

# Belfry Chimes

December 2020 – January 2021

The First Congregational Church of Portland, CT  
United Church of Christ

## We Prepare For The Christ Child And The New Year Through Worship

*"Our sanctuary is a place of safety for anyone and everyone, and we welcome all persons to worship with us. We worship in a manner which is at times comforting, at times a challenge, at times a celebration, and always in a manner which helps us remember that every person is a child of our loving God."*

These words are in The Statement of Mission found in the Constitution of our church. Although we are unable to gather in person for worship due to the risks posed by COVID, worship services are being offered on the church's YouTube channel: *First Church of Portland, CT*

**Sunday, December 6, 2020**

*Second Sunday of Advent: PEACE*

**Sunday, December 13, 2020**

*Third Sunday of Advent: JOY*

**Wednesday, December 16, 2020**

*Christmas Calm Service*

Our annual Christmas Calm service will be a virtual service on YouTube. This simple service features a quiet observance of Christmas and focuses on seeking God's comfort and peace amid the busyness and stress of the season along with this year's burdens of the pandemic. Readings, prayers, hymns, and harp music played by Kasha will be featured. Please send Rev. Hawken the name of a person you would like remembered or up-lifted in prayer at this service.

**Sunday, December 20, 2020**

*Fourth Sunday of Advent: LOVE*

**Thursday, December 24, 2020**

*Christmas Eve Service*

This year's Christmas Eve Service will be a virtual service available on our church's YouTube channel. It will include lessons and carols plus music by Kasha and the choir.



**Sunday, December 27, 2020**

*First Sunday After Christmas: REJOICE  
A Sunday Celebration of Christmas*

**Sunday, January 3, 2021**

*First Sunday of 2021: RING IN THE ANNIVERSARY YEAR*

We, The First Congregational Church of Portland, Connecticut, are an Open and Affirming church. With God's grace, we continue to be a congregation that includes persons of every race, ethnicity, age, family configuration, marital status, mental and physical ability, economic status, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. All are welcome to share in the life, sacraments, missions, responsibilities and blessings of participation in our community of faith.



# Ring in the Anniversary Year Worship Service

## January 3, 2021

**O**n the first Sunday of January 2021, we will ring in the 300th anniversary year with a celebratory worship service featuring a very special hymn "Ring Your Bells," written by Anniversary Committee Chairperson Nancy Johnson.

The service will focus on bells. Bells have played an important part in our world's history. They are used in many ways: to tell the time, to warn of danger, to sound an alarm, to announce death, to proclaim liberty, and to make music, just to name a few. Most importantly, bells are used to call people to church and to celebrate joy! Let us share that spirit of joy as we worship together as a church family.

In the poem "Ring Out, Wild Bells" written by Alfred Lord Tennyson in 1850 (the year our present church building was built), he tells us to "Ring out the old, ring in the new." Joining in worship to ring in the 300th anniversary year of our church is the perfect way to begin 2021!

This service of celebration would not be complete without a bell to ring, and each family will receive a commemorative bell to ring during the worship service, and to cherish as a keepsake of this important milestone in our church's history. The Anniversary Committee is pleased to offer you an official Bevin bell inscribed with the 300th anniversary logo. Our church's

history includes Susannah Bevin as one of our founding members, making these bells all the more meaningful. Given in memory of former church members Melvin and Betty Strickland, we thank their family for this generous gift.

The first hymn of the day will be "Ring Your Bells," sung to the tune of "On this Day, Earth Shall Ring." You are encouraged to ring your Bevin Bell and/or any bell you may have at home each time during the singing of the refrain. What a joyful way to usher in 2021, the 300th anniversary year of our beloved First Congregational Church of Portland.

### Ring Your Bells!

*Words by Nancy Johnson  
Sung to the tune PERSONENT' HODIE Hymn  
"On This Day, Earth Shall Ring"*

On this day, bells will ring  
Calling us to pray and sing  
As we worship Christ the King  
Born on earth to save us  
Guide us and inspire us

REFRAIN: Celebrate, brate, brate  
Celebrate, brate, brate  
Celebrate, 300 years  
Rejoicing all together!

