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Living in Spirit • Committed to Service • Open to All

# first church

## WEST HARTFORD

### TIDINGS

SEPT. 2020 • NEWSLETTER • WWW.WHFIRSTCHURCH.ORG • 12 SOUTH MAIN STREET, WEST HARTFORD, CT • 860-233-9605



# HOME COMING

Friends, as we begin this program year, I'd like to bring two things to your attention:

First, Sunday, September 13, has been marked on my calendar for some time as Homecoming Sunday/Safe at Home Sunday – I haven't been sure if we are coming to church or staying home. As the date draws nearer, I have found myself saying: "looks like we will be doing a hybrid model." As we go to print, the pandemic metrics in our community support our being able to offer some in person worship experiences in September for those who would like to be in the Meeting House. We do not want anyone to take unnecessary risks, and we do not expect to have any gatherings that are very large. We intend to continue to offer a quality online worship experience. The pandemic is first and foremost a public health crisis and we need everyone to take responsibility to guard their own health, and to do everything they can to guard the health of others. You will find more information about in-



son worship in the e-news; please note the pre-registration which will give you access to all the necessary information regarding our COVID19 protocols. (Use this link to pre-register: <http://bit.ly/HomecomingSunday>). This is made possible because a subgroup from our Coordinating Team has been working diligently most of the summer to establish these protocols – bringing us in line with appropriate and safe procedures. A huge debt of thanks is owed to this group.

Secondly, the nationwide Black Lives Matter movement has put a spotlight on social justice issues and the church has many educational as well as restorative justice endeavors happening. You will see conversations about the name of Goodman Green, un-doing racism trainings, book groups, special speakers, and other resources.

The pandemic has created many inequalities, including some of us who are stretched well beyond our comfort level, and others with not enough to do. I'd like to encourage you to focus on what you can do given the constraints of the moment. People of faith have

*Homecoming, page 2*

Please worship with us online on Sundays, and join live Zoom "cyber coffee" time at 11 a.m. Links are here: [https://bit.ly/FC\\_Sermons](https://bit.ly/FC_Sermons)

September 6	September 13	September 20	September 27
Labor Day Sunday Romans 13:8-14 Erica Wimber Avena preaching "Only the Debt of Love"	Homecoming/Safe at Home Sunday Psalm 121 Erica Wimber Avena preaching "Where do you find the Spirit?" Benediction by Geordie Campbell	Confirmation Class commissioning Jonah 3:10-4:11 Erica Wimber Avena preaching "A Covid Confirmation"	Scripture Reading Phil 1:1-13 Amie Giguere preaching "Same Mind"



## Church Family News

■ Catherine and her husband Mark welcomed baby daughter **Aida Izard Desnoyer** on July 21, 2020. Catherine is the daughter of Susan and Bob Izard. Susan says, "what a journey it has been!"

■ **Sally S. Johnson**, daughter of church member Margaret (Peg) Johnson, passed away on August 18. Erica led a graveside service with her family in Rhode Island.

■ **Ruth Seldon** died on July 30, Rev. Susan Izard conducted a graveside service with Ruth's family members who were able to travel down from Maine

■ **Betty Leete** died July 15, an in-person memorial service was held in the Meeting House on Saturday, July 25; the service was Live Streamed.

■ **Liz Oman and Greg Wilfrid** were married on the church lawn August 15 with a small gathering.

■ **Bob Carroll** died on Feb. 12. A committal service, with military honors, held in June 26.

■ **Virginia Peterson** died on August 16 with a funeral home service and burial on August 20.

■ You may submit your prayer requests online! Please use this link: to put in Prayer Request: [http://bit.ly/FCprayer\\_request](http://bit.ly/FCprayer_request)

*If you have an announcement to share, please call the office at 860-233-9605.*

## Homecoming from page 1

been challenged to live faithfully at every point in history. What does faithfulness look like six months into a pandemic? What does a walk of faith look like when members of our community tell us they face as much racism as they ever have? Since before 1713, when First Church was established, there have been people connected to this congregation supporting, challenging, and encouraging one another in faith.

I continue to appreciate your imagination and commitment in these unprecedented days. So whether you are joining us in person for Homecoming Sunday or on line for Safe at Home Sunday, recommit yourself to your own spiritual welfare as the summer ends, as the pandemic continues, and as we seek to walk in faith together.

