The First Congregational Church of Wallingford



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

<u>Vision</u>

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@firstchurchwlfd.org (office) Website: www.firstchurchwallingford.org

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From the Pastor's Desk



Epiphany is such beautiful and light filled season in the midst of the winter gloom. It is a season of celebrating the magi following the star to find the baby Jesus and offering him their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It is a season of receiving gifts from God, Star Gifts are words that will guide us on our spiritual journey for the coming year. Star Gifts are words of wonder, delight, confusion, challenge, comfort, and guidance. Our stars gifts, when used, shed light onto our spiritual path and offer new discoveries (or epiphanies) into our relationship with God. What is your star gift this year?

My 2023 Star Gift was a real challenge for me. Focus. Anyone who knows me well laughed when they heard that was my word, because my mind and attention are often many places at once. Initially, focus was not a word that I could embrace. I believed that multi-tasking was a way of working and being that would allow me to use my time efficiently and get the most done. But as I learned to embrace the word Focus, I found my experience of ministry was richer, deeper, and hopefully, more effective. I felt a shift from quantity to quality, from production to relationship. Hopefully, I learned enough about focus to carry that gift with me into the future..

For 2024 I picked two Star Gifts, one for the church and one for me. Both seemed like interesting words to discover and explore during this interim time. My personal word is Empower. Empower. Do I need to be empowered by all of you to do my best work? Do I need to focus on learning how to empower all of you to be the best church you can be? Does empowering require control, or relinquishing of some control? Will learning empowerment provide a different balance in relationships? Will empowerment lead to thriving? How can I empower people who may be reluctant to be empowered? How can I empower myself to empower others? What does power have to do with all of this? I invite you to reflect on this word with me and share any insights you may have.

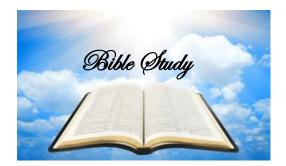
And the church's word is Season. At first I thought it was a boring word. And then I remembered one of the joys I find in New England is cyclically living through the changing of seasons. When people ask "what is your favorite season?", inevitably the answer is whatever season we are in. Each season has its gifts and challenges. Each season is beautiful in its own way. Some are seasons of regeneration and growth, others are seasons of rest and recovery. What season are we in as a church? What are the gifts of this season? What are some of its challenges? Whatever season it is at FCCW, I am grateful to be living into it with all of you!

What is your Star Gift? May you find blessing as you discover its worth!



February 4, 2024 - Communion & Commissioning of the Search Team

- February 11, 2024 Boy Scout Sunday
- February 14, 2024 Love Feast and Ash Wednesday Service 6:20 PM
- February 18, 2024- First Sunday of Lent
- February 25, 2024 "Called" Children's Musical by Mark Burroughs



Bible Study will resume Tuesday, March 5 at 7 pm in the Guild Room. All are welcome! Bible scholars and Bible neophytes all learn together, leading to some lively and insightful discussions. For more information, contact Pastor Meredith at <u>pastormeredith@firstchurchwlfd.org</u> or (914) 255-1690.

A Note from the Moderators

The last two months of 2023 and the first few weeks of 2024 have found us and many of you praying about the pending formation of the Settled Minister Search and Call Team. As you may recall, the Nomination period for the Search and Call Team opened on November 15, 2023 and ended on January 5, 2024. In that time, we know that many of you were considering individuals who might serve the search process, and many were discerning whether they were being called to serve. During the nomination period, we received 15 nominations for the Search and Call Team and 11 of those nominees agreed to be considered on the slate of nominees for Vision Board review and voting.

On Monday, January 22nd, the Vision Board met to review the nominees, and votes were submitted by the two co-moderators, the treasurer, the clerk, and by a representative of each Ministry (Administrative, Congregational Care, Faith Formation, Membership, Mission & Outreach, and Worship). As per the approved guidelines for establishing the Search and Call Team, the Vision Board elected 7 team members and 2 alternates from the list of 11 nominees.

