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THE SPIRE

Hello from First Congregational Church

In person services are back and will continue through the summer!

Every Sunday: 10am Family Worship Service in the Sanctuary

First Sunday of each month: 8am Communion Service in the Sanctuary
(July 4, August 1, and September 5)

Ashlar Services will begin again as soon as we have permission from
Ashlar's administration.

Pride Retreat at Silver Lake

November 5-7, 2021
LGBTQIA+ and Ally 9th-12th Graders

Join a community of your peers for fun, laughter, connections, music, community, campfires, history, low ropes, arts and crafts, fashion shows, and discussion. This retreat is open to youth in grades 9 through 12, and is a safe space for members of the LGBTQIA+ community and their allies to explore issues of identity and faith through a lens of progressive Christian values. All are welcome, regardless of faith identity or belief.

Learn more at slcc@silverlakeect.org



Community and World Services & The Vision and Mission Implementation Committees will be sponsoring a Back to School Drive



Saturday 9/18

9am to 11am.



We are looking for fruit cups, protein bars, cookies, crackers, and any other snack foods you can think of. Master's Manna will be thankful for rice, canned fruit, hearty soups, and cereal as well.

Please enter from South Main Street

As always, your donations are greatly appreciated.

For questions, please contact Kathy Wallace at kbwallace@comcast.net or 203-265-7205.

#BouzaStrong Pasta Dinner Thank You!

To say that the BouzaStrong Pasta Dinner on Friday, July 30, 2021 was a successful event filled with love, fellowship, generosity and the Holy Spirit is an understatement.

There is no way that it could have happened without the generosity and support of so many individuals, both members of this congregation and Jodi and Fred's family and friends in their extended community. Thank you to all who contributed in any way, including:

- Serving on the Pasta Dinner team.
- Buying a dinner ticket.
- Making a monetary donation directly to the Bouza Pasta Dinner fund.
- Donating food, supplies, drinks, decorations, desserts and the 82 teacup raffle prizes.
- Giving your time to help set up the hall and teacup raffle, prepare food, serve dinner, and clean up the dinner.
- Spreading the positivity and love felt during that dinner to keep this uplifting energy going.

On Friday, we served about 170 people who all went home with feelings of fullness in body and spirit.

We are overjoyed to announce that together, we raised **\$8,170.54** for the Bouza family!

This event reflects who we are, who we have been, and who we will continue to be as we move into the future: a faith family filled with love, generosity and the Holy Spirit, a faith family that will rise above challenges to journey together, uplift one another and move into the future guided by the hand of God.

With gratitude,

The BouzaStrong Pasta Dinner Team

Ushering Committee

We need you!! Ushers needed.

If interested, please call the church office or Tony Annunziata at 203-500-9542.



Sunday School

As we approach the time for Sunday School classes to begin, FCCW is finding ourselves a little short staffed!

We are looking for Sunday School teachers to help during this coming Sunday School year!

If you are interested in helping out, please contact Robin Davies at dav111@snet.net to see which age groups are still open.

Men's Work Group

The Men's Work Group is returning! On September 13 from 9-12, we need men to help with odd jobs such as changing light bulbs etc. Mostly, it is a time of fellowship and getting to know one another. We hope to see you there.

If you have any questions, please call Tony Annunziata at 203-500-9542



A Message from The Flower Committee

Thank you for your ongoing support for flowers for the altar. The traditional altar flower sign up calendar has returned to the Narthex, and there are many openings available for altar flowers from September 26 through the end of the year.

If you are not interested in sponsoring flowers for a specific Sunday, but would still like to help, donations can be made to the Flower Fund which pays for altar flowers when specific sponsors are not available and for flowers offered during baptisms. Please reach out with any questions. Thank you!

If you are interested in sponsoring flowers for the altar or have any questions, please sign up in the Narthex, contact the church office, or email Lori at lorifolkbarron@gmail.com



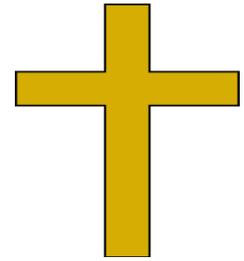
Open and Affirming Committee

Several months ago, the church council approved the plan to pursue the steps to become an Open and Affirming Church, to support the vision and mission of the church. We have a committee that has been meeting to review the process and put a plan into place to help guide the church to reach the Open and Affirming Status. We are working with a consultant and a guidebook to ensure that the whole church is involved with the process.

What does Open and Affirming mean? It means that the church and its members welcome all who want to worship without consideration of color, ability or sexual orientation. The guide book has particular focus on the LGBTQIA+ community. We are working with the Implementation committee to make sure the church is open to all.

The O&A committee consists of Michele Tarantino, Kathy Filkins, Steve Knight, Jeanette Gross and Pam Walker (And Pastor Kathy!). Come meet us at Catch the Spirit Sunday at the Implementation Committee's table where we will have information and opportunities for you to get involved! We will also have a great activity and giveaways.

Our kick-off event will be a showing of the documentary "Fish Out of Water" with a discussion. It will follow a service and include lunch! Be on the lookout for more information! If you are interested in joining the committee, please contact Michele at 203-228-7461.



