

THE HERALD
March 2022

**First Church Congregational, Fairfield
United Church of Christ**

A Letter From the Pastor

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

What does that mean, to be “in Christ”?



It seems to me that to be in Christ is to be my true self; to have my relationship with Christ as the center point from which all other relationships flow.

In a very real way, God is relationship. Divinity is essentially relational. I remember my beloved Grandmother answering my question about why God created us with her wise words, “Because God was lonely.” This is profound theology, I think.

God desires me, God desires you, God wants to live in friendship with us.

Franciscan priest and mystic Richard Rohr writes:

When we live from our true self in God, religion is not about requirements; it's about relationship, the quality and capacity of our relatedness to God and others.

What gets in the way of that relationship? Our human propensity for rules, requirements, rewards and punishments creates fear, resentment, and resistance in our hearts. It is hard for us to accept that God simply wants to be in relationship with us, to love us, and that we do not need to earn, warrant, or merit that friendship with God. We set up rules that we can never fulfill and then conclude that God does not love us – even wants to punish us - because of our “failure.”

Rohr goes on:

In relationship with God ... we're not being manipulated, we're not being used, we're not being judged, we're not being evaluated. Who wouldn't want to go there? It's the place of ultimate freedom. It's the state that every one of us wants to live in. That's why we tell people to go pray for some set time each day, because when we do, we slowly learn to live in this place.

I want to say as strongly as I can that all of the elements and practices of religion exist to help us experience this essential and united self. Pure and simple. That's all.

Please give yourself permission during Lent – Ash Wednesday is March 2! – to pay attention to your true self, to live in Christ. I would love to chat with you about this. Please give me a call at 203-414-0496 so we can set aside some time to do that, okay?

Grace and peace,



WELCOME THE STRANGER

IRRC

The adults in our cosponsored family have been busy improving their English skills, building their resumes, and looking for work. The IRRC Employment Task Force is looking for leads/company contacts for one of the adults. In Afghanistan, he was the HR Director at the Governor's Office. His skills include all critical HR functions, communications, PR, office management, coordination/facilitation between multiple stakeholders, and computer skills including Microsoft Office. In addition to the HR field, he is also exploring data entry/payroll jobs. If anyone in this group has any company contacts or job leads, please contact the Interfaith Refugee Resettlement Committee (IRRC) Employment Task Group at IRRC.Jobs@gmail.com

CIRI

Our church coalition team set up 4 apartments in the past 10 days week in Bridgeport and New Haven for Afghan evacuees being resettled through CIRI. Our team has been extremely busy – since October 1, 2021, we have set up 32 apartments, curating over 400 pieces of donated furniture and logging over a thousand volunteer hours. We are looking for First Church volunteers to:

- Donate supplies – see our Signup Genius for a list of items. We particularly need hanging closet organizer shelves. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080c4baca22aa8-stock> Contact Julie Mughal for more information.
- Donate furniture – we always need bedside tables and dressers, and are also looking for lamps and rugs. Contact Patty Gregory for a list of current needs.
- Donate time – for every setup, we need cleaners, furniture movers, and handy people. Setups are usually during the day in Bridgeport or New Haven. Contact Nikki Kenney to be added to our volunteer list.

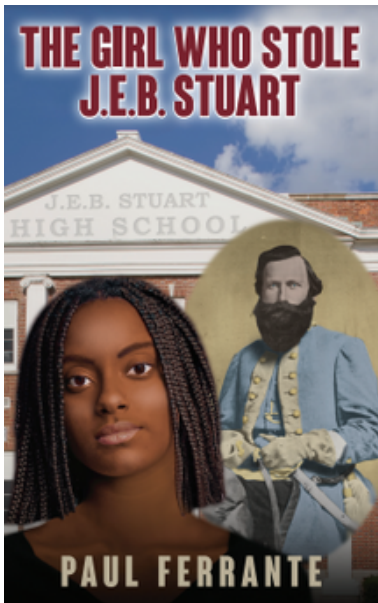


**WORKING
FOR
RACIAL
JUSTICE**

One Book, One Congregation

Magnolia was just
another sleepy
Southern town...until
she arrived:

The Girl Who Stole J.E.B. Stuart



Didi Diyoka can't believe her good fortune when she's given the opportunity to attend high school in America for her senior year — and maybe after that. Once she arrives from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, she marvels at the almost magical upgrades in her education and standard of living. But as time goes on, Didi begins to understand that the trappings of her new life come at a price, and notices the chilling similarities between her new home and the one she left behind. And although it's 2013, it seems that in Magnolia, South Carolina, time has stood still, and that the ghosts of its past are never far away. What then happens forces Didi to examine the values of her community, school and friends, and embark upon a journey of discovery about her new country — and herself.

Hear the Author Paul Ferrante

March 27 at 5:00 pm

Join Paul for Questions and Conversation

In reflecting on the book, one member of our congregation said, "Until I read this book I did not really understand why removing Confederate monuments mattered." The book may be fiction, but the issues it raises are vitally important to our nation and life together.

Pick up your book (\$20 each) on Sunday at worship, from the church office during the week, or online. Whatever way you choose, let's read the book together, One Book, One Congregation!





