

THE CORNERSTONE

First Church is an Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

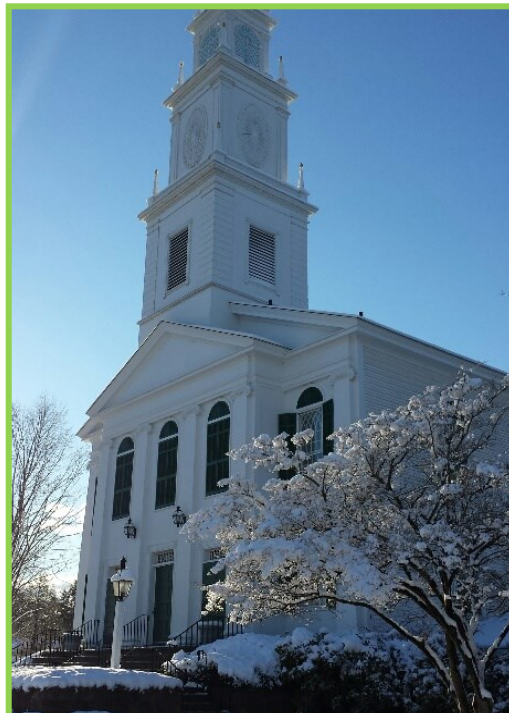
Please join us for worship this April!

April 7th **Second Sunday of Easter
and Communion**
10 a.m. in the Sanctuary
Also available via [Virtual Church](#)
Rev. Kevin Weikel, preaching
Children in church with their families

April 14th **Third Sunday of Easter
and New Member Sunday**
10 a.m. in the Sanctuary
Also available via [Virtual Church](#)
Rev. George Harris, preaching

April 21st **Fourth Sunday of Easter
and Earth Day Sunday**
10 a.m. in the Sanctuary
Also available via [Virtual Church](#)
Rev. George Harris, preaching

April 28th **Fifth Sunday of Easter**
10 a.m. in the Sanctuary
Also available via [Virtual Church](#)
Rev. George Harris, preaching



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CALL TO ANNUAL MEETING

The 2024 First Church Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, May 5, following the 10:00 a.m. worship service. The agenda includes a review of church activities during the 2023-24 program year, nominations to fill executive positions and to staff our Boards and Committees, and discussion of plans to address ongoing financial needs of the church. Our by-laws require a minimum of 75 voting members present to conduct church business.

—Anna Harris, Clerk

Beginning Sunday, April 5, our new website will be live!

This means that our Virtual Church page is back up and running! You will be able to easily access our online worship each week by using the link on our website, as well as chat with your fellow First Church friends. We will no longer be broadcasting live via Facebook, but not to worry--we will put up the link to the Virtual Church page on Facebook each week.

Please save your comments until you are on the Virtual Church page, as we will only be monitoring those comments. If you find you need any assistance with this, please contact the church office.



Pastor Pondering



Rev. George Harris

Senior Minister

860-651-3593 x 102

gharris@fccsimsbury.org

Out of Office Tuesdays

Resurrection, resurrection, everywhere! What could be better for the week after Easter than a couple light-hearted resurrection stories.

The first comes from First Church member, Jim Trimble. After a career as an actuary in the insurance industry, followed by a second chapter as the Director of the Actuarial Program at UCONN, Jim and his wife Sue retired to Green Bay, Wisconsin. Why Green Bay, you ask? Because they are HUGE Green Bay Packer fans. They hold season tickets for the storied football franchise, and even shared their tickets for a Monday Night Football game with me and Lourdes a few years ago. We loved the game, and even took a tour of storied Lambeau Field; I remember our tour guide as a lifelong fan who, like Jim and Sue, bled Packers green and gold.

So imagine my delight when I received an email from Jim that begins:

"So why am I in Green Bay? You won't believe this-but it's true - For orientation and training in my new part-time job- as a Green Bay Packers Stadium Tour Guide! I can hardly call that a job! It will be a blast. The funny thing is I asked if I could volunteer as a tour guide- and they said no they don't use volunteers- but after hearing my story they encouraged me to apply! It reminds me of an old Steve Martin line in his stand-up comedy act - "I get paid for doing this!"

