



The Spire

**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@fir¹stchurchwlfld.org (office)

Website: www.firstchurchwallingford.org



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A Message From the Interim Minister

Message from the Interim Minister

This past Sunday we celebrated Earth Day, a day to celebrate God's creation and to reconsider how we might play a part in supporting creation for generations to come. This past Sunday we also held the last 8:00 am service, (at least for now) after many many years of the smaller more intimate Communion service, loved by many, but in recent years attended by only a small core of the faithful. The Worship Ministry and the Vision Board voted to suspend the early service for now. It seems fitting that we suspend that service in the springtime because springtime is a time of new life and renewal. It is a time of hope and promise. It is a time for us to believe that new life may spring from old. Preparing to lead the final 8:00 service, I found myself singing the lovely hymn, "In the Bulb There Is a Flower" by Natalie Sleeth. The last verse seemed to ring particularly true.

In our end is our beginning; in our time infinity;
In our doubt there is believing; in our life eternity.
In our death our resurrection; at last a victory,
Unrevealed until it's season, only God alone can see.

As I grieve the ending in one chapter of the church's life, I believe the ending of one thing opens the possibility for something new to spring forth. What, I do not know. But I trust God will reveal that something new in God's time.

I am very conscious that we are entering a new stage in my interim work with you. Together we will be looking at what has been, what is, and what needs to be to prepare fertile soil for your next settled pastor. We are in a tilling the soil stage and while tilling the soil is necessary, it can also feel disruptive or unsettling. During the tilling process, it is important we communicate with one another. You will be asked many questions. You may be asked to try new things. You may need to consider other points of view. Please know that your opinions matter. Please know that You matter. I am open to conversations about anything. Let's talk! Let's listen! And let's use this time of tilling as an opportunity to nurture the amazing garden known as the First Congregational Church of Wallingford!

Blessings,
Pastor Meredith
914 255-1690



A Message from the Moderators

Dear Members and Friends,

As we reflect on the recent Easter holiday and look forward to the upcoming months, there is so much going on in the life of the church that requires love, effort, commitment, time, discernment, decision-making, openness to change, patience with differences of opinion, and tolerance for uncertainty. To one degree or another, each of us is personally invested in the past, present, and future of this congregation by virtue of having offered or intending to offer our time, talent and treasure to the work of God in this place. There are so many issues, events, and tasks that are near and dear to the hearts of this congregation and that require input and prayerful reflection from all members and friends of this church family. For example, and it is by no means an exhaustive list, we approach our annual meeting on June 9, 2024, considering weighty matters related to budget, generosity, stewardship, our financial future, the ongoing work of our interim minister, the trial period of our Ministry Team model, the Open and Affirming initiative, and the efforts of the Settled Senior Minister Search and Call Team.

While there is hope, joy, and opportunity related to all of these “weighty matters,” there can also be anxiety, differences of opinion, and fears of the unknown as we try to determine what is best for our church as a whole. There are times when disagreements or conflicts, which are normal, can appear to be insurmountable obstacles. However, with Christ as our guide, we can change this perception! In our message this month, we believe it important to offer a reminder that Jesus Christ and his teachings are our guide and road map for how we can and should work together to move our church forward into the future for God’s glory and to have a positive impact on the world around us.

As we work together with one another to live into our Vision and Mission with love and to the glory of God, we need to keep Christ’s teachings at the center of our thoughts and interactions. We are all familiar with Jesus’s greatest commandments from Matthew 22: 37-39: “He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Beyond these greatest commandments, we invite you to reflect on these scriptures as we work together for the future of our church.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:15-18: “See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
- Ephesians 4:15-16: “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him, the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”
- Proverbs 4:7: “The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.”
- Luke 11:4: “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.”

In the many matters of importance facing us in the life of our church, we all seek answers, plans, progress, and growth because we love God and we love this church. Indeed, there is so much that is possible when our gifts of generosity, love, and service to Christ are shared and celebrated by all. In all of our interactions with each other as we face our future, let us remember Christ’s teachings: that all things are possible with prayer, with love, with grace, with listening and seeking understanding, and with forgiveness.

With peace in Christ,
Lori Folk-Barron & Greg Whitehouse



Message from the Minister of Music

THANK YOU to all the singers and instrumentalists who gave of their time and talents for all of Lent and for an incredible Holy Week. The children were phenomenal in putting the Good Friday service together quickly and dealing with the malfunction of the audio system.

