THE CHURCHMOUSE

Newsletter of The First Congregational Church, Canton Center, CT

February 2024



A message from the pastor...

To all in (Canton Center Church) who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. ~Romans 1:7

Dear Canton Center Church Family,

October is 'Clergy Appreciation Month'. I'm not sure when it came about or by whom. So, in turn, I would like to inaugurate February as 'Congregation Appreciation Month'. It may not become a national or global event, however for me it feels perfect to offer all of you a note of tremendous gratitude for the people you are, the work you do for the church, your community, as well as your strong faith, bountiful grace & hospitality, kindness, and love.

February begins my fifth month as your Interim Pastor, and it feels we are on a robust journey paving the way for many wonderful things to happen in 2024. FCCCC is an amazing congregation and I thank God for the blessing and honor to have been called to your church for however many weeks or months I may serve. I could go on yet do not want to make anyone's head 'swell' up too much!!

February seems a tad early to begin thinking about Easter. As we approach Lent, a season on our church calendar of reflection and renewal invites us to not only look inward but also outward. Instead of solely focusing on "giving up" something, let's challenge ourselves to "add" joy to the lives of others. Visit someone who might feel isolated, reach out to a former parishioner, or let's delve into a Book/Bible Study. Ask yourselves where your passions lie and invite others to join you in making our church a beacon of collective purpose and faith. Remember, serving others and spreading joy is a powerful reflection of Christ's love and sacrifice.

Lent provides a time of tuning into God, realizing the blessings and beauty in our lives found in following Christ. Lent is reconnecting in joy to the grace of God, surrounded by others who share their unique gifts and experiences of living as followers of Christ. This Lent let's embark on a journey of shared joy and deeper connection.

"As Lent is the time for greater love, listen to Jesus' thirst...'Repent and believe' Jesus tells us. What are we to repent? Our indifference, our hardness of heart. What are we to believe? Jesus thirsts even now, in your heart and in the poor -- He knows your weakness. He wants only your love, wants only the chance to love you." ~Mother Theresa

May the warmth of your spirits and the strength of your faith continue to illuminate our church and community.

In Christ's love,

Pastor Kurt

WORSHIP MINISTRY

WORSHIP IN FEBRUARY

All Sunday services at 10 a.m., in person & live streamed. To watch a service live, go to "Connect with Us" on our website homepage, then to "Livestream." To watch a recorded service later, see archive of recorded services under "Connect with Us," or go to YouTube.com and search "Canton Center Church. Sunday services are generally posted on our website on Mondays, and usually are available for viewing on YouTube by Sunday afternoons.

Feb. 4	Fifth Sunday	y after Ep	iphany;	Communion

Feb. 11 Last Sunday in Epiphany Season

Wed., Ash Wednesday, Beginning of Lent

Feb. 14 6:00 p.m. Simple Supper in Parish Hall 6:30 p.m. Brief service in the sanctuary

Feb. 18 First Sunday in Lent

Feb. 25 Second Sunday in Lent



February 14

Simple supper at 6:00 p.m. followed by a brief service at 6:30 p.m.

Please come and join us as we begin the season of Lent.

Musical Notes Mary Lou Keefe, Director of Music



WORSHIP MINISTRY

Another Christmas has come and gone and all the beautifully decorated trees and homes have been dedecorated sadly with everything carefully put away for another year. I hope some of you were able to indulge in some of the musical offerings and plays. It had been years since Pete and I had visited the Riverton church to see The Christmas Carol. There were four members of the senior choir who participated in the play this year, namely Jerry Alonzy as Scrooge, Judy Robinson as the music director and actress with many parts, Karen Needham, who portrayed Mrs. Dilbar, and sang in the chorus among other feats, and Art Dewey, who sang in the chorus. It was a very enjoyable evening. The good news was that none of the above had to miss any choir rehearsals this year.

I have so many people to thank for their musical endeavors in December. We started working on the cantata in mid October with presentation on Dec. 17th. Many of the members took it upon themselves to work overtime by listening to the music which definitely helped in the overall performance. Special thanks to the following: Jerry who was the narrator, sound man, soloist and choir member, Kathleen who was soloist and choir member, to Jon Keefe who was drummer and guitarist, and Cindy who was the flutest.

Of course special thanks to all the choir members and guest singers.

For Christmas Eve, there were two two ringers absent, and Gina was able to have Cary LeGeyt sub for one position, and in fact, Gina played for Karen's position, Cindy played for Gina's position and I played for Cindy. It all seemed to work out.

Sadly in other news, our Allison will be absent for several weeks with an eye ailment and Judy will be subbing for her.

With Christmas Eve falling on a Sunday this year, there was the dilemma of whether the choir would sing for both services and they did which was very gratifying to me and others I am sure.

