

the
little
Church
that can...

The Spirit ~ March/April 2024 **First Congregational Church of Norwich**

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Deacons Message



Here is the schedule for Holy Week:

Sunday, March 24th, 10 a.m. – Blessing of the Palms

10:00 a.m. at First Congregational Church

Thursday, March 28th – Maundy Thursday

6 p.m. gather in Speerli Hall for Soup and Bread followed by Service of Tenebrae about 7 p.m.

Friday, March 29th – Way of the Cross

6 p.m. gather at Chelsea Parade. Walk along Broadway to City Hall. We will stop at each station for reflection, song, and prayer.

Saturday, March 30th

Carry Your Cross – Walk for the Lord
10 a.m.. starting at First Congregational Church in Norwich or you can join us along our route at one of the designated stopping points (to be announced). Light refreshments served in Speerli Hall following the walk.

Sunday, March 31st

6 a.m. Son-Rise Service – Confirmands, along with Deacon John Ross, will lead the service. Breakfast Bake Sale and hot beverage follows.

10 a.m. Easter Service – No Coffee Hour

Blessings of Easter to all,
Bill Shaw, Deacons Committee Chair

Online Services

We post our services on Facebook. If you do not have a Facebook account, you may still view the services by going to our website...

<http://www.firstcongregationalchurchofnorwich.com>

... or use this link on your phone or computer.

<https://www.facebook.com/348587508575879/video/s/553387415326278>

MARCH CALENDAR

- 24 Palm Sunday (Deacons)
Council Meeting
- 28 Maundy Thursday
Soup and Bread - Service of Tenebrae
- 29 Good Friday – Office Closed
Way of the Cross at Chelsea Parade
- 30 Carry Your Cross – Walk for the Lord
- 31 Son-Rise Service at Avery Chapel
Son-Rise Breakfast Bake Sale (Events)
Easter Sunday Service in Sanctuary
Community Meal at St Mark (Missions)

APRIL CALENDAR

- 7 Communion Sunday (Deacons)
Confirmation Ethnic Meal at Coffee Hour
- 13 Ham & Bean Dinner (Events)
- 14 Board of Deacons Meeting
- 20 Rummage Sale- Clothes/Shoes (Events)
- 21 Deacons serve Coffee Hour
Community Meal at St Mark (Missions)
- 27 Marketplace & Pop-Up Vendor (Events)
- 28 Council Meeting

Weekly Activities:

- Mondays- Cookie Prep for Fair (Jean Stott)
- Tuesdays- Crafting in the Loft (Judy Dailey)
- Wednesdays- Walking Group



April Happy Birthday

Wishing Barry Black, Tim Job, Lindsay Twitchell, Victoria McAvay, Sarah Gray, Cole Shaw, Elizabeth Stott, Vincent Zercie, Bill Shaw, Azelea Bauza, and all of our April Birthday friends and church family members a wonderful day filled with happy times and great memories.

April Happy Anniversary

Wishing a Happy Anniversary to Bill & Joyce Sullivan, and all of our members, family and friends who are celebrating years of love and commitment to each other in April. May your days continue to be filled with love and happiness.

Helping Those in Need



With your help, the Pastor's Discretionary Fund assists people in need within our local community. If you feel so led, would you donate?

If you are paying by check, please make it payable to First Congregational Church (memo Pastor's Fund). Envelopes are available in the church pews.

We customarily dispense two \$25 gift cards from Stop & Shop. The gift cards allow people to purchase items such as food, gas, and bus passes for transportation.

We have been unable to offer any assistance since January 30th. The Fund only gets replenished when folks donate. Please consider contributing support to those in need.

Community Food Locker

We donate to St. Vincent DePaul Soup Kitchen monthly. Please drop your items in the Speerli Hall library during church office hours, or on Sunday mornings before or after church services.

Listed below are some of the non-perishable items needed: macaroni & cheese, canned tuna, canned meats, pasta, sauce, rice, peanut butter, soups, boxed cereal, beans, canned veggies, canned potatoes, canned pasta. There is also a need for deodorant, shampoo, razors, toothpaste, and toilet paper.

Prayer Shawls

We have Prayer Shawls that were made by church members and prayed upon to give you comfort. If you would like a Prayer Shawl, please call the office at 860-889-9520.

91st Meetinghouse Rocks Fair



We are still looking for people to volunteer to help the day of Fair, especially for setup and takedown. Also, if you know of anyone interested in being a vendor, please reach out to Amanda or Debbie. There are also applications in the office.

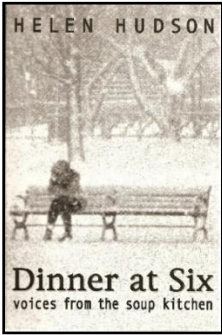
Debbie and Amanda have been working on filling ten raffle baskets. Fair Basket Themes include:

Fall Basket, Game Basket, Picnic & Summer Basket, Dog & Cat Basket, Spa Basket, Coffee Tea & Breakfast Basket, Unisex Baby Basket, Wine Basket, Garden Basket, and Lottery Ticket Basket.