In good faith,

*Erica*

The Reverend Erica Wimber Avena, Interim Senior Pastor

## BYOE Homecoming Picnic

The Spirit team is hosting a "Bring-Your-Own-Everything" Picnic on the front lawn after worship on Sunday, September 13th.

There will be music by The Jolly Beggars and an opportunity for socially distanced fellowship. Bring your own chair, mask and food, and the Spirit team will provide sanitized ice cream cups to celebrate the start of the program year!



## From the Moderator

In the summer edition of *Tidings*, I outlined five initiatives we are addressing. One workgroup is focused on determining the future direction of our church and one committee is searching for our next settled Senior Pastor. The Business Team's work on the budget and mission of First Church Academy for Young Children will be discussed at the annual budget review meeting for FCAYC in October. The Coordinating Team just announced a plan to open First Church's buildings during this continuing pandemic time. And we continue to discern how we as a faith community in the center of West Hartford respond to the call for social justice.

In August, the Coordinating Team established a set of "pandemic protocols" to guide our decisions on how and when to meet, worship and use the church building while maintaining safe practices and social distancing. Our first worship experience back in the church is planned for Homecoming Sunday on September 13th. In a recent letter to our church family, I noted that worship in the Meeting House will be like no other service we have had before. We must pre-register to attend worship here: <http://bit.ly/HomecomingSunday> (so that we do not exceed our allowed capacity). We will wear masks. We will not sing hymns. We will not have a choir. We use a QR code to follow an online bulletin. And we will experience other changes.

Our online services will continue because not all of us can or should leave the safety of our homes at this time. Gathering together for new forms of worship is no longer "new." We have heard scripture and sermon messages from many different locations throughout Connecticut. We will continue to discern God's word in new ways – whether it is online, in the church building, or elsewhere. We listen for God's still small voice wherever we are.

Our last initiative is social justice concerns. Most recently, many members responded to a request from the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA) team to contact our state senators and representatives about legislation being considered during the special session of the Assembly. We will continue to receive requests for our time, our energy and our support.

Locally, our church is examining the history of Goodman Green in front of the church. That space is being considered for a park where we, as a community, can reflect on the multiculturalism of our town. More specifically, our community can elevate the accomplishments and stories of those who have been often overlooked, with a focus on persons of color. At an online meeting August 30th, we discussed suggestions we have received for the park. In addition, Barbara Lewis, the former church historian, made a presentation about the enslavement of Native Americans and African Americans in our town and region.

Beyond these identified initiatives, the Outreach and Inreach teams continue to be very active collecting food, filling backpacks, and supporting many community needs. The JPW Library continues to offer book groups, programs, books, and other library resources to enrich our souls. With all of these initiatives and activities available to us, I once again ask: How are you putting your faith into action? – *Judy Schmitt, Moderator*

## Men's Fellowship

The next meeting for the Men's Fellowship group is Tuesday, September 15 at 9 a.m. Join us for a time of sharing, lively discussion, and supporting one another and our church. For more information or the Zoom link to the next meeting, contact Joseph Tobin at 860-916-1923 or [jmtobin@gmail.com](mailto:jmtobin@gmail.com).

# Our Discussions About Renaming Goodman Green

In late June, we received a letter from Concerned Parents of Color of West Hartford (CPCWH) expressing their concerns about Goodman Green. The CPCWH advocates for a more equitable, just environment for the youth of West Hartford. The letter was addressed to the Town. Since First Church owns the Green and leases it to the Town, Moderator Judy Schmitt and Rev. Erica Avena were made aware of the letter. They in turn sent emails to both Mayor Shari Cantor and Adrienne Billings-Smith, spokesperson for CPCWH, to confirm First Church's interest and to open a discussion with the group.

By now, many church members may know that until the 19th century, the Congregational church was effectively the governing body of Connecticut towns. In West Hartford, church member Timothy Goodman donated land to our church (at the time called the West Division Ecclesiastical Society) in 1747 which, though reduced in size, is now known as "Goodman Green." Research through the Witness Stones Project of West Hartford recently indicated that Timothy Goodman was a slaveholder (as were our first two pastors). In this light, the Green is perceived as a less welcoming and inclusive place for all members of the West Hartford community.

