

THE CHURCHMOUSE

Newsletter of The First Congregational Church, Canton Center, CT

May 2026



Message from the pastor...



Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer ~Romans 12:12

Our National Day of Prayer falls on Thursday, May 7th. While this tradition was formally established in 1952 and later set for the first Thursday of May, its roots stretch back to 1775. In our earliest days, the Continental Congress called for a day of public prayer and solemnity, seeking biblical wisdom to navigate the difficult issues of the time. They sought God's guidance for decisions that were moral, just, and for the good of all people.

This year, prayers for our national and world leaders top my list. This is not a prayer for any political platform or party; I care not if you are blue or red, conservative or liberal. Rather, this is a prayer to end the divisiveness that weighs on our nation and our world. It is a prayer for open-mindedness; a search for resolutions that are critically vital for this moment in our history.

There are no "easy" solutions, yet in our prayers to God we can ask for divine guidance that moves us toward unity and kind-heartedness. Next Thursday I invite you to join me in offering a special prayer for the freedom to worship, the joy of fellowship, and the "new, bright beginnings" only the Maker of all Life can provide.

My own prayer list may begin with global peace, but like yours, it is endless. I offer this specific hope to each of you: In a world struggling with discord, may you and I find solace in remembering our many blessings, the beauty of the natural world that surrounds us, and God's exorbitant heavenly grace. Instead of dwelling on the shadows, let us look toward the Light of Christ and offer thanksgiving to our Creator.

May the month of May fill your life with love, health and peace. May you cherish the peace of mind we have in Christ, as promised in Philippians 4:7: *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

In Christ's love,

Pastor Kurt

Director of Faith Formation

Jody Swan

Dear Canton Center Church Family,

With spring all around us, blooming with color and life, we are reminded to be thankful for the earth God has given us to enjoy and take care of.

The Christian Education Committee and I completed our Easter Family Event earlier this month. It was a fun-filled morning with many engaging activities for all ages. Thank you to Tim and Kathleen Lundgren for building our Easter arch. We will be using it again for Mother's Day. Please make sure you stop by Parish Hall on Sunday, May 10th for a picture.

On April 25th Christian Education Committee with the help of Jim Magennis and Scott Neumann will evaluate bikes and do small repairs on brakes, tires, and gears in our parking lot. Kids can wash their bikes and have popcorn before they head off for the trails!

Looking ahead, on May 31st, Christina Reiser, a Puppy Instructor from Educated Canines Assisting with Disabilities, will visit the Church and Church School with a fur baby and talk to us about dogs who support members of our community with disabilities. This promises to be an inspiring experience for everyone.

Registration is open for Silver Lake summer camps. These camps offer a chance for our youth to grow in faith, form lasting friendships, and experience the beauty of God's creation. Please visit www.SilverLakeCT.org for more information.

We are grateful for your ongoing support and participation. Wishing you all a blessed spring season.



Music Notes

Mary Lou Keefe, Director of Music



The Messiah, Georg Handel's most successful and best known Oratorio was composed in 1741, in 24 days between Aug. 22 and Sept 14. It has been said that it was divine providence to be able to write choral and orchestra parts amounting to give or take 250 pages, with no Sibelius, no computer, just old-fashioned hand writing. The oratorio was first performed at a concert in Dublin, Ireland in April 1742, with Handel himself directing the chorus and orchestra. He did not go beyond 4 point harmony and kept the orchestration fairly simple with a small Baroque orchestra consisting of violin, trumpet, bassoon, and oboe. After that first performance it was performed every year in London with a much appreciative applause. The reason people stand for the Hallelujah Chorus dates back to those early performances in March of 1743 when King George would rise and everyone would follow.

Years ago, our choir presented the so-called Christmas portion of the Messiah on a Sunday afternoon in the Sanctuary. Bill Thomas directed and I played the piano. We invited several

church choirs and only one lady showed up but nevertheless we had fun singing it. Greatest hits come and go and you hear about the top 100 or even the top 500 but the Messiah is timeless and a tradition to see and hear at Christmas time. My husband Peter B. and I attended the Waterbury Symphony in Dec. of '24 with the Hartford Chorale of over a 100 singers performing along with the great orchestra, the Christmas Messiah and it was a rush to get to stand during the final Chorale.

With May at our doorstep the two choirs are winding down with the Summer Soloists hopefully willing and able to do their favorite song. The Senior Choir traditionally sings until about the middle of June and the Bell choir plays for the last time on Mother's Day. However, this year, on May 31st they will be traveling to Torrington to Valerie Manor, a rest home, to perform some of our favorites for the clients there and we are hoping that some strong people will help with carrying the bell tables and bell cases down stairs and to the waiting car.

