

THE CORNERSTONE

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

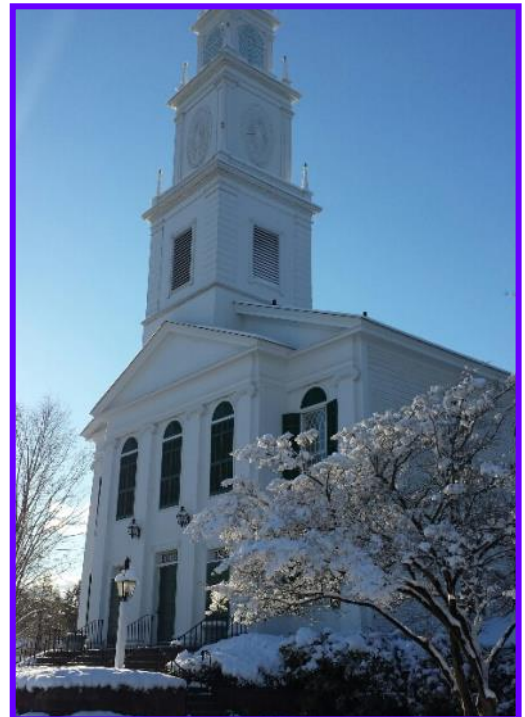
Please join us for worship this May!

May 5th **Sixth Sunday of Easter | Communion | Annual Meeting**
10 a.m. in the Sanctuary
Also available via [Virtual Church](#)
Rev. George Harris, preaching

May 12th **Seventh Sunday of Easter | Baptism | Mother's Day**
10 a.m. in the Sanctuary
Also available via [Virtual Church](#)
Rev. George Harris, preaching

May 19th **Pentecost Sunday**
10 a.m. in the Sanctuary
Also available via [Virtual Church](#)
Rev. Kevin Weikel, preaching

May 26th **Trinity Sunday**
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

Our new website is 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

This is my 2023 Annual Report; I share it here that it might be a bit more widely read.

We might think of 2023 as First Church's return from exile. There's a Bible story about that.

In 587 BCE the Babylonian Empire invaded the kingdom of Judah, destroyed the temple in Jerusalem, and sent thousands of Jews into exile in Babylon. For fifty years (generations), the Jews suffered there, until Persia captured Babylon, and the Persian king, Cyrus, allowed the Jews to return to Judah and rebuild the temple.

Certainly, our hardship at First Church doesn't compare to that of the Jews in the Bible story, but we too have experienced an exile of sorts. Between COVID, followed by a burst sprinkler in the sanctuary, we were forced to worship in a strange land of parking lot and parish hall for almost three years.

You know that my wife Lourdes and I experienced an exile of our own following our daughter Abby's diagnosis with brain cancer and death a year later. All of you showed up, quite literally, with hammer, paintbrush, and dust cloth to finish rebuilding our "temple" in time to celebrate Abby's life, while marking our church's return home. Praise God!

In exile over generations, the Jews lost a lot of the glue that held them together as a people, and it didn't all just come back with the rebuilding of the temple. We too lost something, and not just numbers on Sunday mornings. In those first months of 2023, there was a sense of starting over, of figuring out what it means to be the church post-COVID, in-person and online, in a world turned upside down. But like the daffodils in front of the sanctuary, we are springing forth, beautiful and fully alive! Indeed, 2023 had been a year of return from exile and rebuilding.

My response to our return has been (mixed metaphor alert!) to play "small ball." Our resident Phillies fan, Rev Kev, could say more about the term, but according to Wikipedia, small ball "emphasizes placing runners on base and then advancing them into scoring position for a run in a deliberate and methodical way." This, as opposed to getting lots of home runs. In this rebuilding year, I have sought to kindle and rekindle as many relationships as possible, one conversation over a cup of coffee at a time.

It is worth noting, that I have sensed a change in the quality of some of these conversations following Abby's death. You are more inclined to open up about personal trials you are experiencing in your life (everybody has something). I often hear the words, "well, you understand." Which is not to say we spend all our time together weeping by the rivers of Babylon (Psalm 137). Connecting around trials enables us to then speak hopefully even joyfully, of return and rebuilding. What a gift; I am grateful for the wonderful stories shared by so many.

