

# The Belfry Chimes

## October Sundays Worship at 10:00 a.m.

**October 1**  
**World Communion Sunday**  
**"Shake Awake"**  
 Sermon by Pastor Julie  
 We will welcome worshipers from Zion Lutheran, as well as representatives from True Vine and Trinity Churches. The special gift of sacred dance will be shared by Kasha Breau, Gail Bergan, Pastor Sara from Zion and Pastor Julie.

**October 8**  
**"Watering the Tree,  
 Producing Good Fruit"**  
 Sermon by Pastor Julie

**October 15**  
**"Who Am I?"**  
 Sermon by Deacon Louise Wright. Faith Fraulino will serve as the worship assistant.

**October 22**  
**"What Belongs to God?"**  
 Sermon by Pastor Julie

**October 29**  
**All Saints Sunday**  
 We will remember those gathered to God in the past year.



Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States.

**"BEHOLD!"** Is once again the theme for this year's Neighbors in Need collection. This year's focus is on environmental justice. Plastics, electronics, and other non-compostable wastes are being shipped across, and even tossed into our waterways, launched into space, or buried in landfills. As stewards of our planet, we must do better!

One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM), which communicates justice issues that affect American Indian life. This ministry supports local churches and their pastors, who are UCC members, to strengthen their participation in the life of the church.

Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants to UCC churches and organizations. This ministry supports a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts and direct service projects to support congregations in seeking justice and peace to build vibrant faith communities that are welcoming to all.

The **"BEHOLD"** offering will begin the first Sunday in October and continue throughout the month. Envelopes are located in the pews, or you may make a donation online. [ucc.org/nin](http://ucc.org/nin)

Please give as generously as you are able.

## **A Message from Pastor Julie Olmsted**

Dear friends,

The fall season has turned on with a switch and we have enjoyed several blessed bright and cool days recently. I pray this finds you well and safe, warm and faith filled.

Our Celebration Sunday was glorious and well-attended. It was great to see some new faces as well as those returning from various vacations and excursions. Remember that worship is a spiritual discipline and is a defining factor in our identity as Christ followers. I encourage all to make attendance as regular as possible. It makes a difference to the church and to us individually in our faith development.

We had a robust Renewal Gathering following worship on September 17. Many attended and participated wholeheartedly in the discussions which included a meditation on *Who is Our Neighbor?* There is a yearning to expand the diversity of the congregation and there were differing thoughts on becoming more visible as an ONA congregation. I wouldn't be surprised if programs and outreach projects are outcomes of this gathering.

Please plan to attend another Renewal Gathering on Wednesday evening, October 11 when we will look deeply at *What is God calling us to do?* This is another "pie gathering," so you won't want to miss that one, for sure! Time is 7:00 p.m.

World Communion Sunday is October 1 and Zion Lutheran will be joining us, as well as some friends from True Vine and Trinity Episcopal. We have a special gift to the churches of a sacred dance to the beautiful *Servant's Song*, which I pray all will enjoy. Sacred dance is a form of whole-body prayer that is rooted in Christian tradition, as are the blessing of people and animals, anointing and faith testimony.

If you are someone or know someone who is not currently a member and would be interested in joining the church, please join us for a class and historical exhibit of the church on October 22. All are welcome and Deacons will be on hand to answer questions and offer support. We will welcome new members during worship on Sunday, November 5.

Keep the church, the country, and the world in your prayers.

Yours in faith,

Pastor Julie

**Weekly church is God's gift. Assembly required.**

Church Chuckles ("Everyday Thoughts")

## **IMPORTANT MESSAGE: CHURCH RECORDS UPDATE**

Keeping the church mailing list and membership records “up to date” is challenging. Now that so many of us have eliminated telephone landlines, and use email for much of our communication, our church records are long overdue for an update.

Early next week you will receive a letter and record update form to complete. This will come via email, and for those who don't use email or prefer a paper copy, we are happy to provide that. Completing the update form will take only a few minutes of your time, can be done either online or on paper, and is incredibly important to the church.

**THANK YOU FOR RESPONDING PROMPTLY!!**

## **CALLING ALL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: THIS MESSAGE IS FOR YOU !!**

There is exciting news at First Church! A new youth group is being formed for high school age students. This group will be led by Louise Wright, a newcomer to our church and Ann Labby, whom many of you know from church school and confirmation class. These two women bring years of experience leading youth groups and look forward to seeing you at an Ice Cream Social on October 22, from 3:30-5:00 p.m.

The first gathering to plan this Teen Group was held on a beautiful September day and lots of great ideas were discussed with Ann and Louise. Before it gets too cold is the perfect time to gather and enjoy an ice cream sundae with snacks and cold drinks. There will be fun and conversation about what will make a youth group successful, and what you (the youth) would like as the focus of a youth group.