Before announcing the church members who were elected to the Search Team, we want to pause and express our sincere gratitude to all who were involved in this process:

- Thank you to all church members who thoughtfully considered others who might serve our church in this way.
- Thank you to all members who considered this opportunity to be nominated and took the time to discern whether they were a "match" for the expectations and goals of this Team.
- Thank you to all of the nominees who accepted the nomination and were willing to have their names "put in the hat" for consideration. Although not all of the nominees could be elected to serve, we extend our thanks to each person who offered to be part of this process, and we look forward to your continued support of our church family.
- Thank you to all of the Vision Board members and Ministry Coordinators who reviewed the list of nominees and prayerfully considered their votes.
- Thank you to the newly elected Search and Call Team members who have agreed to take on this task of preparing our church profile, searching for the ministerial candidate who God is trying to send us, and, ultimately, for calling our next Settled Minister.

We pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to work among us and lead all members and friends of this congregation to offer their support, prayers, and positivity to this newly formed Search and Call Team as they begin their work.

Additionally, we ask that all members and friends assist the Team by being responsive when they seek congregational feedback about the future directions of the church and by being respectful of the boundaries and confidentiality that the Team must maintain to ensure the integrity of this process.

With that said, the list of the Settled Minister Search and Call Team members follows. Please join us in thanking them for their service and in praying for God to guide their work. The Search and Call Team will be commissioned at the 10 AM worship on February 4, 2024. Please join us! With the peace of Christ,

Lori Folk-Barron & Greg Whitehouse Co-Moderators

Introducing the Settled Minister Search and Call Team



Cliff Castellano



Nancy Tipping



Erica Haddad



Kathy Wallace



Russ Hinckley



Nancy Churma (Alternate)



Mudi Kenney



Cathy Knight (Alternate)



Amanda Nesto

From the Minister of Music

Our Epiphany/Lent Musicals are back!! Historically for the past many years, the music program has done a musical. An anonymous donor gave this program a gift of \$10,000 many years ago with the instructions that the interest accumulated from this gift could be used to finance the Epiphany musical. Because of the COVID break, we have not had a musical during this time period in the last few years. Here we are—BACK. The musical this year is *CALLED* by Mark Burrows. It was written in 2019. Mark himself because of COVID was not able to do it at his church in Fort Worth, Texas until last year.

The story presented in *CALLED* relates that children of whatever age are called and are capable of contributing to doing good in the world. They can raise money. They can do projects. They have many gifts at their young ages which they can use to support and contribute to the solution of community, state, country and world problems.

We have some emerging, gifted young stars with many kinds of talents. Come on Sunday, February 25, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. worship or Ashlar Village 1:30 p.m. (Bridgehouse Auditorium A-B) to see and hear them. Bring pocket change because they will be collecting it to give to a cause they, as a group, have decided could use it.

Rehearsals have begun. Basically we are rehearsing Sundays (11:15am-12:15 pm.)

Notices have been sent out, but if you did not get them and wish to participate contact Jeanette via text or phone at 860-803 8745. The more the merrier, as they say.

Should you not be aware, Easter is very early this year: Sunday, March 31, 2024. So backing up from there.

Ashlar Village Easter Vigil	March 30, 2:00 p.m.
Good Friday	March 29, 12 noon
Maundy Thursday	March 28
Palm Sunday	March 24
Sundays in Lent	March 17, 10, 3, February 25, 18
Ash Wednesday	February 14

Mark these dates in your calendars. Note that the musical *CALLED* is February 25, the second Sunday during Lent. The Handbell Choir and Chancel Choir are already working on music for the services during this time period. As always, you are welcome to join us when you can.

Soli Deo gloria (Glory to God Alone)

Jeanette, Minister of Music

Faith Formation Updates

A lot has been happening with the youth of the church these past months! We want to thank everyone for their donations and help with Youth Group's Thanksgiving Scavenger Hunt and Random Acts of Kindness! Youth Group is looking forward to an exciting 2024!

With Sunday School, the students wrapped up learning all the different parts of the Christmas story and are looking forward to jumping into Lent and learning more about the stories of Jesus. Both the Sunday School and Youth Groups helped make fleece blankets to donate during December. Below are some pictures of Sunday School over the last couple of months.