Years ago, our land was bare  
People gathered, everywhere  
Built a church and worshipped there  
Served God with such grace  
Blessed us with this place REFRAIN

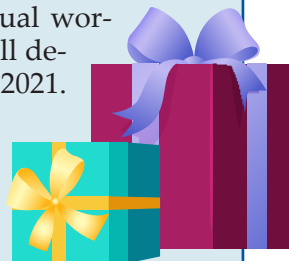
Grateful for our history  
We have shared true ministry  
Now we are one family  
Called to love each other  
Sisters and our brothers REFRAIN

So, ring your bells, loud and clear  
Tell the world that love grows here  
Spread the word for all to hear  
Let God's spirit guide us  
Shape us, mold us, lead us REFRAIN

#### MARK THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR: Saturday, December 5 and 12, 9 a.m. - 12 noon

#### SPECIAL CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR YOU FROM THE 300TH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

To help us prepare for this exciting time in our church's history, the 300th Anniversary Committee invites you to stop by the church on December 5 or 12, between 9 a.m. and 12 noon to pick up your gifts to help you celebrate the 300th anniversary of our church. Each family will receive a Bevin bell to be used during the January 3rd virtual worship service and a booklet that will describe the anniversary events for 2021. Just pull up to the fellowship hall door and roll down your window and your gift will be presented to you by one of the anniversary committee members.



*A message from*  
REV. JANE HAWKEN, PASTOR

Dear Friends,

The season of Advent begins on Sunday, November 29. It will be a different type of observance this year since we will not gather in the sanctuary for worship. However, it will be the same as in years past as we watch and wait and prepare ourselves for the birth of the baby Jesus on Christmas Day.

Each Sunday in Advent we will offer a virtual worship service available on our church's YouTube channel. In addition to music, prayers, sanctuary decorations, and messages befitting the season, we will include videos of church families lighting the four Advent wreath candles. Once again, we light the Candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

I have always found those four words to be very evocative of the gifts Jesus brings into our world and into our lives – especially as they are highlighted in the weeks leading up to Christmas. But this past year, the words took hold long before Advent.

From the beginning days of the pandemic, the four words have formed a meditative prayer of calming and centering for me. I slowly pray: "God, fill me with hope and let me share that hope. God, fill me with peace, and let me share that peace. God, fill me with joy, and let me share that joy. God, fill me with love, and let me share that love." I admit that there have been many times during these past eight months – sometimes in the middle of the night – when I have prayed those words over and over.

The coronavirus has brought disturbance, disappointment, and deprivation in many ways. But still, we can lay claim to the gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love. Better yet, we can share these gifts with one another, and we can share these gifts in tangible forms of outreach to those in deepest need.

Our church and family traditions will be different this year, but the message and promise of Christmas will hold true. The Christ Child will be born among us – just like every Christmas!

Yours in hope, peace, joy, and love,

*Jane*



# MISSIONS

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY AND BEYOND

## GOD'S WORK, OUR HANDS



*"In our service to others, and in the spirit of Jesus, we share our unique God-given talents and gifts. We seek to pass on to others the blessings that we have received."* These words are taken from The Statement of Mission found in the Constitution of The First Congregational Church of Portland: Passing blessings

on to others is the essence of Christian service. We do God's work by using our hands to serve others. Please consider the opportunities offered by the Board of Missions to serve others.

## SERRV INTERNATIONAL

Our church has been supporting SERRV for nearly 40 years, and we invite you to visit their website [www.serrv.org](http://www.serrv.org) to shop once again this year.



SERRV fights global poverty through

fair and ethical trade and working to empower over 7,000 artisans and farmers by creating employment with respect and dignity and paying fair wages. You may support this worthwhile mission through your purchase of beautiful, handcrafted items. Visit [www.serrv.org](http://www.serrv.org) to see the catalog.

## STREETFIRE MINISTRIES DINNER: A HOT MEAL FOR THOSE IN NEED

Providing a hot meal to those in need is another way we use our hands to do God's work. The Missions Board of our church has developed a relationship with Streetfire Ministries, a ministry that assists the poor and homeless population of Middletown. Each Saturday afternoon, Streetfire serves a hot meal in front of St. Vincent de Paul. Our Missions Board has provided the meal on several Saturdays, and will once again do so December 5. Prepared food is collected at the church by the Missions Board, and then it is delivered to Streetfire Ministries. Providing a hot meal is another way of doing God's work with our hands. Thank you to all who have assisted with this important mission project.

