



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2026
THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT
TEN O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING



THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GREENWICH

declares itself to be Open and Affirming (ONA); open to all for participation, membership, leadership and employment and affirming of all who wish to join us as children of God.

We continue to give thanks for God's guidance in our journey of faith.

We welcome you this day and are glad you made the choice to join us for this worship service.

May it be a blessing to you.

Welcome to Worship!

We welcome you this day and are glad you are here! May worship be a blessing to you.

First Church Welcomes *You.*

With Worship. A casual tone, stirring music, moving prayers, & a faith-invoking message. **Prayer Book requests** (in Narthex) are uplifted during the Prayers of the People.

With Inclusion. Open & Affirming (ONA). We make a point of meeting all and name tags are worn.

With Communion. The first Sunday of each month, all ages share in the sacred meal together. We use juice & gluten-free bread!

With Care. We pass the Peace of Christ to one another. We are a mask-friendly, come-as-you-are, leave-as-a-friend community.



First Church Welcomes *Children.*

The PrayGround. In the Chapel space, guiding kids in worship.

Cherub Choir, Celebration Singers, & Genesis Choir. Children of all ages are welcome to offer music in worship!

Children's Message. A moment for kids & the child in each of us.

Church School. Faith learnings for the day continue in the Undercroft classrooms after the Children's Message.

Children's Take Home Library. Located by the PrayGround. Check out what interests you & bring it back next week!



First Church Welcomes *All.*

Sensory Sanctuary & Rocking Chairs. Focusing resources located in the back of the Meetinghouse.

Visual Worship Aids & Live captioning. Found on the monitors.

Audio Hearing Aids. To use, ask Greeters or Ushers.

Spaces in Meetinghouse for Wheelchair Users

Exterior Ramp. In the back of the Meetinghouse, driveway side.

Liftavators. Located inside, from Narthex to Auditorium Level & Outside in the Memory Garden.



Enjoy a cup of coffee, food, & fellowship at *Community Hour* after the service!

ORDER OF WORSHIP

First Church is a mask-friendly community of faith. Anyone who prefers to wear a mask should feel comfortable doing so.

*Please know our worshipping community gathers in-person and online via livestream
with multiple camera angles of the Meetinghouse and congregation.*

Audio Hearing Aids are available for your use during the service. See an usher to request a device.

Please silence all electronic devices.

PRELUDE

Improvisation on Lattimer
Charles Callahan (1951-2023)
Steven Russell, guest director/organist

CHIMING OF THE HOUR

CALL TO COMMUNITY

Reverend Cydney Van Dyke

Please sign and pass the red Fellowship Pad found at the end of your row near the center aisle, then pass it back to the center aisle, noting the names of those worshipping near you so you may greet them at the end of worship.

If you are the person on the center aisle, please remove the completed sheet and place it in the plate during the offering.

MOMENT FOR MINISTRY

David Rabin
CEO, Greenwich United Way

PRESENTATION OF GIFTS

Lauren Ghaffari, Pam Speer, Kate Collins
Christmas Tree Sale Co-Chairs

†CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Jesus says: I am the resurrection and the life.

All: **And so we come to seeking possibilities we don't yet know how to name.**

One: Jesus says: You will see the glory of God.

All: **And so we look, though all around seems bleak.**

One: Jesus says: Unbind him and let him go.

All: **And so we take our part in a new future.**

†CHORAL INTROIT

†HYMN

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days
166 Glory To God Hymnal (purple)

†PRAYER FOR WHOLENESS (in unison)

God of life and love, you know the fullness of human life, from the heights of joy to the depths of sorrow,
and you dwell with us in it all. Sit beside us today in the shadows, and teach us to be real with each other
and with you, trusting your presence. Amen.

Moment of silence for personal reflection

†ASSURANCE OF GRACE

†PASSING OF THE PEACE

God makes peace within us. Let us claim it. God makes peace between us. Let us share it.

† Please rise in body or in spirit

One: May the peace of Christ be with all of you.

All: And also with you.

†RESPONSE (remain standing)

Halle, Halle, Halle

Hal-le, hal-le, hal - le - lu - jah! Hal-le, hal-le, hal - le - lu - jah!
Hal-le, hal-le, hal - le - lu - jah! Hal-le - lu-jah! Hal-le - lu - jah!

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

(During the response, the children will return to their seats.)