Please know that the Sr. choir has shrunk by three members due to health issues. If any of you have ever had the inclination to join a choir, now would be the perfect time. The members are very welcoming. As our former minister Evan Sealand said, if you can carry a tune across the room you are in. The other option is to be a guest singer and get to sing the cantatas and other special music.

Judy took it upon herself to start a children's choir with the goal of singing for Music Sunday. Well, they did and and we are hoping that she will do the same for Easter Sunday.

Special thanks to Marilyn who scheduled and participated in, along with Jerry, a meeting with the sound man who put in our system. There have been changes which have enhanced the sound from the choir loft.

In addition, Marilyn caulked the leaky window by herself with no provocation and we hope this will help the situation with the piano going out of tune too frequently.

Special thanks to Jerry who purchased and installed my new computer as well as debugged it and trained me on some of the new features.

Thank you also to Judy who has agreed to be on the Music Committee starting in May.

Deacons' Bench Cora Mutch

WORSHIP MINISTRY

The Deacons have started to have greeters for our Sunday morning worship services. We have heard from many members who wanted us to return to this part of our service and we are happy to have this tradition brought back to Canton Center. We have had the confirmands and their parents or mentors greet in December.

We are actively looking for members to serve as greeters for our services from now on. If you would like to be a greeter, just tell me and I will put you on the schedule. If I don't hear from you, I might ask you to serve as a greeter.

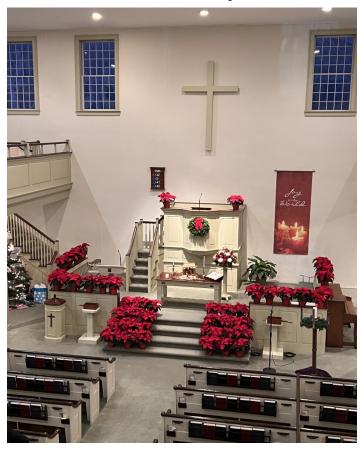
The duties for greeters are easy! Arrive by 9:30ish and stand in the vestibule and greet people coming in for the worship service. It is always nice to have a friendly hello and smile as one enters the church! Thank you for helping our church to be a welcoming place for our members and visitors.

If anyone is available to learn how to operate the livestream camera, please let me know. We have 5-6 people now and would like to have more to cover this aspect of our worship service. There is a binder with the directions.

Thank you!

Cora Mutch

Photos from our Christmas Eve Worship ~ 2023





Christian Education News

Dr. Hollace Bristol, Director of Faith Formation

Karen Needham and I have started the tradition of hosting an evening of kids' activities on selected Friday nights. This is both an opportunity for parents to enjoy the evening out and for kids to invite friends into our community. We have held two movie nights and this month we are hosting a **Cooperative Games Night on Friday, February 16th from 5:00 to 8:00.** You may wonder what a cooperative game is and how it is different from card games or board games or sport games. In cooperative games there are no winners and losers. Everyone wins. The group is typically invited to plan and carry out activities that accomplish a stated goal or result. Every Sunday in Church School we use this type of challenge to illustrate the scripture reading or biblical theme for that particular Sunday as decided by the Pastor.

An example may be helpful here. The first Sunday of 2024 we focused on the idea of *Turning Over a New Leaf*, meaning as the new year begins, what do we want to change? What new ideas, new habits, new friends, new experiences, new thoughts, new feelings, or new ways of being do we want to invite into our lives. We read the scripture message from Isaiah, Chapter 43:18-19 and talked about being aware of what we want to leave behind and what we want to newly embrace. Then we had the children pair up and face each other, observing the details of how their partner looked. We asked them to then stand back-to-back and change four things about their appearance. When everyone had done this, we asked them to turn around and face their partner and try to identify the four things that their partner had changed. We repeated this one more time, changing two additional things.

Before they had time to change back to "normal," we asked them to talk about how it feels sometimes to do things differently, dress differently, wear your hair differently, and generally change your appearance to something other than what you find comfortable. We related this to the idea that finding new ways of being is not always easy; sometimes it can be quite uncomfortable, but if our heart tells us to follow a new thought, new habit, new experience, it may be worth the discomfort.

FAITH FORMATION MINISTRY





Next, we had the kids write one thing they wanted to change on a piece of paper, fold the paper and write their name on it, with the understanding that these ideas are for their eyes only and not to be shared. We had the children place their papers under a yoga mat and then all stand on the mat to play out the idea of "Turning Over a New Leaf," both literally and figuratively. The directions were to figure out how to turn over the mat so that everyone is standing on the other side of the mat and to accomplish the goal without anyone stepping on the floor at any time. If someone stepped on the floor, they had to start over. So, imagine six children doing this. Imagine the ideas shared, the fun, the ways they decided to work together, the laughter and the success!! Then we debriefed around how they supported each other and shared ideas to reach their goal. Life gives us many (could be daily) opportunities to ask for support to turn over each new leaf in whatever form it appears. May it be so with us! Blessings, always!

