

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 after Epiphany; 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.*

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

FAITH FORMATION MINISTRY

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.

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 lifelong member 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.

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.



—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 Kimberle, 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 descendant 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.

PHOTOS FROM OUR ITALIAN BUFFET ON JANUARY 28, 2024



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.

The Cake Auction Is February 11th!!

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



FEBRUARY 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Bell Choir 5:30 pm Cub Scouts 6:30 p.m.	2	3 AA 11:00 p.m.
4 Worship & Communion 10:00 am	5 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	10 Cub Scouts 8 am Pinewood Derby AA 11:00 p.m.
11 Worship 10:00 am Cake Auction <i>Annual Reports Due</i>	12 Senior Choir 4:30 pm Trustees 7:00 pm Al-Anon 7:00 pm ACA 7:00 pm	13 AA 7:00 pm	14  Meal 6:00 pm Service 6:30 pm	15 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	19 Senior Choir 4:30 pm Al-Anon 7:00 pm ACA 7:00 pm	20 AA 7:00 pm	21 Council 7:00 pm	22 Bell Choir 5:30 pm	23	24 AA 11:00 p.m.
25 Worship 10:00 am <i>Fourth Sunday Food Collection</i>	26 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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Worship every Sunday at 10:00 a.m.