The handbell choir will be losing two members as of the end of May, namely Diana who comes all the way from Plantsville and Karen who has been experiencing pain in her hands. That leaves us with eight ringers. At first, and the necessity to play 3 octave pieces as opposed to 5 which we have played for many years. If you have ever thought of joining the bell choir, now would be a great time and you would be so welcomed by all. You can just come to a rehearsal or contact me or one of the ringers. You will be trained by an experienced ringer with two bells.

Deacons' Bench

Phil Doyle

The responsibilities assigned the Diaconate are as numerous as they are diverse. Most recently, the Deacons were: preparing for the many services associated with the Easter period, arranging for visiting ministerial services, addressing the membership rolls review, attending to the functioning of the live-stream system, as well as planning for new member joining.

Each of the tasks is of importance, two may be worthy of consideration, herein. First, the rolls review is conducted annually and is intended to assist both the Diaconate and the Trustees, as they reach out to Church members. The effort takes time and careful outreach to those who have not recently attended services, or provided financial support. In many situations the follow-up communications often lead to renewed interest in the Church and a better understanding of member needs. Second, live-streaming is a relatively new task, as the Church attempts to reach out to home bound members, and to generally expand the message beyond the Church walls.

The Diaconate has been fortunate to find volunteers to run the system, weekly. However, no system is perfect, and we are learning as we go. Please let any Diaconate member know, if you are interested in helping stream the services.

Worship Schedule

May 3	Fifth Sunday of Easter ~ Communion
May 10	Sixth Sunday of Easter ~ Happy Mother's Day!
May 17	Seventh Sunday of Easter
May 24	Pentecost
May 31	Trinity Sunday



Wider Church Fellowship Upcoming Events

Take me out to the Ballgame – May 31st!

Wider Church has purchased 30 tickets to see the Yard Goats game on Sunday, May 31st. It's a 1:10pm game vs the Altoona Curve, and kids get to run the bases after it's over! We will be subsidizing 33% of the ticket price to make it a very affordable. \$12 for all ages. Tickets will go on sale during coffee hours starting May 3rd. We hope you can join us!

Speaking of a ballgame, we had a fun movie and pizza night on Friday, April 17th. We watched the classic Field of Dreams on the big screen in the parish hall. We enjoyed pizza, popcorn and even some ice cream. Thanks to those who came out!

We'd love to hear your ideas for other events throughout the year! Have a chat with Linda, Craig, Geri or Debbie if you have thoughts you'd like to share.



STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL SUNDAY, JUNE 21, 2026



The Strawberry Festival will be held
on Father's Day, June 21, 2026
from 3-7pm

Please save the date
as we will need many volunteers
to have a successful event.

Last year was very successful and with
your help, we can do it again.

Please watch for sign ups.

Shop Scrip for all your Special Occasions!

So much going on this time of year! Graduations, Weddings, Showers, Anniversaries, as well as birthdays that happen year-round. All of these are excellent occasions to purchase and give gift cards. And what better place to get them than right here at church?! Scrip is a very convenient way to shop for gifts and raise money for the church at the same time.

With Scrip, you can help raise money for the church by buying gift cards for everyday expenses like groceries, gas, clothing, restaurants and gifts. It is literally “fundraising while you shop” and there are nearly 600 retailers to choose from. The best part about Scrip is that you pay for exactly what you get and the church makes money by purchasing the gift cards at less than face value. You can also order scrip online or through the RaiseRight app. Add gift cards to your cart and either pay by check, credit card or through an automatic withdrawal from your checking account. For more information on how to sign up online and get our enrollment code, just reach out. I’m available via phone (860-371-1016), email (c.levine@comcast.net) or find me at the Scrip table in coffee hour nearly every Sunday.

Thanks for your continued support!
Casey



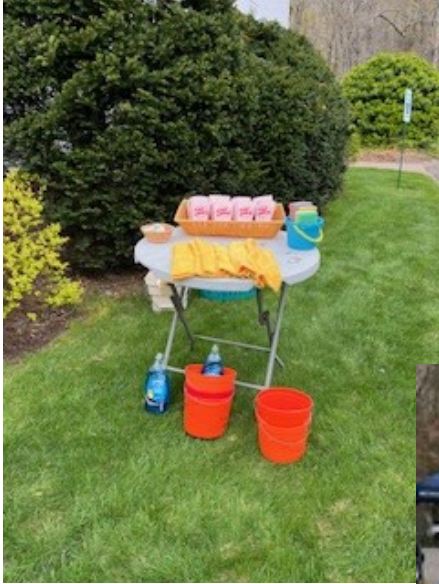
On Sunday, April 26th we welcomed new member Rev. Dr. Keith Alderman. We look forward to welcoming more new members soon!

