

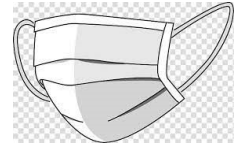
# THE CHURCHMOUSE

Newsletter of The First Congregational Church, Canton Center, CT

MAY 2021

## From the Pastor

Rev. Brenda Pelc-Faszczka



### “WHEN WE RETURN, WE’LL ALL BE NEWCOMERS”

So said an observer about the situation congregations find themselves in, after more than a year of pandemic protocols that have made for closed church buildings, or tentatively re-opened ones. She meant that we’ve had so much time away from “normal” that we may find even our familiar places, when we first go back to them, feeling somewhat foreign...as though our at-home-ness in them lies “just outside the realm of memory.”\*

At church, it may be modified practices that are keeping us from feeling fully at home even when we’re physically there for worship. We may be sitting in a different pew than we always did before, because of social distancing requirements, and partaking of Communion in a different way. We may have forgotten that we ever passed offering plates from person to person. And, of course, we miss the children, who have been gone all year.

Beyond that, we have missed some of our normal ways of staying in contact as human beings, the way that cultivating attentiveness to other people’s lives has always been part of what church is, for us.

*There’s also a deeper distancing that has occurred over the last year in our churches... We may now be strangers not just to physical spaces but also to those with whom we previously shared those spaces. So much life happens in a year, even in a year of pandemic lockdown. While congregations and organizations have tried to sustain community in difficult circumstances, there are still so many stories, so many experiences that we did not share with each other in real time. There’s been grief and joy that simply went unspoken.\**

So.... as we ease back to normal, over the coming weeks and months, we’ll have to remember that even the most long-standing church members among us will be making a re-entry and re-learning the rhythms of church --that there is a transition back “in,” just as there was a transition “out,” at the front end of this pandemic. Or, to put it another way, we may all be feeling somewhat like newcomers again at church, strange as that may sound.

The good news? It’s part of our church psyche to be welcoming and kind to newcomers -- even when they are ourselves. Our Open & Affirming statement says “Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.” Let’s remember, as we move toward gathering back, to be kind and gentle with each other, because we probably won’t know all of what each other’s journeys have been like in this past year, or where all of our spirits are right now. Reconnecting, in the spirit of care, will be a gift for all of us.

Faithfully,

Rev. Brenda

\*Quotes from Nathan Kirkpatrick, Duke Divinity School, <https://faithandleadership.com>

## WORSHIP MINISTRY

### WORSHIP IN MAY

**All our Sunday services will be live streamed at 10 a.m., as well as being held in person at 10 a.m. unless otherwise noted. Online access to the live stream and bulletin for each week, as well as access to previous weeks' recorded services, may be found on the homepage of our website, [www.cantoncenterchurch.org](http://www.cantoncenterchurch.org).**

- May 2 Fifth Sunday of Easter; Worship with Communion
- May 9 Sixth Sunday of Easter; Mother's Day
- May 16 Seventh Sunday of Easter
- May 23 Pentecost Sunday
- May 30 First Sunday after Pentecost; Memorial Day Weekend  
Lay-led service, Steve Byko preaching

*Rev. Brenda will be on vacation May 24 through 31.*

### Deacons' Bench

Casey Levine, Deacon

I find myself in a reflective state as I sit down to write my first Deacon's Bench.

This month marks the beginning of my second year as a Deacon, and there are so many things I have yet to experience. I've sat on the *actual* Deacon's bench just a handful of times in the last year, and never once to serve communion. There have been no baptisms and very few special events to help with. I haven't even been to an in-person Deacon's meeting. I hear sometimes there were snacks!

A little over a year ago, I was worried about having to "beg" people to be ushers and greeters. Now I feel like the permanent greeter, as I often stand at the door to check people in for contact tracing purposes.

As I prepared myself for what I thought was to come, I had lined up a special person to sit with Jason on the weeks when I needed to be on duty, so she could help him follow along with the service when I couldn't sit there with him. Now I wonder how much longer it will be that we need to keep our 6 feet of distance inside and outside when not with our immediate family members.

It's so easy to focus on what has changed, isn't it? Much harder to remember what has stayed the same. Maybe we have to look further back – much further back. We still have our precious Earth. It still spins and gives us day and night and our seasons. We have the sun, the moon and the stars. We have the beauty of nature – sky, oceans and land and all the plants and creatures that live here. Perhaps most importantly, we have each other. And it is good.

## Music Notes

Mary Lou Keefe, Director of Music

A rebirth, an awakening, a renaissance. Any way you say it, life is going on as it does every year at this time. Spring is here. The birds are singing, the flowers are starting to bloom and warmer weather is on the horizon. If you want to get the full impact and tumult of Spring as never before, give a listen to The Rite of Spring (Le Sacre du Printemps) by Igor Stravinsky. I remember well my first listening of the work and found it so atonal as to not be easy to listen to. One has to hear it more than once and preferably outdoors, say at Tanglewood. It is indeed jarring, and atonal throughout but like Spring will grow on you.

