

DECEMBER 2019



THE NEWSLETTER FOR FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GREENWICH

first church Meetinghouse

congregational

of greenwich

founded 1665

MONTHLY



“For unto us a child is born...”



Christmas @ FCCOG

Tuesday, December 24

10 a.m. Family Service
For our youngest families
Rev. Carla Dietz, preaching
Music by The Cherub Choir
 Children who would like to be in the Nativity Pageant should arrive at 9:15 am for costuming and instructions.

3 p.m. Family Service
Rev. Patrick Collins, preaching
Music by The Children's Choir
 "Once in Royal David's City" Christmas Pageant

5 p.m. Carol Sing and Wish Making
 Meet by our creche and make a wish for the coming year at the fire pit

6 p.m. Festival Service
Rev. Patrick Collins, preaching
Music by The Chancel Choir and Brass
 "Once in Royal David's City" Christmas Pageant

9 p.m. Youth/Alumni
Candlelight & Communion Service
Rev. Patrick Collins, preaching
Music by The Youth/Alumni Choir and harp

Sunday, December 29

10 a.m. Christmas Service
of Carols and Readings in the Meetinghouse
 Join us for Carols and stories in your favorite Christmas Pajamas or "Ugly" Christmas Sweater
 No Church School or Child Care

Ministers:

The Members of FCCOG

Interim Senior Pastor:

Reverend Carla Dietz, carlad@fccog.org

Associate Pastor:

Reverend Patrick Collins, patrickc@fccog.org

Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care:

Reverend Avery C. Manchester, averycoe@aol.com

Minister of Music:

Dr. Craig Scott Symons, craigs@fccog.org

Director of Family Ministries:

Rosemary Lamie, rosemaryl@fccog.org

Director of Church Administration & Finance:

Steve Summerton, steves@fccog.org

Administrative Assistant/Operations:

Wendy Spezzano, wendys@fccog.org

Director of Membership:

Ginny Breismeister, ginnyb@fccog.org

Parish Nurse:

Susan Asselin, RN, susana@fccog.org

Director of Preschool:

Darla Kohler Steiner, darlak@fccog.org

Communications Specialist:

Dalinda Rioseco, dalindar@fccog.org

Database Administrative Assistant:

Sue Wilder, susanw@fccog.org

Pastors Emeriti:

Reverend Dr. Thomas L. Stiers

Reverend Sally Colegrove

WORSHIP WITH US

Every Sunday at 10:00 am

FCCOG declares itself to be open and affirming: 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.



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From the Interim Senior Pastor

Someone wise once said "never write a newsletter article about the dates of things that will be listed elsewhere in that same newsletter." Make sense, doesn't it? Sometimes listing the things that are upcoming is a convenient short cut to doing the work of actually thinking. So I won't do that here for what is my final newsletter submission to you. There are lots of awesome events coming up at FCCOG in December and you can find them all in this edition of the MHM or look them up on the website www.fccog.org, easy-peasy. I am also not going to write you a sad farewell because, frankly my dears, I am not sad. I am so glad you selected the best person for your next Settled Pastor. I am happy we have had a productive time together during this Interim period. I recognize I am not your typical strong male, powerful voiced, drop-the-mic pastor/preacher but you welcomed me anyway. That pretty much says it all - you welcomed the feminist stranger in your midst and together we did our best to work for the church and the glory of God. I can't think of a more important way of going about a transition time. You did that and it was good!

So now I am off to a new assignment in God's church world, which is vast, as of the end of this month of Christmas cheer. I go with joy and contentment. Nothing is perfect but we learned from each other and I feel a great deal of genuine love and care for you. I hope you will remember me with positive reflections as I will you. I leave these beautiful words from Paul's letter to the Colossians simply because:



"And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

—Colossians 3:14-16

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year! I will think of you often with gratitude and joy,

Carla

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Friends,

This is such an exciting time to be here at First Church. The trees are back and all the proceeds will go to local non-profit organizations. I get to dust off my favorite Christmas jackets, sweaters and hats. The annual performance of the Messiah is just around the corner and we just had a wonderful concert by *Ornament: A Trans-Siberian Orchestra Tribute Band*. Oh, and the search committee concluded their search by recommending me to be next



Senior Minister here at First Church. I am so incredibly overjoyed and deeply appreciative of the opportunity to walk this journey of faith alongside each and every person connected to this congregation. I am looking forward to getting to know every one even more and to many years of innovation and collaboration. There are challenges that lay ahead of us, for sure, and with a deep faith in God's expanding and infinite love we will meet those challenges and thrive as a beacon of hope and joy in this community.

