



THE HERALD
February 2022

First Church Congregational, Fairfield
United Church of Christ

A Letter From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

Thank God for faith. Thank God for hope.

In the Letter to the Hebrews 11:1 we find the foundational words:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

We live in a time that tries and tests us: the devastation of the Coronavirus pandemic; the destructive effects of a warming planet; the fact that one in six children lives in extreme poverty; the rich get richer and the poor get poorer by the day; the ongoing ravages of systemic racism; our democracy in extreme danger of failing; and our personal troubles, losses and grief.

No wonder it is tempting to give in to despair and nihilism. This is why I thank God for faith and hope.

Faith is trusting in God. Hope is trusting that God will show us more. These are the antidotes to the despair and nihilism that threaten to overtake us. They are the well springs of our emotional health and most especially of our spiritual well being.

You may remember Amanda Gorman, who read her poem “The Hill We Climb” at the 2021 Inauguration. In reflecting on the difficulties of the last year, she wrote a column in the New York Times:

Even as we’ve grieved, we’ve grown; even fatigued we’ve found that this hill we climb is one we must mount together. We are battered, but bolder; worn, but wiser. I’m not telling you to not be tired or afraid. If anything, the very fact that we’re weary means we are, by definition, changed; we are brave enough to listen to, and learn from, our fear. This time will be different because this time we’ll be different. We already are.

And yes, I still am terrified every day. Yet fear can be love trying its best in the dark. So do not fear your fear. Own it. Free it. This isn’t a liberation that I or anyone can give you — it’s a power you must look for, learn, love, lead and locate for yourself.

Why? The truth is, hope isn’t a promise we give. It’s a promise we live. Tell it like this, and we, like our words, will not rest..

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Here's to living in 2022 with a Hope that is a promise we live!

David

P.S. You can read Amanda's full article at <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/20/opinion/amanda-gorman-poem-inauguration.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

OUTREACH



CONNECT

*Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut
Congregaciones Organizadas para un Nuevo Connecticut*

CONNECT will be conducting a "House Meeting" in either February or March to determine what issues we think are important to our community . This information will be used by the CONECT leadership team to determine the legislative agenda for the coming year or two.



Join the Community Emergency Response Team!

The CERT disaster training course begins Saturday, February 26th and runs for five consecutive Saturdays from 8 am – 2 pm. This free, annual training prepares people to help themselves and their community in the event of a major emergency or disaster. Attendees are trained in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, disaster psychology, disaster medical operations as well as shelter operations. The CT Division of Emergency Management, Homeland Security, and FEMA developed the training and upon completion of the course, participants are eligible, and invited to join the Fairfield CERT Team.

The CERT team mission is to assist first responders during emergencies and disasters under the direction of the Fairfield Fire Chief who is the town Emergency Manager. "We know disasters can happen at any time, and take different forms – hurricanes, blizzards, flooding, shootings, chemical spills, and that the key to a rapid response is having trained personnel available to help. Our trained CERT Volunteers play a vital role and multiply our manpower capabilities during a crisis," said Deputy Fire Chief Kyran Dunn, Fairfield Emergency Management and CERT Coordinator.



(CERT cont'd from pg 2)

During Super Storm Sandy, Fairfield CERT assisted nearly 300 residents through our efforts managing and operating the municipal shelter at Ludlow High School. Shelter operations for people and pets continues to be a major part of the mission and training for the team. The CERT team regularly supports the town with traffic and pedestrian control for major events including the Fairfield Half-Marathon and the Fourth of July Celebration.

For more information and to register:

<https://www.fairfieldct.org/Community-Emergency-Response-Team>



Women's Spirituality group will meet on **February 23rd from 6:30 to 8:00 PM**. We will be finishing our readings from "Meditations of the Heart" and moving on to a new book in the coming sessions. All women are welcome. For information on the current readings or for any questions about future meetings please contact Amy-Alison Ward at amyaliward@gmail.com

