

THE PARISHIONER

February 2025

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

Reflections on Prayer

In mid-January I had lunch with a dear friend I'd not seen for 3-½ years and so, yes, it was 3+ hours long. We covered every topic under the sun – children, grandchildren, elderly parents, work, faith, church, home, romance, travel, health, finances, politics, future plans, and more. In the middle of one of these topics, my friend encouraged me to hold onto certain positive thoughts so as to “manifest” them in my life. I've heard countless of variations on this theme – in publications, social media posts, and ordinary conversations – and cringe pretty much every time. For starters, the idea that we can spiritually or psychically manifest something is eerily like the prosperity gospel nonsense which claims that, with a whole lot of faith and prayer, we can get a whole lot of cash and good health from the divine vending machine. Or said another way, just keep reminding God and yourself, very nicely of course, of the good things you want and at some point, they will show up. Well, except for the fact that we all know better.

If you've traveled any sort of spiritual road, you've likely been asked or asked yourself, “What exactly is the point of prayer?” Is it a way to twist God's arm to get what we want? Is it like a complaint box that generates a to-do list so gigantic that only God can manage it? Is it just totally passive where we review and rehearse our fears and worries as a mental release, while God does nothing?

If we turn to scripture (a sure guide for Protestants), we can't miss that throughout the New Testament we are exhorted to pray for one another; indeed, we are called to pray without ceasing. Well, on a very practical level, that's just not possible. I hate to sound like the never-getting-it disciples, but here I'll join them in a reply: ‘Jesus, we all need to eat, work, and do a bunch of other stuff. Even monks have to sleep.’ And yet we inquire because on a visceral level, we are drawn to this spiritual connection with God and others. I hope this insight will help ... Because our culture is so insanely individualist, perhaps we miss the possibility that this urging to pray without ceasing is intended as a *communal* act. When we pray, we lift up ourselves and others and the world to God, and then we trust that others in the community will continue where we left off. In Sunday worship, we share joys and concerns and ask that these be held in prayer throughout the week. In this, our community commits to pray without ceasing.

These days, people mock those who offer “thoughts and prayers” as if it is empty piety. But prayer is not what we do instead of taking action; prayer is an action we take to settle down our minds and hearts enough to know what is ours to do. It is the necessary first step of faithful action. In that sense, prayer is less about getting what we want and more about getting closer to what God wants. As Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber notes, these silken threads of prayer, which connect us to God and to one another and even to our enemies, are how God is stitching our broken humanity back together.

So, people of God, let us pray without ceasing and not lose heart for God has work that needs to get done and some of it is ours.

In prayer with you,
Rev. Susan



FCCW CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT

February 2025

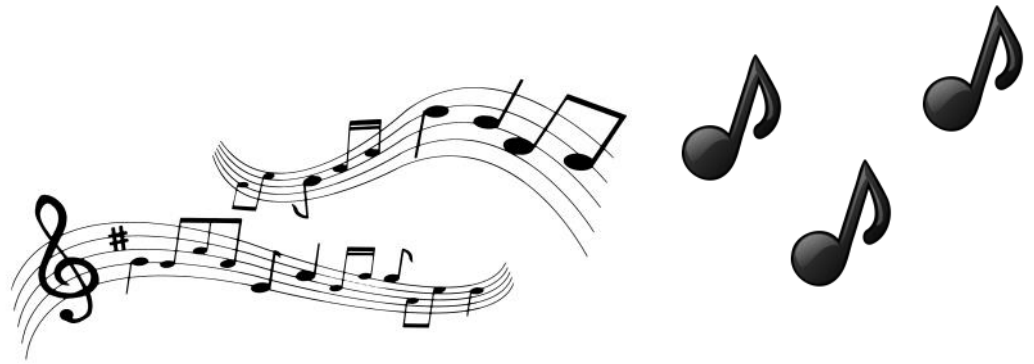
The Church Council met in person on January 6th with a quorum present. The Rev. Susan Murtha reported on activities during the prior month. The highlight of the month was the Christmas Eve service, which was well attended. The monetary collection was \$1030, which was contributed to Woodbridge Human Services. Well done! She reported that the "Souper Sunday" soup and meal will be served after church on February 9th. Susan Stoddard, who is in charge of the event, reported that all is ready to go, with soup and mac & cheese for all. The Treasurer reported that expenses and the budget were in line with expectations and that we were in good shape. Trustees reported that plans continue to be reviewed and agreed upon with the proposed tenant for the Early Childhood Education Center revisions for the Parish House. A detailed report will be presented at the Congregational Meeting. The Music Committee reported that the concert for February 1st has been planned with a performance by the Champlain Trio with a reception to follow.