The gathering will be held at the First Congregational Church. Enter at the parking lot entrance and follow the signs upstairs. Every teen is welcome. Bring a friend or two. You can be from any church or no church. This is just a fun social time for teens, a way to relax and meet new friends.

If you have any questions feel free to contact either Ann at [labbyannm@gmail.com](mailto:labbyannm@gmail.com) or Louise at [retwrightl@gmail.com](mailto:retwrightl@gmail.com)

**Pass the word among your friends! All are welcome!**

**When: Sunday, October 22, 2023 from 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

**Where: First Congregational Church, Portland**

**Park in the lot behind the church and follow the signs to the meeting room**



## THE BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1, 12:30 p.m.



Each year, our church offers a simple, yet meaningful service called "The Blessing of the Animals." You are invited to bring your pet to the back field of the church on Sunday, October 1, at 12:30 p.m. Please bring your pet on a leash or in a cage or crate. In addition to offering a prayer of blessing for each animal, we will also offer a prayer of remembrance for beloved pets who are no longer with us.

*"And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good."* Genesis 1:24,25

### **A Message from the Pastoral Search Committee**

Your Pastoral Search Committee has had several meetings of thoughtful discussions preparing for our journey, educating ourselves with United Church of Christ (UCC) resources and guidance, and planning for the necessary steps of discovery of who we are and what God is calling us to become. One component of these efforts is a survey that will go out to our membership. There will be more details coming about the survey, timing, and support resources for those that might have questions or need help. For now, consider this a teaser.

The Search Committee survey will be extremely important to help us understand as much as we possibly can about what our membership feels is important, our identity and what direction we need to pursue. It is not the "end all" document that determines an outcome, but merely an important piece of the many considerations that are part of a pastoral search.

Your committee started with a sample from the Hartford Institute for Religion Research and pared it down and customized it for our needs. We certainly wouldn't call it a "short" survey but feel that it will provide tremendous and important insight into this collaborative journey of First Congregational Church of Portland.

More to come, stay tuned.



A very heartfelt "thank you" to church member Ivy Maurice, and our neighbors in East Hampton from Laurel Grove, for the adorable dresses for the Dress A Girl Project. The time, commitment and love shows in every stitch. These dresses will be sent to Guatemala.

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**FALL CHURCH YARD CLEAN-UP: NOVEMBER 4, 9:00 a.m. (rain date November 18)**

Grab your rake and join the fun! All ages are invited to help prepare the church grounds for fall and winter. There will be raking, trimming, weeding etc. We will work until the jobs are done. Linda Cunningham provides coffee and delicious pastries to make the task more palatable. If the day is really windy or rainy we'll try again on November 18. Please plan to join the members of the Board if you can. Your help is very much appreciated.

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**News for Children and Their Parents**

**Church School will be held on October 1, 8, 15 and 22.** Children will begin their morning in the worship service with their families, and will then go to the upstairs classroom for Church School following the Children's Message.

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

**On October 29,** children will be dismissed to the Fellowship Hall following the Children's Message in worship for the annual UNICEF Carnival. There will be games and activities for children of all ages. Volunteers are needed for the UNICEF Carnival. This is a great way for high school students to earn community service hours.

Please email Mary Clark at [maryeclark13@outlook.com](mailto:maryeclark13@outlook.com) if you would like to help out!

**A SIGN UP POSTER** for Church school teachers and helpers for the coming year is located in the Fellowship Hall. Please consider how you might be able to help and speak to Mary Clark if you have questions.

**The tradition of children ringing the church bell and lighting the candles** at the beginning of the worship services is returning! If your child would like to participate in one of these activities, please contact Mary Clark who is managing the schedule.

**"THE TOP TEN" ... REASONS TO STOP BY FOR COFFEE HOUR**

1. WE hope to see YOU there!
2. Welcome a visitor and/or greet an "old" friend
3. Chat with and listen to others ~ it's a great group of people
4. Delight in new foods and snacks to tide you over until lunch
5. Coffee is great and there are also other beverages to quench your thirst
6. Find out about upcoming events
7. Contemplate the sermon or scriptures
8. Treat yourself to a casual get together with all ages
9. Review or discuss church or community business
10. Extend your joy to others

**(OPTIONAL BUT APPRECIATED) \*Sign up to host or assist with a Coffee Hour**

**SPECIAL THANKS TO DIANE BURGESS, COFFEE HOUR ORGANIZER EXTRAORDINAIRE!!**

## Church History Sunday: October 22

It has become a tradition to celebrate the founding of our church each year on the Sunday nearest to the actual anniversary day for our church, October 25. The year, under the leadership of Church Historian Nancy Johnson, a special historic display will be featured on Sunday, October 22, in Fellowship Hall. There will be old pictures of the church, photo albums of past church activities, original documents and more. Two historic quilts will be hanging in the Fellowship Hall the entire month of October.

