

THE BELFRY CHIMES

We Prepare for Easter

Palm Sunday, April 2

10:00 a.m. Worship Service
Sermon: "I Love A Parade"

Maundy Thursday

April 6

7:00 p.m. Communion Service

Good Friday

April 7

12:00 noon, Cross Walk
The walk begins at
St. Mary Church, Freestone Ave.

Easter Sunday

April 9

6:00 a.m. Sunrise Service at the
Gazebo behind the church

10:00 a.m. Easter Worship

Sermon: "Emptiness Is Beautiful"

If you have a blooming flower in
your garden, please bring one to
the Easter service with you.

Bright Sunday

April 16

10:00 a.m. Worship Celebration

Sunday, April 23

10:00 a.m. Worship Service

Sunday, April 30

"God's Work ~ Our Hands"

On this day, there will be
no worship service.
We will go into the community to
perform deeds of kindness and
helpfulness by doing
"God's work with our hands."

A Message from Interim Pastor Julie Olmsted

Dear Friends,

I have enjoyed being with you this past month. I thank you all for your warm welcome and your responsiveness to some changes already implemented. I have appreciated the comments and shows of faith you have graciously shared in the Lenten Soup series. We have one more to go, then the joy and foreboding of Palm Sunday, followed by the passion, love and sorrow of the walk toward the cross.

Please do not miss the services of Holy Week. Easter is just not the same without Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. In this world, there is no joy quite like the joy that follows sorrow and loss. The message of Easter is not complete without our being present to the sufferings of Jesus and the suffering of the world. It is our calling as followers of Christ to brave the difficulty of connecting with those who are wounded and in need of compassion and solidarity.

After Easter comes a Sunday you may not be familiar with. It is called Bright Sunday, or Holy Humor Sunday. Rooted in ancient Christian tradition, the idea of Bright Sunday is that God played a trick on the devil by raising Jesus from the dead, and that's why we can celebrate with silly hats, jokes and all 'round fun. This occurs after the majesty of Easter morning, a much more glorious, heavenly celebration. Children love Bright Sunday and adults get to "become as little children," so big or small, young or old, please loosen up, bring a good clean joke and come to the party on April 16!

I will take a little break the following week. This is the break between churches that I decided not to take because of the holy season and the need here for a pastor to steer that. I'll be "back in the saddle" on April 30, when we all will be participating in "God's Work ~ Our Hands!"

Please enjoy the poem "The Lamb" found on Page 2 , and written by Judy Lewis, my friend in our Writing Workshop.

God's love and light to you,
Pastor Julie

The Lamb

A poem by Judy Lewis

*On my daily walk uphill in March
the first few blooms of spring
sing out in pale harmony.*

*Through wind and clouds
the light shines down
on sparkling squares of snow
laid out to dry on lawns
like huge white sheets.*

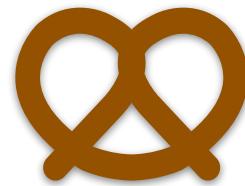
*Soon they'll melt away,
and the lamb we dreamed of will be born,
we'll return to the place
we've been waiting for,
that was here all along.*

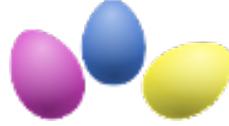
**Come One, Come All !!!
Annual Easter Bake Sale
Saturday, April 8, 2023
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon**

Cookies, cakes, pies, breads, candy ... we need all sorts of Easter treats to make this a successful fundraiser for the church!

**Drop off your items: Friday, April 7, 3-5 p.m.
Saturday, April 8, between 8:15 and 8:45 a.m.**

**Sunday, April 2, JUMBO PRETZEL SALE
During Coffee Hour
Sponsored by Christian Education Board**



Easter Egg Hunt 
**Saturday, April 8, 10:00 a.m. in the
field behind the church**
Games and Prizes for all the children!

INTERGENERATIONAL GAME NIGHT

Saturday, April 22, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Fellowship, Snacks and an Evening of Games for All Ages
Many games will be available or bring your favorite!



