

THE CORNERSTONE

*First Church is an Open and Affirming Congregation
of the United Church of Christ*

Welcome to First Church!

Please join us for Worship!

January 7th

Star Gift Epiphany Celebration

8:30 am in the Chapel
10:00 am in the Sanctuary
with Holy Communion at both services

On Sunday, January 7, 2018, come to our Sunday services and hear from several members, who received a Star in 2017, reflect and describe how that Star was a Gift to them. Then join with the congregation in receiving your own Star, with the hope that it will be a Gift to you for 2018.

Let's celebrate the culmination of the Advent Season with the same encouragement, inspiration, thought, and wonder that the Wise Men felt as they followed the Star that lead them.

January 14th

Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday

8:30 am in the Chapel
10:00 am in the Sanctuary
with the Sacrament of Baptism
Rev. George Harris, preaching

January 21st

8:30 am in the Chapel
10:00 am in the Sanctuary
Rev. Kevin Weikel, preaching

January 28th

8:30 am in the Chapel
10:00 am in the Sanctuary
Rev. George Harris, preaching



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Rev. George Harris
Senior Minister

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Out of Office
Tuesdays

Pastor Pondering

Our Advent and Christmas Eve services this year were filled with touching and memorable moments. The decorations were exquisite, the music exceptional, and familiar stories creatively told. I was deeply moved by all aspects of our worship services, but my warmest memory is of one little angel in our Christmas Pageant on the Third Sunday of Advent. Sporting the requisite white robe and garland halo, he came forward with the heavenly host and took his place on the chancel steps. All the way to the left, below the pulpit, and away from the distractions of those rascal shepherds and sheep, stood angelic Andrew Czuchta. Smiling. And waving. And smiling. And waving. And waving. And waving. I couldn't see from where I sat, but I am sure he was looking into the love-filled and delighted faces of his proud parents Heather and Nick. I know he was having the time of his life!

Maya Angelou suggests that we are each unconsciously asking each other four questions, all the time. The questions are:

- Do you see me?
- Do you care that I'm here?
- Am I enough for you, or do you need me to be better in some way?
- Can I tell that I'm special to you by the way that you look at me?

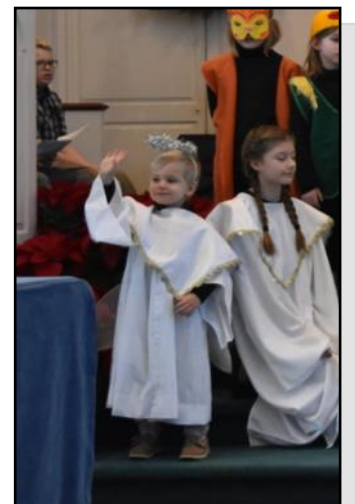
Not only are we forever, silently asking these questions of loved ones, friends, and co-workers, in a broader sense, we also look for answers from everyone we encounter, the barista at the coffee shop, the UPS driver dropping off a package, our children's friends' parents, and of course, our church. When we feel a "Yes!" in response to these questions, our humanity is affirmed making us smile and wave. But when we don't get an answer, or worse, receive a "no," we can feel separated from loved ones and detached from our community.

Of course I remember angelic Andrew because he was so darn cute. But even more than the cuteness factor, I thought, I want everyone to experience what Andrew is experiencing right now. I want everyone who walks into First Church to be awash in love and delight as a beloved child of God.

As we step out into a new year together, it is my hope and desire that First Church responds to each of you as God receives all of us, with love and delight, seen and cared for just as we are, always enough, indeed special. And bathed in this reflected glory of God, may we, like the angel Andrew, light up! And smile. And wave. And smile. And wave. And in this way, share this divine joy with all who enter here. And so, may 2018 be for each and all, the time of our lives.

