Please join us for worship this December!

December 5th  
Second Sunday of Advent  
Bricks & Mortals Building Campaign  
Dedication  
Fifth Sunday of the 2022 Pledge Drive  
10 a.m. in the Sanctuary with Holy Communion  
Also available via Virtual Church  
Rev. Kevin Weikel, preaching

December 12th  
Third Sunday of Advent  
Final Sunday of the 2022 Pledge Drive  
10 a.m. in the Sanctuary  
Also available via Virtual Church  
Rev. Kevin Weikel, preaching

December 19th  
Fourth Sunday of Advent  
Christmas Sunday  
Children’s Christmas Pageant  
10 a.m. in the Sanctuary  
Also available via Virtual Church  
Rev. Kevin Weikel, preaching

December 22nd  
Longest Night Service  
7 p.m. in the Sanctuary  
Also available via Virtual Church

December 24th  
Christmas Eve  
Join us for Christmas Eve Services in the Sanctuary!  
- 4:30 p.m.—Puppet Pageant  
- 9 p.m.—Lessons and Carols  
- 11 p.m.—Communion and Candlelight  
Also available via Virtual Church

December 26th  
First Sunday of Christmas  
Christmas Hymn Sing  
10 a.m. in the Sanctuary  
Also available via Virtual Church

Learn more about Longest Night and our Christmas Services on Page 14
A Message from Stewardship Committee Chair John Burrows

December 1, 2021

It’s time to pull on the oars and make the boat go. Our Church needs your 2022 financial pledge now. December 12th marks the official end to our Future with Hope campaign. Our goal is to increase the number of pledges and to increase the total pledge dollars from last year. Sara and I appreciate the pastoral care, youth programs, music ministries and the Church’s wider mission which is why we pledge financial support to First Church.

I hope First Church is important to you and you are aware of how important it is to its members, friends and the larger community. Our Church relies on your financial pledge to make good things happen in 2022.

Our Stewardship committee has asked that we all consider a pledge to the Church of 3-5% of our annual gross income. We know many of you are able to give more and we also recognize the financial strain that others are experiencing. Please pledge with a full heart by either calling the church office, mailing in your pledge card or going online to fccsimsbury.org.

With a full heart and the boat moving,

John Burrows
Stewardship Committee Chair

Click here to visit our Stewardship webpage

Click here to pledge online
From The Desk of Rev. Kevin Weikel

From Amazon Prime delivery to Keurig Coffee makers, our expectations for promptness are steep and have only made the recent trend of shipping delays more frustrating. We have grown accustomed to a somewhat instant world, and waiting is hard.

Enter the Season of Advent, the centuries-old liturgical season of waiting that spans the four weeks before Christmas. Why would we create an intentional delay and a whole season of it to boot? After all, there is a lot to do in the precious days and weeks leading up to Christmas. Why do this to ourselves?

Because what God does in us as we wait is often more important than what we are waiting for. As we wait in Advent, we explore the shadows of our lives – the places where hope, peace, joy, and love are needed most. Then, when the light of the Christ Child finally comes into the world on Christmas Day, our hearts are ready to join Christ in overcoming the darkness.

The waiting of Advent is a spiritual practice, and exploring the shadows of our lives is hard work, and there are many ways to engage the season of Advent. Here are some possibilities for you:

At home, make Advent wreaths and light the Advent candles each evening at dinner. Or, set out the characters of your nativity set one day at a time instead of all at once.

Pick up Advent devotional cards created by the church office staff to help friends and members of the church practice Advent. These cards include a thought or short activity for each day of Advent and are available on Sunday morning, December 5th after worship, at the Open House that night, and all through Advent after worship and in the Main Office at the church. Email admin@fccsimsbury.org to reserve yours today.

Of course, you can also prepare for Advent by attending worship on the Sundays of Advent, including this week which will include the dedication of the renovated church building to the Children's Christmas Pageant on December 19th. From the Longest Night Service on December 22nd, through our Christmas Eve Services at 4:30 p.m. (Puppet Pageant), 9 p.m. (Lessons and Carols), and 11 p.m. (Communion and Candlelight).

Friends and members of First Church, amid the busyness of our preparations for Christmas, Advent is calling, beckoning us to practice waiting. May our waiting prepare our hearts for the Christ Child this year.

