

first  THE NEWSLETTER FOR FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GREENWICH

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congregational **church Meetinghouse**

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of greenwich      *founded 1665*      MONTHLY





## All Services Are Online Now!

Download our [SUNDAY BULLETIN](#) and live stream Sunday's worship service at 10:00 am by clicking [HERE](#) or listen to the radio broadcast online at [WGCH](#) (or tune to AM1490 or FM105.5).

Please make sure you are on our e-mail list to receive all of our publications. Email [DALINDA](#) if you are not signed up. Thanks!

### FIRST CHURCH CONNECTS WITH YOU DURING THE WEEK

**Monday:** Music on Mondays  
(sent by Craig Symons, Minister of Music)

**Wednesday:** Wisdom on Wednesdays  
(sent by Rev. Patrick Collins)

**Thursday:** Faith Formation at Home for All  
(sent by Rosemary Lamie, Director of Faith Formation)

**Friday:** [FRIDAYS ON FACEBOOK](#)  
(live with Rev. Patrick Collins)

### In the news

Rev. Patrick has been interviewed recently by various news outlets and reporters.

- Click [HERE](#) for NEWS12CT interview
- [WATCH](#) the WNBC interview
- Click [HERE](#) for The Daily Beast article
- Click [HERE](#) for the CNN article

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#### Ministers:

The Members of FCCOG

#### Senior 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

#### Preschool Administration Assistant:

Melanie Garnett, melanieg@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.*



## VISION AND HOPE:

### Interested in being on a Church Committee to help move our Church forward into the future?

We are looking for individuals interested in joining a church committee for the next church year (starting in July). There are 10 committees. The following are a brief description of their missions and sponsored events or activities:

- **OUTREACH**

**Mission:** Promoting involvement of members of the committee and the congregation to serve those in need. **Events:** Harvest Sunday, Giving Tree, Christmas Tree & Wreath Sale, Lenten Offering. Includes Women's Fellowship.



- **FAITH FORMATION AND EDUCATION**

**Mission:** To enrich our faith by listening, encouraging and building community and to instill faith in all we do. **Events:** Faith Formation Breakfasts, Trunk or Treat, Advent Craft Fair, Egg Saturday and Holy Week events, overall support to Pastors' projects and special events.



- **WELCOMING**

**Mission:** Supervising and coordinating all functions related to hospitality and growing church membership. **Events:** Homecoming, New Member events, Christmas Party, Cookie Walk, "At Home Dinners", Maundy Thursday Supper, Memorial Day refreshments, July BYO picnic, planning new activities



- **CARING MINISTRIES**

**Mission:** Overseeing and coordinating church programs directed toward the spiritual and physical well-being of our members, families, friends, and neighbors. **Activities:** Prayer Shawl Ministry, Prayer Chain, Soup for the Soul, Organization of "Meal Trains", "Small Gifts of Caring", Card Ministries, Visiting Committee, and the Wellness Committee.



- **PERSONNEL**

**Mission and Activities:** To assist the senior staff in personnel matters and assisting as required in the annual performance review process. Each member serves as a liaison for one of the church employees.

- **DIACONATE**

**Mission:** Oversight of all aspects of worship services. **Activities:** Providing the support needed for worship services; involvement in reading of the scriptures, the offertory, organization of the ushers, serving of

## Nominating Committee, cont'd

communion, helping with baptism and memorial services, helping at the beach services, and planning special services; also meeting with confirmands to discuss their statements of faith.



- **BUDGET**  
**Mission and Activities:** Planning, preparing, and monitoring the annual budget, administering the utilization of memorial funds and other special funds, and implementing appropriate accounting and financial reporting procedures.
- **ASSET MANAGEMENT**  
**Mission and Activities:** Supervising investments of the FCCOG endowment and other funds in accordance with the investment policy objectives and guidelines.
- **STEWARDSHIP**  
**Mission:** Achieving an annual Stewardship budget; **Activities:** Designing, planning and executing the FCCOG Annual Stewardship

campaign and to broaden member participation in Stewardship through cultivation and education.

- **BUILDING AND GROUNDS**  
**Mission and Activities:** Responsible for the infrastructure of the church buildings and grounds. This includes general maintenance as well as any capital projects.



Most committees meet once a month and many do not have meetings during the summer.

Committees can meet virtually. Please call Ginny Breismeister (203-637-1791 ext 826), Rosemary Lamie (203-637-1791 ext 820) or Mary-Ann Assing (nominating chair, 203-532-0082) for more information or to let us know if you are interested in being involved in any of these committees.