RESPONSE

Jesus Loves Me

Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong. They are weak, but he is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

FIRST LESSON

John 11: 1-16

New Revised Standard Version

Pat Mendelsohn

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather, it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble because the light is not in them." After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

ANTHEM

There Is A Balm In Gilead
William Dawson (1899-1990)
The Chancel Choir
Carol Woodman, soprano

† Please rise in body or in spirit

New Revised Standard Version

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

MESSAGE

Leave It Behind
Reverend Patrick Collins

†HYMN

We Wait The Peaceful Kingdom
378 Glory To God Hymnal (purple)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**THE LORD'S PRAYER** (in unison)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

†Please rise in body or in spirit

CALL TO OFFERING

Carol Woodman

Using your smartphone messaging app,
text FCCOG Donate to 73256 or scan the QR code to donate.



OFFERTORY SOLO

Steal Away

Harry Burleigh (1866-1949)

Linnea Conley, mezzo soprano

†DOXOLOGY

Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

†PRAYER OF DEDICATION

†HYMN

Fight The Good Fight

846 Glory To God Hymnal (purple)

†BENEDICTION

†CHORAL RESPONSE

†POSTLUDE

Jesus Lifted Me

Keith Hampton (b. 1957)

† Please rise in body or in spirit

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Join us for Community Hour in the Auditorium where you can greet one another, have a cup of coffee, and a light snack. Hosts for February are members of the Budget Committee.

COMMUNITY
HOUR

BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING – TODAY



High blood pressure is one major risk factor for stroke, which can lead to a multitude of disabilities, and affects nearly 800,000 people in the U.S. each year. Other common stroke risk factors are smoking, uncontrolled diabetes, and lack of regular physical exercise.

Your Parish Nurse, Sue Asselin, will be available for blood pressure screenings and health consultations in her office to the right of the Auditorium stage. During the week, Sue is available by appointment. Email susana@fccog.org or call 203-637-1791 extension 821.

INTERRELIGIOUS COMMUNITY PROJECT – TODAY - SUNDAY FEB 22, 2 – 4:30 P.M. SACRED SITE VISIT TO FIRST CHURCH OF ROUND HILL



Build community relationships through a campus tour, the church's history in Greenwich, and a United Methodist denomination overview. Q&A time. Light fare provided. RSVP by Feb 15th by scanning the green QR code on the left.



We return the favor and host First Church Round Hill and the wider community on Tuesday, March 3rd from 6 – 8:30 p.m. Scan the blue QR code on the right to RSVP by Feb 22 for FCCOG attendance.

FEBRUARY FRIENDSGIVING

Our final February Friendsgiving events are filling up quickly! There are a limited number of spaces per event, so sign up soon so you're not disappointed and help the hosts can plan their get-together. You can sign up at Community Hour, on Signup Genius, or call Betsy (203) 832-8113 or email betsykreuter@hotmail.com – Cynthia (203) 918-1523 or email deriemer.cynthia@gmail.com. Scan the QR code to sign up today!

February Friendsgiving

Saturday, Feb 28 - 6 - 8 p.m. Old Greenwich
Pizza Dinner: Hosts Pat & Tad Larrabee

Sunday, March 8 - 12 noon Old Greenwich
Brunch: Hosts Donald & Ginny Breismeister

Saturday, March 14 - 1 - 3 p.m. Old Greenwich
Tea and Art Viewing: Hosts Ernest & Candace Garthwaite

SCAN QR CODE TO SIGN UP





First Church is proud to launch Royalties for Spirituals, an initiative to honor the legacy of Black spirituals and invest in the future of Black musicians. Rooted in our commitment to racial justice and the power of sacred music, this effort will provide ongoing financial support to organizations that educate and empower Black students in music.



The initiative was unanimously approved by our Church Council and emerges from thoughtful conversations held earlier this year. As a congregation that regularly sings and celebrates music from the Black church tradition, we recognize that these songs—many born from the suffering and resilience of enslaved people—were never compensated. It's time to pay that debt forward.

To donate to Royalties for Spirituals, click on the QR code and donate online, or go to www.fccog.org and scroll to the bottom of the website and click the blue button.



We have secured an organization which matches our goals and dreams for partnering with our initiative. **The Adam J. Lewis Academy (AJLA)** in Bridgeport, CT is the perfect school that educates underserved children in the eastern end of Fairfield County.

ROYALTIES FOR SPIRITUALS IN FEBRUARY

February is Black History Month and we are using this time to highlight our Royalties For Spirituals initiative. We will be singing spirituals and gospel songs throughout the month.