Spring has sprung in our music ministry, with a sort of rebirth. If you were at church on Easter or were able to live stream at home, you know we had a small choir. I say rebirth because thirteen months ago, when state and national pandemic protocols meant we needed to stop in-person services for a while, we suddenly had no gathering of choirs, no special programs, no singing or ringing. Those days are mostly over with the speedy arrival of the various vaccinations. In fact, the small choir idea which was initiated by a suggestion from Linda Mcallister, will continue into May with special music. I am sincerely hoping to be able to resume the Senior and Handbell choir rehearsals in late August as we have always done, and begin singing and ringing in church soon thereafter.

On April 18<sup>th</sup>, as I hopefully will be out of town, Kari Miller, a friend and fellow musician will be subbing for me on our Rogers organ. She is presently organist at the Simsbury Methodist Church.

Without either the bell or senior choirs able to rehearse and sing and ring, thank goodness for the loyal soloists and instrumentalists. Jerry Alonzy was usually here to tape the services for Sunday and later to live-stream them and was hands down the most active volunteer soloist. Whenever I asked him to sing he was always agreeable. In the first few months after the shutdown Karen Needham and Judy Robinson shared the duties of playing the chimes. Karen has been playing them since January.

Special thanks to all soloists, Jerry, Judy, Jen, Jim, Bill, all vocal soloists, and Cindy, flute and Scott, guitar. Special thanks also to the members of the small choir: Jerry, Donna, Meg, Marilyn, Linda, Karen, Judy, and Jim.

As was reported in the previous churchmouse, the organ had suddenly stopped working. Special thanks to trustee Larry who was able to trouble shoot and solve the mystery. Our Rogers works just fine now.

## Mission & Outreach

Geri Bunnell

### Mission Update

The Missions Committee delivered \$875 in Stop & Shop, Walmart, and Shop Rite gift cards to Savana Fernandes, our Wellmore contact. Savana also received our toiletries collection and reports that their clients are working again but they could use more toiletries and would also appreciate food donations. She sends her thanks to our congregation!



Your Mission Committee sends a Big Thank You to the Canton Center Church for all the generosity you demonstrate every time we ask for your support!

### May Collections

With the resumption of in person church services, the Mission Committee has decided to restart our monthly collections.

**For the month of May we will be accepting toiletries and food for Wellmore.**

Please put any food/toiletries for Wellmore in the Mission box outside the kitchen door

Director of Faith Formation

Sarah Pradhan

FAITH FORMATION MINISTRY

We are winding down the church school year. I'm very thankful that this year has been so successful, even though it's looked A LOT different. We have had a few in person activities for kids and families including our Jack-o-Lantern display and Easter Egg hunt. All were well attended and successful! Along with our Facebook live messages each Sunday morning, our youth and kids have remained connected and engaged through a variety of crafts and activities. We made pretzels for Lent, sent cards and well wishes to folks in our congregation, created resurrection gardens, painted Peace rocks, and let's not forget our special virtual Christmas pageant!



As we finish out this year, I want to give a big thank you to everyone on our CE committee who have helped with events, planning and brainstorming. Thank you to Beth Lingenheld, Judy Robinson, Julia Poleyestewa, Heather Neumann, Chris Hager and Marianne Burbank.

The CE committee will be ending the year with an in-person Mother's Day craft get together in the beginning of May, and an end of the year nature hike in June.

The Summer months will be filled with planning for the 2021-2022 church school year. Come September, our classroom experience will look much different. We are hoping (and praying) for a smooth transition back into church school, while implementing precautions to keep everyone safe and healthy.



## Message from the President

Hello to everyone,

I would like to thank our former president, Hollace Bristol, for all her efforts in guiding us through a very unique and challenging year. Thinking back to March last year, the sudden shut down of our church activities and our daily lives, both home and work, all to due a global coronavirus pandemic, comes to the forefront. I know that finally with the availability of a vaccine we have the opportunity to emerge from this period of difficulty with new insight on what it means to be a church family. It isn't all about the building we call home but it is us the members who make up this church.

The effort to hold us together via zoom meetings and now live streaming have greatly helped keep us connected and forced some of us (or dare I say, maybe a lot of us) to update our computer skills. As the Council and Deacons decide to gradually bring our church back physically on-line let us not forget that we can transition to new ways of doing things: that yes, "tradition" is important, but if we are going to exist in this post pandemic world we need to adapt and be open to new ways of thinking.

Our official church membership now stands at 263. Many of us have experience with all functions of the church and what it takes to run things. Some of us are new members.

