

THE CHURCHMOUSE

Newsletter of The First Congregational Church, Canton Center, CT

December 2023



Message from the pastor...

There is no better time than now, this very Christmas season, for all of us to rededicate ourselves to the principles taught by Jesus the Christ. It is the time to love the Lord, our God, with all our heart - and our neighbors as ourselves. ~Thomas S. Monson

Our Christian season of Advent has once again opened a door inviting each of us to behold an optimistic vision for the remainder of 2023 and beyond. Prayerfully it will begin with thoughtful preparation of how to serve our Lord in the New Year with a rebirth of our faith in the Christmas story. I encourage each of you to step back from your day-to-day life and take a panoramic perspective of the journey you have traveled up to this point in your faith life. As you do, thank God you have safely traversed ravines of despair and grief with Jesus by your side. Thank God for the blessings along the way that have helped shaped who you are today. Let us similarly offer our sincere and gracious gratitude to God for our church family.

Advent is a time of preparation, not just for the celebration of Christmas but introspection for the renewal of our faith and commitment to living a Christ-centered life. Let us embrace this opportunity to strengthen our bonds with one another and build a community that reflects the love and compassion of Jesus Christ. Advent presents a gateway to a hopeful vision for the coming year. Seek God in prayer for that bright Divine Light to guide you into and through 2024 to enlarge and mature your faith life.

Let us explore together how the First Congregational Church Canton Center can build a strong foundation for all the good we can accomplish together in 2024. What are your hopes and dreams for FCCCC this coming year? *Share your thoughts and ideas with others.* Acknowledge our weaknesses, not as shortcomings, but as opportunities for growth. Harness and give thanks for those things we do well? *Share your thoughts and ideas with others.* By sharing our aspirations, dreams, conflicts, and accomplishments we will kindle a spark of creativity and innovation within us illuminating the path towards our goals and objectives. Most importantly, strive to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and extend that same love to our neighbors, embodying the true spirit of Christmas. May this Advent season be a beacon of hope and renewal, guiding us towards a brighter and more fulfilling 2024.

In Christ's love,

Pastor Kurt

WORSHIP MINISTRY

Worship in December

All Sunday a.m. services at 10:00.

To watch a service live online, go to our website homepage and click on the icon. To review a recorded service later, see under "Connect with Us" on our website (Sunday services generally posted on Mondays), or go to YouTube.com & search "Canton Center Church" (morning service usually available there by Sun. afternoon.)

Dec. 3	First Sunday of Advent <i>Communion</i>
Dec. 10	Second Sunday of Advent
Dec. 17	Third Sunday of Advent <i>Music Sunday</i>
Dec. 24 10:00 am	Fourth Sunday of Advent; Christmas Eve
5:00 pm	Christmas Eve Candlelight Service <i>Offerings will be donated to the Canton Fuel Bank</i>
Dec. 31	First Sunday after Christmas

Pictures of our "Children's Message" from our Nov. 26 service



Deacons' Bench

Eric Herbek, Deacon

WORSHIP MINISTRY



Hello everyone, the deacons and Rev Kurt are working to plan a joyous and reverent holiday season for our church. One aspect of the service that sets this season apart is the weekly lighting of the Advent Wreath candles. We're blessed to have a confirmation class this year, and our confirmands and their mentors have kindly volunteered to light the candles. I thought this was a good time to reflect on both the history as well as the meaning of each of the candles, and what it means to me personally as a deacon and a member of our church.

The origin of the Advent wreath has been traced back to Lutheran churches in Germany in the 1600s. Historians credit Johann Hinrich Wichern (1808–1881), a Lutheran pastor in Germany, for bringing the idea closer to its current form to help children countdown to Christmas. In 1839, he built a large wooden ring with 24 small red and 4 large white candles. A small candle was lit successively every weekday and Saturday during Advent and on Sundays a large white candle was lit. This tradition likely evolved into an "Advent wreath" and became adopted as a Christian tradition, spreading beyond Germany in both Protestant and Catholic churches.

The Advent wreath now carries important symbolism for our faith. The circular shape symbolizes God's infinite love for us. The evergreen leaves symbolize the everlasting nature of God. And finally, each of the candles represent the weeks of Advent - symbolizing hope, peace, joy, and, finally, love.

