

# INSPIRE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH'S BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



## Dear Church Family—from Judi Wallace

I hold two positions that are challenging to separate when writing such a letter. Therefore, I write to the congregation, Christian Education families, and Pilgrim Fellowship, all of whom I cherish.

This is a letter to express my sincere gratitude for the privilege of leading young people in love and service to others over the last 10 years and teaching our youngest children stories and lessons from the Bible for the past three years. We pray that all these young people grow in faith from these experiences and lessons. During this time, it has been an incredible honor to teach and love the children and youth of this congregation and in the community, with your dedicated support.

Among the richest blessings were my 10 years of directing Pilgrim Fellowship. I am grateful beyond words to have been a part of the lives of these young people, serving as their youth director. Many of you I met for the first time at a Pilgrim Fellowship welcome picnic. I remember thinking, "Wow!!! Look at all these teens. I am so blessed but also a little scared!" These friendships have been a truly amazing gift to me. I have learned so much from the youth in our community.



Cont. page 2

### IN THIS ISSUE

**PAGE 1 - NOTE FROM JUDI**

**PAGE 2 -CONT. NOTE FROM JUDI, LETTER FROM GINGER**

**PAGE 3 - REFLECTION FROM GINGER, MAY WORSHIP, PARISH CARE TEAM INFO & MOTHERS DAY BASKET PICK UP**

**PAGE 4 - MESSAGE FROM PASTOR JEANETTE, MESSAGE FROM CLARA, SCHOLARSHIP INFO, EMT ACTIVITY & MEDITATION OPPORTUNITY.**

**PAGE 5 - PRAYER LIST, WELCOME JON ORT & CORRECTION**

**PAGE 6 - PAJ NEWS & COUNCIL MINUTES**

**PAGE 7 - CHILDREN'S MINISTRY & PF UPDATES**

Over all the years I have served First Church, each week I am most moved by the exuberant participation in children and youth programs! There is something special, a feeling difficult to describe, when I see the youth gathering to meet at our church. They gather to become part of a loving and wonderful community! No matter how many times I experience it, the minute I see PF students being wonderfully greeted by their peers or see the youngest ones walk through those big doors under that steeple—I feel at home. I know that here at church, there is something stable in this changing world.

The positions entrusted to me have held great responsibility; we are called by God to a place and a time to serve. The time has come for me to make a transition in my ministry from full-time work at First Church. So, it is with spirit of sadness, yet a heart beating with gratitude, that I tender my resignation, effective July 31, 2022.

Please know of my deep respect and love for my colleagues and friends and First Church. I am a better person in every way because of the staff with whom I have worked these ten years. I have enjoyed incredible relationships with all of our outstanding church leaders.

There is not a children and youth director anywhere who could have asked for a greater environment in which to grow, participate and to thrive. I am so grateful.

With every good wish, and many bright blessings,

Judi Wallace

Director of Children and Youth Ministries



## Celebrating Judi Wallace

In the time of change or at departures, we are fond of quoting Ecclesiastes: There is a time for every purpose under heaven. While such a statement is true, the reality may not be comforting. In that spirit I write.

There are few people who can minister equally effectively with both children and youth. We have been blessed by one of those rare folks! Director (more accurately minister) Judi Wallace has enhanced our lives with her children's messages and service opportunities. She has been a guiding force in empowering and guiding our children, youth, and adults too. It is with sorrow and deep gratitude that we say good-bye to her. No doubt her gifts of sewing and creative spirit will find renewal and perhaps a few more moments for rest too.

As Judi makes this transition, we will work to find two replacements. The role will be split once again into Director of Children and Family Ministries and Director of Pilgrim Fellowship. Naturally we might feel a bit of anxiety about finding folks as gifted and loved as Judi. Now is when we lean into our faith and trust that the Spirit will guide and direct our paths as stated in Proverbs.

Utilizing our resources from Judi and local divinity schools, we will post these part-time positions after meeting with both the Christian Education and Pilgrim Fellowship committees to confirm the job descriptions. Church Council chair and staff will be helpful in assessing these roles as well.

