

THE CHURCHMOUSE

Newsletter of The First Congregational Church, Canton Center, CT

APRIL 2022

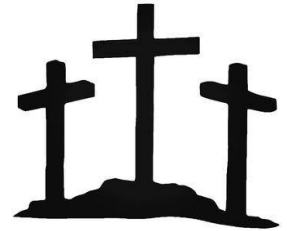
From the Pastor

Rev. Brenda Pelc-Faszczka

Holy Week: Staying There

Who can listen to a story of loneliness and despair without taking the risk of experiencing similar pains in his own heart and even losing his precious peace of mind? In short: Who can take away suffering without entering it?"

-Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*



As I write this, Holy Week is several weeks away and I'm thinking about it. That's the time when, as someone once put it, "we experience whiplash:" first we're going one way, then the opposite way. The dark sadness of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday give way to the bright joy of Easter morning. The emotions couldn't be more opposite. And whew, thank goodness, because who wants to stay in sadness, right?

Sometimes we are so wanting to avoid contact with the sorrowful dimensions of this life that we don't even want to do it in Holy Week, where it can't actually be avoided if we are to remember the whole story. *Jesus is triumphantly hailed. Then he is betrayed. Then he is arrested. Then he is killed. Then he is risen.* I've known far more people who want to be there for the "risen" part than for the remembrance of any of the awful things that happen to Jesus first. Churches are typically pretty full on Easter, but not for the Thursday and Friday observances of Holy Week.

I have concluded that this is not all because of some form of unfaithfulness. I think it's often because the sadness of remembering what happens to Jesus, as we sit in a darkened, solemn sanctuary on Maundy Thursday, can make us feel our own sadnesses and losses, and it may be those that we are mainly trying to avoid. As Henry Nouwen puts it, who can hear a story of despair or pain without losing some of their own peace of mind, without in some way feeling it and entering into it themselves? Maybe this is why we so often keep ourselves from some of Holy Week. Maybe we are trying not to have our own pain speaking up, our own peace of mind pierced.

But there's another way to approach it. And that's to trust that if we *did* feel our peace of mind pierced, that if we did feel sad, God would be right there in that experience. It would be to stay present to the whole thing, on the premise that it's the whole story, all the way through, that has life to offer us and that all of it is our teacher. We only get what Easter is, really, if we've allowed ourselves to stay present all week first. I think of it as a form of spiritual maturity to be able to do that, to remember that at the heart of our faith is a conviction that God is always and everywhere present – not just in the good times, not just in the joyful experiences, but in all of them. Truly, all of them.

Maybe this is the way we could think of Holy Week this year, as a whole story and a whole experience, with its dark and its light both telling us something essential about the nature of God and of ourselves. Maybe we could enter the week and stay there, all the way through.

Faithfully,

Rev. Brenda

WORSHIP MINISTRY

WORSHIP IN APRIL

Current policy: masks optional.

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| April 3 | Fifth Sunday in Lent; Communion |
| April 10 | Palm Sunday; Beginning of Holy Week Special choral music |
| April 14 7:30 p.m. | Maundy Thursday Tenebrae & Communion Service |
| April 15 12 – 3 p.m. | Good Friday Sanctuary open for personal meditation |
| April 17 | Easter |
| April 24 | Second Sunday of Easter Ali Hager - preaching |

FAITH FORMATION MINISTRY

CHURCH SCHOOL UPDATE

Our in-person church school continues under the enthusiastic and capable leadership of Hollace Bristol and Karen Needham.

Each week, they lead a creative learning activity for kids, almost always related to the Scriptural theme being used in that day's service.

It's hands-on, interactive, designed to engage the whole child.

Notes for April:

April 10 & 17 (Palm Sunday & Easter) -- no church school.

April 24 -- regular church school, with an Earth Day theme.



Music Notes

Mary Lou Keefe, Director of Music

WORSHIP MINISTRY



On a recent Sunday, Craig McAllister announced that the yearly Palm Sunday Pot Luck will take place this year after a hiatus of two years. Well, the same is true of the annual Palm Sunday Cantata presented by the choirs of the church which has had to suspend this event since 2020 because of the pandemic. The Sr. choir members have been putting in extra time in order to practice their abundance of music for the upcoming Holy Week.

This year we have three guest singers for the Palm Sunday cantata to be presented on April 10th. They are sopranos Gina Magennis and Megan Keefe, and bass Dan LeGeyt. We are singing three octavos from two separate cantatas with appropriate readings as well as the traditional The Palms sung by choir and soloist Jerry Alonzy.