God bless you and your loved ones this Advent and Christmas,

Kevin
Musical Notes

If I were to venture a guess, I would say that there is more music written for Christmas than any other time of the year. If you take a look at music history (an admittedly challenging subject during my college years) when most of composed material was written for the church, a large part of that was for the Christmas season. And now, particularly when Christmas has become so popularized for reasons other than religious ones, the warm fuzziness of the season is characterized through song almost anywhere you hear music. We Need a Little Christmas, while we’re Roasting Chestnuts, Dreaming of White Christmases and hearing Silver Bells, while Walking through a Winter Wonderland. On the other hand, we have songs like Mary Did You Know, speaking to the meaning of the Birth. And then again, I don’t mean to pop your balloon, but somehow I don’t think there was a boy in the manger playing drums while the ox and lamb tapped their hooves in time. When I brought Emma home 17 years ago, I don’t think she would have appreciated a rim shot or two.

Don’t get me wrong – this music fills me with as much good cheer and memories as the season allows, but the only thing that has to do with Christ’s birth is the peace and goodwill that the season evokes. (To be honest, though, a lot of this material still brings a tear to my eye. I will admit that I like it.)

I also like hearing the Christmas portion of Messiah…the Victoria or Lauridsen “O Magnum Mysterium”; most of the Christmas Music by Rutter; any Vaughn Williams Christmas choral music, the Bach Christmas Oratorio; Tavener “The Lamb”; Britten Ceremony of Carols; to mention a few. This music goes a bit deeper that the cockles of my heart – it reaches into my soul and lets me see that Christmas, indeed, is one of the most sacred times of the year. We are not scratching the surface of the meaning of the birth of Christ – we are digging infinitely deep and wide with a very powerful shovel.

Our present day Christmas without music would be pretty pale and colorless. Even those of us with limited singing capability will belt out the first verse of “Joy to the World’, or whisper along with “Silent Night” in the dark. It is not just an expression of the event; it is an integral part, embedded within its fabric. We like to think that even Mary’s “Magnificat” was an intoned hymn.

We still sing one of the two oldest carol in history: “Of the Father’s Love Begotten”, and know that as you sing it with us at the 9 PM Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols service here, you will be singing an ancient tune that has been sung on Christmas since the fourth century. “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” dates to the ninth century. Many carols, like “The First Nowell” began as folk songs; some were words set to older music like “What Child is This?” some began as poems like “In the Bleak Midwinter” or “O Little Town of Bethlehem” or one of my, (and Meg Gains’) favorites: “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear”. One of the best verses in this hymn has gotten me through many low times:

And ye, beneath life’s crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,
Look now! For glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing.
Oh, rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!

Rest and hear the angels sing! Imagine. What great advice.

So, please, this year, think of how music has given depth to your Christmas. Take a good look at the poetic words to the Christmas music that you know. They are beautiful, moving and descriptive. Come to a Christmas service. Come to a choir rehearsal. Sing out loud with the music in Wal-Mart, or in your car. It’s Christmas! Let the music of the angels fill the air!
As long as we have hope, we have everything we need.

Hope. It’s a word that we have used so much over the past two years but also a word that we celebrate each December during Advent. We embrace the hope that Joseph and Mary displayed on their journey to Bethlehem. We celebrate the hope that the world felt when Jesus was born. And now, we are filled with hope of a bright future and a Christmas season where family and friends are able to be reunited after a long time apart due to the pandemic.

After so many months away from our church building due to the pandemic and construction from the Capital Campaign we are finally back together! Worship has resumed and with it our children and youth programs! This month we are inviting our church members, friends and the community at large to gather together on December 5th as we celebrate this Grand Reopening of First Church! We will offer many activities for families including live music, s’mores at the outdoor fire pits, games in the youth room and gingerbread house decorating in the Church School wing! Bring your family, bring your friends- this is sure to be an event you do not want to miss!

Every year the children at First Church come together to put on what is always a beloved children’s Christmas pageant. Each child dons a costume and together retell the story of Jesus’ birth. Last year was truly one for the books! As we were in the height of the pandemic we had to think out of the box and out came, “Mary, You’re on Mute!” It made us laugh with many tongue in cheek lines about current topics like baking bread and the endless zoom meetings. It was a hit and everyone enjoyed seeing the children making lemonade out of lemons!

