

THE PARISHIONER

NOVEMBER 2022

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

What's happening with children's ministries in mainline Protestant churches?

I'm glad you asked! For as long as I can remember, I've been passionate about children's ministries – both engaging in them and paying close attention to their changing shape. Long before the pandemic, major shifts in our culture impacted church participation. In particular, when religious affiliation was no longer a cultural expectation (circa 60 years ago in the 1960's), most mainline Protestant congregations experienced a slow but steady decline in numbers. While some mainline leaders grasped new visions and practices to reach the next generation, the majority just kept insisting upon their traditional ways. And then came the pandemic. While devastating in so many ways, the inability to gather indoors, led some of our churches to look outward, beyond the church's doors; they adapted their fledgling Sunday School to regular outdoor and online gatherings, thereby inviting and engaging many families in their community. Now, emerging from the pandemic, the churches that lost their last bit of younger generations are looking anew at their children's ministries. Maybe it goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway: engaging meaningful children's ministries means understanding parents and rethinking how to care for them in meaningful, faith-filled ways. With that in mind, maybe the old models no longer fit today's generation of parents. While no one article can give all the answers, some can and do ask the right questions; below is an article that asks a few good questions!

So, Your Church Wants More Young Families?

By Rev. Dr. Anna Hall



When I help churches through our Church Vitality Assessment, there is one comment that I see again and again.

“We need more young families.”

I also hear “We need younger folks to serve in leadership roles,” and “We are declining because of a lack of young families, children, and youth.” I know that this challenge is top of mind for so many of you out there trying to live into God's calling in a time of national church decline. It can be hard when you believe a healthy church is generationally diverse and you look out on Sunday mornings and see only gray hair. While I believe that God has a calling for every church, no matter what color your hair or what your age bracket, I completely understand the anxiety caused by seeing your beloved congregation age.

However, when I read these statements by members of churches that are already struggling to minister to their existing members, much less their community, I have to wonder if they actually know any young families. You see, the young families I know in my networks of friends and relations are struggling. They are stretched so thin they are near the breaking point.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

A study by researchers at Ohio State University shows that parental burnout may be at an all-time high these days. Some of this increase is due to the pandemic, but studies as far back as 2017 cite rising burnout rates, simply because of the ever-increasing demands of modern parenting. As many as 66% of parents experienced symptoms of parental burnout during 2021. Mothers were particularly affected along with parents of children who have special needs. Burnout like this is strongly associated with parental depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. Parents are more isolated than ever from community and family support, feeling like they have to do everything on their own. They feel torn between doing a good job at work and being a good parent. Simply put, these parents need help.

Yet the churches I hear saying the most about young families are also saying that they are tired and wanting to pass the baton of work and leadership to a new generation. They see young families as a source of help to them as they age, without considering the great needs of any family with school-age children right now. Trust me when I say, these young families that I know do not have the capacity to take on one new thing. Some of my friends and acquaintances with young children are or have been involved with churches, and too often I hear stories of them being offered no help and support at all, while being asked to serve in leadership year after year without a break. Can you blame them for taking church off the “to-do” list?

If there was one question I would ask any church that wants more young families, it would be this:

Why do you want them?

I might go on to ask:

Do you want them simply to help you do your work? Or are you called to minister to them?

If the answer is the latter (and I truly hope it is), I invite you to first consider what the families in your neighborhood actually need. And the best way to do that is to ask them. When was the last time you reached out to your neighbors to simply ask: What do you need? And how can we help?

Of course, this doesn't only apply to young families, these are great questions to ask all of our neighbors if we seek to love them as ourselves. The key here is seeing your neighbors as more than fodder for the survival of your church. It means seeing each and every one of them as beloved children of God. It means loving your neighbors, even when their needs far outweigh anything they can offer in time or service.

This is the great commandment. How will you live into it today?