When I reflect on these important symbols and what they should remind us, I think about our lives in these challenging times on both a national and worldwide scale, or even our challenges in our community and church. It can be so easy to get wrapped up in the news and feel we are moving in the wrong direction as a church, a country, or a world. We need to be reminded there is always hope when we are with God. God's path will lead us to the peace that we seek. There is joy coming if we can open our eyes and hearts to God. And finally, God's love is there for us when we need it.

I hope you all have a joyous holiday season! And a reminder from the deacons that we have moved up Christmas Eve service to 5:00 on Sunday the 24th! We will have regular service at 10am on the 24th as well as Christmas Eve service at 5:00. I hope to see you all there if you are able to make it!

Yours in Christ,

Eric

Music Notes

Mary Lou Keefe, Director of Music

WORSHIP MINISTRY

This is a very exciting time of year for children and grownups alike and of course for musicians what with special music abounding. Our own Senior choir and guest singers along with instrumentalists will be offering a beautiful and poignant musical gift on Dec. 17th entitled "Have You Heard" by Joel Raney during the regular service. Raney very cleverly tells the Christmas story using narration and Celtic tunes disguised within our familiar Christmas Carols. The work has its difficult passages but all the better when conquered and the sheer beauty is revealed. We happily and eagerly present this work and hope indeed it sets the stage for the upcoming holiday season. The bell choir will also be playing that Sunday. The service will be followed by an enhanced coffee hour.



Special thanks to the following choir members:

Jerry Alonzy who was responsible for purchasing and installing my new computer.

Marilyn Larose who is on track to improve some hiccups that exist in the sound system in the choir loft

Gina Magennis who happily and productively took over the bell choir when I was away.

Karen Needham who has been loyally and skillfully playing the morning chimes for quite some time and we make a great duo.

And the **Senior Choir** members who have been giving extra time to rehearsals without complaint.



Dec 4th Sr. Choir 4:30
 Dec. 7th Bells 5:30
 Dec. 11th Srs 4:30
 Dec. 14th Bells 5:30
 Dec. 18th Srs. 4:30
 Dec. 21st. Bells 5:30
 Dec. 25 Merry Christmas

Director of Faith Formation

Dr. Hollace Bristol

FAITH FORMATION MINISTRY

There is an enlivened energy at church these days. Can you feel it? This past Sunday there were twelve young people in Church School, of ages seven to fifteen. This is the most children we have had on a single Sunday since the pandemic. We are excited! Judy Robinson has also been working on building a children's choir for Christmas and we have six lively young singers who have stepped forward to participate in Music Sunday on December 17th. And, we are working on involving young people in the Sunday services for Advent and in the months ahead.

We had a successful movie night on October 27th. We showed the movie *Wonder*, and served pizza, veggies, fruit, popcorn, and Halloween treats and enjoyed some group activities. This provided an opportunity for parents to enjoy an evening out. We will have **another movie night on Friday, December 8th from 5:00 to 8:30.** We are hopeful that this will give parents a break to participate in holiday activities or enjoy an evening out. Encourage your children to bring a friend! All are welcome.

We wish you a joyous, heart-felt Christmas!

We are so grateful to be part of this loving church family!

Pictures from our previous classes



Missions & Outreach

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Thank you for your Christmas generosity to the families served by Wellmore and Canton Social Services. The gift cards you provided will help these families create a personalized Christmas.

December Missions

Our Missions Box collection for December will be our traditional **new hats, gloves, mittens and scarves** on the Christmas tree. Please place items in a plastic zip bag so they will not get full of needles. Then put the bag on or under the Christmas tree in the front of the sanctuary. The hats, gloves etc. will be donated to local organizations in the Farmington Valley area.

Our Mission Box collection will also include **new or gently used, clean blankets** for the clients of Brian's Angels. Many of these folks are sleeping outside, in tents, or other places with limited shelter. There will be a bin by the Christmas tree for the blankets. (These do not need to be bagged.)