Grace and Peace,
Patrick

Our book study group will finish its read, *Fahrenheit 451*, on December 5th.

Hats Off Christmas Luncheon

**Where: Mary Fike's home
21 Maple Drive, Old Greenwich
When: December 12th at 12 noon**



Please contact [Debbie Berner](#) at 203-629-1110 if you would like to attend. Our new selection for January 2020 will be announced in our next Meetinhouse Monthly. We welcome new members to our reading group!! Start your new year with thought provoking books and friendly discussions.

THE 53rd ANNUAL MESSIAH CONCERT

This wonderful holiday tradition at First Church returns on **Saturday, December 14 at 4:00 pm**, and the improved acoustics in our Meetinghouse promise to make this event more enjoyable than ever. Mark your calendars now for this special performance. Admission is a free-will offering with a suggested donation of \$20 per person.

If you love to sing, or know someone who does, join us in the First Church Festival Chorus for one night only on Monday, December 9 from 7:30-9:30 pm. Dress rehearsal with the orchestra will be Wednesday, December 11, from 7:30-9:00 pm.

2019 Messiah Soloists



Risa Renae Harman, soprano



Sarah Bleasdale,
mezzo soprano



Daniel Young, tenor



Constantine Novotny, bass

Contact Craig at craigs@fccog.org for more information.

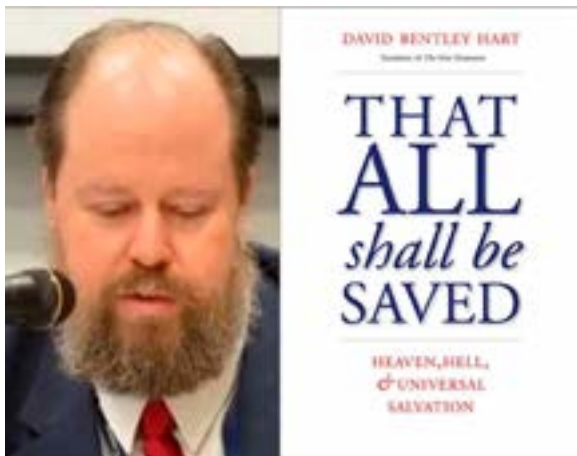


Avery's Book Corner

My book recommendation for December is

That ALL shall be SAVED: Heaven, Hell & Universal Salvation

by David Bentley Hart



A stunning re-examination of one of the essential tenets of Christian belief from one of the most provocative and admired writers on religion today

In this momentous book, David Bentley Hart makes the case that nearly two millennia of dogmatic tradition have misled readers on the crucial matter of universal salvation. On the basis of the earliest Christian writings, theological tradition, scripture, and logic, Hart argues that if God is the good creator of all, he is the savior of all, without fail. And if he is not the savior of all, the Kingdom is only a dream, and creation something considerably worse than a nightmare. But it is not so. There is no such thing as eternal damnation; all will be saved. With great rhetorical power, wit, and emotional range, Hart offers a new perspective on one of Christianity's most important themes.

David Bentley Hart is an Eastern Orthodox scholar of religion, and a philosopher, writer, and cultural commentator. His books include *The Experience of God* and *The New Testament*.

FIRST CHURCH CHRISTMAS TREE & WREATH SALE IS ON THROUGH DECEMBER 8 OR WHILE SUPPLIES LAST!

Weekends: November 30-December 1 & December 7-8

The tree stands were up in about an hour, thanks to all the helpers and the Gro Pro drillmasters. Spirits were high for the upcoming sale! There's still time to join the fun by volunteering for a two-hour shift. Sign up [here](#) or contact [Pat Mendelsohn](#).