Vision and Mission Implementation Team

Our 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.”

Guided by the teachings and compassion of Christ, our Vision and Mission Implementation Team has been actively working to bring our Mission to life within our church and community. We are excited to share that the Team is:

- Continuing thoughtful planning and review of potential sanctuary renovations and upgrades that will support our Mission. Our next step is a joint collaborative meeting with Council, the Board of Trustees, the Diaconate, and the Vision & Mission Team to share ideas, hopes and plans.
- Launching the UCC’s Open & Affirming process.
- Continuing to assist the Board of Community and World Service with monthly supply drives to benefit our community. Next up is our “School is Back Snack Drive” to benefit Master’s Manna.

- Striving to form partnerships with community organizations whose missions reflect and resonate with our own. For example, we will be learning about potential opportunities to work with the Wallingford Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee. We will also be educating ourselves about other Wallingford nonprofit organizations and seeking ways to establish mutually supportive relationships that strengthen our community connections.
- Reviewing the structure and organization of FCCW’s boards and committees to see what is working and where there may be room for growth that enhances our ability to live our Vision & Mission.

Have any questions?

Want to be a part of the Vision & Mission Implementation Team or help with certain projects?

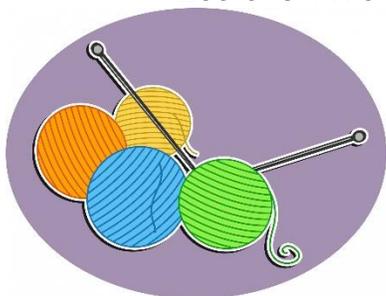
Contact the team at: fcc-wallingford-implementation-team@googlegroups.com

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Do you have a loved one, a friend, an acquaintance with health, family, or personal issues? The Prayer Shawl ministry creates beautiful, comforting shawls, lap robes, and blankets for you to give to your loved ones in need. Please ask one of the deacons, Rev. Kathy or Kathy Janis for a shawl in one of our many colors and sizes. All items 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 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.

The prayer Shawl group meets on the third Monday of the month at 7:00 pm. Please consider joining us, we will teach you how to knit or crochet or help improve your skills. Please contact Kathy Janis at 203-376-1173 or kathrynmjanis@gmail.com with any questions or requests.

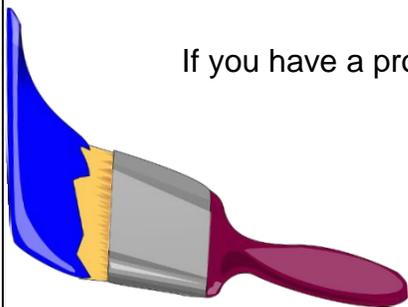


Youth Group Helpers

If you have a project around the house that you need help with, consider having some of our church's youths help out!

Whether it's a burned-out lightbulb or help cleaning up the sticks in your yard after the storm, we're here to help!

If you have a project or questions, please contact Leslie Spiars at 203-600-8043.





Catch the Spirit Sunday

Sunday, September 12th

**Join us after the 10AM service for a
picnic, games and fellowship.**

FREE raffle prizes!

**Stop in and register your child for
Sunday School.**



Message from the Moderators

For some very valid reasons, our church year now technically begins on July 1st each year. Indeed, there are new members of boards and committees as of that date, and the Church Council, which had normally not met in either July or August, has had to do so because there are so many “irons in the fire,” so to speak.

Having said that, however, the real kickoff for our church year still remains Catch the Spirit Sunday, which will be celebrated on September 12th. Robin Davies and her committee has come up with some creative and interesting new ideas to make the event even more fun, and we hope to see every member there.

As noted above, there are so many projects and plans afoot that it was important for Council to meet over the summer months. There are three specific issues to which we wish to call your attention:

One very important development has to do with the Meetinghouse. Mike Savenelli and Matt Bushey have completed research on the possible future uses of this building and the feasibility maintenance by the church. Because we have not made use of the Meetinghouse to anywhere near its capacity and the cost of upkeep will be an increasing concern, they concluded that the best use would be to sell the building in order to apply the funds generated toward future uses, programs and projects. The Board of Trustees approved their recommendation.

That recommendation was presented to Church Council, and it was determined that this was a matter which would ultimately have to be voted on by the Congregation. As such, Council voted to present this research and proposal to the entire congregation for discussion and eventual action. For that reason, there will be a presentation and discussion on this matter on a Sunday after the 10am service within a few weeks. In the meantime, written information compiled by the authors of the presentation will soon be available. A vote or action on the proposal would not occur until time had passed to allow the Congregation to consider the pros and cons of the information presented related to the feasibility research.

Needless to say, this is a complex and important decision in the life of our church. We would ask that you make every effort to attend the informational meeting when it occurs, and, in the meantime, familiarize yourself with the written material on this subject when it becomes available and prior to attending.