In Christ,

Pastor George



A Message from Rev. Kevin Weikel

A blessing as you journey into the new year

- ◇ May your eyes be opened to the wonder of the daily miracles around you and your sense of mystery be deepened.
- ◇ May you be aware of the light that shines in the darkness, and that the darkness can never put out.
- ◇ May you be blessed with companions on the journey, friends who will listen to you and encourage you with their presence.
- ◇ May you learn to live with what is unsolved in your heart, daring to face the questions and holding them until, one day, they find their answers.
- ◇ May you find the still, quiet place inside yourself where you can know and experience the peace that passes understanding.
- ◇ May love flow in you and through you to those who need your care.
- ◇ May you continue to dream dreams and to reach out into the future with a deeper understanding of God's way for you.

Amen.

-Lynda Wright



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Out of Office Wednesdays



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Out of Office
Tuesdays

Musical Notes

Christmas has happened, and we once again have had the opportunity to celebrate Christ's birth. What a wonderful occasion! Musically, it was also a marvelous season, with an enormous amount of music available to everyone on every level in a very short space of time. Our choirs and many individuals have worked extra hard this year, to contribute music for concerts, presentations, Sunday services, and celebrations. Farmington Valley Chorus and Chorale; Hockanum Valley Ringers; Supper Club; Mini Concert with everyone; Longest Night; Christmas Eve also with much help from everyone: Junior Choir, guest singers and players, the incomparable Jim Martocchio; and our equally amazing members of the Jericho Road Band and talented youth. And probably more than that – thank you all so much! What terrific music we have had this year! Everyone that contributed all your time, your energy, your creativity in a sometimes confusing flurry of events: you have all come through having given something very special in the life of this church. I cannot say enough about what you have done!

And as the New Year comes, we have the chance to use the perspective that the rearview mirror gives us. We have accomplished some amazing musical feats. We have gained new members in all of our organizations. For their presence, we are grateful to our new friends. We have the talents and wonderful voices of our YASC members – new to us this year. We have a youth that have amazing musical abilities.

But we have also lost valuable friends and members of our musical family. Some have had to direct their time to significant and serious family circumstances; some have moved; and we still very much mourn the passing of our dear friend Marilyn Kew. But they have all left their mark on us and on the music that we present here. We are all so much better for having had them here with us, and we will remember them always.

We look forward to more opportunities in the next half-year. More concerts; some wonderful worship services including those of Holy Week and Easter; and the ability to perhaps take our music to other places in the community; some possible collaborations; a new Monday night course in “PA 101” for those that want to know more about sound systems. The prospect for creativity here is huge. What a terrific place First Church is!

One of my true hopes is that what you have heard this past season inspires you to take part – to join us, to take some time to feed the creative part of your being. This is more important than anyone may know. It's an increasingly complicated world, and there are more answers in the creative process than one might realize. I really hope that we in Music Ministries (note: “Ministry”) can open this door for you.

And you may have more fun than you think. And we all need a little more fun.

Thanks to everyone that took part. Thanks to everyone that listened. I hope that all of you gained from the music here, and that we are all closer to God because of it.

May you have a healthy, happy, and fulfilling New Year!

Mark



A Message from Anastasia

Recently, I've been in a place of stress and worry, afraid that if I wasn't constantly keeping up with all my work I wasn't accomplishing anything, and that I was losing precious time. All of my worrying just drove me into more worry and anxiety and separated me further from the inner voice of peace. I felt a godly reminder to slow down and to seek rest. This situation in my life reminded me of the story of Mary and Martha.

This story is in Luke chapter 10: 38-41, and it tells of Jesus traveling and being welcomed to Martha's house. While Jesus was there, Martha was fretting about all that needed to be done, and Mary, her sister, was seated at Jesus's feet, listening to His word. Martha seems to be annoyed and anxious that she's working so hard while Mary is enjoying listening to Jesus and being in His presence. Martha grows fed up and complains to Jesus that Mary isn't helping her. I imagine that Martha expected Jesus to agree with her, but He tells her that she worries too much, and that Mary has chosen what is best, listening to what he was saying.

