

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@firstchurchwlfd.org (office)

Website: www.firstchurchwallingford.org



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, developmental, 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. Jesus' 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 world 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, and we proclaim ourselves an Open and Affirming church.

Adopted June 9, 2024

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A Message From the Interim Minister

Even if you have never seen the musical Rent, you may be familiar with its most popular song, **Seasons of Love**.

Five hundred twenty five thousand six hundred minutes Five hundred twenty five thousand moments so dear Five hundred twenty five thousand six hundred minutes How do you measure Measure a year?

In daylights?
In sunsets?
In midnights?
In cups of coffee?
In inches, in miles, in laughter, in strife?

As I prepare to celebrate my third Holy Week and Easter with all of you, I am deeply aware of the passage of time. When I came on board as your Interim, I expected to be here for 18 months to two years. Already I have been with you for 28 months and by Easter it will be close to 29.

I have been thinking about the days, months, and now years quickly ticking by as you await a new settled pastor. How do we measure a church year? Liturgical seasons? Potlucks? Meetings? Mission Drives? Deaths? New Members? The height of our children? Church Fairs? Rummage Sales? Baptisms? Celebrations? How do we measure a church year?

How about love? How about love? Let's Measure in love

Unconditional love Unexpected love Undeserved love Unbounded love Christ-like love Resurrected love

Seasons of love



Holy Week at First Church!

Palm Crosses, French Toast, and Fellowship An Annual Tradition

April 12 – 9:00am – 11:00am in Congregational Hall

Please join us for our all-church breakfast. There is no charge but free-will donations will be accepted. Learn how to make crosses with strips of palms.

We usually make hundreds in just one hour!

Following the palm cross making, join in the fun of an *Easter Egg Hunt* for grades 2 and younger. *Children grade 3 and up (as well as any adults) are invited to experience The Bell Tower Tour.*

Palm Sunday – April 13 10:00am Worship and Communion

We will journey with Jesus into Jerusalem. The Choir and Congregation will sing *The Palms*.

Maundy Thursday – April 17 – 7:00pm

Join us for this special service of *Tenebrae: A Service of Light and Shadows*.

The Lord's Supper will be shared around tables as we take this time to reflect on the final experiences of Jesus through scripture and song.

Good Friday - April 18 - 12 Noon

This service is the crux of the entire Holy Week. Without this action, Christianity and its sequelae would not exist. The Good Friday Service will focus on the nails of the cross and will feature the UKULELE GROUP playing Were You There, verses of which correspond with the events of that day.

Holy Saturday Worship – April 19 – 2:00pm

And Easter Vigil at Ashlar Village in Auditorium A&B Based on the ancient liturgy: Fire, Word, Water, and The Lord's Supper.

The Joy of Easter Sunday – April 20 – 10:00am Easter Celebration Worship

Join us for this uplifting service of music, prayer, and thanksgiving as we celebrate the resurrection and the presence of the living Christ in our lives.

An array of Easter flowers will brighten our sanctuary!

A Message from the Moderators



Dear Members and Friends of the First Congregational Church,

Spring is finally here; the daylight hours are growing longer and the temperatures are rising with each passing day. The flowers are beginning make their presence known in the garden and the trees are beginning to bud. The season of renewal and growth has begun. At the Church, we are also in the middle of the Lenten season which is an opportune time for each of us to focus on our own spiritual growth, examine our lives and deepen our faith. Lent is a time to nurture our relationships with family, friends, our community and the world around us by fostering empathy and understanding. The scriptures remind us to take some to reflect upon the meaning of Jesus' suffering and death and how his sacrifice offers hope and redemption to us all. Let us use this time of reflection and renewal to deepen our faith, strengthen our relationships, and serve others with compassion, preparing our hearts for the joy of Easter.

Our church family has been active and busy thru the winter supporting each other and our community and bringing our Vision and Mission statements to life. As Moderators, we are grateful for the support and generosity of each person who is part of our church family. Our 350th year celebration is in full swing and we hope you enjoyed the Kick Off Celebration Dinner in January, Boy Scout Sunday in February and the Silver Tea in March. Our special thanks to all who made these events possible. We hope you are able to join us on May 4th for our 350th Celebration Worship Service and Birthday Party. It will be a wonderful time to not only look back on all our church has accomplished but to also look forward to all that is possible thru the power of our faith.

Also, as we enter the stewardship season at the church, we ask each you to thoughtfully consider how you can support the First Congregational Church thru the generosity of your time, your talents and your financial resources. All we do is only possible with your support.

