



The Cornerstone

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

SEPT/OCT 2024

The Pastor's Pen

For many people autumn is their favorite time of year. I prefer summer, but I can easily understand the vote for autumn. The weather is cool and crisp. The harvest is coming in with its bounty of pumpkins and apples, and the colors of fall offer magnificent hues of red, yellow, orange and brown. Halloween is a fun day, especially for kids, and All Souls and All Saints Day remind us to remember all the people, who have been a part of our lives as well as the very special ones, who have made a major impact on the life of the Church. There is also Reformation Sunday, a celebration of the free conscience standing before an authority that cannot force the capitulation of a mind and spirit that knows itself to be free. The story goes that in 1521 when Martin Luther was called to the city of Worms and asked to recant what was considered heretical teaching, his reply was: **“My conscience is captive to the Word of God; I cannot and will not recant, so help me God.”** Luther was not claiming infallibility. He knew he could be wrong, but he also knew where his study had brought him---to a conclusion that flew in the face of authority. What else could he do but submit to the truth as he understood it? There would be no turning back, and the church was torn asunder. And it has never been put back. Some people, and not only Roman Catholics, think we should not celebrate the breaking apart of the church.

So, autumn has its special days and times, though the season for Christians unfolds in what is called “Ordinary Time,” when the color is green. Ordinary time dominates the church calendar, beginning after Advent and Christmas until Lent is upon us, followed by Easter and Pentecost. Then comes the long season of Ordinary Time, which we are now in, until Advent, the beginning of a new church year.

Ordinary time is where most of life unfolds, punctuated here and there with a few special days of celebration. But in our part of the world, New England, we have this marvelously beautiful season of autumn. And we can fully enjoy it and give thanks to God that we are alive in such a time as this. Yet autumn also has a lesson to teach about change and letting go. All the seasons bring change, but it seems to me that autumn announces its changes more dramatically. As lovely as the season is, we do witness the end of something. The long days of light disappear into darker mornings and evenings. The beautifully colored leaves lose their grip on the trees as they turn to a crispy brown and fall to the ground, leaving behind a stark barrenness. The cool temperatures begin to give way to the cold, and there is no denying what lies ahead: the long, dark days of winter, which always seem to last too long. Spring, for most of us, comes too slowly. And perhaps autumn for many of us disappears too quickly.

I had an elderly friend from one of my former churches who told me she did not like autumn because it reminded her of death. “Everything is dying,” she said, “and even the beauty of the season cannot hide that fact from me.” And so, she said, “The season makes me sad.” I can understand that feeling, because at times I share it, but recently I came across some words by a writer named Joyce Rupp:

*Autumn draws me into a reflective embrace. The misty air, the golden leaves,
the noisy call of geese winging their way southward,
all these lead me inward. I relish autumn's quiet way of doing this.
At the same time, I resist autumn. Mainly because it pokes “death”
in my face everywhere I turn. I don't want to let go of summer's warmth and energizing green.
I resist the inherent message of impermanence reflected in this season.
Yet letting go is absolutely essential in order for change to occur.
All the major spiritual teachings hold this belief – we can't grow unless we let go.
This call to love what is but not cling to it has been a longtime challenge.
Every autumn I turn and face the big question:
how to cherish who and what I have but to hold these gifts freely, with open hands and heart.*

Most of us can understand exactly what she means. Who wants to let go of what and whom we love? And yet, when Mary Magdalene, finally recognized that the man she thought to be the gardener was really Jesus, she reached out to touch and hold him. And what did Jesus say, “Do not hold me,” or as some translations read, “Do not cling to me.” In life there can be no final clinging or hanging on. Finally, we must let go. We begin to learn the lesson early, when we learn to say good-by, as our parents leave us at the

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 sandraleeolsen@gmail.com

daycare center or at school or camp or all the other places we go. Letting go is an essential lesson to learn. And autumn is one of our teachers.