At First Church Woodbridge we have launched an experiment: Forest Vandeflor and I are creating monthly events for families with children in the hopes of getting to know them and ministering to them. We're off to a great start. ***Now I have a question for you: would you like to be part of it?*** We need a team of people to take on a variety of small tasks. If you have just two hours (in any given month), we have a spot for you! Please reach out to me – in-person, by phone, or by email – if you want to be part of this team-experiment. Excited!

Blessings,

Rev. Susan

FCCW CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT

NOVEMBER 2022

The FCCW Church Council met, with a quorum present on Monday, October 3, 2022, in the Board Room.

After the opening prayer given by Rev. Murtha, she reported that Trustees are continuing to review and discuss Robert Sheiman's report regarding alternative, future uses of the Parish House. He is presently obtaining cost estimates on upgrading the building to make it marketable for rental uses as well as installation of air conditioning to make it a year-round use facility. While all reports are presently being presented to and approved by Trustees, all final decisions, regarding refurbishing and repurposing, will be made by members at a congregational meeting. Rev. Murtha also provided a preliminary overview of the search process for a settled full or part-time minister. She will make a presentation at the October 16th "steps" session. She also reported that The Rev. Michael Ciba, UCC Southern New England Conference, has graciously accepted an invitation by Rev. Murtha to speak with us at a special after church session on October 30th regarding the value of and role played by the conference in the search process.

The Treasurer's detailed report indicated that pledges are down somewhat for August and to some degree, year to date. Council discussed ideas regarding contacting all members with friendly reminders to fulfill their pledges, as we near the end of our fiscal year. Expenses for August exceeded income. Trustees reported on the Sheiman report being reviewed and discussed. They also approved an increase in the Rev. Murtha's hours from 25 to 32 per week, at the request of the Search & Support Committee. This is due to the fact that she has been devoting more time than originally planned to fulfill and meet our needs as we move forward with plans for repurposing.

The creation of an Ad Hoc Stewardship Committee was voted on and approved for 2022-23. This committee will review the status of pledges to date and plan and promote the pledge campaign for 2023. Individual members will be contacted to assist with both efforts. The Personnel Committee reported that Forest Vandeflor has begun working on a Children's Ministry program under Rev. Murtha's direction and guidance. This is much needed and long discussed effort to provide religious education programing for the children of our membership and community. A new FCCW staff Covid policy formulated by Rev. Murtha with input from members has been developed and approved by Trustees. Deacons reported that there will be an Interfaith Service held at our church on Monday, November 21, with a reception coordinated by FCCW to follow. Volunteers needed! A new microphone system for the Meetinghouse which has been approved by Trustees will be reviewed for a planned installation, in cooperation with the Technical Committee. Also, Deacon's will be contacting former Deacons to ask if they would again become members, as their membership has become limited.

A written Christian Service report was presented as to organizations to which funding is being granted and the overall criteria used by CS in making decisions regarding why organizations were given donations. The Music Committee reported that Nenad, FCCW organist, will again give a concert in November. The possibility of sponsoring a Christmas Carol Sing was discussed. Maybe it could be held outdoors on the Green with a fire pit, which the Boy Scout Troop would provide. More discussion is needed, with a final decision in November. Nominations for new members of the Nominating Committee must be made soon in order for presentation at the January Congregational meeting. The Bylaws Committee reported that while the new Bylaws have been approved and will soon be distributed, there is already a call for reviewing those sections dealing with the audit and the preliminary budget time frame. These matters will soon be reviewed. Technical Committee reported that two new air purifiers have been purchased for installation in the two staff offices in the Parish House. Wi-Fi strength in our facilities could be better and is being investigated presently.

Search & Support reviewed Rev. Murtha's request for increased hours and approved them with a recommendation to Trustees. The Boy Scout report noted that over \$1000 had been cleared by their latest garden sale. They provided support and assistance to the church at the Pie ala Mode event and will be working on Woodbridge's food drive. They will also be working in cooperation with Hamden Scouts in a Christmas tree sale in Hamden.

When we return to Standard Time in November, all Council Meetings will be conducted at mid-day meeting times. The new schedule will begin in November and last until March 2023. The next Council meeting will be held at 12:30 PM, November 7, 2022, in the Parish House Board Room.