For now, let us celebrate Judi. Please send cards and monetary gifts to the office. We will present her a basket on her last Sunday, July 31. Until then, she will be active with both programs and recruiting fall Sunday School teachers too.

With thanks for all that has been, all that is, and all that is yet to come,  
The Rev. Dr. Ginger Brasher-Cunningham

## SYMBOLS: A REFLECTION

Symbols are plentiful in life. In Sunday's service, we reflected on several meaningful symbols of faith and church. Through the years, folks have asked why we have moved the pulpit Bible, changed communion elements, removed the cross for certain events, and changed the table runner. There are intentional inclusive and practical reasons for each shift.

The pulpit Bible is very large. We keep it near the pulpit but read scripture from folders or phones to accommodate the space and microphones. The elements of communion and surrounding liturgy evolve to affirm our practice of hospitality and inclusion. Gluten-free bread and grape juice allow those with allergies and addictions to participate more freely. If we take down the cross during interfaith services (in the tradition of being a meetinghouse on the green), it is leaned by the pulpit pew. This is a kindness for our Jewish siblings because, at times, the cross has been a symbol tied to words of anti-Jewish sentiment and hatred. The communion table runner woven by members is removed during Advent and Lent as a practical protection because we burn numerous candles.

The Bible, communion elements, and the cross are symbols of our faith, just as the runner is a symbol of our church; but they are only symbols. Sometimes, changing or reframing those symbols can help us see our faith and ourselves in a new light as we allow the words written in the Bible to dwell in our hearts and as we follow Jesus, lean into the good news of resurrection, and practice hospitality in our community of faith.

-The Rev. Dr. Ginger Brasher-Cunningham

## MAY WORSHIP

**Sundays, May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29**

**10:00am In-person Worship in the Sanctuary**

**In-person Church School (10:00am) on Sundays May 8, 15 & 22**

**Sunday School via Facebook Live 9:00am Sundays May 8, 15, 22**

Windows remain open for air circulation, so please dress for the weather! Masks optional for those who are fully vaccinated.

**Mother's Day Remembrance Sunday, May 8, 9:30 a.m., in the Memorial Garden** (in the Chapel if raining). In this brief gathering before worship, we will pause to remember our mothers—or perhaps those who were to us like mothers—who are no longer with us.

**Church Chat, Sunday, May 22**, in the Sanctuary after worship—please join us.

**Parish Care Team Contact** for May is Jamie Mikolay (203-453-1535) or [jamiemikolay@gmail.com](mailto:jamiemikolay@gmail.com))

Deacon for May is Amanda Patrick (203-530-9005 or [ajpafrica@aol.com](mailto:ajpafrica@aol.com))

Copies of the Upper Room devotionals for May/June purchased by the deacons are available in the narthex and the Minear Library. You are welcome to pick up a copy; there are several copies in a large print format.

## Parish Care Team Needs Your Help

Looking for volunteers to be added to our list of meal makers. If you would like to make and deliver a meal for someone going through tough times, please call or email Pam D'Amico. Delivery can be arranged, if that is not possible. (860-338-4811 or [damicopamela@gmail.com](mailto:damicopamela@gmail.com))

## Mother's Day Flower Basket Pick-up

Please pick up your pre-ordered flowers at the First Church parking lot this Friday, May 6, 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. (110 Broad St., Guilford).

## **Pinchbeck Scholarship Applications Due May 22**

Application forms for the 2022-2023 college academic year are available from the church office, [office@firstchurchguilford.org](mailto:office@firstchurchguilford.org). Scholarships will be awarded in June.

Please contact Ellen Edens with any questions ([eledens@gmail.com](mailto:eledens@gmail.com), or 203-444-3024).

## **EMT's New Climate Activity**

Monthly starting next Wednesday, May 11, EMT will meet to pray and ring the bells on the 11th day of the month at 11:11 a.m. to sound the alarm for climate action. For more information, please email Jon Leckerling ([jon@LLL-Legal.com](mailto:jon@LLL-Legal.com)).

