

# THE CHURCHMOUSE

Newsletter of The First Congregational Church, Canton Center, CT

December 2024

## A Season of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love



*Message from the pastor...*

As the Advent season unfolds, let us pause to reflect on the profound meaning of our journey to Christmas Day. It is a time of spiritual reflection on the importance of our Christian foundation; a time to reflect on the messages of our Lord Jesus. The Christmas message goes far deeper. It announces the entrance of God into human history in Emmanuel. It is Heaven descending to Earth.

How do we experience this trek to Bethlehem in our modern-day world. The day following Thanksgiving watch out for little green men and women, or in other words, frantic elves, sprinting through malls, racing from store to store, like they are preparing for a marathon. There is a decorative extravaganza for which house will look more like a winter wonderland, surrounded with lights that compare with Times Square at New Years Eve. And the PRESSURE of finding just the right gifts for the special people in our lives. As Andy Williams so beautifully sings It's the most wonderful time of the year, with the kids jingle belling and everyone telling you, "Be of good cheer!" It's the most wonderful time of the year... OR is it the most stressful? And when Christmas Eve arrives before the big day, after weeks of neglecting spiritual reflection and practices, some of us flock to church (if they remember how to get there) to FULFILL their Christian obligations. (Did someone say it was a horrible sin to miss the Christmas Eve Service?)

It is wonderful that we want to have fun at our festive parties and spend quality time with family decorating our homes, it's easy to lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas. After all, it's not about the presents, it's about the present... of Jesus.

One of the most beloved Advent hymns, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," echoes the yearnings of our hearts. Its words, particularly the fourth verse, speak to the deep-seated longing for unity, peace, and justice that resonates within us all:

*O come, desire of nations, bind  
All peoples in one hearts and mind'  
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;  
Fill the whole world with Heaven's peace.*

In a world often marred by division, conflict, and suffering, the message of Christmas offers a beacon of hope. The birth of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, signifies God's unwavering love and commitment to humanity. As we journey through Advent, let us embrace this message of hope and peace. It is a message that calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves, to extend compassion to the marginalized, and to work for justice and harmony in the world. As we journey through Advent, let us embrace the opportunity to draw closer to God and to one another. May we extend compassion and kindness to others, recognizing the sacredness of every life. And may we strive to be instruments of peace, working towards a world where justice, equality, and love prevail.

As we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, let us remember the words of the prophet Isaiah: *For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

As we anticipate the joyous celebration of Christmas, let us pray for peace on earth and goodwill to all. May the love of Christ fill our hearts and homes with warmth and joy.

In Christ's love,  
Pastor Kurt & Jennifer

### Worship in December

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

- Dec. 1**                    **First Sunday of Advent**  
*Communion*
- Dec. 8**                    **Second Sunday of Advent**
- Dec. 15**                  **Third Sunday of Advent**  
*Music Sunday*
- Dec. 22**                  **Fourth Sunday of Advent; Christmas Eve**
- Dec. 24 (5 pm)**        **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**  
*Offerings will be donated to the Canton Fuel Bank*
- Dec. 29**                  **First Sunday after Christmas**

## The Season of Advent



## Deacons' Bench

Tim Lundgren, Deacon

## WORSHIP MINISTRY

These are difficult times. There are for many feelings of division, loss, dread and that there is a lack of civility towards one another. Here I share some scriptures that speak to us today and how we might love one another both now and in the future.

**John 13:34-35**

*"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

**1 John 4:7-12, 16b**

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us....16b God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.*

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8a**

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails.*

**Ephesians 4:2-3**

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

**1 Peter 4:8**

*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*

**Colossians 3:14**

*And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

**1 John 4:16-17**

*And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.*

**Philippians 4:6-8**

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

We need to seek after God and pray that he will help us to see the good in those who hold different points of view, that He will help us to walk together as brothers and sisters in Christ with a united heart of purpose and service. That we show one another love, compassion, and understanding during these times of change and uncertainty. Let peace and civility rule both in our innermost thoughts and in our outward behavior.



## Music Notes

Mary Lou Keefe, Director of Music

## WORSHIP MINISTRY

It's that special time of year again when many people are engaged in choosing what special event they would like to attend to get in the spirit of the Christmas season such as the Messiah, The Christmas Carol, or the several offerings of various local churches who may be presenting cantatas and/or Lessons and Carols.

