



THE HERALD

April 2022

First Church Congregational, Fairfield
United Church of Christ



An Historic Meeting March 29, 2022

Great thanks to Interim Pastor Search Committee - Mark Engstrom, Patty Gregory, David McKinnis, and Teresa Harris - for their incredible ministry over the past year searching for our next Senior Pastor. Assisted by the Personnel Board - Jim Muschett, Patty Bilotto, Sue O'Donovan, Jacque Paige, and Sally Chandler – they you have carried out their work with distinction, grace and a deep spiritual foundation.

On Tuesday evening, March 29 the congregation gathered in a Special All Church Meeting to act on their unanimous and joyful recommendation that the Reverend Vanessa Payne Rose be Called as the 22nd Senior Pastor of First Church.

Discussion of the Motion was open, respectful, and spirited, reflecting the best of our congregational tradition. The voting by confidential ballot for those in the Sanctuary and by individual breakout room for those on Zoom resulted in an overwhelming affirmation of the Motion: 109 in favor, 5 opposed, and 2 abstaining, i.e., over 90% voting to Call Vanessa.

This was a clarion affirmation of the Search Committee's work and a full hearted and enthusiastic endorsement of Vanessa as our next spiritual leader. What a glorious and wonderful moment for First Church, for Vanessa and her family, and for the community of metro Bridgeport!

A new age has begun. To God be the glory!





A Letter From the Pastor

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

“Spring has sprung, the grass is ris’, I wonder where the birdies is?”

Johnny Norris and I would yell this silly non-grammatical children’s rhyme at the top of our lungs as we walked to the Elementary School back in the day. Third graders gone wild! We thought we were hilarious.

Yes, spring is here and we luxuriate in the warming earth, the blooming bulbs, and the budding trees. The promise of new life.

As we prepare our gardens in these lengthening days, we are reminded of Jesus’ wisdom, “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it is just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces many grains of wheat, a great harvest.”

The two are inseparable. No Crucifixion, no Resurrection. The seed that is sown, dies, and then springs forth with new life.

God’s resurrection of the crucified Jesus is unique; it changes everything. Yet, it also reflects the way the world works every day. Death and life, always together.

Physics shows us that matter and energy are neither created nor destroyed, but conserved. When our bodies die, as indeed they do, their matter and energy continue, rearranged in new forms.

Easter shows us that there is no “death” as we think of it as an “end.” There is only transformation. When we suffer our physical death, our souls are transformed to join the saints of light who have gone before us, into the fullness of God.

May the closing days of Lent and Holy Week be a time when you prepare your spirit to stay with Jesus on the Cross, and then to look into the tomb of death to find new life in Christ’s Resurrection.

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David".



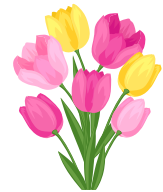
Step into Spring at First Church
Saturday, April 9, 2022
10:00 AM-3:00 PM



Visit from the Easter Bunny
Easter Egg Hunt at 11:30am
PLANTS - GARDEN WORKSHOPS - VENDORS
BAKE SALE - EASTER EGG HUNT
CHILDREN ACTIVITIES
ADMISSION - \$5.00 PER PERSON/\$20 PER FAMILY



Volunteers still needed please call Joy at 203-572-4669!



Calling All Bakers!!!!

We are looking for baked goods donations for the upcoming Spring Fair, Saturday April 9th.



We accept all baked goods, breads, cakes, pies, as well as cookies, brownies, cookie bars, etc.... Note: Please do not send products that need to be refrigerated!

Please bag cookies or brownies in baggies of 2-4 pieces (depending on size) for single serving treats. They may also be (paper) plated by the 1/2 dozen or dozen for a family treat. However you choose, please include an ingredient list on the label.

Please wrap all breads and pies and cakes ready to sell, with an ingredient list as well!

Any questions? Contact Cathy Kane 203-257-2276 or cathykane2525@gmail.com or contact Wendy Muschett 203-521-7793 or wendymuschett@optonline.net

"You Bake It, We Take It!"



WELCOME THE STRANGER

IRRC March Newsletter

The Interfaith Refugee Resettlement Committee has been hard at work helping our co-sponsored family settle into their new homes in Black Rock. Please see the [newsletter](#) for updates on employment, education, and volunteer opportunities for First Church members.

Thank you for your support!