Youth Group Schedule

Upcoming Dates:

Middle School Youth Group High School Youth Group

Theme: Teamwork

February 4th

5:30 - 7:00

February 4th 4:00 – 5:30 Theme: Teamwork

February 11thFebruary 11thSuperBowl Grinder MakingSuper Bowl Grinder Making7:00 a.m.7:00 a.m.

February 25th 4:00 – 5:30 Board Game Night

March 10th 4:00 – 5:30 March Madness

March 24th 4:00 – 5:30 Theme: Holy Week

> April 7th 4:00 – 5:30

7:00 a.m. February 25th 5:30 – 7:00

5:30 – 7:00 Board Game Night

 $\begin{array}{c} \text{March 10}^{\text{th}} \\ 5:30-7:00 \\ \text{March Madness} \end{array}$

March 24th 5:30 – 7:00 Theme: Holy Week

> April 7th 5:30 – 7:00



A Message from the Flower Team

Thank you to all who sponsored Christmas poinsettia and to Joe Geremia and Geremia Farms for donating so many additional beautiful flowers that enhanced our Christmas worship!

The **2024** Altar Flower sign up calendar is available in the Narthex. Please sign up for the dates that are special to you and your family. We thank our altar flower sponsors for adding to the beauty of our worship each week.

We are in need of sponsors for the following upcoming dates: February 25th, March 10th, March 17th, and March 31st.

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!



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The cost to offset processing fees when paying online by credit card is increasing December 1, 2023 from 2.75% to 3.37%.

If you have any questions, please contact Kathy Wallace at 203-745-9842 or kathywacct@gmail.com.



Please join us for a

Ladies' Fellowship Breakfast

Saturday, February 24, 2024 9-11 AM Location: To be announced.

Please bring a dish to share and enjoy a meal, scripture discussion, and fellowship.

RSVP to Lori Folk-Barron (<u>lorifolkbarron@gmail.com</u> or 203-314-9885) by Thursday, February 22nd, and let her know what breakfast item you plan to bring. Suggestions include juice, muffins, yogurt, fruit, banana bread, quiche, etc.

First Congregational Church 23 S. Main Street, Wallingford



SOUP DRIVE

The Monthly Drives Team of the Mission & Outreach Ministry is collecting soup for Master's Manna.

Prefer to make a monetary donation? Store gift cards and other monetary donations will also be happily accepted the day of the drive or at any point before the drive.

Soup will be collected on: Date: Saturday, February 17, 2024 Time: 9:00 am to 11:00 am

This is a drive up, drop off event at the rear of the church. As always, your donations are greatly appreciated!

If you have questions, please contact Kathy Wallace at <u>kathywacct@gmail.com</u> or 203-745-9842.



Baby Corner Wish List

Baby wipes	Diapers All sizes
Lotion	Shampoo
Baby wash	Pacifiers
Diaper rash cream	Infant Tylenol
Baby blankets	Boogie suckers
Grooming kit	Baby washcloths

Pajamas (sleepers) Gender neutral Blankets

Items will be collected and delivered to DCF Meriden/Wallingford

Helping Hands



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.

BOOK CLUB NEWS



Our February book is "Transcendent Kingdom" by Yaa Gyasi. We will meet in the Guild Room at 6:30 PM on February 27.

"A book of blazing brilliance...of profound scientific and spiritual reflection..." Washington Post





Super Grinders and Salads for

SUPER BOWL SUNDAY!!



INALLIC.

_____ Phone: _____

Place your order for Superbowl Sunday, February 11, 2024

Price is only \$9 for a 12" grinder sandwich or \$9 for a tossed salad

Total items order _____ @ \$9 each = \$_____

Circle whether grinder or salad desired and select type of meat and toppings for each

(Circle one)	Meat: (circle one)	Toppings: (circle all desired)
Grinder or	Turkey Ham Tuna	cheese lettuce tomato onions
Salad	Roast beef None	cucumber green peppers
(Circle one)	Meat: (circle one)	Toppings: (circle all desired)
Grinder or	Turkey Ham Tuna	cheese lettuce tomato onions
Salad	Roast beef None	cucumber green peppers
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Salad	Roast beef None	cucumber green peppers
(Circle one)	Meat: (circle one)	Toppings: (circle all desired)
Grinder or	Turkey Ham Tuna	cheese lettuce tomato onions
Salad	Roast beef None	cucumber green peppers

If more than six grinders or salads desired, please listed additional on the back.