Last year, Outreach raised over \$32,000 for non-profits through the tree sale. Once again, all proceeds from this year's sale will directly benefit worthy local non-profits, including:

**Soundwaters Young Mariner's STEM Academy
Pacific House Young Adult Program
Building 1 Community
Kids in Crisis
Mothers For Others**

Your purchase of a high quality, fresh-cut Fraser or Balsam Fir tree, hand-tied wreaths and white pine or boxwood roping is a gift that will keep on giving to those in need long after the holidays are over. Help spread the word and stop by to support First Church Outreach.



From Caring Ministries

Thank you for your generosity with your gifts for those at H.O.M.E. (Homeworkers Organized for More Employment) and Pilgrim Towers. The gifts are so appreciated. **Remember to return all gifts by Wednesday December 4th** so they can go on their merry way to Maine and to Pilgrim Towers.

CHURCH SCHOOL CALENDAR

December 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 am: One Room Schoolhouse program in the Daniels Center 3:30-5:30 pm: Advent Craft Fair and Supper in the Daniels Center
December 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Church School
December 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Church School Church School Christmas visit to Pilgrim Towers right after church school
December 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 am One Room Schoolhouse program in the Daniels Center
December 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 am – 12 noon Pageant Rehearsals for 3 pm and 6 pm pageants
December 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 am pageant members arrive at 9:20 am 3pm pageant members arrive at 2:30 6 pm members arrive at 5:30

Don't Miss the Advent Craft Fair and Lunch!
Sunday, December 8 at 11:15
in the Daniels Center

Make your own Christmas Gifts and Decorations for Family & Friends!
 Includes a family lunch!
 Free will offering appreciated.

Now Casting for the Christmas Eve Nativity Pageants

Do you know that on Christmas Eve we have THREE nativity pageants?

We need Mary's and Joseph's, shepherds and angels, kings, little drummer boys, and even some farm animals!

At the 10 am service, any children who arrive by 9:20 am can be in the pageant.

For both the 3 pm and 6 pm services, we also need an angel who is willing to climb the ladder and spread your wings.

For the 3 and 6 pm services, you will need to choose costumes and rehearse on Monday, December 23, from 10 am to Noon. There are no speaking parts! How easy can this be? All you need to do is act the part of the character you are portraying AND smile.

So as soon as your family knows which service you will be attending and if you want to be part of the fun, just let [Rosemary](#) know. She will be so happy to hear from you.





meeting in faith • welcoming all

God bless the early birds!

We have 157 pledges from people who want to continue the vital work of the church.

What is this work?

First Church supports over 30 charities that shelter the homeless, feed the food insecure, bolster veterans, promote literacy, provide job training, and much more.

Our pastors and parish nurse visit the sick and homebound. Church members on the Caring Ministries Committee are always ready with a prayer shawl, flowers, a simple card, soup, and prayers to bring comfort.

Our church staff and lay leaders are committed to vibrant worship centered in gratitude and welcoming all. Our faith formation guides young families from baptism to confirmation.

Please know that **YOUR PLEDGE WORKS WONDERS**. We hope you will pledge this year to help your church achieve new heights in outreach, faith formation, worship, and hospitality to welcome our neighbors into the First Church family.

To make your pledge, please visit www.iamfirstchurch.com. If you prefer, you can email your pledge to [Steve Summerton](mailto:Steve.Summerton@firstchurch.com) or send via mail to the church office.

THANK YOU!
The Stewardship Committee

From the Kettle Quilters

The Kettle Quilters have long finished the 2020 Women's Fellowship Raffle quilt and are full steam ahead for 2021!

Choosing a new pattern is a good process for a team of stitchers. We have tried to have a mix of older modernized patterns, different fabrics and color combinations that work together.

We start by viewing pattern books and looking for pleasing patterns according to degree of difficulty. Several travelers this summer saw quilts on display and shared photos. Although quilts are rooted in history, more modern designs can have some shortcuts. Even with the modern tool of a rotary razor cutter for precision, cutting the fabrics into shapes takes a good deal of time. Piecing these shapes and sewing the seams needs to be done

carefully. As the shapes begin to build, the top of the quilt is formed. Lots of ironing, ripping back seams and standing back to look at the entire quilt. Once completed, we put the quilt on a large quilting frame with a layer of batting and then a fabric backing. The quilting stitches cement the three layers together.



