



# The Cornerstone

News from the First Church of Christ, Congregational, United Church of Christ  
Unionville, CT

MAY/JUN 2024

## *The Pastor's Pen*

May is my favorite month, and it is not because it is my birthday month. I love May because it announces spring in all its full glory. The leaves of the trees are making their full appearance, and the flowers are blooming in a magnificent array of colors. The air is warmer, and the sun stays longer in the sky, guaranteeing more hours of brightness. And May also points toward the long and warm days of summer, which is my favorite season. So, yes, I love May, even more than June, July and August, because anticipation is almost everything!

The first day of May this year is Wednesday, and May Day has many different roots, some red and some green. Astronomy also plays a role since May Day is the halfway point between the spring equinox in March and the summer solstice in June. The Celtic people celebrated May Day as one of its cross quarter days, which marked the midway points among the four solstices and equinoxes.

But May Day also has its roots in agriculture. People have always celebrated times of planting and reaping, and May Day has often been celebrated with festivities, marking the sprouting of plants, trees and the richness of fields, filled with the promise of a rich summer harvest. May was also a time when people would drive their cattle into the pastures after the cold of the winter months. During the Middle Ages the Irish celebrated the festival of Beltane, known as "a day of fire," when a huge bonfire was ignited and people danced and sang throughout the night, welcoming the fullness of spring into their lives.

England had a tradition of the Maypole, and this was brought to America, though our Puritan ancestors did not like what they considered a pagan ritual. But our nation has other roots besides the Puritans, so despite Puritan disapproval, the maypole endured. Children especially would gather wildflowers and green branches and make hoops of flowers to hold while singing and dancing around the maypole. It was a glorious spring festival, and though there were those who saw it as a pagan rite, others celebrated the season as God's gift and a means of giving God thanks. Joy, after all, is one of the gifts of the Spirit, and so to be joyful is a way to honor God as creator.

May Day, however, did not remain solely as a nature (green) celebration. Industrialization in the western world showed the plight and struggle of workers, and by the early 1890's May Day became associated with a call for worker rights and justice. May 1 was set aside as a day for workers to take action and demand improved wages and working conditions. Labor unions and trade unions often made their demands known on May Day, which often led to a day of strikes and protests. Between 1891 and 1894 over 150,000 people would each year gather and strike as a way of making their working situation known to others, who often were ignorant of what workers had to endure. In 1885 the number of people on strike rose to 250,000 and in 1886 the number became over 600,000 as people struck for an eight hour work day. By the year 1890 May Day was recognized as an international day for workers, but in the United States President Grover Cleveland on June 28, 1894 made the first Sunday in September a national Labor Day in an effort to disconnect it from the more radical labor movements in Europe that continue to be celebrated on May 1.

So, May Day has both green roots and red roots---green as reminder that the beauty of nature is a gift of God to be celebrated in joy and thanksgiving and red, the color of protest and a call for justice. God would have us remember and celebrate both. God is the creator of a vast and beautiful universe, and that same God also calls the people to do justice and love mercy and walk humbly with God.

Yours in Christ,  
Sandra

## **Pastoral Coverage**

*In case of  
emergency,  
please contact the  
following:*

**Church office: 860-  
673-2796**

*or*

**Rev. Sandra Olsen:  
(860) 347-4100**

*or*

**Diaconate  
Chair,  
Cindy Nye:  
(517) 402-1000**

## **SANDRA'S OFFICE HOURS:**

*Tuesdays & Fridays:  
11:00 am-2:00 pm, and  
after church on Sundays  
until 2 pm.*

Feel free to drop by, or  
make an appointment  
by calling the church  
office or contacting  
Sandra: (860) 347-4100  
[sandraleeeolsen@gmail.com](mailto:sandraleeeolsen@gmail.com)

## **Prayer Concerns**

*Please contact the  
church office with  
prayer requests,  
thanksgivings, or  
remembrances to be  
included in the  
weekly notices.*

## **Deacons Desk**

I shared this in the May/June Cornerstone in 2018. It feels right to share it again this year. ~Cindy Nye

One day in 2009, I was reflecting on my experiences with my father from when I was a child, and how much more I appreciated those once I was raising children of my own. I was inspired to write the following to him for Father's Day that year. He died suddenly 3 months later, and I will forever be grateful that I had the chance to express this to him before he passed. Parents take on a sacred job when they bring children into their lives. Happy Mother's Day and Father's Day to everyone who has responded to this awesome calling!

