

# THE PARISHIONER

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**THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, WOODBRIDGE *since 1738***

**An Open, Welcoming, and Affirming Church**

**Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m.**

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## **November 2020 Pastor's Column**

I am grateful today! I'm grateful God has decided to love us and that nothing can tempt God to do otherwise. I'm grateful for the life we have been given and the new life promised in Jesus's resurrection. I'm grateful for the Holy Spirit who holds us tightly in the presence of God and empowers us to participate in the healing of the world. I am also grateful that God gives us gifts to help us in these turbulent and uncertain days.

I'm grateful for four gifts in particular:

1. The call to be always thankful to God
2. The faith enabling us to persist in the face of difficulty and the unknown
3. The gift of love that reveals itself in acts of mercy and justice
4. The hope that resists the forces driving us to despair

The Apostle Paul tells us to be thankful in all things. God tells us to be thankful, not for God's sake, but for our own. When you identify just one thing for which to be thankful, your gaze may grow a bit wider. You can begin to notice other things to thank God for: the breath you just took and the beating of your heart. You notice and give thanks that the sun shines and the rain falls. You give thanks for the people in your life who are kind to you, who are healing and helping you. When we give thanks to God, our lives are renewed and refreshed. To be thankful to God is to say "yes" to life.

The Bible tells us over and over again that God chooses to love us and offers love to us as a gift. But we often think of love as something that happens *to* us. We fall in love and love blinds us. We feel love as a romantic experience or state of the heart. But God *chooses* to love us, and we in turn, *choose* to love others. To choose to love is a conversion. It means we have joined our lives with the whole of humanity. Love sees the best in others and works for the healing and wholeness of *every-body*. True love is active and manifests itself in our work for justice with individuals and with communities. It may be sitting with a friend or family member who is sick. It may be planting a garden. It may be walking your neighbor's dog. It may be acting against racism. It may be writing a letter to the editor about an issue you care about, or to a loved one who is lonely. It may be sharing in worship, singing a hymn, or being with others - at a distance - to celebrate a special occasion. It may be voting in the election. It may be listening to someone who needs you. (*cont.*)



Faith is the gift that helps us keep on keeping on. Faith enables us to trust the promises God makes to us. Because of our faith, we trust that Jesus's resurrection frees us from sin and death. We have faith in everlasting life. Faith helps us to experience the presence and mystery of God. Our faith guides us in our work for mercy, compassion and justice.

God's gift of hope helps us to be optimistic. Hope helps us to resist the people and structures that try to render us powerless. Our hope helps us to fight against despair. Our hope helps us live in the present, with all of the struggles and suffering that we know in our own lives and in the lives of others. Our hope helps us to live into God's promise for a better future.

The Bible tells us the purpose of life is to give thanks and praise to God and that we do this by loving others and making our love concrete in acts of justice. By faith we persist in this work, even when all seems lost. And it is the gift of hope that gives us the courage to resist the powers of sin and death. As we accept these gifts we will endure these days, and we shall flourish. May all praise and thanksgiving be given to the one and only God!

Rev. Shepard Parsons



## In all things give thanks. -1 Thessalonians 5:18



November 2020

The Church's Congregational Meeting was held, with a quorum present, on September 27, 2020. A preliminary budget for 2021 was approved, and other business matters discussed. A new Moderator, Richard Prescott, was elected. Outgoing Moderator, Bill More, conducted the meeting. We thank Bill for his many dedicated years of service as Moderator and his many other contributions to our church.

A financial gift of \$30,000 has been donated, over a three year period, for the repainting of the interior of the sanctuary. Joyce Simpson continues to pursue a variety of other possible resources, including State of Connecticut Preservation funds, for the painting project.

The October Council meeting welcomed back Rev. Shepard Parsons. A quorum was present at the meeting which was held by Zoom. Committee reports and updates were presented. The Council previously agreed to open our facilities to AA and Alanon for their weekly meetings, which will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. Also, the Town of Woodbridge, through the Registrar of Voters, has been given permission to use the Parish House on election day primarily for the purpose of counting absentee ballots. In all instances, Covid-19 safety protocols will be followed. The Council has established ground rules, eg: signing of waivers, no use of the kitchen, etc. for use of the facilities.