Please place your order no later than Monday, February 5th. You may place your order during coffee hour or by leaving the order form and check in office. Pick up will be on Sunday, February 11th after church until 12:30. All proceeds will benefit the youth mission trip to this summer. **A special thank you to Mark Allard and to Ferraro's Market in North Haven for all of the quality meats, cheeses and produce used to make each grinder and salad.**

SHROVE TUESDAY SUPPER

Join us for a delicious pancake dinner!

Enjoy our scrumptious pancakes and fun relay races!



Shrove Tuesday is just around the corner, and we have prepared a feast for you! Come and join us for a night of food, fun, and festivities.

WHEN? FEBRUARY 13TH TIME? 6:00 P.M. WHERE? CONGREGATIONAL HALL



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.



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



January 2024

Dear Former Deacons and Friends,

We are writing to you as members of the Worship Ministry of First Church. As you probably know, the church is trying a new governance design this year. One of the goals is to involve more people doing jobs that are not as time consuming or demanding. The Worship Ministry is responsible for many of the tasks previously assigned to the Diaconate.

The preparation, serving, and presenting of the sacraments (Communion and Baptism) are special opportunities. As a former deacon you are invited to serve as a Sacramental Minister with these tasks. Sacramental Ministers may volunteer for dates that are convenient for them by selecting them from the schedule.

We hope you will consider this opportunity to serve as you have before. We will provide a training session to bring you up to date. Also, we will have a moment of dedication at a future 10:00 service to reaffirm the importance of this service.

Please prayerfully consider this opportunity to serve and be in fellowship. You may notify the office (203-265-1691) or call any one of us on the Worship Ministry.

Grace and Peace,

Bob Westervelt. (203-218-9537) Dawn Charron. Ken Minkema Marji Martin

P.S. Of course there are additional opportunities that you might enjoy!



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 <u>charlenebruce@sbcglobal.net</u> or Cliff at <u>cliffc45@yahoo.com</u>



ONA – All Things Considered

One of the blessings and challenges of being Congregational in polity (governance) is that the people of the church must discern together what the church stands for and how it is run. One of the questions the church has been asking for over a year is what it might mean to be Open and Affirming, to welcome all of God's children, including those who identify as LGBTQ +. We have had several well attended programs in the last year and have sought to provide programs that address your questions, concerns, and needs. We are hoping to write an ONA Statement and vote on this designation in the late spring. Before we do that, we would like to develop our remaining programs to address any outstanding questions or concerns you may have. Please share your thoughts with the ONA Committee via email <u>ONA.FCCW@gmail.com</u> or check in at the ONA Table during Coffee Hour.



MISSION MONEY AT WORK

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:17-18)

This holiday season your mission distribution team has been hard at work support people in need internationally, nationally, locally and within our church community.

Supporting our world -

Church World Service – Their vision is a world where everyone has food, voice, and a safe place to call home. They work around the work and their programs include disaster relief, food security, water sanitation, hygiene, health, and livelihood programs. This is a faith based organization and we felt the need to provide international humanitarian support aligned with our mission. We contributed \$250.

Supporting our country -

Mike Yerganian Foundation, Inc. – The Foundation was founded by John and Maria Yerganian and Reverend Dean Warburton in memory of John and Maria's son Mike. With a purpose guided by the wisdom and life lesson that is found in the "Parable of the Good Samaritan." The organization makes grants to provide such things as emergency needs, pastoral care, and Random Acts of Kindness.

Supporting our local community -

Food Share – To show our support for those in struggling with food insecurity during Christmas and this winter, we contributed \$500 to the community foodbank.