Okay, so it's not exactly emerging from a tomb, but thank you, Jim, for reminding us to remain open to life's happy surprises.

The second story is about our dog, River, who in February had knee surgery. Again, not exactly crucifixion on a Roman cross. We learned that she had a luxating patella (a knee cap that slides out of place). It got progressively worse, making her lame in that right, rear leg. The surgery was a success, but required us to closely monitor her rehab, including carrying her up and down stairs, and keeping her on a leash inside so she wouldn't jump up on the furniture, not to mention the cone-of-shame. Again, this clearly falls into the category that is sometimes called, "First World problems," but I confess that by the time Holy Week approached, I was so done lugging River's thirty pounds up and down our stairs a dozen times a day. Well, she has now been set free from her leash, leaps onto the furniture, and bounds up and down the stairs. She is free, and so are we!

Sometimes healing requires some leash and lugging time, but resurrection is everywhere! So cast off your cone-of-shame, leap, bound, and be free!

In Christ,

Pastor George



A Message from Rev. Kevin Weikel

Everyone loves a good story. Stories are memorable. When someone comments on a sermon of mine, it is typically a story I shared within the sermon that stuck out to them. Stories are memorable because they are relatable, and we can connect them to something we have experienced, or could at least imagine experiencing, in our lives.

Stories are also great teachers because the lessons within a story are transferable to many situations in our lives. Stories are powerful, and we remember stories from childhood because of their power. And it is because of the power of story we use the Godly Play curriculum in Church school.

In the October edition of this monthly Cornerstone newsletter, I wrote about Godly Play. I explained that the Godly Play curriculum uses storytelling, specifically the retelling of Bible stories, to help young people learn, explore, and wonder about God's presence throughout history and in their lives.

In that article, I told the history of Godly Play at First Church, describing how it went from one of our stations in the Church School rotation model before COVID to our weekly curriculum since COVID and how, thanks to Dianne and Jim Szipsky, we now have a dedicated Godly Play room (Room 210).

Our students continue to benefit from weekly Godly Play. Not only can our students recite many of the details of our Bible stories after hearing them in Church School, but they also ask good wondering questions about the stories. Parents report that, out of the blue, kids will share details about a Bible story at home or hear about something and say, "That's like what happened in the story..." Bible stories integrated into the fabric of our children's lives is the goal, and it is beautiful to hear reports that it's happening.

The next step in our church's relationship with the Godly Play curriculum is to make available training for as many folks as possible. And so, this is where you come in - yes, you! I am excited to announce a Godly Play training at First Church with a Godly Play facilitator and trainer on May 18th from 9 am to 4 pm (including lunch and snacks). This training is open to everyone and anyone interested in learning how to be a Godly Play storyteller for our Church School.

If you've ever taught anything at all, which we all have, you know that we learn more about something when we teach it; the same is true for our Bible Stories. You will find that teaching encourages us to learn and wonder, and the spiritual lessons of the Bible stories we tell will naturally pop up in our lives. Even more notable, this Godly Play training will give us the opportunity on Sunday mornings—as many or as few as you'd like—to share these stories with our young people.

I'd invite you to sign up for our Godly Play training and become one of our Godly Play Church School teachers. No matter your age, whether you have kids in Church School or not, teaching Bible stories through this curriculum will be a blessing to you. Here is the link to sign up. I hope to see you there!

 **GODLY PLAY**
WORKSHOP
STORY. WONDER. PLAY.

Create community, share stories, and learn more about how you can nurture children's spirituality - and your own.

Led by Bird Treacy, Licensed Godly Play Trainer

Contact Rev. Kevin Weikel to register
kweikel@fccsimsbury.org

Sat. May 18, 2024
9am-4pm

First Church,
Simsbury, CT

[https://
www.signupgenius.com/
go/4090D4EADAA2AABFF2-
48891366-godly](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090D4EADAA2AABFF2-48891366-godly)

Peace to you,
Kevin



Rev. Kevin Weikel
Senior Associate Minister

860-651-3593 x103

kweikel@fccsimsbury.org

Out of Office Tuesdays

Musical Notes

Happy Eastertide!