### *Now That I'm A Parent*

*Dear Dad:*

*When I was growing up I would often hear, "When you have kids of your own someday, you'll understand". Now that I'm a parent, I recognize many things that I took for granted as a child, and I want to thank you for some of those today.*

*Thank you for never getting mad at me when I took out your tools, without asking, so I could "build" -- even though I never quite finished a project, and I usually left it all scattered around the garage floor. I think about this whenever I happen upon the creations that my own little builders have started and left behind.*

*Thank you for playing sports with me in the yard, taking me to practices and tryouts, and coaching my teams. Now that I'm a "soccer mom", I realize what a sacrifice that was.*

*Thank you for all of the assignments you helped me with: science experiments, diaramas, maps, and more. Now that I have kids of my own, I recognize just how much of a project those tasks can be.*

*Thank you for the many times you carried me upstairs to bed when I fell asleep in the car. I have since learned firsthand what an act of love that is.*

*Thank you for tucking me in at night with a story and a kiss to help me put the cares of the day behind. I think of that as I wish my boys sweet dreams at bedtime.*

*And thank you for being there for me through thunderstorms, wet sheets, fevers, and nightmares. I remember that each time I am up during the night with one of my sons.*

*Thank you for all of the creatures you helped me love and care for along the way. I know now that taking on a pet means taking on more work for the parent.*

*And thank you for all that you did to make each holiday special: setting up the Christmas tree, carving pumpkins, taking us Trick-or-Treating...*

*As a kid I just assumed those things were fun for you.*

*Now I know that you really did them for me.*

*And now I appreciate and understand so much of what didn't make sense back then -- Like why "We'll see" IS a good answer -- and so is "Because I said so"...*

*and that "Got you last" is NEVER a good game to play.*

*I now realize that it's impossible to "Watch this" every single time the request is made, or to know all of the answers to all of the "Why" questions...*

*and that sometimes saying "No" is one of the most loving things a parent can do.*

*I have learned the importance of making time to visit relatives, and of going to church on Sunday.*

*You showed me that it is possible to be angry and upset without reacting in ways that hurt.*

*You taught me that a parent cannot protect a child from ever feeling sad or scared, but CAN be there to give comfort and support during difficult times.*

*And I've discovered that children make mistakes not only so they can learn how to do better, but also so parents can learn how to forgive.*

*So, Dad, on this Father's Day, I want you to know how grateful I am for all of those things, how much I cherish the memories of those times with you, and how much your love, patience, values, and understanding when I was a child have helped me to be the parent that I am today.*

### **Transportation Ministry**

Church Member Volunteers are always available to provide transportation to and from church. We encourage anyone who is in need of a ride to please contact Dayle Kane at (860) 404-5149 or [daykane@comcast.net](mailto:daykane@comcast.net)

### **Want to be kept up-to-date?**

### **Get on our Church email list.**

You will be notified of all the current news and upcoming happenings of our Church. You will not receive any junk mail or be bombarded with jokes or chain letters. It is a great and inexpensive way to be kept informed. If you are not on the list and would like to be, or if you have a prayer request or any other news to share, send an e-mail to: [jgebby@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jgebby@sbcglobal.net)

## *Welcome*

We are happy to welcome Mike McDonough, who officially joined us as our newest member on March 17.

## *Pastoral Coverage*

Sandra will be in Ireland from May 20 to June 4. Because May 27 is officially Memorial Day, the Deacons will lead the Sunday, May 26, service with readings and reflections about war and peace. Some of the reflections will be in the form of letters, written from soldiers about their experience of war and the yearning for peace.

On June 2 The Rev. Suzy Rivera will be our guest preacher.

## *Outdoor Worship Services*

- June 16 (rain date June 23)
- July 21 (rain date July 28)
- August 18 (rain date August 25)

## *Singing to our Seniors*

We will sing for our home bound friends again on June 30 and August 11 after the Social Hour, weather permitting. All are welcome to join us. In April we had 11 people sing. This always brings a smile to the faces of those we sing for, and it brightens our day, as well.

