programs for our youth, outreach to the community and beyond; meaningful worship; faith formations opportunities for all ages; comfort and care for the ill, dying, and bereaved; fun and playful social programming; administering the sacraments and rights of the church; strengthening our relationship with the Ashlar Village community; sharing our beautiful space with others; and many other opportunities we have to “be the church” and a sign of God’s presence in the Wallingford community.

We do great things! Doing great things sometimes costs money. I’ve been told that people don’t like to talk about money at First Church. It reminds me of the song from the Disney movie *Esperanza*, “We Don’t Talk about Bruno!” (No! No! NO! NO!) At First Church, “We Don’t Talk About Money!” (NO! NO! NO! NO!) But I love to talk to about money and the church! I love to talk about First Fruits Giving, Proportional Giving, Tithing, and Investing in God and bringing the beauty of Heaven to life here on earth!

Very soon you will be asked to make a commitment to contribute to sustaining the ministry of First Church. Very soon you will be asked to consider increasing your giving to help stabilize the unsustainable draw we are taking from our endowment. Very soon you will be asked to give to God first as an act of faithfulness and as a means of creating your own joy in giving.

First Fruits Giving is a Biblical practice that has been around since early Biblical times. It originated in agrarian culture when people would offer the first and the best fruits of their labors as an offering of thanks to God for the bounty they had produced. First fruits giving calls us to give to give to God first, before anything else. Often, we give to God a portion of what we have left after all the bills are paid. What would your giving look like if you prayerfully considered what God is calling you to give to the work of the church first, and to work out the rest of your budget having already set aside the portion that you are giving to God? Have you ever thought that all we have comes from God and we are simply called to manage the resources we have been given? I am asking you to consider (or maybe reconsider) your priorities. I am asking you to consider what you give to the church, not as your dues, but as a high yield investment with dividends beyond measure.

When you receive your stewardship materials in a week or so, don’t just fill out your Intent to Give card, spend some time in prayer asking God what God needs and requires. Spend some time in prayer considering what is the first and best of what you have to offer? We will be celebrating our giving at a Stewardship In-Gathering Luncheon on May 21 following worship. Plan on joining us for the celebration!

Let’s talk about money! Our future depends on it!

Blessings,
Pastor Meredith



A Message from the Moderators

Within the next three weeks, you will be asked to look into your heart and, recalling your own history as a member of this faith community, accept the responsibility to sustain and grow the many missions of this church through a pledge of financial support. We are beginning our annual pledge drive to raise funds to carry out the many and varied activities that define the First Congregational Church of Wallingford.

We often speak of how so many people provide their Time, Talent and Treasure to make this place so special; a place of warmth and welcome, a place of energy and enthusiasm, and a place of sincere love and respect for one another. Now is the time though for us to speak openly, transparently, and bluntly about the Treasure leg of our three-legged stool.

For as long as we have been members, we have noticed how awkward it is to talk about money when it comes to funding our church. We avoid it. We ask in circumspect ways. We come up with all kinds of reasons to speak softly, and, with a voice of compassion, may excuse people when they do not participate, as yes, there are members of our church whose financial circumstances require that they give little or nothing in the way of financial support.

But in 2023, it is time for some straight talk. Our pledge numbers have been dropping for years now. We are not alone and know that it is a universal situation in the Western world. Religious organizations have for millennia been the sacred keepers of Western values, values that are the bedrock of all the world's major religions, values that grew out of those same religious institutions. But our church, like many others, is swept up in the secularization of our society and faces concerning financial decline as people may turn their attention and resources away from religious homes.

But here, now, at First Congregational Church, we need to do better. We need to stop leaving it to everyone else. We need to ask ourselves if we can do more to be part of the financial foundation and future of the church that we love. We need to recognize the energy about vision, ministries, and mission that is pulsating in our church *at this moment* and do what we can to ensure that THIS church, with all its hopes for ministry among our brothers and sisters in Wallingford, remains an influential force in this community in the years to come.

Speaking bluntly, our role in the future of this community is at risk without everyone's reflection on how they financially support our church, our ministries, and our faith family. We ask you prayerfully consider significantly increasing your pledge for the coming year. Yes, it is a big ask for some of you, and we all have many competing interests for the funds we provide, but if you will do so, we will be on our way to changing our future in a very positive way.

