

Est. 1639

# The Herald

## January 2026

- **Reflections on Christmas Eve 2025**
- **Thank You for a Generous Season**
- **A Message of Support to B'Nai Israel**
- **Save the Date: Church Pasta Dinner**
- **Because of You Campaign Concludes**
- **More Church News & Updates**

*The deadline for Herald submissions for February is December 15.  
The deadline for Weekly Word submissions is always Wednesdays at noon.*



## A Message from the Pastor



# Supporting our Friends at Congregation B’Nai Israel

On Christmas Eve, our friends in the local Jewish community who worship at Congregation B’Nai Israel on Park Avenue in Bridgeport, experienced a devastating act of Antisemitic hate. The synagogue’s menorah, a sacred Jewish symbol central to the celebration of Hannakah, had been vandalized by someone who deliberately pushed it over. Rabbi Evan Schultz, my friend and the congregation’s spiritual leader, wrote eloquently about these heartbreakin events on his personal Facebook page in a message to his congregation. His poignant and thoughtful message included this:

*“When one of our fellow synagogues is attacked, we all suffer. As our tradition teaches, kol Yisrael areivim zeh ba-zeh. All Jews are interconnected. It is through this connection that we continue to find hope. It is through our friendship and fellowship that we draw strength. May we all live to see better days and an end to hate. This is what keeps me hopeful. We are stronger together”*



# Pastor's Message (continued)



Our bonds with congregation B’Nai Israel have been strong for decades and continue today through many touchstones, including our Interfaith Book Group (which I encourage you to consider joining) and the annual Holocaust Memorial we have hosted in our sanctuary for more than four decades.

Shortly after this act of vandalism, I reached out to Rabbi Schultz to personally express my sympathy and support for him and his congregation.

We hope the people of B’Nai Israel have found comfort in the thoughtful messages they have received from a diverse array of local congregations and community leaders, who have rightly condemned the desecration of a religious symbol at a time when the Jewish community has experienced a frightening escalation of Antisemitism, acts of extreme violence and aggression.

If you personally know a member of the congregation, I encourage you to check in on them and offer your thoughts and prayers.

In the New Year, let us pray together for a kinder world.

**In Peace,  
The Rev. Vanessa Rose, Senior Pastor**

# Service and Worship News



## A Blessed Christmas Eve



Thank you to all the young angels, shepherds, Chancel Choir, Pastoral Team Members and volunteers who helped us create two meaningful worship services on Christmas Eve. It was a joy to worship with so many friends, family and new visitors to our sanctuary. Special thanks to the talented Heather Mitchell for capturing these beautiful images of our pageant and Lessons & Carols service. Look for more of Heather's wonderful photos on our social media pages.

# Lessons and Carols 2025



# Christmas Eve Pageant 2025

Featuring the children of Disciple and Middle Road



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# **Bible Study**

**with The Rev. Vanessa Rose  
Resumes Wednesday, January 7**

**10 a.m.**

**in the Eunoia Room**

**All are welcome to gather for faith and  
fellowship through Bible study.**

**Meetings happen weekly on  
Wednesdays at 10 a.m. through June.**



**Because of  
YOU  
our church changes lives.**

## **Pledge Campaign News**

Thank you to all the congregation members who have so generously made pledges to our Because of You campaign. Your dedication and commitment to First Church helps us plan for a vibrant New Year of faith.