Here we are a year later and we have hoped and prayed that the congregation would be able to enjoy the children live in our makeshift manger in the Sanctuary. However, we still need to be cautious for our populations who are unvaccinated and/or vulnerable to Covid-19. So again, the Board of Christian Education has been hard at work putting together a pageant that is sure to delight all! We know you will enjoy this year’s hybrid Christmas pageant, “Masks in the Manger” which will be shared during worship service on December 19th.

We will once again hold our annual Christmas Eve Puppet Pageant in person! We were so happy to be able to offer the Puppet Pageant virtually last year but are overjoyed to be back in person in the sanctuary! Join us at 4:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve to see this beautiful family-friendly retelling! It is sure to be a service full of joy and celebration of reuniting together with family and friends as we celebrate Christ’s birth!

With so many ways to gather together to celebrate the joy of the season, I believe that this community and the events we are offering will bring you and yours great hope. Hope for a better year. Hope for a faith-filled year. May it be so.

Many blessings to you and yours this Christmas season,

Jessica Wolanin
Our Children's Christmas Pageant will take place LIVE on Sunday, December 19th!
We are so excited to present the show, "Masks in the Manger"
If you would like your child(ren) to participate please sign up all children below!
There will be a rehearsal on December 12th during Church School.
If there are any families who would be more comfortable participating virtually, please reach out to Jessica for an alternative way to be involved in the pageant from a distance this year!
The pageant will take place on December 19th at 10:00 a.m. All participants must arrive at 9:00 a.m.

[Click here to sign up!]

Church School Mission Project
Each year the children in Church School at First Church of Christ, Simsbury collect items and assemble 50 stockings to go to children in our town who would otherwise not receive gifts on Christmas morning. If you would like to contribute to this mission project, please see the items that are still in need below.

Please drop off all items to the First Church office at 689 Hopmeadow Street by December 3rd. We will also be collecting monetary donations towards this mission project.

[Click here to donate]

Children’s Ministries Ice Skating Event
All FCC families and friends are invited to join us for ice skating and fellowship at Simsbury Farms Ice Rink on Sunday, January 9th from 12:45-1:45 p.m.! Skate rentals will be offered. If you are able, please bring money to help offset the cost of skate rentals.
Please dress for the weather!
[Click here to sign up!]

Church School Teachers Needed!
We need Church School volunteers! We have a wonderful robust group of children attending Church School so now we need to volunteers to show up and teach preplanned lessons to the children! All lessons and materials are provided to you! No experience necessary, just a love of sharing God’s love with others! [Sign up here!] If you have any questions please reach out to Jessica at jwolanin@fccsimsbury.org!
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 (all 6th through 8th graders welcome!)

- **December 12th, 5-6:30 p.m.** in the Youth Room. Join us for Christmas games, activities, and a devotional! Please bring a $15 or under Yankee Swap gift.
- **December 19th, 6-8:30 p.m.**: Youth Group Christmas Caroling! Stay tuned for more info.

Pilgrim Fellowship (all 9th through 12th graders welcome!)

- **December 5th, 5-8 p.m.**: First Church Open House. Join us in the Youth Room!
- **December 12th, 7-8:30 p.m.**: PF Meeting in the Youth Room
- **December 19th, 6-8:30 p.m.**: Youth Group Christmas Caroling! Stay tuned for more info.

Confirmation

- **Wednesday, December 1, 5-6:30 p.m.**: Confirmation Class Meeting (Worship) in Classroom 208
- **Wednesday, December 15, 5-6:30 p.m.**: Confirmation Class Meeting (Advent & Christmas) in Classroom 208
The Friendship Center at St. Elizabeth House
Breakfast Volunteers Are Needed!

Please join us as we prepare and serve breakfast on the third Tuesday, each month, from 7-9 a.m. at The Friendship Center at St. Elizabeth House. The Friendship Center at St. Elizabeth House is a shelter and facility that supports homeless people and those at risk for homelessness in downtown Hartford.

Click here to sign up!