I remember this story was told to me with the purpose of instilling a lesson that choosing to listen to God was the most important and valuable thing, far more worthy than anything else that required work, like preparing a meal. I found solace revisiting this scripture and thinking back on that teaching from long ago. I can relate with Martha in that preparing for what's to come often gets me distracted from what's here. In fact, I think we can all relate to Martha. She was concerned with practical matters, she had good intentions, and she was being responsible. But she became worried and bothered by so many things. Her work and worry interfered with her ability to choose the pleasure Mary had, that I think she also desired.

Jesus offers a gracious answer to Martha, and to me too. Only one thing is really important, and that's listening to the voice of wisdom, listening to God speak, and being present in the moment. Amazing God! In my season of busyness, God reminds me that although my work and intentions are admirable, the most important priority is my relationship with God.

Being a busybody is a way of life for many of us, especially at the beginning of a new year. We make new goals, aspire to accomplish more and we fill up our schedules with more and more things to do. But the story of Mary and Martha teaches all of us a lesson to not be caught up in daily toil. Otherwise we miss the opportunity to spend time in relationship with God. In this new year, let's take time to slow down from our doing and worrying. Let's focus inward and tend to the conversation between us and God.

- Anastasia Damyan
YASC Intern



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In Office Tuesdays and
Friday (8-2:30)
Evenings / Weekends by
appointment



Kids @ First

Grow your heart at First Church January Children's Ministry News



Visit www.firstchurchsimsbury.com to see the church school schedule, videos, and information about what the kids are doing at First Church.

Weekly church school emails are sent to parents on Thursday. If you are not receiving the emails contact ccole@fccsimsbury.org.

Save the Date:

First Church Skates

Sunday, February 4th from 4:30-5:30 at Simsbury Farms Ice Rink

- ✓ Ice skates are provided if needed.
- ✓ Arrive at 4 to be prepared to be on the ice at 4:30.
- ✓ Children's Ministries is providing hot chocolate, please bring cookies to share.
- ✓ This is a free event sponsored by Children's Ministries
- ✓ No hockey sticks will be allowed.
- ✓ Parents/guardians are responsible for supervising your children or others that you bring with you.

Invite your friends to skate with us!



Upcoming Dates for your Calendar:

- ✓ **January 7:** Spring Church School Session Begins
- ✓ **January 14:** Martin Luther King, Jr Weekend -Grades K-7 Movie—Our Friend Martin + clips from Jesus, Son of God
- ✓ **February 4:** First Church Skates 4:30-5:50
- ✓ **February 10:** Valentines Party/Parent's Night Out 5-8pm

Valentines Party/Parents Night Out

Save the date:

Saturday, February 10, 2018 in Palmer Hall, 5-8pm

Please sign up and fill out the registration form

- ♥ High Energy Activities: indoor basket ball, bowling, Valentine Twister, bounce houses
- ♥ Group Activities: Valentine Bingo, Valentine tag, Chocolate heart hunt, indoor snowball fight, Valentine cake walk
- ♥ Movie: Charlie Brown Be My Valentine
- ♥ Quiet Activities: play dough, crafts, Legos, Ice Tower Excavation, Pink Slime making
- ♥ Ages: 3(potty trained) - 6th grade, teen helpers are needed
- ♥ Cost: free will offering
- ♥ Dinner: Pizza, decorate your own cupcakes
- ♥ Please note: you may sign up and bring younger kids, however, parents/guardians must stay and supervise their child



It's Not Too Early to be Thinking...

Summer 2018!



2018 Silver Lake Summer Camp brochure is now available online!

Registration opens Jan. 15, 2018. Check it out and find your week!

www.silverlakeect.org/summercamp

Church School Mission Project

In January and February, the children in grades K-7 will be collecting items and offerings for toiletry kits for the homeless.

The items needed are:

- ◆ Deodorant
- ◆ Travel size: soap, shampoo, conditioner, wipes, shaving cream, Kleenex
- ◆ Toothbrushes and tooth paste
- ◆ Razors (men's & women's)
- ◆ Combs and hair brushes
- ◆ Socks (men's & women's)
- ◆ Snacks: granola bars, fruit cups, etc
- ◆ First aid supplies: band aids, Neosporin, nail clippers, cortisone cream, antiseptic cleansing wipes
- ◆ Chap stick

To learn more:

- ◆ YouTube video: *Life in a homeless shelter through the eyes of an 8-year old*
- ◆ Picture Books: *The Lady in the Box* by Ann McGovern, *A Shelter in Our Car* by Monica Gunning, *The Can Man* by Laura E. Williams.