On July 14, Rev. Avena led a two-hour Zoom discussion at which the CPCWH shared their concern with members of First Church. Subsequently, church staff researched and shared with the Coordinating Team both the deed to the Green and the most recent lease from First Church to the Town.

On August 30, past Church Historian Barbara Lewis presented a history of the church that included research about colonial enslavement of African Americans and Native Americans in the "West Division" of Hartford (now known as West Hartford), a practice that dates to the 1636 founding of Hartford and the 1637 Pequot War. We hope that most members had the opportunity to hear Barbara's presentation.

Now it is the time for conversation both within the congregation



and with members of the wider West Hartford community. Through education, discussion, and reflection we have an opportunity for discernment regarding the creation of a renamed, more open, and welcoming Green as the modern centerpiece of West Hartford. If you missed the presentation, or have questions, concerns, or comments, please join the conversation during the next several weeks. Others await our thoughtful deliberations.

## Congregational Survey Coming Soon!

The Interim Transition Workgroup will be distributing a full congregational survey this fall. All friends and members of First Church are encouraged to participate. This will be an opportunity for each of you to give your feedback and share your thoughts about how you see First Church today and where you think it should be in the future.

The survey will be available in both an online format, and on paper for those who need, or prefer to use, that method. The compiled survey results and data will be shared among the congregation and First Church leadership (including Teams and Workgroups) to help guide our Interim time activities and priorities. Additionally, this survey includes important questions related to our search for a new Senior Pastor. The Search Committee will use the information you provide to structure their pastoral search criteria. Please be assured the responses you provide will remain anonymous unless you specifically choose to identify yourself. As of the mid-August press time for *Tidings*, our workgroup is expecting to use the Hartford Institute for Religious Research (an arm of Hartford Seminary) as the survey vendor and administrator. More detailed information will be provided soon!

*-Interim Transition Workgroup: Rev. Erica Avena, Lisa Bugos, Ed Lennig, Jimmy Quinn, Wendy Wigglesworth, and Eleanor Wight*

## The Work of GHIAA

First Church's GHIAA (Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance) team is pleased to present Cesar Aleman and Derrick Everett on Wednesday evening, September 23 at 7 p.m. Aleman and Everett are community organizers who recently joined GHIAA at the Center for Leadership and Justice. They will discuss how GHIAA differs from the vital work being done by the many charities in the Hartford region. While food and clothing drives are necessities in our current societal structure, GHIAA's goal is to build relational power among local residents and leaders so they can address the social justice issues in their own communities, thus forging broader positive changes. Register here to join us: <http://bit.ly/helpWithGHIAA>

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Rev. Erica Wimber Avena, Interim Senior Pastor  
Rev. Amie Stuart Giguere, Acting Associate Pastor  
Rev. Susan Izard, Minister of Spiritual Life  
James Boratko, Music Director  
Lauren Dube, Director of Children & Family Ministries  
Dawne Quinn, FCAFYC Director  
Suzanne Nardi, Office Manager  
Lisa Reed, Business Manager

Church Office: 860-233-9605 • Fax: 860-232-8183

J.P. Webster Library: 860-232-3893

First Church Academy for Young Children: 860-232-2106

12 South Main St., West Hartford, CT 06107 • [www.whfirstchurch.org](http://www.whfirstchurch.org)

# Confirmation Kick-Off!

## Mark your Calendars for Two Events

### Confirmation Orientation Sunday September 13th 5-6pm

Parents and students in grades 9-11 who have not yet been confirmed are invited to attend an orientation meeting to be held in the auditorium. Please come meet one another and the confirmation team: Jimmy Quinn, Lauren Dube, Ryan Mannix and Rev. Amie Giguere. This time together will provide the opportunity to learn all about the plans for this year's class and ask questions about the expectations, commitment and format. Each student should bring at least one parent along for this meeting, and attendance at the meeting is necessary for participation in the class. Please wear masks and we will observe physical distancing.