2021 Pledge Fulfillment
As 2021 draws to a close, please see the below important information from the Office:
You still have time to fulfill your 2021 Pledge to First Church!
If you would like your donation to be recorded in 2021, all checks must be dated by December 31, 2021, and received by the First Church Office no later than January 7, 2022.
If you have any questions, please contact the Office.
Thank you for your donation!
All invoices, or expense reimbursement requests for 2021 must be received by the First Church Office no later than January 7, 2022. Please contact Judi Sedor (finance@fccsimsbury.org) if you need more information.

Capital Campaign Payments
When writing a check towards the Capital Campaign, please clearly mark in the memo line “Capital Campaign.”
If you choose to have your payments made via your bank web bill pay, it is important the check makes mention of the Capital Campaign. Failure to do so, may lead to donations being posted toward an incorrect fund.
If you have further questions, please contact Shannon Lindsay in the office at (860) 651-3593 or email slindsay@fccsimsbury.org.

Wednesday Bible Study
Feeling a bit stir crazy and want to get studious?
Join Rev. Kevin Weikel in a virtual Lectionary Bible Study on Zoom! We meet on Wednesdays at 10 a.m.
To join the meeting this Wednesday, 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!
Worship Lay Readers
Volunteers wanted!

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

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!

Acolytes Wanted!

What is an acolyte? Children and youth are invited to sign up to participate in the 10am 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.

What should I wear? For boys: Dress pants or khaki’s and a nice shirt (ties are nice but not necessary). For girls: Dress pants or khaki’s, or a dress or skirt (if wearing a dress or skirt, please be sure it is as long as your fingertips when you stand with your hands at our sides, and please no sleeveless or spaghetti strapped tops).

When and wear should I arrive? At 9:45am, 15 minutes before the service begins, arrive in the Narthex (the Narthex is the lobby looking area just inside the traditional front doors of the church). Once you arrive, look for an Usher.

How do I Acolyte? The Usher will talk and walk you through all the specifics of being an acolyte.

Thank you! An acolyte adds much to our worship together. The reverence with which you approach the Communion Table can help set the right tone as our worship begins, and can add meaning as our worship ends. Thank you again! Click here to sign up!

2021 Masooli Project Donor Letter

The Board of The Masooli Project is pleased to provide its 2021 update to donors and friends who have generously supported the mission and the work of Faith Mulira Health Care Centre in Masooli, Uganda. During the past year, the clinic staff has worked hard to deal with the challenges of the Covid pandemic and delivered essential care and support to Masooli residents. The generous financial support provided by the Board of Mission and Outreach and from First Church members and friends has been critical during this time and is deeply appreciated. As you read about the clinic's challenges and accomplishments, we hope you will prayerfully consider a contribution to help continue the clinic’s work. Contributions can be made at www.masooliproject.org or sent to The Masooli Project, Inc., P.O. Box 1001, Simsbury, CT 06070.

Click here to read the 2021 Donor Letter
Recipient of Don’t Forget: First Church is an Amazon Smile Charitable Organization!

How to Benefit First Church as an Amazon Smile Charitable Organization:
Go to Amazon Smile (smile.amazon.com), you will be prompted to select a charitable organization. Note: You can change your selection at any time. Search for “First Church Simsbury” and select “First Church, Simsbury, CT” as your Smile Charitable Organization.

If you already use Amazon Smile; to change your charitable organization:
Sign in to smile.amazon.com. From your desktop, go to Your Account from the navigation at the top, and then select the option to Change your Charity. Or, from your mobile browser, select Change your Charity from the options at the bottom of the page. Search for “First Church Simsbury” and select.
Poinsettias in Honor of Loved Ones

On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 19th the sanctuary will be decorated with Poinsettias!

The poinsettias will continue to beautify our services through Christmas Eve. Following any Christmas Eve service any reserved flowers may be taken.

These poinsettias are provided by your donations.

To contribute a poinsettia, please neatly fill out this form and mail it to First Church, or bring it into the office at your convenience. You may also sign up online by scanning this QR code or clicking here.

Please indicate whether you wish to take your flower, or donate it to a friend or member of First Church who cannot get out to enjoy the advent season.

The cost is $10.00 per plant. Please write a check payable to First Church, with Poinsettia in the memo line.

The deadline to sign up is Wednesday, December 15th.