**2018 VBS at First Church
Rolling River Rampage**

For more information see:

www.firstchurchsimsbury.com/vbs-2018



First Church Youth and Young Adults

Junior Fellowship (JF) is youth group for 7th and 8th graders. JF gathers approximately one Friday per month from 2:10-4:30 pm, with additional special events scheduled from time to time. At a typical JF meeting our youth enjoy a snack, play games, participate in service projects and faith-based discussions.

JF Gathering!

Friday, January 5th

2:10-4:30 pm

Confirmation at First Church is an intentional time of exploring what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. The goal is for each student to grow in the knowledge that he or she is a magnificent creation of the Divine and deeply loved by God, and for each student to understand that God's love extends to all creation and all people.

Large Group Meeting (Baptism & Communion)

Sunday, January 7

5-7pm in Palmer Hall

Small Group Meeting (Saints)

Sunday, January 21

5-7pm, Host Homes

Large Group Meeting (Prayer)

Sunday, January 28

5-7pm in Palmer Hall

January/February (specific times TBA) Soup Kitchen in small groups at First Church and South Park Inn Shelter

Pilgrim Fellowship (PF)

is for all 9th through 12th graders no matter their religious background, or ideas about God. Everyone is welcome. PF is a place to play, discuss, worship, grow, serve, and love. PF is a place for teenagers to journey together in faith. PF meets for fellowship, retreats, mission opportunities, and more.

Regular PF

Gatherings

Sundays

7-9pm the Youth Rm

SAVE THE DATE!!!

2018 Annual First Church Youth Pilgrimage

We're going to Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love!

We'll be working with Broad Street Ministry (BSM), a broad-minded Christian agency that provides opportunities for youth to engage their faith in educational, motivating, and provocative service experiences related to social justice issues.

A sample day at BSM!

- 7:15 —9:00 am: Wake Up! Morning Devotion. Breakfast and lunch packing.
- 9:00am Travel to work sites.
 - Each work group will go to a different work site each day to allow for a variety of experiences throughout the week.
- 12:30pm Lunch.
- 2:30 – 6:15pm
 - Showers.
 - Discussion Groups with your work group leader
 - Free Time.
- 6:15pm Set-up and Dinner Chores.
- 6:30pm Dinner. A delicious and nutritious meal provided by BSM's professional chef
- 7:00pm Clean-up and Chores
- 7:30pm Games.
- 8:00pm
 - 2 nights a week + Friday: Evening Worship.
 - 2 nights a week: Home Group Meeting.
- 9:15pm Free Time. Feel free to continue playing games or begin to get ready for bed.
- 11:00pm Lights Out. We will be sleeping on cots in the air conditioned Sunday School Room of BSM. Males and females will be separated.

June 24th—July 1st 2018

Registration Details:

Coming Soon!

Visit

www.broadstreetministry.org

to learn more about

Broad Street Ministry (BSM)



We are working on stopping somewhere fun on our return home. Stay tuned!

Compassion ∞ Gratitude ∞ Redemption ∞ Respect ∞ Curiosity ∞ Commitment ∞ Hospitality ∞ Integrity

Being Green

An occasional column on the work of the Environmental Ministries Team

“When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.” John Muir

Kermit the Frog claimed, “It isn’t easy being green!” He, of course, was talking about being different in a homogeneous society, and on that score, he was right. Since that time, being green has come to mean something different, signaling an environmental consciousness and conscience and behaving accordingly. And today, in this context, it isn’t so hard to be green.

Under the banner of Environmental Justice, the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ has formed an Environmental Ministries Team “to engage churches of the Conference in an active program of caring for God’s creation via environmental stewardship that will preserve and restore Creation for our descendants and for all living things on Earth.” Made up of lay leaders in local churches across Connecticut, the Environmental Ministries Team works with congregations to:

- Reduce the environmental impact of their church facilities and activities,
 - Assist their members to reduce the environmental impact of their homes, activities, and businesses, and
- Reach out to others to work and advocate for environmental stewardship.