### Confirmation Commissioning Sunday, September 20 at 10am

The class will begin with participation in a commissioning service as part of worship in the Meeting House. The journey through the confirmation year will be an important one for youth and their families, as well as for the church. This service will create the opportunity intentionally ritualize the beginning of the journey. Pre-registration is necessary, and all COVID-19 protocols will be followed.

## Church School News

With the public schools changing plans all the time, and the uncertainty of schools opening back up, the following schedule and plan is subject to change. As of *Tidings* press time, here are the plans and we look forward to your participation!

- September 6th: no Church School (Labor Day weekend)
- September 13th: Virtual lesson: To Be Blessed
- September 20th: Virtual Lesson: The Beatitudes
- September 27th: Virtual Lesson: Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

The church school will continue to meet at 10 a.m. Sunday

Mornings online. Our lessons will be based on the Beatitudes, and will use the Illustrated Children's Ministry curriculum. We will also have asynchronous lessons and Faith-at-home kits available starting September 13th.

"A MOMENT FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES" continues to be a part of our worship service and if you haven't been watching, please tune into our YouTube channel for the creative messages, often featuring Lauren's favorite furry friend. For more information on how to get involved, contact Lauren at [Lauren.dube@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:Lauren.dube@whfirstchurch.org).

## Music Ministry Plans for the Fall

The question of when, where, and how often we will worship in person this fall is still under discussion as this article is being composed, but enough is known at this time that our plans for the early fall for music can be shared, and you are invited to participate!

Homecoming Sunday is scheduled for September 13. That day is normally the start of the choir season, church school, and a number of other seasonal activities at First Church. It is often celebrated with a fun service and a picnic and social time after church. While we can't do things exactly as we have in the past, we are looking to providing an in-person worship service at 10 a.m., with the Jolly Beggars joining us for the festivities. We'll also be doing an online service at the same time, (also including the Jolly Beggars).

Of all the musical activities at our church, ringing handbells is one of the safest activities that can be performed during this pandemic. The Whitechapel Handbell Choir will be resuming their rehearsals on Wednesdays nights in the Meeting House, following Labor Day. Since this is a safer activity, they will be performing more often than their customary once a month schedule for the near term. They will be able to participate both in online worship as well as in person worship services. New people interested in ringing are always invited, and reading music is not a requirement. Contact Jessica Berube via email at [jessicaberubesings@gmail.com](mailto:jessicaberubesings@gmail.com) for more information.

On the opposite extreme, singing in worship has been found to be one of the riskiest behaviors in the spread of the corona virus.

Singing forces people to expel more aerosols that could contain the virus for greater distances, and good singing practices requires the singer to breathe deeply, potentially inhaling more aerosols than through normal breathing. There are many documented cases where a single person might infect many others during a choral rehearsal. For that reason, choir will not resume for the foreseeable future. However, we will include virtual choir performances, both in online services and projected for in person worship services, when appropriate, but not as often as we are normally accustomed to. There may be soloists on an occasional basis for in person worship.

That leaves the possibility of expanding what we can offer beyond choir and handbells. Instrumental offerings are still possible, as studies have shown that wind instruments tend to slow down the projection of aerosols as opposed to singing. We've been blessed to have several individuals come forward to present music during this time for our online worship services, and I encourage others who might be motivated to consider this as an option as well. If you are interested, please contact Jim Boratko at [jim.boratko@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:jim.boratko@whfirstchurch.org) to discuss.

Of course, not everyone will be comfortable worshipping in person yet, in spite of the precautions and protocols being implemented. Our online worship services will continue to be provided during this period so everyone has the chance to participate in worship as they are able.



# Loaves and Fishes During the Pandemic

**LOAVES & FISHES**  
Groceries for Neighbors in Need

*Editor's note: This is an edited transcript of Dottie Stone's "Pandemic Voices" presentation during worship on August 2, 2020.*

I'm Dottie Stone and I coordinate, along with Jane Cave, our First Church volunteer efforts at the Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen located in the Immanuel Church opposite the Mark Twain house in Hartford.

Members of First Church have been volunteering with Loaves and Fishes Ministries since the mid-1980s, serving a hot noonday meal once a month. So we have been helping 90-130 Hartford neighbors experiencing "very low food security" every month for 35 years.