The vote to approve Ryan Paxton to Trustees was approved by the Council. Joyce Simpson reported that she will be retiring from both Trustees and her Building & Grounds positions, as of the end of January 2025. She has been a hard-working, dedicated member of both committees and has made invaluable contributions by giving her time and expertise with both groups. Thank you, Joyce, for all you have done for FCCW. In addition, Jack Jones stated that he will be leaving the Treasurer's position as of January 26th. He also has provided much time, effort and expertise in keeping the FCCW books and keeping us on a sound financial track. Thank you, Jack, for your time and dedication. Both of them will be missed.

We look forward to this coming year with great expectations. If, and I note "if", all plans go as expected and proposed, we will be beginning a new course of action based on all the planning which has been done by so many during the past few years. There are many to thank, starting with our Interim Minister, Susan Murtha, whose time, knowledge and dedication has been so critical in bringing us to this juncture. In addition, there are many, many individual members who have given so much to bring us to this point. Thanks to all. Keep the faith! We are almost there!

Respectfully Submitted,
Richard A. Prescott, Moderator





CHAMPLAIN TRIO TO PERFORM SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1st

Please join us in welcoming Vermont's acclaimed Champlain Trio on Saturday, February 1, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. in the sanctuary at the First Church of Christ, 5 Meetinghouse Lane, Woodbridge. The Church will be hosting this trio in their *Timeless Trios* program, featuring Letitia Quante on violin, Hiromi Fukuda on piano, and Emily Taubl (who is originally from Woodbridge) on cello. It will be an afternoon of inspiring chamber music featuring works by Clara Schumann and Ludwig van Beethoven. All are welcome. There will be a free will offering.

The Music Committee will be hosting a reception after the concert in the Parish House. For more information, call the church office, 203-389-2119.

Coffee
time



From the Coffee Hour Crew:

Coffee Hour is a popular way for FCCW members and visitors to mix and mingle in a casual way. The Coffee Hour crew wants to acknowledge the generous cash donations made in 2024 that helped to defray some of the expense of this welcome fellowship. Thank you as well for the generous donations made to the UCC Disaster Relief Fund.

This year we are casting our net a little wider and asking for other congregation members to contribute refreshments as they are able. We would especially appreciate nutritious kid snacks. If this sounds like something you can do, please contact Bill More at 203-387-0090 to join in the rotation of goodie suppliers. We would love your homemade treats, but as Ina Garten has famously said "Store bought is just fine." Thank you!!



"SOUP"-ER BOWL

FELLOWSHIP LUNCH FOR ALL AGES



SOUP
BUFFET
&
MAC'N'
CHEESE



MUSIC WITH
MICHELE
URBAN

CAN
DONATIONS
WELCOME



SUNDAY, FEB 9, AT 11:15 AM

Parish Hall , 5 Meetinghouse Lane, Woodbridge, CT

For more info: 203-936-9356



Troop 907 News February 2025

It will be an exciting late winter and spring for BSA troop 907, chartered by First Church. Aside from the weekly Thursday 7 pm meetings, including skiing locally in Connecticut (February 27) at Mount Southington, and go carting in Wallingford (April 24), these are the special weekend plans:

- February 21-23 Fellowship/Cook Off Campout, Camp Whiting, Woodbridge.
- March 21-23: Vermont cave exploring
- April 11-13, West Point Camporee
- May 16-18 Whitewater rafting
- June 13: FCCW Strawberry Festival
- June 14: Hammonasset campout/Court of Honor
- August 3-9 Camp Sequassen week 6

Additionally, to ensure the troop maintains financial viability, the troop is planning the spring plant/fertilizer fundraisers on April 19. April 26 and May 3-4. Please consider supporting the troop!