***Thank you to everyone who donated to UNICEF online. This was certainly a different Halloween and we appreciate all who remembered the children around the world by donating to UNICEF.***

## CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS WITH A NEW TWIST!

### MISSIONS GIVING TREE

The tradition of helping the Portland Food Bank provide Christmas to many Portland families continues this holiday season. In past years, the "Giving Tree" in the sanctuary has been overflowing with tags symbolizing gifts purchased by church members and friends to help provide Christmas gifts for families in Portland who are in need of our assistance. Although the tradition of "taking a tag" off the tree will not be with us this year, the spirit and warmth of providing gifts to children is ever present in our hearts.

Our Giving Tree will have a different feel this year ~ An email will be sent out with a link to insert your name next to a Tag Number which indicates the gift you will purchase. The Missions Board will receive the detailed list from Ruth Maio shortly after Thanksgiving, so watch your email for details. In addition, there is the option of sending a check made payable to First Congregational Church, and clearly marked for "Missions Giving Tree." This year, there are many families struggling with lost income and mounting bills, and we have the opportunity to share our blessings with others by donating funds or gifts. Thank you for your generosity!



*Caroling at Portland Rehab 2019. From L-R, front row: Hazel and Jude Ettlinger; 2nd row: Rev. Jane Hawken, Nancy Johnson, Beth Gould-Ruitto, Megan Ettlinger, Mary Pont; back row: Pete Ettlinger, Steve Demarest, Ed Burgess, Phyllis Clark.*

## JUMBO CHRISTMAS CARD

A large card posted in the church narthex for members to sign and send their greetings to others in the holiday season has been a tradition at our church for nearly 50 years. The money saved by not buying cards and paying postage to send cards to fellow church members was then donated to a worthy cause. This year, members and friends of the congregation are invited to send a photo greeting card, a photo, or a Christmas card to the church with a small donation if you choose. Donations received will be sent to the Portland Food Bank. We hope you will join with us in sharing the joy of the season in this new way.

# Merry Christmas

## Calling ALL First Church Children! we need YOU for the virtual CHRISTMAS PAGEANT!

Here's how it will work ... Mrs. Labby will deliver a costume and a short script to your home (if the child wants a speaking part). Parents will record the child (in costume), and all the videos will be connected to create a coordinated pageant which will be shared online, complete with the "stable" as a background. Certainly this year's pageant will be different from past years, but the story of Jesus' birth will be as heartwarming as it is every year. There is a place for everyone in this pageant (even parents). Please let Ann Labby know if your child would like to participate at [labbyannm@gmail.com](mailto:labbyannm@gmail.com).

## SPECIAL CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS

Historically, our church has supported two special offerings at this time of year. In 2020, the needs are great and we are pleased to provide information about these opportunities to share your blessings with others. To support either of the offerings, please mail a check payable to the church, with a notation of the offering you wish to support.

**The Christmas Eve Offering** supports the Portland Fuel Bank.

**The Christmas Fund** is a United Church of Christ offering that provides pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retired church workers, emergency assistance to clergy families in need, and Christmas checks to hundreds of annuitants as administered by the Pension Board of the United Church of Christ.

## CHRISTMAS CAROLING FA LA LA LA LA

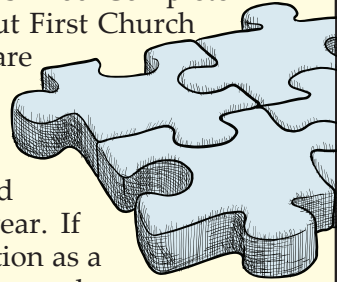


Calling ALL singers! Please make a phone video recording of you and/or your family singing your favorite Christmas Carol (don't forget to wear your Christmas hats and sweaters). Send the video to Ann Labby who will put them all together and send out the "Christmas Caroling" video to the entire church family to enjoy.

