



Landmark

OCTOBER 2020

First Congregational Church
An Open and Affirming Congregation
Vol. 66, Number 9

LEANING INTO GOD

Dear Church Family,

Many of you have queried, "How we can be creative during these days?" Some are knitting prayer shawls, others delivering Meals on Wheels, many calling people, and most are praying too. There are art projects, moments to Zoom, and postcards to send. Please email other ideas about how to stay connected during these odd days.

In speaking with my dear friend from high school, a creative businessperson, I asked him to share some of the ways he has been working to empower change. He sent me the ideas below I share with you to spark our imagination. Beyond care of family and pledging in time, talent, and treasure to church, Mark Fogas writes about his experience-

1. *Several years ago, I created a scholarship in my parents' name. This is endowed and will provide one or two scholarships per year. This year we changed the criteria for selection to include minority students who have a demonstrated financial need who are first generation college attenders. The recipients can get this every year.*
2. *Because it simply takes time for scholarships to generate enough income to support multiple awards, I made donations to the university to allow them to award two additional \$1,000 scholarships each year for the next five years while the endowment continues to grow in principle.*
3. *I had our company establish a partnership with several Historically Black College and Universities that will provide paid internships during the summer of each school year, with the intention that when they graduate and are proficient in the job, they will transition into a full-time position.*
4. *With so many families struggling to get the technology they need for their kids to do online schooling, I partnered with a local middle school to provide 30 WIFI hotspots to families. The school board is providing chrome books, but many families do not have access to, or cannot afford, Internet Service at their home.*
5. *In partnering with an organization called Homestretch, which provides support services to homeless families, we were able to get Chrome Books and printers so they can create a learning lab in their facility to help kids with either after-school tutoring or providing them access to technology for schooling.*
6. *With the university from which I graduated, we established a Minority Opportunity Scholarship. This will be established with resources defined in my estate when I pass away. This will fund multiple scholarships annually for minority students.*
7. *I recently had the opportunity to begin discussions about a skill development program with a shelter that houses women and children who don't have someplace to live who are in transition away from situations of domestic violence. The intention is to help them develop skills that will lead to full-time employment.*

May Mark's creative vision help inspire us to think broadly about our corners of the world. What projects fit our passions and skills? We hold to the prophet Micah's words, What does God require of us but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. How might we follow Micah's call today?

Peace on the journey and for the ministries of life,

Ginger

OCTOBER 2020 WORSHIP

Please RSVP to the Church Office to reserve a seat in a worship service.

With the sign-up system for worship, please RSVP as early in the week as possible. If the seats for the designated groups are not all taken by Tuesday, any open seats are available first come, first served. If you are eager to attend a particular service, it is never too early to RSVP!

Sunday, Oct. 4: Communion

10:00am In-person Worship for:

those who have lost a loved one in the past 3 years, Deacons, Deaconess/Visitors- please

RSVP to the Church Office

Worship email will be sent out to all others

Sunday, Oct. 11:

10:00am In-person worship for:

Church Council participants, Business Committee, anyone else not had a chance to attend yet- RSVP

Worship email will be sent out to all others

Sunday, Oct. 18:

10:00am In-person worship for:

Stewardship, Community & Global Justice, Memorial & Organic Garden, Harvest Fair, Nominating-RSVP

Worship email will be sent out to all others

Sunday, Oct. 25:

10:00am In-person worship for

Finance, PF, Women's Fellowship & Outreach, other committees-RSVP

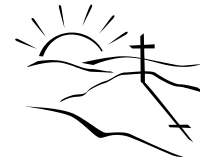
Worship email will be sent out to all others

DEACONESS/VISITOR OF THE MONTH

Deaconess/Visitor for October is Debbie Peluse (203-453-5517). Please notify her of births, adoptions, or anyone who may need a note of sympathy, encouragement, or a prayer shawl.

DEACON OF THE MONTH

Deacon for October is Ellen Edens (203-444-3024). Please contact Ellen if you have questions or reflections about the spiritual life of the church.

**IN MEMORIAM**

Natali George Acuil Angok
September 3, 1982 – August 23, 2020

Jason Vance Plyer
August 5, 1958 – September 19, 2020

FOOD COLLECTION

"...I was hungry and you gave me food." Matt 25:35

Food insecurity continues. Though we won't collect the food at the worship service, we invite you to continue to support the Guilford Food Bank. Check the Guilford Food bank website for their recent needs. Food can be dropped off at Big Y and Palumbo's Automotive during their regular working hours. The Guilford Food bank receives donations on Friday mornings.