The second item is a church-wide storage area cleanup. As part of the Refresh and Renew spirit that accompanies this special time of year in the life of the First Congregational Church of Wallingford, plans are being made to do as thorough a cleanup of all the areas in which there is “stuff” stored. While we are not nearly at the “hoarder” stage, it has become evident that so much has accumulated over the years that it is time to make decisions on what to do with it all. We might add that an inspection by the Fire Marshal and his expressed concerns have also accelerated our interest in having this project take place sooner than later. We will be looking for volunteers from all boards and committees for their help in moving things we want to keep and removing those things which we no longer need. After a long period of building closure due to COVID-19, we are beginning to welcome members, friends, and the community back into our spaces, and we need to make that space as welcoming as possible by reducing the “stuff” that is no longer needed.

Our third and last item has to do with the Church Fair. Because progress at overcoming the Covid-19 virus seems to be at a “two-steps-forward, one-step-back” pace, Church Council voted not to have a Church Fair this year. Unfortunately, the delta variant has required much more caution than we all would have thought necessary a few months ago. It is not clear what the status of our world will be related to COVID-19 in just a couple of months, and it is challenging to plan a Fair of our typical scope in the face of such uncertainty. Church Council will be brainstorming in the next couple of months to see how we might replace the fellowship and the income that the Fair generates with other fun and fund-producing activities. If you have talents or interest in creative fundraising in the era of COVID-19, we would love to hear from you!

As you read this month’s Spire, you will see that our church is moving forward in many directions. As we every month, it is a very busy and transformative time for our church. We thank those who are working so hard to build our future, and we extend a sincere invitation to those now just returning to join in the work and Catch the Spirit!

Steve and Lori

Message from the Minister

While spending time on Cape Cod during my sabbath time away, we spent a lot of time outdoors. It is what we love to do in such a beautiful place with so many of the natural surroundings having been preserved from development and human impact.

It was on August 7, 1961 that President John F. Kennedy signed an unprecedented bill authorizing the establishment of the Cape Cod National Seashore. A long-time place of summer residence for his family, he had co-sponsored the bill while he was still in the Senate. The bill recognized the importance of the coastal lands and their natural resources.

The National Park Service conducted an 18-month detailed survey to evaluate the biological, geological, archeological, historical, and scenic resources of the six towns that comprise the Outer (also called the Lower) Cape. The results showed that not only did the beaches need protection, but the upland areas as well for the preservation of trees, land, and the wildlife that make their homes there. This was not a simple endeavor because much of the land to be designated was already privately owned. Various negotiations had to occur to reasonably satisfy all parties involved. Kennedy wrote that the goal was "to preserve the natural and historic values of a portion of Cape Cod for the inspiration and enjoyment of people all over the United States." It was a major step that considered the sustainable future of these natural assets. Today, the CCNS encompasses a total of 43,000 acres and is visited by more than 4 million people each year.

I have been traveling to this area since early childhood and more recently for the past 12 years. While enjoying the coastline with its scenic cliffs and expansive sand flats, the nature trails, birds, wildlife, and various vistas overlooking the vast ocean, an observation came to mind. It is this: as much as the land and coastline have been preserved, it is also in a constant state of change and flux. In fact, you can visit a particular beach one day and it can be a completely different experience from the day before. This is the result of tides, weather, the lunar cycle, and other factors. So, as much as President Kennedy longed to save this sacred place, nothing remains the same, even from day to day. As we speak, miles of coastline are being eroded by the force of the sea and especially the strong storms that impact this eastern arm reaching out into the Atlantic. Lighthouses, homes, restaurants, and even CCNS buildings have all been impacted in addition to the land itself.

It is this observation in a beautiful natural setting that reminds me that in other parts of life, despite our best efforts at preservation and care, nothing in this life is permanent. Nothing remains the same. Some of us may find that realization to be disconcerting, especially in a time with so much challenge and uncertainty. Some thrive on having a sense of certainty and control. But this is simply not realistic. If we are willing to observe and truly take in what we see, as I did during time spent in natural settings, we will find that the things around us are always changing. It is the way of life.

From a spiritual perspective, what if we could become more willing and capable of embracing this fact? What if instead of striving to hold on and to keep things exactly as they are, we were able to let go and go with the flow...to greet each new day not with fear or dread because of uncertainty, but with a spirit of curiosity about what unexpected thing could be unfolding and to trust that God is in it? To willingly anticipate its arrival, how might that change our experience? I realize that not all surprises are always good ones, and we must learn to cope with that, as well, but it is all a part of this human life that unfolds beyond our power to control...any more than we can control the moon, the tides, or the sea.

Some thoughts to consider as we approach another new program year in the life of our church. It offers a way to live as God's calling for us continues to unfold and creates the inevitable changes that I know are on the way because we are willing to listen, to follow, and to act. Do not be daunted by this. Rather, let us embrace the flow and whatever unfolding is on the way with a spirit of excitement and anticipation. I wonder what will become possible!

Pastor Kathy

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Our Values, Mission, and Vision

United in Christ we:

- Uplift Individuals
- Celebrate Shared Humanity
- Cultivate and Share a Community of Faith Among All Ages
- Pledge our Mutual Love and Support
- Walk Together in Service

Our 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.

Our 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 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