At our church we have a few opportunities with Wider Church selling tickets to the play featuring four of our own choir members, Jerry who is Scrooge, Judy who is the music director and also plays many parts on stage, Karen who portrays Mrs Dalloway, and Art who sings and acts. We intend to see that again.

Our own music department will be presenting the cantata "Have You Heard" by Joey Raney with the Sr choir, guest singers, Gert, Megan, and Scott, Cindy on Flute, Jon on guitar, drum, and percussion, and Jerry as narrator, and additionally the bell choir will be playing, all to be presented during the church service on Dec. 15th.

On Christmas Eve there will be a plethora of music with familiar hymns and the traditional candlelight ceremony.

If it's the Messiah you crave, the Waterbury Symphony Orchestra in conjunction with the Hartford Chorale will be presenting the Messiah as well as the Bach Magnificent. on Dec. 8th. We will be going.



Photos from our recent  
"Happy Wanderers Hike"



## Director of Faith Formation

Dr. Hollace Bristol

## FAITH FORMATION MINISTRY

Stewardship has been a theme this past month. We heard from Jennifer and Paul about the value of our church experience to our lives, our sense of belonging and our ever-expanding love for God's creation. In Church School we shared the parable of the coins (Mark 12: 41-44) with the young folks. Jesus observed the rich giving large sums of money to the treasury, then a poor widow came and put in two small coins. Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "This poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury".

In this parable one of the themes is giving from the heart and placing great value on the treasures that lie within. We asked the children "What can you give when you feel you have so little, or you feel you are so small?" The answers came rapidly and thoughtfully. They spoke of kindness, love, joy, a helping hand, understanding, hugs, and time. We then challenged them with an activity where they had to use these gifts to work together to get all members of the group across an area with few spots to stand on while also rescuing the identified gifts from the floor. They then reflected on their process and named the ways in which they gave to each other. We ended with an echo prayer of thanksgiving for all our God-given gifts and our willingness to share them with the world.

We are inviting the children to participate in the church service during Advent both as acolytes, lighting the candles during the prelude, and reading short passages as we assemble the crèche on the altar.

May you join with us in receiving and sharing all Christ's love and grace throughout the holiday season!





## December Missions



**Thanks:** Thank you to everyone who contributed desserts for the Canton Community Thanksgiving Dinner. They were very much appreciated and enjoyed by the attendees. Thank you also to those of you donated to buy gift cards for Wellmore and for Canton Senior and Social Services. This congregation is always so generous to these organizations. We'll update you on the final totals when we have them.

**More Opportunities to help others.** -December brings so many fun and exciting times, but it also emphasizes how many people continue to have needs. We have so many opportunities to live our faith by helping others. We know we're setting a big challenge, but we also know the generosity of this congregation.

**The Christmas Tree** - We are once again collecting winter scarves, hats, gloves, mittens, and socks to be given to various organizations. These can be placed on or under the Christmas Tree in the sanctuary. However, please place them in a plastic bag so we don't have to pick pine needles out of them. These will be collected all month.

**Cherry Brook Health Care** - We have been asked to help Cherry Brook Health Care provide some simple gifts for their 90 residents, most of whom are on Medicaid and have very limited income. They have requested small items including pens and pencils, adult coloring books, crossword and word searches, lap blankets, small mirrors, 2025 calendars, picture frames, pens and pencils, small notebooks, sticky notes, hand creams, pocket mirrors, magnifying glasses, scarves and cotton socks. We will collect these items Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> and will place a box near the Christmas tree for the donations.

**The Christmas Fund** - This year we are also returning to our church's tradition of collecting The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund. This fund is a Special UCC Mission Offering administered through the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, the charitable arm of the Pension Boards. Funds provide direct financial support to those who serve the church and are facing financial difficulties. Active and retired clergy, lay employees, and their surviving spouses may be eligible for the Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and/or Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks. The Christmas Fund collection will be taken on December 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. Envelopes will be provided on those dates. Please write checks to: FCCCC with memo: "Christmas Fund"

**Christmas Eve Offering** - Monies collected during the Christmas Eve Offering will once again be donated to the Canton Emergency Fuel Bank. Please make checks out to: The Canton Fuel Bank.