Our church finances are in a dangerous downward trajectory, and all of us must do our part to change that. We fervently ask you to prayerfully and dutifully consider how you can be part of that effort.

To that end, we will leave you to mull over a famous quote from American author, historian, and Unitarian minister Edward Everett Hale: *"I cannot do everything, but still I can do something and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do."*

Peace to all,

Steve and Lori



From The Minister of Music

Musically we are on a wind-down with the music groups that have been providing music for worship since September. I commend and thank the members of the Chancel Choir and the Handbell choir who have continued to be involved in our week-to-week rehearsals. Truly, that regularity in rehearsing has been the backbone of our ability to provide music weekly in the worship services. The Chancel Choir will continue until the annual meeting June 11 while the Handbell group has formerly ended but will continue to rehearse in smaller groups.

Sunday, May 28, 2023 which is Pentecost as well as confirmation Sunday is a targeted date for an anthem involving children, youth and adults as well as drummers. Rehearsals will be right after church (11:00-11:30 a.m.) before the after-church events begin.

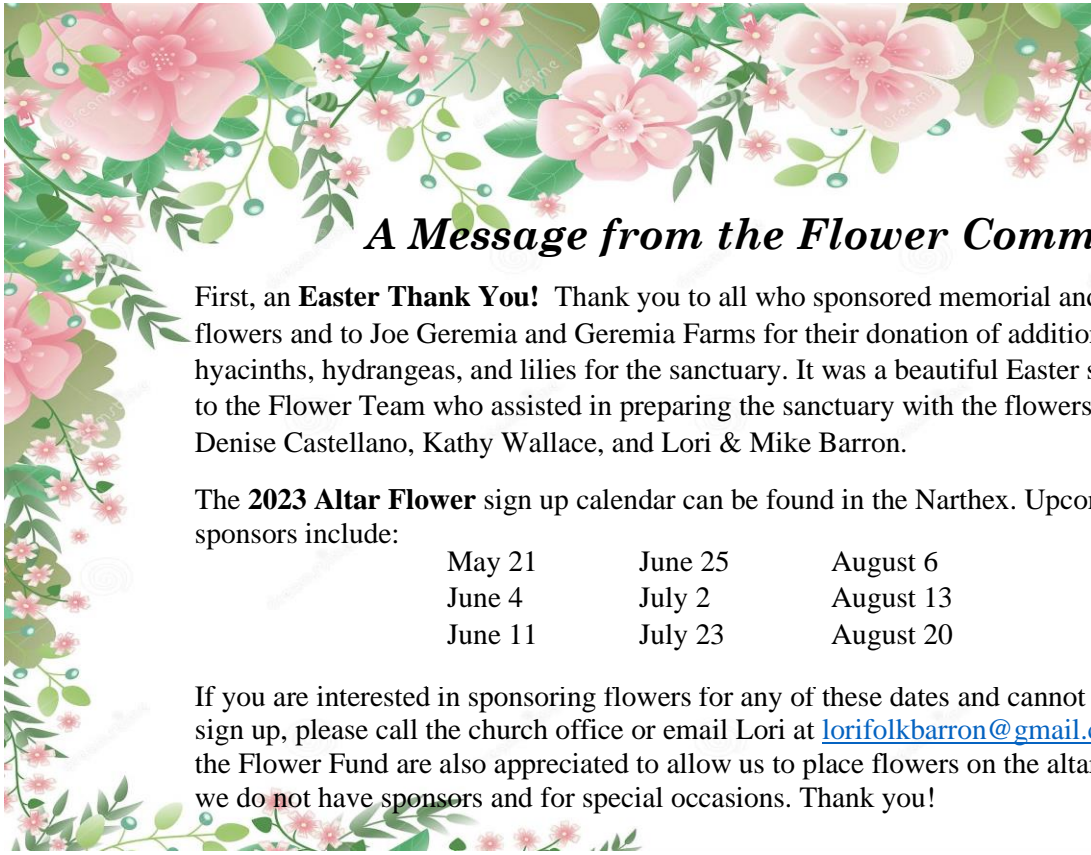
SINGING/DRUMMING for a SPECIAL SERVICE

- Rehearsal Dates: April 30. May 7, May 14, May 21.
- Come to the Music Room immediately following worship.
- I guarantee you this will be a fun piece to learn and sing or drum.