Plan to participate in this fun video and send to [labbyannm@gmail.com](mailto:labbyannm@gmail.com) **BY DECEMBER 13.**

## STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY

The fall stewardship campaign is underway and this year, the theme is "You Complete Us!" When we think about First Church in all of its wonder, we are reminded of the humble jigsaw puzzle. Many of us have turned to puzzles as a way to stay entertained at home over this past year. If we think of our congregation as a giant puzzle, each of us has a place as a piece of that puzzle and no other piece can fit into your place. The whole puzzle needs each piece to be finished and once a piece joins the puzzle, its separateness disappears and we become part of the complete picture.



This is the time of year that we reflect on the role that our church plays in our lives and the lives of others. Stewardship letters have been mailed, so please prayerfully consider how your financial contributions help keep our church relevant and able to serve others. We are truly appreciative of any and all gifts and pledges. When you return your pledge, please remember to include the puzzle piece you received with the mailing from the stewardship board, so we can complete our picture of First Church.

If you didn't receive a stewardship letter, or have questions please contact Kelle Young by leaving a message in the church office. 860-342-3244

## LUMINARIES IN THE GARDEN December 22 and 23, 5-6 p.m

You are invited to come and sit a spell ... and enjoy the sounds of Christmas music amidst luminaries near the Memorial Garden and the Gazebo. Music will fill the air and luminaries will light the way, so bundle up and stop by at your convenience for some quiet time of reflection as you await the birth of Jesus.

# Church Business Continues in the Midst of COVID

## — News from Boards and Committees —

*Despite the inconveniences we have all experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the church's business has continued on full speed ahead. The center roof was replaced this summer; video recording equipment is being installed in order to live stream worship services and other events in the sanctuary. The church council, boards and committees have continued to meet and conduct important business. Thank you to all those who currently serve the church in any capacity; your dedication and participation are greatly appreciated.*

### FACILITIES MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Annual Fall Cleanup was completed on a beautiful summer-like day thanks to members of the Confirmation Class and Facilities Board.

Our insurance company has mandated the installation of water and temperature sensors to, hopefully, catch a malfunction before significant damage occurs. The Board will install these and connect to the monitoring system available to us for that purpose. There will be a charge for this monitoring starting in 2022.

By mid-December the double doors into Fellowship Hall should be replaced with new ones similar to those under the portico. They need to be of a slightly different design as that area is not protected by a roof. New hardware will also be installed. This improvement has been made possible by the generous donations from a couple of church members. The current doors are badly worn (are they the originals?) and rain seeps into the vestibule when there is a southerly wind. Thank you to chairperson Linda Cunningham for stepping in to lead this important board.

### NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee is currently compiling the slate of Officers and Board and Committee members for 2021. If you are presently on a Board or Committee we encourage you to carry on, especially for continuity during this unusual year. We will be contacting those who will need to be voted for second or third term. Please say "yes!" when we call you to take on a leadership role in the church or contact us if you have an interest in being involved. There are openings on the Boards of Deacons, Facilities Management, and Christian Education.

To learn more about the opportunities for serving your church on a board or committee, contact any member of the Nominating Committee: Diane Burgess, Megan Ettlinger and Laura Winakor

#### The First Congregational Church

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Phone: 860-342-3244

Email: [first.church.pct@sbcglobal.net](mailto:first.church.pct@sbcglobal.net)

Website: [www.firstchurchportlandct.org](http://www.firstchurchportlandct.org)

Facebook: The First Congregational

Church of Portland, CT

YouTube Channel:

First Church of Portland, CT

#### STAFF

PASTOR: The Rev. Jane Hawken  
[jhawken@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jhawken@sbcglobal.net)

DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:  
Ann Labby [labbyannm@gmail.com](mailto:labbyannm@gmail.com)

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Kasha Breau  
(860) 983-6065

OFFICE MANAGER: Margaret Stewart  
Office Hours: Tues.-Wed. 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS  
SPECIALIST:  
Amy Jahnke  
[amy.jahnkefcportland@gmail.com](mailto:amy.jahnkefcportland@gmail.com)