CHILDRENS CHOIR:

The Children's Choir will be singing on Mother's Day, May 12, 2024.

Rehearsals will be Sundays April 21, 28 and May 5 from 11:15-12:15. Meet in the Music Room.

MUSICATION SCHOOL : LEARN ABOUT OUR PIPE ORGAN!

When: August 19-22 (Monday -Thursday) 10-12 noon

What is it? Learning about our pipe organ, how it works, how the pipes sound.

We will be exploring the physics involved in the production of the different sounds that the organ can produce.

Who may attend? Anyone entering grades 3-8 in the fall of 2024. Let Jeanette know if you're interested.

Attendees may try playing the organ. Students who study the piano may bring pieces they know and see how they sound on the organ.

We will be working on an organ demonstration piece which we will present to the congregation possibly in the fall.

FUTURE PLANS:

The Chancel Choir will sing on Sunday, June 16, 2024 (Father's Day) and will take a summer hiatus until Wednesday, Sept. 18, 2024 when regular rehearsals will begin again.

There will be a choral sermon: *Our Father: A Journey through the Lord's Prayer* by Pepper Choplin on Sunday, Nov, 17, 2024. The choir will rehearse on Wednesdays, June 26, July 31, August 21 from 7-8:30 p.m. to begin learning this piece. Everyone is welcome, teenagers on up.

SINGERS AND INSTRUMENTALISTS

The summer is a perfect time to try out singing or playing a solo in church. Contact Jeanette (860-803-8745) if you are interested. I will be glad to work with you.



May Worship

May 5 **Communion**

May 12 Rev. Margret Hofmeister, Preaching
Blanket Sunday Offering

May 19 Generosity Sunday/Luncheon After Church
Discussion of ONA Statement

May 26 Peace on Earth Sunday

Welcome Our Area Conference Minister

The Rev. Margret Hofmeister, May 12, 2024 10 AM



Rev. Margret Hofmeister supports and resources clergy, congregations, and associations of the Southwest region in their efforts to live the love and justice of Jesus in their locale. Part of Rev. Hofmeister's work is to provide resources and guidance to churches in the Search and Call process. She has been working with the Search and Call Team of First Congregational Church to support them in their search for our next settled pastor.

Stay for Coffee Hour following the service to offer Rev. Hofmeister a personal welcome.

Church Directory News

One of the many tasks we are undertaking in preparation to welcome a new Settled Senior Pastor is to *update our Church Records and Directory*. If you have not yet completed your profile, complete this form using the QR Code below or stop by the church office Tuesday – Friday 9-2 to fill it out.



Directory Photos

We are onto Phase 2 and are attaching pictures to Profiles. A picture is worth a thousand words and will help us to get to know one another better. Please have your picture taken at church, by a friend, or a headshot selfie to be included in the directory.

Please email your photo to FCCWDIRECTORY@gmail.com by May 15!



Blanket Sunday

On May 12, we will continue to the tradition of collecting funds to purchase blankets through Church World Service. In 2023, 32,785 blankets were shipped to provide comfort and warmth to refugees, the homeless, and survivors of natural disasters in the United States and around the world. \$10 buys a blanket that can save a life! \$60 buys a Blanket Bundle. \$300 buys a case of 30. Be a part of the movement to Blanket the World With Love!



Proposed Open and Affirming Covenant

The Open and Affirming (ONA) Team is excited to share the proposed ONA Covenant for our congregation. It has been approved by the Vision Board and is included below for the congregation's review. On **Sunday, May 19th** after the 10:00 service, we will gather in Congregational Hall to give everyone the opportunity to discuss the document and share their comments. A light lunch will be hosted by the Stewardship and ONA Teams. If you are unable to attend, please email your thoughts to us at ona.fccw@gmail.com, or talk with any ONA Team member.

After considering your suggestions, the ONA Team will finalize the covenant and distribute it with other documents for the Annual Meeting, where a vote will take place to determine whether we will adopt the covenant and join the growing number of ONA congregations in the UCC.

Please read the draft carefully, and prayerfully consider its importance to our congregation. An ONA church is committed to not only welcome, but to also affirm the inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in the life of our ministries and in our community.