This has, indeed, been a year of return and rebuilding, both for First Church, and in our lives. Someone suggested that we might create more opportunities to share our stories with one another. Of course, not all stories are made for sharing publicly, but I bet with a little help and encouragement, many might find it meaningful to write or tell some of your beloved stories. Our stories are glue that binds us together, and having sat across a table and a cup of coffee from many of you, I can affirm, you've got glue!

Watch for opportunities to share our stories in the year to come as we continue to build upon the foundations of sanctuary and story.

This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Pastor George



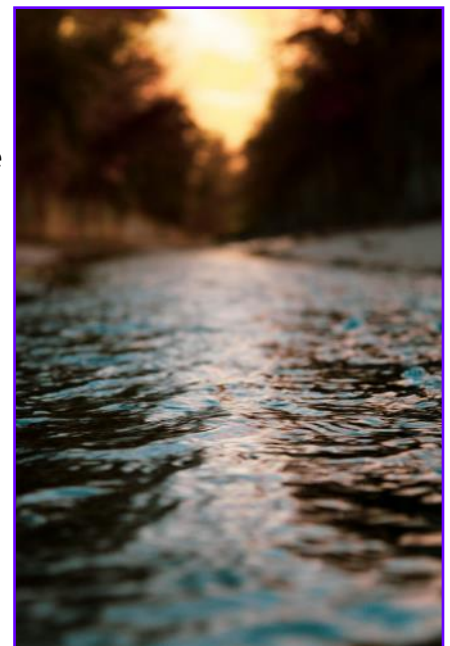
Rev. George Harris

Senior Minister

860-651-3593 x 102

gharris@fccsimsbury.org

Out of Office Tuesdays



A Message from Rev. Kevin Weikel

Extravagant welcome! The hub-bub and amazing grub at coffee hour warms my heart and fills my belly, and the vibe down there each Sunday is exactly what every church would hope for. Of course, fellowship hour didn't just happen by chance. Brian Noga, Penny Roskin, and their team of regular and occasional volunteers, work hard every week- super hard- to make fellowship hour what it is.

As I sat down in fellowship hour recently observing some folks visiting First Church for the first time I began to wonder, what is the difference between a visitor and a guest?

Here's how I've come to understand the difference: Visitors are often just checking things out. They may tend to be observers, or window-shoppers. A guest is someone who is invited to visit and when they do they feel part of it almost instantly, whether they realize it or not. That's what coffee hour does. It fills people up, and brings everyone in. It makes our visitors feel like guests. When folks leave they feel like they belong. And it makes them want to return.

In the gospels, when Jesus shared a meal, it was always special. I guess Jesus knew what he was doing when it came to hosting others? It is that presence of God's Holy Spirit that we feel breaking bread at coffee hour.

Thank you to all of you for letting the Spirit move in your hearts at coffee hour, where people walk in and feel at home. This, friends, is how Christ welcomes all of us, wherever we are on life's journey.

Writer Anne Lamott puts it this way: I do not at all understand the mystery of grace—only that it meets us where we are, but does not leave us where it found us. At First Church, we are getting pretty good at offering this same grace that we have received, to every guest who walks through the door. For that—and for you—I am grateful.

Thank you for being the welcoming hands, feet, and heart of Jesus. May we continue to reach out to visitors, turn them into guests and build lasting connections with all who call our church "home."

Peace, Kevin



Rev. Kevin Weikel
Senior Associate Minister

860-651-3593 x103

kweikel@fccsimsbury.org

Out of Office Tuesdays

Musical Notes



Mark Mercier

**Director of Music
Ministries**

860-651-3593 x 105

mmercier@fccsimsbury.org

Out of Office Tuesdays

Happy Spring!

The birds are singing. The flowers are blooming, and, even though this is just the beginning of May, thoughts turn to gardening, getting the pool ready, and making preparations to go to the Lake/Mountains/Beach for the summer. It is certainly an exciting time of year.

The church year goes onward, however – and there are still some great plans for the upcoming month or two...

