



THE HERALD

February 2025



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Greetings Friends:

There is so much that tries to claim our attention and energy in these days. I am doing my best to focus on the work that we are called to as a congregation here and now. We have the opportunity to meet and welcome the family we have just been assigned by IRIS in New Haven. This is the **last** family we will be able to co-sponsor for some time. They will be attending the Refugee Shabbat at Temple Israel in Westport **TONIGHT!** Friday, Jan. 31 at 6:30 p.m.

**Temple Israel
14 Coleytown Road
Westport, CT 06880**

My family and I will be there and we hope you will join us to hear from others we have co-sponsored and welcome this new family. This is a meaningful act for a time like this: to worship with Jews, Muslims, and Christians from multiple congregations and to pray to our one God together.

Please read Emily's letter (which follows) and please help us stand up our task forces so we can align our prayers for a world of justice and peace with our actions in the days ahead.

I am so proud of this congregation and the work we are doing, faithfully following in the way of Christ. May we focus our hearts on the work that is ours in the days ahead: to be a place of radical inclusivity and hospitality, to be Open and Affirming of all God's children, and to work together to tend God's beloved world.

Peace, Vanessa

Important IRRC Mission Update:

We Welcome A New Family

The IRRC is excited to welcome an Afghan family of six! There is a critical need for community sponsorship such as ours through the IRRC. The Afghan family includes a father, mother and 4 daughters ages 13 to 19. They moved to Stratford today (Jan. 31) in an apartment the IRRC arranged for them with the help of First Church.

To continue supporting this family and other refugees we need your help on several task forces, especially those related to education, transportation and employment. This family needs help with learning the bus and train system, rides to appointments, school enrollment and finding work.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Emily Fuehring at ekey@mail.bradley.edu or call/text at 309-258-3804. Thank you!!



The above painting was created by the eldest daughter in the Afghan refugee family. It depicts her understanding of what an Afghan girl of her age sees in the mirror. A dream that is sadly no longer possible, but something that seems to motivate each of the girls; to make good of this opportunity in the US, and to never forget the girls and young women they left behind

CIRI Program Update: Two Families Settled Just in Time



First Church members, alongside members of other local congregations, set up 2 apartments last week, both for Syrian families of 4. Sadly, this will be our volunteers last apartment setups for a while since the Trump Administration suspended the USRAP (Refugee Admissions Program). Our committee is devastated and outraged, as is everyone who works or volunteers with refugee resettlement. We are working with CIRI to determine ways to support the families who have already arrived, and are meeting as a group to figure out how we can use our talents and resources to support others who need our assistance. We will rejoice when our country begins welcoming refugees with open arms again, but we won't remain idle until then.



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The Members of
First Church
are invited to attend our
All-Church Meeting
Tuesday, Feb. 18 at 7.p.m.
Wakeman Hall

Refreshments at 7 p.m.

Business agenda at 7:30 p.m.

*Please read the following letter to learn
more about the evening's agenda.*

This is an in-person meeting.

Save the Date:

Kimberly Wilson To Perform at First Church on March 22



The Racial Justice Committee of First Church will present “A Journey,” a musical one-woman show featuring performance artist Kimberly Wilson on Saturday, March 22 at 7 p.m. in Wakeman Hall. In celebration of Women’s History Month, come and witness Wilson bring historical women to life through song, dialogue, movement, and audience participation. Tickets, which will be \$25, will be available online soon. Please watch upcoming editions of the *Weekly Word* for a ticket purchase link.

Join the Bell Choir



The First Church Bell Choir has kicked off rehearsals for its spring season. New members are welcome and encouraged to become part of this fun and engaging instrumental choir. To learn more, please contact Director of Music, Dr. Frank Martignetti, at FMartignetti@firstchurchfairfield.org

2025 Men’s Breakfasts



The men of First Church are invited to join our monthly Men’s Breakfasts held at 8 a.m. at the Circle Diner. Dates for 2025 are as follows: Feb. 24, March 23, April 27, May 18 and June 29.

2025 Music in the Meetinghouse Series

Violinist Andrew Sords

Sunday, Feb. 2 at 4 p.m.

First Church Sanctuary

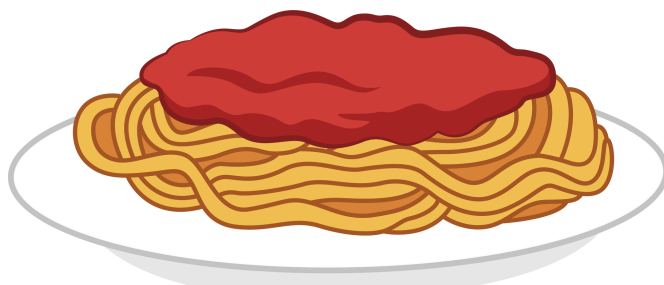


First Church is honored to welcome acclaimed violinist Andrew Sords to its sanctuary for a Sunday afternoon concert featuring music by the accomplished classical performer. Sords, who has received rave reviews for his dynamic playing style, impeccable tone and technique, will be accompanied by pianist Elizabeth DiMeo and special guest, mezzo-soprano Lara Nie.