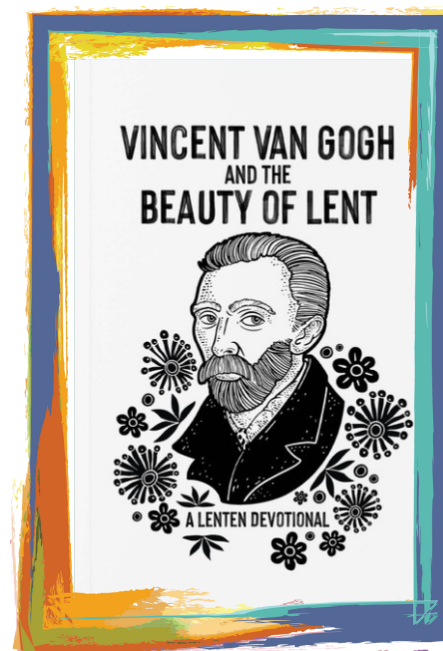
LENT DEVOTIONAL STUDY

Mondays

Beginning March 7th

7:30 PM over ZOOM

The son of a Christian pastor, Vincent van Gogh devoted his life to light — and so what better companion on this pilgrimage of "lengthening light" (that's how "Lent" gets its name!) than this brilliant, thoughtful artist? In this devotional, the words of Scripture and the paintings and letters of Van Gogh will be our guides, pointing toward simple, powerful practices you can try each week. Sunflowers and starry nights await!



Music Ministry



Choirs Back in Action

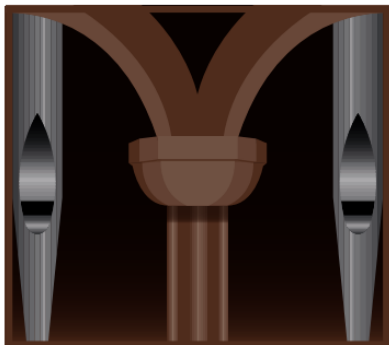
Chancel Choir rehearsals Thursdays at 7:30pm .

Come and enjoy singing with us! Or, join us for Holy Week and Easter, beginning March 10!

Contact Frank with questions: fmartignetti@firstchurchfairfield.org, or (203) 259-8396, x. 102.

Children's Choir is back in action on February 6 at 4:00pm meeting in the Children's Music Room. Come join us for a fun time of singing, creative movement, and instrument playing. Ages K-3rd Grade Contact Cheri Evan for more information cevan@firstchurchfairfield.org or 203-259-8396 x 100.

Bell Choir will be ringing away again beginning February 6 at 6:00pm. Bell choir curious? Come see what it's all about and give it a try. 7th Grade to Adult (music reading and prior experience not necessary)



MUSIC — in the — MEETINGHOUSE

Reneé Anne Louprette
in recital
Sunday, February 13,
4:00 PM

Music in the Meetinghouse and the Greater Bridgeport Chapter, American Guild of Organists, present internationally-known organist Reneé Anne Louprette in recital, Sunday, February 13, at 4:00 PM. Free-will offering to benefit the Louise M. Miller-Paul E. Knox Scholarship. Hailed by The New York Times as “splendid,” and “one of New York’s finest organists,” Renée Anne Louprette has established an international career as organ recitalist, conductor, and teacher. She is associated with a number of distinguished music programs in the New York City area, having served as Associate Director of Music at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Associate Director of Music and the Arts at Trinity Wall Street, Organist and Associate Director at the Unitarian Church of All Souls, and Director of Music at the Church of Notre Dame.

Since 2019, Louprette has been Assistant Professor of Music and College Organist of Bard College, where she directs the Bard Baroque Ensemble. She was subsequently appointed to the faculty of the Bard College Conservatory in 2020. She has been the University Organist and Organ Area Coordinator at Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University, since 2013 and is a former member of the faculty at the Manhattan School of Music, The Hartt School of the University of Hartford, and the John J. Cali School of Music at Montclair State University. For more information, click [here](#).

Operation Hope Update from Church Council

Recently, there have been multiple news articles and TV news reports regarding Operation Hope receiving a \$1.5 million state-approved bond to go toward funding a new building.

Given that Operation Hope is our tenant at 636 Old Post Road, this news prompts certain questions and, therefore, Church Council would like to provide an Operation Hope update to the congregation.