SPECIAL NOTE, PLEASE: Be it called "Stewardship" or "Season Of Giving," we at FCCW are at that special time of year when we are called upon for the pledging of money for the financial support of our facilities and mission for the year 2023. We have accomplished a great deal of progress this past year, in repurposing our church's future direction under the guidance of our Interim Senior Pastor, Rev. Susan Murtha. There will be a great deal of continued work in 2023 to continue along this path and to accomplish and implement our hopes, dreams, and plans. No need to go into details, you've heard them all. However, the church needs the financial support of everyone who reads this publication, whether you regularly attend and participate in services, events and/or meetings, or not! 2023 will be a pivotal year in the long, long, long history of First Church! Please make a financial pledge and give serious consideration to increasing your present pledge by 40%. Yes, these are tough financial times for us all, but think how much tougher they might be if you didn't have your First Church to be there for you! Return your completed pledge card today. And if you did not receive one, please call the church office and ask that one be sent to you. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted, Richard A. Prescott, Moderator

Thank you and Bless you!

To all who helped launch children's ministries at First Church,

Thank you and bless you for the time, care, and effort you gave to launching our children's ministries this fall. While our gifted Project Leader for Children's Ministries, Forest Vandeflor, created the events and recruited robust teams of youth volunteers, these couldn't have happened without all your care-filled work behind the scenes – before, during, and after “Face Painting” and “Monster Bash.” ...

Julie Hultgren for being our adult volunteer and for putting up flyers around town (and meeting some very welcoming people along the way!);

Richard Jeynes for braving the task of handing out flyers to shoppers at Stop & Shop and learning best practices (seven times, on various days/time slots!);

Nancy Dickgiesser for graciously offering to do the shopping for ingredients and supplies (and for finding another person to do this when you were sick at home!);

Stefany Schultz for shopping for all the ingredients and supplies (at four different stores!);

Al Jarvis for making amazing indoor artwork and triaging with Bobbi Griffith to create a beautiful outdoor sign to welcome folks indoors (in the rain!);

Bobbie Griffith for offering to help, personally inviting friends and neighbors and for coming up with multiple creative solutions to unanticipated needs (and smiling the whole time!);

Joyce Simpson and Jesse Hubbard for being “Safe Church” accompanists to Forest and me (when I asked on short notice!);

Janice Touloukian for showing up to support us (and sending me a note of affirmation afterwards!)

Thank you and bless you! **May you and others feel inspired to contribute to our next gatherings for children in Woodbridge.** Stay-tuned!

All blessings,

Rev. Susan

*****MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS!*****

INTERFAITH THANKSGIVING SERVICE

The First Church of Christ, Woodbridge, will host this year's annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service on Monday, November 21, 2022 at 7:00 PM. It is a wonderful tradition that welcomes the greater community, and everyone is encouraged to attend. There will be a reception immediately following the service in the church parish hall. Join us in starting Thanksgiving week in the spirit of gratefulness.





New Hope AFG Woodbridge

Please join us to celebrate our 34th Anniversary

Date: Tuesday November 1st, 2022

Time: 7:00 pm Light Dinner and Fellowship

7:30 pm Alateen, AA and Al-Anon Speakers

Place: First Church of Christ Parish House

5 Meeting House Lane, Woodbridge, CT

We are a hybrid meeting, so the Anniversary will also be hybrid

To Join us via Zoom: Meeting ID # 827 1432 4838

Finger foods & Raffle items appreciated (make it/bake it/grow it or CAL)



NEW DATE

An All-Church Gathering
First Church Woodbridge

NEXT STEPS Part 11

Welcome Rev. Dr. Michael Ciba –
your Regional Minister from the
Southern New England Conference
of the United Church of Christ

**What is the Southern New England Conference
of the UCC & how can it help you strengthen
your church & how can it help you in your
search/call process?**

**Sunday, November 6, 2022
11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. (1 hour)**

Parish Hall or via Zoom

NEXT STEPS Part 11 Zoom Link

Meeting ID: 965 8397 2550

(646) 558-8656

**Please save the date & join us
for this special discussion + coffee & snacks!**

FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST
5 Meetinghouse Lane, Woodbridge

Classical MUSIC CONCERT



Nenad Iovic



Filip Tomic

**NOVEMBER 19th
at 4 PM**

reception
to follow



Join us for a family focused event! 2:00 to 3:00 pm

Words by Rev. Susan Murtha Songs by Michele Urban of My Music Room Games by Forest Vandeflor

How can we sing and say thanks in the season of thanksgiving?