Mark Mercier

**Director of Music
Ministries**

860-651-3593 x 105

mmercier@fccsimsbury.org

Out of Office Tuesdays

We are now able to celebrate the risen Christ – we have gone through the temporary elation of Palm Sunday, the angst of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, and finally the joy of knowing that Christ rose from the dead. This is what it’s all about.

Musically, it was a marathon – many major choir anthems for all three services – extra musicians helping out, much time (weeks, in fact) spent by all the choirs and musicians learning and rehearsing the music, practicing logistics so that everything could go as seamlessly as possible... but it was a joyful and fulfilling process. We contributed music that was particularly meaningful not only to the attending congregation, but to the singers and musicians as well. The saying – no tears in the eyes of the performers - no tears in the eyes of the listeners – holds true here. We must get personally involved with our music – otherwise, it means less. That said, for maximum effectiveness, we have to keep the distractions and missed notes down to as few as possible, and do it as best as we can. For ourselves, the congregation, and for God. Hence the practices and rehearsals.

I do want to say this: this is a program filled with usual people. No one is a professional here. Most are people that, at one time, said “Oh, you don’t want me in your choir – I can’t really sing”, or, “I can’t really play that well”. I hear that all the time from everyone I speak with about doing something like this. Everyone. I actually heard it from a lot of people who you saw standing in front of you on Palm and Easter Sunday. Somewhere along the line, they came to agree to spend a little time with each other, do some, practicing, and give it a whirl. Anyone can do this. And when we get a critical mass together to make this happen, you get a product like you see this past Holy Week or on Christmas. And I don’t think that there was a single person that gave up time on Thursday evening, or Wednesday afternoon, or a Sunday morning, that regretted it in the least. It was truly an exceptional, exhilarating time.

While I am at it, I want to sincerely thank all the musicians that were here to help us celebrate Easter: All the musicians that came in from the “outside”, all the musicians and friends that are here to help us on a regular basis, and in particular, all the choir members and First Church musicians that took part on our music. None of this could have happened without you. You enliven all the music that is done here. Thank you!

Now, onward and upward: the BoMM is presenting a coffeehouse concert in Palmer Hall on April 26 at 7 – we are bringing in the fabulous Silk City Jazz Band for your listening pleasure. We are requesting that you consider a plus or minus 10.00 donation, although we don’t want this to be a deal-breaker regarding your ability to come. No matter what you can contribute, please come, sit down and enjoy some delicious snacks and freshly-made “mocktails” for free, and have an evening out hearing this terrific band. And, if you have a mind to, bring your dancing shoes - you could even dance a few steps!



Hope you all have a happy Eastertide, and as the weather gets warmer, go out and experience God in the flowers, the grass, the sound of the birds, and the laughter of children.

Peace,
Mark

You are Invited to a Reception for Newcomers, Visitors and Friends!

Sunday, April 7 at 11:00 am
in the Conference Room

Join the ministers and lay leaders for a light lunch and conversation following worship. Take this opportunity to get to know church leaders, ask question, learn about the church and discover just what being a member of First Church is all about.

All attendees of this orientation will be invited to be welcomed into First Church as New Members on Sunday, April 14, 2024, at the 10:00 a.m. worship service.

Please RSVP for the reception by Friday, April 5 to the Church Office, admin@fccsimsbury.org or 860-651-3593.

If you are unable to attend this orientation, but are interested in membership, please contact Pastor George at gharris@fccsimsbury.org

Childcare available upon request.

Whether you've been attending for years or weeks,

We would love for you to join us!

Please come and explore this faith-filled, active congregation!



Rev George Harris



Rev. Kevin Weikel

Children's Ministry News

Grow your heart at First Church



Church School is a warm, welcoming space for children to hear the stories of our faith tradition and learn the vastness of God's loving embrace. Children are invited to gather for worship with their families in the Sanctuary at 10 am.

On a typical Sunday, children are shepherded to Church School following the Children's Sermon (or Baptism if a Baptism Sunday), and younger children return to worship during the Offering Time, and participate in Holy Communion on the First Sunday of the month. ***This month will be a little bit different because of April Break. For our April 7 worship the children are invited to stay with their parents throughout worship in the sanctuary.***

Nursery Care

The Nursery is open during worship for newborns through 3-year-olds. *Note this change: Parents are asked to stay in the Nursery with their children.*

Volunteers Needed!