Operation Fuel – All of us know how difficult New England winters can be. Concerned about those in our community who may need utility and energy assistance, we contributed \$250 to Operation Fuel.

Supporting our church –

Trevor Project – We are proud to announce we provided the full \$500 in matching donations collected **in memory of Emma May**. The congregation collected an additional \$750.



Help Wanted

Directory Team – One of the tasks in preparing for a Settled Minister is to have an up-to-date Church Directory. The Directory will benefit the new pastor by offering a resource to connect names to faces and offer easy and accurate contact information. The Directory Team will be checking the accuracy of our current membership directory, attaching photos to each entry, and securing permission to be included in the directory. We have approximately 700 members and friends in our data-base who need to be contacted. Many hands make light work! Will you help with this important transitional task?

Love Feast Team – We will begin the Season of Lent, Wednesday, February 14, with a Love Feast and an Ash Wednesday Anointing with Oil. Our Love Feast will include Soups, Breads, and other foods traditional to a Love Feast. If you are able to help with set up, cleanup, soup making, or shopping, this a short-term opportunity to share the God's love!

Woodworking Team – Are you a wood worker? Are you interested in a short-term project that will enhance the caring ministries of the church? This fun and easy project may be just what you need to cure the winter doldrums. Consider using your skill to share the love of God and FCCW!

Stewardship Team – It's almost that time again when we will be inviting members of the Congregation to give prayerful consideration to supporting the vision and ministry of the FCCW. Last year we had a robust and relatively successful Stewardship Season of Giving. We need five-six individuals who are committed to the ministry of the church, willing to learn wholistic stewardship practices, and who can enthusiastically articulate what giving to FCCW means in terms of our vision and mission. This team calls for a variety of skills – creative, communicative, graphic, visionary, and analytical. Financial background is a plus, but not necessary. This team is essential to securing the future of the church. Do you possess even one of these skills you would like to offer in God's service? This team is forming now to begin work in late February.

To learn more about or volunteer for any of these opportunities, speak to Pastor Meredith. <u>pastormeredith@firstchurchwlfd.org</u> or (914) 255-1690.



350th Anniversary Celebration Team

Between May 2024 and May 2025, we will be celebrating the 350th anniversary of First Congregational Church of Wallingford!



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!

The Church Chime: Did You Know?

- THE CHIME WAS GIVEN BY CHARLES B. YALE IN 1927 AS A MEMORIAL TO THE YALE FAMILY.
- THERE ARE 14 BELLS IN THE YALE MEMORIAL CHIME WITH LARGEST BELL, AND LOWEST TONE (MIDDLE C), WEIGHING 2500 POUNDS.
- THE CHIME IS A "STAR SPANGLED BANNER CHIME" MEANING THAT THE CHIME COMPRISES THE CORRECT NUMBER OF BELLS, AND TONES, TO CORRECTLY PLAY THE NATIONAL ANTHEM.
- THE BELLS ARE FASTENED TO A WOODEN FRAME TO FIT THE STEEPLE AND ARE PLAYED BY DEPRESSING LEVERS TO CAUSE THE CLAPPER TO STRIKE THE BELL.
- THE LARGEST BELL CAN ALSO BE SWUNG TO RING ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS BY PULLING A ROPE.
- THE BELLS WERE MANUFACTURED BY THE OLD MENEELY BELL FOUNDRY OF WATERVLIET, NY AND ARE MADE OF 78% COPPER AND 22% TIN WITH THIS PROPORTIONATE MIXTURE KNOW AS PUREST BELL METAL BRONZE.
- CHURCH MEMBERS VOLUNTEER TO PLAY BEFORE CHURCH SERVICES AND FOR SPECIAL TOWN EVENTS.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE YALE MEMORIAL CHIME AND TRY YOUR HAND AT PLAYING THE BELLS? PLEASE CONTACT RICK VOELKER AT r_voelker@sbcglobal.net.



First Congregational Church of Wallingford 23 South Main St Wallingford, CT 06492

The next Spire will be published in March 2024. Spire submission deadline is the 15th of every month for the following month's edition.

Email the church office at : officemanager@firstchurchwlfd.org

