



THE HERALD December 2021

First Church Congregational, Fairfield
United Church of Christ



A Letter From the Pastor

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Welcome to December, which has been called “The Most Wonderfully Holy Time of the Year” by journalist Nancy Haught in *The Oregonian*.

That’s right. December encompasses not only the Jewish holiday Hanukkah and the Christian celebration of Christmas, but also includes spiritually significant holy-days for Muslims (Ashura), Buddhists (Bodhi Day), Pagans (Winter Solstice), and Zoroastrians (Death of Zarathustra), as well as the Pan-African celebration of Kwanzaa. More than twelve in all! As we go about our daily lives we come into contact with many people of different traditions and faiths, or of no faith, whether we are aware or not.

No wonder, “Happy Holidays” has become a profoundly respectful greeting during this “wonderfully holy time.” I remember Rabbi Waldman at Congregation Beth El saying how the Christmas lights that decorate so many homes were not in any way offensive, but that their light gave him hope in the darkness.

I greet people during December by saying, “I celebrate Christmas and if you do, too, I wish you a very Merry Christmas. If not, I wish a very Happy Holiday in your tradition and that your life is blessed with goodness.” It’s a bit wordy, but I can report that it has engendered smiles and words of thanks, opened the door to wonderful conversations, and created new bonds of friendship in my life. The diversity in God’s world is spiritually enriching!

Also, if you want to “Keep Christ in Christmas,” continue doing what the people of First Church do every day: feed the hungry, shelter those without homes, welcome immigrants and refugees, forgive others, embrace outsiders, share with those in need, advocate for the marginalized, confront and resist those abusing power, and respect and value other religions.

With a heart overflowing with gratitude for you this Advent, awaiting the joy and wonder of Christmas, I wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas filled with love.



OUTREACH

First Church Congregational 2021 Christmas Angel Gifts for the Central CT Coast YMCA Families in Transition Shelter in Bridgeport



Thank you to everyone who signed up last week! Our list is complete!!!
Please have your wrapped gifts with name tag ready to drop off at my house (2607 Congress Street, Fairfield please call first)... OR...I can pick them up from you **no later than Fri. Dec. 17th**. Please **also wrap the gift cards in a box** too so they don't get lost when delivered.
The name tags have on the back the age of the family member, their sizes and any wish items they might have mentioned if cost appropriate. Thank you again for your help.

Debby Dwyer 203-255-8835

Christmas Gifts for Covenant to Care

Thank you to all who donated gift cards to the Covenant to Care Thanksgiving drive. We collected \$350 in cards which our Social Worker delivered to her clients. We will have Christmas Angel Tree signups in the corridor outside of Wakeman Hall after the 10:15 services the first two Sundays in December. Gifts will be due back in church by **before noon on Tuesday, December 21st**.

Thank you for your continued support of the Covenant to Care ministry.