Each Sunday, we need two lead teachers and two shepherds (assistant teachers) for Church School. Are you interested in helping out?

[Please click this link](#) for the Signup Genius!

Thank you, and God bless you,

Rev. Kev and the Board of Christian Education

Is God calling you to make a difference in the lives of the children in our church?

We have a wonderful way for you to do that- by signing up for and attending a Godly Play training. Godly Play is the story-telling curriculum we utilize to teach Church School, and this training will make you able to teach the children of the church school, either regularly or on occasion. The training will also make you a more gifted storyteller in general. Please join us on May 18th!



STORY. WONDER. PLAY.

Sat. May 18, 2024
9am-4pm

First Church,
Simsbury, CT

Create community, share stories, and learn more about how you can nurture children's spirituality – and your own.

Led by Bird Treacy, Licensed Godly Play Trainer

Contact Rev. Kevin Weikel to register
kweikel@fccsimsbury.org

2024 VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

AT FIRST CHURCH SIMSBURY
WITH SIMSBURY UNITED METHODIST



Camp Firelight

A SUMMER CAMP

Psalm 56:3

ADVENTURE WITH GOD

JUNE 17-21 | 9 AM - 4 PM

FIVE FULL DAYS!

\$229 (EARLY BIRD) \$249 (AFTER MARCH 31)

REGISTRATION ENDS 6/1

**CAMPERS WILL LEARN TO
FACE THEIR FEARS, TRUST
GOD, AND MAKE FRIENDS**



Join us for Vacation Bible School 2024! For more information and to register, [click here!](#)

First Church Youth and Young Adults

No matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!

Visit the [Youth and Young Adult Pages](#) on our Website for Current, Up-to-Date Information!

Save the Date!

April 27—"Rebuilding Together"— for youth age 15 and above

Confirmation at First Church is an intentional time of exploring what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The goal is for each student to grow in the knowledge that he or she is a magnificent creation of the Divine and deeply loved by God, and for each student to understand that God's love extends to all creation and all people.

- April 1, 5:15 p.m. | Confirmation Class, Conference Room (*library*)
- April 15, 5:15 p.m. | Confirmation Class, Conference Room (*library*)
- April 20-21 | **Confirmation Retreat**
- April 29, 5:15 p.m. | Confirmation Class, Conference Room (*library*)



Acolytes Wanted

Children and youth are invited to sign up to participate in the 10 a.m. worship service as an acolyte.

An acolyte, or "one who helps," lights the candles on the alter before the service and takes the light out into the world at the conclusion of worship.

[Click here to sign up!](#)

Acolyte
Ministry

See the next page for more opportunities to grow and serve!

FIRST CHURCH,
SIMSBURY
2024
YOUTH SUMMER
MISSION TRIP!!

650 WSM GRAND CLE OPRY OPRY.COM #OPRY

YOU BELONG HERE

mission trip

NASHVILLE

AUG 4-10, 2024

FOR MORE INFO & TO REGISTER >>>





VOLUNTEER FOR REBUILDING TOGETHER!

A DAY-LONG SERVICE PROJECT IN HARTFORD!

SATURDAY APRIL 27TH FROM 8 AM - 4 PM!

Rebuilding Together is a nationwide organization focused on helping homeowners with minor repairs and upgrades to make their homes safer. First Church has committed to bringing a team to help with repairs.




Text Rev. Kev at 860-324-5630 with any questions




For more information and to register,
[**click here!**](#)

For more information and to volunteer,
[**click here!**](#)

To register with Rebuilding Together,
[**click here!**](#)
Required!!

Women's Ministries Group Walk

Please join us for a lovely walk and a chance to be together. We meet every Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. in the parking lot behind Fitzgerald's along Iron Horse Boulevard. No sign-ups or RSVP needed. Just come and bring a friend!



CARE BAG MINISTRY

SPECIAL REQUEST

BATH SIZE TOWELS are needed at DCF in Hartford!!

