

# Belfry Chimes

Summer 2021



The First Congregational Church of Portland, CT  
United Church of Christ

## We Prepare to Gather For In-Person Worship

*“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”*

*Matthew 18:20*

For the first time in over a year, those who feel comfortable doing so are beginning to gather for in-person worship. We are still mindful of the fact that COVID variants are emerging, and while many have been vaccinated, some have not, including the youngest in our church family. We will continue to follow CDC guidelines pertaining to crowd gatherings, including social distancing, masks, and doing all we can to limit the possibility of the virus being spread through the air.

All Sunday worship services are available on the church's YouTube channel, First Church of Portland, CT

In-person services held indoors will be available on YouTube at the time of the service, thanks to the live streaming technology recently installed in the sanctuary. Services that are held outdoors will be recorded and made available on the church's YouTube channel within a few hours of the conclusion of the service. Whether you worship in-person or virtually, God is present with you, as the scripture reminds us



**May 30, 10:00 a.m. Memorial Day Worship** outdoors at the Memorial Garden, weather permitting. More information about this service can be found on page 8.

**June 6, 10:00 a.m. Confirmation Sunday**

The Confirmation Service will be held in the sanctuary. In-person attendance will be limited to the 10 confirmands, their families, sponsors, and worship participants. The service will be live-streamed so the

congregation may worship by tuning in to the church's YouTube service at 10:00 a.m., and the service will also be available for those who wish to worship at a later time.

**June 13, 10:00 a.m.**

On this date, we will bid Jane farewell for the summer, as she prepares for her sabbatical leave beginning June 15.

**Sundays, June 20 – September 5**

The summer worship schedule will begin on June 20, at 9:00 a.m. We will welcome Rev. Eva Cudmore as our sabbatical pastor on this date. The details for these summer services are yet to be confirmed, and will be announced in *The Weekly Word*, on the church website, and in the weekly community newspaper, *The Rivereast*. 🌱

  
**Please join us for the  
summer services!**

We, The First Congregational Church of Portland, Connecticut, are an Open and Affirming church. With God's grace, we continue to be a congregation that includes persons of every race, ethnicity, age, family configuration, marital status, mental and physical ability, economic status, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. All are welcome to share in the life, sacraments, missions, responsibilities and blessings of participation in our community of faith.

# Meet Our New Members!

We welcomed them into our church family May 2.



## Trina Vardanian

Trina Vardanian is married to Wayne Pierce and they have a daughter Danielle. They live in Portland and Trina works in purchasing and supply management with the United States Postal Service. Trina's hobbies include APA Pool, reading, motorcycle riding, and camping.

## Margie Mehler

Margie Mehler and her husband Ken live in Portland and they recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They have two sons and five grandchildren. Margie is a special education teacher who is currently tutoring in Glastonbury. She sings in our church choir and in the Greater Middletown Chorale. She is on the Executive Board of the Chorale, and she enjoys reading, gardening, hand crafts, and traveling.



## Patty Pires

Patty Pires lives in Portland with her husband Jason and their daughters Zoey and Zayla. She and church member Erin Hall are sisters. Patty is a school counselor at Berlin High School and her interests include taking pictures, scrapbooking, anything Disney, and traveling.



## Introducing our new Sabbatical Pastor...

## Eva Cudmore

Eva Cudmore is an ordained minister and has served as a pastor in many churches. She is married to Rev. Richard Cudmore, a chaplain at Covenant Living. They live in Cromwell and they have four children: Greta, Cedrik, Ian, and Karl. Eva is originally from Sweden, and her interests include things that fall in the "artistic and creative" category.



Eva will provide pastoral leadership during Rev. Hawken's sabbatical leave from June 15 - September 6. During that time, Rev. Cudmore will lead Sunday worship services and provide pastoral care as needed. Because this is a most unusual time as we find our way out of the pandemic and since we do not expect Eva to maintain office hours, we have determined that her commitment will be approximately one quarter time.

