

# THE PARISHIONER

## December 2024

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

### Celebrating the first coming of Christ and anticipating his second coming!

Advent brings two colliding weather patterns. There is the happy high-pressure front: Christ is coming and wants to be born anew in you! There's also the stormy low-pressure front: Christ promised to come again in might and glory; that's a wake-up call and it takes a while to see the good news in it.

To get us started in this holy season, I chose a tender reflection from the 2024 United Church of Christ Advent Devotional; see below. May it bless your spirit and deepen your faith!

*Advent blessings,  
Rev. Susan*

#### **The Tender Dawn**

Rev. Matt Laney

*Because of the tender mercy of our God,  
the dawn from on high will break upon us,  
to shine upon those who sit in darkness  
and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace. – Luke 1:78-79 NRSV*



If someone offered to “guide your feet into the way of peace” would you imagine strolling through unknown terrain, without a device, in pitch darkness, far from home?

Me neither. Walking in those circumstances is just plain dangerous. Better to sit down, avoid injury, possibly cheat death, and wait for dawn to break. Yet, according to the passage above, sitting in darkness and waiting for dawn is the necessary prerequisite for walking in the way of peace. Why?

Here's my theory: dawn does not click on like a light switch. It arrives slowly, gradually, tenderly, peacefully. The sky brightens long before the sun makes an appearance.

If I spent the night sitting in total darkness in an unknown place I would rise up and walk slowly, gradually, tenderly, peacefully, when the first signs of dawn appeared. I would marvel at the serenity of my surroundings, wondering what I was so afraid of.

We are living in dark times, but dark times don't last. They can't. The dawn will come, gradually and tenderly, coaxing us to rise up and go forth while smiling at our fear.

This is how I imagine the second coming of Christ. It won't be like the first coming. Instead, it will be the dawning of tenderness and empathy and the diminishment of fear around the earth. It's happening right now among those who walk in peace.

Prayer: *Guide our feet into the way of peace.*

## FCCW CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT December 2024

The FCCW Church Council met, by ZOOM, in November with a quorum present. All the respective Committees and Boards continue to meet and function for the benefit of their respective program areas in meeting their administrative and program tasks for First Church. Some highlights thereof are reported here. Pastor Murtha reported on her administrative and ministerial duties for the month. She noted that the Children's Ministry program under the coordination of Nicole Giannetta, assisted by Anna Haep, continues to be working well. The annual Interfaith Thanksgiving service will be held this year at Assumption Church on November 25th at 7:00 PM. Rev Murtha introduced Dianna McCarthy-Bercury as the proposed new At-Large member to Church Council. Her membership to Council was voted on and approved. The council also voted to appoint Rob Heinimann to fill the remainder of the term for the seat vacated by Bob Touloukian, on Trustees. Both new appointees were welcomed to their respective positions.

Council voted to approve the spending of \$500 from undesignated line items in the budget to support the Woodbridge Human Service Holiday Basket fund and UCC's Hurricane Relief fund. In addition Bill More noted that all collected free will donations to the coffee hour in November will also be donated to Hurricane relief. It was noted that everyone is pleased with how all the new staff personnel are working out. Stewardship reported that all the Pulpit Personals have been excellent and appreciated. Pledges received for 2025, thus far have increased, to-date, from last year.

As we come to the end of the calendar year and begin to celebrate the Advent season and Christ's birth, we at First Church have so very much for which to be thankful.

A few notables: The completion of the Sanctuary Restoration, and the beauty and wonder provided to worship there. The time and care given by all members of Committees and Boards in working so hard to support their respective administrative church program responsibilities, especially Trustees who have gone above and beyond with all their time and effort in overseeing their property management responsibilities. Kid's Church every Sunday with so many happy faces walking down the aisle to participate therein. New members joining the church. The huge success of the Family and Children's Ministries program and the attraction it has become for town residents. And lastly, for our Interim Minister, Susan Murtha: Many thanks for ALL the time, effort, energy and skill brought to First Church in guiding, poking, encouraging, and leading us toward a new future. We couldn't be where we are today, without her! We have already received many of our Christmas presents during the course of this last year. We have so very much for which to thank God. Let us keep up the good, diligent and hard work as we prepare to continue progress during the new year.