Your is Christ,

Greg Whitehouse and Lori Folk-Barron

Co-Moderators



HOLY WEEK SERVICES

PALM SUNDAY, April 13, 2025

On Palm Sunday, the choirs traditionally sing three compositions.

- "Little Grey Donkey" by Natalie Sleeth
 The children who have been practicing this piece will process down the center aisle with palms.
- 2. "The Palms" by Gabriel Faure with choirs and congregation singing.

The pick- up choir will sit in the balcony on the pulpit side. Please come at 9:30 a.m. to run through it with Kathy Wallace who will be directing it. The children and past youth choir members who wish to sing with them will sit in the balcony on the street side. Copies of "The Palms" will be on the stairs going up to the balconies as well as some by the back door of the sanctuary coming off the connector.

3. The service will conclude with the singing of VIA DOLOROSA by Madison Torre while the cross is carried down the aisle

MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE, April 17, 2025, in congregational hall-7:00 p.m.

This service will include Communion and the Tenebrae ("shadows") service with the addition this year of a hymn written by Mary Louise Bringle specifically for a Tenebrae service. The choir will sing the stanzas which relate to a specific passage of scripture with the congregation singing the refrain. Hymns and anthems will further amplify the scripture readings.

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE, April 18, 2025 at 12 noon in the sanctuary.

The Good Friday Service will focus on the nails of the cross and will feature the ukulele group playing "Were You There ", verses of which correspond with the events of that day. Youth and adults also will read scripture and other readings. This service has been adapted from a service written and copyrighted 2006 by The Rev. Richard Fairchild & Charlene E. Fairchild

EASTER SUNDAY, April 20, 2025 HALLELUJAH!

HALLELUJAH! CHRIST IS RISEN! The service will end with the tradition of singing G.F. Handel's Hallelujah chorus. Kathy Wallace will direct.











Palm Cross Making Breakfast

April 12, 2025 9:00 am

First Congregational Church Bring the whole family!

- Learn how to make a Palm Cross
- Youth second grade and younger will be able to go on an egg hunt
- Third grade and up can go on a bell tower tour!



ONA NEWS

March 31st is Transgender Day of Visibility. This world day of recognition was created to bring awareness about the transgender community to all people. It celebrates the accomplishments and individualism of people who are trans. The ONA team recently met with the head of Meriden Pride, Branddon Arroyo, who reminded us that there is no LGB without the T. LGBTQIA+ people identify as all one family. To honor our transgender friends and relatives, will hang blue, pink and white flags on our posts at church. The ONA team is holding a clothing drive on Saturday March 29 from 9:00 to 11:00 for people transitioning who are in need of clothing. Items requested include new boxer shorts/boxer briefs or bras of any size. Thank you for supporting this collection.

As we enter the month of April, besides Easter, people are celebrating Passover and Ramadan. It is also the month for Autism Awareness, Arab American Heritage, Parkinson's Disease Awareness and Stress Awareness. The ONA team encourages you to respect and honor the diversity of all God's children.

With open minds and open hearts, The ONA Team



EASTER FLOWER MEMORIALS & TRIBUTES

This year, Easter is **April 20th.** During Lent, you will have the opportunity to purchase flowers that will honor and remember loved ones and decorate the Sanctuary for Easter. Please complete the form below and put it in the collection plate or return it to the church office by **April 13th**. You may also order flowers via the Online Giving tab on the church website: https://www.firstchurchwallingford.org/

Thank you for your continued support and generosity. - The Flower Team

	EASTER PLANT ORDERS
Number of Daffodils:	
Number of Tulips:	
Number of Hyacinth Plants:	s
	<u>x \$10 each</u>
	Subtotal:
Number of Lily Plants:	
	<u>x \$12 each</u>
	Subtotal:
	Total:
I will pick up my plant(s) after the Easter servicesPlease donate my plants.
In Honor Of:	
In Memory Of:	
Your name:	
Address:	
Daytime Telephone:	



The First Congregational Church 23 S. Main Street- Wallingford

Monthly Drives Team will be sponsoring our annual Easter Baskets for The Department of Children & Families.

Baskets will be available for pick up on March 30 and we will be collecting the filled baskets or supplies to help fill the baskets on

Saturday, April 12 from 9-11am.

This will be a drive through or drop off event.

Please keep the card attached to the basket. If you would like 2 baskets, consider picking up siblings they have been tied together

If you have any questions, Please contact Karen Janus at 203-265-5882 or kjanus01@snet.net

Stewardship Team - 2025

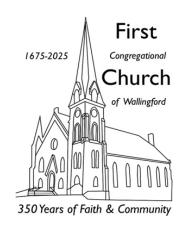


Imagine what more we can do, together, to support issues that impact our community and the world including poverty, isolation, and exclusion.