As I write this, it is the afternoon of the Music Ministries coffeehouse concert with the Silk City Jazz Band. But in my mind's eye, it is a terrific event. People are dancing to the music, and we are hearing songs from that famous great American songbook sung by a wonderful vocalist and expertly played by seasoned musicians. Nothing better than a big band... and it's been that way for ages, from my parent's time back at the Old Orchard Beach Pier to nowadays, where you can hear this at multiple places in Hartford. It is truly great music.

We are planning a "Mini Concert" at the beginning of June, (tentatively June 16) featuring some of our youth musicians that are home from/graduated from college. This will be for a half hour before the 10 AM worship service, so plan on coming early and enjoying some unbelievable playing. I marvel at the musical expertise of the people coming out of music conservatories these days – the graduates, at least the ones from First Church, are getting better and better. National quality stuff.

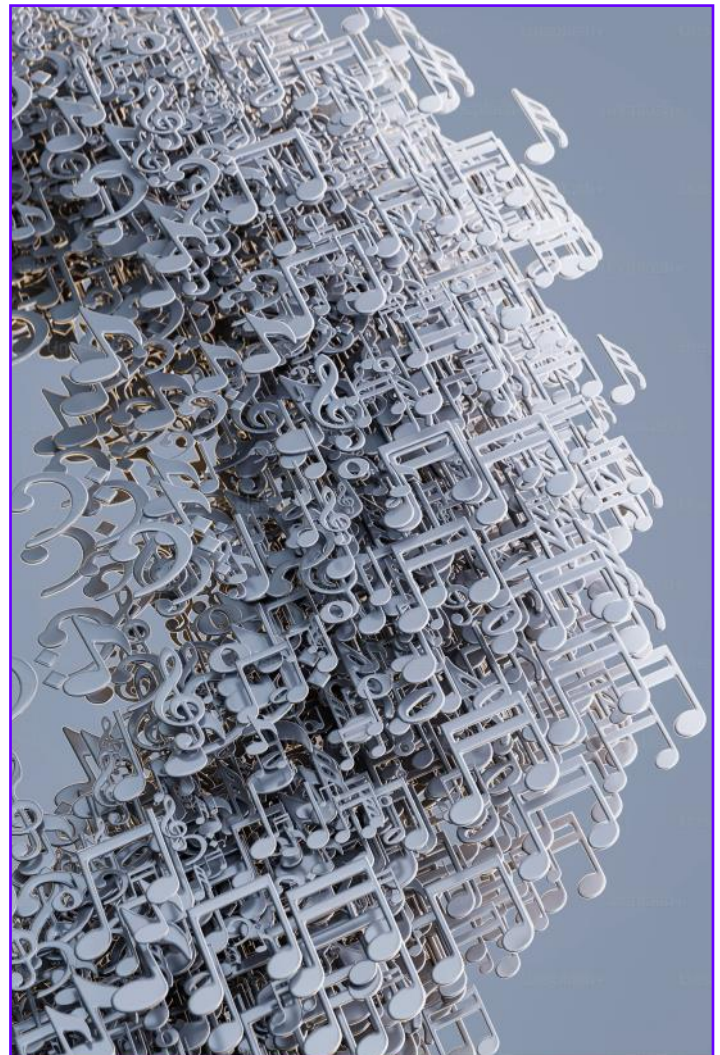
The choirs are still singing/playing until the beginning of June, so there's still time to drop by a choir rehearsal. I have some plans for a "Drop-in" choir this summer, where anyone can come, learn an easy anthem, and sing at the service. Additionally, I am seeking soloists and instrumentalists to provide music for the summer services, since our choir will be taking a well-deserved break. Everyone has worked so hard during this past year, and, musically, what a year this was – from Thanksgiving through Easter. The music has been terrific, if I do say so myself. We hope you have appreciated our efforts...

Happy May! Stay healthy, and be careful of how much time you spend in the sun... We want you around for next year. And please, please spend some time considering joining us when Fall rolls around.

Go out, and get that garden planted! The tomato plants are calling you!