MERRY CHRISTMAS, to all!!  
Richard A. Prescott, Moderator



## **Christmas Trimming Bee and Wreath-Making at the First Church of Christ Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm.**

You are cordially invited to make a wreath - or learn to make a wreath – which will decorate the church during the Christmas season. Fresh greens, wire frames, wire, and bows will be provided.

**Please bring your own gloves and hand garden clippers/pruners.**

Families with youngsters are invited to hang artificial wreaths and place electric candles on each window in the sanctuary. Guidance will be provided.

The outside Christmas tree will light at dusk.

Deck the Halls!!



### **Poinsettia Orders**



In this advent season we are taking orders for poinsettias to fill our sanctuary for Christmas. The poinsettias are \$16 each. You can find order forms in the Parish House and the Sanctuary. Please submit your orders and checks to the office before December 13th!

### **Volunteer Gardeners at the FCCW**

Stefany, Georgia, Kit, and Sarah Jane each ‘adopted’ a patch of the flower garden behind the church this year where they banished the mug wort, bittersweet, and other weeds. New flowers were planted and Jesse dug in a darling little Christmas tree that was donated by the Collin’s family. Frequent watering has been required because of the drought.

Please join me in thanking these volunteer gardeners for their extraordinary efforts - and be prepared for a glorious spring garden in 2025.

Joyce Simpson  
Buildings and Grounds



# Troop 907 Pancake Breakfast

December 7th  
8:00AM to 12:00PM

*Plus, see Santa!*



Serving:  
-Pancakes  
-Sausage  
-Bacon  
-Orange Juice  
-Coffee

Two Seating times  
8:00am -9:30am  
9:30am-11:00am



First Church of Christ, Meetinghouse Lane,  
Woodbridge

Costs: Adults- Online \$12 at door \$15  
Kids-\$5

[https://my.cheddarup.com/c/  
troop-907-pancake-breakfast/  
items?cart](https://my.cheddarup.com/c/troop-907-pancake-breakfast/items?cart)



After the pancake breakfast, all are invited to stay for  
Troop 907 Winter Court of Honor @ 12 pm.

Best wishes,  
**Rich Forselius**  
[forselius@snet.net](mailto:forselius@snet.net)



# *Holiday Family Fun*

Sat, Dec. 14 at 10:30 -12 noon

Parish House  
5 Meetinghouse Lane,  
Woodbridge CT

*Sing  
Along* with Michele Urban

**Make Gingerbread Houses**

**Cookie Decorating**

**Craft Ornaments**

Contact 203-936-9356





## 2024 Christmas Offering

### WOODBIDGE HUMAN SERVICES

At Christmas we want to give not only to loved ones and friends, but also to people in need. Did you know that there are approximately 100 families in Woodbridge in need of food, fuel, funds for an electric bill, and/or a critical installation such as a handicap ramp? This Christmas Eve, First Church Woodbridge will give its offering to Woodbridge Human Services to help our Woodbridge neighbors in need!



**First Church of Christ Woodbridge**  
**All are Welcome**



**Christmas Eve 2024**  
**All Ages Worship Service**  
**3:30pm**

**Our 2024 Christmas Offering will go to Woodbridge Human Services to provide for food and fuel to Woodbridge families in need.**

### FCCW OFFICE HOURS

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

### WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

All are welcome to join our weekly Bible Study every Wednesday at 11 a.m. in the Parish House

### PARISHIONER DEADLINE

Articles and photos for the January edition of *The Parishioner* are due by Wednesday December 18th  
\*Please submit materials by email [office@uccw.org](mailto:office@uccw.org)

### WORSHIP SERVICE

All are invited to gather in the Meetinghouse for our 10:00 a.m. worship service. For participation via Zoom, see our website - [uccw.org](http://uccw.org)