**FIRST CHURCH TAG/ESTATE SALE**

Saturday, October 10, 2020
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
outdoors / weather permitting / rain date TBD

Social Distance / Masks Required
Cash & Carry

Volunteers Needed
Due to COVID we cannot accept new donations at this time.

Contact Lisa Freund at 203-907-6376 or
lafct7177@gmail.com.

CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS SEPTEMBER

Treasurer Report Bill Bailey

- We applied for and received EIDL and PPP funds in March. We will be applying for as much forgiveness as our eligibility allows.
- Treasurer's Report approved.

Discussion of potential use of Work bequest
Stephen/ Ginger

- Knowing how much Betsy and Clyde were passionate about keeping people connected to the church, we could use some of the bequest to reimburse the Major Repair Fund which just paid for an Internet upgrade. WiFi in the church has been so poor, that it affected many groups and aspects of our ministry.

- Motion approved.

Discussion of payments to conference

Stephen/MJ Potter

- First Church clergy and Committee on Global Justice (formerly Church World Concerns) proposed that we combine UCC dues and Wider Mission payments and rename them the Proportional Giving. Church Council assumes responsibility for making the budget decisions for the First Church contribution to the SNEUCC (Southern New England UCC). The Consociation dues are still separated. Unanimous approval.

Ministers' Report Ginger/Jake

Ginger:

- Jake's installation on Sunday. Terrific celebration.
- First invitation for in person worship this Sunday. Ginger feels like they have a great plan.
- Dut Malek's 37-year-old brother-in-law died suddenly of a heart attack and it was Ginger's first memorial service since March. Large group. All masked.

Jake:

- Very difficult for people to stay apart during memorial services.
- COVID response team has carefully thought through the process of bringing people back together. We are nervously excited about the next step in the saga of 2020.
- Scripture, Sermon and related Song (triple S) video will still go out to the congregation and get posted on the website.
- Weekly Steward video will appear in the Steeple every week over the next few weeks.

Business Committee Peter Rebuzzini

- Over the Summer, Business Committee upgraded the internet on the Church campus for \$7,000+ from the Major Repair Fund.
- Spencer House roof is substantially done.

- Mark has been sealing windows in the basement of Spencer House as well as taking care of a mouse problem in Spencer House.
- Working on the ramp entrance of Fellowship Hall.
- Mark has also been working with the Harvest Fair committee to arrange a "tag sale" of some kind to sell some of the furniture in the shed.
- Guilford Center for Children is going to use our space for childcare during the three days that the kids work remotely. We will house 60 K-4 kids.
- The lead paint was remediated in the windows.
- Carbon Monoxide detectors were added.
- Not scheduling more capital improvements until next year.

Nominating Gail Tomsich / Peter Rebuzzini

- Starting to get into the Nominating season. They have been meeting in the Memorial Garden.
- Committee members should reach out to people who might want to serve.

New /Old Business

All

- Nancy Leckerling presented: Environmental Ministry Team has been continuing to work on the possibility of our church becoming a Creation Justice Church. They want Climate Justice to become part of our church's DNA. First job is advocacy. Congregation Climate Justice Voter Challenge. Really important for us to vote in November and to prioritize voting to support climate justice and creation care. Nancy will put the packets in the mail and Jake will put the announcement in the Steeple. This will get the information in everyone's hands and we will ask for comments by next Tuesday (September 15) and then we can put it to a Church Council vote.
- Stephen Dudley recommends that we take the remaining funds from Sarah Verasco's sabbatical fund (\$9,278) and place in a "holding" fund that Church Council can direct as needed. Moved, seconded and approved.
- Debbie Peluse asked that the names of the members of the COVID team get published so that congregation members can contact them if they have questions or concerns. Drew Tucci is the chairperson. You can reach him at: andrew.e.tucci42@gmail.com.
- Debbie asked about the status of the labyrinth. The labyrinth has been held off for a little while.
- F1Go status? The Deacons were made aware of the new the directory and will be trained in small pods. The Financials still have a goal of October 1st for the changeover. We will see. It is a huge undertaking. Annemarie has been terrific and very organized and methodical about the process.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES

Things are happening!!! See the opportunities listed here to connect with faith stories, friends and First Church while we remain distanced and do our best to keep each other safe!