Please consider giving generously to this program that supports the music program at Adam J. Lewis Academy in Bridgeport. Click on the QR code below to learn more about this initiative.

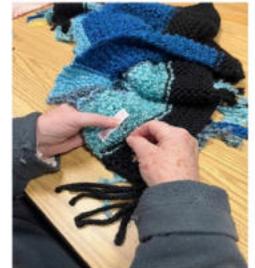


PRAYER SHAWL KNITTING WRAP SOMEONE IN PRAYER

There is something quietly powerful about a handmade prayer shawl. Each stitch carries care. Each fringe is tied with intention. Each tag is a reminder that someone is being held in prayer.

You are warmly invited to join our Prayer Shawl Ministry on **Tuesday, February 25 from 7:00–8:30 pm in Rick's Room.** Whether you knit, crochet, help affix fringe or tags, or simply come to sit and visit, all are welcome.

All are Welcome to Join the Prayer Shawl Ministry.
Come knit, affix fringe or tags, and visit with friends.
Next Meeting: February 25, 7-8:30 pm, in Rick's Room.



Contact Angela Stevens angelamessinastevens@gmail.com or Sue Asselin susana@fccog.org for more information.

UPCOMING SECOND HOURS

A Second Hour Event

THE LONELINESS EPIDEMIC:
AND WHAT THE CHURCH CAN DO ABOUT IT

February 22nd, 11:15am in the Lounge
Guest Presenter: Joe O'Callaghan
Clinical Director, Greenwich Advanced Counselling

FEB 22 SECOND HOUR – LONELINESS & THE CHURCH

The crisis of loneliness is one of the biggest community health issues of our time, especially for youth, men, and the elderly. Join Joe O'Callaghan, Clinical Director of Greenwich Advanced Counseling (formerly The Center for Hope and Renewal), for a presentation and discussion on what current literature on loneliness says, and what churches can do to help mitigate its effects.

**MAR 1 SECOND HOUR –
MUSIC AND MEMORY: THE ACCIDENTAL
CREATION OF A 92-YEAR-OLD SOCIAL MEDIA
SENSATION**

Elaine Lebar began playing piano at the age of 3. She graduated from the High School of Music and Art in NYC, received a BA in music from Brooklyn College and an MFA in music education from the University of Missouri.

Randi Lebar graduated from Cornell's College of Arts and Sciences in 1978 with a BA in Chemistry and went on to receive an MD in 1982 from the University of Maryland School of Medicine. She then served for 11 years in the US Navy, completing her Orthopaedic Surgery residency at the Naval Hospital Oakland.

Finding the Piano
Music
in Dementia

**SECOND HOUR
SUNDAY, MARCH 1
11:15 A.M.**

Dr. Randi Lebar will present an inspirational talk about the wild ride she took with her mother, pianist Elaine Lebar (born in 1928) who went viral on TikTok in 2020 while living in a memory care unit. Specifically focusing on the magic and power of music in dementia, the talk features many videos of Elaine, and also includes lessons Randi learned along the way about connecting to her mother and finding meaning and joy in their relationship, in spite of her mother's mental decline. The presentation is sure to entertain a wide audience, and it will be especially educational and hopeful for those dealing with a loved one in any stage of cognitive decline.



**MARCH 15 SECOND HOUR –
A CONVERSATION ABOUT END-OF-LIFE CHOICES**

We are honored to welcome Susan Stout from Graceful Bridge for a thoughtful and compassionate conversation about end-of-life planning and education.

We will explore topics such as advance care planning, medical decision-making, and what it can mean to approach the end of life with clarity, dignity, and peace. Whether you are thinking about your own wishes, caring for aging parents, or simply wanting to be prepared, this conversation offers practical guidance and space for honest questions. All are welcome.

**2026 LENTEN OFFERING –
RISE AGAINST HUNGER**

Our Lenten Offering this year will once again support one of First Church's most meaningful hands-on ministries, our Rise Against Hunger Meal Packing Event.

On **Sunday, April 19 at 10:00 a.m.**, we will gather to pack 20,000 meals for communities around the world facing food insecurity. But before we pack, we give.

Throughout Lent, we invite you to make a special Lenten gift to help underwrite the cost of these meals. Each meal costs just \$0.40 and every donation makes a real, tangible difference.

"Feed the hungry and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness..." (Isaiah 58:10)





Discover community activities in 2026

All women of the church are welcome!