VIDEO WORSHIP ASSISTANT:  
Brian Labby

CHURCH SEXTON: Ann Labby

#### BELFRY CHIMES

Jeannette Hodge and Cari Klick  
with numerous contributors

### NURSERY SCHOOL

The First Church Nursery School has experienced big changes in the past year due to the unexpected March closure due to COVID and the retirements of Director Diane Burgess and teacher Nancy Johnson. These dedicated women have left big shoes to be filled! A Nursery School Reopening Committee has been convened and is busily gathering information with the hope of re-opening in the Fall of 2021. The goal is to begin enrollment in early 2021, and to initiate a search for a Nursery School director. The committee is searching for one more member. If you are interested in serving in this time-limited capacity, please contact Amy Jahnke at (203) 915-1277 or [amy.jahnkefcportland@gmail.com](mailto:amy.jahnkefcportland@gmail.com)

### PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Convened by chairperson Joe Aresco, the Personnel Committee created two very part time positions to meet needs that have become evident over the past few months: Video Worship Assistant and Electronic Communications Specialist.

Brian Labby has been hired as the Video Worship Assistant, responsible to record and upload weekly services. Even after we are back in the sanctuary for worship on a full time basis, we will live stream our services, allowing those who cannot attend.

Amy Jahnke has assumed the role of Electronic Communications Specialist. Amy will be responsible for managing the web-based e-mail system we have implemented for weekly letters and updates, coordinating the website and the church's social media presence, as well as helping with the videoconference needs for meetings and other gatherings.

**Welcome Brian and Amy!!**



# COMMUNICATION: 2020 STYLE

## *Zoom....Zoom....Just what is Zoom?*

The word *Zoom* used to refer to moving or traveling quickly, or changing from a long shot to a close up with your camera. The word *Zoom* has taken on new meaning for most of us in the past year. When we hear the word *Zoom* now, we think of the video and audio conferencing technology being used for meetings, gatherings with family and friends in the new reality we now call COVID.

Our church has been using *Zoom* technology to hold congregational meetings, council, board and committee meetings, confirmation class, Bible study, book groups and the list goes on. Many of us gathered via *Zoom*

for a very touching memorial service for Charlie Coe. Joining a *Zoom* event for the first time can be a bit daunting, but once you get the hang of it, it's pretty amazing! You don't need a computer or an iPad; you can join with audio by using your telephone.

For those who haven't yet ventured into the world of *Zoom*, we are here to help you navigate it to get started. Just contact Jeannette Hodge (860-342-4093) or Amy Jahnke (203-915-1277) and we'll walk you through what you need to do to join in and we'll even plan a trial run to help you familiarize yourself with how it works. We hope you will zoom in to be part of a *Zoom* gathering!

*Join us for any of these virtual events via Zoom!*



Grab your favorite beverage, settle into your comfy chair and join the conversation! The links for coffee hour appear in the email communications sent out weekly. Mark your calendar or set a reminder on your phone. Coffee hour begins at 11:00 a.m.

### DECEMBER 2020

Sunday, December 6

Sunday, December 20

### JANUARY 2021

Sunday, January 10

Sunday, January 24

### **BIBLE STUDY**

Third Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. Contact Megan Ettlinger for the invitation to the Zoom Bible Study.

### **BOOK GROUP**

First Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. Watch the weekly updates for more information.

*In Loving Memory*

## **Important information about email communications from the church**

Have you been getting our Mailchimp emails? What is Mailchimp you might be asking yourself? Mailchimp is an email marketing company that allows us to keep everyone informed in new and exciting ways. Be on the lookout for a church e-newsletter that will debut soon.

We have heard feedback that some Gmail users are finding our emails in their promotions tab rather than the primary box. This is a known issue between Mailchimp and Gmail. There are two solutions you can try. First, add our email addresses to your Google contact list. Second, move the email to the Primary tab. The more you interact with our emails, Gmail will recognize they should go to the primary account. If you have any questions or would like to be added to our mailing list, feel free to email Amy at [amy.jahnkefcportland@gmail.com](mailto:amy.jahnkefcportland@gmail.com).



*Photos that capture the spirit of a moment in time are priceless. This photo of Charlie Coe and Hal Larson taken at the Chocolate Fest a few years ago reminds us of these two fun-loving, kind men. Charlie died on April 16, 2020 and Hal died on October 21, 2020. We remember Charlie and Hal with great fondness.*

# Introducing the 2020-2021 Confirmation Class!



**Confirmand:** Lilly Clark  
**Sponsor:** Linda Yohe

Lilly is a sophomore at Mercy High School where she plays the flute in the orchestra and runs on the cross country team.