Additionally, we are working on Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday music as well as the regular Sunday service music. The handbell choir will also be contributing beautiful and appropriate Palm and Easter Sunday music.

Special thanks to Gina Magennis who stepped in as director for the bell choir one evening when I was unable to attend.

We are always on the lookout for new members for both the sr. and handbell choirs and if you are interested see any member or me.

choir practice



Both choirs are now meeting earlier in the day

Senior Choir - Mondays at 5:00 p.m.

Handbell Choir - Thursdays at 5:30 p.m.

The question should not be 'What would Jesus do?' but rather, and more dangerously, 'What would Jesus have me do?' The onus is not on Jesus but on us, for Jesus did not come to ask semi-divine beings to do impossible things. He came to ask human beings to live up to their full humanity; he wants us to live in the full implication of our human gifts, and that is far more demanding.

-Peter Gomes

EASTER FLOWERS



With Easter just around the corner, it's time to order plants for our Easter Sunday service.

Lilies (\$14.00) and tulips (\$8.00)

Flowers may be given in memory of or in celebration of loved ones or a special event. Please take your plants after the Easter service to enjoy at home.

Orders for plants will be **accepted through Sunday, April 10th**, and forms will be available in the Easter Basket at the back of the church until that date.

EASTER FLOWER ORDER FORM

Name: _____

of **LILY** plants ordered _____ x \$ **14.00** = _____

of **TULIP** plants ordered _____ x \$ **8.00** = _____

In Loving Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

In Celebration of: _____

Please write checks to: FCCCC and return by April 10.

MISSIONS & OUTREACH

April's Mission Box Collection will benefit New Hartford's **Hands of Grace's backpack program** which provides weekend meals to children who might have to fend for themselves. Hands of Grace currently supplies two of each item in a 2 gallon plastic bag to an elementary school in Winsted and one in New Hartford. All items should be single serving in size:

- Cereals, hot or cold - oatmeal packets are fine.
- Ramen noodles
- Chef Boyardee meals
- Macaroni & cheese
- Fruit cups



The "shopping" shelves at Hands of Grace, which is separate from the backpack program, are always in need of **64 oz juice bottles or 12-16 oz sized cans of coffee as well as crackers** if you wish to donate for that.

Trustee News

Dave Heyer

We have received Eversource's rebate check for installing 18" of blown-in fiberglass insulation in the parsonage attic. The rebate reduces our cost for this improvement to \$1400. We do not yet have the details about what that translates to in terms of fuel oil cost savings.

We have upgraded the parsonage's existing and obsolete 100 amp electrical service to a new 200 amp General Electric breaker panel including meter socket and exterior wire. This will improve the value of the parsonage and help power the items in the house for our tenants, a mother and three middle school and high school age children. We have officially entered the modern (electrical) age.



Our spring cleanup day will be from 9 to noon, on Saturday, April 16th (Holy Saturday).

Put this on your calendar, bring your garden tools, and help (kids too).

On the morning of Saturday, May 7 we will be hosting a Breakaway Benefit (Cycling) Rest Stop in the parking lot to the north of the schoolhouse/library. We did this last year also. The riders begin at Farmington High School, ride up past the reservoir in Barkhamstead, and then back to Farmington High School. Whether or not you ride a bike, this is fun to watch. Stop by and see for yourself, and if you have spandex, wear it.

We will (occasionally on Sundays after communion) during coffee hour begin staffing a table in the parish hall to meet with interested members to introduce ourselves and bounce around suggestions and ideas.

Deacons' Bench

Tim LeGeyt, Deacon

WORSHIP MINISTRY

There are so many opportunities to be of service to Christ and to his church. Too numerous to count or even begin to list in this writing. But I'd like to share a particularly meaningful one for me - that is being a member of the Diaconate.

I am finishing up my third "tour of duty" on the Diaconate - one in the 1980's with Rev. Sealand, one in the 2000's with Rev. Larry Smith and one in the present with Rev. Brenda. Nine years of serving our congregation in the process of worship.

I really recommend being on the Diaconate because it can change you in ways that you might not anticipate. You can become closer to the people in our congregation, become aware of who comes to church and enjoy a closer sense of how each person's life is evolving, i.e. what each one struggles with, the silver linings that each one finds as things challenge them, how strong each one's faith is, who is a good singer (I have encouraged several people to join the choir with some success) and how some of us respond to expressions of care.