Get In Touch

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

Maria Ferrante is in the Office Monday – Thursday

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

LENT DEVOTIONAL STUDY

Mondays

Beginning March 7th

7:30 PM over ZOOM

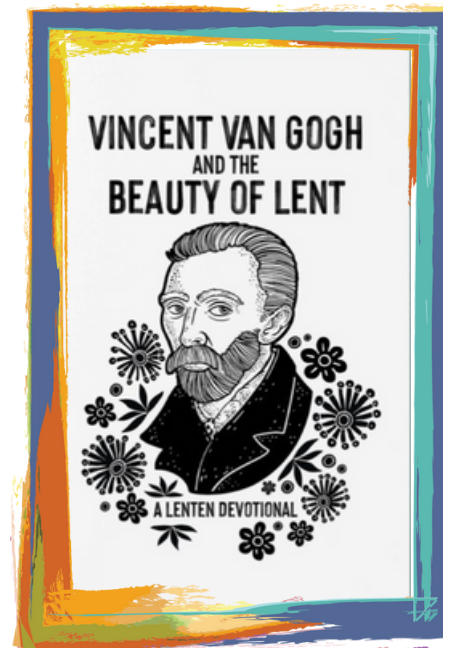
The son of a Christian pastor, Vincent van Gogh devoted his life to light — and so what better companion on this pilgrimage of “lengthening light” (that’s how “Lent” gets its name!) than this brilliant, thoughtful artist? In this devotional, the words of Scripture and the paintings and letters of Van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

Download Devotional [HERE](#)

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86261980485pwd=OFphMDITMjhTbUplT2wvazh4RFkyUT09>

Meeting ID: 862 6198 0485

Passcode: Fairfield1

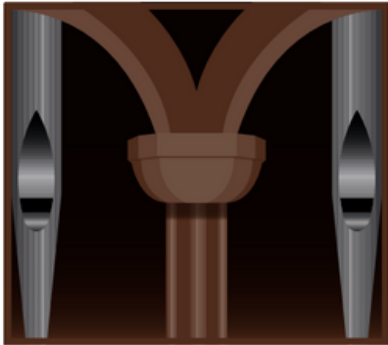




Join the Festival Choir for Holy Week & Easter

Join the Festival Choir for Holy Week and Easter! Rehearsals begin Thursday, Mar. 3 at 7:30 PM in Wakeman Hall. Click [HERE](#) for repertoire, and please feel free to reach out to [Frank](#) if you are interested, or have questions!

Lenten Organ Recital Series



MUSIC
— in the —
MEETINGHOUSE

Music in the Meetinghouse presents the return of the Lenten Organ Recital series. These 30-minute lunchtime concerts offer the chance to hear our renowned pipe organ played by some of the region's best organists! Our 2022 series begins Wednesday, March 9 at 12:15 PM, recurring each Wednesday of Lent. Those reading digitally, click on the performer's name for more information! Hope to see you there!

March 9: [Kevin Bailey](#) (First Presbyterian, Stamford)

March 16: [Frank Martignetti](#) (First Church Congregational, Fairfield)

March 23: [Liya Petrides](#) (St. Catherine of Siena, Riverside)

March 30: [Victoria Shields](#) (Christ and Holy Trinity, Westport)

April 6: [Nathan Bayreuther](#) (First Congregational, Madison)

A Letter from the Church Moderator

Hello Church Friends,

As I write this, we are still preparing for the 2022 All Church Meeting, but that doesn't mean we can't look forward to spring. There are a lot of important moments for First Church coming in the weeks ahead.

- Work on the Sanctuary's new HVAC system and other renovations continue so we can once again worship together.
- Our Pastoral Search Committee and Personnel Board will finish their discernment and make their recommendation to Council.
- A committee is being formed to plan David's retirement party (it will be Sunday, June 5th—save the date!). If interested, please let me know.

As always, please feel free to reach out to me at jmuschett@optonline.net. Thank you.

God's peace to you,
Jim Muschett
Moderator

News from Member in Discernment - Rachel Spollett

Greetings, Siblings in Christ!

I write to you with a brief update about my life and calling. As you may know, I began my studies at Yale Divinity School in Fall 2018. After taking a medical leave to attend to my health while being treated for Lyme Disease, I returned to my studies last spring. I continued through this fall semester, and I'm very happy to report that I finished my coursework in December and will graduate at the end of May with my Master of Arts in Religion degree. I began my time at Yale with the intention of discerning whether I was being called to ordained ministry in the UCC, and I entered into a covenant with First Church and the Fairfield East Association as a Member in Discernment. After many months of prayer and conversation with trusted mentors and friends, I decided to withdraw from that process as I have discerned that I am being called to direct-service work in the nonprofit sector. In January, I started working in the clinical team at Operation Hope as a case manager. I am so excited for what's in store in the coming months, and I know that my theological education from YDS has prepared me well for this work. Thank you for all of your loving support over the last three and a half years, and I hope to see you soon!

Grace and Peace to you all--
Rachel



First Church is having a Spring fundraising event
Step into Spring at First Church
Saturday, April 9, 2022
10-3PM. Admission is \$5.

The event is Easter and Spring focused with vendors, workshops and activities for the children. An Easter Egg Hunt is planned along with activities for the children such as making of bird feeders, painting of flower pots and planting seeds in the pots. Several workshops are planned with flower arranging, learning about invasive plants as well as establishing an eco-friendly environment.

The store will be selling gift items and all things Easter. We hope that the Audubon Society will also be joining us.

If you know of vendors that would like to sell their items, please let us know and we will send them a vendor application. Vendors pay \$50 for one table or \$75 for two tables.

Our team of volunteers are diligently working on making this a wonderful first time Spring event, but we could use more help with setting up on Friday, bake sale and clean up on Saturday afternoon. Please call Joy at 203-572-4669.

We hope that you can join us, it will be a fun event for all ages.

Thank you.

Joy Nazzaro and Elisabeth Pavlofsky, Resource Development



ASH WEDNESDAY

In-Person and Online

March 2
7:30 PM

Join us on our Website
www.firstchurchfairfield.org
or on Facebook
[@firstchurchffld](https://www.facebook.com/firstchurchffld)

A quiet, contemplative worship experience with special music by the Chancel Choir. A time for reflection and renewal as we begin the journey of Lent. For those who desire, we will have the Imposition of Ashes.



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