Blessings,

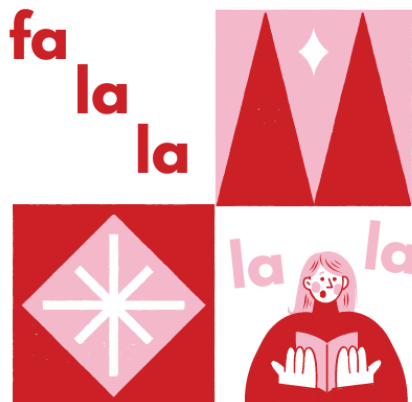
Marilyn, Kim and Jessie

.(203) 255-5296 marilynhenry18@optonline.net



Christmas Caroling

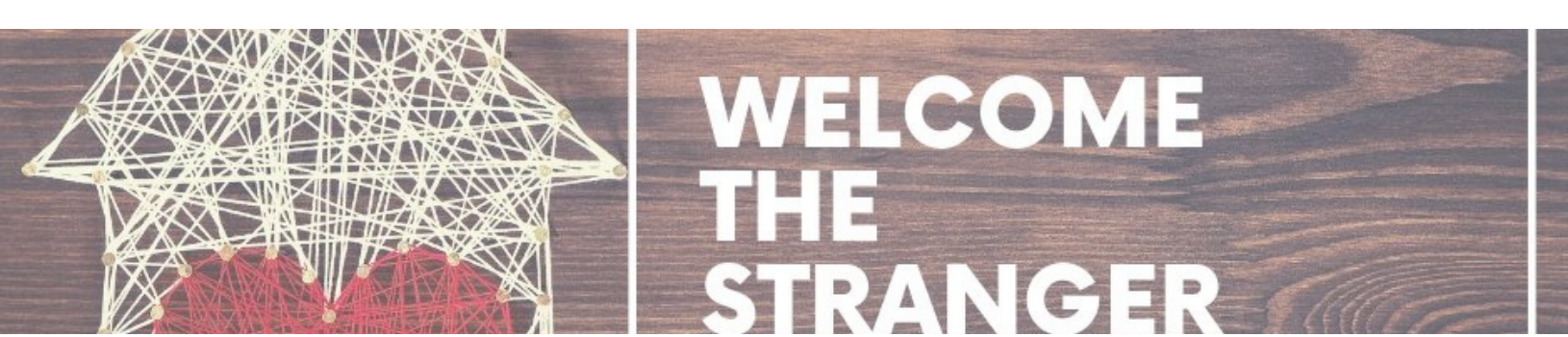
Come spread the holiday cheer to members of our church family!
RSVP to sing with Vanessa vrose@firstchurchfairfield.org



LA LA LA LA

Sunday, December 19
4:00PM

Cocoa and Cookies in Wakeman Hall
Then off to share the beauty of song and fellowship



Interfaith Refugee Resettlement and CIRI

This past few months have been a busy time for the Welcome the Stranger committee. Thousands of Afghan evacuees have started to make their way to their final US homes, and many of them are resettling here in CT. At First Church, we are fortunate that we have many ways we can serve.

Through the **Interfaith Refugee Resettlement Committee**, we continue to support our cosponsored Afghan family of 11, who are settled in their Black Rock apartments and beginning their new lives in CT. Our coalition members are busy enrolling the children in school, helping the family with health screening, clothes shopping, and getting ready for employment. There is much work to be done and many passionate coalition members willing to do it.

First Church also continues to support **CIRI (Connecticut Institute of Refugees and Immigrants)** by setting up apartments for their clients as they settle in the community. Today First Church worked alongside church members from Norfield Congregational, the Unitarian Church in Westport, and Greenfield Hill Congregational to set up an apartment for 6 Afghan men in Hamden. The landlord, himself an Afghan who immigrated to Connecticut in 2018, had the house on the market but decided to rent it when approached by CIRI. It was truly a collaborative effort.

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/DbcU5CDfX37vFtUg9>

First Church members can continue to support our CIRI setups in 2 ways:

1. You can donate the supplies that First Church provides each setup – including First Aid kits, welcome mats, paper blinds, kitchen mats, and clock radios. Full list of supplies and where to deliver them can be found at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e0e4fa9ad2fa6ff2-stock>.
2. We finally have space in our furniture storage unit and are ready to take your furniture donations. We are looking for the following items in particular. Please contact Patty Gregory pzarra@optonline.net if you have items you would like to donate.
 - dining/kitchen tables
 - small coffee tables
 - end tables
 - bedside tables
 - small dressers

Christmas

ONLINE WORSHIP PREMIERE

Christmas Pageant

December 24
4:00PM

View online on our website
www.firstchurchfairfield.org

The Pageant can be viewed on our website www.firstchurchfairfield.org, our [Facebook](#) page and [YouTube](#) channel at anytime after the premiere.

Lessons and Carols

WORSHIP ONLINE AND IN-PERSON
CHRISTMAS EVE
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24
10:00 PM
VIEW ON OUR WEBSITE
WWW.FIRSTCHURCHFAIRFIELD.ORG

Christmas Gifts

Gifts this year will go to the St. Luke/St. Paul Food Pantry. Names of those in memory or honor will be printed in the Christmas bulletins. Please return this form together with your contribution to the church office no later than
Monday, December 13th

My/Our Christmas Gift is given:

In Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

Given by _____

Amount \$ _____

Make checks payable to First Church
Congregational.
Memo: Christmas Gift



First Church Congregational
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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