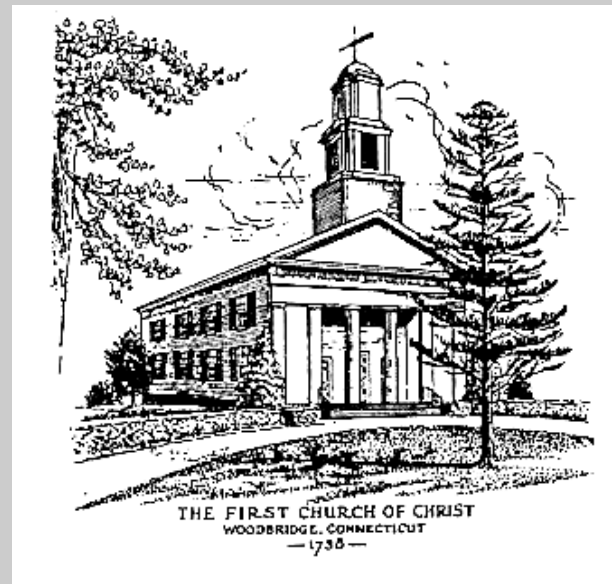
### MARKING LIFE'S PASSAGES

Debra (Deb) Shee, passed away on November 1, 2024. Deb was a cherished member of her community and will be missed tremendously.

Friends are invited to a Memorial Service on Saturday, December 14 at 1 PM at the First Church of Christ, 5 Meetinghouse Lane, Woodbridge, CT. Deb's memory and legacy will continue to be honored by her family, friends, and all who were fortunate enough to know her.

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.



**Interim Minister:** Rev. Susan Murtha ([pastorsusan@uccw.org](mailto:pastorsusan@uccw.org)) (203) 936-9356  
**Pastoral Care:** Rev. Janice Touloukian ([jantouloukian@gmail.com](mailto:jantouloukian@gmail.com)) (203) 915-1510  
**Office Administrator:** Jill Fahrback ([office@uccw.org](mailto:office@uccw.org)) (203) 389-2119  
**Sexton/Custodian:** Bob Turner  
**Coordinator for Children's Ministries:** Nicole Giannetta & Anna Haep

# December 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1</p> <p>10:00 am Worship 10:00am AA 10:10 am Kids Play</p>	<p>2</p> <p>6:00 pm Church Council 7:00 pm Search Committee 7:30 pm Lamp Post Group AA</p>	<p>3</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 6:30 pm Choir Practice 7:30 pm AA 7:30 pm AI-Anon</p>	<p>4</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>5</p> <p>2:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 6:30 pm Deacons 7:00 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p> <p>8:00 am Troop 907 Pancake Breakfast 9:30 am Musical Folk 11:00 am Scouts Court of Honor 2:00 pm Trimming Bee</p>
<p>8</p> <p>10:00 am Worship 10:00 am AA 10:10 am Kids Church 3:30 pm Girl Scouts</p>	<p>9</p> <p>1:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 7:00 pm Search Committee 7:30 pm Lamp Post Group AA</p>	<p>10</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 6:30 pm Choir Practice 7:30 pm AA 7:30 pm AI-Anon</p>	<p>11</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>12</p> <p>2:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 7:00 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 10:30 am Holiday Family Fun Event 1:00 pm Memorial Service for Deb Shee 2:00 pm Reception</p>
<p>15</p> <p>10:00 am Worship 10:00 am AA 10:10 am Kids Church</p>	<p>16</p> <p>1:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 7:00 pm Search Committee 7:30 pm Lamp Post Group AA</p>	<p>17</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 6:30 pm Choir Practice 7:30 pm AA 7:30 pm AI-Anon</p>	<p>18</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>19</p> <p>2:00 pm Neighborhood Music School 7:00 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk</p>
<p>22</p> <p>10:00 am Worship 10:00 am AA 10:10 am Kids Church 3:30 pm Girl Scouts</p>	<p>23</p> <p>7:00 pm Search Committee 7:30 pm Lamp Post Group AA</p>	<p>24</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 3:30 pm Christmas Eve Service 7:30 pm AA 7:30 pm AI-Anon</p>	<p>25</p> <p><b>** Merry Christmas! **</b></p>	<p>26</p> <p>7:00 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk</p>
<p>29</p> <p>10:00 am Worship 10:00 am AA 10:10 am Kids Church</p>	<p>30</p> <p>7:00 pm Search Committee 7:30 pm Lamp Post Group AA</p>	<p>31</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk 6:30 pm Choir Practice 7:30 pm AA 7:30 pm AI-Anon</p>	<p>1</p> <p><b>** New Year's Day **</b></p>	<p>2</p> <p>7:00 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p> <p>9:30 am Musical Folk</p>

**Key**

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

\*\* The church office will be closed Dec. 24th and 25th for Christmas and Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> for New Years Day