## **Meditation Opportunity on Zoom**

... to learn, to try out, and to ask questions about meditation. All ages, new & experienced meditators, and those who pray in any form are welcome to join in. "How to Meditate": Tuesday, May 24 & 31, 7 p.m. "Try out techniques": Tuesday, June 7 & 14, at 7 p.m. For more information, please call or email Nancy Mann (203-245-0513 or [nmannLCSW@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nmannLCSW@sbcglobal.net)).

## **MESSAGE FROM PASTOR JEANETTE**

Dear First Church Community,

I am grateful to all of you at First Congregational Church of Guilford for your kindness, inspiration, and support in these past months as your interim associate minister. Thank you for receiving me warmly into your vibrant and creative congregation during this transition. I have appreciated the dynamic staff, the glorious choir, and the numerous ministries of peace and justice. I will no longer be your interim associate pastor; however, like former part-time interim associate pastor Doug Clark, I will remain your Guilford neighbor. Although my last Sunday as interim associate minister will be May 8, I look forward to August, when I will return to cover preaching and pastoral care during Pastor Ginger's study leave. Undoubtedly, we will bump into each other in the store, on the green, and at community events. We will have opportunities to serve and worship together as neighbors and in the context of our New Haven East Consociation. I trust that God will continue to work among you and pray for this beloved faith community as you embrace new leadership.

Peace Be with You,  
Pastor Jeanette



## **MESSAGE FROM CLARA SIMS**

Dear First Church,

How can I even begin to express what a joy and honor it has been to work with you this past academic year? Thank you for your spirit of extravagant welcome and for the authenticity with which you have encouraged and affirmed me in my role here as a ministerial intern, as well as in my discernment of a call to ordained ministry in the UCC. Since I did not grow up in a faith community, it is such a gift to be ending my second year of seminary with a much clearer sense of that call as one that I believe will include serving in a parish setting, in conversation and alongside the work of environmental justice advocacy, which has been so formative for me to this point. As I prepare to head home for a summer internship at my home congregation in Albuquerque, New Mexico (through which I will hopefully, one day, be ordained!), I am delighted that this note is only a "goodbye for now," and that I will get to be with you all and our incoming YDS intern, Rachel Sauls, in the fall. Until then, many blessings to each one of you for a summer of deepening emergence from this long and weary season—filled with sun, sea breezes, and an abundance of fellowship with one another.

In gratitude, Clara



**In the kinship of faith, we pray for:**

the people of the Ukraine,  
 the Pastoral Search Committee and  
 the minister we seek;  
 the Afghan refugee family of 11 we  
 are helping to resettle;  
 David V. and family on the death of  
 Theresa;  
 Rachel  
 B.; Bill W.;  
 Gloria H.;  
 Frank C.,  
 Lucy H., cousin of Lynne O.; Stanley  
 B., cousin of Barbara H.; the family  
 and friends of Frank R.; those  
 impacted by natural and human  
 disasters;  
 those who are ill or suffer;  
 those who are grieving, struggling or  
 awaiting diagnoses;  
 all healthcare workers;  
 family and friends of those who have  
 completed or are contemplating  
 suicide;  
 those living with chronic diseases,  
 dementia, cancer, and their families;  
 those living with domestic violence;  
 families dealing with  
 addictions;  
 peace and health for all.

**CORRECTION—UCC UKRAINE EMERGENCY  
 APPEAL FUND ADDRESS**

In a prior issue, the zip code for donations to benefit the people of Ukraine was incorrect.

Please make your check payable to: United Church of Christ and include "Ukraine Emergency Appeal Fund" in the check memo.