## *Faith Formation*

### **TAKING A LOOK AT SOME BIBLICAL TEXTS:**

While life at church does slow down a bit during the summer months, we have put aside the first and third Sundays after Social Hour to take a look at some biblical texts that are worth revisiting and pondering. Here are some possible texts and questions to consider:

1. Does God have a name? (Exodus 3: 13-14) July 7
2. Walking on Water (Matthew 14: 22-33) July 21
3. Can Memory Save? "Forgetfulness leads to exile, while remembrance is the secret to redemption," words from a famous rabbi, Israel Ben Eliezer. (Isaiah 43: 18-19, Psalm 111:4) August 4
4. Who are the Blessed? (Matthew 5: 3-12 and Luke 6: 20-23) August 18
5. Mary and Martha (Luke 10: 38-42) September 1
6. Complaining to God: Elijah Wants to Die (I Kings 19:1-12) September 15

## *Annual Business Meeting & Potluck*

**June 9** is our annual congregational meeting to approve officers, and committee/board members, and to review/approve the annual report. The meeting will be held in the Sanctuary, right after worship, followed by a potluck. A sign up sheet for the potluck will be posted in the Social Room. **Speak with Jennifer Dupont or Nancy Sylvester, our Nominating Committee, if you would like to serve on a committee.**

## *Strengthen The Church Offering*

The Strengthen The Church offering will be collected during our worship service on Sunday, May 19. This is a denominational offering that supports leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations. By your generosity to this offering, you build up the Body of Christ..

## *Small Angels Ministry*

We continue to partner with St. Paul's Luther Church in Terryville to provide diapers, baby formula, baby food, wipes, etc, for families in need. Please bring any such items to church to donate, or write a check to the church if you are unable to purchase them yourself. Susan Keenan goes to St. Paul's once a month to assist.

**SMALL GROUP  
OPPORTUNITIES  
AT FCCU:**

**HSSS (High School  
Sunday Series)**

*A small group Bible study  
for high school and middle  
school age young people,  
following the Children's  
Moment in worship.*

*Meets at Dunkin Donuts in  
Unionville. Adult Leader:  
Tim Barth.*

**Frances Richards  
Club**

*Women's group. Meets the  
second Wednesday of the  
month (except January  
and February) for  
fellowship, special  
activities, and lunch.  
Contact Donna Williams:  
[pyroartist@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pyroartist@sbcglobal.net)*

**Men's Breakfast Club**

*Meets one Thursday a  
month. Contact Tim Barth:  
[tbarth525teb@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tbarth525teb@sbcglobal.net)*

**Bell Choir**

*Wednesday evenings at  
7:00 p.m. (except July and  
August).  
Directed by Lisa Durkin:  
[usnavynurs@aol.com](mailto:usnavynurs@aol.com)*

**New small groups  
are welcome and  
encouraged. To begin  
one, contact the  
church office.**

## *Walk Against Hunger*

Please support the Rev. Suzy Rivera's efforts to raise money for the Walk Against Hunger, which was May 4. You can donate by making a check out to the church, marked Walk Against Hunger, or through Suzy's Walk Page: <https://donate.ctfoodshare.org/fundraiser/5365790> You can also email her at [srivera@fsc-ct.org](mailto:srivera@fsc-ct.org) OR call her at 860-801-8603.

## *Spring Cleaning*

Thanks to everyone who helped clean the Sanctuary and participated in the outdoor cleanup of our grounds.

## *Committee and Club Updates*

**Men's Breakfast Club** will get together next on Thursday, May 30 and June 27, 9:00 am at Uncle Bob's Ham and Eggers in Plainville.

**Frances Richards Club:** Attention all ladies of the church. Please mark your calendars now for the next 2 gatherings of the Frances Richards Club this Spring. Bring your own lunch. Beverages and dessert will be provided. We will meet at noon, on the second Wednesday of the month on the following dates:  
Wed., May 8th: Indian Baskets Exhibit at the Unionville Museum  
Wed., June 12th: Summer Luncheon to be decided  
Hope to see you all there!

**Church Committee** meets next on Monday, May 13 and June 17, 7:00 pm, in the Chapel.

**Deacons** meet next on Monday, May 6 and June 10 at 7:00 pm via Zoom.

**Trustees** meet next on Thursday, May 2 and June 6, at 6:30 pm at George's.

**Finance Committee:** Income and expenses in the operating budget are close to plan, with no significant variances. Yoga classes are ongoing in the Social Room on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. They are scheduled to end on June 20th. We cleaned out the children's library in the wing. On May 1st, we will start renting the room to Mary Beth Griffin, the Special Ed teacher that currently rents 2 rooms downstairs. We are very fortunate to have her as a tenant.