February

Tuesday 2/17 @ 12pm
walk at Tod's Point**

Friday, 2/20 5p-7p
Feb Friendsgiving:
All Church Bingo Night*
FCCOG Auditorium

Tuesday, 2/24 @ 10am
coffee at Coffee for Good
(48 Maple Ave, Greenwich)

Wednesday, 2/25 @ 5pm
Happy Hour at Bosco's
(148 Sound Beach Ave, Old Greenwich)

March

Tuesday, 3/3 @ 12pm
walk at Tod's Point**

Saturday, 3/14 10a-12p
Women's Health Day
FCCOG Auditorium

Friday 3/20 @ 10am
coffee at Coffee for Good
(48 Maple Ave, Greenwich)

Wednesday, 3/25 @ 5pm
Happy Hour at Bosco's
(148 Sound Beach Ave, Old Greenwich)

***Greenwich residency not required*

**Women's Fellowship sponsored event: free and open to all of FCCOG*

Scan the QR code for the **GroupMe** app or go to **www.GroupMe.com** from your desktop for Women's Fellowship activity updates

For questions, email
Sara Stuckey (sdstuckey@gmail.com)



**Scan here
with your
smartphone
camera!**



COME FORTH: A LENTEN STUDY

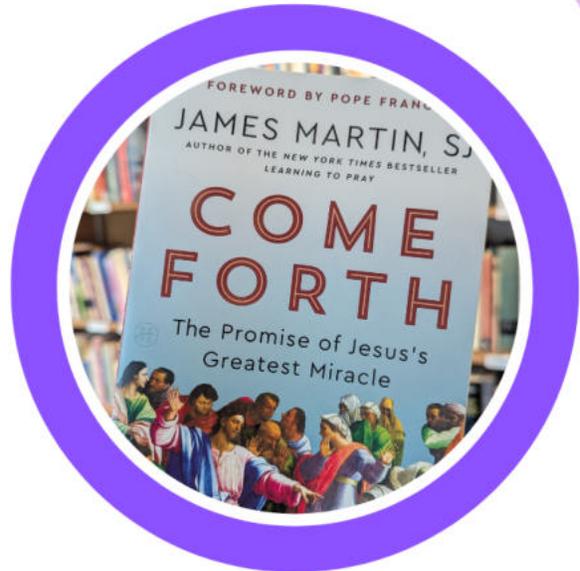
Wednesdays
February 25 - March 25
7:00 pm
First Church Lounge

COME FORTH
BY JAMES MARTIN, SJ

An engaging exploration
of John's Gospel that
brings the story of Jesus
to life today.

GET YOUR BOOK

Limited number of books
are available in the church
office or purchase online.



Hosted at RYM Partner Organization: First Congregational Church Greenwich
108 Sound Beach Avenue in Old Greenwich

RYM Baked Ziti Fundraiser Dinner & Bake Sale

March 22nd, 2026 from 6:00-7:30 pm

Raise \$3,000 for our Service Trip!

ALL
VEGETARIAN
MEALS,
GLUTEN
& DAIRY
FREE
OPTIONS
AVAILABLE



YOUTH &
ADULTS
SETTING
UP AND
SERVING
WILL BE
FED BY
RYM

director@
myrym.org
MYRYM.ORG

QR CODE FOR TICKETS



SINGLE TICKET \$30 FAMILY OF FOUR \$100 FAMILY OF FIVE \$130 FAMILY OF SIX \$150 FAMILY OF SEVEN \$180 OR SPONSOR A MEAL \$30 + MORE WAYS TO GIVE!

CHRISTMAS TREE SALE FUND RECEIPIENTS

Greenwich United Way

For over 90 years, the Greenwich United Way has been dedicated to every Greenwich resident having the opportunity to be healthy, educated and self-sufficient. Our mission is to identify unmet needs in the community, raise awareness and financial support, and work collaboratively with community partners to address those needs with effective solutions and programs that make lasting, positive impacts.

The Greenwich United Way has been a Christmas Tree Sale partner agency since 2024

Greenwich Alliance for Education

The Greenwich Alliance for Education was launched in 2006 as the local education foundation supporting students in the Greenwich Public Schools. Since our founding we have dedicated \$5.6 million to funding innovation, expanding opportunities, and inspiring educators. We believe it is our shared community responsibility to leverage resources and build partnerships to guarantee all students achieve academic success and a promising future.