Link to Newsletter:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1otcVoH1ra73TOSjbQCCpDMNHHgmCH_2P/view?usp=sharing

Grocery Card Update

“To honor David Spollett’s decades of service to the church and the community, and to honor his dedication to helping those in need through the Church and the co-founding of Operation Hope.” This is the reason given by two members who have made a donation of \$110,000 to the Deacon’s Fund to cover the past twelve years of grocery card donations to people who are hungry.

Since its inception in 2009, the grocery card sales program has served two purposes. First, as a fundraiser: the church purchased the cards from grocery chains at 95% face value and then sold them at 100%, netting 5% profit.

In addition, cards were distributed to people from the church and community who were in need of help. This was done through direct gifts, as well as in purchasing food to cook for Operation Hope Suppers. The costs of these cards were supposed to be covered by the Deacons’ Emergency Assistance Fund. When these cards were not charged to the Deacons’ Fund, the deficit built up over a twelve year period. The economic dislocation and suffering during the pandemic resulted in as many as 60 – 80 requests for help per month, resulting in a rapid growth of the deficit in 2020-21.

The lack of entries charging the Deacon’s Fund was a breakdown between the Business Manager, the Treasurer and the Finance Board. The Finance Board is very good about monitoring the income statement but the balance sheet, where these charges were going, was not being monitored. This was a weakness in our accounting system; the deficit was created by helping hungry people over twelve years and was not an act of malfeasance.

To make sure this doesn’t happen in the future the Finance Board will be hiring an accountant to correct the balance sheet that is in QuickBooks. The Finance Board will then review the entire balance sheet each month, along with the income statement, to make sure there aren’t any entries going into unmonitored accounts as happened here. The sale of grocery cards has been terminated.

We are very sorry this took so long to uncover and to have created such a high level of concern regarding this program. We are deeply grateful to the members who have made this gift of \$110,000 to honor David’s ministry and to restore balance to the Church’s finances.

The Finance Board strives to always do what is best for the finances of First Church. Please contact any member of the Finance Board if you have further questions or concerns.

Jacque Paige, Treasurer, Eric Treschuk, Finance Board Chair,
Jim Meisner, Joy Nazzaro and John Harmon, Finance Board Members



A SERVICE OF THANKS GIVING FOR HOBART CHAPEL

Please join us for a special worship at 8:15 am in
Hobart Chapel on Sunday, April 10, Palm Sunday.
A time to give thanks to God, to offer our worship of
God, trusting in God's providential care.
A time to dedicate the space to a new purpose.
A time to look toward to the future in faith.



Stay In Touch

**The Church Office is open and staffed
Monday through Friday 8:30 – 2:30**

Maria Ferrante is in the Office Monday – Thursday

*Working remotely Mon-Thurs 7:30am-2pm from May 12-June 30.

She can be reached by email mferrate@firstchurchfairfield.org or at (203) 394-8738

Cheri Evan is in the Office Tuesday – Friday
in addition to Sunday mornings

To reach a Pastor anytime with an urgent need, call
Rev. David Spollett, 203-414-0496
Rev. Vanessa Rose, 617-921-8648



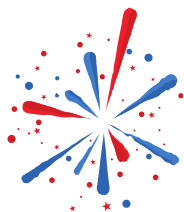
CROP Hunger Walk No. 48

Sunday, May 1, 2022

at 1:30 – 4:00 pm for 2+ mile walk (Rain or Shine)

at United Congregational Church
2200 North Avenue, Bridgeport, CT

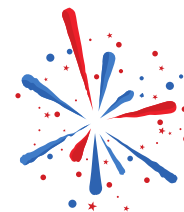
Walk Registration: We encourage all participants to **register online** before the walk at crophungerwalk.org/Bridgeport CT and to **fundraise online** with the CROP Hunger Walk Website. You can also **register in person** a month early at the **Rally on April 3rd** at 2:00 pm at **Unity Hill United Church of Christ in Trumbull, OR** in person at the **day of the walk on May 1st** at 1:30 at **United Congregational Church in Bridgeport**. Please pick up the detailed instruction sheets about the walk, registration, fundraising, donations, etc. at the church. If you are unable to walk, but would like to make a donation that is available on line or with the instruction sheets. Questions call our church member and Fairfield walk recruiter **Debby Dwyer** at 203-255-8835.