Eva is a pastor in good standing with the Evangelical Covenant Church, having been ordained in 1997 in Sweden. Eva was born in Africa, and is the child of missionaries who lived and served in Africa. When she was about to begin school, her family returned to Sweden where Eva's schooling and theological training took place, with the exception of a semester in Chicago where she met her husband Richard, who is also an ordained clergy.

Eva and her husband have four children ages 17-22, and the family moved back to Sweden from 2010-2016 for the purpose of allowing their children to embrace their Swedish heritage. Eva has served as a co-pastor with her husband in Naugatuck, and also as an interim pastor in Cromwell, Granby, and North Easton, MA. While in Sweden, Eva was the lead pastor in a church there for nearly six years. At this time Eva is in the process of pursuing clergy standing in the United Church of Christ.

Eva's experience is vast and she describes herself as well rounded in most areas of ministry and comfortable dealing with most human needs and experiences, from cradle to grave. Eva is fully bilingual in English and Swedish, and adjusts well to new situations and changing circumstances, which will be helpful as we carefully begin to navigate our pathway post-COVID.

Eva's first Sunday service will be held on June 20 at 9:00 a.m. Watch *The Weekly Word* for details of the service. 🌱

### The First Congregational Church of Portland

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[www.firstchurchportlandct.org](http://www.firstchurchportlandct.org)

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

**PASTOR** The Rev. Jane Hawken – [jhawken@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jhawken@sbcglobal.net)

**DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

Ann Labby [labbyannm@gmail.com](mailto:labbyannm@gmail.com)

**MUSIC DIRECTOR** Kasha Breau (860) 983-6065

**OFFICE MANAGER** Margaret Stewart

**Office Hours:** Tuesday, Wednesday 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

*A message from*  
REV. JANE HAWKEN, PASTOR

Dear Friends,

As with most things this past year, the threat of the coronavirus affected the way we offered the confirmation program. In spring of 2020, as church leaders met via Zoom and reconfigured the ways we would hold worship, communicate with one another, care and pray for each other, extend our mission work and outreach, educate and inspire our children, youth, and adults, and still enjoy a sense of fellowship – I confess that I was continually concerned about how we were going to teach confirmation.

I had confidence knowing that we would have the support and guidance of the Board of Christian Education, and that Ann Labby would be co-teaching with me. She is **always** ready to lend a hand, share her wisdom and ideas, volunteer her skills, and above all: care deeply for our youth. So, prior to the months that we were to begin the confirmation program, Ann and I mapped out ways to cover the various aspects and teachings that we feel are essential to impart each year.

At our first meeting way back in September when parents and confirmands met outdoors in the backfield of the church, Ann and I presented an overview of the course and the requirements. No question that things would be different this year – but that could be said for just about **everything for everybody** as we endeavored to find new ways to live our lives, do our work, nurture our relationships, care for our families, honor our commitments, nourish our spirits, and strive to keep ourselves and others healthy and safe.

When we met that September day with parents and confirmands, I shared my personal belief that the confirmation program is one of the most important things that we do at the church, and teaching confirmation is one of the most important things I do as your pastor.

While, of course, we would have preferred to meet in-person over the past months, we conducted our classes and discussions via Zoom and utilized videos, and an online engagement tool called Mentimeter. Our subject matter remained much the same: *Who is Jesus?*, *Who is God?*, *Who Am I?*, *The Church Year*, *Worship*, *The Bible*, *Mental Health*, and this year we added sessions on Racial Equality, and All Hallows Eve/All Saints Day, and Lent and Easter traditions.

As I write this in early May, we will meet this month to plan and lead a Sunday worship service, make stoles, and gather with confirmation families and sponsors for our Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows Ceremony. End of the year assignments include a review of Sunday worship services “attended” on YouTube, completing interviews with long-time church members, and written answers on a *What Do I Believe?* sheet. The confirmands discussed their beliefs with their sponsors, and they also held conversations about our church’s YouTube Christmas Calm Service and Ash Wednesday Service.

