

# THE CHURCHMOUSE

Newsletter of The First Congregational Church, Canton Center, CT

December 2021

## From the Pastor

Rev. Brenda Pelc-Faszczka

### IS IT CHRISTMAS AGAIN?

When we are children, time seems to pass slowly... *summer vacation is a long, lazy stretch... the time from one birthday to another is a long wait...the week from Christmas to New Year's is a long stretch of holiday.* Not so much when we're adults, when the more common feeling is how fast it's all going, how brief the intervals. "Is it Advent already?? Christmas is *how many* weeks away? Wasn't it just summer?" Yes. As a friend of mine likes to put it, "The days may be long, but the years are short." The next crowning-of-the-year gets here before you know it.



But the fact that it gets here, no matter what and no matter how ready or unready we may feel when it does, is a precious gift of the Christian spiritual year. There is a wisdom built into the liturgical rhythm of Christian tradition, and that is the wisdom of cycles, the repeating of a sequence of seasons and themes in the same order every year, so that no matter what, those seasons and themes become the overlay to our lives and the invitation to see our experience through them and with their spiritual gifts. This means that rather than greet each season with "Oh, that again," we might welcome it with "Oh – we get to do THAT again!" As many times as we've lived anything, including Advent-Christmas, it's a new experience each time, a new presence of Holy Spirit, a new birth, a new awakening. It comes bearing gifts for us, if we'll take them.

Advent, being the first season in the church year – where each new liturgical cycle starts over – is especially instructive because it reminds us that we begin with hoping and watching as the starting place, and patience is the first thing needed. We begin with the anticipation of birth. We begin by watching for how Christ comes into the world and becomes visible in it. We begin by not only celebrating the birth of Jesus once, an event of 2000 years ago, but by focusing on our own opportunities to bring Christlikeness to birth now – in us, among us, around us, in the world. This is what Christmas is for, in the big picture; it lays the foundation for the rest of the story that we re-tell through the rest of the year. It starts in hope, it remembers peace, it keeps joy in view, it stays nestled in love. All else goes from there.

Is it almost Christmas already? Yes! Thank goodness, it's coming around again.

Hope, peace, joy and love to you,

Rev. Brenda

**Worship in December**

- Dec. 5      Second Sunday of Advent; Communion
- Dec. 12     Third Sunday of Advent
- Dec. 19     Fourth Sunday of Advent  
Special music service
- Dec. 24     Christmas Eve Candlelight service;  
7:00 p.m.    vocal & handbell choirs
- Dec. 26     First Sunday after Christmas;  
Deacon-led service

*Looking ahead:*

- Jan. 2      Epiphany Sunday;  
Guest preacher: Rev. Terry Schmidt  
(Communion for Jan. will be on the 9<sup>th</sup>)

*Rev. Brenda will be on vacation from  
Dec. 25 through Jan. 2.*

**Our Current Pandemic Protocols**

At the mid-November meeting of our Church Council, it was decided that as of now, we will be mask-optional indoors for the vaccinated, masks requested indoors for the unvaccinated, masks worn indoors by those working with children, and masks not required for anyone outdoors. This is per an honor system, as we do not ask anyone to disclose vaccination status or to provide evidence of it.

This policy is consistent with the masking policy of the State of CT and of the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) at the time of its adoption. We will continue to require sign-in for all those attending our services, in the event that we should need contact tracing. Council reviews our policies each month, since conditions can change and so that we can stay alert to any modifications we might need to make.

**Deacon's Bench**

*Tim LeGeyt*

The word "Advent" means coming, the coming of Christ into our lives, and these four weeks that lead up to Christmas are the anticipation and preparation period. In our church, we have several traditions that we celebrate and venerate as we prepare for the revelation of our Saviour's birth.

We light a series of colored candles, one a week, to remind us of the various aspects of Advent, culminating with the white Christ candle, to signify Christ's purity and his aim to be the light of the world. We welcome a Christmas tree in the sanctuary and we decorate it with some evidence of our ministry to the rest of the world. We decorate the Meeting House with wreaths to symbolize the never ending (evergreen) love of Christ and the love of God through Christ.

Our Senior choir and our bell choir offer anthems for the Season, sometimes as a Music Sunday, and of course, our hymns are themed for the Holiday itself. We often have an extra offering at some point during the holiday season. Our Christmas Eve service is one of anticipation of the coming of the One who can save the world if enough of us hear his guidance, feel his love and become his hands and feet. At Christmastime, we pray to let God and Christ into our hearts.

We hope that, by finding our way into a new level of closeness with each other, more so in a spiritual way but also in a physical way by gathering together to worship, we may feel the wonderful blessing and warmth that the birth of the Christ child can bring into our lives and the sense of community that can be so uplifting.