We are still looking for monetary donations, gift cards, and scratch lottery tickets. If you have any questions please reach out. Thank you.

~ Amanda Flaherty and Debbie Zito, Co-Chairs

Missions Committee



Missions has a few items available for purchase:

Dinner at Six This book is a true story based on a Rhode Island soup kitchen. We have (3) copies available for \$10 each. Proceeds will go to the St. Vincent DePaul Soup Kitchen.

We also have First Congregational Church T-shirts and Sweatshirts for sale, sizes listed below.

Sweatshirts \$20 each:

Adult Sweatshirts: (2) 2XL, (1) XL

Childrens Sweatshirts: (2) Medium, (3) Small

T-shirts \$8 each:

Childrens: (1) Large, (3) Medium

Please contact Sue Sanborn if you are interested in purchasing a book or clothing.

Missions continues to serve Grab and Go Community Meals at St. Mark's. FCC is providing the main dish on April 21st. Helpers are always welcome.

Thank you for all the past support. We look forward to working together to make a difference in our community.

~ Missions Committee
Sue Sanborn and Brenda Mellor

Rummage Sale



We are holding our annual Rummage Sale on Saturday, April 20th from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. We are accepting donations of new and slightly used clothing, rugs, bedding,

curtains, books, and jewelry starting on March 30th. Please stack items neatly in the yellow room between the library and the hall. If you have any questions, or would like to assist with the setup, during the sale, or for cleanup, please contact me at 860-608-2343.

~ Deb Zito

Confirmation Class



Above: Confirmation Class Game Night

You are invited to the Confirmation Class Ethnic Potluck Luncheon!

On April 7th, Family Sunday, the members of the Confirmation Class will be hosting a potluck luncheon after church. We are asking members of the congregation to help them celebrate all our church families and their heritage by bringing something that celebrates your heritage and has traditionally been enjoyed by your families. For example, Judy Dailey's family came from Wales and settled in the Boston area. She is planning on bringing Boston Baked Beans to share at the meal.

What are some unique foods you grew up enjoying? Please bring a copy of the recipe you used to create your menu item and remember to sign up in the Library indicating what you will bring to the meal. If you do not like to bake or cook, consider donating either juice, soda, rolls, or bread for the meal.

Monthly Themes for Confirmands

- April - "Compassion and Caring for All People"
- May- "Unity- Helping Families Continue to be a Part of the Family and the Church"

Future Confirmation Activities

May 5th is Confirmand Bowling at the Ten Pin Alley after church.

June 2nd is the Confirmation Service for the class.

~ Judy Dailey

Crafty Critters

For the month of February, the Crafty Critters made \$350 in sales to help support the Church.



So much to do, so little time! We are hoping to do at least one Saturday Marketplace each month. We need your help for each of the Marketplaces, especially helping to set

up and man the booth. Sue Sanborn, who assisted Judy at the Marketplace in the past, watches her granddaughter and is unable to help on Saturdays.

We need extra hands to get things ready, work the booth, and take things down at the end of the sale. If you are available, we would be grateful for your help. Please call or text Judy at 860-460-1977 or see her at church to sign up. Below is a schedule for everyone to mark on their calendars.

Saturday Marketplace Schedule

The list below indicates the dates for each Saturday Marketplace. The market will be held outside, weather permitting, between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

April 27	May 11
June 8	July 20
September 21	October 26
November 16	December 7- 9 to 2

Please share the dates of the Marketplaces with friends and those you know make and create items that could be sold at the Marketplaces. The cost is \$20 per vendor and vendors can call or text to contact either Jean Stott at 860-705-1141 or Judy Dailey at 860-460-1977 to register for any of the dates.

Additionally, our church always has a booth for crafts at the Meetinghouse Rocks Fair. If you have crafts that you do at home and are willing to create some extras for the Fair let us know.

~ Judy Dailey

Helping Hands

Saturday Marketplaces are a challenge to do monthly. We need your help! If you do crafts at home and would be willing to create or sew items for the booth, it would be greatly appreciated. We also need someone that is willing to cut wooden items, drill holes in items, or sand to finish pre-cut items. If you like to paint, we have items that also need to have a coat of paint on them. We have the paint and the paintbrushes for you to use. Also, always be on the lookout for items you think we could create and sell in our booth.



We are looking to offer craft classes to everyone. We would also invite the public to join the classes. What kind of craft items would you be interested in learning to create? Please offer suggestions to either Judy Dailey or

Sue Sanborn. One that has been considered is jewelry art. We have collected jewelry from the congregation for several years now and have a large collection that could be used to create jewelry art. Is that something that would interest you?

Please contact Judy to volunteer or inquire about craft classes. Her phone number is 860-460-1977.

~ Judy Dailey

Quilt of Valor

We customarily award Quilts of Valor to veterans at our Meetinghouse Rocks Fair. We need to get started filling out application forms.

We would like to have our members and friends recommend a veteran that would be worthy of a Quilt of Valor. They must have served in one of the military branches, can be male or female, and must have an honorable discharge.

Please submit any veteran names and their contact information so that she can process their applications and plan for the presentations at the 91st Meetinghouse Rocks Fair.