Church Historian's Corner Tim LeGeyt

A Notable Church Member

This article is about Lewis Sprague Mills, born in the 1870's and died in the 1960's, who was a lifelongmember of our Church and a Canton Center native.

Mr. Mills descended from a long line of Millses who inhabited Canton Center from the early 1740's and was the son of Deacon Archibald Mills, who lived in the house on Barbourtown Road just opposite Bunker Hill Road (now owned by Greg Boyko) where Mary Mills Humphrey, his niece, grew up.

Mr. Mills attended the Canton Schools, including the one-room schoolhouses on West Road and the one right across from our church. He wanted to become a photographer and took some schooling toward that end, but his education evolved into that of being a teacher.

Mr. Mills made a sizeable contribution to education in Connecticut as a teacher, a principal and eventually, a school supervisor for the State of Connecticut. As a result of his contributions to the educational process in Connecticut, the new high school in Burlington was named the Lewis S. Mills High School in the early 1960's.



-Photo by Ray Hazzard

READING THE BARKHAMSTED LIGHT HOUSE LEGEND

Parish House, Canton Center, Conn., May 29, 1952. Names, left to right— Lewis S. Mills, Carol Turner, Mrs. Roy Turner in charge of the children who sang the "Good Night Prayer" of the Light House Children, Susan Bristol, Janice Turner, Walter Burdick, Margaret Perry, Stewart Gillespie, Judy Yacovino.

Mid way in the reading there were musical selections by Nancy Ann Kimmerle, Mrs. Jo Dyer Wells, and Mrs. Ada L. Nichols. Mrs. Helen Sweeton was in charge of the evening's exercises.

On June 24, at the auditorium of the new Consolidated School in Pleasant Valley, Barkhamsted, under the direction of Rev. Arthur Berry, a second reading from the Light House Legend was equally successful. Mrs. Florence Shelley, a direct described of James and Molly Chaugham, was present on the stage with her son, Arthur. Here, too, a group of children sang the evening prayer of the Light House Children.

Mr. Mills contributed to the history of our area as well, becoming the editor of the Lure of the Litchfield Hills, a magazine that encompassed thirty-some years of articles about the northwest part of Connecticut and the people who made it special.

He also contributed personally to the history of our area as the picture included with this article conveys. The picture shows Mr. Mills in our old Parish Hall (a building not still standing) across the street from our Church, sitting on the stage with some children cared for by Marian Turner of our church, where he recited the poem entitled "The Legend of the Barkhamsted Lighthouse" in 1952.

Mr. Mills died in March of 1965 and his funeral was held in our Church with the Rev. Evans F. Sealand, Jr. conducting. Mr. Mills is buried in the Mills plot across the street from our church.

PHOTOS FROM OUR ITALIAN BUFFET ON JANUARY 28, 2024



Page 8 The Churchmouse

Missions & Outreach

Martha Stansel

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Missions Box collection for February:

Cleaning supplies, laundry detergent, coffee, and canned or dry milk for the Canton Food Bank.

These items are less frequently donated, but very much needed and appreciated by the clients of the Food Bank.

Brian's Angels:

We will make sandwiches on Friday, February 16th at 11:00 a.m. Sign-ups will be on the kitchen door.



This year's much anticipated auction will be held after church on Sunday, February 11th, so grab coffee and a snack, have a seat, and be ready to bid on your favorite cake. Suggested themes this year are Valentine's Day and The Super Bowl, but feel free to follow your fancy on your design. Anyone can make a cake to be auctioned, so feel free to invite your friends and family to bake as well as to come and bid.

Cakes should be delivered to the Fellowship Hall before church so they can be tagged. During church, representatives of the Missions and Outreach Committee will taste a tiny bit of the cakes (or you can make a small extra piece) and they will be "judged" in a variety of strictly for fun categories.



If you've attended the cake auction before, you know we receive a variety of delicious and creative cakes for the auction. You also know how much fun our very own professional auctioneer, Paul Stansel, makes the whole event. Plus, all proceeds benefit the Mission and Outreach Committee's Food Fund. This fund supports missions such as meals and sandwiches for Brian's Angels and specific food requests from Hands of Grace.

Photo of a cake from October 2022 auction.

The Missions and Outreach Committee meets monthly to discuss ways to involve the congregation in various community outreach missions as well as to carefully consider the distribution of monies allocated to us through the yearly budget.

We welcome your input, suggestions, and ideas to help us make those plans. Feel free to speak to any of the members of the committee:

Geri Bunnell, Martha Stansel, Debbie Poleyestewa, Cary LeGeyt, Carol Orlando, John Raye, Casey Levine, Beth Lingenheld, and Rebecca Glinsman.