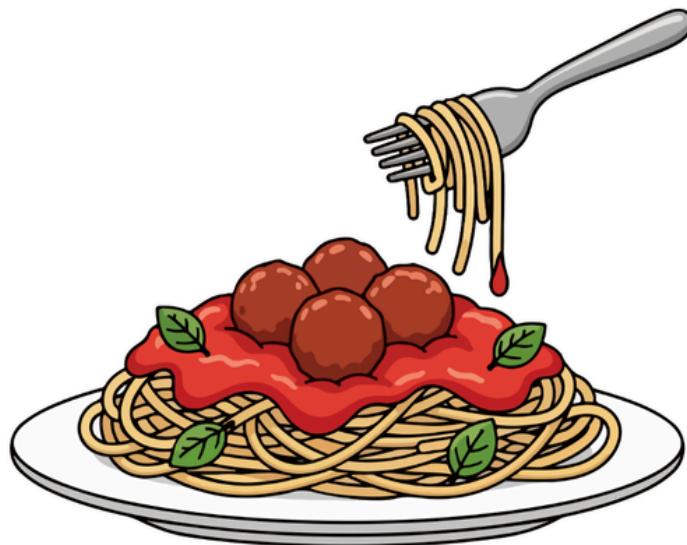
Please consider making your pledge by the end of January to be included in time for February's All-Church Finance Meeting.

Please see a deacon at Sunday worship if you need a pledge card or reach out to the Rev. Vanessa Rose if you have questions about pledging.

# Save the Date!

## 15<sup>th</sup> Annual First Church

### Pasta Dinner



**Sunday, February 1**  
**4 to 7 p.m., Wakeman Hall**

Make plans to join us for this dinner to benefit the Deacon's Emergency Fund, which provides urgent assistance to those in our community in need.

**Look for details on signups for this convivial church gathering in upcoming editions of the Weekly Word and Sunday bulletins.**

*Special thanks to Chips Family Restaurants for once again supporting and sponsoring this important fundraiser.*



# **Fellowship Hour**

# **Volunteers Needed**

Our dedicated team of fellowship volunteers could use some extra hands willing to help offer coffee and refreshments after Sunday's 10:15 a.m. services this year. Families, individuals and those new to First Church are invited consider this meaningful service. Thanks to those who have already answered the call to help! To volunteer or learn more please reach out to Cathy Kane at [ckfellowship.coffeehour@gmail.com](mailto:ckfellowship.coffeehour@gmail.com)



# Covenant to Care

## Holiday Toy Drive Thanks

Dear First Church Family,

Our heartfelt thank you to all who contributed Christmas gifts to the Covenant to Care ministry.

We gave more than 30 children beautiful gifts for the holiday! I'm expecting a letter from our Social Worker with some details of the children served which I will post on our bulletin board for all to read.

Best wishes to all for a blessed New Year,  
Marilyn, Kim and Jessie



## **Thank you from the Central Connecticut Coast YMCA Shelter Families for their 2025 Christmas Angel Gifts**

**For the 27 th year our First Church congregation signed up to give Christmas Angel Gifts to 12 families (which included 29 parents and children currently living in the YMCA's Bridgeport shelter.**

**Congregation member Debby Dwyer wants to once again thank everyone who brought Christmas joy, smiles, laughter and feelings of being remembered for those special families.**

**They are so thankful for your generosity. It is also such a wonderful example of our continued outreach spirit and activities we focus on throughout the year.**

# Warm Welcomes!

There's always something happening at First Church. Whenever possible, we are proud to share space here at the town's first meetinghouse with the community. This month we highlight the following:

- **Morgan Cleveland Yoga.** Morgan will bring her gentle yoga to the sanctuary on Thursday mornings at 9 a.m. beginning Jan. 8. **Maggie Taylor** continues to offer yoga in our sanctuary on Mondays from 10 to 11 a.m. Reach out to the office if you are interested in trying a class.
- **The Fairfield Men's Association**, a new nonprofit which launched late last year, provides fellowship, service and engagement opportunities to men ages 50 and up. The FMA meets in Wakeman Hall most Tuesday mornings at 9:30 a.m. For more information visit [FairfieldMensAssociation.com](http://FairfieldMensAssociation.com).
- On Saturday, January 10 we are so pleased to welcome the **Japan Society of Greater Fairfield County** as our guest for its Oshōgatsu New Year's celebration in Wakeman Hall.