There is a famous Jane A. Stickle quilt from 1863 in the collection of the Bennington VT Museum constructed of 5,602 pieces and 225 patterns. It is many squares surrounded by a border of triangles. Either they had an ambitious group of stitchers or couldn't decide on a simpler pattern.

There is currently a quilt exhibit at the Cos Cob Library through December 14 - check it out!

White Gifts for Covenant to Care for Children



Members and friends of First Church have a long standing tradition of bringing gifts wrapped in plain white paper for children of all ages to the Christmas Eve services. We will continue the tradition this year with a slight modification because we recognize that not all visitors to First Church know of this practice. So, we invite all who are able to bring a white gift this year and place it under the tree in the back of the Meetinghouse.

'TIS THE SEASON



Medicare Part D

It's that time of year again... well, yes, Advent, but also time for those with Medicare to review and choose their Medicare part D prescription drug plans. The open

enrollment period ends **December 7**, and changes can be made online at medicare.gov. Even if you are happy with your current plan, it is wise to review your options each year. Plans can change, as do your current medications, and all this affects your out-of-pocket expense.

Overwhelmed with options? Need help sorting through the choices? Fear not! Help is available. No-cost counseling is offered through the Town of Greenwich and here at FCCOG. Personal counseling sessions include internet navigation and comparison of plans. For an appointment with a Town of Greenwich counselor, call the **Commission on Aging office at 203-862-6710**. For an appointment with your parish nurse, call **Sue Asselin at (203) 637-1791 x 821**.

Healthful Holidays

Advent can also be stressful due to the rush to get all things prepared, or perhaps the anticipation of spending time with family members with whom we may have a strained relationship. Remember to practice generous self-care and forgiveness. A few ideas for self-care: Take walks, do some brief breathing exercises, relax intentionally, listen to music, or enjoy the fragrance of a candle or essential oil diffuser. Sleeping 6-8 hours a night and eating nutritiously will also prevent the stress sometimes felt during the holiday hustle.

If healthy eating is a struggle, I recommend a program offered by Greenwich Hospital: *Survival Guide to Healthy Holiday Eating*, presented by Denise Addoriso, RD. Denise has spoken here at FCCOG many times and we appreciated her expertise. This program will be on **Wednesday, December 4 from 6:00 to 7:30 pm** in the Noble Conference Center at Greenwich Hospital. **Registration is on line [here](#) or by phone at 203-863-4277.**

From the Welcoming Committee

by Ginny Breismeister

Join us for the annual First Church Christmas Party

Come celebrate the holidays with your First Church friends! Join us for fun, generous hors d'œuvres and full bar on **Sunday, December 8th from 5:00-7:30 pm in the Auditorium**.

Please RSVP [here](#) or by calling the Church office at (203) 637-1791 by **Wednesday, December 4**.



First Church Cookie Walk

Our First Church Cookie Walk, provided by the Welcoming Committee, is fast approaching! On **Sunday, December 15th**, we will all have the opportunity to participate in



a festive sale of delectable Christmas cookies and treats provided by all of you wonderful bakers. Bakers will receive "priority" stickers to fill your box first and then non-bakers may go through the line. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

Boxes are \$5 each. Proceeds go to the Pastor's discretionary fund (for emergency relief). Fire up your ovens, get out the flour and sugar, and bake to help those in need! Please indicate that you will bring cookies on the **sign up during Community Hour**.

4th & 5th Grade Halloween Party at Pilgrim Towers

On October 27, the 4th and 5th graders went to Pilgrim Towers, a senior housing facility, to celebrate Halloween. They shared holiday craft-making activities, lunch, treats and a joyful time with the residents. This is the 12th year the Church School has organized this event.