News for Children and Youth

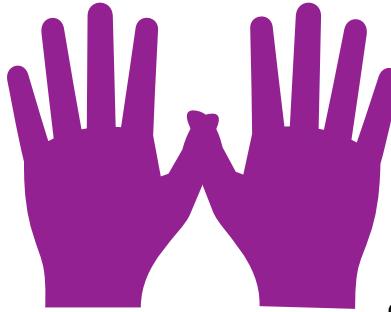
PLEASE NOTE: ON EASTER SUNDAY, children ages kindergarten through 8th grade will attend worship with their families. Infant/Toddler care will be provided for younger children as it is each Sunday.

On Sundays other than Easter, Church School is available for children in kindergarten through 8th grade. Children will begin their morning in the worship service with their families, and go to Fellowship Hall for Church School following the Children's Message.

Infant/Toddler Care will be provided in the infant/toddler area in Fellowship Hall beginning at 9:45. Parents may bring young children directly to Fellowship Hall before worship begins or anytime during worship.

Church school registration forms are available from Ann Labby.

"God's Work ~ Our Hands" Returns In April



It's time to get out the rakes, garden tools, sewing machines, flower vases, kitchen utensils and warm up your singing voices as the Missions Board is back again to sponsor "God's Work ~ Our Hands" on Sunday, April 30. On this day, rather than gathering for Sunday morning worship, our doors will open and we will venture out into the community to do "God's" work. Our church is filled with people who have so many gifts and talents and this is an intergenerational opportunity for the ENTIRE congregation to come together and join in this project.

This year, we have **FIVE** areas for you to choose from as you consider how to be involved.



Those who are handy and enjoy yard work or simple "handyman" repairs will go to the homes of people who have asked for assistance with these tasks. **YARD WORKERS ARE NEEDED!!** This is a great opportunity for high school students to complete community service hours for school.



If you love to sing, consider being part of a sing-a-long at Portland Care and Rehabilitation Center. Kasha will provide song sheets and the choir welcomes any volunteers who would like to join them.



Our church has supported "Dress A Girl" for many years, embracing their motto "every girl deserves at least one new dress in her life." Volunteers for this group will meet in Fellowship Hall and begin to make dresses. This is a great opportunity for those who enjoy sewing. The kits are provided, and all you need to bring is a sewing machine if you have one, or one will be provided.



Making flower arrangements (and deliveries) will bring a "little sunshine" to those in our congregation who may be homebound or those we want to know that we are thinking of them and want to "brighten" their day.



The fifth area is the kitchen crew and servers. Volunteers for this area would work together to come up with a menu, set up a few tables and serve lunch to those coming back from their areas of work.

No matter what your abilities or age, there are ways you can BE the "hands" of God. You may sign up in Fellowship Hall or by contacting Karen Faass. Once the details are confirmed, you will be contacted by a "mission member" and given instructions on how to proceed. T-shirts will be available to those who sign up and don't have a shirt from the "God's Work ~ Our Hands" day.

Kudos to Karen Faass and the Board of Missions for leading this important mission opportunity "right here in our backyard."



OFF WITH THE OLD ... ON WITH THE NEW !

When speaking of the roof on our beloved church building, it's time to be "off with the old" and "on the new!"

The cost of our new roof which will be installed in early summer is \$35,000. To date, we have commitments totaling \$19,000. Please consider how you can help; a donation of any amount is much appreciated.

Checks may be made payable to First Congregational Church with the notation of "Roof Fund" on the memo line. THANK YOU!!!

THANK YOU FOR HONORING THE SPECIAL PARKING REQUEST

Over the past few weeks, we have asked able-bodied worship attendees to please refrain from parking on the left side of driveway in order to leave those spaces open for worshippers who need closer parking due to health or mobility issues. The response to this request has been heartwarming!

Thank you for your assistance in making worship attendance possible for all!



The First Congregational Church of Portland, CT

United Church of Christ

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Interim Minister: Rev. Julie Olmsted

Pastor Julie's Email: jgolmsted.86@gmail.com

Pastor Julie's Phone: 937-409-1375 (Please call before 8 p.m., except in emergencies)

**Our congregation is open and affirming.
No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.**