



THE PARISIONER

THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, WOODBRIDGE *since 1738*
An Open, Welcoming, and Affirming Church

Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m.

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February 2021

Rev. Shepard Parson's Letter of Farewell

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the LORD. Jeremiah 29:11-13a

My Dear Friends,

Last Sunday we worshiped together for the last time. I was filled with joy to see so many of you at our Zoom worship. Your words and notes of affection and appreciation will go with me as I continue in the journey of faith. I thank God for the love and support you have shared with me over the years. Though the pandemic has kept us physically apart, it has not broken the bonds of love and friendship with which we have been blessed by the Holy Spirit.

I am grateful to have served with you these past seven years. Working together we have formed friendships, ministered to each other and those around us, near and far; all while seeking to follow the example of our friend and savior Jesus. Like every community, we have struggled together, suffered loss and cared for each other in our grief and sorrow, but doing so as a hopeful people. Recall the many ways we have experienced God's presence and love as we worshipped together. We have celebrated the lives of loved ones at funerals and embraced God's promise of new life at baptisms. We have experienced the joy of love at weddings just as Jesus did at Cana. Together we have dared to live in the presence of the mystery we call God. It is hard to be leaving you.

At the conclusion of yesterday's service we made vows to one another. You promised to release me from all my duties as your pastor, and I promised to release you from turning to me and depending on me. (cont.)

Practically speaking, this means I will become a member of another congregation and will not attend services nor participate in the life of the First Church of Christ Woodbridge. No longer will I perform baptisms, confirmations, weddings or funerals at First Church; nor will I be available for counseling or spiritual direction. As hard as this may be, I will not be in contact with church friends until your new pastor has arrived and their leadership and authority is honored. This will be difficult at times, but it facilitates the work of calling a new pastor and building new relationships with the blessed one who answers, "Yes!" to your invitation.

I have no idea what the future holds, but believe its held in God's hands. Some of you are being called to continue your ministry in Jesus' name from your church at the center of Woodbridge. Some of you are being called to different ministries in different places. And others of you are being called to serve the Lord in places and ways you have yet to imagine. Regardless, God is present with us - and all people - right now, preparing that future into which we are being drawn. It is a future some call home. Forgiveness is the front door flung wide open to all. Hope fills its halls as we walk in God's light. And love, God's love, is the foundation of it all; revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus who frees us from sin and death.

I end with a few words of Maya Angelou: "If you must look back, do so forgivingly. If you will look forward, do so prayerfully. But the wisest course would be to be present in the present gratefully," for it is right here and right now that we are kissed by the grace of God.

With all love and affection and in joyful expectation of Jesus's coming realm of love and justice, I say good-bye.

Shepard

IN APPRECIATION OF YOUR MINISTRY:

The Second Letter of PETER (which is not "E" as Bible literalists may have it), at Chapter 1, Verse 5, exhorts us to supplement our faith with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with fortitude, fortitude with piety, piety with brotherly kindness, and brotherly kindness with love.

You have worked hard to supplement us. You have blessed us with your insight and your knowledge. You have borne setbacks occasioned by events out of your control and despite it all, left no doubt at all that you have loved us, as God urges us to love one another.

WE HERE WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT WE LOVE YOU, AND APPRECIATE THE PATH YOU HAVE URGED US TIME AND TIME AGAIN TO TAKE, THE PATH OF GOD'S GRACE.

We appreciate your kindness, your sense of humor, and your practice of hospitality even under often difficult circumstances. We hope that wherever you go from here, whatever you do, you continue to employ your gifts in the service of our Lord and Savior, and that you bless us, your flock, even those among us who may be counted as errant sheep. Though you will be absent from us, you and your family will remain in our hearts. Thank you for your lessons, thank you for your faith, thank you for sticking with us for as long as you did. Let hope keep you joyful, and may our affection for you and our prayers for your salvation supplement you in turn for what comes next.

With love from your friends at the First Church of Christ,

Woodbridge, Connecticut.

Hillis Tribbles
Live Oak
T. Lumpkin
1995

Pastoral



Coverage

Pastoral Coverage for the month of February will be provided by the **Reverend Janice Touloukian**. Rev. Touloukian is an experienced minister regarding personal matters and supporting those in need of pastoral advice. She can be reached by telephone at: 203-387-4991.



Music Committee News

At the Sunday, February 14th service at 10:00 a.m., Nenad and Faye will be playing "Angel's Blessing", a Two Piano Duet by Joy Gilmore, a contemporary composer. Please join us! The Music Committee is planning more of these for future Sunday services.

As reported before, the church is blessed with the wonderful gift of a baby grand piano from the family of Dr. Gerhard Giebisch. It has found a home in our sanctuary.