MEMORIAL DAY FAIR – FUNDRAISER

MONDAY, MAY 30, 2022

SAVE THE DATE AND VOLUNTEER!



First Church is having a Memorial Day Fair with a tag sale, bake sale, raffle baskets, book sale, and ReMax will have tethered hot air balloon rides (weather permitting) from 8:30 AM – 10:30AM. The men’s group will provide egg sandwiches for our luncheon. It will be truly a great day.

So many folks asked about our tag sale at our outdoor Three Kings Bazaar this past Christmas, so we decided to have it on Memorial Day.

To make it a true success, we need YOU to volunteer, to bake and to help in any way you can.

Please mark your calendars for the day and to remind yourself to bring in donations beginning Monday, May 23, 2022 for the tag sale and book donations. We will have more information on donations in early May.

Please contact Joy Nazzaro, jnazzaro@optonline.net or 203-572-4669 about volunteering. Thank you.

Joy Nazzaro, Resource Development Committee

**Save
the Date**

TO CELEBRATE
**REVEREND DAVID SPOLLETT'S
RETIREMENT**

SUNDAY JUNE 5, 2022

Worship at 10:15
Gathering to follow more details to come...

If you would like to help with this special day please contact:



Jim Muschett
jmuschett@optonline.net
or
Jane Barnes
singingbirdj59@gmail.com



At Home Vigil Before the Cross

Opening Prayer

I have begun this solemn vigil, O God, to watch and wait with you. To read the Scriptures, recalling your saving acts throughout history and how, in the fullness of time, your Word became flesh and dwelt among us: Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen. (Wait in quiet contemplation.)

Old Testament Readings

First Lesson: Genesis 1:1, 26-31

Prayer

Almighty God, who wonderfully created the dignity of human nature, grant that we may share in the divine life of the one who came to share our humanity, and to restore us to our rightful minds, Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

The Second Lesson: Genesis 22:1-18

Prayer

Gracious God, through Sarah's and Abraham's trustful obedience you made known your covenant love to our ancestors and to us. By Christ's faithful obedience, even unto death, fulfill in your church and in all creation your promise of a new covenant, written upon human hearts, through Christ our Savior. Amen.

Third Lesson: Exodus 14:21-29

Prayer

God our Savior, even today we see the wonders of the miracles you worked long ago. Once you saved the people Israel from slavery and made them your covenant people. We give you thanks that through Christ you offer salvation to all the world and have grafted us into your covenant. We pray that we will be worthy of the heritage of your people Israel, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Fourth Lesson: Isaiah 55:1-11

Prayer

Eternal God, you created all things by the power of your Word, and you renew the earth by your Spirit. Give now the water of life to all who thirst for you, and nourish with the spiritual food of bread and juice all who hunger for you, that our lives may bear the abundant fruit of your heavenly reign on earth. Amen.

New Testament Readings

Epistle Lesson: Romans 6:3-11

Prayer

Living God, you have called us each to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and death. Baptized in Christ, we must die with him. Call us out from the shadows of death that lie within ourselves, that you may bring into new life. Let us die with Christ so that we may live only for you. Amen. (Wait in quiet contemplation.)

Gospel Lesson: Mark 15:16-47

Prayer

God of all compassion, we behold the cross on which hung the salvation of the world. In Christ Jesus you have come to us and shared our common lot, reconciling the whole world and ourselves to you. Reveal to us the glory of your love in Christ so that we may see and understand that you love and forgive us just as we are, for you are love, and we your beloved children. By sharing in the fullness of our human condition, including betrayal, desertion, suffering, and death, you reveal the depth of your love for us and all. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Continue in quiet reflection and contemplation.

Close your Vigil, very slowly offering the Lord's Prayer. Amen.



Holy Week



April 11 Palm Sunday

- 8:15 am A Service of Thanksgiving for Hobart Chapel
- 10:00 am Palm Processional beginning in the parking lot
- 10:15 am Worship In-person and Online in Wakeman Hall

April 14 Maundy Thursday

- 7:30 pm Worship In-person and Online in Wakeman Hall

April 15 Good Friday

- 12:00 pm Worship In-person and Online in Wakeman Hall

Easter Sunday

- 5:45 am Sunrise Worship at Jennings Beach
- 9:00 am Worship In-person and Online in Wakeman Hall
- 11:00 am Worship In-person



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