I would like us to see if we can break down what it means to participate in church life. I liked the vision that our Church Council generated a few years ago of our church as a circular organization with four areas: Worship, Faith Formation, Fellowship/In Reach Ministry, and Missions/Outreach Ministry. How formal of an organizational structure do we have to maintain? I would like to see our church membership grow. If you knew you didn't have to commit to a formal term or committee would you volunteer more of your time?  
Please think about it.

Dave Poleyestewa

*Begins term as president as of May 1.*

## Scrip

Last month, we marked the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Scrip program at our church. We have raised around \$8000 since the start of the program, and funds raised go back into the church's general fund.

Throughout almost all of the last year, we have still run the program, albeit differently from the prior 4. I don't keep a lot of "inventory" on hand, but you can place an order anytime and usually have it within a week. When you place a gift card order through Scrip, you can choose from over 750 retailers available in various monetary denominations. Reach out for a copy of the retailer list, or go to [www.shopwithscrip.com](http://www.shopwithscrip.com) to see what's available. There is also a mobile app called RaiseRight, which is available in the Apple app store or Google Play. You can see what is available and even place an order right from your phone.

As the state and country begin to open up more, nearly everyone is eager to get "back to normal" and enjoy all the Springtime events and rights of passage. May is a popular month for college graduations, confirmations, weddings, showers and don't forget Mother's Day! June will bring Father's Day, high school graduations, teacher and bus driver gifts and more weddings and showers. Gift cards are great for birthdays as well, of course. And don't overlook just using gift cards for your own everyday expenses. Grocery store and Amazon gift cards are the most popular ones we sell, but we have Ace Hardware, Home Depot and Lowes for all your Spring yard needs and home improvement projects. If you want to place an order, you just need one week's notice. You can order through the app, call me at 693-0134, email me at [c.levine@comcast.net](mailto:c.levine@comcast.net) or see me most Sundays in church.

Happy Spring and as always – thanks for your support!

Casey

**OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

We gather as a welcoming community in worship, learning, service and fellowship, to embody Christ's message of love, compassion and justice. Joining faith with action, both within and beyond our church, we strive to build a community that serves all.

*(An Open and Affirming Church)*

**Thank You to Outgoing Lay Leaders!!!**

As we complete a term-year for our committee and officer positions (new terms begin May 1), our congregation thanks the following leaders who are going off committees as chairpersons or completing an officer's term, and are completing their related service on Church Council as well. We so appreciate your time, your care and your skill!

- Hollace Bristol, outgoing President;
- Darryl Haberern and Steve Byko, outgoing Senior Deacons;
- Larry Minichiello, outgoing Chair of Trustees;
- Beth Lingenheld, outgoing Chair of the Christian Education Committee;
- Linda McAllister, outgoing co-chair of Wider Church Committee

**Annual Meeting of the Southern New England Conference of the UCC  
Sat., May 8: Register by May 5**

All are welcome to participate in the upcoming annual meeting of our UCC Conference, Sat., May 8, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., all online: workshops, speakers, music, worship.

Our church's official delegates are Marianne Burbank (Vice-President) and Grant Hagedorn (Member-at-Large on Council), but any and all members and friends of the church may attend. See here for info. and registration: <https://www.sneucc.org/eventdetail/annual-meeting-14923441>.

*"Faith in action is love.*

*And love in action is service."*

Mother Teresa

**God is still speaking !!!**

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Visit our website at [CantonCenterChurch.org](http://CantonCenterChurch.org)

Listen to recorded **Sermons and Music** from worship services!

Like us on Facebook



# MAY 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Worship & Communion 10:00 am	3	4	5 Missions 7:00 pm Deacons 7:00 pm	6	7	8
9 Worship 10:00 am 	10 Trustees 7:00 pm	11	12 Council Meeting 7:00 pm	13	14	15
16 Worship 10:00 am	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 Worship 10:00 am <i>Fourth Sunday Food Collection</i>	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 Worship 10:00 am	31 					



The Churchmouse  
The First Congregational Church  
(United Church of Christ)  
184 Cherry Brook Road  
P O Box 133  
Canton Center, CT 06020-0133

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**THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**  
**184 Cherry Brook Road PO Box 133**  
**Canton Center, CT 06020-0133**

**Office**

(860)693-4581

Kristen DiMattia, Office Manager  
office@cantoncenterchurch.org  
M-F 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

**Pastor**

(860)693-4207

Rev. Dr. Brenda Pelc-Faszczka  
pastor@cantoncenterchurch.org

**Organist/Director of Music:**

(860)693-4216

Mary Lou Keefe  
music@cantoncenterchurch.org

**Director of Faith Formation:**

(860)810-3070

Sarah Pradhan  
ce@cantoncenterchurch.org

**Worship ~ Sunday at 10:00 a.m.**

*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*

cantoncenterchurch.org