But in the meantime, relish the loveliness of the season as you consider these words from an unknown source:

*In the fading of the summer sun,
the shortening of days, cooling breeze,
swallows' flight and moonlight rays
We see the Creator's hand.
In the browning of leaves once green,
morning mists, autumn chill,
fruit that falls, frost's first kiss
We see the Creator's hand.*

Yours in Christ,
Sandra



Prayer Concerns

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

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

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

With Gratitude

Thank you to Miriam Tsombanos for her service as the Administrative Assistant for our church. She has decided to retire after 3 years with us. We are grateful that we will continue to be able to still see her in church. We are happy to welcome Nancy Ladish into the position.

Church Picnic

Sunday September 15 after our worship service. Deacons will provide subs; the congregation can bring chips, salads, desserts, and drinks.

Singing to our Seniors

We will sing for our home bound friends again after our worship service on September 22, weather permitting. All are welcome to join us. This always brings a smile to the faces of those we sing for, and it brightens our day, as well.

Faith Formation

This summer we tried to have some bible study after Social Hour, but the summer beckons people to other activities. Completely understandable; it was an experiment. So we will try again this autumn. And looking ahead: In Advent we will take a look at some of the art of Advent and after Christmas we will try some Poetry Unbound: Poems to Open Your World.

1. Does God have a name? Exodus 3: 13-14 October 13
2. Walking on Water: Matthew 14: 22-33 October 20
3. Who are the Blessed? Matthew 5: 3-12 and Luke 6: 20-23 November 10
4. Mary and Martha: Luke 10: 38-42. November 17

Beatles Tribute Band Concert



Sunday, October 6, 2024 - 3PM

First Church of Christ, 61 Main St, Unionville

Join us for a musical celebration of the 60th anniversary of the British Invasion!

Doors open at 2 PM. Seating starts at 2:30 PM.

We will have our popular Annual Fall Fundraiser Raffle showcasing an assortment of fabulous gift baskets to bid on.

Tickets - All Seats \$20

Call: (860) 673-2796

Online: <http://bit.ly/concertsatFCCU>

Pastoral Coverage

Pastor Sandra and Deacon Susan Keenan will be walking the El Camino de Santiago, October 21 to November 5. The Camino de Santiago was considered one of the great pilgrimages during the Middle Ages, when as many as 250,000 people walked it. The other two great pilgrimages was to the city of Rome, which Martin Luther did walk, and a pilgrimage through the Holy Land to the city of Jerusalem.

Santiago was believed to be the site where James, the Apostle, son of Zebedee, and so called brother of John the Evangelist, was buried in the Cathedral of Santiago. Much of this is myth. John the Evangelist wrote his gospel around the year 90 or 100, so he could not possibly be the brother of James. But story and myth play powerful roles in all religions. The story goes that a shepherd by the name of Pelayo in the 9th century discovered in a field the preserved body of James during the reign of King Alfonso II. The body was eventually buried in the Cathedral and pilgrims began to make the journey across France, Spain and Portugal to arrive at the final destination, the Cathedral. The belief was that making a pilgrimage of this sort would reduce one's days in purgatory! There are many routes to take, beginning in different countries, and if one walks the entire way, it would be about 500 miles. People continue to make the pilgrimage today! Even people in their 80's do the walk.

From Sandra: Susan Keenan and I are not so ambitious, and since I work, I do not have the time to walk 500 miles. To be honest, I also lack the ambition. But the two of us are going to walk the final 70 miles over a period of nine days. The church affords me two weeks of study leave, a standard practice in the United Church of Christ for clergy, so this is how I am using my time. We expect to be able to do this: the route we are taking is deemed an easy one, but we are humble and old enough to be sensible. If there is a day, we are too tired to walk, we can contract a ride to the next stop. We do not have to carry our luggage, just our supplies for the day. The weather in Spain is still relatively warm in October. I was in Santiago two years ago, and I was quite surprised how warm it was. So, when we return you will hear about our walk, and who knows, we might inspire some of you to be a pilgrim on The Way of St. James, which is how the Camino de Santiago is translated into English.

The Rev. Carolyn Young, will be preaching on October 27 and November 3. She is so happy to return to our pulpit and really enjoys being at our church.

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

Men's Breakfast Club

Meets one Thursday a month. Contact Tim Barth: tbarth525teb@sbcglobal.net

Bell Choir

Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. (except July and August).

Directed by Lisa Durkin: usnavynurs@aol.com

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

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.