Rechartering went well for troop 907 this year now with 22 scouts and 15 trained leaders, including 4 scoutmasters. This is the most engaged with the troop in recent memory.

The troop is also excited to welcome its newest Eagle Scout this year, Griffin Welander, who is also the troop's Senior Patrol Leader. He successfully passed his Eagle Board of Review on Monday, January 21, and once confirmed by BSA National, an Eagle Scout Court of Honor will be scheduled. Shown is Griffin with his dad, Assistant Scoutmaster Matt Welander; many know his mom, Mary Welander as she is a Connecticut State Representative. The second photo shows Griffin with the members of his Eagle Board of Review: Daniel Arpaia (Troop 63), Former Troop 907 scoutmasters Paul Konwerski and Nat Case, Griffin Welander, Quinnipiac District Eagle Board of Review Chair Ted Pocwiercz, and present Troop 907 scoutmaster Tom Luciani.

Potential scouts and adults are always welcomed to troop meetings, feel free to stop by Thursday evenings. More at troop907.org.

Best wishes,

Rich Forselius

Troop Committee Chair/Chartered Organization Representative

forselius@snet.net

Award-Winning Storyteller Coming to Woodbridge

Valerie Tutson

Get Ready to be **INSPIRED!**



Stories & Songs of Blessings

For all ages -- from 2 to 102!

Sunday, March 16th

2:00-3:00 PM Spirited
Stories!

3:00 PM Refreshments

First Church of Christ
5 Meetinghouse Lane
Woodbridge, CT

Valerie Tutson graduated from Brown University with a self-designed major in Storytelling As a Communication's Art, and a Masters in Theatre. Valerie received an honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from Rhode Island College. She has received numerous awards for her work, including the Pell Award for Artistic Excellence from Trinity Repertory Theatre in Providence. Valerie has traveled the world teaching, gathering, and sharing stories and songs. Her repertoire includes folktales, personal and historical stories with an emphasis on black traditions, and first-person biblical stories. She works in schools, libraries, festivals, faith communities, conferences, businesses, and universities. In addition to telling stories, she creates spaces for people to learn storytelling skills and share their stories. Valerie believes in the power of stories, storytelling and story-listening to help us heal ourselves and our communities.

For more information call:

203-936-9356

FCCW OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
9:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

All are welcome to join our Bible Study each
Wednesday at 11 AM in the Parish House.

PARISHIONER DEADLINE

Articles and photos for the March edition of
The Parishioner are due by
Monday, February 17 2025.
*Please submit materials by email
office@uccw.org

WORSHIP SERVICES

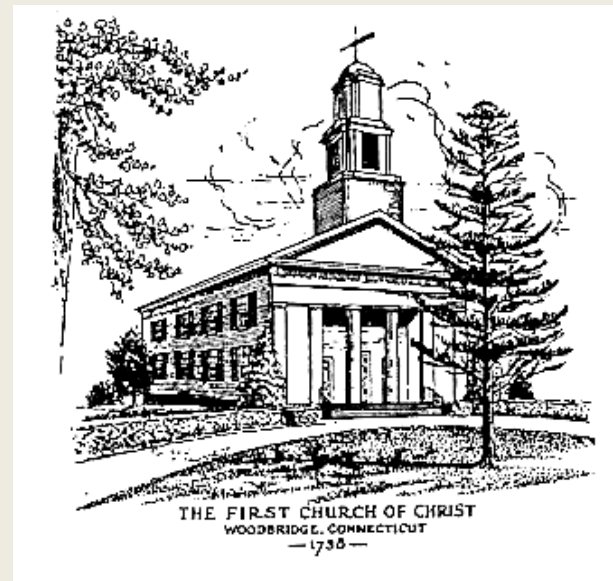
All are invited to gather in the
Meetinghouse for our 10 AM worship service.
For participation via Zoom,
see our website - uccw.org

MARKING LIFE'S PASSAGES

Please contact the office with any birth or death
notices, baptisms or memorial service dates.

Printed copies of *The Parishioner* are always available
in the church office and on our church's website.

