

THE CHURCHMOUSE

Newsletter of The First Congregational Church, Canton Center, CT

February 2025



A message from the pastor...

Iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. (Proverbs 27:17)

Dear Canton Church Family,

The verse above reminds us that we are meant to live in community, supporting and encouraging one another on our faith journeys. One of the greatest blessings of being part of a church is the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with other believers. These connections provide support, encouragement, and a sense of belonging that enriches our faith journeys.

Strong relationships within our church family provide:

- ◇ Sharing burdens and celebrating joys with others strengthens us in times of need.
- ◇ Knowing we are not alone in our faith can be incredibly empowering.
- ◇ Learning from the experiences and wisdom of others helps us to grow in our faith.

It is my hope that we can gather during one of our fellowship times after worship and share our faith story with others and be open to answering questions about our life story. This can occur one on one or in small groups. Share only what you would like others to hear in the congregation so we can communicate each short 'life/faith bio' in an open forum. Try to connect with someone you may not know as well as another person. This is a very informal way of getting to know each other at a deeper level. Building strong relationships takes time and effort. But the rewards are immeasurable when everyone feels known, valued, and loved.

During discussion learn what people are passionate about and would want to see more of within our church community such as a book/bible study, prayer group, mission work within and outside the walls of our church. The church is a wonderful setting that provides a safe place to share not only our 'life journey' but also a safe place to grow together in faith.

Let's strive to be a church where everyone feels connected and valued. Together, we can build a stronger, more vibrant community of faith. As followers of Christ, we are called to love one another deeply. This love should not be confined to the walls of our church, but should extend to our friends, neighbors, and the wider community. It stands to reason that as we are more closely connected as a church family, we are better equipped to serve those in need within our community. Let us be a church that reflects the love of Christ to the world.

May God bless each of you as we seek to connect with others in our church family.

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 during the week.

Feb. 2	Forth Sunday after Epiphany; Communion
Feb. 9	Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
Feb. 18	Sixth Sunday after Epiphany
Feb. 25	Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

Looking ahead...**March 5th**

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.*

An Update from the Pastoral Search Committee

The search committee had a very busy and productive 2024. You have a great team representing you in what is a very involved and challenging endeavor. In our first nine months we effectively formed, created a bond of trust and openness, engaged with the Conference Leadership on the steps and best practices within the process, conducted a congregational survey, held two second hours, and completed a comprehensive church profile which is a prerequisite to any level of search. After what felt like a whirlwind of activity in 2024, the committee effectively took a holiday break before getting back to work in the new year.

So where are we now? We have incorporated all of the Conference Leadership's suggestions, all minor, for change in our profile, and are now awaiting re-approval. Once that happens, we will create a cover page, essentially an executive summary of the profile, in order to be able to post the position. As we await this approval, we are familiarizing ourselves with best search and interview practices put forth by the conference. Rev. Isaac Lawson and his search and call associate Jill Ford have been very supportive.

We want the congregation to know we are hearing all of your varied feedback and ask that you continue to work with us with an open line of trusted communication. Look for more second hours, and please feel free to speak to any member of the committee individually. We have no agenda and no pre-ordained outcome other than to conduct the mission that we were commissioned by you to do. If and when we identify a candidate for settled pastor we wish to bring forward, we all will have ultimate say via a congregational vote.

Faithfully,

Hugh Anderson, Chair

A graphic with the words "UPCOMING EVENTS" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The text is set against a background of overlapping, semi-transparent colored rectangles in shades of red, orange, yellow, green, and blue.

February 15 ~ Chili Cook Off

March 16 ~ Cake Auction

March 23 ~ Annual Meeting

PASTORAL AND MEMBER CARE IN ACTION

As you may know, our church has a formal structure for members in need of prayers, contact, visit and/or meals to help get through tough times. I personally benefited from visits, hugs, prayers and food from this church family after my husband, Bob died five years ago just before Christmas. I can't stress enough how much it meant to me to have Reverend Brenda at my house within hours of learning of his death to provide comfort, a listening ear and warm hugs. Many, many church members came to visit, bring plants, flowers, gifts, and healthy meals to help me and my daughters, April and Charlotte, to get through this most difficult time and unexpected loss. Their display of love and empathy made us feel cared about and loved by our church family.