Imagine what else we can do, together, to provide a safe place for our members and quests to worship and participate in God's work.

Imagine the impact we can make, together, as you prayerfully consider your pledge commitment for the 2025-2026 church program year.





Join the 350th "Voices of Devotion" Project!

By now, you have heard that one of the many ways we will be celebrating the 350th Anniversary of First Congregational Church in 2025 is with the "Voices of Devotion" Project. Modeled after the Upper Room devotionals that many of us use for our daily devotional time, we are seeking devotionals written by past, present and (hopefully) future members and friends of FCC. With the start of 2025, we have begun to share submitted devotions on a weekly basis via email, and we intend to publish all of the devotions in booklet form at the end of the anniversary year.

Some may find the idea of writing a public devotional to be intimidating, but we want to remind you that the purpose of this project is to celebrate the many voices that have worshipped God at First Congregational Church. We are looking for YOU, the heart, soul, and history of FCC, to lend your voice and offer a devotion that speaks from your heart. Write about an experience, large or small, that told you God is near. Write about an event, a memory, a trial, a person, a meaningful piece of scripture - anything that brought your heart closer to God or reminded you that the Holy Spirit was and is a force in your life.

To create your devotional: Choose a Bible scripture that speaks to you or connects to the story you have to tell. Describe your story and how you apply this story and its spiritual truth to your life. How do you hope others might apply it to theirs?

We pray you say YES to participating in this project. Please use the attached form to submit your devotion. The "Voices of Devotion" team members will confirm the receipt of your submission. If you have submitted your devotion and did not receive confirmation or received a "rejected email message," please assume we have not received it, and contact us at fcc350devotionproject@googlegroups.com or at lorifolkbarron@gmail.com. You can also enter your devotional using the Google sheet at this link:

 $\underline{https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfr6UXLI8h8weoxhhyoG23cKxWF0DXRDi_4z-2oGzq-b84lcQ/viewform?usp=pp_url}$

We are accepting submissions on a rolling basis. Please feel free to submit more than one devotional if you have more than one story to tell!

With joyful voices,

Lori Folk-Barron, Bernie Annunziata, Marsha Mather, and Bob Westervelt

"Voices of Devotion" Submission

Nam	ne:	
	(as you wish it to appear in the devotional booklet)	
Ema	il Address:Phone:	
Title	:	
Quo	ted Scripture:	
	ted Scripture Citation: (e.g., Jeremiah 29:11-14)	
Devo	otional Text: (up to 500 words) Please handwrite or type below or attach separate page.	
Pray	ver:	
Plea	se submit devotional by	

- · ·
- Email to fcc350devotionproject@googlegroups.com
- Use this Google sheet link to enter your devotion directly
 https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfr6UXLI8h8weoxhhyoG23cKxWF0DXRDi_4z-2oGzq-b84lcQ/viewform?usp=pp_url
- Mail to "Voices of Devotion" Project, First Congregational Church, 23 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT 06492.



YES...IT'S TIME!!

IT'S TIME TO OPEN UP YOUR CLOSETS IT'S TIME TO OPEN UP YOUR DRAWERS IT'S TIME TO OPEN UP YOUR HEARTS FOR OTHERS

Our Spring Rummage Sale is back on the calendar for Thursday through Saturday, MAY 1-3rd! Hopefully during our cold winter months, you have had a chance to clean out some closets and basements. If you set things aside, now is the time to donate them for our sale. It is **absolutely CRUCIAL** that you **DO NOT START TO DROP OFF YOUR ITEMS UNTIL MONDAY, APRIL 21st...THE DAY AFTER EASTER**. Storage space is extremely limited.

Some reminders:

We accept gently used clothing, linens, shoes, pocketbooks, coats, puzzles, kids toys, stuffed animals, fabric, yarn, and small household items.

PLEASE - NO FURNITURE CAN BE ACCEPTED

1. **HOURS OF THE SALE:** Thursday, May 1 and Friday, May 2 - 4:00 – 700 pm; Saturday, May 3 – 9:00 a.m. to noon

2. Help is needed as follows:

- a. Setting up tables on Sunday, April 27th in Congregational Hall at 11:30 a.m.
- b. Sorting donated items from Monday, April 28th through Thursday, May 1st from 9:00 a.m. to noon and then 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.
- c. Working the sale floor whenever available those 3 days.
- d. Breaking down the sale on Saturday, May 3rd at noon.
- e. **MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK** great fellowship and camaraderie while working and helping others! Let's put a smile on all our faces!!
 - If interested in donating your time, please call Bernie Annunziata at 203-415-9809.