Although the sanctuary was closed for church services due to Covid-19, the Thompson-Allen Company was able to repair the organ by repacking the 56 stoppers on the Pedal Bourdon pipes, which will make a significant improvement in the turning stability of the 3 Pedal Bourdon stops.

We have such a talent in Nenad and Faye, and we look forward to hearing them play together on our two pianos.

Boy Scout Troop 907 News

New Troop 907 scouts Will Hulse, Ethan Laub, Sebastian Kohncke, and Connor Kuczynski have been working hard on rank advancement the past year, the pandemic notwithstanding. Since the scouts focus on outside activities and learning skills, much of which can still occur, all have now achieved the tenderfoot rank, were awarded their badges in late January.

The troop is continuing to meet through the winter, meeting outside whenever the weather allows. All are welcome to our socially distanced scout meetings, and as always, new scouts are welcomed! Contact Rich Forselius if you are interested.

Best wishes,
Richard Forselius
forselius@snet.net



SANCTUARY REPAINTING UPDATE January 2021

Two applications for funding for the repair of plaster and repainting of the sanctuary have been submitted; one, in November, 2020 to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for \$100K in matching funds and one, in January, 2021 to the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven (CFGNH) for \$15K. It is unclear when we will receive decisions from either,

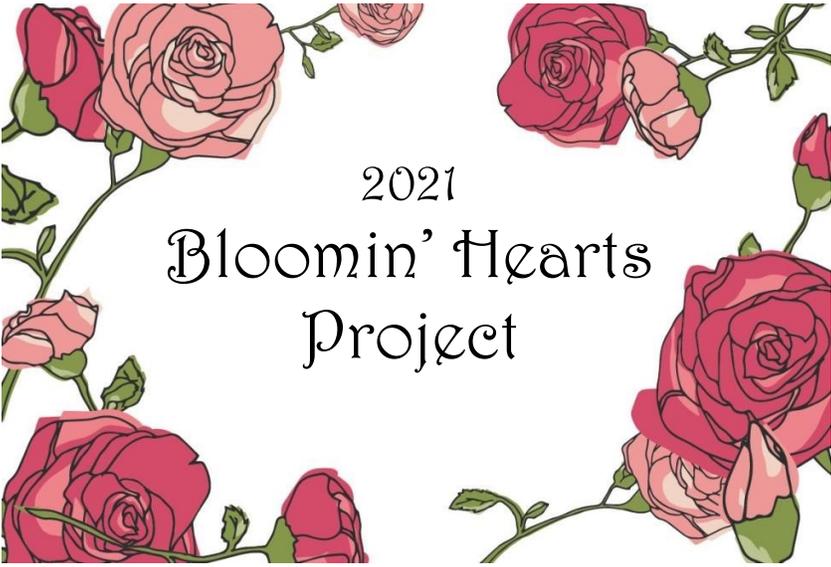
In their pre-development report and budget (February, 2020), Canning estimated the cost of repairing plaster and repainting the sanctuary in the historic 1886 grisaille/trompe l'oeil décor, and the narthex and stairwells plain to be \$475K. Because of the high cost, the project has been divided into two phases. Costs for Phase One will run about \$250K. The Phase One scope of work in the SHPO application comprises the entire ceiling, cornices, north wall and the re-installation of the plaster capital above the chandelier. Funds from the TCFGNH can be used anywhere in the sanctuary.

Because the pre-development grant went out to bid, the State has allowed us to hire Canning to do the work without going out to bid again as Canning's body of work and reputation in the field of decorative arts is nationally recognized. (See their website). Many of you may have met the Canning VP, David Riccio during his presentations at the church. The Canning report and budget can be found in the church office and are available electronically on request.

A designated Sanctuary Fund has been set up at the church and several very generous donations have already been received from parishioners and from interested persons in the wider community. Even though a formal Capital fundraiser for the repainting will be launched once funding from the SHPO is secured, persons interested to contribute to this effort can do so at any time. Make checks payable to the FCCW and write Sanctuary Fund on the memo line. The Fund currently stands at \$27,400.00 so we have a ways to go. Thank you for your interest in this matter.

B. Joyce Simpson
Trustee





2021
**Bloomin' Hearts
 Project**

Valentine's Day 2021

February 14th is just around the bend and Christian Ed is ready to lend a hand!

This year, we would like to launch a "mini fundraiser" by offering "mini bouquets" to be *delivered* to your door. Because money is tight and flowers can be pricey, we will be selling miniature bouquets for **\$25 each**.

You will have 3 choices, listed below, and the bouquets will be delivered to your home, or the home of a loved one who needs to know that a dear friend is thinking on them this Valentine's Day.

Who couldn't use a little "bloom" of love in their hearts?