We have many levels of assistance that you can provide, depending on your strengths and interests. Here is a list of the categories of our Pastoral Care Team in case you wish to participate in any or all of them:

Prayer Providers (includes praying for those mentioned in the Weekly Reminder)

Food Prep & Delivery (includes signing up for MealTrain which is an online food delivery database/organizer)

Visitation (at home, hospital and/or facility, if requested)

Transportation (to doctor appointments or treatment centers)

Please let me know if you wish to be added to the list for any of these areas of help for our church members. I believe you will feel good when doing good. John 3:11.16.18 says "For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another...we know love by this: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another...Dear children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action."

CHANGE IN CHURCH SERVICE PROCEDURE FOR JOYS & CONCERNS

To save time and prevent sharing of potentially personal information, the deacons and Pastor Kurt have decided that it would be best to receive Joys & Concerns *in writing only*. We ask that the Prayer Cards include the person(s) needing our prayers and a word or two regarding the nature of the joy or concern. We will start using this new procedure in February. Thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation.

Christian Education News

Dr. Hollace Bristol, Director of Faith Formation

FAITH FORMATION MINISTRY



January has been a month of engaging the Church School youth in the mission work of the church. Our missions committee has shared their activities with us so that young folks can develop a broader view of how the resources of our congregation are shared with those around the world who are in need of support.

The children assembled kits of toiletries for local families with an understanding of the situations in which they would be appreciated. The children also created colorfully decorated and heartfelt letters to those serving in the military. We studied the map of the world to identify where our troops are stationed and talked about what it might be like to be living there, so far from home. We also made sandwiches for Brian's Angels, a local relief organization that feeds the hungry.

Our young folks are intrinsically wired to care; they are compassionate, and heart centered. We foster these gifts in Church School each week, comparing our themes and activities to the works and words of Jesus. We are so blessed to have a thriving youth community among us.

Blessings, always!



**PHOTO FROM OUR
“OUT TO LUNCH BUNCH”
OUTING AT THE ROOFTOP**



SUPPORT TO OUR MINISTRIES

Scrip 2024 Year in Review

February is here and it's time for another Scrip "Year in Review". We had another fun year of shopping, earning and giving back to the church and the community! Here are some stats:

Funds Raised: \$1,446.05 – that's just a few dollars less than what we made in 2023, and nearly double what we made in 2022!

Participants: 55 – 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 coffee runs). We also had 6 more shoppers than last year participate, either for Christmas gifts or to support our church's missions

Number of Gift Cards Sold: 855 (32 less than 2023)

Number of Retailers: 40 – 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 – 168
Shop Rite – 95
Target – 82
Walmart – 79
Dunkin - 76

Rounding out the Top 10 are CVS (56), Starbucks (55), Amazon (52) Visa (36) and Barnes & Noble (35). Our top 10 retailers stayed exactly the same in 2024 as 2023, but the order changed substantially! Our #1 and #2 have been consistently the same for many years, and both saw increases in the number of cards sold last year. Target and Walmart both went up 1 spot, while Amazon slipped from #3 to #8. All told, we purchased 734 cards from just these 10 retailers – that's almost 86% of our total cards sold!

Highest Earning months: December (\$415.40), June (\$190.63) and March (\$143.83) – This past December was the highest earning month **EVER** (by far) in our 8 ½ years of the Scrip program! Not only did we sell many more gift cards, but some of the retailers purchased were offering higher rebate percentages. And even though November didn't make the top 3 this year, you were all very generous with your support for the Christmas gift card collections for Wellmore and Canton Social Services. We were able to donate more than 2023 as far as face value of the cards is considered, we just don't make as much of a percentage off retailers such as Target and Walmart, which is what Wellmore especially prefers.