Your Name (please print) _______________________________________________

Telephone / Email ____________________________________________________

In memory of ________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

OR

In honor of ____________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

Please indicate Total number of Plants Ordered: _________________

☐ Please deliver __________ plant(s) to a friend or member of First Church.

☐ I will take ____________ plant(s) following a service on Christmas Eve.
First Church of Christ, Simsbury

Open House

Sunday, December 5th, 5-8 p.m.
Music, Food, Games, and Crafts!

Following Christ - Building Community
Changing Lives

All are Welcome!

Visit

www.fccsimsbury.org/openhouse

for a full list of events
First Church of Christ, Simsbury

Community Supper

Sunday, December 5th
Seatings at 4:30 & 5:30 p.m.

Join us for beef stew, mac & cheese, rolls, dessert, and beverages in our newly renovated Palmer Hall!

All are Welcome!

Visit www.fccsimsbury.org/openhouse to make a reservation!
**CHRISTMAS SERVICES AT FIRST CHURCH, SIMSBURY**

**CHILDREN’S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT: “MASKS IN THE MANGER”**

**December 19th at 10 a.m. in the Sanctuary**

Families are invited to join us for worship and enjoy a current but meaningful retelling of Jesus’ birth.

If children would like to participate, [click here to sign up!](#)

**THE LONGEST NIGHT**

**December 22nd at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary**

This is a service of comfort for those for whom this Christmas season may not be so joyful. Come, experience a place of rest during a quiet service of music, prayer, and candlelight.

**CHRISTMAS EVE**

**CHRISTMAS EVE PUPPET PAGEANT**

**December 24th at 4:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary**

A wonderful, captivating service for all ages that retells the joyous story of Jesus’ birth using larger-than-life rod puppets.

This service is a memorable, long-standing tradition at First Church that the entire family will find meaningful.

**SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS**

**December 24th at 9:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary**

A beautiful candlelight service that truly embodies the mystery and awesomeness of the birth of Jesus Christ.

This is based on the English service of Lessons and Carols, which tells the story of the birth of Jesus with nine short Bible readings, interspersed with the singing of Christmas carols and anthems by the choirs.

**HOLY NIGHT WORSHIP WITH COMMUNION**

**REV. KEVIN WEIKEL, PREACHING**

**December 24th at 11:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary**

Experience the wonder of Christmas as we worship into midnight by candlelight and partake in Holy Communion.

Church youth and Youth Group alumni participate in and lead this spirit-filled service.
Covenant to Care Christmas Gift Collection

Covenant to Care Christmas Gifts have been a tradition at First Church for almost 20 years. Our church works directly with social workers whose clients are abused, neglected and impoverished children. Your gifts may be the only ones they receive this Christmas.

Please click here to sign up to purchase a gift for someone in need.

First Church Puppet Pageant 2021

Come be a part of the larger than life Christmas story on Christmas Eve. Volunteers will carry the puppets as narrators retell the nativity story accompanied by classic Christmas hymns.

Volunteers are asked to wear black clothes and the church will provide black gloves.

Mandatory rehearsal will be on December 20th from 6-8 p.m.

On Christmas Eve we will meet at the church at 4 p.m. in preparation for the 4:30 p.m. pageant.

Please sign up below and share the link with your friends! Contact Jessica Wolanin at (860) 682-0796 with any questions.

Click here to sign up!

New Year’s Day Meal in Hartford

Our Board of Mission and Outreach will again partner with Hands on Hartford to host a New Year’s Day Meal for some of Hartford’s low income and homeless people.

We will leave from the church parking lot at 8:30 a.m. New Year’s Day and return by 2:00 p.m. This is a great way to start the new year and we need volunteers to help set up the dining room, prepare and serve food and contribute desserts. Children 10 years or older are welcome to come along and help. Sign up Sheets will be available during Fellowship Hour on Sunday, December 12th and 19th.

Please contact Dave or Nancy Wadhams with any questions or to sign up at (860) 836-7368 or wadhams.nd@comcast.net.

Festival of Songs

Please join us for our annual Festival of Songs (formerly known as the Mini Concert) before service on December 19th. Starting at 9:30, gather with us to celebrate the joy of the season with Christmas music presented by the performing groups of First Church, Simsbury. We hope to see you there!