Bouquet Choices:

- "I Love You Toolips" -- includes fresh greens and 8 tulips (color surprise)
- "Rosey Cheeks" – includes fresh greens, gypsophila, and 2 oversized red roses
- "Cuddle Me Carns" – includes fresh greens, gypsophila, and 6 Carnations (color surprise)

- All mini bouquets will be wrapped in sturdy handmade fabric and raffia bow • Bouquets will be delivered on either February 13th or 14th. (*local deliveries only*)

**Orders must be received by February 6th, by mail or email.
 ***Checks to be mailed to the church @ 5 Meetinghouse Ln., Woodbridge, CT 06524
Email JoAnna with any questions: growfirstchurch@gmail.com

"Bloomin' Hearts" Order Form

Your Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Your Address: _____
 Email: _____

Flower	Recipient	Delivery Address	Phone	Qty.

*attach a note for the recipient to be written in the card (optional)

Make a Donation to the First Church of Christ in Woodbridge – *online!*



It couldn't be easier to donate online. **Here's HOW:**

1. Log on to our website: **www.uccw.org**
2. Click on the word "Mission" at the top center of the home page.
3. Click on the words "Opportunity to Donate" in the blue box below.
4. Click on the option "Online", and follow payment instructions.

We accept PayPal and all major credit cards

How Do I View Sunday Service?

All Worship Services are live streamed on our website and on our YouTube channel. All Services are recorded and are available for viewing on our website, our YouTube channel, and on Facebook. (www.facebook.com/uccwoodbridge)



Please look to your email for invitations and links to these resources. We will continue to use Zoom for all our Worship Services.



**If you are having trouble with any of these church provided services, please email JoAnna at growfirstchurch@gmail.com*

Office Hours

The office is currently open **for essential business, by appointment only.**
Email JoAnna at office@uccw.org to request an appointment.

Marking Life's Passages

Caleb González, M.D. died peacefully on January 10, 2021.
2021 in Lancaster, SC at the age of 91.

A written memorial can be found on our website blog. Use the web address below to find it:
uccw.org/blog

The Parishioner

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NEXT PARISHIONER DEADLINE IS WEDNESDAY, February 17, 2020 (a firm date).

At this, the last meeting of his ministry with Council, Pastor Shepard Parsons expressed his thanks and good wishes to FCCW and its members. In turn, members of the Council also expressed thanks and best wishes to him and his family as they move forward to new opportunities.

Rev. Mary Nelson, UCC Conference Minister was an invited guest to the meeting. She described the search process for an Interim and Settled Minister, as we prepare to begin to look for a new minister. There was discussion and some questions from members of the Council. The hope of this session is that members of the Council will bring information back to their respective committees so that all members of the congregation are familiar with the search process as the Deacons under take their appointed and initial role in the process. The Deacons will be responsible for obtaining pastoral coverage for FCCW as well as for Sunday services, prior to the hiring of an Interim Minister.

The Treasure's report indicated a modest surplus of income over operating expenses for the year 2020. A special meeting of Council will be held by ZOOM to discuss and approve the Proposed 2021 Budget as prepared and presented by Trustees. (The meeting was held after the Trustees meeting and the Proposed Budget was approved for submission, review and action at the Congregational Meeting on January 31st, by ZOOM, at 11:00 AM)

All other committees had regular, routine, updating reports. The exception was the report from Trustees which presents FCCW with a year of belt tightening in 2021 due to the continuing effects of the pandemic and a major decrease in pledges for the coming year. The budget will have to be amended as required when the time comes to employ an Interim Minister. The main problem at the moment is how to operate and open the office with regular scheduled hours on a daily basis. We will have to wait for advice, decisions and recommendations coming from present staff, the consultant, and lay leaders. In general there is much support for opening the office and also considering how we can begin to have some kind of Sunday worship services. Members want to return to the sanctuary and pray--simple as that! Time will tell. We're working on it!

The last item of discussion revolved around the logistics of preparing for and conducting the Congregational meeting by ZOOM. A subcommittee of three was appointed to discuss the matter and prepare a plan of action regarding mailing lists, report distribution, etc.

Moderator's Comments: You all know what we have to do, in the next few months. Actions we take, or don't take may potentially "make us" or "break us" as we at FCCW move into this coming decade. Do we have to change the "culture" of our church which impacts our social, behavioral patterns and beliefs and how we do, or don't, work together for a successful future to do God's work in our community? All I ask of you all, members and friends, is that you participate in church activities when asked to. Answer questions about in what directions do you want us to go, what you want to see happen and how, what do you want from a new minister, etc.,etc.,etc.---I could go on. PLEASE, get involved. Sports teams talk about

developing a "winning culture" and developing positive attitudes. Can we do the same? Do you agree or disagree? Let your church leaders know. It is in all our hands and up to us.

Respectfully, Richard A. Prescott, Moderator

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