The main topic of discussion of the meeting dealt with a passed motion from the September 2020 Council meeting. It stated "To address the level of conflict currently in the congregation". The motion was made because of the varying degrees of negative comments and abusive language, verbal and in email print, between and among members of the congregation. A variety of opinions during the October meeting dealt with a broad range of issues regarding the conflict. Eg: Is it real? How long has it been going on? Are there many sources of the conflict or only a few? How is this conflict affecting the perception of our church in the community and in attracting new or old members. Should an outside professional "conflict resolution" group be brought in? Should the UCC be involved? After lengthy discussion, the Moderator asked a sub-committee to meet before the November 2020 meeting, for the purpose of trying to narrow down the issue so that action could be taken. Any ideas or suggestions on the matter are welcomed from members of the congregation.

Richard Prescott, Moderator

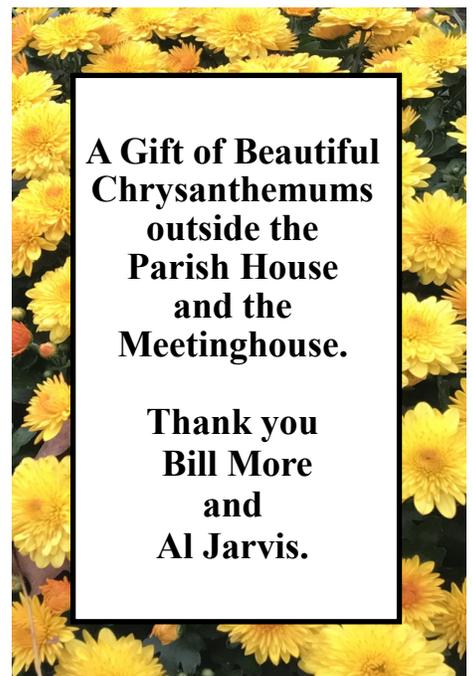


## SANCTUARY UPDATE, NOVEMBER, 2020

The discussions about the repainting of the sanctuary and the enthusiasm within the congregation for moving ahead with the project came to an abrupt halt in March when the church was shuttered because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It has not been completely quiet, however. A beautiful baby grand piano was given to the church by the Giebisch family, organ pipes were removed, repacked, and replaced, and old storm windows were repaired and re-installed on the choir room windows by Bob Turner. Violent storms damaged two shutters and broke a window pane on the east side of the sanctuary. Jack Jones took the lead and Jim Hubbard provided technical know-how for the installation of Wi-Fi and live-streaming equipment in the sanctuary. A banner with John Lewis quotes (created by Muffy German) was installed on the front of the church. This summer, after Constance Ecklund had spoken with friends Judy and Paul DeCoster about the proposed repainting the sanctuary, they requested a visit to the church and to learn more the process involved. They were given a tour and a copy of the Canning assessment, recommendations, and cost estimates (Feb2020). They fully appreciated the historic and current role the church plays in the life of Woodbridge and were impressed with the 2018 stabilization of the structure, the restored chandelier, and the beauty of the trompe l'oeil décor. After speaking together at home and with their tax advisor, the DeCosters wrote with a promise of very generous gifts for repainting the sanctuary of \$10,000 in January 2021, 2022, and 2023 (for a total of \$30, 000) which the Board of Trustees voted to accept. Thank you, DeCosters. *Mr. DeCoster has challenged others who are able, in the church and in the wider community, to match his gift.* Generous designated gifts from church members and the wider community may reduce the need for a capital campaign. There is currently approximately \$12,000 in the "Sanctuary Fund" at the First Church and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is encouraging us to apply for \$100,000 in matching state funds. The SHPO has also informed us that if we are awarded funds they will allow us several years to complete the work (they pay out only completion), they will allow us to do the work in stages, and they no longer insist that the contract go out to bid which allows us to hire a qualified vendor of our choice. The current estimated cost for repainting of the very highest quality is \$450, 000. The Board of Trustees will meet before the end of the year to discuss how to best move forward.

Comments and questions from the congregation are strongly encouraged.