General Operation Hope Lease Information

- Operation Hope (OH) signed a 20-year lease with First Church which commenced October 1, 2007 and expires December 31, 2027.
- OH has the right to terminate their lease but must provide First Church with one (1) year's advance notice.
- The building at 636 Old Post road is a total of 10,734 square feet including 4,763 sq. ft. in the basement, 4,989 sq. ft. on the first floor and 982 sq. ft. on the 2nd floor. OH pays annual rent of \$92,250 per year or \$15.45 per square foot on an annual basis (excluding the basement square footage). We believe this rental rate is well below a market rental rate if the space were to become vacant.

Operation Hope Space Needs

- At 636 Old Post Road, Operation Hope operates a significant food pantry that provides food for the needy four (4) days a week. They provide over 123,000 meals per year and serve 1,000 area households per year.
- At 636 Old Post Road, there is a full basement floor used for mostly canned and dry food storage, a full first floor with offices, workstations and a conference room and a partial second floor used mostly for office storage.
- Operation Hope also has space at 50 Nichols Street owned by the Town of Fairfield near the Fairfield Police Station. That space houses OH's homeless resource center and community kitchen and is where lunch and dinner is served 5 days a week.
- On multiple occasions from 2020-2021, Operation Hope has communicated to Church Council their expectation that they would not be able to continue to lease the 50 Nichols location indefinitely and their optimal desire and need would be to have one building sizable enough to encompass all of their uses within 636 Old Post Road and 50 Nichols Street (i.e. all OH services under one roof). In OH's communications, they estimated that they would need at least an additional 4,000 square feet beyond their existing square footage at 636.
- In response to OH's need for more space, we toured OH through areas of 148 Beach Road which could be potentially subdivided for their use in addition to their remaining at 636; however, their interest in having all their services and space uses under one roof (and not part of a campus of buildings) continues as a top priority and that priority seems only more bolstered with the recent approval of the \$1.5 million state bond.

- While we understand that OH has inquired with the Town's Historic District Commission and Planning & Zoning regarding possibly adding a floor at 636, that prospect involves historic architectural requirements, a zoning variance and a myriad of Town approval processes that are challenging. It also does not provide for their ability to additionally grow in the future.

Next Steps with Operation Hope

- Church Council has been in communication with OH in the past week and OH has confirmed that they have not purchased a new building location but that they have been searching in Fairfield. They have agreed to keep Council apprised of any new developments regarding their search and to meet with Council in January related to the 636 location. Also, since the bond announcement last week, both OH and First Church have begun receiving inquiries from groups interested in occupying 636.
- During our communications with OH in 2021 and recently, OH has provided us with their assurance that it should take approximately 2 years for them to vacate 636 if they find a new building that suited their needs.

A new and improved way to give to First Church!

Many of you have asked the church to modernize its giving platform, broaden the ways to give, and add a "cover the fees" option.

Thanks to the hard work of Maria, Cheri and the Finance Board, we have a new online giving platform: [Giving Tools](#)

Giving Tools is an intuitive and simple platform -- and offers a "cover the fees" option to maximize your support. For the church, the benefits include new ways to give and improved tracking.

If you currently use Vanco to give, please consider switching (especially if you have a recurring online donation) to use Giving Tools to realize benefits for you and the church.

If you aren't yet using online giving, then please give it a try!

To learn more, check out <https://givingtools.com/give/3668> or if you have any questions, please contact Maria. mferrante@firstchurchfairfield.org



Pastor

Search Committee

SEARCH COMMITTEE WELCOMES INPUT FROM CONGREGATION

As part of the ongoing discernment process, the Interim Pastor Search Committee welcomes input from the congregation with respect to Vanessa's candidacy to be our next Senior Pastor. While the Sunday cottage meeting with Vanessa and the earlier series of cottage meetings were important steps in this process, the committee also welcomes direct input from church members who would like to raise questions, thoughts or concerns. Committee members may be reached by email as follows:

Mark Engstrom (Chair) — mwengstrom@gmail.com

Patty Gregory — pzarra@optonline.net

Teresa Harris — teresa.harris@one10marketing.com

David McKinnis — david@bethanddavid.org

*If you would like to view the recording from Vanessa's Cottage Meeting on Sunday, January 23 please contact [David McKinnis](mailto:David.McKinnis).





ANNUAL FINANCE MEETING

TUESDAY

FEBRUARY 22

7:00 PM



First Church Congregational
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
148 Beach Road • Fairfield CT • 06824