Another year end requirement is the completion of 15 hours of community service. Many of these hours were spent in cleaning up the church grounds, volunteering at the Children’s Easter Event, and providing a meal for Streetfire Ministries to distribute to hungry folks in Middletown. We are looking forward to hearing the confirmands present their *Pray It Forward* mission projects during the worship service they will be leading on May 23.

Traditionally, much of the confirmation program involves what I whimsically call “field trips.” These couldn’t happen in the same way as in past years, but we were able to have the students participate in a portion of the Silver Lake Retreat programming via Zoom, which included a look at our own congregational life as well as United Church of Christ beliefs. Our visits to the funeral home and to the synagogue took a new turn this year. Funeral director Heidi Abbott led us on a live-streamed tour of Doolittle Funeral Home in Middletown as she discussed funeral practices and grief resources. Joanna Schnurman and Andy Bauer gave us a live-streamed video tour of Congregation Adath Israel in Middletown while we also learned about the synagogue’s faith practices and beliefs. I can’t tell you how grateful I am for the time, care, and knowledge that Heidi, Joanna, and Andy generously extended to our confirmands.

As we hold Confirmation Sunday on June 6, we know that it will be different from other years. However, it will have a distinct air of accomplishment as we honor the commitment of our confirmands and their parents, along with the sponsors. Given the challenges of the past 14 months, the Rite of Confirmation will be conducted with deep gratitude, joy, and faithfulness.

Lastly, please know how grateful I am to receive the gift of sabbatical time, and how delighted I am that the Rev. Eva Cudmore will serve as summer sabbatical pastor. I appreciate the congregation’s generosity and caring as I welcome rest, renewal, and time with family. I wish you all a summer filled with good health, soothing relaxation, and deep joy.

Yours in faith,  
Jane

*We give thanks for:*

CONFIRMANDS	SPONSORS
Lilly Clark.....	Linda Yohe
Lauren Eckert .....	Jenn Renk
James Grzegorek .....	Pete Ettlinger
Evan Guilmette .....	Karen Rettich
William Jahnke .....	Diane Burgess
Meghan Lemieux.....	Erin Hall
Sean Mearman .....	Eric Smith
Erik Medvecky .....	Joe Aresco
Cooper Rettich .....	Meghan Guilmette
Matthew Smith .....	Scott Pellin

# SUMMER

*Saturday, June 5* (Rain Date June 6)

## View the Quarries at Quarry View



*Dean and Darlene have done an amazing job of cleaning up the property and have turned the area into an historic park. The views of the quarry and the changing colors of the stone as the sun moves across the sky are incredible.*

What can you expect to see? Here you will find natural springs that flow from what they call "The Wall of Water" down to one of the small waterfalls. There are artifacts including dinosaur tracks, quarry tools and carved dates in the stones that date back to 1887. You will see the drumming circle, a frog pond, a trail that winds itself through the property and you'll even see Clifford B. Hanger, Portland's very own rendition of the Old Man on the Mountain.

"View the Quarries at Quarry View" is an "open house type event", so come anytime between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. A short history of the Portland Quarries will be given by Bob McDougall of the Portland Historical Society at 2:00 p.m. Parking is available in the lot across from the gate to Quarry View, at the Riverfront Park, or at the Brownstone Middle School. Dress for the weather and wear sturdy shoes. Historical books and ornaments will be available for sale and in order to thank Dean and Darlene for their generous hospitality, donations of any kind will be accepted to help them in their continuing work.

**Please Note:** When entering Quarry View you are entering at your own risk. Children are to be supervised at ALL times and there is no rock climbing allowed. 📌

The 300th Anniversary Committee invites you to "View the Quarries at Quarry View" with owners Darlene Rice and Dean Soucy. Located at 311 Brownstone Avenue, Quarry View is a unique 334-year-old brownstone quarry that is listed as a Historic National Landmark. Dean and Darlene purchased the property in 2019 when it resembled a jungle straight out of Jurassic Park, overgrown with trees, brush and vines. They have cleared the land and the walls of the quarries, creating a remarkable historical treasure of Portland's past.