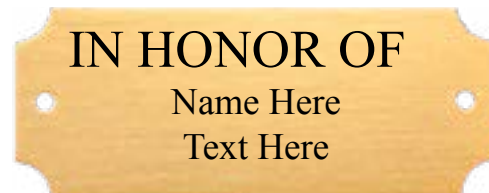
Church Chair Naming Opportunity

We're currently accepting requests and donations for naming the gorgeous new Meetinghouse and Choir chairs. Name one or more chairs in memory or in honor of someone special with a tax-deductible contribution of \$250 per chair. Complete this form and donate online www.fccog.org/the-perfect-gift/

This is a great time to:

- ❖ Honor each member of your family.
- ❖ Memorialize a parent or relative.
- ❖ Give a birthday or Christmas gift by honoring someone special.

Examples of plaques:



Complete the form below or go to www.fccog.org/the-perfect-gift/ to complete and pay online.

Please complete the form below, detach and include a check payable to First Congregational Church for \$250 and write in the memo section 'Chair Naming'. Mail to: (please complete a form for each chair naming opportunity)

The First Congregational Church of Greenwich, 108 Sound Beach Avenue, Old Greenwich, CT 06870

Name: _____ Telephone # _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Check here if this is a gift: [] GIFT – *We will send you a card to present your gift to the person you are honoring.*

Chair Preference (check one): [] MEETINGHOUSE [] CHOIR

Chair being donated (check one) : [] IN MEMORY [] IN HONOR

Name of person chair is being named for: _____

Dates and/or Text on last row: _____

Please call or email Steve Summerton with any questions or concerns: 203-637-1791 x.838 or steves@fccog.org.