The Greenwich Alliance for Education has been a Christmas Tree Sale partner agency since 2024.

Mothers for Others

Mothers for Others supports the well-being of low- and limited-income families by providing diapers for children from birth to three years old. It is the largest independent diaper bank in Fairfield County, and the only dedicated diaper bank serving the town of Greenwich. In July 2024, we celebrated the distribution of our one-millionth diaper.

Mothers for Others has been a Christmas Tree Sale partner agency since 2020. They have also been the beneficiary of FCCOG's annual Mother's and Father's Day Diaper Drive and the annual diaper drive in the First Church Preschool.

The YWCA Harmony Project

YWCA Greenwich has been providing critical domestic abuse services in Greenwich for over 40 years. Over the last decade, we have launched a more comprehensive response to violence and abuse in our community to include public awareness, professional training, violence prevention programs, and sustainability services such as housing, civil legal guidance, and financial empowerment. We are proud to offer services and support to victims and survivors of sexual violence through the Harmony Project.

The YWCA Harmony Project has been a Christmas Tree Sale partner agency since 2024.

Call A Ride

Established in 1975, Call A Ride, provides free, safe and secure transportation for 60+ seniors to and from anywhere in Greenwich. Our mission is to help Greenwich seniors maintain their independence and live full and active lives.

Call a Ride has been a Christmas Tree Sale agency partner since 2015. The roster of 52 current volunteer drivers includes many First Church members.

Pacific House Young Adults Program

For 40 years, Pacific House has been a leader in preventing and ending homelessness in Fairfield County. The agency provides emergency shelter for men and young adults and develops and operates permanent supportive housing. Pacific House's portfolio totals 15 homes throughout Stamford, Darien and Norwalk. The Pacific House Shelter is committed to offering a safe and welcoming space with beds, meals, showers, laundry, and on-site case management to men and young adult males. The Young Adult Programs (ages 18-24) tailors programming with life-skills support, shelter diversion, and housing opportunities.

The Pacific House Young Adults Program has been a Christmas Tree Sale partner agency since 2013. The history of First Church's support of Pacific House is far longer. For instance, in 1991 we assisted the Stamford Shelter for the Homeless (now Pacific House) by housing winter overflow of homeless men in the area in the Daniels Center for two weeks. 83 volunteers helped with this project.

The Undies Project

The mission of The Undies Project Inc. (est. 2015) is to provide new underwear to men, women and children in need to improve their lives. We also aim to educate communities about this true, unmet need. Underwear is the most under-donated, and most needed, item of clothing. The Undies Project donates underwear through its partner organizations who serve those who are homeless, living in shelters or who are on a low income.

First Church's support of The Undies Project (est. 2015) began with the annual Undies Sunday underwear drive and has evolved into monetary support from the Christmas Tree Sale since 2024.

New Covenant Center

New Covenant Center is focused on hunger prevention and social services for a better life. Our facility in Stamford provides expanded basic need services to our guests. The soup kitchen serves 300 healthy, hot, nutritious meals daily.

First Church has been providing and serving a hot meal once a month since 1989. Beginning with homemade chili, brown bag meals during the COVID-19 lockdown and now with a hot chicken and vegetable dinner 4 volunteers each month provide a meal served with a smile.

The Christmas Tree Sale has funded this monthly meal since 2020.

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS FROM ANNUAL FCCOG CHRISTMAS TREE AND WREATH SALE

(source: Annual Reports, Financial Statements, Outreach Committee Reports, *Honor the Past*)



The Christmas Tree and Wreath Sale began in 1966 under the guidance of the Couples Club (est.1961). The official sale may have grown out of the “time honored tradition” of purchasing trees and wreaths for the cemetery, Binney Park, the Meetinghouse and Nathaniel Witherell. There is little information on quantities of trees sold or profits.

The able help of the Sea Scouts and the Explorer Scouts is mentioned from the beginning until around 1990. During the years that the Scouts volunteered the proceeds of the sale were shared with them. The Couples Club directed the remaining funds to church interests such as exchange student support and funding Coffee Hour.

In 1974 the Couples Club became known as The Congregators and the tree sale continued under their jurisdiction. Proceeds from the sale continued to fund Coffee Hour, the International Christian Youth Exchange, the Young Peoples Fellowship and began to pay for and promote “activities that might not otherwise be funded.” Projects included retreats, speakers, lighting projects, the Daniels Center kitchen, tree care and radio broadcasts.