THANK YOU!!

MISSION MONEY AT WORK



As the scripture says: "Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13: 1-2

Your mission team was at work this month using your mission money to support organizations and spread our values. We continue to support disaster relief, refugees, those ravaged by war and being a positive roll model to young people in our community. We continue to *donate* internationally, nationally, locally and within our church community while keeping our mission and values in mind.

Supporting our world & church -

One Great Hour of Sharing – This aligned with the UCC's One Great Hour of Sharing on March 30, 2024. As the UCC website explains "One Great Hour of Sharing is one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ. This Lenten Offering supports the disaster, refugee, and development ministries of the United Church of Christ within Love of Neighbor." We felt committed to the international support provided by this mission plus the desire to support the greater UCC church effort. We donated \$250.

Supporting our country –

World Central Kitchen - World Central Kitchen provides critical support to Ukrainians impacted by war (#ChefsForUkraine). They state on their website "In the early months of the invasion, WCK served millions of fresh meals to Ukrainian families caught between the choice of fleeing their homes or facing the ravages of war. Now, we are focused on supporting frontline communities in eastern and southern Ukraine where the need for food has become more urgent than ever." We donated \$261.94 (\$250 plus admin fee).

Supporting our local community -

Project Graduation - Project graduation is committed to providing Wallingford's Senior graduates a fun, safe and substance free celebration. As a church community, we wanted to support our young adults in a positive manner. We donated \$250.

If anyone would like to participate on our Mission Distribution Team, we typically meet the first Wednesday of the month at 5:30 by Zoom. Please contact Mary Antonetti, Kathy Wallace or Lori Folk-Baron for log in information.

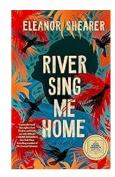
Book Club News



This month we are reading "River Sing Me Home" by Eleanor Shearer.

A Good Morning America book club pick. A "celebration of motherhood and female resilience." (The Observer)

Please join us on Tuesday April 22 at 6:30 in the Guild Room.





Youth Mission Trip Scranton, PA July 20-26, 2025

Youth (going into ninth grade next year through age 20) interested in going on this mission trip should speak with Maddie Torre or Lorraine Westervelt

The First Congregational Church

Chocolate Easter Egg Pick-Up Times

If you placed an order for chocolate Easter Eggs, the available pick-up times are listed below.

Thank you for your support!



Friday, April 11th 5pm to 7pm Saturday, April 12th 9am to 12pm Sunday, April 13th 11am to 12:30pm

The First Congregational Church of Wallingford 23 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT 06492

A Gift for You!

Christian Renewal Weekend

Men's May 16-18 or Women's May 30-June 2



Does a spiritual boost sound good?
Enjoy a **Renewal Weekend** presented by **Footsteps in the Sand.**

Footsteps Weekends are conducted by a team of 21 volunteers including two pastors. Everyone from our church who has attended a weekend felt blessed by the experience and some are serving on the teams for the upcoming weekends.

If you would like to know more visit: Footsteps-Sand.org or contact Bob (203-218-9537) and Lorraine (203-257-6964) Westervelt



Congratulations to Jackie Wadelin and Yvonne Ortiz who were married Sunday, March 23, 2025 in our Sanctuary! Jackie and Yvonne were married on their 17th Anniversary surrounded by family and friends. Blessings!



Henry Dana Rotman passed away February 27, 2025 at Ashlar Village at the age of 95. Dana was active in the Ashlar worshiping community for many years. A service celebrating Dana's life will be held April 19 at 11 am in Auditoriums A&B.



November 9, 2025

In Congregational Hall

Exodus 35:31-32

And he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze.

- This is the time to gather some wonderful artwork to display in the church art show! "Art" includes photography projects, craft projects, etc.
- This is a multi-generational display of our congregation's artwork for our 350th celebration year!! Please invite your family & friends are welcome to show their artwork too!
- Drop off to a designated area of Congregational Hall on Sunday, Nov. 2 and the work will be on display on

Sunday, November 9th

• Pick up your art work on Monday, Nov. 10th between 3:00 – 5:30 p.m. or at coffee hour on Sunday, Nov. 16th





I'm trying to give people time to create something or put things aside as artwork comes home with your children! Please label with family name & artist's name.

Questions? Please email Pam Perkowski at pperkowski@myhts-wallingford.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

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.



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 six 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

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

The next Spire will be published in May 2025. Spire submission deadline for the May Issue is April 15th.

Email the church office at: officemanager@firstchurchwlfd.org