In faith,  
B. Joyce Simpson, Trustee  
Bjoyce.simpson@gmail.com



## Troop 907 Bike Ride Campout

Troop 907 camped at the Connecticut Yankee Council's Wah Wah Taysee camp, located in North Haven just 0.3 miles from Sleeping Giant State Park the weekend of September 12th to 13th. Scouts and scouters have enjoyed camping at Wah Wah Taysee since 1922. Troop adult and youth leaders recognize there continue to be significant and understandable concerns about gatherings amid the Covid19 pandemic. Social distancing and mask wearing rules and practices were adhered to.

On Saturday morning, scouts completed a 12 1/2 mile bike ride on the historic Farmington canal linear greenway trail from Sleeping Giant State Park north to Main Street in Cheshire, access is 1.6 miles from the camp. Scouts planned their own meal menus, including a light lunch while taking a break on the trail. The scouts investigated the series of historic canal locks on the canal route that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was used to transport goods via barges. In some areas, the remnants of the old canal line railroad can also be seen. Scouts enjoyed biking on the canal trail, learning about the history, and also participated in some geocaching along the route back to camp.



After returning to camp in mid-afternoon, the patrol completed a one hour service project for the camp, including clearing/pulling weeds from a crossover beam near a low ground area that floods and raking and clearing approx..200-300 yards of camp trails of storm debris and leaves.

While patrol cooks prepared delicious Philly cheesesteak sandwiches on the dinner menu, other patrol members enjoyed catching fish in the camp pond. Over ten fish were caught and released.

The Sunday pack-out included the normal breakdown of the campsites and policing the camp for any human-left behind material and since Camp Wah Wah Taysee is a "leave no trace" training facility, scouts also had to ensure fire pit ashes were bagged and the 'gray' cleaning water charcoal pit screen was collected and packed out to provide to the Camp Ranger for disposal.

Lessons learned for the scouts, as part of the fun of scouting on this late summer campout, included advanced planning, organization skills, food budgeting, service to community, protection of the environment, traffic safety, bike safety, pitching tents, preparing and cooking meals, building a fire, making knots and leadership of fellow scouts in the promised adventure of scouting.

The woods of the camp, along with the meadow area are ideal for practicing scouting skills.



One parent of a scout new to the troop commented that he was pleasantly surprised how much independence the boys have in scouting vs. Cub Scouts. It is great to have the parents engaged and enjoying the adventures with their sons. The consensus from those attending was FANTASTIC, it went fantastic! Another adventure is planned, Troop 907 will be fishing on Sunday October 4 in Niantic on the Black Hawk fishing boat! As with all events, masks are required.



Chartered by the First Church of Christ, Troop 907 continues to meet on Thursday evenings, recently outdoors at Camp Whiting in Woodbridge, rather than in the Parish House. Parents of scouts have expressed interest in outdoor leader skills training, October 10-11, which will lead to their taking on adult leader positions. We are always asking church members to consider assisting with the troop, now is the time.



The troop has grown in youth members recently; more information at [troop907.org](http://troop907.org).

Best wishes,  
**Richard Forselius**  
Troop 907 Committee Chair & Chartered Organization Representative  
[forselius@snet.net](mailto:forselius@snet.net)



### Website Update

Have you visited our website? You may be surprised at how many resources and information updates are available to you. Take a look and “link” yourself with church and community news!  
[www.uccw.org](http://www.uccw.org)

### Updating the Church’s Electronic Communications



Your Board of Trustees has been bringing the church’s internet capability up to date. WiFi has been installed in the sanctuary to support live streaming of Sunday Services and events. A ZOOM hosting account has been established to use for Sunday services and leader meetings. Live streaming capability on YouTube has been started using an existing camera and computer. The church audio system has been repaired with provisions for additional microphones. Live streaming of Pastor Shepard’s worship service in the sanctuary will begin soon. We will provide a link to YouTube to join the 10:00 service. Until live streaming begins, you can continue join in the ZOOM service. We will provide a ZOOM invitation by email. If you miss the live service, you can also go to the website and find the video of the service. We hope you use and enjoy the new internet presence of your church.