Prayer Square Blessing





Community Bike Event



Egg Drop



Easter Family Fun Event



Please be sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram.



Missions & Outreach ~ SPOTLIGHT ON ECAD



Educated Canines Assisting with Disabilities (ECAD), located in Winsted, CT, was founded by Lu and Dale Picard in 1995. Lu started ECAD when she saw that her father, who had suffered a stroke, responded well to their family dog who she had trained to do simple tasks for him. Dale joined her a year later and was instrumental in creating their site with kennels and offices. They are a small non-profit that has grown and placed over 350 Assistance Dogs nationwide.

ABOUT THE DOGS:

Service Dogs work for individuals with disabilities due to illness or injury, other than blind or deaf. They are trained to perform a wide variety of tasks such as: pulling a wheelchair, bracing, retrieving, alerting to a medical crisis, and providing assistance in a medical crisis.

Skilled Companion Dogs work or perform tasks with an adult or child with a disability under the guidance of an additional person, a facilitator. A facilitator is typically a parent, spouse or caregiver who handles and cares for the assistance dog, encourages and is responsible for the customized needs of the placement.

ECAD's Project HEAL® honors and empowers Veterans with combat-related physical and/or psychiatric disabilities including amputees, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and/or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), by providing specifically educated Service Dogs to increase independence and make a positive difference in every aspect of their lives. The Project HEAL® Service Dogs learn numerous specialty commands to aid Veterans including reminding them to take medications, sensing and warding off hyper-vigilance, depression and anger, and offering non-judgmental companionship and unconditional love. Additionally these specially educated dogs provide stability, mobility and retrieval assistance.

ECAD's Canine Magic is a specialized program offering Service Dogs for children with autism, helping families build independence and confidence. ECAD is one of the few accredited service dog providers that accepts children with autism as young as two years old. These dogs assist a child with Autism in areas of social, emotional, and cognitive development, but the dog's primary duty is to increase the child's physical safety by "anchoring". Anchoring is a method in which the dog wears a harness that is attached to the child's belt. The child also holds the harness and is taught to walk with the dog, but a third party facilitator (usually a parent or teacher) holds a second leash attached to the dog's collar. The parent can then give the dog a command to "stay" if the child becomes distracted, frustrated, or tries to bolt away, enabling the child to function well in situations that were previously impossible to handle.

Facility Service Dogs are specially trained Service Dogs that work with a volunteer or professional who is trained by a program. The work of a facility dog can include visitations or professional therapy in one or more locations. The Facility Dogs, who can be found in hospitals, nursing homes, courthouses, etc., have helped thousands of distressed individuals.

BREEDING:

Dale and Lu Picard have developed a breeding program, as well as a strong network within the industry to uphold the highest standards for the service dog breeds they raise and train. With the exception of some breeder donations, their dogs are Labrador and Golden Retrievers bred by ECAD for outstanding physical and mental health. They have owned all of their female breeders from birth, and they only use studs from other Service Dog programs to ensure the continued strength, stability, and excellence of their service dog breeds. Each female will have no more than 4 litters in their lifetime and then go on to be ambassadors for ECAD.

TRAINING:

Each dog receives two years of education to prepare them for their career. If you are interested in watching LIVE training, each Wednesday, from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. EST you can go to ECAD's website on their ECAD LIVE page and watch!

ABOUT THE APPLICANTS:

The applicant for a service dog must go through a process to show compatibility and commitment to uphold the training for the life of the dog among many other requirements. All participants are required to complete a thirteen-day Team Training, where they are taught commands, skills, and canine behavior through lectures, dog handling drills, and community field trips.

GET INVOLVED:

There are many ways to get involved with ECAD, not just by monetary donations. Youth can volunteer to help care and train at their facility. You can host a dog-in-training over a weekend. You can be part of the nursery team that educates dogs from eight weeks old until they are eight to nine months old in individual homes. You can drive the ECAD bus for community events or field trips. You could help with ongoing improvements at their facility or if you are internet savvy that's something you could help with too!