Our denomination has declared that we are called by God to be stewards of Creation. We are witness to the destruction of our Earth and its communities, on local, regional and global scales. We are witness to the unjust burden of that destruction, which is borne by our most vulnerable and marginalized communities. And we are called to act to create a society that embraces our interdependence with all of Creation, and accepts moral responsibility for the impact of humanity’s choices.

Now if being green means working to change society, how can that not be hard? It sounds like an enormous challenge. But in a variation on “Many hands make light work,” many green hands make the lights work, the gardens grow, the landfills shrink; they can even stabilize climate change, halt the destruction of our ecosystems, and provide purpose and hope to impoverished people around the world. It is the collective impact of individual actions that creates this power, and those individual actions are not hard.

The Connecticut Conference, together with the Inter-Religious Eco-Justice Network, has developed a list of action steps for local churches. Fulfillment of these steps leads to recognition as a Green Congregation. To date, forty-nine congregations in the state have qualified for one of three levels of achievement. First Church Simsbury has already completed many of these challenges, including performing an environmental audit, showing environmental films, recycling paper, bottles and cans, installing LED lighting, assisting with Simsbury’s Community Farm, and making conservation resources available to church members.

In 2017, First Church gathered an Environmental Ministries Team to publicize and pursue a program of conscientious environmental stewardship. Over the coming months, we will provide educational opportunities, hands-on projects, and lots of encouragement to join in the work to change society through collective effort. And make it easier to be green.

You are Invited:

Syrian Buffet, Saturday January 27th

Come join us as we celebrate the resettlement of the Syrian refugee family, the Aldabaans on
Saturday, January 27th at 6pm (Snow date, Friday, Feb. 2nd)

HANA (The Hartford Area Neighbors' Alliance), which includes members of First Church of Christ (FCC), Simsbury, along with others from neighboring churches and a West Hartford community group have been assisting this family over the last 6 months as they become adjusted to making their way in West Hartford, CT, USA. Adeebah Alnemar, mother of the five Aldabaan children and wife of Ibrahim Aldabaan, is preparing a buffet to be held at Palmer Hall at the FCC in Simsbury. The recipes for the food Adeebah will be making come from her family and years of experience cooking in Syria. Having sampled Adeebah's cooking at a small holiday gathering at a home in West Hartford, I can say that you are in for a treat!

The cost is \$20 per adult or \$7 per child. Adeebah is considering catering for small groups as a potential business, and this event can help her to test the idea. Adeebah is also an accomplished artist and will be showcasing her artwork and have some pieces for sale.

For Reservations: Email Frank Gould: fgould@wesleyan.edu or call (860) 224-6978

PFLAG: Simsbury



First Church of Simsbury is very happy to announce that it will be hosting monthly PFLAG meetings on the *third Monday of each month*

PFLAG PFLAG serves parents, families, friends & allies united with LGBTQ people for support, education, & advocacy. All are welcome.

Please join us for our first meeting, Monday, January 15th, 6:30 pm, in Parsons Study.

Save the Date!

Note your calendar for these upcoming important dates:

Monday, January 1st	New Year's Day Soup Kitchen sponsored by Mission Board Church Office Closed
Wednesday, January 3rd	Executive Council Meeting
Sunday, January 7th	Epiphany Sunday, "Star Gift" Service
January 8th—13th	Un-decorating of First Church Takes Place
Monday, January 8th	All Board Meeting
Tuesday, January 9th	Retired Men's Luncheon
Sunday, January 14th	MLK Sunday
Monday, January 15th	MLK Day, Town Sponsored Event at FCC Church office Closed
Friday, January 19th	Mission Film and Discussion Event
Sunday, January 21st	Scout Sunday
Saturday, January 27th	HANA Syrian Dinner Buffet
Sunday, January 28th	Jazz Mass Sunday
Saturday, February 3rd	JF Lock-In
Sunday, February 4th	Family Skate Event
Monday, February 5th	Executive Council Meeting
Saturday, February 10th	Babysitting Event
Sunday, February 11th	"Mardi Gras" Style Sunday Worship Financial Meeting
Monday, February 12th	All Board Meeting
Tuesday, February 13th	Shrove Tuesday Retired Men's Luncheon
Wednesday, February 14th	Ash Wednesday Valentines' Day
Friday, February 16th	Mission Film and Discussion Event
Sunday, February 18th	First Sunday of Lent
Monday, February 19th	President's Day Church Office Closed
Sunday, February 25th	Second Sunday of Lent