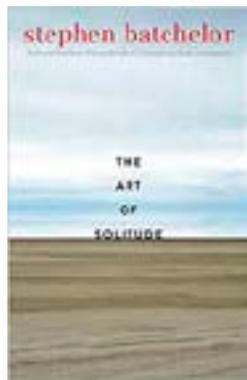


### Avery's Book Corner

For May, Avery's book of choice is...

***The Art of Solitude***  
by Stephen Batchelor

This book is a blessing. Krista Tippet did a wonderful interview with author Stephen Batchelor for her program "On Being", now a **podcast**.



### Kettle Quilters



As the Church building and the Rummage Room are closed now, we cannot show you our 2020 Quilt! It has been thoughtfully designed and lovingly hand-quilted. As soon as we are able to display it, raffle tickets will be available. We look forward to this time and presenting the quilt to the lucky winner.

### Women's Fellowship

Our May 20th Annual Meeting/Luncheon and Quilt Raffle will be canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions. We hope to set a rescheduled date after the church reopens.

In preparation for Memorial Day on May 25th, 2020, we pulled from the church archives the WW II letters from our local soldiers to Ethel Parry Fish, the Church Assistant and Director of Religious Education at the time. She sent a cheerful monthly newsletter called "News From Home" to about 500 Greenwich service people, including her own two sons, no matter what church they went to. This was to keep them up to date on local news and where their buddies were posted. These newsletters meant a lot to the service people, as their letters reveal. A few of the letters were from parents thanking the church for this wonderful effort and others were from Rev. Dr. Vincent Daniels and the Governor of Connecticut. These letters are from all of 1942 through May 26, 1944, when Ethel Fish and her husband moved away.

Included is a wonderful New York Times article dated April 27, 2003 about Sally Colegrove saving those letters from going into the dumpster when they were cleaning out the church attics. The article gives a variety of perspectives on life back then. Pdf copies of the letters will also reside at the Center for American War Letters Archives at Chapman University in Orange, CA and the Greenwich Historical Society. The original 194 letters will remain in our church archives, as requested by the Church Council. If a family requests a letter(s) their relative wrote, I will send them the original, keeping a copy in the church archives.

I cataloged the letter writer's name, location, the letter's date and topics into an Index, so you can find particular letters by name or by date.

## **SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED: A LETTER BAG FROM 1943 THE NEW YORK TIMES, APRIL 27, 2003**

*By Tim Townsend, April 27, 2003 (click [HERE](#) for the full article)  
Click [HERE](#) to view all of the letters from this collection.*



The bag held about 150 letters, responses to a monthly newsletter called "News From Home," a homey and prosaic recitation of the goings on in Old Greenwich and Riverside that were written by Ethel Parry Fish, the church's assistant and director of religious education in the 1930s and 1940s. Mrs. Fish had addressed and sent her newsletter to about 500 servicemen from the area, according to "History of the Church," a book written to celebrate First Congregational's tricentennial in 1965.

Forty years before she discovered the bag of letters, Ms. Colegrove had explored the church's three attics as a little girl when her mother was the church secretary. She knew some of the cob-webbed items up there had sentimental value, but she suspected there might be something of historical merit tucked into the church rafters, too.

When the First Congregational Church of Greenwich was doing some renovating in the mid-1990s, the Rev. Sally Colegrove kept her eye on all the stuff being cleared from the attics. As she looked through some of the accumulated odds and ends awaiting a trip to the parking lot dumpster one day, she poked her hand into a crumpled white shopping bag and pulled out a scrap of paper that read:

**"Letters from Service Men to Mrs. Ethel Fish, Church See - 1943 World War II."**

"That's the kind of find historians dream about," said Steve Waddell, associate professor in the history department at the United States Military Academy at West Point who specializes in World War II. "I've not heard of anything quite like this in terms of the wealth of variety of where the letters were sent from."

Just one copy of "News From Home" survives in the church archives. It was found, mingled in with other letters, unopened. It had been returned to

## Our World War II Letters Collection, cont'd

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the church by the post office after it failed to reach William B. Tuite, a Navy man from Barracks 6A in Trinidad in what was then the British West Indies.

That copy, which is dated June 9, 1943, includes news about the Memorial Day parade ("very colorful, but we missed the fire equipment and cars, barred because of the gas shortage"), new landscaping ("Farmer Daniels has planted a garden south of the parsonage and is cultivating it in his spare moments - between plane spotting, calls, etc.), and weddings ("Walt, of Walt's Diner and Elsie Barmore were married in First Church on Saturday"); ("Frank Krupicka and Betty Wood married in the Presbyterian Church last week during a surprise black-out").