The history of our church began at the quarries. It is believed by many that in 1690 James Stancliff, an English stone-cutter, became the first European to build a house on the east side of the river, on the riverbank just south and west of Commerce Street. More families followed his lead, and together they formed The Third Society of Middletown on May 13, 1714. The rest is history, our history and the town of Portland's history, so come and feel a part of it at Quarry View.



*Dean Soucy and Darlene Rice, owners of Quarry View.*

# EVENTS!

*Sunday, July 18* (Rain Date July 25)

## WILD NOTES CONCERT 6:00 PM



What's better than watching and listening to a live music group in our own back yard? When that group includes our own Kasha Breaux! Come out to the Gazebo the evening of Sunday, July 18 to relax and take in a concert as the sun sets over the river!

Bring a chair or a blanket and join us!  
Watch *The Weekly Word* for more details as the date approaches.

*Saturday, August 21*

## Take Me Out to the Ball Game!

Nothing says summer more than going to a baseball game with family and friends, so let's go to a Yard Goats game on August 21, 2021! The gates open at 6:05 p.m. for *Yard Goats Family Faith Day*.

**WE NEED A COUNT OF THOSE WHO  
WANT TICKETS BY JUNE 30TH!!**

Please contact Ann Labby at [labbyannm@gmail.com](mailto:labbyannm@gmail.com) if you are interested or would like more information.

Tickets will cost between \$10.00 and \$13.00, depending on the number of tickets purchased by our church. Lots of members participated in this event two years ago and it was a lot of fun!

**Face masks are mandatory.**



*July...*

## SUMMER MOVIE NIGHT!

DATE  
TBD



Load the family into the car, bring your friends, or come alone ... just come! Join your friends from church for an outdoor movie night in the parking lot/back field area behind the church.

Bring a chair or a blanket and some snacks and join the fun! Watch *The Weekly Word* for more details.

*This Summer!*

## SILVER LAKE SUMMER CAMP

Silver Lake Summer Camp is open for campers 5th grade and above! Just go to [www.silverlakeect.org](http://www.silverlakeect.org) to schedule your time. Camp is such a wonderful aspect of any child's upbringing. It provides outlets for children to make new friends and create memories that they'll carry for a lifetime. Financial aid and scholarships are available through Silver Lake and First Church.





## Children's Mission Project – Funded by Penny Challenge –

The winner of the Church School's Penny Challenge is Snowball, the furry bunny. Snowball received 23 votes and Bluey received 19 votes. The Penny Challenge is a fun way for the children to raise funds for a worthwhile cause. **Kudos to the children who collected \$139.78 to be donated to a mission project of their choice.** Watch *The Weekly Word* for the announcement of what mission project the children vote to support.



## Prayer Shawl Ministry

A great example of our church's outreach and caring for one another is the Prayer Shawl Ministry, an active, caring ministry to our congregation and community at large. Shawls are always available to be given to members or friends who are experiencing illness, loss or other life challenges. Contact Nancy Johnson at any time if you know of someone who could benefit from the warmth, caring, and love conveyed by receiving the gift of a prayer shawl.

The Prayer Shawl Knitters welcome others to join in the ministry of this program by knitting shawls or providing a monetary donation for the cost of the yarn. In the words of Nancy Johnson, "Through this ministry, we celebrate our God who knits us into wholeness, who enables us to care for others, who encircles the world in an external shawl of love and compassion."