Open and Affirming Covenant of the First Congregational Church of Wallingford

We, the faith community of the First Congregational Church of Wallingford, United Church of Christ, aspire to live by the wisdom of Christ's teachings. At the heart of our vision and mission is a commitment to inclusivity and acceptance. We welcome everyone regardless of age; race; culture; sexual orientation; gender identity and expression; family configuration; economic circumstance; mental, physical, and emotional ability; and religious tradition.

Jesus Christ, in speaking to his disciples said this: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." (John 13: 34).

As current disciples of Jesus, we commit to maintain a nurturing environment where all are loved, valued, and inspired to meaningful involvement in the life of the church. His teachings of love and compassion call us to uplift each individual and celebrate our shared humanity, both within the sanctuary of this church and throughout the community in which we live and serve.

Diversity in our faith community is a gift from God which we celebrate. Guided by our Lord's wisdom, we offer an authentic and loving welcome to all who seek a relationship with God.

2024-2025 Stewardship

Because of **YOU** our church changes lives.

Our church matters because of **YOU**.

Our resources make ministry happen.

By choosing to give, even a little bit more, we will expand our shared quest to change lives --- even our own.



Please join us to celebrate
Generous Stewardship and Pentecost Sunday at the
10AM service and at a celebratory light luncheon
afterwards in Congregational Hall!

Generosity Sunday - May 19, 2024

We will hand in our commitment cards and continue to pledge our support to issues that impact our community and the world including poverty, isolation, and exclusion.

Mothers' Day 2024 Plant Sale

During the Entire Month of May

Proceeds will offset the balance of the unexpected expense caused by a lightning strike that damaged our electrical, alarms and computer system. \$2,900 has already been donated, thereby \$9,582 remains.

*Show this flyer at
Beaumont Farm
(paper or on your mobile device)
and a portion of your
sales total will be
donated to the First
Congregational Church.*

OPEN

Open daily at 945 E. Center Street, Wallingford

Church Community Garden

WALLINGFORD VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK

1029-1097 E Center St, Wallingford, CT 06492

Dear Our First Congregational Church Members,

Spring is just around the corner, and we're excited to announce a wonderful opportunity for you to get involved and make a positive impact! Our church community garden will be in full bloom, and we're looking for enthusiastic volunteers to join our gardening team.

Why Volunteer?

- **Nourish the Soul:** Gardening is not just about planting seeds; it's about nurturing connections, fostering growth, and creating a beautiful space for everyone to enjoy.

Health Benefits: Spending time outdoors, digging in the soil, and tending to plants can boost your physical and mental well-being.

Community Bonding: Working side by side with fellow church members strengthens our sense of community and shared purpose.

What Will You Do?

- **Planting and Weeding:** Help sow seeds, transplant seedlings, and keep our garden beds free from weeds.
- **Watering and Pruning:** Ensure our plants receive the love and care they need to thrive.
- **Harvesting:** Enjoy the fruits (and vegetables) of your labor by harvesting fresh produce for our community.

How to Get Involved? Simply contact Tina Caldwell at the email below or sign up on the sheet posted in the church narthex. Let us know your availability, and we'll add you to our gardening team.

Bring:

- Gardening gloves
- Sun hat
- Water bottle
- Enthusiasm!

Together, we can cultivate beauty, share abundance, and grow deeper connections within our church family. Let's make our community garden a place of joy, reflection, and growth.

Thank you for being part of this green initiative!
Blessings, Tina Caldwell "Community Garden Team Lead".

For more information please email Tina.Caldwell520@gmail.com





HELP A HERO

TOILETRIES DRIVE

at

First Congregational Church
23 South Main Street, Wallingford

Date: Saturday, May 18, 2024

Time: 9:00 am to 11:00 am

**TO BENEFIT VETERANS AT
VETERANS HOME AND HOSPITAL
ROCKY HILL, CT**

This will be a drive through event at the rear of the church. Enter from Center Street.
Drive sponsored by the Monthly Drives Team of the Mission & Outreach Ministry.