Mail to:  
 United Church of Christ, PO Box 71957,  
 Cleveland, OH 44194

or donate online:  
<https://www.ucc.org/global-h-o-p-e/ukraine-emergency-appeal/>

**Welcoming Jon Ort, Summer Ministry Intern**

Jon Ort (he/him) is finishing his first year as a Master of Divinity candidate at Yale Divinity School. He will intern this summer with the New Haven Reentry Welcome Center, where he hopes to serve clients who are rebuilding their lives after enduring the crucible of incarceration. In college, Jon studied history, focusing on anticolonial movements across the Black Atlantic world, and served as Editor-in-Chief of The Daily Princetonian, Princeton's independent, daily student newspaper. He is a student liaison at Yale Divinity School's Office of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion and a member of the team organizing a U.S. Student Christian Movement. An identical twin (and the cousin of identical twins!), Jon enjoys photography, hiking, and listening to music.



Jon Ort, Summer Ministry Intern

## Peace, Affirmation & Justice News

Most people associate PAJ with the duffle bags and backpacks we prepare for people being released from incarceration, as they are a significant and vibrant part of our ministry. But PAJ does much more, actively identifying and supporting organizations involved in many social justice issues, including three described here.

A recent donation was made to the brand-new Kathy Carroll Community Playground in New Haven in a poor neighborhood that is being reclaimed and revitalized. The sponsor, Christian Community Action, strives to help children experiencing homelessness to face every day with confidence and dignity. They wrote to us that finally “children in CCA’s New Hope program will have a safe place to play.” PAJ donated funds to the UCC for weekend meals for asylum seekers. On one Saturday, “207 single and separated adults walked into the Welcome Center” where volunteers offer food, showers, and warm support. 1-for-3 is an organization for Palestinian rights. They let us know that our support of the Zahrat Al-Yasmeen Kindergarten in the UN-run Aida refugee camp “will benefit Palestinian refugee children for a lifetime.”

## CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS: APRIL 12, 2022, MEETING VIA ZOOM

The meeting was opened with a welcome and a prayer.

**Treasurer’s Report** approved.

**Board of Finance:** Finances in a pretty good place. Language in Standard Operating Procedures manual was updated per request at last meeting. Motion approved. Will put document online. Motion

approved to close out six funds no longer needed as separate accounts.

**Ministers’ Reports:** Holy Week services listed. Those on the prayer list: Bill Weidmann, Gloria Hager, and Judi Wallace, whose father-in-law died. Annie Adams turned 100! Many members have things going on in their personal lives: we need to continue to be kind and caring to each other. Thanks to Clara, Jeanette, Judi, and children for the Palm Sunday ribbons and greening of the cross.

**Business Committee:** Continuing to work on two projects: air conditioning of Spencer House and painting outside of Sanctuary and will come back with figures for Finance and Church Council. To expedite process, motion approved to authorize Chair of Council to present vote to Council via email.

**Nominating:** Vacancies in Stewardship. Suggestions welcome!

**Search Committee Update:** Fewer candidate profiles circulating, so our church profile will be tweaked to appeal to a wider audience.

**Review Prior Minutes:** Two edits offered. Moved and approved as amended.

**New /Old Business:** Meet in person on May 10. Pray for Judi and service trip to Puerto Rico next week. Office email is still: [office@firstchurchguilford.org](mailto:office@firstchurchguilford.org). Penelope’s new email is: [penelope@firstchurchguilford.org](mailto:penelope@firstchurchguilford.org). Meeting adjourned at 7:44.



Surrounded by spring, we are so happy to be able to continue weekly in-person Sunday school classes through May 22! There will be **LIVE-on-Facebook lessons and in-person classes May 8, 15, and 22** (no class on May 29, Memorial Day weekend). On **June 5**, we will celebrate the children of our congregation ~ CELEBRATION SUNDAY!! Join us at Sunday school this month to prepare and be a part of the June 5 worship led by the children.