*Thank you for your continued support of Holy Joe's. This past Pentecost Sunday 2024 we celebrated 18 year of ministry. We couldn't have done it without you! As Chaplain Pete Hoffmann said: "The coffee is a good thing for not only with what we do at the chapel but at the unit level. It's another touch for Chaplains to go around and check in on their soldiers, their staff, their commander - 'Hey everyone, what's going on?'. It opens new lines of communication and allows the Chaplain to get his foot in the door, and maybe just spark up a conversation. Hot coffee is a good way to do it."*

*Where our service members go we go.  
We are always present in the chapels  
with a good cup of coffee.*

*God Bless America! Tom Jastermsky  
Not Alone Never Alone with Thee*



Wider Church News...  
Linda McAllister

## FELLOWSHIP/INREACH MINISTRY

By now the Thanksgiving potluck is over and I hope everyone enjoyed a time of great fellowship and food.

**December - Tickets for Riverton Theater's "A Christmas Carol"**, for December 8 at 1:00, are on sale. The regular tickets are \$15.00 with a senior discount ticket at \$12.00 (12 tickets available). We will go to lunch at The Royal Coachman before the play at 11:30. See me (Linda McAllister) during coffee hour to sign up.

**In January we will have the Italian Buffet lunch** after church on January 19. Craig will be the head chef once again! This is open to the public, so let your friends know!

**February will see the return of the chili cook-off** and game time. If there is snow, sledding may be available on "Church Hill Downs" behind the church. Stay tuned for details.

**May - Tickets to the Yard Goats** have been ordered for May 18. Mark your calendar and look for a signup sheet in the spring!

As always, if you have an idea for a fellowship activity, please speak to a member of Wider Church.

*Craig and Linda McAllister, Geri Bunnell, and Casey Levine.*



### 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 tickets for "A Christmas Carol" in Riverton on **SUNDAY, December 8 at 1:00 p.m., with the option to join us for lunch/brunch at the Riverton Inn at 11:30 a.m.** before the performance.

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

Tickets are \$15 ~ \$12.00 for Seniors

If interested, please see Linda McAllister.

## 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!

Speaking of support ... Thank you so much for your incredible generosity during the month of November purchasing gift cards for families in need at both Wellmore and Canton Social Services. Final numbers are not in yet, but I'll be sure to report after collections end on December 1<sup>st</sup>.

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](http://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 15<sup>th</sup>**. Last minute shoppers can visit the table on 12/22 to see what's available in inventory to pick up same day.

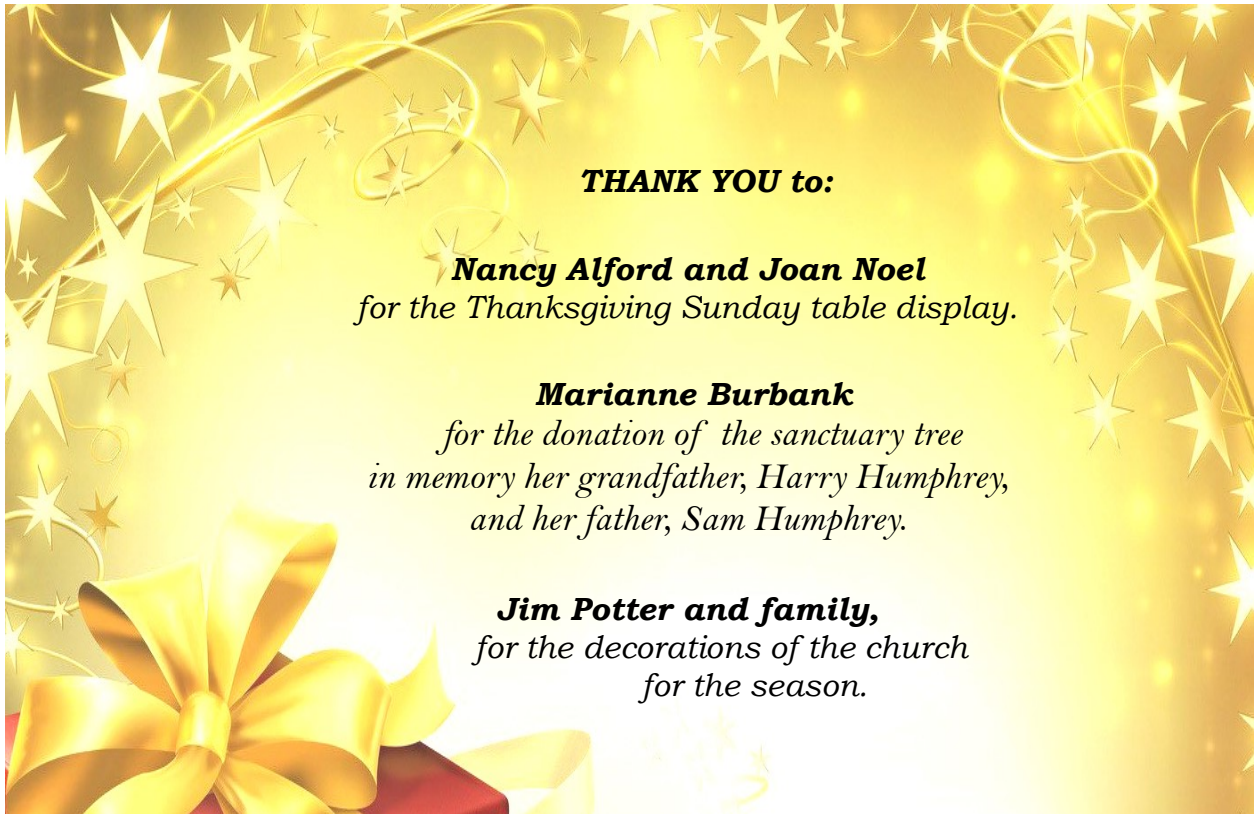
If you're not in church, you can always call, text or email me (860-371-1016 or [levine429@gmail.com](mailto:levine429@gmail.com)) or you can place an order online or through the RaiseRight app. Reach out to me for our church's unique enrollment code if you wish to place an order electronically.

