



# Landmark

## SUMMER 2020

First Congregational Church  
An Open and Affirming Congregation  
Vol. 66, Number 7

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### CONGRATULATIONS AND NEWS!

Dear First Church family,

Some of you have heard that Gerhard Kummerow has a new job in Darien. We are excited for him! As Gerhard and Jake prepare to move to Milford - to split the travel distance- you can still send Gerhard a note of congratulations to the Church Office, 122 Broad St.

In September, we celebrate Jake's one-year anniversary (cards welcomed, too!) We look forward to his years of ministry ahead at First Church. Thank you for supporting them and praying for them in their move for "equitable work travel."

*Peace, Ginger*

### CALL TO JUSTICE

*...what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6: 8b*

Micah's call to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God is the anthem of these days! Through the years our legacy of slavery and racism has been challenged. In 1863 the Emancipation Proclamation was enacted; in 1963 Dr. King proclaimed, "I have a dream." These were markers and steps along a horrid and rugged road in the fight against injustice and oppression. Another awakening is occurring today. Birthed out of moving from the evils of slavery and stepping toward civil rights, more voices are rising in recognition of the systemic racism that is the structure of America. Even in the struggle, there is profound hope. Our world is experiencing significant change again.

A call this morning prompted me to write up some of the ways we, as a church, have been participating in lifting our voices with the chorus of other Shoreline communities.

For the past four years, we as a community have taken Civil Rights History Trips. The lessons learned in Alabama, Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee challenged and inspired the hearts and minds of more than fifty of our church members. We have read anti-racist books and articles together, heard speakers, held racial justice trainings, and reflected about our participation in systemic oppression. While all of that has happened, there is still much more to address, learn, and do.

On Monday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, the world watched the shocking death of George Floyd. Conversations, protest, vigils, questions, rationalizations, wonderings, and disillusionment filled social media and news outlets. As the country tried to absorb those eight minutes and forty-six seconds, a shift seemed to occur.

That Sunday's sermon at First Church, and for many congregations, focused on the journey toward racial equity. I sent out a text to Judi and a few others asking that folks gather at 5pm on May 31st on the Green with signs that read "Remembering George Floyd," or another person killed by police brutality. Within minutes one of our former Pilgrim Fellowship students texted me that he, too, had planned a gathering on the Green from 10am - 4pm. I changed our time to 4pm to follow our youth. Distanced and masked people surrounded the Green.



During the week, protestors continued to gather around the Green holding signs affirming that Black Lives Matter. Mark put back up our Eliminate Racism sign. As a result, a non-member came to our offices and confronted staff with harsh words about race. We made a police report.

On Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup> some of our members - distanced and masked- gathered to write the names in chalk and stand by the Eliminate Racism sign to read Bible passages that speak to these days. Staff and others then headed to Branford for a student-led protest. In the late afternoon we joined with St. George and Christ Episcopal churches ringing our bells together for eight minutes and forty-six seconds, the time that George Floyd endured a knee on his neck. We sat in silence as we posted live to church members at home and across the country. Later we headed to Madison for the evening vigil.



Jake suggested another gathering to the area UCC clergy. First Congregational Church, Madison was selected because it had room to accommodate the news media, as well as appropriate physical distancing on the front stairs and lawn. We gathered on Monday, June 8<sup>th</sup> and proclaimed the statement Scott Morrow of North Haven and I compiled.



*We gather this morning as clergy and colleagues to mourn the tragic death of George Floyd at the hands of police officers who showed callous disregard for his health in a situation where he posed no danger to anyone.*

*In addition to the daily acts of racism, we are deeply saddened and disturbed by the growing awareness that communities of color have borne a disproportionate burden of the severe illness and death wrought by COVID19. This reality is a reflection of deep inequality in our healthcare system and in our society.*

*In recent weeks a torrent of new anguish has overtaken us as we learned of the unfathomable circumstances of the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor. Our hearts ache.*

*We, the clergy of the New Haven East Consociation of the United Church of Christ, stand together to acknowledge our privilege and our acts of complicity in the cultural structure that is built on white supremacy. We commit ourselves to learn, listen, and work for racial equity.*

*We join our denomination in proclaiming, "When Black lives are systemically devalued by society, our outrage justifiably insists that attention be focused on Black lives. When a church claims boldly 'Black Lives Matter' at this moment, it chooses to show up intentionally against all given societal values of supremacy and superiority or common-sense complacency. By insisting on the intrinsic worth of all human beings, Jesus models for us how God loves justly, and how his disciples can love publicly in a world of inequality. We live out the love of God justly by publicly saying #BlackLivesMatter."*

*We join together in proclaiming, welcoming, and sharing, such a love that recognizes equality, demands justice, and works humbly and persistently for understanding and healing.*

At the end of the service Gini King offered the commissioning. Other First Church ordained members present were Shannon Clarkson, David Colton, Nancy Leckerling, and Sandra Wiens.