Since 2007 my role has been to sign up seven to eight of our First Church volunteer team-of-16 to work on the 4th Tuesday of the month from 10:00 to 1:00. In the kitchen we all pitched in with Hector, the chef, and Mary, a staff member, by making salads, buttering bread, cutting pies and cakes into serving pieces, and setting the tables.

During the dining hour some of us filled plates with the hot entrée and sides, some served coffee and tea, and others served each client as he or she arrived and sat down at the large round tables. The crowd always enjoyed this hospitality and the chance to chat with friends... and they liked the food, too, especially the crusty chicken!

In addition to our volunteer labor we as a church community

funded the cost of the meal, approximately \$100 each month, through the Outreach Team's budget.

On March 16 the dining room closed, and it seemed we as volunteers had no role, until the Director, Allison Petrie, announced an alternative to the established in-person group dining – once a week "Pantry Bags To Go." Grocery bags filled with five days of ready-to-eat canned foods, sandwiches, and fresh fruit with contactless pick-up every Monday during the noon hour.

The challenge then was to re-envision our Church's role and our volunteers' time. So with the help of the Outreach co-chairs, Ginny Vocelli and Jenny Clark, we requested that our budget commitment of \$100/month continue to be sent to L&F to support purchases for the pantry bags.

Next I emailed all the team members about the pantry bag program and offered the opportunity to donate ready-to-eat canned goods. Just drop them off on my doorstep - no contact/no appointment/any time. We converted our volunteer time at the soup kitchen to time at the supermarket. And I've been delivering pounds and pounds of canned goods every Monday morning at 10 am since March 23rd!

The word spread to the Friday Knitting Group and then morphed into a joint collection for the Town of WH Food Bank and L&F. Now we have "Drive By/Drop Off" at the Church Rotunda Entrance two days each month and at Dottie's front door anytime.

And there's more! In chatting with Mary at one of my deliveries I learned that the clients love finding homemade cookies and bars in the pantry bags (well, who wouldn't??) So we talked up the baking idea among the knitters and young people in the church, and amazingly, bags of homemade cookies are appearing on my doorstep!

Amie Giguere asked me what the biggest challenge has been – the challenge was not huge, but the response from our congregation has been huge and the biggest joy.

So continue baking. Continue shopping. Continue the "Drive by/Drop Off" effort at my house or at the Church (see page 7). Your gifts warm many hearts and fill many tummies in Hartford and West Hartford.



"Pandemic Voices" in August included: Dottie Stone, Anna Lumbruno, Joy Taylor, and Becca Benevides. (Unavailable at press time: Kelly Munroe).

## Pandemic Voices

During August, we made space in each worship service to hear from church members about what the experience of the pandemic has been like for them. We heard from **Dottie Stone** - a volunteer for Loaves and Fishes, **Anna Lumbruno** - a Registered Nurse, **Joy Taylor** - a Grocery and Food Supply worker (along with her Marketing Manager role) at Essential Health, **Becca Benevides** - a parent of young children and **Kelly Munroe** - a teacher. These short segments during worship have been well received! We have therefore decided to continue the series during September. Please let us know if you or someone you know in the congregation is either an essential worker or someone whose experience during the pandemic should be amplified. Please reach out to Pastor Amie [amie.giguere@wh-firstchurch.org](mailto:amie.giguere@wh-firstchurch.org).



**JOHN P. WEBSTER  
LIBRARY**  
Resources for Faith & Life

Jennifer deSimas, Library Director: [jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org)  
 Karla Grafton, Assistant Librarian: [jpwebsterlib@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:jpwebsterlib@whfirstchurch.org)  
 General Inquiries: [jpwebster@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:jpwebster@whfirstchurch.org)  
 Phone: 860-232-3893  
 Explore our catalog online! <https://jpwebster.biblio.org/eg/opac/home>

**Staff Hours:**  
 Monday-Thursday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
 Friday & Saturday closed  
 JPWL Archives are open by appointment

**Curbside Services**  
 4 to 5 p.m. on Mondays or  
 by appointment.

## July Circulation Stats Up

Despite the pandemic and the fact that the library is open only via curbside service, we are pleased to announce that our circulation numbers are actually higher than our usual summer numbers! In fact, our July numbers are over a hundred circulations higher than last year and almost sixty more than 2018. Thank you all for supporting the JPWL and continuing to contact us to meet your reading and information needs!