Sandwich making for Brian's Angel

We will be making sandwiches for Brian's Angels on Friday, December 15th. We will meet at 10:00 rather than our usual 11:00 due to the Prime Timers luncheon and concert that day.

January heads up...

We will be collecting coats again in January, so if you're sorting out after Christmas, please save good usable coats for that collection.



Prime Timers' Annual Christmas Potluck & Concert

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2023

The PRIME TIMERS' annual Christmas Potluck Luncheon will be held on **FRIDAY**, December 15, 2023, at 11:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall.

The Canton High School Chamber Singers will join us for lunch, weather permitting, and present a concert following lunch.

If school is canceled then the luncheon and concert will be canceled.

Note the change of day to **FRIDAY** to accommodate the schedule of the chorus.

Please note that due to the early arrival of the Chamber Singers, we are requesting that Prime Timers' arrive at 11:00 a.m. with a casserole of your choice.

You do not have to belong to Prime Timers' to attend. All are welcome.

If you are not a member and wish to attend or have any questions, you may contact Donna Hammond at 860-693-8676.

Wider Church

FELLOWSHIP/INREACH MINISTRY



A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Please join us for an early Lunch and a Christmas traditional production of "A Christmas Carol" in Riverton at the Riverton Congregational Church.

Wider Church has bought a block of 20 tickets for "A Christmas Carol" in Riverton on **Saturday, December 2nd at 1:00p.m.,** with the option to join us for lunch/brunch at the Riverton Inn at 11:00 a.m. before the performance.

Many of our choir members are the stars of this wonderful musical performance.

Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$12.50 for Seniors, \$10 for children 12 and under.

If interested, please sign up on the sheet on the kitchen door or contact:
Gina Magennis at 860-965-2061 or g.magennis76@gmail.com.



*Thank you
to all our
volunteers
for helping with
our annual
Chicken Pie Supper!*



SUPPORT TO OUR MINISTRIES

**Shop Scrip this Christmas!**

It's the most wonderful time of the year!

Gift cards are 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, 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! Cards are offered in various denominations and some start as low as \$5 or \$10. There are nearly 600 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 is 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.raiseright.com to start making your list. I also have a list of just local retailers and restaurants available at the Scrip table. Please note that the deadline to order cards to ensure they are here in time for Christmas is **December 18th**. Last minute shoppers can visit the table on 12/24 (morning service only!) to see what’s available in inventory to pick up same day.

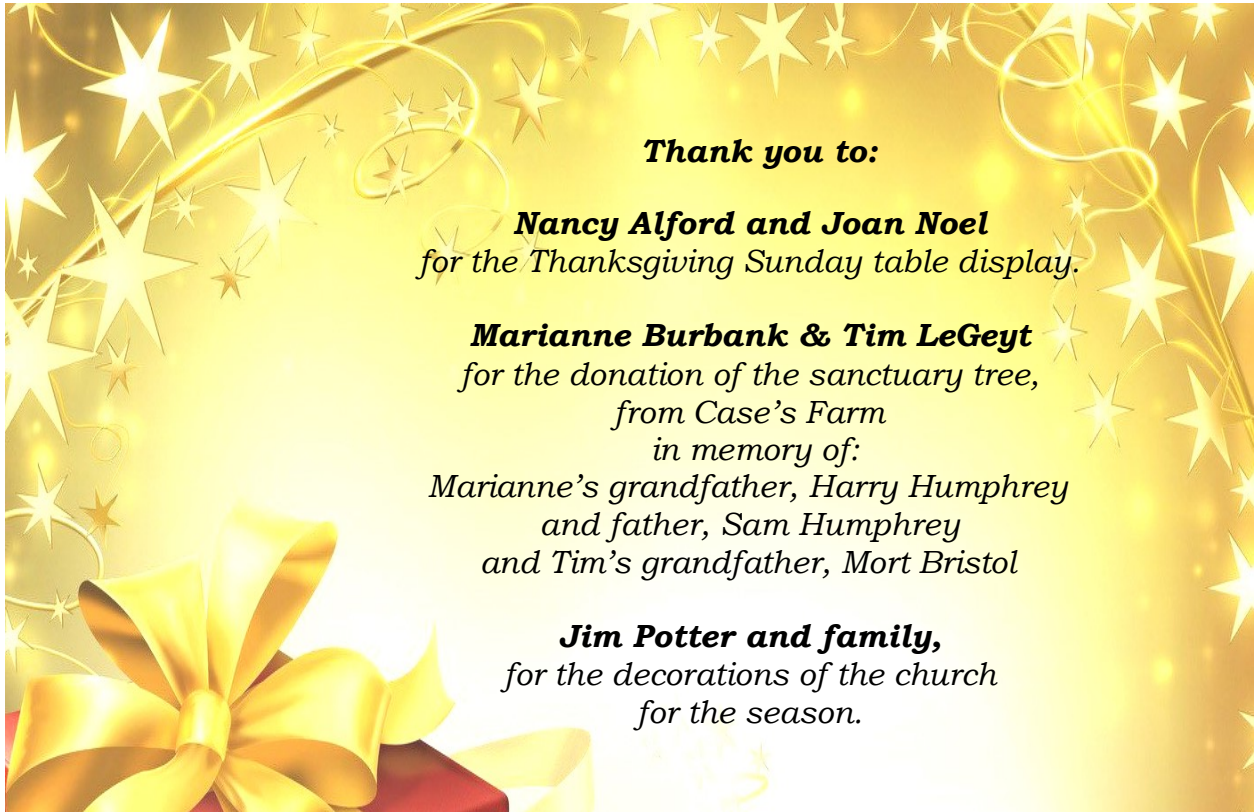
If you’re not in church, you can always call or email me (860)-693-0134 or c.levine@comcast.net or you can place an order online or through the RaiseRight app. Reach out to me for our church’s unique enrollment code if you wish to place an order electronically.