MUSICIANS NEEDED for SUMMER WORSHIP

I will be searching for musicians to help out with music during the summer months. For young people learning an instrument, this is a great opportunity to play something. Let me know or I'll come find you.





A Message from the Flower Committee

First, an **Easter Thank You!** Thank you to all who sponsored memorial and honorary Easter flowers and to Joe Geremia and Geremia Farms for their donation of additional tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, hydrangeas, and lilies for the sanctuary. It was a beautiful Easter service! Thank you also to the Flower Team who assisted in preparing the sanctuary with the flowers including Jodi Bouza, Denise Castellano, Kathy Wallace, and Lori & Mike Barron.

The **2023 Altar Flower** sign up calendar can be found in the Narthex. Upcoming dates that need sponsors include:

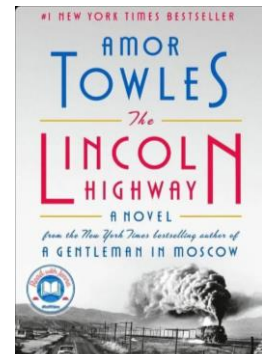
May 21	June 25	August 6
June 4	July 2	August 13
June 11	July 23	August 20

If you are interested in sponsoring flowers for any of these dates and cannot make it into church to sign up, please call the church office or email Lori at lorifolkbarron@gmail.com. Direct donations to the Flower Fund are also appreciated to allow us to place flowers on the altar on those weeks when we do not have sponsors and for special occasions. Thank you!



Book Club News

Our May book is “The Lincoln Highway” by Amor Towles. The meeting is Tuesday May 23rd at 6:30 PM in the Guild Room. Please join us as we discuss this fascinating book. And remember to start thinking about your book recommendations for next year!





The Prayer Shawl ministry creates beautiful comforting shawls, lap robes, and blankets for you to give to your loved ones in need. We also create the Baptismal blankets that are given to each child baptized in our church.

Each shawl and blanket are blessed in our prayer circle. We are blessed with the opportunity to share our love and concern for others through something tangible.

We meet the third Monday of most months. If you would like to join us, please let us know. If you would like to make shawls or baptismal blankets but cannot come to meetings, let us know that as well and we will provide patterns and support.

Please ask one of the deacons or Kathy Janis for a shawl. You may call or text Kathy Janis at 203-376-1173 or kathrynmjanis@gmail.com with any questions or requests.



Are you willing to serve?

Sign Up Today!



The ministry of ushering is a crucial part of worship because it is one of the most visible ministries in the church, nevertheless the usher performs a major role in ensuring that people see and experience that.

People feel invited to serve the church through a welcoming ministry. The church usher duties can be summed up in a few words – making people feel welcome at church, assisting the Pastor with people management, assisting with seating, collecting offering, and maintaining a safe environment. Currently, we have five rotating teams. Usher teams are only needed no more than once a month.

If you are interested in joining the ushering ministry, please contact Tony Annunziata at (203) 500-9542



The First Congregational Church

23 S. Main St-Wallingford

Community and World Services will be sponsoring a

Cereal Drive

on

Saturday, May 20, 2023

9am-11am

We are looking for donations to help fill the shelves at Master Manna in Wallingford with boxes of cereal for families in need.

If you have any questions or are interested in volunteering, please contact Karen Janus at 203-265-5882 or kjanus01@snet.net



Love is Love

Open and Affirming (ONA), is a designation for United Church of Christ congregations that publicly affirm LGBTQ+ people and welcome them into their ministry.

In the process of developing our church's current vision and mission statement, it became clear we deeply value inclusivity and hope to be a place where all feel welcome. This led to the decision to work toward becoming an ONA church, and a committee has been formed to guide us through the process. The committee members are Pam Walker, Sandy McKenna, Cathy Knight, Steve Knight, Erica Haddad, Jeanette Gross, and Kathy Filkins.

The Open and Affirming process will provide opportunities for discussion on how we can help our church be welcoming and inclusive for all. We strongly encourage everyone to participate, and invite open, respectful conversation on the topics being discussed. Please contact a member of the ONA committee if you have questions on the process or what it means to be an ONA church.