**Confirmand:** Lauren Eckert  
**Sponsor:** Jenn Renk

Lauren is a sophomore at Portland High School who loves to play soccer and spend time with friends.



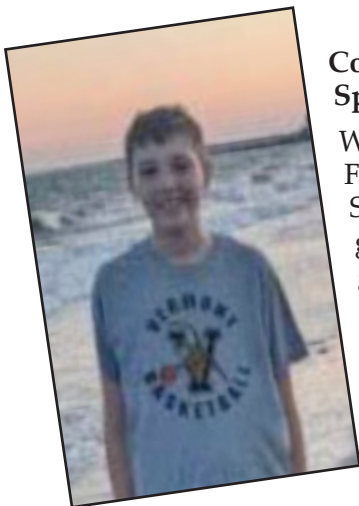
**Confirmand:** James Grzegorek  
**Sponsor:** Pete Ettlinger

James is a 9th grader at University High School of Science and Engineering. He enjoys karate, video games, and reading in his spare time. James states that he looks forward to going through Confirmation this year.



**Confirmand:** Evan Guilmette  
**Sponsor:** Karen Rettich

Evan is a freshman at Portland High School. He loves Bluegrass, Southern Rock and Classic Country Music and plays guitar and sings lead vocals in his bluegrass band, *Bend In The River*. Evan also enjoys NASCAR and IMSA car racing as well as mountain biking.



**Confirmand:** William Jahnke  
**Sponsor:** Diane Burgess

William is 15 years old and a Freshman at Portland High School. He enjoys playing golf, basketball, and video games.

**Confirmand:** Meghan Lemieux  
**Sponsor:** Erin Hall

Meghan is a sophomore at Middletown High School where she is a member of the volleyball team and track team. In her free time, she enjoys baking and hanging out with her friends and family.







**Confirmand:** Sean Mearman  
**Sponsor:** Eric Smith

Sean is a 10th grader at Portland High School who enjoys playing on his PC and riding his bike with friends. Sean does his best in school and likes to hang out with his friends in school.

**Confirmand:** Erik Medvecky  
**Sponsor:** Joe Aresco

Erik Medvecky is 14 years old and attends Portland High School. Erik's brother Jaxon is a student at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Erik likes to play soccer and video games, and enjoys his dog Jenna.



**Confirmand:** Cooper Rettich  
**Sponsor:** Meghan Guilmette

Cooper is 14 years old and is a freshman at Portland High School. He races karts and likes cars, and enjoys hanging out with his family and friends because they are cool.

**Confirmand:** Matthew Smith  
**Sponsor:** Scott Pellin

Matthew attends Vinal Technical School in Middletown. He is an active Boy Scout who enjoys the outdoors, hiking, and riding his bike. He is a black belt in Kenpo Karate and is an instructor at his school.



**Confirmand:** Matthew Sobieski  
**Sponsor:** Lauren Tomaschko

Matthew is a freshman at Xavier High School where he was captain of the Xavier Freshman Soccer team this fall. Matthew enjoys basketball, history and listening to music.



# 300th Anniversary News

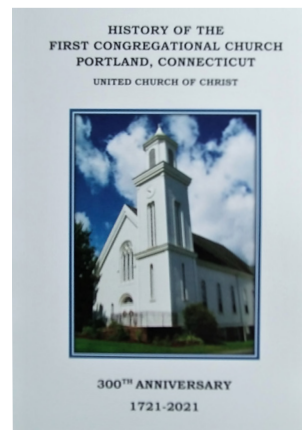
## Commemorative Anniversary Items For Sale

The anniversary committee is offering two items for sale that may be of interest to church members and friends. A beautiful 300th Anniversary pewter ornament designed by our very own church member and resident artist Kearen Enright will adorn your Christmas tree for years to come. In fine detail she has captured a picture of the church as it looks in its present state. The ornament was made at the Woodbury, CT Pewter Factory and is available for \$12.00.