"News From Home" and the letters it provoked are reminders of how isolated soldiers in combat were from the people and places most familiar to them. In these recent weeks of constant war coverage, family members and communities at home can keep up with the minutia of a military campaign thousands of miles away. But for soldiers the reverse isn't true, and perhaps the things they long to hear about most are the small and even mundane happenings at home.

First Congregational sits across Sound Beach Avenue from the duck pond in Binney Park, and just a few blocks from the village of Old Greenwich, a New England enclave that retains much of the small-town charm alluded to in Mrs. Fish's letters.

Many of the letters contained little more than words of thanks to Mrs. Fish for her reports about the community.

Some letters also included news of where a soldier was stationed at the time he wrote the letter. Mrs. Fish then used that information in future newsletters so soldiers could keep track of their friends from home.

Douglas Kerr, a Navy Air Corp flight instructor, wrote in June 1943 that the newsletters "contained the 'homey' things I otherwise wouldn't have known about. What's happening at the church, in the town, and especially what my buddies in the service are doing."

The letters are written on an array of military letterheads ("Bombardment Squadron," "U.S. Army Airforce: Kearns, Utah," "Royal Canadian Air Force," "USO: Idle Gossip Sinks Ships"), and come from all corners of the war ("Overseas, England," "Panama Jungles," "Greenland.")

Not all soldiers went oversea, though. Willys M. Monroe, an assistant surgeon with the United States Health Service explained in a letter dated May 1944,

that he had been transferred to a federal penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pa., to care for sick military prisoners, "while this at times seems to me to be a strange contribution to the war effort, in these times one goes where he is sent and asks no questions," he wrote.

Mr. Kerr, now a 79-year-old resident of Fairfax, Va., recalled in an interview that he was an impatient "young squirt" who wanted to be a pilot stationed on an aircraft carrier. He joined the Navy Air Corps in 1941, and hoped he would go "from Connecticut to the great beyond, to the battles of war." He made it as far as Indiana, where he became a flight instructor. Mr. Kerr's restlessness to fly mission comes through clearly in a letter he wrote to Mrs. Fish 60 years ago, on June 7, 1943. "Up to now it's been 'school,'" he wrote, "But now comes the ice cream of our training. To fly is the aim and dream of all of us, and the sooner the better."

Paul Staby, 85, now of Jupiter, Fla., remembers getting Mrs. Fish's newsletter when he was stationed in Europe under General George S. Patton. "It was a contact with home," said the former Army warrant officer. "It was great to get news from the church, news from your family. Gives you an idea of how long it took news to travel back then."

Some of the letters also relay the hazards of war. One describes England after Nazi bombing: London "isn't smashed up so bad as I expected, they have the rubble all cleaned up. Bristol was smashed pretty bad, there aren't very many churches or hotels left but the factories are still there."

Others mention the dangers of close combat: "for some time we have been engaged in a very real war - the other day I flew two long operational missions in one day - I have learned to have a healthy respect for both flack and bombs."

Along with the danger, the letters to Mrs. Fish also contain stories of young Americans in other cultures.

"I'm way over here in India now," wrote Private Norman W. Irion in April 1944. "Cows are sacred here, and they walk all over the streets and sidewalks. Indians are always coming around wanting to clean our ears and cut our corns. It's a common practice here I guess."

Corporal Pete Caperine wrote that he was training Puerto Rican troops in Panama in February 1944. "Many of these boys are just 'kids' out of school," he wrote, "and like American boys, they are full of the devil."

*Continued on Page 13*

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## Holy Week in Pictures and Videos

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[Behind the scenes](#)

[Palm Sunday](#)

[Maundy Thursday](#)

[Good Friday](#)

[Sunrise service](#)

[10:00 am service](#)

[Youth Choir 1](#)

[Youth Choir 2](#)

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## In Memoriam



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### VIRTUAL COMMUNITY HOUR INFORMATION

In an effort to remain spiritually and socially connected during this time of physical isolation you are invited to join us for virtual community hour via Zoom. To join the community hour, click [HERE](#) or navigate to Zoom.com on your internet web browser or in the Zoom App on your computer, laptop or phone. Enter the meeting **ID: 909 415 108 and the password: 003930.**

## FAITH FORMATION & EDUCATION

No Church School but... We are gathering our children in their own Kids Zoom Room on Sunday during Community Hour. We often have a Show and Tell, reporting on an activity agreed upon the week before, storytelling and more.