“Congregators were unhappy to be terminated in 1989, which was mainly because the Board of Trustees disagreed with how they chose to spend their money from the annual Christmas tree sale. Consequently, the annual tree sale proceeds went back into the church budget with a Trustee heading the sale, and the proceeds going to various charities. By 1995, the tree sales were run by the Christian Outreach Committee.” (*Honor the Past*)

Interestingly, it appears that the largest expenditures by The Congregators in 1987 and 1988, prior to termination in 1989, were for bell tower repairs and the sound system. Small amounts were spent on dances, apples and flowers.

From 1990 there is no reporting on the tree sale details, except for dollar amounts in the financials, until 1999. It is unclear what chairperson, or trustee oversaw the sale or specifically how the funds were used. In 1999, Bill Bausch submits his first report and becomes the tree sale chair. Regular reports resume. At the time, Mary Bausch was chair of the Christian Outreach Committee.

In 1994, financials show that the tree sale proceeds were assigned directly to the Christian Outreach Committee for the first time. The Christian Outreach Committee at that time had a broad range of interests and funds were given locally and internationally. The tree sale seems to have been a separate entity but continued to donate its profits to Outreach until 2006 when the two committees were combined under Chris Hartwell as chair. From 2006 the tree sale has been a subcommittee of Outreach. The Outreach chair also chaired the tree sale until 2024 when a tree sale subcommittee was established with 3 co-chairs who did not also fully chair Outreach.

Historically, tree quantities were not reported with regularity. However, 450 trees were sold in 1981. 2004 and 2005 seem to be the high years with 612 trees sold. Stands and decorated wreaths were added in 2012.

Concerning volunteers, it appears that one or two dedicated chairs have guided the sale since 1967. There is no mention of a tree sale committee ever. There are recorded comments since the 1970's regarding the need for fresh volunteers and an expanded volunteer base. Charlie Fish and Bruce Benedict were early organizers of the sale and seem to have been in charge from 1967 until at least 1981 when they are last mentioned by name. The Sea Scouts and the Explorer Scouts appear to have volunteered until about 1990. When volunteers are mentioned, the numbers range from 60 ~ 80 most often, with higher numbers reported from 2016- 2019 at 110 - 150. 2020 and the pandemic brought lower volunteer numbers - 70-80 volunteers have helped from 2020-2025.

As mentioned earlier, profits from the sale supported the needs and interests of the church in the early days. In addition to funding Coffee Hour, many physical additions and maintenance projects were supported. When profits were distributed by the Christian Outreach Committee beginning in 1994, they were added into the Outreach budget and disbursed outside the church according to the goals of that committee. Funds were no longer used for church projects or needs. In 2013 it appears that tree sale profits were not added into the Outreach budget and began to be allocated separately and to local agencies. This was the first year that the recipients were announced as beneficiaries before the sale. 2015 brought a slight deviation from all local disbursements as UNICEF was included. In 2017 gifts were made to Church projects - mission trip scholarship and the Refugee Task Force. Only since 2018 have recipients been all outside local agencies.

Since 1966, the Christmas Tree and Wreath Sale has raised an estimated **\$943,354** for distribution to local, national and international non-profits and funded important projects at First Church. Despite rising costs due to increased numbers of paid workers, profits over the last ten years have increased sharply due to more market aware pricing, a larger inventory of Fraser trees and generous donations from shoppers. The customer experience and, perhaps customer retention, has been aided by expanded electronic payment systems and logistical improvements such as driveway tree loading.



THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GREENWICH

108 Sound Beach Avenue Old Greenwich CT 06870

203-637-1791 • www.fccog.org

Ministers - All Members Of The First Congregational Church Of Greenwich

Senior Pastor
Associate Pastor
Minister of Music
Director of Church School/ Regional Youth Ministry
Parish Nurse
Director of Operations
Director of Finance & Administration
Livestream Director
Audio Technician
Database Administrative Assistant
Facility Manager
Sexton
Sexton
First Church Preschool Director
First Church Preschool Assistant Director
Pastor Emerita

Reverend Patrick Collins
Reverend Cydney Van Dyke
Dr. Craig Scott Symons
Khaleigh Laicher
Susan Asselin, RN
Wendy Spezzano
Greg Girolamo
Daniel Lepoutre
Bob Small
Sue Wilder
Julio Yika
Joe Vartuli
Curtis Gay
Beth Genovese
Melanie Garnett
Reverend Sally Colegrove



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
a just world for all