An updated history book of the First Congregational of Portland, CT was written in celebration of the 300th anniversary of the church's founding. Comprised of two parts, Part I was authored by Albert A. LeShane, Jr. for the 250th anniversary held in 1971, and revised in 2020. It includes many helpful suggestions from the Rev. Edward T. Clapp, minister of the church from 1941-1973. Part II contains the next fifty years and was written by members of the 300th anniversary committee. It contains eight sections recording the history of

significant areas of church life. Also found in Part II includes the history of significant areas of church life as well as a list of the ministers since the church's founding, a list of the original founding members, an historical chronology, and information on recently acquired portraits of our third minister, the Rev. Cyprian Strong and his third wife Abigail Strong. The cost of this book is \$20.00.

These keepsakes will make great Christmas Gifts and delivery is available in Portland. To purchase either of these items, please contact the church or Nancy Johnson at 860-342-4098 or [nlj1952@comcast.net](mailto:nlj1952@comcast.net).



## Our Church's History by the Month: December

*By Diane Burgess ~ 300th Anniversary Historian*

Beginning this month and throughout the 300th Anniversary Year, items of historical interest will be included in newsletters and our website. We hope you enjoy reading about the church's history.

**December 1, 1720** the church voted to call the 20-year-old Rev. Daniel Newell as our first minister. Rev. Newell had graduated Yale in 1718 and was ordained on October 25, 1721. He married Ruth Porter one week later and they had 4 children before his untimely death in 1731.

**December 27, 1766** Rev. Moses Bartlett died at age 58. He served for 33 years as our second minister and was the first physician for the East Middletown settlement then known as the Third Church of Christ of Middletown. A new larger meeting house was constructed during his ministry.

**December 18, 1850** the new (present) church building was dedicated. It is the third edifice for our congregation and took just one year to build. The gothic design was created by New Haven architect Henry Austin and is similar in design to the First Church of Kent, CT built in 1849. This year marks the 170th year that worship has occurred in this building!

**December 19, 1865** Rev. Hervey Talcott died at age 74 having served for 45 years as our fifth minister and was the longest serving pastor in our history and the first to preach in our present sanctuary.

**December 1973** the first Jumbo Christmas Card was signed by members, and perhaps was the design of Ruth Campbell who used Garfield the Cat as a frequent artistic choice. This was a way for members of the congregation to send greetings to other members and the savings of stamps and card expenses were then donated to a special mission. Various artists have designed a large card for most years since and a special "mission" has been chosen yearly. Approaching almost 50 years of donations, this year, we hope to continue this tradition even if we're not meeting in person.

In 1989 Christmas Eve Services were initiated and in 2011 a Service of Christmas Calm became a part of the Advent traditions. Giving and Missions have always been a part of our Christmas. But in more recent decades the focus has changed with the times. "White Gifts" was a tradition from the 1950's through the 1980's when members brought gifts wrapped in white tissue paper and children presented them at the Christmas Pageant. Later they were distributed at the Cromwell Children's Home. Recently our decorated "Giving Tree" near the pulpit bore gift tags for local families' needs which were then fulfilled by our willing congregation and returned with the attached tag for dispersal to the assigned local families. In 2020 the method of getting a tag will be accomplished online, but the spirit of the project will remain the same and local families will continue to enjoy your generous donations!



# Women's Fellowship News

On Saturday, September 12th, eleven women gathered for an outside meeting to begin the church year. Officers for the coming year were elected:

President – Nancy Johnson  
Vice-President – Phyllis Clark  
Secretary – Sandy Baines  
Treasurer – Ann Dimock

- Members offered sincere thanks to Faith Fraulino for her devotion to the Treasurer's position for the past two years.
- Thank you notes for gifts given upon the births of Evelyn Faass and McKenna Grace Foote were shared, as well as thank you notes from Ann Labby and Ann Dimock for prayer shawls given to them following their surgeries.
- About 35-40 summer cheer cards made by Diane Burgess were mailed and most included personal messages from Nancy Johnson. Thank you notes were received, as well as one phone call from former minister Rev. Rosemary Turner.
- The Chocolate Fest was discussed. Recognizing that the usual event cannot be held this year, the group discussed what might be done on a simpler level. The decision was made to not offer anything in February, but depending on how the year goes, consider an event in the Spring, maybe in conjunction with an anniversary event.