The year was 1690 when James Stancliff, an English Stonecutter, became the first pioneering soul to cross the river from Middletown and establish a home site upon the rocks on "ye east side of ye great river" as it was called for many years before and after that date. By 1710, nine additional families joined him and a Church Society was formed. On May 25, 1721 there was an appeal to the General Assembly for liberty to gather a church and settle a minister. On October 25, 1721 the Rev. Daniel Newell was ordained and our church was formed.

### What Is The Book of Remembrance and Where Is It Located?



When entering the sanctuary and looking to the left, the Book of Remembrance can be found in the cabinet with the glass top behind the last pew. The original book was donated by Mrs. Chester Hale in 1951, and was created to record the gifts given to the church in memory of its members. In 1988, the Board of Deacons expanded the purpose of The Book of Remembrance to memorialize church members by placing a picture and a brief statement about their life and relationship to our church family.

The calligraphy in the book was done by Ruth Campbell, a dedicated church member and talented artist. In 2005, when the original book was filled, a new book was added.

The Book of Remembrance contains stories of church members whose lives touched this church. The Board of Deacons invites the congregation to look at the book through the glass from time to time, to pause and give thanks for those who came before us. To help us remember, the pictures will be changed each Sunday and it will be noted in the bulletin.

## Happy 187<sup>th</sup> Birthday Women's Fellowship

By Nancy Johnson

On September 18, twelve women gathered in the fellowship hall for an evening to celebrate the 187<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Women's Fellowship. It was a festive atmosphere with decorated tables, delicious food, a birthday cake, and an historical display. A short history of the Women's Fellowship was shared including the different names of women's groups through the years - Lady's Benevolent Society, Missionary Society, Mother's League, and United Workers. What we have been called may have changed, but we are connected to the past by the same commitment to the church as conveyed in the following poem written by Linda Cunningham in 1983.

### Women Together

We're women serving together  
Each separate, but we are one  
We serve home, church, and community  
With love and faith in the One  
Who taught us how to live and serve  
That we might lead the way  
Showing our friends and families  
The path to a better day.

God's plan for us is a mystery  
And yet we live it each day  
We serve the Lord through our works of love  
And very often we pray  
For strength and peace and brotherhood  
A world of love and goodwill  
His love guides and strengthens us  
As we strive to do His will.

### Thinking of Becoming a Church Member?

Are you thinking of becoming a member of our community of faith? We would love to welcome you to our church on November 5 when we receive new members during the 10:00 a.m. worship service. We invite anyone interested in knowing more about membership in The First Congregational Church of Portland to attend an informational meeting on Sunday, October 22 at 11:30 a.m.

Please speak to Pastor Julie or call the church office if you would like to join the church or if you would like more information.

## October Dates to Remember \*

### Every week:

- Worship on Sunday at 10:00 a.m.
- Sunday Night Alanon Group, 7:00 p.m.
- Wednesday Night Living Clean Group, 7:00 p.m.
- Thursdays, Choir Rehearsal, 6:30 p.m.

- October 1: The Blessing of the Animals, 12:30 p.m.
- October 2: Pastoral Search Committee
- October 3: Church Council Meeting, 6:30 p.m.
- October 7: Living Clean Anniversary Celebration
- October 9: Mid-State Regional Meeting of NA Leadership, 6:30 p.m.
- October 11: Board of Deacons, 6:00 p.m.  
Renewal Gathering, 6:30 p.m.
- October 16: Missions Board, 6:30 p.m.
- October 17: Membership Committee, 6:00 p.m., Zoom
- October 18: Facilities Board, 7:00 p.m.
- October 22: History Sunday, Historical Display at Coffee Hour  
New Member Meeting, 11:30 a.m.  
Teen Gathering, 3:30 p.m.
- October 24: Pastoral Search Committee, 7:00 p.m.
- October 29: UNICEF Carnival and Chili Lunch
- October 30: Nursery School Halloween Parade, morning
- October 31: Nursery School Halloween Parade, morning

### LOOKING AHEAD TO NEXT MONTH:

- November 4: Fall Yard Clean-up, 9:00 a.m., Rain date November 18

\* Each month, meeting and activity dates will be published in The Belfry Chimes. If you have an event to be included, please send the information to Jeannette Hodge, Belfry Chimes editor.

### ***The First Congregational Church of Portland, CT***

United Church of Christ

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YouTube Channel: First Church of Portland, CT

Interim Minister: Rev. Julie Olmsted

Pastor Julie's Email: [jgilmsted.86@gmail.com](mailto: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.**