Pilgrim Fellowship has returned from an amazing and moving journey to Puerto Rico, where they served so many people, more than they even know! The work was difficult and rewarding; lives were changed in Puerto Rico and Guilford. May our hearts in service continue throughout our lives. Huge THANK YOU to so many who support and uphold this PF community in so many ways! We are strong in community and loving in the world. **Sunday, May 22, at 7 p.m.**, ALL are welcome—church friends, PF members, and families—to the **video showing and photo sharing of PF Puerto Rico 2022!** We will also have a fun PF Seniors Send-off Celebration that night!



Members of Pilgrim Fellowship in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>May 2022</b> First Congregational Church of Guilford					CH-Chapel CR-Choir Room FH-Fellowship Hall GH-Griswold Hall MEB-Moore Ed. Bldg MG-Memorial Garden	ML-Minear Library Narthex Out- Outside Sanct- Sanctuary
<b>1</b> 9a Sunday School-Facebook Live 10a In-person Worship & Sunday School 7p PF-Sharefest-Sanct. 7p-Boy Sc Leaders-GH	<b>2</b> 7p Confirmation-Sanct./GH 7p Parish Care Team-FH	<b>3</b> Noon Staff-Sanct. 6:30p Music-CR 7:00p Deacons-Narthex	<b>4</b> 9a Meditation-Zoom 7p Trustees-Zoom	<b>5</b> Noon-30 Minutes of Joy-Sanct. 6:30p BSA-FH 6p C&GJ—Rm. 9 7:15p-Adult Choir-CR	<b>6</b> 4:30-6p Hanging Basket Plant Pick-up	<b>7</b> 1 p-Gathering at the Labyrinth
<b>8</b> 9a Sunday School-Facebook Live 9:30a Mother's Day Remembrance 10a In-person Worship & Sunday School	<b>9</b> 7p-Business Com-Narthex.	<b>10</b> Noon Staff-Sanct. 7p Church Council-Sanct./FH	<b>11</b> 9a Meditation-Zoom 11:11a Climate Bells	<b>12</b> Noon-30 Minutes of Joy-Sanct. 6:30p BSA-FH 7p EMT 7:15p-Adult Choir-CR	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b> 9a Sunday School-Facebook Live 10a In-person Worship & Sunday School	<b>16</b> 7p Confirmation-Sanct./GH	<b>17</b> Noon Staff-Sanct. 7p-Human Resources	<b>18</b> 9a Meditation-Zoom	<b>19</b> Noon-30 Minutes of Joy-Sanct. 6:30p BSA-FH 7:15p-Adult Choir-CR	<b>20</b> Confirmation statements due	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> 9a Sunday School- FB Live 10a In-person Worship & Sunday School 11a-Church Chat-Sanct. Pinchbeck Sch. App. due 4p Joyful Noise! Concert-Sanct. 7p-PF-Sanct.	<b>23</b> 7p PF Com.-Zoom	<b>24</b> Noon-Staff-Sanct. 2p Women's Fellowship & Outreach-FH	<b>25</b> 9a Meditation-Zoom	<b>26</b> Noon-30 Minutes of Joy-Sanct. 6:30p BSA-FH 7:15p-Adult Choir-CR	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> 10a In-person Worship (No Sunday school today)	<b>30 Memorial Day</b> Church Offices Closed	<b>31</b> Noon-Staff-Sanct.			<b>In-person 12-step Groups:</b> Sun 7:15a AA-GH Sun 2p NA-GH Mon 8a Al-Anon Tues 7p AA- Room 9	Wed 10a Al-Anon-FH Wed 7p AA-GH Thurs NA 7p GH Fri 7:30p AA- FH Sat. 7:30a AA- GH

**New Submissions Process for InSpire** - Please send submissions to InSpire by Monday noon of the first and third weeks of the month to Linda Mahal at [office@firstchurchguilford.org](mailto:office@firstchurchguilford.org), who will forward to Tarren Bailey for inclusion in the newsletter.

*InSpire***April 20, 2022**

Articles due by Monday noon of the first & third weeks  
emailed to [office@firstvchurchguilford.org](mailto:office@firstvchurchguilford.org).

**First Congregational Church Clergy and Staff**

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