May it be so with us this Christmas season!

### Church School: Active, Relational, Experiential!

As we have yet to find a suitable candidate for the position of Director of Faith Formation with Children and Youth, the Christian Education committee has kept our Sunday programming for children alive and active. Karen Needham and Hollace Bristol have stepped up to create a plan each week in alignment with Rev. Brenda's Sunday message. They have made a commitment to continue to serve in this role throughout the school year if necessary.

Classes are designed in accordance with the experiential model. The theme is offered by Rev. Brenda with the Bible verse(s) in mind. Once the theme is established, activities are planned so that the children work as a group to play out the theme by working together and recognizing the gifts that each one embodies. Class plans are grounded in an understanding of education as relational learning, active and experiential, process oriented with the goal of mirroring the God light that shines through each of us.

The class members build an agreement of how they would like to be with one another during class. The agreement is always in draft form and may be edited by the children at any time. The interactive format builds caring relationships and an increased sense of community.

We will continue to hold class in the Parish Hall for better air circulation. Masking will continue to be mandatory for those working with children. Church school families, come and join us!



#### SPECIAL HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES ON DEC.19

All are invited to some special coffee-hour activities following our service on Dec. 19, Advent 4, when a few simple & child-friendly Christmas crafts will be available in Parish Hall for all to participate in and enjoy.

#### **Thank you to:**

**Nancy Alford and Joan Noel**  
for the Thanksgiving Sunday  
table display.

**Marianne Burbank & Tim LeGeyt**  
for the donation of the sanctuary tree  
in memory of  
Marianne's grandfather, Harry Humphrey  
and father, Sam Humphrey  
and Tim's grandfather, Mort Bristol

**Jim Potter and family,**  
for the decoration of the church  
for the season.



## Wider Church Fellowship News

### Coffee Hour

Coffee Hour fellowship has resumed. Please come and enjoy spending a few minutes with friends after church worship service. Coffee and snacks are provided and everyone is welcome. It is a good time to catch up with fellow members or make new friends.

### Church Dinner

On January 16, 2022 we'll be having an Italian Buffet and Salad Bar. "All You Can Eat" Please keep the date clear and join us for a good time and great dinner. Please see the illustrated announcement for more information on page 6.

### Church Members

We are always looking for volunteers to host coffee hour after church. It is a very simple job and gives you the opportunity to greet and perhaps get to know other members. Please think about signing up on the bulletin board. You can host with a spouse, a friend or as an individual. If you would like to learn what the job entails please see Linda or Craig McAllister.

### Committee Members

Since coffee hour has started again the normal coffee hour hosting schedule has resumed.

January - Missions  
 February - Diaconate  
 March - CE  
 April - Music  
 May - Trustees  
 June - Missions  
 July or August - Diaconate  
 September - CE  
 October - Trustees  
 November – Wider Church  
 December - Nominating

The scheduled committee has the responsibility to seek and find volunteers to host coffee hour. If the committee chooses committee members may host themselves. There is usually a sign-up on the bulletin board where members of the congregation may volunteer to do the coffee hosting.

## Missions and Outreach

*Deb Poleyestewa & Gina Magennis*

***The missions committee would like to thank you for your generous donations and many forms of support for our various areas of need.***

*Thank you for filling the paper bags and providing non-perishable food for the Canton Food Bank.*

*Thank you for the grocery store gift cards that helped provide those in our community with food for Thanksgiving.*

*Thank you for the toiletries that support families at Wellmore.*

*Thank you for purchasing Christmas wreaths to support the Susan B. Anthony project.*

*Thank you for providing furniture, household items and warm clothing to support and welcome refugees from Afghanistan as they start their new lives here. **We will continue to collect household goods until Dec. 1st,** however, we will not be collecting any more clothes, per their request. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.*

### DECEMBER MISSIONS

We will be collecting gifts and gift cards for Wellmore. Please take an ornament off the tree and provide a young person with a Christmas gift if you can.



### CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERING

Our Christmas Eve offering will be going to the Canton Fuel Bank.

*Wishing you all a Blessed Holiday Season!*



**Fourteen members of our church family participated in our first *Happy Wanderers* hike on November 7th after church.** Karen and Hollace walked the yellow trail at the Mary Conklin Sanctuary ahead of time and scattered little wooden hearts along the way for folks to find. They also prepared trail maps and a list for a scavenger hunt for all participants. It was a glorious fall day, and the 2.3-mile hike was enjoyed by all. We hope to plan another one, weather permitting.

### Shop for Christmas and Help the Church and Others!



It's the most wonderful time of the year!