Please consider donating new or very gently used towels. A collection bin will be in Palmer Hall. Monetary donations are always gratefully accepted as well. Many thanks!! Any questions, please contact

Linda Drake - 860 874 3118 or Terry Carlson - 860 983 2720

Care Bag Think Tank Meeting Monday, May 13 th

You are invited to a think tank conversation as to how best continue First Church's Care Bag program's 20+ year commitment to the CT Department of Children and Families. The purpose of Care Bags is to provide immediate support to children entering into DCF under emergency circumstances. Which means for children arriving abused, dirty and with no possessions. We provide filled decorated tote bags which include clothing, toiletries, food, blanket, book, stuffed animal & small toys. Bags are provided for ages newborn through teen with an average of 25 bags per month.

Our three leaders, Becky Goss (20+ years overall coordinator & boy bags), Nancy Wadhams (10+ years girl bags), and Terri Carlson (10+ years infant bags) will be leaving their posts later this year. It's currently a well oiled machine but new blood and improvements are in the wind!

Nancy Wadhams will host our meeting on Monday, May 13th, where we hope to create a framework for going forward. A tutorial on what we do and how we accomplish it will be provided as well as physical examples.

We have heard many wonderful creative ways to accomplish this task and hope you will join in this mission. There is such satisfaction in knowing you are providing a desperately needed service to both damaged children and harried social workers.

Becky Goss
Becky@bgoss.net

Usher Schedule

Team	Team Captain
A	Debi Ackels
B	Erin Naspo Jen Petron
C	Anthony Weber
D	Andie Fabian
4/7/24	C
4/14/24	D
4/21/24	A
¹⁰ 4/28/24	B

Sunday Morning Flowers

Sunday flowers give the chancel a complete and celebratory look. They often are placed in honor or memory of a loved one or special day.

If you think you might like to have an arrangement placed in memory or honor of someone or something near or dear to you please sign up below! Sara Batchelder will contact you to confirm the date and arrange for any details you may want to provide, including wording to be placed in the bulletin on that particular Sunday.

Flower arrangements generally cost approximately \$75.00 and Sara Batchelder can take care of the ordering for you.

Sara can be reached at (860) 655-4810.





GHIAA Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance News

Sisters and Brothers at First Church,

GHIAA House Meetings for 2024 are continuing through April 15th. We thank you for your support in attending the sessions that were held on March 3 at First Church and on March 17th at the Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation. The link to our online form, below, includes a list of the remaining house meetings throughout the Greater Hartford Community, which includes the next meeting to be held in Simsbury at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church on Sunday, April 7!

As previously explained, this house meeting campaign is a little different from previous ones in that our house meetings are being co-hosted by teams of congregations and held on-site at various GHIAA institutions. You are encouraged to [register via our online form](#) for any date. Whichever house meeting(s) you attend will be an opportunity to connect with leaders from across our network. **FCCS is hosting with** our neighbors at Farmington Valley Jewish Community and Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, both in Simsbury.

At each House Meeting, participants will divide into small groups to share stories of the struggles you are facing, to hear about the forces your loved ones are contending with, the wrongs in your community and greater Hartford that need to be made right. ***This is a critically important step in our organizing process, as the stories shared in these house meetings will shape GHIAA's next slate of issues for action in the coming Months and Year.***

We need to hear from you!

As noted above, **the final house meeting in Simsbury will be on April 7, 2pm at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church.**

We look forward to hearing your stories as we deepen our relationships and move forward in our shared work of justice. Thank you for all you do.

Joining you to work for Peace & Justice,

Bill White, Mario Chiappetti Co-Chairs
and the entire FCCS GHIAA Core Team



First Church Simsbury,
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran &
Emek Shalom (FVJC)
invite you to a

GHIAA House Meeting

April 7, 2:00 pm

SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS LUTHERAN CHURCH
7 WESCOTT RD. SIMSBURY CT

All are welcome! Registration is required.

To register, scan here:



GHIAA

Greater Hartford
— Interfaith —
Action Alliance



See previous page for more information!

FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST
SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT
689 Hopmeadow St.
Simsbury, CT 06070
(860)651-3593 | fccsimsbury.org


**RED CROSS
BLOOD
DRIVE**

GIFT THE GIVE OF LIFE

**FIRST MONDAY OF THE
MONTH (WITH A FEW
EXCEPTIONS - SEE CALENDAR)**
1-6 PM

PALMER HALL
689 HOPMEADOW ST. SIMSBURY, CT 06070

For More Details Scan QR Code Below!