On Thursday evening, June 18<sup>th</sup>, the faith communities on the Green once again joined in solidarity with our black and brown siblings who struggle for equity.

Our witness will continue.

*Peace, Ginger*

## WORSHIP SUNDAYS IN JULY & AUGUST

We will continue with online worship throughout the summer.

**10:00am First Church's bells will peal, and an email will be sent out containing the worship service.**

First Church will be "gathered" for worship spread out across all our homes.

***If you are not on the worship email list please contact the Church Office at [office@firstchurchguilford.org](mailto:office@firstchurchguilford.org).***

## PLANS FOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP!

First Church has done well in keeping everyone safe and healthy by worshiping online during the COVID-19 crisis AND we miss being gathered as a congregation for worship. We long for Sundays when we can worship together in-person!

Clergy, staff and Deacons, with guidance from the state, local authorities and the United Church of Christ, have begun to plan for when we can worship in the Sanctuary again. ***On Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, we will hold our first in-person worship in the Sanctuary - for those who are senior adults age 70+.*** (We estimate we can safely allow 70 persons in the Sanctuary at that time.) The worship will be videoed and will be emailed later that day to the rest of the congregation. Sunday by Sunday we will add other groups, until we are able to all worship together again. Stay tuned!

## CLERGY PHONE-IN HOURS

Ginger and Jake continue to be available for conversations, just not at Java Hut! They are available by phone 203-453-5249:

**Ginger:** Tuesdays 7/7, 14, 21, 28 from 9-11am

**Jake:** Wednesdays, 7/1, 15, 22, 29 from 2-4pm

## DEACONESS OF THE MONTH

**Deaconess for July** is Diane Grigaitis (203-458-1450.) **Deaconess for August** is Diane Weidmann (203-887-4847.) Please notify her of anyone who may need a note of sympathy or encouragement.

## DEACON OF THE MONTH

**Deacon for July** is Paul Kuehn (203-281-1616.) **Deacon for August** is John Nelson (203-500-8753.) Please contact Paul or John if you have questions or reflections about the spiritual life of the church.

## GROCERY CARDS AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE Wednesdays 10am – Noon State St side of Spencer House

For the summer, while the Church Offices in Spencer House are still closed to non-staff, grocery cards for Big Y, Bishop's and Stop & Shop may be purchased through the window into the Finance Office. \$100 in cash or check buys \$100 worth of groceries -and the church receives \$5. It is a great fundraiser for the church.

## UPPER ROOM DEVOTIONALS AVAILABLE

Copies of The Upper Room devotional magazines, which normally would be available to pick up in the Sanctuary or Minear Library, will now be available outside the State Street door of Spencer House when the Church Office is open. Please contact Penelope if you would like one left out for you to pick up: [office@firstchurchguilford.org](mailto:office@firstchurchguilford.org) or 203-453-5249.

## FOOD COLLECTION – July/August

***"...I was hungry and you gave me food." Matt 25:35***  
Support of local food banks is critical in these times of illness and job loss. ***We invite you to continue our tradition of donating food to the Guilford Food Bank – only we will not receive the collections at church- please use the drop-off places listed below.*** Monetary donations are also welcome and may also be mailed to Guilford Food Bank, c/o Guilford Social Services, 263 Church St., Guilford, 06437.



## Guilford Food Bank Needs as of 6/15

Mac & cheese, canned pea/corn/string beans, hearty soups, canned pasta, baked beans, jelly, ketchup, tuna, tea, dish detergent, toothpaste, tissues.