**Items needed for men and women include Bottled Water, K-Cups, Laundry Pods, New
Twin sized bagged bedding sheet sets, Adult Diapers, Antiperspirant/Deodorant, Bar
Soap, Body Wash, Brushes/Combs, Sanitary Napkins, Shampoo/Conditioner, Shaving
Cream, Razors, Tampons, Toothbrushes, and Toothpaste.**

**Monetary Donations or Gift Cards will also be gratefully accepted for the purchase of
these items.**

As always, your donations are greatly appreciated!

Questions? Contact Tina Caldwell at tina.caldwell520@gmail.com or 860-995-5744.





Ladies' Breakfast

Please join us for a

Ladies' Fellowship Breakfast

Saturday, April 27, 2024

9-11 AM

At the home of Denise Castellano

65 Kingsland Avenue, Wallingford

Please bring a dish to share and enjoy a meal, scripture discussion
led by

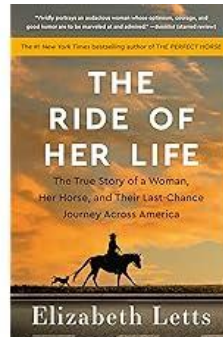
Lorraine Westervelt, and fellowship.

RSVP to Lori Folk-Barron (lorifolkbarron@gmail.com or 203-314-
9885) by Friday, April 26th

and let her know what breakfast item you
plan to bring. Suggestions include juice, muffins, yogurt, fruit,
banana bread, quiche, etc



Book Club News



“The Ride of Her Life” by Elizabeth Letts is our book for May. The true story of a woman, her horse, and their last-chance journey across America.

Please join us on Tuesday May 28 at 6:30 in the Guild Room.



To the members of The First Congregational Church of Wallingford, Connecticut: Notice is hereby given of the 348th Annual Meeting of the Church to be held Sunday, June 9, 2024 at 11:15 a.m. via hybrid meeting, both in person in Congregational Hall and via Zoom. A detailed agenda for the meeting will be provided to the congregation in early May.

*Lori Folk-Barron and Greg Whitehouse
Co-Moderators*



Gathering at First Church of Wallingford

May 18, 2024

Footsteps in the Sand wants to support you on your Christian journey. We do that by holding monthly gatherings where you can recharge your spiritual batteries. For people who want to know more about Footsteps, a gathering is a good way to learn about our community and the weekend retreats we present. There will be music, an inspiring story, followed by discussion, and communion. These monthly events are open to all and are a great way for people to learn about our fellowship.

Join us for potluck at 6 pm and program at 7 pm.

Christian Renewal Weekend

May 30 – June 2 for Women

June 7 - 9 for Men

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.



We Would Like to Be There When You Need Us!

We would like to be there when you need us. Sometimes, things happen in life leading to someone needing special care – the loss of a loved one, a hospitalization, a nursing home stay, a prolonged illness, an unsettling life transition, becoming homebound... If you are in need of care or would like to be added to the Prayer List, please call Pastor Meredith at 914 255-1690 or the church office at 203 265-1691. They will share your request with the Visitation Team Coordinators Charlene Bruce and Cliff Castellano. If you would like to be a visitor and join the Visitation Team, contact Charlene at charlenebruce@sbcglobal.net or Cliff at cliffc45@yahoo.com



Bible Study

Bible Study is one of the many ways we grow in our Faith. At this writing, we have one session left in our spring Bible Study on “Embracing the Uncertain.” Our final session for the Spring, will be held on April 30 at 7 PM in the Guild Room and will focus on Resurrection and New Life. Curious what Bible Study is like? Join us! We will begin a new series in the fall!



As many of you may or may not know, we have been providing meals to some members of our church family, who through various circumstances, are receptive to having a meal delivered to them. If you know of someone in our church, who either on a short or long term basis, could benefit from a delicious dinner, please let us know. Also, if you wish to have your name added to our list of folks who have volunteered to make a meal, please let us know. We'd be happy to have you join us!

Helping Hands is just one of many "behind the scenes" groups within our congregation that provides comfort and support to our fellow brothers and sisters.

If there is a need or if you are willing to cook, please contact either Louise Zemina at 203-988-2517 or Bernie Annunziata at 203-415-9809.