MORAL MONDAY CT

STATEWIDE PREACH-IN
WITH FAITH LEADERS FROM ACROSS CT

“WHAT DOES JUSTICE MAKING MEAN TODAY?”

FEATURING...

BISHOP JOHN SELDERS-HARTFORD
REV. JOSH PAWELEK-MANCHESTER
REV. TRACY JOHNSON RUSSELL-HARTFORD
REV. DR. ANTHONY BENNETT-BRIDGEPORT
PASTOR RODNEY WADE-WATERBURY
RABBI DONNA BERMAN-HARTFORD
IMAM BILAL ANSARI-HARTFORD
REV. DR. STEPHEN RAY-NEW HAVEN
REV. GEORGE HARRIS-SIMSBURY *M/LK 56
years later*
AND OTHERS



APRIL 4, 2024 2 PM

In Person or

EMANUEL
LUTHERAN CHURCH
311 CAPITOL AVENUE
HARTFORD, CT




**2024 WOMEN'S
YOGA AND MUSIC
RETREAT**

May 3rd -5th
Silver Lake Camp and Retreat
Center in Sharon, CT

Join a phenomenal group of women as we reconnect with the sacred in ourselves and each other. Whether you're a yoga devotee or a novice, a seasoned singer or shy about your voice, we have a special place for you in our circle!

Cost: \$235/person, includes materials, instruction, two nights' accommodations, and four meals

See below for online registration link!

[Click here for more information and to register](#)

FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2024

5-6:30 PM

PALMER HALL

*Our menu features barbecued pork
on a bun,
baked beans
and coleslaw!*

FREE
Community
DINNER



Lay Readers Wanted

At First Church, we value the participation of our members and friends in our worship services. Therefore, the Board of Worship is asking one layperson to read each week in worship.

What is a lay reader? A lay reader is a layperson (a non-clergy member or friend of the church). in the church who volunteers to worship by reading liturgy (i.e., call to worship, confession, scripture, and/or offertory).

[Click here to sign up!](#)



FoodShare Truck Help Needed

Every other Monday throughout the year, the FoodShare truck provides perishable food items to those from our community in need in our church parking lot.

[Click Here to Sign Up](#)

First Church of Christ

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Simsbury CT 06070
(860) 651-3593
Fax (860) 408-9229
Kitchen (860) 658-9043
www.fccsimsbury.org
[Donate Online](#)

Rev. George M. Harris,
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gharris@fccsimsbury.org

Rev. Kevin Weikel,
Senior Associate Minister
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Mark Mercier, Director of Music
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Judi Sedor, Financial
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Ardell McGee, Facilities
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facilities@fccsimsbury.org

*Please note new office
hours of Monday;
Wednesday-Friday from
10:00 am—3:00 pm

From the Office

Calendar of Events

Please click [HERE](#) for a full list of all upcoming events!



Coffeehouse Concert!!

Friday, April 26, 7:00pm

The Board of Music is happy to announce an upcoming Palmer Hall Coffeehouse Concert!!

Following on the footsteps of last year's very successful gathering, this year we are presenting the Silk City Jazz Band - a 21 piece big band ensemble - with Stacey Hartley, an excellent jazz vocalist, performing both current and classic big band music.

The Silk City Jazz Band, based in the heart of Manchester, Connecticut, is a group of dedicated musicians with a passion for the timeless sounds of swing. Their performances resonate with the spirit of a bygone era, evoking the charm and elegance of classic jazz. With a repertoire that includes beloved standards and lively tunes, this band creates a vibrant atmosphere wherever they play. Audiences can't help but tap their feet and let loose on the dance floor as this talented ensemble brings the magic of swing music to life, making them a cherished part of the local music scene.

Audience members can sit and enjoy an evening with a plethora of complimentary munchies and mocktails while either listening to...or even dancing to, music that we all know and love.

Save the Date - Friday, April 26th at 7 PM. We are suggesting a donation of \$10.00, although we encourage you to come and give what you can.