## Drop-off Locations:

Guilford Food Bank, 45 Stone House Lane, Fridays 9am- Noon

Big Y, 830 Boston Post Rd: 7am – 10pm

Palumbo's Automotive, 1099 Boston Post Rd  
M- F 7am-6pm; Sat 7am – Noon

**CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS****June 16, 2020 7:00pm Zoom Meeting****Treasurer Report**

Bill Bailey

We are still in the black, but it is a very hard year to track. Pledging is a little ahead for the year. People are keeping up with their pledges well. Expenses are down. If everything continues the way we are going, we should be fine.

**Board of Finance**

Larry Backes

Time to think of next year's budget. Hard year for working on this. The budget tool will be sent out, process will move virtually until we can meet again. We need to be as conservative as possible.

**Discussion of PPP loan and SBA EIDL**

Larry/Bill/Stephen

Larry thanked Bill Bailey for raising the concern and suggestion of the loans for the church. Received the CARES (EIDL) and the PPP loans and will apply for forgiveness. They keep changing the rules for forgiveness. 30-year fixed loan at 3.75%. We don't have to accept the CARES loan. Lou Federici has quite a bit of experience with this. There are paperwork and forgivability issues. There may be a longer economic recovery time and we need to hold off spending until we are sure of the church finances.

**Update on Covid 19 Issues**

Ginger/Stephen

Mostly Zoom committee meetings occurring. The church has had eight diagnoses and one death. A funeral tentatively scheduled in Oct. Jake's installation will be on his one-year anniversary the first Sunday in September. Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup> senior adults (70 or older) members will be invited to worship - healthy, masked and distant. Service will be recorded & emailed to the rest of the congregation that afternoon. Another group will be invited the next week after deep cleaning of Sanctuary. Communion in sealed plastic cups available in the Memorial Garden on Communion Sundays- members happy that communion is available. Huge shout out to the cleaning crew. Church and church school have been scoured clean, including all of the toys. No church entry without masks.

**Action to remove "Acting" from Judi's title**

Ginger/Stephen

Judi has done a spectacular job over the past year. Kate Ott said the CE Board is thrilled with Judi's work. Unanimous approval to remove "acting" from her title. Jake will post a formal announcement online.

**Contract for Spencer House Roof**

Susan Leete

Northeast corner of the roof leaking – need to replace and rebuild the gutter system. The roof needs to be replaced. Glen Gunderson won the

bid for rebuilding the roof and gutter system. Bay window roof needs repair (Minear Library). Total \$31,747 contract. Business Comm. has enough to cover this- there are no other major projects currently. Stephen authorized to sign the contract

**Update on Spencer House apartment**

Stephen/Ginger/Jake

Jake's call included the clause to make provisions for him to choose to live in another location with a \$2000 per month housing allowance. He will move out on July 14<sup>th</sup>. We have a tenant for Spencer House. She will move in on July 15<sup>th</sup> and install a stair climber in the rear stairs. Realtor recommendation raised rent to \$2400/month

**Action on Housing Designation for Jake**

Stephen/Jake

Jake needs to let CC know that he is using some of his income (additional \$300) for housing for IRS purposes. Debbie Peluse indicated that there is a form to file to make this happen. Barbara moved and Anne Godsey seconded the motion that Jake's designation of \$2300 from salary and housing allowance for "housing" for IRS purposes is approved.

**Environmental Issues**

Stephen/Ginger/Nancy Leckerling

Environmental Issues are still being explored.

**Discussion: EMT request to become a Creation Justice Church**

Nancy Leckerling/ Stephen

Nancy will send information to the committee chairs long before the Annual Meeting.

**Ministers' Report**

Ginger/Jake

**Ginger:** People are struggling and others are being very gracious. Everyone is pulling together nicely. Staff meetings going well and all are working to give each other rest and respite.

**Jake:** In-house webmaster. If anyone sees any issues, let him know. Annemarie Alexa has taken over from Terri Ann King and is learning our systems. She is a trained accountant and thinks strategically. She is a real asset.

**Business Committee**

Peter Rebuzzini

Since the building is not being used, Mark has completed quite a few projects without having to work around others' schedules:

-Two handicapped parking spaces added to the back parking lot.

-Mark repaired, cleaned, and painted the finance office. Finance Office probably needs upgraded furniture.

-Debbie, Susan, and Mary Jane have gone through old records and moved stuff to the "cold storage" behind the Spencer House kitchen.

-Mark added covers on the chimneys because they are not functional. Keeps water out.