Wee the People presenter Tanya Nixon-Silberg talks to parents and teachers at Old South Church, Boston, in October 2019. Courtesy photo.

## A Special Workshop for All Educators and Caregivers

***The ABCs of Racism: Starting and Sustaining Anti-racist Conversation and Action with Kids***

10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Saturday, September 26

- *Mama, why is that lady brown?*
- *How come the Asian kids are so good at math?*
- *Why did the police kill Mr. Phil?*
- *What will happen if immigration comes to take my family away?*

Kids notice a lot about the world – including race, inequity, and injustice. They sense that these things matter, and they have questions many of the adults in their lives are not prepared to answer.

The JPWL invites all caregivers and educators to a special interactive Zoom workshop with Wee The People, Boston-based racial justice educators, to explore the barriers that prevent adults from talking about race and racism with kids.

Participants will examine the social science of race awareness in children, and identify strategies to start and sustain antiracist conversations and action with kids. Please register online.

<http://bit.ly/WeThePeopleFCWH>

Wee The People was co-founded by racial justice educators Tanya Nixon-Silberg and Francie Latour. Their aim is to inspire children to notice injustice and discover the power of their own voices; explore traditions of resistance and protest through the arts; and support adults in opening difficult conversations - with kids and with each other - about difference, equity, and justice.

## Lunch & Learn: COVID-19 and Global Climate Change: An Untold and Evolving Story

Sunday, September 20, 12 p.m. via Zoom

For decades, we have seen a steady stream of viruses and other microorganisms transferred from vertebrate animals to humans, most recently in the COVID-19 pandemic. But the coronavirus is simply one manifestation of what will be a long string of adverse health and economic consequences of global warming, population pressures, and loss of species diversity. How can we mitigate current trends in climate deterioration and together save this planet and our species?



Sten H. Vermund is Dean of the Yale School of Public Health and holds the Anna M.R. Lauder chair in Public Health. A pediatrician and infectious disease epidemiologist, Sten's research focuses on diseases of low- and middle-income countries and on U.S. health disparities. As with many others at Yale, his recent work has focused on the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Lunch & Learn: Nonviolence: A Way of Life

Sunday, October 4, 12 p.m. via Zoom

Victoria Christgau, Executive Director of the CT Center for Nonviolence (CTCN), will address the importance and potential of nonviolence in a society steeped in violence. The CTCN is a leader in Nonviolence education, and is dedicated to bringing people from diverse communities together in dialogue and creative expression to explore the root causes of violence, and to collaborate in finding alternative solutions.



## Book Groups Resume

**AWAKENING THE SPIRIT** is led by Minister of Spiritual Life Susan Izard, and meets every Monday at noon. They will resume meeting on September 14 via Zoom to discuss ***Christ in Crisis?: Why We Need to Reclaim Jesus Jim Wallis.***

Books are available at the JPWL via curbside service on Mondays from 4 to 5 p.m. Please contact Assistant Librarian Karla Grafton to arrange an alternate time if you need one. To join this discussion, contact Jennifer deSimas, Library Director.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT** is led by Jennifer deSimas and meets at 5:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month, starting October 1. They begin the year with their first mystery novel: ***Still Life*** by Louise Penny. Winner of numerous crime writers' awards, it's a mystery around the death of Jane Neal, a local fixture in the tiny hamlet of Three Pines. Please contact Jennifer to join the conversation.



## Drive-by, Drop Off



September 22 and 26

Your participation is needed now, more than ever! Please bring non-perishable food donations to the church parking lot, near the Rotunda entrance, any of the above Tuesdays and Saturdays, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. each collection day

All donated items will be delivered to the West Hartford Food Pantry and Loaves & Fishes for their Meals to Go. If you want to contribute, but are unable to come to the church, please call an Out-reach Team member to make arrangements for pick-up:

**Jenny Clark:** 860-402-4851

**Dottie Stone:** 860- 521-0554

**Ginny Vocelli:** 860-205-1794

THANK YOU!

