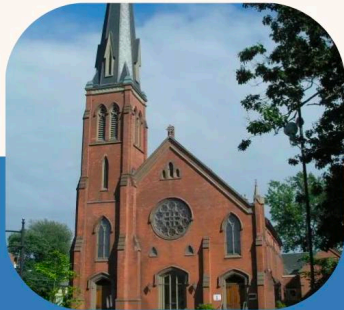


The Belfry Chimes

SUMMER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

SOUTH CHURCH
MIDDLETOWN



10:00 AM
JULY 2, 9, & 16

9 PLEASANT ST

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH, PORTLAND



10:00 AM
JULY 23, 30, & AUGUST 6

554 MAIN ST

FIRST CHURCH,
MIDDLETOWN



10:00 AM
AUGUST 13, 20, & 27

190 COURT ST

This summer, our congregation will join with the congregations of Middletown's South Church and First Church for Sunday worship services, beginning at 10:00 a.m. These services are a wonderful opportunity to join with others who share our UCC faith, to visit other churches, and to renew acquaintances from years past.

Please plan to represent our congregation by attending worship at South Church and First Church, and by all means, come when we are the host church, to extend a warm welcome to our guests.

A Message from Pastor Julie Olmsted

Dear friends,

The seasons of the church and the activities, rites and celebrations continue to roll by. A joyful and proper send-off for the dear Ann Labby, a happy and welcoming of a new "Youth Faith Formation Leader" Mary Clark (a loving student of Ann's, passing the baton), Celebration of Father's Day and a deep dive into the Kingdom ("kin-dom") of God, a glorious outdoor worship service. Meetings, in person, on Zoom, in-between, scrumptious coffee hours with happy faces and tummies. On and on goes the wheel of life in the church and in our lives.

Now we approach what is known on the church calendar as "Ordinary Time." Things slow down a bit, but they are not stopping by any means. Summer itself is a time to take stock, to nourish body and soul, to seek guidance from the Spirit as to what is worth working for and what needs letting go, of separating the wheat from the chaff. Looking long distances and seeing what might be beyond the horizon. A good time to ask, "What's missing?"

Vis-à-vis the church, it's important to ask "what's missing" vs. "what's wrong?" What's wrong can set us on a path of negative seeking and finding. What's missing moves us to be open-hearted and minded, with an honest assessment of where more effort/courage/boldness could be useful. There's a famous story about Michael Jordan, arguably the greatest basketball player ever. Michael used to sit and watch his games on recordings over and over, not to see what was wrong (he was nearly always the highest scorer), but what was missing in order to be able to win championships. He finally got it: Teamwork. Stardom was there, to be sure. But teamwork was missing. When he shared that, his team got it and began to win championships.

We have had two rich and informative renewal gatherings, that reveal a good deal about Portland First. What might be missing to move to the next level of church growth and participation? Think about and dream on these things for the next few weeks.

I will be going to UCC Synod this first weekend in July. I have never been able to go before and look forward to DRIVING with my friend and colleague Quentin Chin to Indianapolis. I plan to enjoy the workshop offerings and listening to keynote speaker Nadia Boltz-Weber. I will also have the chance to have dinner with my niece who lives in Dayton.

I hope you do make the effort to join the worshipers at South Church in Middletown for the next three Sundays (or at least one or two). It's a good sign for churches to be binding together in our love of and service to God. It makes us stronger and wiser. And it bonds each individual church closer to their own members and friends. Remember to come back HERE July 23, 30, August 6.

Please do call me if you'd like to talk. I am here with Margaret during the week (Tuesdays and Wednesdays, except for the week of July 4th, when it's Wednesday and Thursday).

God bless you and keep you safe always,

Pastor Julie

Retirement Celebration Held for Ann Labby, Director of Christian Education

On June 11, the special Christian Education Sunday worship service was devoted to celebrating Ann's 18 years as the Director of Christian Education. There was joyous laughter, heartfelt messages and tributes, and an opportunity to view a presentation by the church school students.

The following message of gratitude comes from Ann to the congregation:

Thank you all so much for the wonderful "Retirement" celebration on June 11th. It was great seeing everyone and enjoying delicious food and cake. All the gifts were overwhelming and truly appreciated. Thank you all. Here is a picture of the hand made bowl the children gave to me. I have it in a special place in my home where I see it every day and think of all of you. Thank you so much.

Sincerely,
Ann Labby



Coffee Hour: A Message from Diane Burgess



Thank you to all who hosted and provided beverages and goodies for the Sunday Coffee Hours this past spring. Your hospitality was certainly appreciated by all who attended! Looking forward to our summer worship schedule, we are having services HERE on July 23, July 30, and August 6 in combination with the Middletown First Church and South Church. After worship refreshments will be provided and hosts are needed for those three services. Find a friend and host together! If you can provide some light repast please sign up in Fellowship Hall or contact Diane Burgess. (email at dianemayburgess@gmail.com) Thanks and have a nice summer!

Welcome to Mary Clark, Youth Faith Formation Leader



We are pleased to announce that our own Mary Clark has accepted the role as our Youth Faith Formation Leader (YFFL). For those of you who do not know Mary, she grew up here at First Church Portland. She has been the infant/toddler helper during worship for the past couple of years and worked closely with Ann Labby in this role. Mary was a camper and counselor at Silver Lake for many years and she currently works at Little Bears Adventure Center as a toddler teacher.

We know that Mary will put her energy, enthusiasm and creative ideas to good use while educating our youth each Sunday morning and beyond. When children are excited about coming to church, that makes it a lot easier for their parents to attend.

Mary will need support from the congregation to be successful in this new role. One of the most important ways that you can show your support is to sign up to help with church school once or twice a year. If you are interested in helping for a Sunday or two this fall, please email Mary at maryclark2455@outlook.com.

An Update From The Pastoral Search Committee

You have selected and trusted the search committee to do this discernment on behalf of the congregation. Trust us to listen to the church members, our community and our God. We will recommend a pastor to work with us all on the path our church will take. We are gathering information and formulating a church profile which will describe our church and our vision.

Beth Gould-Ruitto and Elaine Law, Co-chairs
Gail Bergan
Mary Clark
Beau Doherty
Jeff Fraulino
Cari Klick
Mike Klick
Rob Lentz
Kristen Medvecky
Karen Rettich
Judy Thompson
Louise Wright

Roof Replacement Project Underway



The long-awaited roof replacement project is underway! A goal was set to raise \$35,000 for this important project, and to date donations have exceeded \$38,000. Thank you to all those who have contributed!

SAVE THESE DATES FOR SUMMER EVENTS AT THE GAZEBO*

"SATURDAY AT 554" on SATURDAY, JULY 29, at 5:54 p.m.

Ice Cream Social and Games for All Ages

SUNDAY, AUGUST 20, 5:00-7:00 p.m.

Summer Concert featuring the Great Hill Mountain Trio

This is a return engagement after last year's successful concert!

**A free will offering will be received to benefit the
Portland Food Bank and Amazing Grace Food Bank
Non-perishable food items will also be collected.**

***Gazebo by the Memorial Garden behind the church**

**Please Note: The next issue of the Belfry Chimes will be the September issue.
The deadline for items for the September Chimes is August 25.**

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Facebook: The First Congregational Church of Portland, CT
YouTube Channel: First Church of Portland, CT
Interim Minister: Rev. Julie Olmsted
Pastor Julie's Email: jgilmsted.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.**