December 2019 Church Calendar

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 First Sunday of Advent Church School 10:00-11:00 am Worship Service 10:00-11:00 am Community Hour 11:00 am-12:00 pm Special Meeting of the Congregation 11:00-12:00 pm Cherub Choir Rehearsal 11:15-11:45 am Children's Choir Rehearsal 11:15 am-12:00 pm Youth Choir Rehearsal 11:15 am-12:15 pm Advent Craft Workshop 3:00-5:30 pm	2 Kettle Quilters 9:00 am-12:00 pm	3 Outreach Wreath Decorating Workshop 11:00 am-1:00 pm FCCOG Staff Meeting 12:30-1:30 pm Faith Formation Meeting 7:00 - 9:00 pm SPEDucated Parents (child care provided) 7:00-9:00 pm Welcoming Committee Meeting 7:30-9:00 pm	4 Tai Chi Drop-In 8:00-9:00 am NAMI Support Group 10:00 am-12:00 pm Deacons Meeting 7:30-8:30 pm	5 Tai Chi Drop-In 9:00-10:00 am Hats Off Book Club 10:00-11:30am Palmer Handbell Choir Rehearsal 6:15-7:15 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 7:30-9:00 pm	6 Preschool Family Sing-A-Long 9:00 am-12:00 pm Outreach Wreath Decorating Workshop 11:00 am-1:00 pm Budget Committee Meeting 12:00-1:30 pm	7 AL-ANON Newcomers 9:30-10:00 am AL-ANON Meeting 10:00-11:30 am
8 Child Care 10:00-11:00 am Church School 10:00-11:00 am Worship Service 10:00-11:00 am Community Hour 11:00 am-12:00 pm Cherub Choir Rehearsal 11:15-11:45 am Children's Choir Rehearsal 11:15 am-12:00 pm Youth Choir Rehearsal 11:15 am-12:15 pm Senior Pastor Search Committee 11:15 am-2:00 pm First Church Christmas Party 5:00-7:30 pm	9 Kettle Quilters 9:00 am-12:00 pm Rummage Room Committee Meeting 1:00-2:30 pm Messiah Chorus Rehearsal 7:00-9:30 pm	10 FCCOG Staff Meeting 12:30-1:30 pm	11 Tai Chi Drop-In 8:00-9:00 am NAMI Support Group 10:00 am-12:00 pm Messiah Orchestra Dinner 4:00-7:30 pm Messiah Dress Rehearsal 5:00-9:30 pm	12 Tai Chi Drop-In 9:00-10:00 am Preschool Board Meeting 9:30 am-12:30 pm Hats Off Book Club 10:00-11:30 am Personnel Committee 7:30-9:00 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 7:30-9:00 pm	13	14 AL-ANON Newcomers 9:30-10:00 am AL-ANON Meeting 10:00-11:30 am SOS Talk/Suuport Group for Busy Women with Kate Collins 3:00-4:00 pm Messiah Concert 4:00-6:00 pm
15 Child Care 10:00-11:00 am Church School 10:00-11:00 am Worship Service 10:00-11:00 am Community Hour – Cookie Walk 11:00 am-12:00 pm Cherub Choir Rehearsal 11:15-11:45 am Children's Choir Rehearsal 11:15 am-12:00 pm Youth Choir Rehearsal 11:15 am-12:15 pm 4th and 5th Gr. Trip to Pilgrim Towers 11:15 am-1:00 pm	16 Kettle Quilters 9:00 am-12:00 pm	17 FCCOG Staff Meeting 12:30-1:30 pm Outreach Committee Meeting 7:00-9:30 pm	18 Tai Chi Drop-In 8:00-9:00 am Preschool Board Meeting 9:30-11:30 am Church Council Meeting 7:00-9:00 pm	19 Tai Chi Drop-In 9:00-10:00 am Palmer Handbell Choir Rehearsal 6:15-7:15 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 7:30-9:00 pm	20	21 AL-ANON Newcomers 9:30-10 am AL-ANON Meeting 10-11:30 am
22 Child Care 10:00-11:00 am Church School in Daniels Center 10:00-11:00 am Worship Service 10:00-11:00 am Community Hour 11:00 am-12:00 pm Cherub Choir Rehearsal 11:15-11:45 am Children's Choir Rehearsal 11:15 am-12:00 pm Youth Choir Rehearsal 11:15 am-12:15 pm	23 Kettle Quilters 9:00 am-12:00 pm Pageant Rehearsal for 3pm and 6pm services 10:00 am-12:00 pm	24 Young Families Christmas Eve Worship 10:00-11:00 am Family Christmas Eve Worship 3:00-5:00 pm Caroling around Fire Pit 5:00-6:00 pm Festival Carol Service with Brass Ensemble 6:00-7:00 pm Candlelight Christmas Eve Worship 9:00-10:00 pm	25 Christmas Day Building Closed	26 Building Closed	27	28 AL-ANON Newcomers 9:30-10:00 am AL-ANON Meeting 10:00-11:30 am
29 Child Care 10:00-11:00 am "Come as You Are" Worship Service 10:00-11:00 am Community Hour 11:00 am-12:00 pm	30 Kettle Quilters 9:00 am-12:00 pm	31 New Year's Eve FCCOG Staff Meeting 12:30-1:30 pm				



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Old Greenwich CT 06870
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NEWS FROM THE RUMMAGE ROOM

191 Sound Beach Avenue, Old Greenwich
203-637-1875 • [visit our website](http://www.fccog.org)

We have lots of Christmas decorations and gifts for everyone at The Rummage Room. Remember to shop early as our store closes on Saturday December 14th for the Holidays.

Wondering why we close on the 14th? To give our much appreciated volunteers some time off to spend with their families. Thank you to all of our volunteers, you help in so many ways and make The Rummage Room a very special place to work and to shop.

Manager Leanne's Wish List:
Ladies Blouses, Sweaters for all.

Shop Hours:
Mon. - Fri. 10:00 am - 5:00 pm
Sat. 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Donation Hours:
Mon. - Thur. 9:30 am - 4:30 pm
Fri. and Sat. 9:30 am - 12:30 pm

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL!

We will re-open on Thursday January 2nd. Please do not leave donations during the time we are closed.

----- ✂ cut here ✂ -----

Christmas Meetinghouse Flowers

The Chancel Committee invites contributions for decorations for the Meetinghouse this Christmas. Any amount is welcome. Please deliver the completed form with your check to the church office on or before Monday, December 16, 2019. Thank you!

Please check one of these choices: In Memory of In Honor of

Name: _____

By: _____

Enclosed is my check for \$_____ made out to First Congregational Church of Greenwich ("Flowers" in the memo)

Please print legibly to minimize spelling errors.