*Pictured above with some of the beautiful shawls created by the Prayer Shawl Knitters are members of the group, (l to r) Nancy Johnson, Phyllis Clark, Bonnie Jackson, Nancy Spooner, and Jan Poet. Some of the shawls featured in this photo were donated to the chaplain at Hartford Hospital, an outreach instituted in 2019.*



*All loaded up and ready to go with donations to New Horizons! L-R are Sally Irons, Jan Poet, Karen Faass, Beth Gould-Riutto.*

## New Horizons

On Saturday, May 8, our Missions Team collected items for New Horizons, one of the newest additions to our charity list. Located in Middletown, New Horizons has been assisting victims of domestic violence in Middlesex County for 40 years. The emergency shelter is open 24/7 for individuals and their families, helping over 1,000 women, children, and men every year. The agency assists with community education, support groups, individual counseling, court advocacy, a confidential hotline service, and consultation to the Community Health Center's clinical provider teams.



The Missions Board collected household goods, personal care items, grocery gift cards, games, crafts and activity items for kids, and more! Thank you for your donations!

# 300 Acts of Kindness

*"Your acts of kindness are iridescent wings of divine love, which linger and continue to uplift others long after your sharing."* Rumi

This quote by Rumi, the 13th-century Persian poet, reminds us to spread our wings and being inspired by God's love share an act of kindness with others. That gesture of caring will not only make someone else's day, but will nourish your soul as well. Therefore, be an angel and keep those acts coming and help us celebrate 300 ways. Thus far, 81 hearts have been returned so we are not even halfway there. You can make it happen! Remember you are not limited to the couple of hearts you received in the mail. Extra blank hearts will be available at our in-person worship services or you can email your act to Diane Burgess at dianemayburgess@gmail.com and she will make up a heart for you. Have a heart, share a kindness and celebrate with us in this historic year!



*The "300 Acts of Kindness" banner is ready to receive your kindness hearts! Fill yours out and send them back to the church, so they can be added to the banner. Let's fill it up!*

## Looking Ahead to Fall

### Celebration Sunday

*Sunday, September 12*

We are hopeful that by September, it will be safe for the entire congregation to worship together in the sanctuary. We will have much to celebrate on Celebration Sunday, as we look forward to the coming church year and welcome Pastor Jane back after her sabbatical leave.

### Center Cemetery Tour

*Saturday, September 18*

You won't want to miss this opportunity to connect with our past. Discover some of the early history of Portland as you enjoy a self-guided walking tour of Center Cemetery on Bartlett Street Extension. The cemetery is filled with headstones etched with familiar Portland names, including three men who served as ministers of our church.

### 300th Anniversary Worship and Luncheon Celebration

*Sunday, October 24*

Join with friends as we come together to worship and give thanks to God for our beloved First Congregational Church. We are blessed with a rich history of faithful Christians throughout our church's 300 year history. We will honor the past, and look forward to what the future holds for this community of faith.

**The Church Office will be closed for most of the summer. The voice mail and email will be monitored regularly, so feel free to leave a message.**

**For pastoral emergencies after June 15, please contact Rev. Eva Cudmore at 860-227-0722 or George Law, Diaconate Chairperson at 860-638-9122. For other church matters, please contact church president Jeannette Hodge at 203-605-7231.**



## Anniversary Items Still Available for Sale!

If you haven't already done so, be sure to pick up a copy of the First Church History Book (\$20.00) and a pewter ornament (\$12.00).



First Congregational Church of Portland  
554 Main Street  
Portland, CT 06480

# Memorial Day Worship Service

*"All gave some, some gave all"*

*"All gave some, some gave all" is a familiar quote, and is widely attributed to the Korean War veteran and purple heart recipient Howard William Osterkamp, who served in the Army from 1951 to 1953, experiencing heavy combat during the Korean War. On May 30, The Anniversary Committee will honor the rich history of our church, as we remember those from our church who gave all, who died while serving our country. It is fitting that on Memorial Day in the midst of our 300th Anniversary Year that we take time to remember the members of our church whose lives were lost serving our country. Let us pause and give thanks to God.*

*Our church's history is filled with people who served in the military during wartime. During the service, Jane will name the fallen soldiers who died in service to our country, as well as share newly researched stories of their time at war, and some history of Portland's Civil War Monument. At nearly 150 years old, this easily-recognized brownstone monument is located across the street from the church entrance, at the corner of Main and Bartlett Streets.*