Do you have a loved one, a friend, an acquaintance with health, family, personal issues? The Prayer Shawl ministry creates beautiful comforting shawls, lap robes, and blankets for you to give to your loved ones in need. There is always a selection appropriate for men, women, children, parents, caregivers. We have a variety of colors and sizes for you to give. Please ask one of the Care Team (Charlene Bruce, Cheryl Naski, Cliff Castellano, Joan Bushey and Ann Gygax), Pastor Meredith or Kathy Janis for a shawl. All are created by loving hands, blessed in our group and just waiting to give to someone in need of that loving touch, that reminder that they are cared for and cared about through whatever is going on in their lives.

We also create all the Baptismal blankets that are given to each child baptized in our church. Please consider asking for a special blanket for a child in need. Again, we have many sizes, colors and patterns for any child. Perhaps a parent who needs a Prayer Shawl and a special blanket for their child?

Please call or text Kathy Janis 203-376-1173 or email kathrynmjanis@gmail.com with any questions or requests.



RUMMAGE SALE REMINDERS

DATES: Thursday, Friday, Saturday - MAY 2-4, 2024

TIMES: Thursday: 4:00 – 7:00 pm

Friday: 4:00 – 7:00 pm

Saturday: 9:00 am – noon

HELP WITH THE SALE:

1. **Set up** of tables and bringing rummage into Congregational Hall – **SUNDAY, APRIL 28th at 11:30 am.**
2. **Sorting** of clothes, pocketbooks, linens, shoes, fabric, yarn, etc. from Monday, April 29 to Wednesday, May 1st from 9:00 to noon and 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
3. **Working** the sale floor whenever available the 3 days and hours of the sale.
4. **Breaking down** the sale on **SATURDAY, MAY 4th at noon.**
5. **Drop offs** of rummage including small household items starts Sunday, April 14th. Hours for drop offs during the week are Mondays through Fridays – 9:00 – 3:00.

Many hands make light work! Please join us for fun, fellowship, and helping our neighbors and friends. If you have any questions, please contact Bernie Annunziata at 203-415-9809.



350th Anniversary Celebration Team

At the March 4, 2024 meeting, the Vision Board voted to establish that the 350th anniversary celebration of First Congregational Church of Wallingford will take place in the calendar year of 2025, or from January through December 2025. This was done to allow for additional planning time for our year of celebration!

Time to Celebrate!

Celebrations and activities to honor the 350th will be occurring throughout the year, and we need the assistance of many to celebrate this momentous year. Are you a party planner? Do you enjoy organizing fellowship activities? Do you have connections to other community organizations that might get involved in celebrating this church, OUR church, as an important member of and contributor to the community of Wallingford? We are looking for creative ideas, and we need you!



A Message from the Flower Team

We are in need of altar flower sponsors for these upcoming dates. Please sign up in the Narthex.

June 2 June 9 June 23 June 30

Direct donations to the Flower Fund are always appreciated to allow us to place flowers on the altar on those weeks when we do not have sponsors, to help provide holiday flowers to our homebound members, to provide flowers to our baptismal families, and for special occasions.

Thank you!



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



Baby Corner Wish List

Baby wipes

Lotion

Baby wash

Diaper rash cream

Baby blankets

Grooming kit

Pajamas (sleepers) Gender neutral

Diapers All sizes

Shampoo

Pacifiers

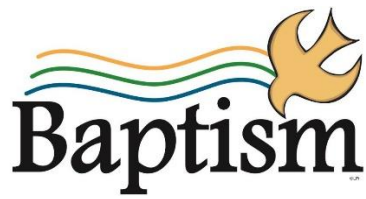
Infant Tylenol

Boogie suckers

Baby washcloths

Blankets

Items will be collected and delivered to
DCF Meriden/Wallingford



It is with joy that we celebrated the **Baptism of Mary-Elizabeth Gayle Hogan**, daughter of Katie and Tim Hogan, born on February 27, 2023, baptized on April 14, 2024. Welcome to God's family, Mary -Elizabeth!

WITH DEEPEST
Sympathy



John Lunny, Jr. passed away March 19, 2024. A service celebrating his life was held March 27 at the Bailey Funeral Home. Our condolences to his family and many friends.

The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

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

Email: officemanager@firstchurchwlfld.org (office)

pastormeredith@firstchurchwlfld.org (pastor)

gross7jeanette1@gmail.com (Minister of Music)

Website: www.firstchurchwallingford.org

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Wallingford
23 South Main St
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Email the church office at :
officemanager@firstchurchwlfld.org



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