The "**Joys and Concerns Mailbox**" is outside the brick Moore Education Building, easily accessible from the parking lot behind the church. You can't miss it! Stop by with a prayer concern or a joy to share and we will pray for them each week!

Every Sunday at noon we invite you and/or your children to join **Judi Wallace LIVE on Facebook** for an interactive opportunity for a story, a lesson, a craft or game and just some fun from a First Church setting!

We also have several **Family Events** planned for the Fall that will be held outside on the Church lawn. Please register for these events by emailing me at: judi@firstchurchquilford.org. We sure hope you can join us for some of these get togethers. Masks will be mandatory, and distancing will be arranged.

Christian Education Plans for Fall!

Oct. 4, 4:00 pm - **Community Garden/CROP Hunger Walk** month - Join me for stories, pictures, a tour of the garden and even a walk around the green. We can raise awareness about food scarcity and insecurity locally and abroad and make a difference!

Oct. 9-12 - **Family Scavenger Hunt** - Do it in a day or over the long weekend! Zoom on Monday evening to share and name the winners!

Oct. 18, 9:00 am - **Storytelling and Writing** – Guest

Nov. 1, 4:00 pm - **Bird Feeders**

Nov. 15, 9:00 am - **Meditation** – Guest

Dec. 6, 4:00 pm – **Campfire**

As everything is shifting, we too are shifting and planning to insure the health and safety of everyone. Sunday School during worship and Nursery Care are on hold. Our greatest hope is to return to those programs in January 2021. Stay tuned!

Confirmation Plans

Confirmation this year will not begin until December 14 when we will have an orientation and Christmas party in some way! Please find the Confirmation Schedules for 1st & 2nd Year students at www.firstchurchquilford.org.

If you have a student who is entering 9th Grade this year and is interested in joining our First Year Confirmation class, please contact me.

Pilgrim Fellowship Plans for the Fall!

October 4 – **CROP Hunger Walk Alternative!** Opportunities for small group walks and awareness programs. This event requires sign-up in advance. Contact Judi if you are in high school and are interested! judi@firstchurchquilford.org.

October 18 – Online **video with speaker Julie Fitzpatrick** on creative outlets for people in difficult times.

November – **Possible small group leaf raking** opportunities!

December – Alternative December Event Opportunities- Look for postings and updates on First Church Social Media, website and email.

If you'd like to be on the PF group email list, please contact me.

With heartfelt prayers and hopes of staying connected, peace be with you all.

Judi Wallace, Director
judi@firstchurchquilford.org





Gift from Betsy and Clyde Work

First Church had the wonderful privilege of the embracing presence of Betsy and Clyde Work. Their stories and slides of places, people, and ministries around the world exemplified their desire to inspire people of faith to gather. They diligently made name tags so we would know each other. These two never sat on a committee or board, but rather *worked* on committees and boards. The CROP Hunger Walk was fueled by their desire to feed people. They were clear that every person could find a ministry task and needed do it!

We have received a legacy gift from them. Their generosity made it possible for us to upgrade our WiFi system. This gift enables all people to still connect and “come” to church during a pandemic. In honor of the Works legacy, we celebrate that they are still uniting us. Peace and time to get to work!

Ginger



2020 CROP HUNGER WALK: WALKING ALONE, TOGETHER

Over the past 50 years, tens of thousands of walkers have raised more than \$500 million through the annual CROP Hunger Walk. And since 1991 the Connecticut Shoreline CROP Hunger Walk has raised \$406,771.70 to help combat global hunger.

This year, due to the coronavirus pandemic and the need for social isolation, we will be participating in a “virtual” CROP Hunger Walk. Instead of gathering together with members of other Shoreline churches to walk in a large group on a single Sunday in October, this year’s participants can walk alone or with families or friends any day during the month of October, and follow any walking route that appeals to them.

Although we’ll be walking in relative isolation, we’ll be demonstrating our solidarity with the millions of neighbors around the world who must walk to live, as well as with the local ministries who also benefit from the CROP Hunger Walk (these include Guildford Interfaith Ministries, Madison Community Services, the Food Pantry of North Branford, and Christian Community Action of New Haven).

All walkers will be encouraged to take “selfies” that can be posted on our Facebook and Instagram pages. It will be fun to see where this year’s walkers end up!