In Loving Memory



Virginia "Ginny" Johanson (Arnold), 91, of Unionville, Connecticut, a beacon of warmth and kindness, passed away peacefully at her home on August 16, 2024, with loved ones by her side. Born in Unionville on September 25, 1932, daughter of the late Eugene and Anna (Dugan) Arnold, Ginny was a life-long native of her small town and was well-loved by many. She met the love of her life, the late Rodney "Rod" Johanson, while attending Farmington High School, she a cheerleader and he a basketball player, and they began their family shortly after graduating. Ginny and Rod were happily married for 72 years. Ginny dedicated her life to her children and grandchildren. She worked tirelessly to provide support and love for her family.

Ginny worked at a few small businesses in Unionville and loved volunteering at the Unionville Museum and taking part in activities at her church, the First Congregational Church in Unionville. She enjoyed listening to music, especially when Rod played his variety of instruments. Her favorite hours were spent taking care of her grandkids and bringing them to local restaurants, like Friendly's and McDonalds. Ginny leaves behind four sons, Tom (Diane), Ron (Cindy), Jim, and Glenn (Mindy) Johanson; 11 grandchildren; 9 great-grandchildren; and many other nieces and nephews, all who will miss her dearly. Ginny was predeceased by her daughters-in-law, Jennifer and Belinda Johanson; and her siblings Dot Ford, Eugene Arnold, Barbara Muszynski, Irving Arnold, and Albert Arnold. Ginny's family would like to extend their appreciation to her homecare aides Sue Lopes and Alina Jodlowski, and her special niece, Debbie Lindstedt, for the support, love and exceptional care provided for the past few years.

Family received friends on Thursday, August 22, with words by Rev Sandra Olsen, at The Ahern Funeral Home, 111 Main Street, Unionville. Burial services were held immediately following at Greenwood Cemetery, Lovely St., Avon. Memorial donations may be made in Ginny's honor to the Farmington Public Library, 6 Montith Drive, Farmington, CT, 06032. To send online condolences to the family, please visit <http://www.ahernfuneralhome.com/>

Committee and Club Updates

Men's Breakfast Club will get together next on Thursday, September 26 and October 31, 9:00 am at Uncle Bob's Ham and Eggers in Plainville.

Frances Richards Club: The group of ladies is looking forward to a lake side picnic at Winding Trails for our first gathering of the season on Wednesday, September 11th. We will be sitting under a brand new Pavilion that day. It will be fun to see everyone again and hoping for great weather that day at Winding Trails.

We will be meeting the second Wednesday of October and November but no specific programs have been scheduled as of yet. Hoping to get some ideas at our picnic.

Church Committee meets next on Monday, September 16 and October 21, 7:00 pm, in the Chapel.

Deacons meet next on Monday, September 9 and October 7 at 7:00 pm via Zoom.

Trustees meet next on Thursday, September 26 and October 24, at 6:30 pm at George's.

Finance Committee: Income and expenses in the operating budget are still running close to plan through the end of August.

The Yoga classes are scheduled to begin on September 17th, in the Social Room, on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, as long as enough people sign up for the classes. They are scheduled to end on December 12th.

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 who participate. 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.

Our fundraiser concert is scheduled for 10/6 from 3-5pm. We are having a Beatles tribute band, Number Nine, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Beatles coming to America. Tickets are \$20. Please help out by informing your friends, coworkers, and family. We were able to sell 210 tickets to our concert last year. Our goal is to beat that number this year.

The pledge process is about to start. A pledge letter and pledge card will be mailed out to church members on September 16th. The planning process for the 2025 budget is also about to begin. A preliminary budget will be presented to the Church Committee in October and finalized in November.

Missions and Outreach oversaw the collection of twelve filled backpacks for the annual Back-to-School Backpack Project serving clients of Covenant to Care. Missions expects to coordinate the filling of Thanksgiving baskets for clients of Covenant to Care and Farmington Social Services in November and will oversee the collection of Christmas gifts for children served by Covenant to Care in December. As always, Missions would like to thank our congregation for their continuing generous support!

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: fcunionville@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.

JOIN US FOR
**Social
Hour**

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

****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.**