This round of membership on the Diaconate has been particularly challenging because of COVID. We went from our regular form of worship to closing the church to masks and marking off the pews for social/worship distancing to masks and no coffee hour to masks optional and no coffee hour to masks optional with coffee hour. We have had abbreviated holiday celebrations and cancelled other meaningful celebrations.

All that I just described involves the formality of worship. As the Diaconate is involved with the congregation during worship and otherwise, we also tried to reach out to members during the covid isolation to find out how each was faring. That was the more difficult part of the COVID experience because of the suffering and tragedy of members or loved ones trying to survive, sometimes unsuccessfully, and having to be isolated from contact as their health deteriorated.

We seem to have gotten through the pandemic with things returning to a more normal condition, but we, as a people and a congregation, are still suffering from lack of contact in all its forms.

Each Sunday, we hope to see some more people coming back to Church, more children, more choir members and more people ready to take part in Church activities.

Our collective prayer is to recover from the disease and from the isolation. If you feel like you are recovering, then try to help someone else who may be struggling still. To care for someone else might display a silver lining for you as well!!

FELLOWSHIP/INREACH MINISTRY

Palm Sunday Pot Luck Dinner

April 10, 2022

A long standing tradition at the church is the Palm Sunday Pot Luck Dinner where everyone gets the opportunity to bring a favorite dish. We haven't had the pot luck in a couple of years due to the pandemic, but we are excited to have the dinner this year. The dinner is well attended and a lot of fun. It gives members and friends the opportunity to spend some time with each other in a very relaxed and social setting while enjoying a superb meal. For new members or those not accustomed to pot luck dinners the following is offered so you know what to expect.

- People who will be coming to the dinner are asked to sign-up on the list outside the kitchen door and indicate a category of dish that they'll be bringing. This helps all of us know what types of dishes are being brought and therefore helps us decide what our own offering should be. A special category is baked ham. It generally takes 3 or 4 baked hams to serve everyone. There will be a column to check if you would like to bring a ham for your contribution. A count of the sign-ups allows the Wider Church Fellowship Committee know how many tables to set and how much supplies to buy.
- On the day of the dinner, bring your dish to the kitchen before you go into church. Someone will be in the kitchen to receive your contribution. Let it be known if your dish is a cold dish or if it needs to be heated before serving. Salads and desserts that need chilling will be kept in the refrigerator. The committee will heat the hot dishes in the ovens and assure that everything is put out on the serving tables at the proper time.
- We'll gather for dinner right after the church service.
- The fellowship committee will provide coffee, tea, water, juice and milk.
- With so many appetizing things to choose from, most people tend to eat a bit more than they normally do at home (this is part of the fun). To accommodate this and assure that there is enough food to go around everyone is asked to bring an amount that is more than what would be needed for their family group.

We hope to see a big turn out on Palm Sunday April 10th. If you haven't been to a pot luck before, give it a try. You won't be disappointed!

*Wider Church Fellowship,
Craig McAllister*



Please consider hosting Coffee Hour one Sunday! The coffee is provided... you can make it a family activity... all you need to bring is a quart of milk. Snacks are optional.

We thank our committees, who fill in on a monthly rotation for any Sundays when we don't have individuals or families hosting coffee hours. Our goal is not to have to tap our committees regularly for our hospitality function. Sunday coffee hours matter to all of us! Please use the sign-up sheet to take a Sunday. Thank you!

Hiking Again! Yay!

We are out and about again and are planning a **hike on Sunday, April 3rd**, after church.

Come join us for a spring hike on the Nepaug section of the Tunxis Trail. This trail section is relatively flat and wide and accessible, making it easy for conversation as we walk. We can do as many as six miles but will probably limit it to no more than four round trip (we can turn around at any point). The woods will be waking up and may display some early blooms.

The trail head is 4.6 miles and about 7 minutes from church, on Route 202 in New Hartford. We will provide maps the day of the hike. Meet in the Parish Hall after service. Wear sturdy footwear and bring water.

Hope to see you there!

Hollace Bristol

Wider Church Fellowship



Mark your calendars!

On May 15th, we'll be heading to Hartford to watch a Yard Goats game.

Did you get your tickets? It will be a great afternoon!

Come and have fun with 30 of your closest church friends.

Please see Linda McAllister for more information.