Sunday | First Church of Christ
NOVEMBER | Woodbridge
20TH | 5 Meetinghouse Lane

Contact 203-936-9356

FCCW Trimming Bee

Help us Deck the Halls!

Saturday, December 3 at 2 pm

If you would like to donate greens,
please contact Jesse Hubbard:

jwinhubb@gmail.com

No Hemlock please!

Greens Needed: Yew, Spruce,

Juniper (red cedar), Holly, pine and fir.



Blessing our 2023 Pledges

~ ~ *Sunday, November 6th* ~ ~

Please bring your pledge card to our All-Saints' Day
worship service!

We'll gather them in, along with the Sunday offering,
and bless these gifts!

If you've already sent in your pledge,
thank you and bless you, in advance!



The questions have been asked by more than a few, "Why the Granite Memorial Bench?" "Why the First Church of Christ, Woodbridge, and the Memorial Garden?"

My paternal grandparents are buried in Dorchester, MA. My maternal grandparents and my mother and father are buried in the Bushnell Family plot in the West Cemetery, Madison. I have never visited the cemetery in Dorchester. I have driven by the West Cemetery on the way to other events and destinations many times and went in perhaps once. We were never "cemetery people."

For more than 50 years, I have known the First Church of Christ, Woodbridge as a place of festivals and as a sanctuary in grief, a place of respite, comfort, and support at life's darkest moments. I came to know the Memorial Garden during the dedication of the Gordon Family Bench. I had known and admired Bob Gordon for his business acumen and his devoted service to the Church, having served in the 1970's with him on the Ecclesiastical Society's Committee. I was struck by the pride which his family took in that simple but enduring gift during its dedication in that small but inviting and engaging space.

So, the decision to add another bench to the Memorial Park was very simple! It has been joyfully received by our and Eric's friends, one of who has promised to visit it, and sit down to have a cigar with Eric, their valued pastime for perhaps 30 years. And consider the bench's physical impact. The life expectancy of granite is reportedly 1,500 years!

Carl Lindskog



Congratulations to Susan Stoddard's son, Bryan Oemier and his wife, Cara, in the birth of their baby girl, **Josephine Oemier**, on October 12th. Many blessings to Susan, Bryan, Cara, Josephine, and the rest of the family!

Congratulations to Faye and Eaton Chen and their family! A new grandson, **Declan Campbell Whitney**, was welcomed into the world on October 13th.



Pie ala Mode and Face Painting

The aroma of warm apple pie and mulled apple cider hung in the air in front of the Parish House as First Church held its second Pie ala Mode event on Saturday, October 8, featuring apple pie and ice cream, with free scoops of ice cream for children, and the addition this year of hot as well as cold cider, the former being popular on what turned out to be a clear but crisp day. An additional draw was face painting for kids of all ages. The unexpected competition from food associated with the Woodbridge Road Race kept our numbers down from last year, but between sales on the day and post event sales to church members we managed to break even this year, a step up from the inaugural event in 2021. The Pie ala Mode was a great opportunity for the church community to come together in fellowship and community outreach to the wider Woodbridge community.