SAVE
the
DATE

For a Complete Copy of our Monthly Calendar:

Please go to our [website and click on Church Calendar](#) to get the most current information.

If you would prefer a printed copy, please call the church office, we will be happy to print one and send it to you!

Sunday Fellowship Hour Hosts



Upcoming Fellowship Hour Schedule:

January 7th:	Board of Stewardship and Endowment Committee
January 14th:	Board of Worship
January 21st:	Boy Scouts
January 28th:	Board of Mission and Outreach
February 4th:	HANA Ministry
February 11th:	No Fellowship Hour
February 18th:	Memorial Garden Committee
February 25th:	Committee of Deacons

2017 Pledge Fulfillment

As 2017 draws to a close, please see the below important information from the Office:

You still have time to fulfill your 2017 Pledge to First Church!

If you would like your donation to be recorded in 2017, all checks must be dated by December 31, 2017, and received by the First Church Office no later than January 8, 2018.

If you have any questions, please contact the Office. Thank you for your donation!

All invoices, or expense reimbursement requests for 2017 must be received by the First Church Office no later than January 8, 2018. Please contact Judi Sedor (finance@fcsismbury.org) if you need more information.



- **February 2018 Cornerstone Submission Deadline:**

Friday, January 26th!

First Church of Christ

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Poking Around the Archives . . .

...from Ken Poppe on behalf of the Heritage Committee



- With the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday coming on January 21, it is important to recall the role that First Church played in his early life. King and other students from Morehouse College in Atlanta spent several summers in the 1940s working in the tobacco fields of Connecticut and attended church services in Hartford and at the Methodist and First Church in Simsbury. According to Bernice Martin, long-term member of our church who died a few years ago at the age of 106, King sang in our choir that was directed by her husband. In letters to his mother in Georgia, King mentioned how he was so pleased to be in a non-segregated state.
- Rev. Hugh MacCallum was the First Church senior pastor from 1910 to 1919. He must have been invited back to preach at the 250th anniversary of the church's birthday in 1947. In the archives there is a hand-written copy of his sermon, which includes some interesting commentary:
 - ✓ Referring to Isaiah 51, he suggests that First Church members need to be reminded that the people of the past, particularly early Puritans, were the rock upon which Protestant Christianity was based. The Puritans, he said, based their beliefs on John Calvin. Calvin went further than the Lutherans who 'left many of the ideas and practices of Rome untouched' and were more clearly based on Biblical sources than the Catholics.
 - ✓ "Calvin thought that man was born in sin, utterly helpless, vile, depraved—we do not think that way today but nevertheless in view of the devilish things which have happened the past few years [WWII ?] we will have to admit that the Calvinist was much nearer to the truth of things than the humanist of our day."
 - ✓ "We are not the spiritual descendants of moral or physical weaklings, but of strong, valiant men who thought deeply, lived strenuously and labored unceasingly to build their homes, churches, schools and to transform a wilderness into the fair and pleasant land in which we live today."
 - ✓ "These men became exiles from their native land of England, they braved danger of the deep sea and the tomahawks of savage men to build new homes and churches in an unknown wilderness."
 - ✓ "True, the Puritans were narrow and intolerant as measured by our standards, but they lived in an intolerant age and we must never forget that it was the narrowness and intolerance of others which drove them out of England...they were prisoners of their age."

First Church of Christ

689 Hopmeadow Street
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~ Please notify the church office of any address changes. ~