



**“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1**

Dear Friends,

In the letter to the Hebrews, the author is encouraging believers to stay strong in their faith and reminding them that even what we cannot see has substance and gives evidence. I have always loved this description of the work of the Holy Spirit: you can't see the Spirit, but you can feel it, and see how she makes things happen. Likewise, you cannot see the wind, but you can feel it, and you can see how even you yourself might be moved by its power.

During the summer months, even for those of us who are not students and teachers or other school administrators, (which many of us are!) these months have a different pace, and many of us are less likely to visit the Meetinghouse at 148 Beach Road while we worship at Sasco Beach or get away for some summer fun, so we also might not be “seeing” all that is happening on the corner of Beach and Old Post Road.

Nevertheless, there is good news! If you are the one making some of this happen, thank you! If you are not, here is a peek “behind the scenes” at some of the good things underway for our life together as a community. The HVAC (finally) is going in so we will have clean air in the sanctuary! There is a new website redesign underway which you will notice soon. A search is underway for a new Director of Disciple Road and a Children's Choir leader so our young ones will have meaningful opportunities for faith formation in the next program year. The Interfaith Refugee Resettlement Coalition is preparing to sponsor and welcome a third family from Afghanistan, Praise God! The youth of Fairfield Yabantu continue to gather for fun and enrichment opportunities from protest marches to swim lessons. David and Geri are unpacking on Martha's Vineyard, reveling in the loving sendoff you gave them, and enjoying their first month in retirement. The new members of the Pastoral Team continue to form new relationships with the community. First Church continues to stand as a witness to God's love for all people and remind all who pass by that they are of sacred worth, just as they are.

I am also away for the month of July, and am very grateful to you all for this time, to the members of the pastoral team for their willingness to keep the church running, and especially to our Student Pastor Heidi Butler, and to longtime friend of the church the Rev. Suzanne Wagner for providing excellent preaching and compassionate pastoral care while I am away.

So friends, even if you are away from the Meetinghouse this July and August, keep praising God wherever you are and keep the faith that good works are happening even when we don't see them. Save the Date for a big party on September 11th to celebrate all of it and to thank all of those who are making it all happen. See you there!

Peace,  
Vanessa

P.S. If any of the activities above interest you, reach out and I will connect you to new opportunities to serve the church! There is room for your gifts and skills.

# Thank You!

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Words cannot express the deep joy and gratitude that Geri and I felt on June 5 and that still fills our hearts. Everything - we mean everything - was just wonderful, perfect even! From the weather (thanks, Jim!); the worship and the preaching (thank you Vanessa, Frank, and Heidi) which was joyous, pastoral, funny, and poignant and really did proclaim the good news of God's love; the music (thank you Frank, the Chancel Choir, and Jane) which was so beautiful and exultant with sounding brass, great hymns, anthems that were just right, and the ethereal "Simple Song"; the naming of the Chapel in my honor (Geri and I were overcome); the incredible luncheon (thank you, Amy-Alison, Jane, so many helpers and talented cooks and bakers) which was just as I had hoped, so gracious and friendly, such a First Church tradition and so delicious; the Memory Book (thank you Carrie and Marilyn) and all who shared photos, notes, poems, memories, letters and so much love.

Geri and I could not have been happier with the day because you all made it a celebration of the whole congregation. We have been together all along, pastor and people. You have loved and supported us for 38 years and distilled all those experiences into a sweet elixir that brought us such joy. You have blessed us on our way, riding a great wave of love.

You will be in our prayers in the coming days as you build on your rich history and abiding commitment to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. In these days of Pentecost the Holy Spirit will descend upon you and you will "see visions and dream dreams" of what God has in store for you. You are an Open and Affirming, Servant Church filled with Disciples of Jesus who are empowered by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is your time, with a faithful, visionary, and inspiring new Senior Pastor. Dare to do great things for God, for to God be the glory!