We would like to thank everyone involved with the event. Walt and Ethel Crosby shopped for the pies and manned the ticket and cash sales table. Sharon Finkenauer, Pat Taylor, Kathleen Foster and Nancy Dickgiesser sliced the pies and joined Rich Jaynes, Jack Jones, Roger Calistro, Chris Hubbard, Eaton Chen, Amy Catalano, Kit Engstrom and Stefany Schulz on serving and/or resupplying the serving tables. Bill More mulled the hot cider. Al Jarvis worked to drum up interest from participants and observers of the road race and joined Sue Stoddard in giving tours of the Sanctuary. Tom Luciani and the parents and scouts of Troop 907 helped with set-up and clean-up and Eileen Rickel shopped for the ice cream. Janice Touloukian shopped for the cider while Henry Gates procured the bottled water. Stefany took primary responsibility for distributing and picking up our advertising signs and posting fliers around town along with Sharon, and Joyce Simpson. Faye Chen provided music with an organ recital during part the day. Forest VandeFlor organized the face painting that accompanied the event aided by her friends, along with Rev. Susan Murtha and Julie Hultgren. As always Lisa Tartaglino and Bob Turner provided support throughout the planning and execution of the event including event preparation and advertising. Nancy, Stefany & Forest supplied the photographs that are on display in the Parish House. Thanks also to all those who agreed to help out on the original event date, but who were unavailable on the 8th.

Joyce Simpson & Bill More



Troop 907 Update - November 2022

BSA Scout Troop 907, sponsored by the Woodbridge First Church of Christ, is a regional troop and continues with significant activity year-round. The troop offers fellowship in life and scouting. Scouting is an ongoing adventure that is youth-led and overseen by trained scout leaders. Troop 907, being an active outdoor unit, is planning adventures this fall and winter including canoeing on the Connecticut River.

Fall is the season of harvest, beauty and fellowship all over our great country. The season starts with Labor Day and ends with the Thanksgiving through Christmas year-end holiday season. In scouting this is no different, but fellowship in scouting includes connecting to community and supporting those less fortunate. This is why the fall has a heavy community service emphasis in Troop 907. The fall season started in September with volunteering at the New Haven Labor Day Road Race. In October the troop supported the Woodbridge Road Race & First Church, our charter organization's pie-ala-mode sale.

Service is a cornerstone of scouting, and the best service is to your local community and residents that are in need one way or another. The troop spends a lot of fall weekends giving back to others. Not only does this build better local relations but a sense of pride and fellowship among our scouts. Adult leaders and parents assisted with the Woodbridge Camp Whiting maintenance work party on October 16. This is an annual event focused on sprucing up the camp and preparing firewood for all campers throughout the winter.



On the evening of October 22, the troop camped with Pack 902 at Camp Whiting in Woodbridge. Running the Pack Bobcat ceremony is also a long-standing Troop 907 tradition. At this November 13 event, new scouts are initiated into the pack. Troop 907 assisted in late October with the Woodbridge Scouting for Food event. Flyers were circulated on October 23, and food pickup occurred all around town October 29 in the morning. Food was appropriately packed into boxes at the Woodbridge Center for distribution to those in need the same day. Thanks to those who made donations!

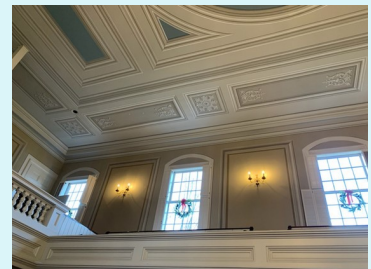
Scouts will be supporting the Christmas Bazaar at Our Lady of the Assumption Church on November 12. Scouts will be setting up for the crafters and breaking down tables and chairs in two shifts. Troop 907 scouts enjoy cooking and on Saturday, November, scouts will be holding their Family Holiday Feast. This involves scouts cooking turkeys and the fixings outside at Camp Whiting and serving their families the feast. Thursday, January 19, 2023, will be the Winter Scout Court of Honor in the First Church Parish House at which advancement and merit badges are awarded.

If you are aware of a prospective scout and if you are interested in learning more about how scouting builds pride and fellowship in youth, Troop 907 holds ongoing open houses at the Thursday 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM meetings at the First Church of Christ, rear Parish House entrance. Three of our scouts made the Eagle rank in 2022 and several potential scouts have come by recently. It is always a good time for a new scout to join and learn skills not available elsewhere. You may contact us on our website. www.troop907.org.