**Business Committee**, cont.

-BC rented an aerial lift to enable Mark to safely repair the Spencer House dormer damaged by a falling tree limb. With it Mark also repaired leader pipes, secured loose clapboards and painted the area behind the chimney removed from the north end of the Sanctuary.

-Spencer House apartment will be quickly repaired between Jake leaving and tenant moving in.

-Carlo, Sunday sexton, has steam cleaned all Fellowship Hall chairs, washed windows, mowed the lawn & helped with spring clean-up.

-All capital projects, except Spencer House roof, are on hold until we are certain of financials.

-Unsure when Neighborhood Music School will resume in-person lessons. Decision mid-July. We should not count on NMS income for rest of 2020.

-Alison Linske, Marti Carlson and volunteers have valiantly kept up with landscaping. Exploring options for garden mulch. Guilford & Madison Stump Dumps Offer free mulch- quality not terrific.

-Fellowship Hall conservation switching out the lighting with LED lights. (see *article below*.)

**Nominating** Gail Tomsich/Peter Rebuzzini

-No new business to present.

**Review Prior Minutes** Stephen Dudley

-Minutes approved.

**New /Old Business** All

Notify the Church Office to receive Council emails.

**FELLOWSHIP HALL LIGHT REPLACEMENT**

Back in the springtime, you may have noticed a few light fixtures in Fellowship Hall that were noticeably brighter. These are new LED fixtures that we were testing. Brighter, yet much lighter in electrical consumption, we can declare the test a success.

A CT state program enables us to buy the fixtures at \$50 each, half the price of regular retail, and Mark can install them. We are taking this opportunity to replace all the old light fixtures. Not budgeted, the new fixtures now in place were funded by gifts from members. We open this to the congregation and invite anyone who feels so moved, to contribute to completing this project.

For better evening meetings, for better Coffee Hours, for better all-around use of Fellowship Hall, please consider donating \$50 for each new LED. Checks with "Fellowship Hall LEDs" in the notation would be appreciated. Thank you!

*Bob Howard, Business Committee*

**MEN'S BREAKFAST**

**Saturday, July 11<sup>th</sup> 8:00am Pa's Place**

Men's physically distanced fellowship!

**TWO WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED:****"30 MINUTES OF JOY"**

Take a music break on Thursdays from 12noon – 12:30pm for Bill's Speed's 30 minutes of live music on the church's Facebook page. He's open to suggestions– [bill@firstchurchguilford.org](mailto:bill@firstchurchguilford.org).

**BIBLE STUDY/REFLECTION****Wednesdays Noon- 12:30pm**

Live with Ginger and Jake on the church's Facebook page- a time for scripture reflection and discussion.

**CALLING ALL GARDENERS!**

Interested in helping keep the gardens at the church and Spencer House beautiful? If you are willing to spend an hour weeding, trimming or even watering the potted plants, please contact : Alison Linske ([alison.linske@gmail.com](mailto:alison.linske@gmail.com), 203-927-9761); Marti Carlson ([marticar@sbcglobal.net](mailto:marticar@sbcglobal.net), 203-710-8957.)

**PILGRIM FELLOWSHIP**

PF wrapped up the school year with a wonderful Zoom senior celebration June 14. Congratulations to all the seniors who are moving forward with enthusiasm and resilience in these times. You are all such passionate and compassionate people— nothing can squelch that. Keep your head up and keep smiling. You bring joy to so many. Thank you!

**FCC Graduates:** Palmer Anderson, Katie Finnegan, Evan Gerritz, Ben Guarino, Dylan Hegedus, Eva Ott Hill, Noah Killheffer, Catherine Larrow, Evan Laughlin, Carter Leete, Peter Loyd, Grace Newman, Ethan Shaw, Charlotte Wiley

**PF Graduates:** Emma Bonz, Ava Bucci, Anna Cerino, Jack Clancy, Gabe Cone, Ben Criar, Annelise DeRusso, Rohan D'Souza, Jackson Fencil, Jade Fischbach, Shayla Flynn, Julia Gangemi, Lauren Hess, Stephen Kegel, Delanney Kenney, Morgan Mancuso, Lily Mackey, Molly McLaughlin, Ava McClure, Matthew Moore, Isabelle Paris, Elle Petra, Abby Pinckney, Dominic Riccio, Angie Rusconi, Brayden Santa Barbara, Luke Strandrowicz, Richie Tillier.