Further, we are inviting church school children to join an online class they can view on their own and then join a Zoom Room with their classmates at a specified time during the weekend.

There is also a special children's section in the weekly faith formation email on Thursdays, FAITH FORMATION AT HOME FOR ALL.

## FAITH FORMATION FOR ALL

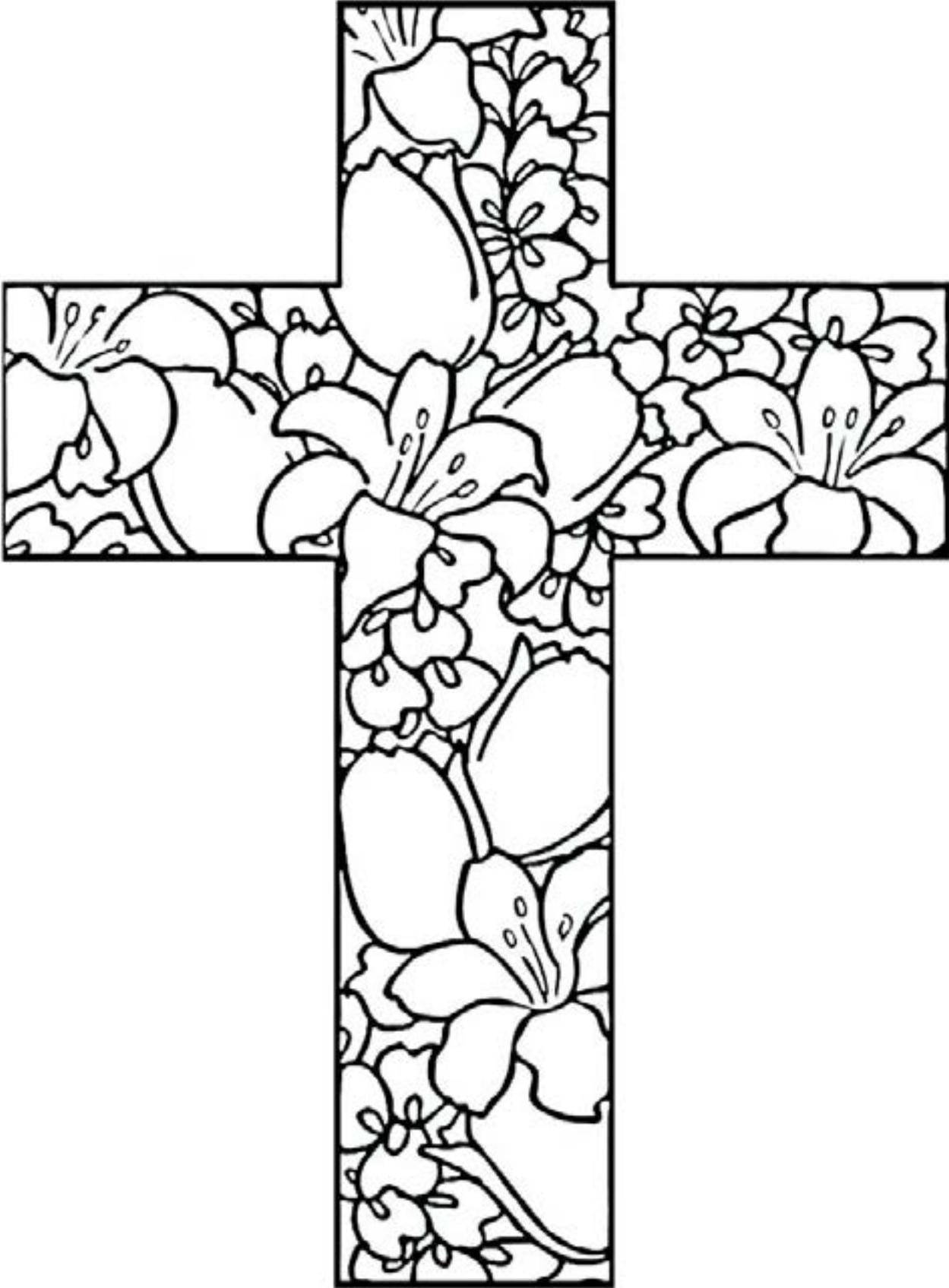
There is also a special children's section in the weekly faith formation email on Thursdays, FAITH FORMATION AT HOME FOR ALL. Every Thursday we send an email to members and friends with reflections, prayers and activities for all ages. We hope you find these to be inspiring and informative and even fun. If you are not receiving these emails, please email [DALINDA](mailto:DALINDA) to be added to the distribution.