If you would like to register to walk or donate online, please visit www.crophungerwalk.org/ctshoreline.

If you’re registered to walk and would like to pick up a free yard sign promoting the Connecticut Shoreline CROP Hunger Walk, please contact Jo Keogh at (475) 331-0251 to arrange for contactless pickup.

A Modern Psalm

by Amanda Patrick

God of this whole world,
This boundless, ocean-filled world;
Whose endless stretching horizons
harness the wind
And make night turn to day.
Where six billion people dwell.
Each unique and fully known.

Why do I struggle so?
Constricted and trapped in myself?
How do I feel the winds of healing in the thicket of
my soul?
When can my heart be a place where freedom abides?
Turn me inside out so the darkness may flee
and my being becomes still.

Help me, O God of this amazing world.
You, who knows my every longing and understands
me like no other.
You, who embraces me in my complexity.
You, who loves me in my failings.
You, only you, who can bring true peace.
You.
You.
You.

Make my heart in line with yours.
So I see the path earmarked for me alone.
Keep me from stumbling.
Ensure I remain faithful until that day I long for
When I see you face to face.



ECO Echo

The New England Conference (SNEUCC) Environmental Ministries Team launched In August the Congregation Climate Justice Voter Challenge.

Because the issue of climate change and climate justice, along with other critical social justice issues, are at stake in this fall's elections, participating in our democracy BY VOTING is really important. The SNEUCC hopes that every Green UCC congregation will accept the "Challenge" to have at least 75% of their members sign the Creation Care Voter Pledge, which simply says that they will "pledge to be a consistent voter" and "always prioritize caring for Creation in how they vote." Follow this link to vote.

<https://www.sneucc.org/congregation-climate-justice-voter-challenge>). The benefit is that when folks take the pledge, they'll receive a nonpartisan reminder of upcoming elections in their voting district.

Thus, the challenge has two levels: first, UCC individuals take the individual pledge; and second, UCC churches in MA, CT and RI accept the "Challenge" on behalf of their congregation (and join the ranks of many other UCC churches in the SNEUCC who have accepted the "Challenge" in the past two weeks) of having at least 75% of their members commit to being faithful and regular voters. Accepting means that the leaders of our church encourage members to take the pledge. The "Challenge" is a challenge to vote, to stand up for our Christian values, to fulfill God's first requirement of us in Genesis to be "stewards" of Creation.

Why is this critical now? Nathaniel Stinnett, who began the Environmental Voter Project, the prototype for the SNEUCC "Challenge", said in a webinar in April that most voters do not prioritize environmental issues: in the 2014 elections, 4% listed climate and environmental issues as their top priority; in the 2018 elections, 7% did. In 2020, about 10% of voters list environmental issues as their top

priority, while 25% list healthcare and 25% list immigration. Most environmentalists don't vote: in

2014, 21% of environmentalists said they voted; in 2016, 50% voted; and in 2018, 53% voted. Where are the others? We need to turn non-voting environmentalists, people whose faith admonishes them to care for Creation, into voters. We in the UCC can be an electorate-changing group, if we do vote. And what is more important than caring for Creation?

If the planet is unlivable by the 22nd century, no other issues are going to matter! Politicians care what our #1 priority is, so let's show them by accepting this "Challenge" that we care about Creation. This is our UCC way to GOTV, to get out the vote for candidates who recognize climate change, realize the importance of climate justice, and understand the intersectionality of economic, racial, social and environmental justice.

Nancy Leckerling, EMT

GROCERY CARDS AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE Wednesdays 10am – Noon

State St side of Spencer House

Grocery cards for Big Y, Bishop's and Stop & Shop are available through the Finance Office window in Spencer House side porch. \$100 in cash or check purchases \$100 of groceries – the church makes \$5 on every card.

As we continue in our pandemic mode, food insecurity is still an issue in our communities. Any who are able are invited to purchase cards to give to clergy for distribution to those in need of help purchasing adequate food. Thank you.

FIRST CHURCH WEEKLY FACEBOOK LIVE OFFERINGS

Sundays Noon – 12:30pm:

Judi

10:16 Moment/ Sunday School Lesson

Wednesdays at Noon – 12:30pm

Ginger and Jake

"Unfiltered" Bible Study

Thursdays- Noon – 12:30pm

Bill

"30 Minutes of Joy!"

Organ and/or piano recital