We continue to collect money for the food donation program for the Farmington Food Bank and the Friendship Service Center in New Britain. The grocery store gift card program continues to be a great program for us to raise money for the church at no extra cost to those that participate. Thank you to everyone. You can purchase cards in \$50 or \$100 denominations for Stop and Shop, Shop Rite or Big Y. Anyone wishing to participate can see Malcolm in the social room after church service each Sunday. You pay face value for the cards and the church gets 5% of every sale.

We had a successful fundraiser event on April 14th. Olivia Germano, a Boy Scout Troop 170 leader, presented on the history of Unionville. We sold 87 tickets for the event, ran a small raffle and sold baked goods made by members of the Francis Richard's Club. We made a little over \$1,000. Thanks to everyone that worked on the event and everyone that donated baked goods. The presentation was scheduled to end at 4:30, but went until 5:00 due to great interest by those that attended.

**Missions and Outreach** oversaw the collection of twenty-one Easter baskets for clients of Covenant to Care. Missions also met in March to discuss the need to be more public about the committee's projects. The committee decided to highlight the need for donations for Small Angels Ministry in April and May and to collect food for the Farmington Food Pantry in June and July. In August Missions will oversee the collection of filled backpacks in conjunction with the Annual Back-to-School Backpack project; empty backpacks and a list of needed items will be placed on the table in the Social Room in late-July or early August. Missions will meet to decide whether to hold a can and bottle drive in the future. The committee would like to thank the congregation for their continuing, amazing generosity. Our church truly does go "above and beyond".

## *Sanctuary/Chapel Etiquette*

Please continue to limit talking while Michael is playing the prelude, as this is a time of contemplation and preparation for the service. Socializing in our worship spaces disrupts this for people in attendance, and interferes with Zoom participants' ability to hear and enjoy the music. Please try to finish conversations in the Social Room or Narthex before entering the Sanctuary or Chapel. At the end of the service, please feel free to exit during the Prelude if you do not wish to stay to listen.

## Building Use

Remember to be aware of the classes and other groups meeting throughout the building, especially the **yoga classes held in the Social Room on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:15 to 10:45 am**. Meetings are listed in our weekly bulletin. Additional times may be scheduled as classes are added or changed. If you are not sure if an area is being used, please call the church office to inquire, and be cautious about going into rooms that might be occupied. Thank you for staying out of these areas during those times, and also for being considerate about noise levels in the building while classes or groups are meeting.



## Grocery Store Gift Cards



Purchase gift cards for Stop & Shop, Big Y, or Shop Rite, and buy your groceries as you normally would. **It costs you nothing extra!** Our church receives 5% of the amount of the gift cards that the congregation purchases. **You may purchase cards from Malcolm in the Social Room after church, or send an email to the church office to make other arrangements: [fccunionville@att.net](mailto:fccunionville@att.net)**

## Social Hour

We continue to use pre-packaged snacks for Social Hour. Thank you to Jean and Tim Barth for providing the snacks,. Please consider signing up to put out the snacks, make the coffee and then clean up. The sign-up sheet is in the Social Room.



## Get Involved!

**Hospitality Team** is open to those who want to provide a warm welcome to all who come for worship and fellowship. If you'd like to be part of this team, call Russ Sylvester at (860) 678-9474.

**Choir** provides the uplifting anthems we hear in worship each week, and is open to all who wish to praise God through the gift of music. To learn more or offer your gifts of music and singing, contact Music Director Michael Korman or drop by for rehearsal any Sunday morning before Worship.

**Handbell Choir** needs more musicians to continue to bring their beautiful songs to our special services. Practices are Wednesday nights at 7 pm in the Conference Room, September through June.

**Cleaning:** We can always use more assistance with keeping our space beautiful. Please email the church office if you can help in any way, either regularly or occasionally/as needed. **We could really use some help with vacuuming the church once every three weeks. Please see Tim if you are interested.**

**Special Events:** Throughout the year, we have a number of events and activities that would greatly benefit from extra volunteers. These include our concerts and clean-up activities. Please consider asking how you can help when you see an event that you're interested in being a part of.

**Transportation:** We have several members who regularly need rides to church on Sundays, as well as some with more occasional transportation needs for special events. Please consider adding your name to our list of drivers. You may do so by contacting Dayle Kane: (860) 404-5149 or [daykane@comcast.net](mailto:daykane@comcast.net)

**\*\*If an unanticipated transportation need arises on the morning of a service, please call Susan Keenan (860) 690-1350 or Cindy Nye (517) 402-1000 for assistance. Please try to call by 9 am so they have time to find a ride for you.**