Our 6th Scrip Anniversary!



Do you remember what you were doing 6 years ago this month? At least a few dozen of you were trying out our Scrip program for the first time!

In early 2016, I was sitting in a special council meeting and the trustees had been exploring lots of options to increase revenue and reduce expenses. The scrip fundraising program had been previously brought to their attention and they had researched it and explained to council briefly how it worked. It seemed like an easy way to bring in a modest addition to our bottom line and it was up for grabs if anyone was interested in coordinating it. I could hardly stop myself from volunteering, as often happens. I did some additional research, the treasurer opened up a dedicated bank account, and in April, we set up a table for the first of hundreds of coffee hours.

Over these last 6 years, we have raised roughly \$9000 for the church. While it's nothing to balance the budget on, it's an easy fundraiser with no real downside.

I believe it was the March 2016 council meeting where I gave a report on exactly how the program would work and the approval was given to go ahead. There sat Karen Needham, giving me the silent nod and hand gesture indicating she'd love to help me out... she has that same volunteering bug I do! And if you find yourself interested in helping out at the table once in a while during coffee hour, just give me a call. We can always use the extra hands. It's a fun way to socialize and do good at the same time.

And if you don't know about the Scrip program yet, clearly I am not doing my job very well! Scrip is an easy way you can help raise money for the church by buying gift cards for everyday expenses like groceries, gas, clothing, restaurants and gifts. It is literally "fundraising while you shop" and there are over 750 retailers to choose from. The best part about Scrip is that you pay for exactly what you get and the church makes money by purchasing the gift cards at less than face value. You can also order scrip online or through the RaiseRight app. Add gift cards to your cart and either pay by check, credit card or through an automatic withdrawal from your checking account. For more information on how to sign up online and get our enrollment code, just reach out. I'm available via phone (860-693-0134), email (c.levine@comcast.net) or find me at the Scrip table in coffee hour nearly every Sunday.

Thanks for your continued 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



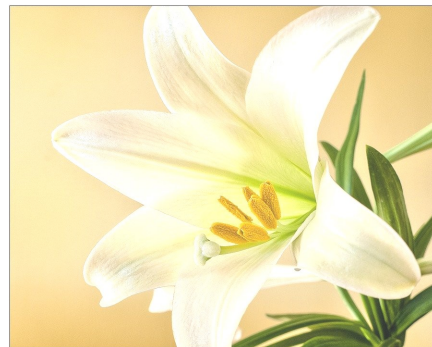
*A very special thank you to
Casey Levine
for her dedicated hard work in organizing
our Scrip Program for the past 6 years!*



Congratulations to



*Van Michael Ferguson,
son of Joshua & Michelle
Ferguson,
who was baptized on
March 13, 2022
at Canton Center Church.*



God is still speaking !!!

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Visit our website at CantonCenterChurch.org

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

Like us on Facebook



APRIL 2022

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 AA 11 pm |
| 3 Worship & Communion 10:00 am Church Hike after service | 4 Sr. Choir 5 pm ACA 7 pm | 5 AA 7 pm | 6 Deacons Meeting 7:00 pm | 7 Handbell Choir 5:30 pm | 8 | 9 AA 11 pm |
| 10 PALM SUNDAY Worship 10:00 am POTLUCK DINNER | 11 Sr. Choir 5 pm Trustees 7:00 pm ACA 7 pm | 12 AA 7 pm | 13 | 14 MAUNDY THURSDAY Worship 7:30 pm Handbell Choir 5:30 pm | 15 GOOD FRIDAY Sanctuary Open 12-3 pm | 16 CHURCH CLEAN UP DAY 9-12 pm AA 11 pm |
| 17 EASTER Worship 10:00 am Lilies/Tulips ready for pick up | 18 Sr. Choir 5 pm ACA 7 pm | 19 Council Meeting 7:00 pm AA 7 pm | 20 | 21 Handbell Choir 5:30 pm | 22 | 23 AA 11 pm |
| 24 Worship 10:00 am (Food Collection) | 25 Sr. Choir 5 pm ACA 7 pm | 26 AA 7 pm | 27 | 28 Handbell Choir 5:30 pm | 29 | 30 AA 11 pm |



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(United Church of Christ)
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Organist/Director of Music:

(860)693-4216

Mary Lou Keefe
music@cantoncenterchurch.org

Worship ~ Sunday at 10:00 a.m.

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

cantoncenterchurch.org