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 before Dec. 15  
if you are interested in providing Poinsettias for our Dec. 22 & 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 15th.)*

In Memory of:

In Honor of:

In Celebration of:

**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*



**Prime Timers' Annual Christmas Potluck & Concert**

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2024**

The Prime Timers' have been hosting the annual Christmas Potluck Luncheon to provide lunch for the Canton High School Concert Choir on the day that they travel to different schools and venues to perform.

The luncheon will be held on **FRIDAY**, December 20, 2024, 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.*

The event is open to all. There will be a signup sheet on the kitchen door. Please arrive by 11:00 am with your casserole or side dish. We also need cookies for dessert.

If you have any questions, you may contact Donna Hammond at 860-693-8676.

**IN THE EVENT OF INCLEMENT WEATHER**

Please tune to:  
**WFSB Channel 3** or **NBC CT**  
or check the church web site at:

[www.cantoncenterchurch.org](http://www.cantoncenterchurch.org)



**God is still speaking !!! , , , , , , , ,**

**Visit our website at**  
[www.cantoncenterchurch.org](http://www.cantoncenterchurch.org)

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

**Follow us on** 



# DECEMBER 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 <b>Worship &amp; Communion</b> 10:00 am	2 <b>Choir 4:30 pm</b> <b>Guest 5:15 pm</b>  Al-Anon 7:00 pm	3   AA 7:00 pm	4  <b>Diaconate</b> 7:00 pm  ACA 7:00 pm	5   Scouts 6:30-7:30 pm	6	7   AA 11:00 p.m.
8  <b>Worship</b> 10:00 am  <b>A Christmas Carol</b> Riverton 1:00 pm	9 <b>Choir 4:30 pm</b> <b>Guest 5:15 pm</b>  Trustee 7:00 pm  Al-Anon 7:00 pm	10   AA 7:00 pm	11  <b>Council Meeting</b> 7:00 pm  ACA 7:00 pm	12   <b>Handbell Choir</b> 5:30 pm	13	14   Baby Shower 11- 5 pm  AA 11:00 p.m.
15  <b>Worship</b> <b>Music Sunday</b> 10:00 am	16 <b>Choir 4:30 pm</b> <b>Guest 5:15 pm</b>  Al-Anon 7:00 pm	17   AA 7:00 pm	18   ACA 7:00 pm	19   <b>Handbell Choir</b> 5:30 pm	20   <b>Carol Sing &amp; Luncheon</b> 11:30 am	21   AA 11:00 p.m.
22  <b>Worship</b> 10:00 am	23 <b>Choir 4:30 pm</b> <b>Guest 5:15 pm</b>  Al-Anon 7:00 pm	24  <b>CHRISTMAS EVE</b> Service 5:00 pm  AA 7:00 pm	25   ACA 7:00 pm	26	27	28   AA 11:00 p.m.
29  <b>Worship</b> 10:00 am	30   Al-Anon 7:00 pm	31   AA 7:00 pm				





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

CE@cantoncenterchurch.org

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