Thanks, as always, for your support!

Merry Christmas!

Casey

SUPPORT TO OUR MINISTRIES



POINSETTIA PLANTS \$ 8.25 each

Please fill out the form below and return to the office if you are interested in providing Poinsettias for our Dec. 17 & 24 Services.

2024 CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA ORDER FORM



Name: _____

of poinsettia plants ordered _____ x \$ 8.25 = _____

(Please attach cash or check made payable to: FCCCC by Sunday, December 12th.)

In Memory of:

In Honor of:

In Celebration of:



DECEMBER 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 A Christmas Carol Riverton Inn 1 pm AA 11:00 p.m.
3 Worship & Communion 10:00 am	4 Choir 4:30 pm ACA 7:00 pm Al-Anon 7:00 pm	5 AA 7:00 pm	6 Diaconate 7:00 pm	7 Handbell Choir 5:30 pm	8 Movie Night 5-8:30 pm	9 AA 11:00 p.m.
10 Worship 10:00 am	11 Choir 4:30 pm Trustee 7:00 pm ACA 7:00 pm Al-Anon 7:00 pm	12 AA 7:00 pm	13 Council Meeting 7:30 pm	14 Handbell Choir 5:30 pm	15 Sandwich making 10 am Carol Sing Luncheon 11:30 am	16 AA 11:00 p.m.
17 Worship Music Sunday 10:00 am	18 Choir 4:30 pm ACA 7:00 pm Al-Anon 7:00 pm	19 AA 7:00 pm	20	21 Handbell Choir 5:30 pm	22	23 AA 11:00 p.m.
24 Worship 10:00 am Christmas Eve Service 5:00 pm	25  ACA 7:00 pm Al-Anon 7:00 pm	26 AA 7:00 pm	27	28	29	30 AA 11:00 p.m.
31 Worship 10:00 am						



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
Cantoncenterchurch.org

Interim Pastor

860-693-4207

Pastor Kurt Satherlie

pastor@cantoncenterchurch.org

Office

(860)693-4581

Kristen DiMattia, Office Manager

office@cantoncenterchurch.org

Mon.- Fri. 8:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Organist/Director of Music:

(860)693-4216

Mary Lou Keefe

music@cantoncenterchurch.org

Director of Faith Formation:

Hollace Bristol

CE@cantoncenterchurch.org

Asst. Director of Faith Formation:

Karen Needham

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Worship every Sunday at 10:00 a.m.