You may ask why we need to go through this process when we have always considered ourselves a welcoming congregation.

Many churches denounce LGBTQ+ people, and they can't assume any church will be a safe and welcoming space for them and their families. Publicly stating we are an ONA church will send a clear message that we feel we are all God's children and should be treated with equal respect and dignity.

We invite you all to open your hearts to this process and keep in mind our church's vision statement, which says:

Our faith – rooted in the compassion and teachings of Jesus Christ – is the foundation of our love for one another and service to the world around us.

We offer a home for those seeking deeper meaning or purpose in their lives through the exploration of Jesus Christ's teachings. The love and compassion found in those teachings commit us to uplift each individual and celebrate our shared humanity.



New Members Are Joining!

It is a joy to receive two new members into the First Church of Wallingford Community! Tina Caldwell and Jolene Pope were received into the membership of the church on April 23, 2023.

Welcome and Godspeed!



Tina Caldwell



Jolene Pope

Tina Caldwell has been coming to this church for just over a year. She is thankful to have finally become an official member after having been baptized here in January and quickly getting involved in many aspects of the life of the church. Tina grew up in Georgia and moved here several years ago after meeting and marrying her husband, Jay. She is a part of the extended Pope family who are members of this church. Tina has helped at many events such as the Monday Morning Group, Holiday Meals, and recently joined the Chancel Choir. Tina served our country as a Marine for 14 years. Another fun fact is that she is retired from the rodeo circuit. Tina is studying to be a Pastoral Counselor at Messiah University. She is the mother of three children and the grandmother of seven. She is thankful and proud to be a part of the First Church family.

Jolene Pope has spent most of her life living in the greater New Haven area. She grew up in Fairhaven come where she attended a United Methodist Church at the end child. When the family moved, she attended an Episcopal Church where she spent much of her adolescence. As an adult, she began attending born again churches in the West Haven area. She turned herself particularly attracted to the music that she heard there. She found that to be a good place to raise her son, Stephen. The family moved from West Haven to East Haven 401. Professionally, she studied Environmental Science and Claims Adjusting, and worked as a manager at McDonald's, and in Health Claims Processing and Medical Adjustment. Jolene came to First Church long before she started attending here. She would come to watch her nieces and nephews perform indifferent events at the church. During COVID, she started watching the services online. Once Covid lifted, she started attending church with her family members and found First Church to be a place of comfort. She very much appreciated that First Church helped so many people and she wanted to be a part of that kind of church. Jolene attends many events and has helped at the Easter Dinner. She wants to be a part of the Helping Ministries of the Church. She hopes that maybe someday the Church will take a plot and grow a Community Garden to help feed the hungry.



Christian Renewal Weekend

May 19-21 for Men

June 2-4 for Women

Could you use a spiritual boost? A Christian Renewal Weekend has been created to do just that. These Weekends have been crafted to help you draw closer to Jesus and feel inspired and empowered to come back to this church with renewed energy and enthusiasm to serve our Lord.

We are Footsteps in the Sand, a community of Christians from a number of churches in this area that seeks to bring people closer to Christ. Our mission is to develop people for the local church and encourage Christian action. This has been made all the more urgent as churches try to recover from three years of the pandemic.

Our non-denominational community has been holding retreats for over 40 years and more than 4,000 people in this area have attended, including people from First Congregational Church of Wallingford.

Footsteps Weekends are conducted by a team of 21 volunteers including two clergy. After attending a Weekend, people come back feeling renewed and energized to work with their pastor in serving their church.

If you would like to know more contact Bob or Lorraine Westervelt or go to our website Footsteps-Sand.org.





Mother's Day

Plant Sale

to benefit the
FCC Scholarship Fund

Show this flyer (paper or on mobile device)
and a portion of your sales total will be
donated to the Scholarship Fund at the
First Congregational Church of Wallingford

Where: Beaumont Farms
945 E. Center St
Wallingford

When: ENTIRE Month of MAY

Time: Mon-Sat 9am to 6pm
Sunday 9am to 5pm



First Congregational Church of
Wallingford

23 South Main St
Wallingford, CT 06492

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