Peace-

Mark



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. **Note that June 2nd will be Church School Sunday. Watch your Weekly email and next month's Cornerstone for more information!**

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 storytelling 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

[Click here to sign up for Godly Play Workshop!](#)

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!

Junior Fellowship Junior Fellowship (JF for short) is our youth group for 6th, 7th and 8th Graders. At JF, we eat together, play games together, and participate in engaging activities and faith-based discussions together. JF gathers twice a month on Sundays from 5-6:30 p.m. in the Youth Room at First Church!

- **May 5—meeting**
- **May 19- meeting**

Pilgrim Fellowship Youth Group (PF) is our 9th-12th grade youth group. We welcome open minds and open hearts, encourage love, justice, and tranquility. We resist hatred, rebuke violence; and we accept people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, question and more. We gather twice a month on Sundays from 7:00 p.m. in the Youth Room at First Church!

- **May 5-Town-wide Scavenger Hunt**
- **May 19-Senior Celebration**

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.

- **Saturday, May 11th, 7:45 am -1:30 pm. Elizabeth House Kitchen and Food Pantry.** We are asking for full participation for the entirety of the event (no dropping off late or picking up early). The conversation before, during and after the kitchen and pantry service work is as important as the service work itself.

- 7:45 am: Gather in the Youth Room for a bagel breakfast.
- 8:30 am: Depart First Church
- 9 am: Arrive at the Elizabeth House in Hartford
- 9-noon: Small groups rotate, preparing meal for 130 guests, organizing Food Pantry, and engaging in conversation with Leah Reyes from the Elizabeth House.
- Noon: Lunch at Harry's Pizza in West Hartford.
- Arrive at First Church for Parent-Pickup: 1:30 pm.

- **Monday, May 13th, 5:15-6:45 pm,** Confirmation Sunday Preparation and Rehearsal.



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!](#)



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

FOR MORE INFO &
TO REGISTER >>>



AUG 4-10, 2024

For more information and to register,

[click here!](#)

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, 7:30 PM

Nancy Wadham's house , 4 Gatewood , Avon
860-836-6921

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, 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
5/5/24	C
5/12/24	D
5/19/24	A
5/26/24	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.



FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT
989 Hopmeadow St.
Simsbury, CT 06070
(860)651-3593 | fcc@simsbury.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!



An Afternoon of *CHALLENGE* and *HOPE*

with

Renowned Civil Rights Leader
The Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II



Sunday, May 5th, 3 pm

IMMANUEL
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

10 Woodland Street, Hartford (corner of Woodland St. and Farmington Ave.)

A freewill offering will be collected.

The Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II is President and Senior Lecturer of Repairers of the Breach; Co-Chair of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call For Moral Revival; and most recently, a Professor in the Practice of Public Theology and Public Policy and Founding Director of the Center for Public Theology and Public Policy at Yale Divinity School.

Parking available next door at the Town & County Club and across Woodland Street at the Hartford Medical Building.

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](#)



Free Community Dinner

Friday, May 17, 2024, 5:00-6:30pm in Palmer Hall



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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www.fccsimsbury.org
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*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!

Sojourn*

I am and am not Presbyterian, Unitarian, Quaker...

*I carry my tent and my cookstove
my bedding and rain gear
from place to beautiful
(or ravaged)
place.*

*Sometimes the view
calls me to
pause,
dwell
for a time.*

*Other times
it is a Source
clear water
berry bushes
good forage
watercress
tasty fish
or soft leaves to
burrow in.*

*Or pure fecundity.
Green-ness
that whelms the eyes
Petrichor
that saturates lungs
with earthly
Essence.*

*And sometimes
It is a place to lay my
burden down,
unpack what I have found
along the way,
and sort it through.*

*Set aside
what is too unwieldy.*

*But usually
it is the Light
falling on
and cast through
a certain clearing,*

*the Shelter
offered by some
Original Tree
that arrests me in my
traces.*

Tammy Forner 12/7/23

*Selected for publication in the August 2024 edition of *Friends Journal*, published by Friends Publishing Corporation. Friends Journal communicates Quaker experience in order to connect and deepen spiritual lives.,