Submitted by Troop Committee Chair and Chartered Organization Representative, Rich Forselius

SANCTUARY RESTORATION UPDATE. OCTOBER 25, 2022

The State Historic Preservation Office application for 50% matching funding for the completion of the sanctuary became available today and must be completed and submitted by December 2, 2022. The John Canning Company will complete the decorative work in the apse and on the walls and will oversee the subcontractors. The scope of work and the budget negotiations with Canning was concluded this week and it was brought to the trustees meeting where it was given final approval.



Even though a formal sanctuary fund-raising campaign will not begin until the SHPO grant is secured, the Sanctuary Fund continues to accept donations. If donating to the Sanctuary Fund in 2022 (versus 2023) is advantageous to your tax situation, please consider contributing before the end of this year. A \$1 for \$1 match for the next \$9K donated to the Fund is currently available - which will double the impact of any gift (large or small).

In faith,

The Sanctuary Committee

Quote of the month: "Places of worship reflect the values of a community and are important social symbols".

FCCW OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday

8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Submission Due Date

Articles and photos for the **December 2022** Edition of *The Parishioner* are due by **Monday, November 21.**

*Please submit articles and photos by email.
office@uccw.org

If you would like assistance regarding Zoom, live stream, or website accessibility, please contact Lisa.
office@uccw.org

Weekly Bible Study



All are welcome to visit our Weekly Bible Study every Wednesday morning at 10 a.m. in the Parish House. Please visit the Bible Study page on our website for more information and a list of weekly readings.

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



ZOOM INVITATIONS

Everyone is encouraged to gather at the Meetinghouse for the 10:00 a.m. Sunday Service!

An archive of past recordings are available 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 of our Worship Services.



Marking Life's Passages

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

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

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

Pastor Emeritus: Rev. Boyd M. Johnson, Jr.

Office Administrator: Lisa Tartaglino (office@uccw.org)

Sexton/Custodian: Bob Turner

The Parishioner

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Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.

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Email: office@uccw.org

Website: www.uccw.org —

FB: www.facebook.com/uccwoodbridge

November 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 New Hope Anniversary Mtg. 7 pm (AA)	2 Musical Folk 9:30 Bible Study 10 am NMS – 3 to 6:30 pm WPA Fall Mtg. 7 pm	3 NMS 2-7:45 Boy Scouts 7 pm Deacons Mtg.	4 NMS 2-7	5 Musical Folk 9:30
6 10 am Church Worship Service Next Steps Part 11	7 Lamppost group – 7:30 pm Council – 12:30	8 Alateen 7 pm Al-anon/AA 7:30 Choir Prac. 6:30	9 Musical Folk 9:30 Bible Study 10 am NMS – 3 to 6:30 pm	10 NMS 2-7:45 Boy Scouts 7 pm	11 NMS 2-7	12 Musical Folk 9:30
13 10 am Church Worship Service	14 Lamppost group – 7:30 pm S&R – 6:30(zoom)	15 Alateen 7 pm Al-anon/AA 7:30 Choir Prac. 6:30	16 Musical Folk 9:30 Bible Study 10 am NMS – 3 to 6:30 pm	17 NMS 2-7:45 Boy Scouts 7 pm	18 NMS 2-7	19 Classical Music Concert 4 pm
20 10 am Church Worship Service Sing & Say Thanks 2 pm	21 Lamppost group – 7:30 pm Interfaith Service 7 pm	22 Alateen 7 pm Al-anon/AA 7:30 Choir Prac. 6:30 Willows – 10:30	23 Bible Study 10 am NMS – 3 to 6:30 pm	24 THANKSGIVING DAY	25 NMS 2-7	26
27 10 am Church Worship Service	28 Lamppost group – 7:30 pm	29 Alateen 7 pm Al-anon/AA 7:30 Choir Prac. 6:30	30 Bible Study 10 am NMS – 3 to 6:30 pm			