## Prayer Shawl Ministry

The women continued to meet outside on a weekly basis throughout the summer. The group held a lovely parting ceremony for Connie Wache on August 27th. Connie was presented with a basket filled with cards and gifts from women in the church. As of October 29th, and with the exception of a very warm November 10th day, the group is meeting in the fellowship hall on Tuesdays at 1:00 p.m. Ten prayer shawls were given to the Hartford Hospital Chaplain who mentioned that some shawls to nurses as well as patients. As of October 2005, 320 prayer shawls have been donated to individuals. Connie Dimock knitted 72 prayer shawls before she left the ministry. Sue Kenny has volunteered to take over the Prayer Square Ministry which Connie led. On September 10th the church received an email request for a prayer shawl from a person from Pennsylvania who found our website when looking up prayers and scripture readings. A shawl was sent and the Women's Fellowship received a very nice thank you note in return.

**15  
Years**  
**320  
Shawls**

## A message from Connie Wache

*To my cherished church family,*

*I will be forever grateful that I was part of a church community that honestly enriched my life. In early 1995, Mike and I were moving to a new town, building our home and expecting the birth of our twin daughters. I had previously drifted away from my hometown church and realized that I missed that connection and wanted to share it with my own family. From the moment I walked through the doors of First Church, I knew that it had everything that I was hoping for. It was easy to feel included by a congregation that was a wonderful mix of people at various stages in their lives. I felt encouraged and nurtured as a new mom and looked to others as role models, I was delighted when the girls made it on to the First Church Nursery School "list" to begin their education, I loved our Friday "Moms and Tots" playgroups and the connection of Women's Fellowship programs; the list goes on and on! You blanketed my family when we needed your care during my illnesses. You cannot imagine the peace of mind that comes with that. You have been an important part of my children's lives and watched them grow up. You have challenged me a bit to step outside my comfort levels to become a church school teacher and to assume leadership positions. It was always easy to say "YES" to whatever was going on at the church and in our community.*

*To be honest, I have been procrastinating writing this letter because I am worried that the sincere sentiments behind it will not be fully realized. This goodbye has been difficult. The time that I shared within and outside our church building is so incredibly valuable as is every person that I shared it with. We have celebrated wonderful times and cried through losses and difficult times. A true family in every sense of the word. My heart is full with all the wonderful words, cards and gifts that were sent to continue my connection with our amazing little church. Thank you so very much!*

*In Christian love,  
Connie Wache*



The Belfry Chimes  
First Congregational Church of Portland  
554 Main Street  
Portland, CT 06480

Welcome  
to your new  
Belfry Chimes!

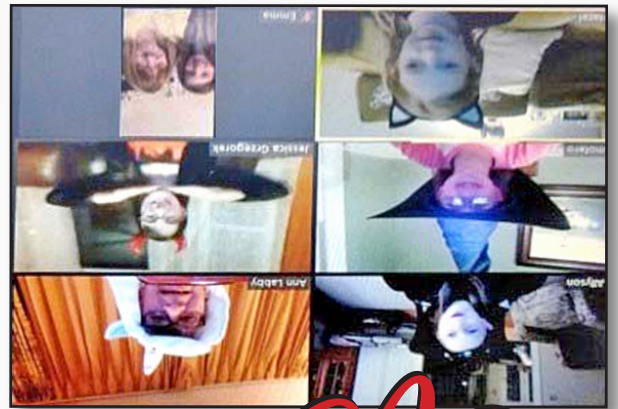
Look inside for COVID-related updates,  
church happenings, and more!

**with our new online  
Church School program!**

"Celebrate Wonder" is a fantastic program being held through Church School for children 3 years old to 9 years old and above. Each registered student receives a tote bag containing Bible books, activity books and craft supplies. Students log on each week and participate in that week's Bible lesson and activities. Once a month there is a ZOOM get-together with the other students.

**IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO JOIN US!**

If your child/children/grandchildren would like to participate just contact Ann Labby, and she will deliver the supplies to your home. [labbyannm@gmail.com](mailto:labbyannm@gmail.com)



For the October ZOOM get-together, students wore their Halloween costumes.

**Celebrate  
Wonder**