

# THE CHURCHMOUSE

Newsletter of The First Congregational Church, Canton Center, CT

March 2024



## *Message from the pastor...*

Are you a sports fan? As we dive into March, the excitement among college basketball enthusiasts is palpable – it's time for March Madness! For Connecticut Huskie fans, like my dear 100+-year-old mother, it's akin to the Super Bowl of college basketball. While my own enthusiasm may have waned a bit, especially with two of my sons' graduating from UConn, it got me thinking about a different kind of "March Madness" we often overlook – the season of Lent.

In the hustle and bustle of life, have we, as Christians lost the anticipation and enthusiasm for Lent, reducing it to just another month on the church calendar? A recent survey in Nashville, TN, revealed that 76% of Americans don't typically observe Lent, with some viewing it as disconnected from its religious roots.

Lent is a time when many people will give up something they enjoy, hopefully not Lent itself! Lent is intended to prepare us for Easter. Lend and lent are the present and past tenses of *to lend*. Let's consider "lending" ourselves to others – a smile, a shoulder, a helping hand – without expecting anything in return, knowing that our acts of kindness can be paid forward. What is important is that our 'kind act' allows us to feel we are emulating Christ's love.

Theologically, the season of Lent encourages us to reflect on Christ's life, suffering, and death, and a time of meditation and self-reflection, where we disengage from worldly distractions drawing closer to God. As we navigate the more challenging aspects of our faith, Lent offers an opportunity to tune into God, appreciate the blessings, and reconnect joyfully with the grace found in following Christ

May this Lenten season be a time of renewal for each of us, as we emulate Jesus in our thoughts and actions, realizing the beauty and blessings in our lives through the grace of God and Christ's victory over death.

Blessings and Peace to each of you.

In Christ's love,

*Pastor Kurt*

## WORSHIP MINISTRY

### **WORSHIP IN MARCH**

- March 3**      **Third Sunday in Lent**
- March 10**    **Fourth Sunday in Lent;**  
*Communion*
- March 17**    **Fifth Sunday in Lent**

### **HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE**

- March 24**    **Palm Sunday; Beginning of Holy Week**  
*Special choral music*
- March 28**    **Maundy Thursday**  
**7:30 p.m.**    *Tenebrae & Communion Service*
- March 29**    **Good Friday**  
**12 – 3 p.m.**   *Sanctuary open for personal meditation*
- March 31**    **Easter Sunday**

*Photograph from February 14 ~ Ash Wednesday*



Musical Notes

Mary Lou Keefe, Director of Music

WORSHIP MINISTRY

The truth is we have a shortage of choir members and therefore we are openly recruiting for new choir members. That is not to say that the present members are not adequate but rather as the saying goes: "there is safety in numbers" and I am positive that all the members would love more in-coming members and also would be welcoming and caring as would I. So to be exact I, we, are looking for new members. One need not be a great singer but must be able to carry a tune and have a modicum of music reading ability. We presently need all parts, Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. If you are a great singer to begin with, so much the better.

I realize that singing or ringing is one big commitment and not everyone has the time to commit. I can say that the present choir members for the most part are also involved in other aspects of the church or may work full time but put aside time to sing. There is usually a good funny joke to begin the rehearsal always provided by Paul Stansel. When we get to work on a piece of music literature, the members are polite and not disruptive, and when we conquer a piece such as our recent cantata we are collectively joyful. The music that we sing comes from a wide array of styles and difficulty. I have had some members exclaim that they feel so much better after singing. If you wanted to give us a try, you might be interested in being a guest singer which is a six week collaborative and that way you would get a taste of our routine and might consider a longer gig. Our rehearsals are on Monday from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Our guest rehearsals are seasonal and start at 5:15 p.m. If you are interested let me or any choir member know and we will look forward to working with you. There will be a folder waiting for you.



There will be special music on Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday as well as Maundy Thursday presented by the choirs and instrumentalists including choir anthems, solos and a duet among other music.

Please join us on Palm Sunday after the service for the pot luck dinner.

*Photographs of our wonderful cakes prepared for our Cake Auction on February 11th.*



## WORSHIP MINISTRY

### Deacons' Bench

Bev Sealand

As we enter this time of Lent, I thought this tale was very fitting.