Gift cards have become one of the most popular choices for gift giving occasions, especially Christmas. Whether you are looking for a present for that "hard to shop for" relative, a hostess gift (if there are any holiday parties happening this year), a little something for a teacher or co-worker or even a small stocking stuffer or grab bag gift – the scrip table is a great place to find just what you need! And with all the talk about the supply chain issues and items that are hard to find, gift cards are an even better choice for Christmas 2021! Cards are offered in various denominations and some start as low as \$5 or \$10. There are over 750 retailers and restaurants to choose from – many local stores, national chains and online shops as well. When you purchase a gift card from our church's scrip program, a percent of the face value of every card goes to our general fund. You are supporting our church every time you buy a gift card!

The Scrip table will be set up in the parish hall every Sunday during coffee hour. Stop by for all your gift card needs! You can pick up a list of all the cards that are available to order and take it home with you, or you can visit [www.shopwithscrip.com](http://www.shopwithscrip.com) to start making your list. Please note that the deadline to order cards is **December 12<sup>th</sup>** to ensure they are here in time. Last minute shoppers can visit the table on 12/19 to see what's available in inventory to pick up same day.

We are also actively collecting cards for Wellmore through **December 5<sup>th</sup>**. Let's help make it a very Merry Christmas for these families in need.

If you're not in church, you can always call or email me (860-693-0134 or [c.levine@comcast.net](mailto:c.levine@comcast.net)) or you can place an order online or through the RaiseRight app. Reach out to me for our church's unique enrollment code if you wish to place an order electronically.


Thanks, as always, for your support! Merry Christmas!

Casey

**Back by Popular Demand!**  
**Sunday January 16, 2022**  
**Italian Buffet & Salad Bar**  
**All You Can Eat!**  
**Chicken Parmesan • Sausage & Peppers**  
**Spaghetti & Meatballs • Vegetarian Dishes**  
**• Huge Salad Bar •**  
**Homemade Italian Bread • Dessert**  
**Adults \$17 Kids 7-12 \$7 Under 7 Free**  
**Purchase Tickets or Make Reservations During Coffee Hour**  
*Proceeds go to kitchen renovation fund*  
**First Congregational Church, Canton Center**  
**11:30 AM—1:30 PM**



**IN THE EVENT OF INCLEMENT WEATHER**

Please tune to: 

**WFSB Channel 3**  
 or **NBC CT**  
 or check the church web site  
 at: [www.cantoncenterchurch.org](http://www.cantoncenterchurch.org)

**PLEDGES**

We ask our members to make every effort to complete your current year pledges by the end of the year.

If you would like your 2021 contributions included on your 2021 year-end-statement, they must be received by Dec. 31.

We ask that you please return your 2022 pledge cards by December 10th.

**POINSETTIA PLANTS \$ 8. each**  
 Please fill out the form below and return to the office if you are interested in providing Poinsettias for our Dec. 19 & 24 services.

**2021 CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA ORDER FORM**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# of poinsettia plants ordered \_\_\_\_\_ x \$ 8.00 = \_\_\_\_\_

*(Please attach cash or check made payable to: Canton Center Church by Sunday, December 12.)*

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

In Celebration of: \_\_\_\_\_

# DECEMBER 2021



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1  Deacons Zoom 7:00 pm	2  Cub Scouts 6:30 –8 pm  Handbell Choir 7 pm	3	4  AA 11:00 p.m.
5  Worship & Communion 10:00 am	6  Sr. Choir 5 pm ACA 7:00 pm	7  AA 7:00 pm	8	9  Handbell Choir 7 pm	10	11  AA 11:00 p.m.
12 Missions 9 am  Worship 10:00 am	13  Sr. Choir 5 pm Trustee's 7 pm ACA 7:00 pm	14  AA 7:00 pm	15  Council Zoom Meeting 7 pm	16  Handbell Choir 7 pm	17	18  AA 11:00 p.m.
19  Worship 10:00 am  Confirmation Class 11:30-12:15 pm	20  Sr. Choir 5 pm ACA 7:00 pm	21  AA 7:00 pm	22	23	24  Christmas Eve Worship 7:00 pm	25  AA 11:00 p.m.
26  Worship Lay Led Service 10:00 am  Fourth Sunday Food Collection	27  ACA 7:00 pm	28  AA 7:00 pm	29	30	31	



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



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

**The First Congregational Church  
184 Cherry Brook Road PO Box 133  
Canton Center, CT 06020-0133**

**Office**

(860)693-4581

Kristen DiMattia, Office Manager  
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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:**

Mary Lou Keefe  
music@cantoncenterchurch.org

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*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*

[www.cantoncenterchurch.org](http://www.cantoncenterchurch.org)

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