Our hearts will be forever grateful for you, our dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ. David and Geri

[Click here](#) for photos from David's Retirement Party

[Click here](#) for David's Speech

[Click here](#) for slide show shown at David's Farewell

Dear First Church Family,

I wanted to write to you all with my deepest gratitude and appreciation for the home you have made for me these past two years. I could not have asked for a better place to learn about and practice ministry, among such a loving, passionate, nurturing, and joyful congregation. I am immensely thankful for the ways that you have engaged with me in small group classes and in Sunday worship, in High Road gatherings and in meetings and events, through a period of such transition and uncertainty. My call to ministry has been affirmed and clarified by the stories and insights you have shared and by the faith that you show every day in all you do. I have grown so much as a minister and a person in the time I have known you all, thanks to your inspiration and your trust in me to join with you on this journey.

My time in seminary has been full of all sorts of challenges that I could never have predicted. But I can also say with certainty that God has shown up and been made known to me in ways beyond what I ever could have imagined, and walking alongside you all in this journey of faith has absolutely been a holy encounter with God. I am blessed beyond measure to know you and to have had the honor of serving as your Student Pastor.

I am sad to be leaving, but I am taking with me so many lessons and so much of who I am that has been shaped by First Church. I am incredibly excited to see what the future holds both for myself and for this beloved congregation!

Blessings, peace, and love to you all.

Heidi



## **Choir Rehearsals to begin!**

Chancel Choir Thursday, September 8

Children's Choir Sunday, September 11

Bell Choir Every other Thursday, 5:45-7:15 PM,  
beginning September 15

I am delighted to report that we have almost all of the wonderful people we need to have a satisfying Bell Choir experience this fall! If we can get one or two more people to commit now, it will ensure our success. Please consider engaging in this enjoyable, entry-level musical experience, and in serving First Church in this way. We will also have a handbell petting zoo after worship on Sunday, September 11, where you can try handbells out in a no-stress, no-commitment environment. ~Frank

# Contact us

## **Just a reminder how to reach our OFFICE STAFF:**

Trinity Bravo: [tbravo@firstchurchfairfield.org](mailto:tbravo@firstchurchfairfield.org)  
203-259-8396 xt 111 Sunday-Thursday 9-1

Maria Ferrante: [mferrante@firstchurchfairfield.org](mailto:mferrante@firstchurchfairfield.org)  
203-259-8396 xt 106 Monday-Thursday 8-2

Teri Preto-Rodas: [office@firstchurchfairfield.org](mailto:office@firstchurchfairfield.org)  
203-259-8396 xt 100 Monday-Friday 9-1

## **Additional important contact information:**

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Jacque Page: [jpaige@smithhanley.com](mailto:jpaige@smithhanley.com)  
203-763-9624



## **IT'S VACATION TIME!!**

When we're away:

Vanessa July 4 - August 8

Frank August 12-15

Maria August 15-21

Trinity August 21-24

Teri August 27-31



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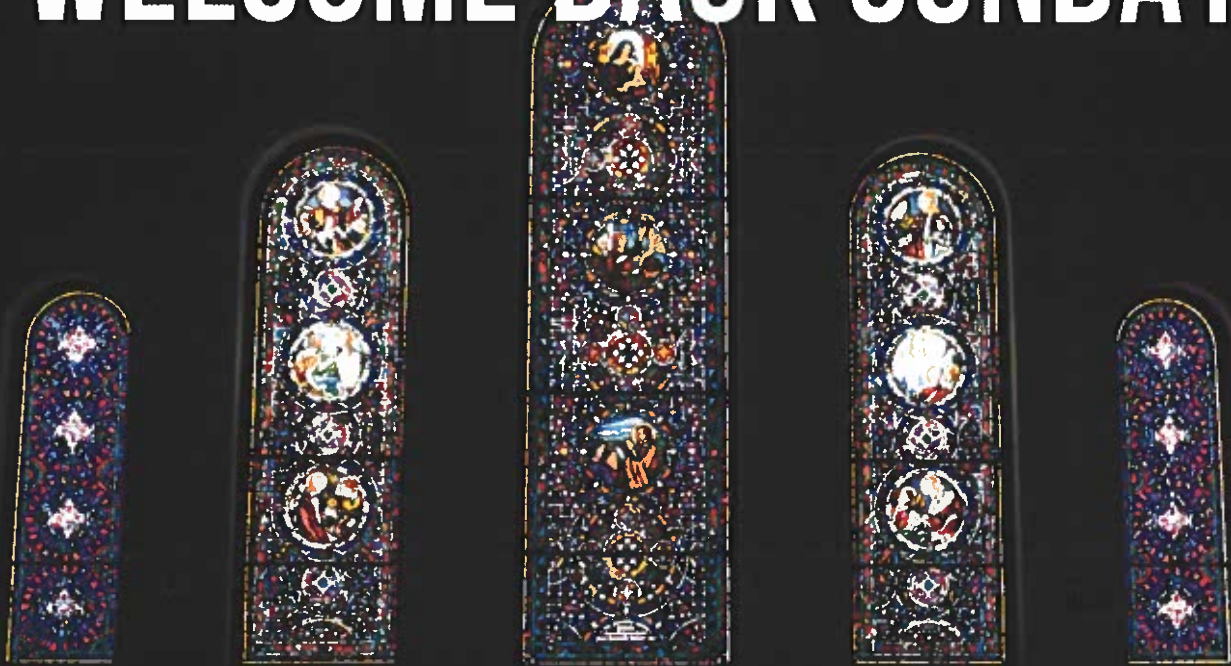
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● <https://firstchurchfairfield.org>

● 148 Beach Rd, Fairfield Ct, 06824

*September 11, 2022*

# WELCOME BACK SUNDAY



Return of Disciple Road, Middle Road, High Road  
Chancel Choir

**Welcome Back Sunday Luncheon after 10:15 worship at  
11:30AM.**

There will be a Tasty Yolk Food Truck for sandwiches  
and a bounce house for the kids.

Please bring a salad to share if your last name starts with A-M and  
dessert if it begins with N-Z.

**Watch for more info in upcoming Sunday bulletins.**

Over the last few weeks, many of our students at the Simply Smiles Children's Village in Oaxaca, Mexico have achieved significant academic milestones:

- Graduating from college with a degree in nursing
- Earning the highest GPA in their middle school class
- Several awards received for their commitment to academic excellence and achievement

To celebrate all they've achieved, We're taking the kids on a 5-day camping trip to Cabañas Rancho Pio!

[Click here to help send the kids on a camping trip](#)

Or go to <https://donate.simplysmiles.org> to donate!



# ANNUAL MEETING UPDATE

**THE ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES ARE IN!**

To view minutes from the Annual Meeting as well as any previous meetings of 2022 please click [HERE](#).



**MERCY LEARNING CENTER**

## MERCY LEARNING CENTER FOOD PANTRY

### There Is Still Great Need!

Deliver Non-Perishable Food, Diapers, Checks, and Gift Cards to Wakeman Hall by Thursday Noon for delivery to the Food Pantry at Mercy Learning Center on Friday Morning!!

These are basic items that will help right now:.

- bags of rice and bags of any type of dried beans, lentils, etc.
- tomato paste, tomato sauce, or diced tomatoes
- powdered or evaporated milk
- toilet paper, bars of soap, other toiletries
- Gift cards: Stop and Shop, Shop Rite, Walgreens, CVS
- oatmeal, cream of wheat, corn meal
- pasta, cooking oil, flour
- canned meats, canned fruit, canned vegetables
- Diapers: sizes 4, 5, and especially 6

Financial Donations: Mail to First Church, check payable to Mercy Learning Center



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**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
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