#### The Lord's Baseball Game

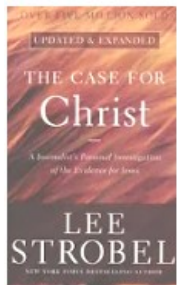
Bob and the Lord stood by to observe a baseball game. The Lord's team was playing Satan's team. The Lord's team was at bat, the score was tied zero to zero, and it was the bottom of the 9<sup>th</sup> inning with two outs. They continued to watch as a batter stepped up to the plate, whose name was Love. Love swung at the first pitch and hit a single, because **Love never fails**.

The next batter was named Faith, who also got a single, because **Faith works with Love**. The next batter up was named Godly Wisdom. Satan wound up and threw the first pitch. Godly Wisdom looked it over and let it pass – ball one. Three more pitches and Godly Wisdom walked, because **Godly Wisdom never swings as what Satan throws**. The bases were now loaded.

The Lord then turned to Bob and told him He was now going to bring in His star player. Up to the plate stepped Grace. Bob said, "He sure doesn't look like much!" Satan's whole team relaxed when they saw Grace. Thinking he had won the game, Satan wound up and fired his first pitch. To the shock of everyone, Grace hit the ball harder than anyone had ever seen. But Satan was not worried; his center fielder let very few get by. He went up for the ball, but it went right through his glove, hit him on the head and sent him crashing on the ground, then it continued over the fence for a home run! The Lord's team won.

The Lord then asked Bob if he knew why Love, Faith and Godly Wisdom could get on base, but could not win the game. Bob answered that he did not know why. The Lord explained, "If your love, faith and wisdom had won the game, you would think you had done it by yourself. **Love, Faith and Wisdom will get you on base, but only My Grace can get you Home.**"

Psalm 84:11 *"For the Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."*



### Book Club

#### "The Case for Christ"

Deacons Tim Lundgren and Eric Herbek will be starting a book club that meets monthly, with the first two meetings planned for 3/17 and 4/21 after coffee hour at church.

We will be reading "The Case for Christ", an exploration of the truth and historical fact of what we believe in the Bible.

The Deacons will supply the books for all who are interested. All are welcome - join us!

There will be a sign-up sheet posted in the church foyer, or see Tim ([tlundgren@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tlundgren@sbcglobal.net)) or Eric ([eric.herbek@gmail.com](mailto:eric.herbek@gmail.com)) directly if you would like to join.

We are looking for interested parties by 2/26 to allow time to order the books (and read them!).

## Faith Formation News

*Hollace Bristol*

As we began our recognition of Lent this week, we talked with the children about how the timing of Lent commemorates the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness. We asked the children what that might be like to be alone for 40 days in a place barren of other people. Then we asked the kids to take a carpet square and find a spot somewhere in the Parish Hall to sit for five minutes with the assignment to “do nothing” as a small experience of what it is like to be in a place with no other people and no resources. We were a bit unsure of how this assignment would be received by the children. We then called them back to the circle and debriefed their experience of “doing nothing.” They saw right through the charade to the impossibility of doing nothing as our bodies are always at work doing what they need to do to keep us alive; our heart is still beating, our lungs are still working so we can breathe, God is still at work in our bodies and in our lives. In other words, we always have ourselves and our inner God-given resources no matter where we are or what is going on around us.

As we go inward during this time of reflection, may we too be reminded that we are never where God is not.

On **Palm Sunday**, March 24<sup>th</sup>, which is also Music Sunday, the children will remain in the Church Service so they can enjoy the choral music with their families.

**We will hold Church School on Easter.**

### Pretzel Making ~ March 10th



On Sunday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, we will have the children make **pretzels** and bake them in time for coffee hour after the Annual Meeting.

Karen Needham and I hosted our first **Cooperative Games Night** on Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, from 5:00 - 8:00 pm. We had fourteen enthusiastic children attend, eight of whom are not currently connected with our Church. This model worked to maintain involvement by all the children, keeping them active and laughing. We will plan another event like this soon. The parents were very appreciative.

### First Congregational Church of Canton Center Adult Faith Formation with Hollace Bristol, Ed.D Spring 2024

#### *The Four Agreements*

In his celebrated book, *The Four Agreements*, don Miguel Ruiz, shares teachings of his Toltec lineage. Toltec knowledge arises from the same essential unity of truth as all the sacred esoteric traditions found around the world. Don Miguel describes the teaching as a way of life, distinguished by the ready accessibility of happiness and love. The book is an easy read and the teaching is powerful. This is a 90-minute introduction to the four agreements. Purchase of the book is not required for the conversation.