SUPPORT TO OUR MINISTRIES

Scrip 2023 Year in Review

February is here and it's time for another Scrip "Year in Review". We had a banner year at the Scrip table, and hopefully that's reflective of how everyone else's wallets were feeling in 2023 compared to the 3 years prior. Here are some stats:

Funds Raised: \$1,457.33 – this is almost double what we made in 2022, 61% more than 2021 and 58% more than 2020. I'd say we are just about back to "normal" – a way a lot of us finally felt in 2023!

Participants: 49 – we absolutely have our loyal scrip shoppers that purchase gift cards weekly or 2-3 times per month (usually for everyday basics like groceries, pharmacy trips and Amazon purchases). However, we had a handful of new folks trying scrip for the first time, either for Christmas gifts or to support our church's missions (more on that later)

Number of Gift Cards Sold: 887

Number of Retailers: 44 – while Scrip has gift cards available for over 650 different retailers, we definitely have our favorites! Here are the top 5 retailers and number of cards sold for each:

- Stop & Shop 118
- Shop Rite 83
- Amazon 53
- Target 51
- Walmart 48

Rounding out the Top 10 are CVS (34), Dunkin (30), Starbucks (26), Visa (20) and Barnes & Noble (14). Our #1 and #2 have been consistently the same for many years, while Amazon replaced Dunkin in the #3 spot (which Dunkin had held for at least the last 3 years). Maybe more people are buying their coffee on Amazon and skipping the drive thru?

Highest Earning months: November (\$270.45), December (\$239.13), March (\$166.78) – to no one's surprise, November and December are consistently the months where we sell the most gift cards and raise the most funds for our church. Not only are we buying gifts for our family and friends, but we are generously donating gift cards through the church to organizations like Wellmore and Canton Social Services. March came in as #3 in the ranking mostly because of our Easter collection of cards for Wellmore. I predict February will come in #3 in 2024 due to your generosity!

It's been a real pleasure running this program for our church. While there are certainly bigger and more lucrative fundraisers, this is about as low maintenance as we can get! I believe it fits in well with all the other ways we work to keep the lights on. I'm looking forward to growing more in 2024!

Thanks, as always, 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 & Affirming Congregation

NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

of the First Congregational Church, Canton Center, Connecticut, on Sunday, **March 10, 2024** at 10:45 a.m. OR on subsequent Sundays at 10:45 a.m. until a guorum is obtained.

AGENDA:

- 1. Call to order and opening prayer.
- 2. Reading of the call to the meeting.
- 3. Presentation of the Minutes from the previous meeting(s).
- 4. Receiving and accepting of the reports of the church officers, committee chairpersons, and staff.
- 5. Any other business proper to come before the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Bev Sealand, Clerk

REMINDER: ALL COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS & OFFICERS – ANNUAL REPORTS DUE 2/11

Each committee and pertinent officers are asked to please have their 2023 annual reports in to the church office no later than February 11 Annual Reports will be available a week before the Annual Meeting.







NBC CT or check the church web site at:

FEBRUARY 2024

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					Bell Choir 5:30 pm Cub Scouts 6:30 p.m.	2	3 AA 11:00 p.m.
4	Worship & Communion 10:00 am	Senior Choir 4:30 pm Al-Anon 7:00 pm ACA 7:00 pm	6	7 Deacons 7:00 pm	8 Bell Choir 5:30 pm	9	Cub Scouts 8 am Pinewood Derby AA 11:00 p.m.
11	Worship 10:00 am Cake Auction Annual Reports Due	Senior Choir 4:30 pm Trustees 7:00 pm Al-Anon 7:00 pm ACA 7:00 pm	13 AA 7:00 pm	Meal 6:00 pm Service 6:30 pm	Bell Choir 5:30 pm	16 Sandwich Making for Brian's Angels 11 am Faith Formation Cooperative Game Night 5-8 pm	17 AA 11:00 p.m.
18	Worship 10:00 am	Senior Choir 4:30 pm Al-Anon 7:00 pm ACA 7:00 pm	20 AA 7:00 pm	Council 7:00 pm	Bell Choir 5:30 pm	23	24 AA 11:00 p.m.
25	Worship 10:00 am Fourth Sunday Food Collection	Senior Choir 4:30 pm Al-Anon 7:00 pm ACA 7:00 pm	27 AA 7:00 pm	28	29 Bell Choir 5:30 pm		



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

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Mary Lou Keefe

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Director of Faith Formation:

Hollace Bristol

CE@cantoncenterchurch.org

Asst. Director of Faith Formation:

Karen Needham CE@cantoncenterchurch.org

Worship every Sunday at 10:00 a.m.