If you would like to go paperless and only receive an
emailed copy, contact the church office.



FCCW Staff:

Interim Minister: Rev. Susan Murtha (pastorsusan@uccw.org) (203) 936-9356

Pastoral Care: Rev. Janice Touloukian (jantouloukian@gmail.com) (203) 915-1510

Coordinator for Children's Ministries: Nicole Giannetta (msnicole@uccw.org)

Office Administrator: Jill Fahrbach (office@uccw.org) (203) 389-2119

Sexton/Custodian: Bob Turner

February 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>26</p> <p>10:00 am Worship 10:00am AA 10:10 am Kids Church 11:15 am Congregational Meeting</p>	<p>27</p> <p>5:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 7:00 pm Search Committee 7:30 pm Lamp Post Group AA</p>	<p>28</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 6:30 pm Choir Practice 7:30 pm AA 7:30 pm Ala-teen 7:30 pm Al-Anon</p>	<p>29</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 10:30 am Musical Folk 11:00 am Bible Study 2:00 pm Neighborhood Music School</p>	<p>30</p> <p>2:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 7:00 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>31</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 3:00 pm Champlain Trio Music Concert 4:00 pm Reception 7:00 pm Private Yoga Class</p>	<p>1</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 3:00 pm Champlain Trio Music Concert 4:00 pm Reception 7:00 pm Private Yoga Class</p>
<p>2</p> <p>10:00 am Worship 10:00 am AA 10:10 am Kids Church 3:30 pm Girl Scouts</p>	<p>3</p> <p>1:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 7:00 pm Search Committee 7:30 pm Lamp Post Group AA</p>	<p>4</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 6:30 pm Choir Practice 7:30 pm AA 7:30 pm Ala-teen 7:30 pm Al-Anon</p>	<p>5</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 10:30 am Musical Folk 11:00 am Bible Study 2:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 7:00 pm Woodbridge Park Assoc</p>	<p>6</p> <p>2:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 7:00 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>7</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk</p>	<p>8</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk</p>
<p>9</p> <p>10:00 am Worship 10:00 am AA 10:10 am Kids Church 11:15 am Souper Bowl Fellowship Lunch</p>	<p>10</p> <p>1:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 7:00 pm Search Committee 7:30 pm Lamp Post Group AA</p>	<p>11</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 6:30 pm Choir Practice 7:30 pm AA 7:30 pm Ala-teen 7:30 pm Al-Anon</p>	<p>12</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 10:30 am Musical Folk 11:00 am Bible Study 2:00 pm Neighborhood Music School</p>	<p>13</p> <p>2:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 7:00 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>14</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 4:00 pm Private Yoga Class</p>	<p>15</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 4:00 pm Private Yoga Class</p>
<p>16</p> <p>10:00 am Worship 10:00 am AA 10:10 am Kids Church 3:30 pm Girl Scouts</p>	<p>17</p> <p>1:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 7:00 pm Search Committee 7:30 pm Lamp Post Group AA</p>	<p>18</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 6:30 pm Choir Practice 7:30 pm AA 7:30 pm Ala-teen 7:30 pm Al-Anon</p>	<p>19</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 10:30 am Musical Folk 11:00 am Bible Study 2:00 pm Neighborhood Music School</p>	<p>20</p> <p>2:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 6:30 pm Deacons 7:00 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>21</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk</p>	<p>22</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk</p>
<p>23</p> <p>10:00 am Worship 10:00 am AA 10:10 am Kids Church</p>	<p>24</p> <p>1:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 7:00 pm Search Committee 7:30 pm Lamp Post Group AA</p>	<p>25</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 6:30 pm Choir Practice 7:30 pm AA 7:30 pm Ala-teen 7:30 pm Al-Anon</p>	<p>26</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 10:30 am Musical Folk 11:00 am Bible Study 2:00 pm Neighborhood Music School</p>	<p>27</p> <p>2:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 6:30 pm Trustees 7:00 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>28</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk</p>	<p>1</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk</p>

Key

Sanctuary, Board Room, Parish Hall, Kids' Church Room, Memorial Room, Music Room, Kitchen, Online,