Attend one session or both!

**Tuesday, March 19, 10:30 am**  
**Wednesday, March 20, 7:00 pm**

**Sign-up sheet on bulletin board**

Hollace's career in adult education at the college level spans four decades. In addition, she has followed a scholarly and sometimes esoteric path in religious studies and spirituality. FCCCC was her spiritual home in her formative years. She has served as Christian education director in five church communities.

For more information call Hollace at (928) 853-0311



## PALM SUNDAY POTLUCK MARCH 24

A wonderful tradition of our church is to share a potluck meal, Easter dinner style, after our Palm Sunday service. Please see the sign-up sheet if you would like to provide a ham, side dish, or dessert.

This would be a great day on which to invite a friend to join you at church: special music during worship and special fellowship!

## Shop Scrip and Help Families in Need!



As many of you know, the Scrip Program is an easy way to raise money for our church through the purchase of gift cards. Our 3 most popular cards this past year have been for Stop & Shop, ShopRite and Amazon. Why not buy a gift card to pay for things you need anyway instead of using your credit card?

Through March 10<sup>th</sup>, the Missions committee will be collecting Target and Walmart gift cards for Wellmore. If you purchase the cards through Scrip, you can help our church while also helping these families in need. It's a win-win! The most requested denominations are \$25's and \$10's, so they can be dispersed among their clients. I'll be selling / collecting the cards during coffee hour and they will be delivered in time for families to shop for Easter. If you are not in church, but still want to help out, just email or call me to place your order ([c.levine@comcast.net](mailto:c.levine@comcast.net) or (860)693-0134).

As Jen Herbek mentioned in a "Moment For Missions" in February, Shop Rite gift cards are always welcome at the Canton Food Bank. Purchase one at the Scrip table and pass it on!

Thanks for your support! Casey

First Congregational  
Church Canton Center

## ONLINE AUCTION FUNDRAISER!

Our resident auctioneer Paul Stansel, and antiques expert, Gary Adajian, are teaming up to lead a unique auction fundraising event. However, unlike our previous auctions, this one will be purely online. It will be hosted for us by Absolute Auctions & Realty, Inc., a company that Paul has used to host hundreds of his auctions in CT, NY and MA. Absolute Auctions has a buyer base of thousands of people in the Northeastern U.S. and their website gets more than a million visitors each month.

### EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

**Donate - TAX DEDUCTIBLE!**  
**Collection Begins March 10th- April 14th**

Antiques (no large furniture items)  
Paintings & sculptures  
Musical Instruments  
Jewelry (including costume jewelry)  
Coins & Stamps  
Collectible Items (figurines, baseball cards, etc.)  
China & Silver  
Lawn equipment & Vehicles  
Sports tickets  
Gift cards  
Business Services  
AND MORE!

### Spread the Word

After you clean out and donate to the auction- tell everyone about the auction- pass out flyers, post on social media and invite your neighbors to view the auction!

### Bid

Bid on exciting items and join in raising funds to support the Church.

Contact Paul Stansel  
203-592-1961  
Or Gary Adajian  
860-352-2186

Hosted for us by Absolute Auctions & Realty, Inc.  
[www.aa auctions.com](http://www.aa auctions.com)



15-  
29  
APRIL

ONLINE AUCTION

GOODS & SERVICES  
[www.aa auctions.com](http://www.aa auctions.com)

## Church Historian's Corner

Tim LeGeyt

This month, I am making reference to the two sections of one of the stained-glass windows that were part of the Church window scheme from 1874 to 1968 (as shown in the picture included here) and which were given to the Church by Shirley Sutton who was raised in this church and became the Director of Christian Education, a position that she held for almost twenty years, retiring just before Sarah LeGeyt assumed that spot sometime in the 1990's.

These two sections, which will be on display for our Annual Meeting, are the bottom sections of one of the windows that were in the long wall of our Meetinghouse. There were five such windows along each long wall, each one having five sections to the window - two rectangular portions at the bottom, two portions that had curved top ends and an arch on the very top which completed the whole window in each position in the long walls. Between the Sutton sections and sections that Cary and I have (which I'll try to have at the Annual Meeting also), we can display a complete window from top to bottom.