## 37th Foodshare Virtual Walk Against Hunger September 13th - 19th

The Foodshare Virtual Walk Against Hunger supports Foodshare's efforts to raise awareness of and resources for the issue of food insecurity in Hartford and Tolland counties. Funds raised from the Walk help support not only Foodshare but the partner programs that help them serve the growing number of people in Greater Hartford who struggle with hunger.

Our team **First Church Striders** invite you to "step up to the plate" and join the Virtual Walk Against Hunger which will be a weeklong event September 13-19 this year (walk or run a 1.5-mile route of your choice). If you cannot make the walk, please support our team by going to the Foodshare website to make your donation or you may send a check to the church marked as a donation for Foodshare.

First Church Striders has walked to support Foodshare and our partner Loaves and Fishes for many years. To support Foodshare please go to our team page on the Foodshare website: <https://bit.ly/FCStriders>. Thank you for your support



## Treasures & Hearts

*Where your treasure is, your heart will be too. And where your heart is, you will also find a joyful willingness to put your treasure!*

When my then partner, Rayda and I found First Church in 1991 we had been Christmas and Easter church attendees for a very long time, but we'd begun to hear a calling for us to return to the faith instilled in us as small children. We picked First Church because we had heard it was an active and activist church – which was important to us. The 1990's were not a highwater mark for First Church but despite their ups and downs we found much warmth and deep caring within the congregation. We stayed with First Church because the others who stayed were good and faith-filled people who wanted to work together toward a bright future.



Rayda Bouma and Eleanor Wight

And the bright future did arrive, and the rewards were tenfold. Rayda and I give of our treasure to First Church because we have found much, much more than activism at First Church. We have been grateful to be part of a community of caring, a community of acceptance, a community of action, a community of deep faith and spiritual yearning. We've seen First Church grow, change, and embrace new ways of helping those in need and we've collectively lifted our voices about injustice and inequality. In 2006 we were thrilled to have First Church vote to become Open & Affirming to the LGBTQ community. In 2014 we were blessed to be married, in front of friends and family, in the wonderful First Church sanctuary.

First Church has a very long history as an important part of West Hartford and the greater Hartford area – we can continue to sustain that place in our community by doing our part sharing our lives, our love, and our treasure to make sure this home of faith, courage, and character stands the test of time.

*-Eleanor Wight*

## In-Reach Team Reaches out

"May there be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another." 1 Cor 12:25

One of the objectives of the In-Reach team is to support and care for members of First Church. Over these last many months, members of In-Reach as well as other volunteers have made connections in the form of "phone buddies" and have intentionality and regularity made phone calls to check in. The conversations which have taken place have been a valuable way in which we have maintained connection with one another while also unable to be together in person. We hope that if you or someone you know in the congregation would like to have a "phone buddy," please let Amie know [amie.giguere@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:amie.giguere@whfirstchurch.org).

**DUE DATE for TIDINGS:** The next deadline is **SEPTEMBER 14th**, for the **OCTOBER** issue. Please send items to Joy Taylor: [joy.taylor@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:joy.taylor@whfirstchurch.org)

**DUE DATES for SUNDAY NOTES & eNEWS:** Submissions are due each Tuesday by noon to Suzanne: [suzanne.nardi@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:suzanne.nardi@whfirstchurch.org).



first church  
WEST HARTFORD

12 South Main Street  
West Hartford, CT 06107



# Taizé

*Worship Services*

September 13

# Celtic

*Evening Worship*

September 27



Taizé and Celtic worship services, led by Susan Izard, will continue to be recorded live in the Chapel and aired via our YouTube channel Watch for notices via email, Facebook, and our website.

You are invited to join the Bible Study group. Led by Jim Warner, the group meets via Zoom Sunday mornings at 10. For more information, please contact Jennifer deSimas at 860-232-3893.

**BIBLE  
STUDY  
FROM  
HOME**



## Yoga classes are open to all

Nancy Murray has continued to hold yoga classes live, via Zoom. We have kept our meeting times of Tues. at 7 p.m. and Wed. and Thurs. 9:15 a.m. This has been a nice way to connect with our yoga community. The Zoom room has no space limitation, so all of the classes have "room!" Nancy is also holding a daily meditation class at 12:15 p.m. Email: [nancy@deepeacect.com](mailto:nancy@deepeacect.com) for links and fees.