If you are not on the PF Facebook page and can join, please do – Pilgrim Fellowship of Guilford, CT. I will be in touch there and through email. I am available for questions or a conversation at 203-809-2556.

We are planning several service opportunities throughout the summer in very safe ways!! We will keep you posted!

*In faith and hope, and with many summertime blessings, Judi Wallace, Director*

## CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES

Children's Day in June was a wonderful worship gathering together a variety of music, prayer, and scripture readings. Thank you to all who participated and helped put it together. Shout out to Kate Ott, Rev. Jake Joseph, Bill Speed and Liza Catino. Thank you, it was extraordinary.

Heartfelt thanks to the many faith leaders, teen teachers and assistants, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends who join me every Sunday morning to help teach and grow and learn with the youngest in our congregation. You are awesome and so valuable to our Christian Education program.

Until in-person Sunday School, Confirmation, PF, or Worship services at church resume, please know that you are in our prayers and that God is with us.

In-person Vacation Bible School will not be offered this summer. We are working on some other resources and possibilities for children and youth for the summer months. Please contact me for resources for activities, or to chat. 203-809-3556.

The Christian Education Committee, the Immigrant Sanctuary Team and friends have built a Lending Library for children and families! The collection of children's books covers preschool - 8<sup>th</sup> grade. We are working to fill the categories of Multicultural, Multiracial, LGBTQ, Care of Environment, One World, Children & Teens Speak Out, Images of God.

### To request books to borrow for two weeks:

- Send email to [judi@firstchurchquilford.org](mailto:judi@firstchurchquilford.org)
- The books, by family name, will be available to pick up from a box outside the Church St doors, Tues. & Thurs., 10 am.
- Please return books to the box within 2 weeks or email me to renew.

Contact me for the links to the list of books available. Thanks to those with the vision and who worked to make this resource possible. *Judi Wallace, Director*

## NAVAJO NATION DONATIONS

Drop-off Church Lawn, Broad St

Sundays, July 12, 19, 26 10am- 1pm

PF member Moira McGovern is collecting supplies for the Navajo Nation which is in desperate need of supplies to help recover from the virus. She will deliver these donations personally in mid-August.

**Supplies requested: cleaning supplies; non-perishable food items; personal hygiene products; masks (homemade or medical); clothing; school supplies; household items.**

Questions? Contact Moira: call/text (203)- 823-0235, or by email:

[Navajonationdonations@gmail.com](mailto:Navajonationdonations@gmail.com)

## ECO Echo

*Can you hear the Trees Talking?  
Discovering the Hidden Life of the Forest*

By Peter Wholeben

Suggested for grades 3 – 5

Especially with the pandemic, families are spending more time outdoors walking in their neighborhoods, visiting local parks, hiking the many trails we're fortunate to have in our area, or just hanging out in one's yard. This book can give your family an added focus on these walks. It explores the wonder of tree, their benefits, and their interdependence with all living things. It's a book that even adults can learn from (at least we did!). Although the book is recommended for children 8 – 10, younger children can be encouraged to pursue to many of the activities in the book, such as finding bark that is smooth like skin or rough and wrinkly.

Check out the experiment on page 11 exploring a tree's water vessels. Find a birch log. Spread some dish detergent over one cut end, and then blow hard against the other end. Surprise! The dish detergent will bubble. The air that you blew, flowed through the log's vessels that carry water and nutrients!

This book begins with the engaging comparison of a tree to the human body. Trees breathe, drink water, eat, and even rest. The author includes a series of activity pages. Each is labeled with a question such as "How do trees breathe? How do forests clean water? Why do trees shed their leaves in the fall?" In addition to an explanation, there is an invitation to observe more closely, and an experiment, a challenge quiz question, or a suggestion for children to take action to protect trees.

We were intrigued with the question, "Do trees have grandparents?" The explanation describes how often trees grow in pairs or clusters in which their trunks actually merge, and their roots intertwine. Now we are looking for examples wherever we go!

The chapters can be read in any order. We'd suggest paging the book and choosing a question that is particularly intriguing to your family.

We have found in our work with children that when they look closely at the natural world, their wonder and appreciation for it increases, and this wonder inspires a commitment to protect and advocate to environmental stewardship.

*David and Phyllis Whitin,  
Environmental Ministry Team*