When the Church was remodeled and restored to its original 1814 form, these windows were removed in favor of the ones that we see presently, and a tag sale was held to offer the older stained-glass windows to interested purchasers. That's how Cary and I obtained our sections. You can see in the picture with this writing the big, beautiful stained-glass window up in the front of the Church where the pulpit is now. This window was broken in the process of removing it and all that is left is a box of stained-glass pieces. You can tell that it was a gorgeous window, much bigger than the ones along the long walls.

There are still some of us who remember worshiping in the Church when this Gothic motif was in place - I was seventeen in 1968 when the conversion was accomplished - and the change was dramatic. For one thing, one of the big concerns with the Gothic motif was that the Church Room was too dark. There is much more light in the Church Room now.

Let there be light!!!



UCC  
FIRST CHURCH  
CANTON  
CENTER




# BRIDGE THE GAP

*Fundraising & Growth*

JOIN US IN FUNDRAISING EVENTS BIG AND SMALL TO  
FUND THE GAPS IN THE BUDGET AND WORK TO  
ATTRACT & ENGAGE A VIBRANT MEMBERSHIP BASE

## Bridge the Gap - a Fundraising & Membership Growth Team

Our vision is to develop fundraising initiatives to support our mission (General Fund) and expand our reach, ultimately attracting and engaging a vibrant membership base. How...

- Build a spirit of *unity and collaboration*, asking all members to contribute ideas, big and small, and participate.
- Implement fundraising strategies that may be independent or work with existing groups/events hosted by Prime Timers, Wider Church, etc. and town/community events as appropriate.

We recognize the importance of *effective communication and engagement* in fostering membership growth. How...

- Ensure that our message reaches a wide audience and those seeking a spiritual home through platforms like social media, the church's website and street signage to share our church's initiatives.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for spiritual growth, fellowship, and service, we will empower our members to deepen their faith and actively contribute to the "church family".

Through our commitment to fundraising and membership growth, we envision a future where the First Congregational Church Canton Center continues to stand as a beacon of hope, compassion and God's love.



## MISSIONS & OUTREACH

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY



The **Missions Box collection for March** is change for Holy Joe's Café. In 2006, members of The First Congregational Church in Wallingford started Holy Joe's Café to support chaplains in Iraq and Afghanistan by providing coffee to serve the troops. As stated on their website, "Holy Joe's Café has become a dynamic part of military Chaplains 24/7/365 service to the troops...in 70 countries throughout the world." As one chaplain explains, "Holy Joe's Café is a place where chaplains in makeshift chapels are able to bring a taste of home to the tired, the anxious, the angry, the lonely and the wounded. They all can get a gourmet coffee, a reminder that the world they willingly left behind still cares." Our church has supported Holy Joe's for a number of years by collecting change (and bills), often during Lent. You can save your money in the cup we'll provide or another container of your choice. We will have a jar for contributions on the small table at the front of the sanctuary.



**We will make sandwiches and a meal on**  
Friday, March 15 at 11:00.  
Sign-ups will be on the kitchen door.

### Gift cards for Wellmore:

We will also be collection gift cards to Target and Walmart until March 10<sup>th</sup>. These gift cards will help Wellmore's families in the Torrington area celebrate Easter.



### Afghan Refugee Family Update:

During a recent Moment for Missions, Paul Stansel spoke about our Church being part of the Avon VFW's effort to bring an Afghan Refugee Family to Connecticut. They are still waiting for a family to be assigned, but the VFW has already secured a furnished home in West Hartford, CT. Paul visited the home to see what items will need to be supplied. The immediate need will be linens and towels. Specifically, we will need mattress pads, sheets, pillow cases and blankets for two queen sized mattresses; one full sized mattress and two twin sized mattresses. We will also need bath towels, hand towels, wash cloths and dish towels. Items should be either new or gently used please. Grant Hagedorn has volunteered to help Paul coordinate this effort for the Church and can be reached at 860-863-1747. A sign-up list to help us track what's been donated and what we still need will be on the bulletin board above the Missions Box near the kitchen door. Donated linens can be left in the Missions Collection Box. Thank you for your help!



### Thank you for your generosity:

The **Cake Auction raised \$2780** for our food fund!! What an amazing result from this fun event. Thank you to everyone who made a cake, purchased a cake, auctioned a cake, or just had fun. This fund will help provide food to many people in our area that are dealing with food insecurity. Also, our **Hawaii Wildfire Disaster Relief collection raised \$475**.