The Missions Box collection for May is diapers and wipes for Gifts of Love in Avon. They particularly have a need for sizes larger than newborn and up through pull-ups. These are frequently requested items that Gifts of Love has difficulty keeping stocked. As stated on their website, Gifts of Love serves individuals and families who “face a short-term crisis in their lives due to reduced working hours, illness, divorce, death of a spouse/mate, domestic abuse, or a significant unexpected increase in expenses. They are hardworking people who simply cannot make ends meet. By assisting our clients with food, clothes, and energy assistance, we allow them to use their income on other necessities such as rent, car repairs, and medications. By helping them meet their family's most basic needs – food on the table or a winter coat – we enable them to focus on putting their lives back in order and regaining their self-sufficiency. We are helping your neighbors.”

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our collection for Holy Joe's Café! We will update you on the amount collected after we get it all counted.

Missions Speaker: The Missions Committee is excited to welcome Christina Reiser from Educated Canines Assisting With Disabilities on May 31st. Christina will speak during worship about the wonderful work done at ECAD, then she and her dog will go to Sunday School with the children. Christina will also be available during coffee hour to answer any questions. Please see the Spotlight Article to learn more about ECAD.

(Missions & Outreach continued next page)

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 and Affirming Congregation

Missions & Outreach Continued...

Brian's Angels: The Sunday School children made ham and cheese and bologna and cheese sandwiches for Brian's Angels Homeless Outreach on April 19th. They will make sandwiches again on May 17th and June 7th. Thank you to everyone who provided apples and oranges on April 19th! This effort was so successful, that we'd like to continue providing fruit in May and June. Please bring apples, oranges, or pears to church on the sandwich days and leave them on the counter in the kitchen.

In addition to purchasing sandwich supplies, the Missions Committee also used some of our food fund money to provide pudding cups and chips for the evening meal bags as well as coffee and lemonade mix to be used at the lunchtime meals.

Knitting Ministry: The knitting ministry continues to meet on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of the month at 9 am. If interested in participating, please see Rebecca Glinsman.

As always, if you have an idea for the Missions and Outreach Committee or know of an organization you would like us to consider supporting, please feel free to talk to one of the members of the committee. Darryl Haberern (Chairman), Debbie Poleyestewa, Casey Levine, Rebecca Glinsman, Heather Neumann, Martha Stansel.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING ~ SUNDAY, May 17, 2026

NOTICE OF A SPECIAL MEETING: First Congregational Church, Canton Center
after the 10 am service or on
subsequent Sundays until quorum is obtained.

AGENDA

1. Discussion and subsequent congregational vote to do the due diligence of compiling engineering, realtor, tax and legal components of options to sell the parsonage.
2. Any other business proper to come before said meeting.

Respectfully Submitted ~ Bev Sealand, Clerk






DID YOU KNOW.... We send out "WEEKLY EMAIL REMINDERS"

If you would like to receive weekly emails about our upcoming Sunday Worship and reminders of events and happenings for the week ahead, please email the church office at office@cantoncenterchurch.org or call 860-693-4581.



MAY 2026



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Knitting 9 am 	2 AA 11:00 pm
3 Missions Mtg 9am Sr. Choir 9 am Worship 10:00 am Communion Canton HS 6-8pm	4 AA/ACA 7:00 pm	5 Cub Scouts Practice PH AA 7:00 pm	6 Cub Scouts set up for mtg Thurs Deacons Mtg 7 pm	7 Handbell Choir 5:30 pm Cub Scouts 6:30 pm	8	9 AA 11:00 pm
10 Sr. Choir 9 am Worship 10:00 am  Happy Mother's Day!	11 Trustee Mtg 7pm AA/ACA 7:00 pm	12 AA 7:00 pm	13 Council Mtg 7 pm	14	15 Knitting 9 am 	16 AA 11:00 pm
17 Sr. Choir 9 am Worship 10:00 am Sunday School Making Sandwiches Congregational Mtg after Svc	18 AA/ACA 7:00 pm	19 AA 7:00 pm	20	21 Handbell Choir 5:30 pm	22	23 AA 11:00 pm
24 Sr. Choir 9 am Worship 10:00 am 4th Sun Food Collection	25 Memorial Day Office Closed  AA/ACA 7:00 pm	26 AA 7:00 pm	27	28 Handbell Choir 5:30 pm	29 Bridal Shower set up Friday evening	30 Parish Hall Reserved for Bridal Shower AA 11:00 pm
31 Sr. Choir 9 am Worship 10:00 am Mission Speaker ECAD Yard Goats Game 1:10 pm  Bell Choir Valerie Manor						



The First Congregational Church
(United Church of Christ)
184 Cherry Brook Road
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Worship every Sunday at 10:00 a.m.

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Pastor Kurt Satherlie

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