Sords' Feb. 2 concert kicks off the annual Music in the Meetinghouse Series, which brings a wide array of talented musicians to the historic church sanctuary for a series of public concerts.

Tickets for Sords' concert are \$30 for adults, \$20 for seniors and \$10 for students and will be sold at the door.

Scenes from Our Pasta Dinner



Thank you to the many dedicated church members behind our 2025 Pasta Dinner. It was a great success that brought more than 80 people to Wakeman Hall for the first meal prepared in our recently renovated kitchen. By joining us, diners helped raise more than \$3,000 for our Deacon's Fund, which provides emergency assistance to those in the community with urgent needs.

Special thanks to our Deacons for their enthusiastic planning and the many volunteers who helped prepare Wakeman Hall, serve food and more!





News from Our Environmental Justice Committee

How Did We Compost? Let Us Count the Ways...



Last week, our coffee hour compost bin was full of contributions that made a difference: discarded flowers from the Pasta Dinner setup, orange peels, coffee grounds, and even uneaten cookies. Thanks to your efforts, nearly 3 pounds of organic waste were sent to the town compost program instead of the landfill. But that's not all! The Pasta Dinner compost bucket alone collected an impressive 26.8 pounds of food waste that was diverted from the landfill. Fairfield's food waste finds new purpose at either New Milford Farms (as nutrient-rich compost) or the Quantum Biopower Anaerobic Digestion Facility (where it's transformed into energy). Together, we're turning leftovers into something meaningful—whether it's supporting local farms or generating clean energy. Thank you for helping make our shared moments not only enjoyable but also sustainable. Let's keep up the great work and make every gathering a little greener!

Faith Formation News



Students in our Disciple & Middle Road programs have spent the past few weeks discussing the baptism of Jesus by his cousin, John the Baptist. The lesson coincided serendipitously with a baptism at our Sunday, Jan. 26 service! Students have also learned meaningful lessons about Jesus's disciples and how they were chosen. Our teachers have discussed how the 12 disciples came from all sorts of backgrounds: fishermen, tax collectors, rich and poor, educated and not. The children learned that Jesus calls people from every walk of life to be part of his work.

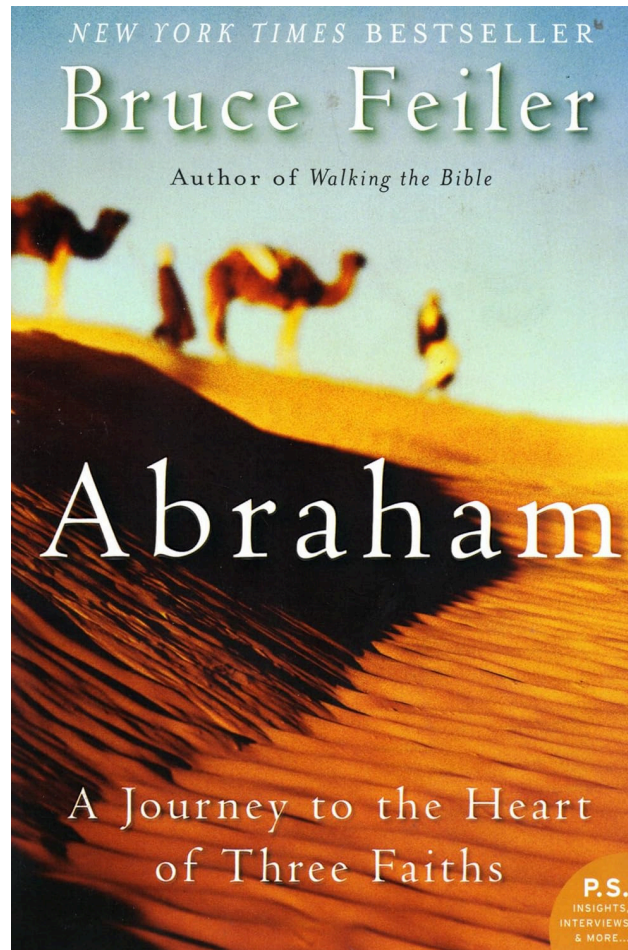
We're looking forward to lots of fun activities and lessons in the coming months and we're already taking about Easter! Our annual egg hunt returns on Easter morning, April 20. Save the date. Details to come!



Classes for students ages 4-14 meet weekly during the 10:15 a.m. worship service. New students are welcome. Contact our Minister of Children and Families Kim Feeney at KFeeney@FirstChurchFairfield.org for more information.

InterFaith Book Group News

Next Meeting at First Church on March 12



The Interfaith Book Group, which includes members of Congregation B’Nai Israel, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, and Greenfield Hill Congregational Church, held its first meeting here last month. The group chose the book *Abraham* by Bruce Feiler as its first collective read. The group will meet again at First Church on March 12 at 7 p.m. in the Eunoia Room. Anyone who signed up to participate and was unable to attend the first meeting --as well as those who would still like to be involved-- are welcome to attend. Please contact the church office with any questions.



First Church Congregational
148 Beach Road, Fairfield, CT 06824
United Church of Christ
Est. 1639