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 amazing things we do together. I'm looking forward to growing more in 2025!

Thanks, as always, for your support!
Casey

Missions & Outreach
Martha Stansel

COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRY

Missions Awareness Month Wrap-up:

The Missions and Outreach Committee had fun sharing Missions Awareness Month with the congregation. We hope our presentations during worship helped you understand the types of giving and initiatives the committee leads, and the Coffee Hour activities helped you understand the importance of your participation. Watch for further follow-up to help us understand what organizations and issues are important to the congregation. We want to be sure we are using your donations wisely and providing participation opportunities that are meaningful to you.

February Missions Box Collection:

Our collection in February will be **household cleaning supplies** to be donated to the Canton Food Pantry. Not only is food difficult to afford for some people, but cleaning products can also be expensive. These supplies are often requested at the Pantry but infrequently donated. In addition, the pantry has requested bottles of 100% juice.

Donations can be left in the Missions Box outside the kitchen door.



Final December Report:

We collected an amazing 172 hats, gloves, mittens, scarves and socks under the Christmas Tree. These items were donated to help the homeless in Hartford and to Hands of Grace to help families in need in our area. Once again, the congregation is warming people and warming



The Cake Auction is coming in March, so start planning your cake.

This year's auction will be held after church on Sunday, March 16th. The themes this year are St. Patrick's Day and Spring. Watch for more information as we get closer to the event.

Photographs of "MISSION'S AWARENESS MONTH" during coffee hour in January.



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 23, 2025** after the 10:00 a.m. service, OR on subsequent Sundays after the service 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

REMINDER: ALL COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS & OFFICERS – ANNUAL REPORTS DUE 2/16

Each committee and pertinent officers are asked to please have their 2024 annual reports in to the church office **no later than February 16**. Annual Reports will be available a week before the Annual Meeting.



A weekly reminder message is emailed out mid-week with worship information and announcements.

If you are not receiving this and would like to, please send your email to: office@cantoncenterchurch.org

God is still speaking !!!

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Visit our website at www.cantoncenterchurch.org

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

Follow us on 

IN THE EVENT OF INCLEMENT WEATHER:



Tune to: **WFSB Channel 3** or **NBC CT**

or check the church web site at:

www.cantoncenterchurch.org

FEBRUARY 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 AA 11:00 p.m.
2 Worship & Communion 10:00 am	3 Senior Choir 4:30 pm Al-Anon 7:00 pm	4 AA 7:00 pm	5 Deacons 7:00 pm ACA 7:00 pm	6 Bell Choir 5:30 pm Scouts 6-7:30 pm	7 Scouts set up Derby 6-8 pm	8 Scouts 7:30-2 pm Pinewood Derby AA 11:00 p.m.
9 Worship 10:00 am	10 Senior Choir 4:30 pm Trustees 7:00 pm Al-Anon 7:00 pm	11 AA 7:00 pm	12 Council 7:00 pm ACA 7:00 pm	13 Bell Choir 5:30 pm	14	15 Chili Cook-Off AA 11:00 p.m.
16 Worship 10:00 am <i>Annual Reports due to the church office</i>	17 Senior Choir 4:30 pm Al-Anon 7:00 pm	18 AA 7:00 pm	19 ACA 7:00 pm	20 Bell Choir 5:30 pm	21	22 AA 11:00 p.m.
23 Worship 10:00 am <i>Fourth Sunday Food Collection</i>	24 Senior Choir 4:30 pm Al-Anon 7:00 pm	25 AA 7:00 pm	26 ACA 7:00 pm	27 Bell Choir 5:30 pm	28	



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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Cantoncenterchurch.org

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Pastor Kurt Satherlie

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Director of Faith Formation:

Hollace Bristol

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Asst. Director of Faith Formation:

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Worship every Sunday at 10:00 a.m.