## 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, 2023** at 10:45 a.m.  
OR on subsequent Sundays at 10:45 a.m. until a quorum 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*

#### Out to Lunch Bunch ~ March 13, 12:00 pm Beans Restaurant in Avon Village

Open to all Men and Women who would enjoy a nice lunch with new and known friends.

Beans supports and employs Favarh adults. They do a great job with good food and service and also sell their food to take home. The big house across the driveway from DaCapo Restaurant.

Please sign up or call  
Harriet Vose 860 -693 -2333



Please consider joining us in providing food assistance to families in need in Canton. Whether you have experience with food pantries or not, we welcome helping hands and people with a willingness to make a difference in the community! We will provide orientation and training for the job and you can volunteer as often or as little as you like.

Volunteer opportunities available are:

- **Mondays 5:30-7:15pm** - set up and assist families with food distribution
- **Tuesdays 8am-11:30am** - assist families with food distribution
- **Wednesdays - Fridays - shop** for perishable food and Food Bank supplies. Plan on an average of 2-4 hours per week at your convenience.
- **If interested** in volunteering on Monday or Tuesday during food distribution please email **Jennifer Herbek** at [Cantonfoodbank@gmail.com](mailto:Cantonfoodbank@gmail.com) or for shopping opportunities call **Madeleine Drummey** at (860)693-8081.



#### 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)** Please take your plants after the Easter service to enjoy at home. Orders for plants will be **accepted through March 22**. Forms will be available in the Easter Basket at the back of the church.

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: **March 22**.*

# MARCH 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2  AA 11:00 p.m.
3  <b>Worship</b> 10:00 am	4  Sr. Choir 4:30 pm	5  AA 7:00 pm	6  <b>Deacons</b> 7:00 pm	7  Cub Scouts 6:30 - 8 pm  Handbell Choir 5:30 pm	8	9  AA 11:00 p.m.
10 <b>Worship &amp; Communion</b> 10:00 am <b>ANNUAL MEETING</b> <i>Pretzel Making</i>	11  Sr. Choir 4:30 pm  <b>Trustees</b> 7:00 pm	12	13  "Out to Lunch Bunch" 12:00 pm <b>Council</b> 7:00 pm	14  Handbell Choir 5:30 pm	15  <b>Sandwich/Meal making for Brian's Angels</b> 11 am	16  AA 11:00 p.m.
17  <b>Worship</b> 10:00 am  <b>Book Club</b> <i>(The Case for Christ) following Coffee Hour</i>	18  Sr. Choir 4:30 pm	19  <b>Lenten Study</b> <i>(4 Agreements)</i> 10:30 am  AA 7:00 pm	20  <b>Lenten Study</b> <i>(4 Agreements)</i> 7:00 pm	21  Handbell Choir 5:30 pm	22	23  AA 11:00 p.m.
24 <b>PALM SUNDAY</b> <b>Worship 10:00 am</b> <b>POTLUCK DINNER</b> <i>4th Sunday Food Collection</i>	25  Sr. Choir 4:30 pm  ACA 7:00 pm	26  AA 7:00 pm	27	28  <b>MAUNDY THURSDAY</b> Service 7:30 pm.  Handbell Choir 5:30 pm	29  <b>GOOD FRIDAY</b> 12-3 pm Sanctuary open for meditation	30  AA 11:00 p.m.
31  <b>EASTER</b> <b>Worship</b> 10:00 am						



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



### **The First Congregational Church**

184 Cherry Brook Road, PO Box 133  
Canton Center, CT 06020-0133  
[Cantoncenterchurch.org](http://Cantoncenterchurch.org)

#### **Interim Pastor**

860-693-4207

Pastor Kurt Satherlie

[pastor@cantoncenterchurch.org](mailto:pastor@cantoncenterchurch.org)

#### **Office**

(860)693-4581

Kristen DiMattia, Office Manager

[office@cantoncenterchurch.org](mailto:office@cantoncenterchurch.org)

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

#### **Organist/Director of Music:**

(860)693-4216

Mary Lou Keefe

[music@cantoncenterchurch.org](mailto:music@cantoncenterchurch.org)

#### **Director of Faith Formation:**

Hollace Bristol

[CE@cantoncenterchurch.org](mailto:CE@cantoncenterchurch.org)

#### **Asst. Director of Faith Formation:**

Karen Needham

[CE@cantoncenterchurch.org](mailto:CE@cantoncenterchurch.org)

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