## Local Artist and Calligrapher Muffy German at the First Church of Christ, Woodbridge

Muffy German has volunteered her professional calligraphy skills at the First Church of Christ, Woodbridge for many years. She recently created a beautiful and meaningful piece with three quotes from Congressional Representative John Lewis who died at age 80 on July 17, 2020. He was a towering force who frequently put his life on the line as a non-violent civil rights and voting rights activist.

A number of lawn signs depicting Muffy's banner were sold at the Care Pumpkin Pick-Up on October 24th and 25th. If you would like a lawn sign, please contact Muffy at (203) 387-2187.



Ryder Rosson helps out at the Pumpkin Pick-Up



Muffy German stands next to her art in "lawn sign" format

### Weekly Bible Study

All are welcome to visit our Weekly Bible Study that takes place every Wednesday morning from 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Meetings are currently being held inside the Parish Hall or outside in good weather. All safety regulations must be followed when on the church grounds. Copies of our safety regulations are available in the Parish Hall foyer.

Please visit the Bible Study page on our website for more information and a list of weekly readings.

<https://www.uccw.org/bible-study>



## Care Pumpkin Project October 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>

What a wonderful “Care Pumpkin Project Pick-Up Weekend”!

What a pleasure it was to breathe in the fresh autumn air amongst friends, flowers and pumpkins. Volunteers from our Christian Education program congregated safely all about the Meetinghouse steps, waiting to welcome Parishioners as they approached to pick up their Pumpkin Packages. Although we were wearing masks, no one could keep the smiles from their eyes.

Our Sunday School kids were present and prepared to pass out their seasonal crafts while members of the Youth Group helped carry items to visitors’ cars. Those who couldn’t be there were instrumental in preparing the cards and crafting autumn garlands for the church railings. As an unexpected blessing, music spun forth from the open doors of the Meetinghouse. Our own director of instrumental music, Nenad Ivovic, came to practice on the church’s new piano.

God’s presence was all around us in every sense!

The Christian Education Program is ever seeking new and creative ways to reach out to the community. We want to teach our kids that the smallest one of us can bring forth great joy to so many, if only we choose to live out the love of God that dwells within each of our hearts. To support these projects is to support our children, as they are the future of this community. We cannot thank you enough.

JoAnna Rubino, Director of Christian Education

\*Thanks to all our volunteers and supporters, we were able to raise approximately \$400 to donate to New Haven shelters for single women with children. Please see our website for more information.



Wilson and Carole Kinnach invite you to view our Pumpkin Pick-Up Gallery on the next page!







### Slowly Coming Together

It is a relief to see that our community is taking slow and careful steps as we begin to reassemble. Here, at the First Church of Christ, we continue to take every precaution necessary to keep one another safe and healthy while keeping fear and stress at a minimum.

You will be kept apprised of changes as they occur via our website, [www.uccw.org](http://www.uccw.org). Please continue to pray for one another and for the prosperity of our community as we journey toward a blessed reunion of in-person fellowship.

The office is currently open **for essential business by appointment only**, Tuesday through Friday, from 10:00 a.m. - 12 :00 p.m. Email JoAnna at [office@uccw.org](mailto:office@uccw.org) to request an appointment.



### ZOOM Meeting Schedule

All are welcome to join our weekly Zoom Meetings online or by phone. You will find the links for each meeting, every week, in your email. Please email JoAnna if you need assistance.

[office@uccw.org](mailto:office@uccw.org)



<b>Sundays</b>	<b>10:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Sunday Service</b>
	<b>11:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Sunday School (F.L.O.C.K.)</b>
	<b>6:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Youth Group (F.U.S.E.)</b>

\*Please keep an eye out for email updates including instructions for livestreaming and meeting invitations.

### Lay Readers for Worship

We are in need of volunteers to read, via Zoom, for Sunday Worship. Anyone, including youth, who would like to participate is encouraged to email JoAnna at [office@uccw.org](mailto:office@uccw.org).

### Marking Life's Passages

N/A

#### **The Parishioner**

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***NEXT PARISHIONER DEADLINE IS WEDNESDAY, November 18, 2020 (a firm date).***