~ Judy Dailey

Events & Fellowship

On March 3rd we held our annual Chili Cook-Off. We had 6 chilies enter the contest. We sold voting tickets at 3 for \$5.00. Our chili makers were Dave Lord, John Ross, Joel Bauza, Donna Piacenza, Ken Bly, and Jean Stott. We had a tie for 1st place – Dave Lord and Joel Bauza. 2nd place John Ross. A big thank you to all our chili makers and to all those that voted. We raised \$140 for our General Fund.

On March 9th we had our annual Corned Beef Dinner. On the menu was corned beef, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, salad, and bread. For dessert there was a choice of Irish cream cake or pistachio pudding dessert. We sold about 121 dinners. We raised \$2,020. Our expense was the corned beef at \$593.90 with all the rest of the food and supplies donated. Our net profit was \$1,426.10. We deposited \$713.05 in the General Fund and \$713.05 in the Capital Fund. Thank you everyone.

April Events



April 13th – Ham & Bean Dinner. Menu includes ham, homemade baked beans (red kidney), potato salad, coleslaw, and bread. Your choice for dessert is banana pudding, poke cake or chocolate cake with white frosting. Pre-Order Take-Out ONLY. Please call the church office with your order. Make sure you leave a message with your name, phone number and number of dinners you need; and your dessert choice(s).

April 20th – Rummage Sale (Clothes & Shoes)

April 27th – Marketplace and Pop-Up Vendors Sale

Thank you everyone for your continuing support of our church.

~ Blessings to All,
Bev Shaw, Event & Fellowship Committee

Minute with the Moderator

Dear Friends,

During Lent, more than usual, I find myself in deep reflection. Perhaps you do too.

As I sat down to write this month's column, I was temporarily distracted and lost in my thoughts. How lucky am I that I have this opportunity to write for you every month. What a privilege it has been to stand at the microphone and deliver, not one, but two sermons. I'm grateful for your kind words after a service when I've spoken or when you mention to me at Coffee Hour that you "loved the Spirit article."

I'm not sure when I became a Co-Moderator, I think I'm in my third term. I've shared with some of you that I believe there were times when I was not a strong leader, times when I could have done a better job. There have been times when I was frustrated by people's behavior. There have been times when my action or lack of action frustrated some of you. There were times in the last couple of years that I wondered if this was where I belonged. If I'm speaking transparently, I got to the point where I dreaded coming to Church. There was so much turmoil with the merge, the building repairs, the heat, it was **a lot!**

When I learned that CBC would be leaving, I was surprised by the physical reaction that I experienced. There was less tension in my neck and I would swear that my shoulders almost instantly relaxed. I felt a sense of peace returning that I had been missing for a long time. Don't get me wrong, I really loved the people, I just didn't love the work of blending two "businesses." When that was off the table, it felt like a new beginning and, if I'm being honest, it was exciting to me to see where we could go even though I knew it would be challenging. Maybe you felt a little of that too.

Many of you know that I work at Connecticut College as the Director of Computer Support. In plain English that means I lead the team of technicians that fix technology problems. When I first met Paul many years ago and I tried to explain to him what I did for a living - I shortened it to "I fix things." While some of you weren't ever shy about contacting me - after the CBC decision was made public - I heard from more of you - some offered support in any way that I might need. Some of you

(Contd. next page)

Minute with the Moderator, contd.

told me what I needed to do, some of you shared your opinions on our friends who were moving on, and some of you complained about this or that. Since February, there have been many conversations - in the pews, before and after meetings, texts, and phone calls. Over the past 4 years, we let some things fall by the wayside. In some instances, we stopped talking to each other. Even more detrimental, in some instances, we stopped listening to each other, we stopped respecting a perspective that differed from ours. I've told you many times that I believe in the power of words and because of that I try to choose mine very carefully. We're the little Church that could, right? That I "get" to have a colonoscopy. It is a privilege to be part of the leadership team at First Congregational Church as we go about "fixing" things and moving forward.

We've made some progress since January 31 and we'll keep at it.

In the message I shared on the morning of February 25, I talked about a scene in the movie *Evan Almighty*. In it, God appears at a fast-food restaurant in the shape of Morgan Freeman. A woman asks for more fries, he asks if she's ok, she shares that the crazy guy building an ark all over the news is her

husband and Morgan Freeman says let me ask you this ... "If someone prays for patience, does God give them patience or the opportunity to be patient. If someone prays for courage, does He give them courage or opportunities to be courageous? If someone prays for family to be closer, does He fill them with warm fuzzy feelings or does He give them the opportunity to love?"

I can see that some of my recent prayers have been answered with opportunities both at Church and in my life outside of church. I've been given opportunities to be patient, courageous, respectful of different opinions and to forgive - that forgive piece - there's another Sunday sermon or Spirit article.

I'm grateful to everyone who is rolling up their sleeves and helping to provide ministry, music, office support, and fundraising. Your time and your talents are a treasure.

Since it has kind of become a thing where I give you a bit of a homework assignment in my columns, here's your homework for April. As you go about your days, as you offer your prayers to God, I'm asking you to look for the opportunities that He is giving you to grow.

In Service,
Heather Romanski