## Finger walk the labyrinth



# Activities for Kids

## Color a springtime flower cross



## MY COVID-19 STORY

In addition to being the Parish Nurse for First Church, I work in hospital, normally in an ambulatory or outpatient setting. Before COVID-19, I worked in a wound care clinic.

As COVID-19 became more prevalent and approached our town, the hospital was constantly preparing us, getting us familiar with the masks and other equipment we might one day need, updating us with the potential scenarios. 3 months ago it all seemed abstract and unlikely. But as we all know now, it became inevitable.

All this preparation: reading and discussing all the "what if" scenarios, was necessary to get us prepared. But it also raised a lot of questions that gave me some anxiety... "Would they really close our department?"... "Will I have to work closely with this virus". Hospital leadership reassured us they would find work for nurses in departments that might have to close, Which of course was not reassuring at all, because it raised the big question: "Where will I be assigned to work?" and then "Will I get sick? What will that be like? Will I be fortunate enough to get a mild case? Will my family become sick?"

Meanwhile, each day brought a new reality:

- Less and less visitors allowed in the hospital until one day None were allowed.
- Less outpatients coming for wound care appointments, as our doctors decided the risks outweighed the benefits.

The week of March 16 things changed rapidly. It became clear our department would close; the only question was when. Day to day our scheduling strategy changed.

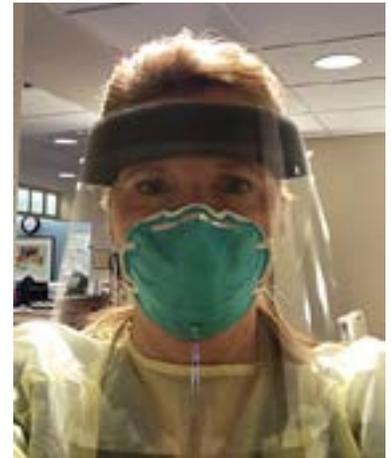
On Friday March 20, I was told to report to ICU on the following Monday. For me, that weekend was the roughest thus far in my COVID-19 experience. I'm so glad I had the weekend to mentally process the changes I was about to encounter. My fears shifted - from getting sick, to being completely out of my element in critical care nursing. Ginny Breismeister, my friend and fellow nurse, gave me a pep talk when I needed it most. "You've got this" she said. My family was comforting and supportive. By Sunday night I had processed, prepared, and packed away my doubts. Prayer and positive mantras bolstered me up as I began a new role in the midst my new reality.

My anxiety was alleviated after about ½ hour on the ICU unit. It became clear I was there to help a competent team, and they were grateful for any task I was able to assist them with. Their attitudes were great

(and still are). They were welcoming and patient. I remember how a "helper" can initially slow someone down. Soon, I came to enjoy the change of pace, and the feeling of being part of a force working for a great cause.

So, it was very disappointing when 3 days later, on March 26, I developed a fever and I was diagnosed with COVID-19. Though lengthy, my illness seems minor in the overall picture. My symptoms were not much more than a fever, muscle aches, and a headache. I thank God that I never had trouble breathing, and that my husband and daughter (home from college) did not become ill, and that they were here for me. I quarantined for 17 days, because the recommendation was to stay quarantined 72 hours after my last symptom. That coincidentally had me rising from the basement on Easter Saturday. What an analogy to experience Passover with a real-life plague and coming out for Easter. At least I was in good company! I will save tips for easier quarantining for another article.

Last week I went back to work and it feels good to be useful. When at the hospital, I'm in the ICU or the nearby Telemetry unit. I often get asked about the morale of the hospital staff working with the COVID-19 patients. My experience is that morale amongst the staff is high. Despite the illness and sadness we see, there is a strong sense of comradery. The greater community has been wonderful with sending messages, cards, and meals to those working at the hospital. This level of morale didn't happen without effort. It's evident to me that hospital administration looked for opportunities to make those expressions of gratitude possible. For instance: There's a different inspirational "thank you" drawn by a child, at the end of every daily command center update email. There's a gratitude page on the hospital website. The Police Fire & EMS held a parade wrapping around the hospital last week just honking for us for 5 to 10 minutes. The hospital is distributing lawn signs in support of health care workers. The cafeteria developed a basic grocery shopping pre-order and pick up service for healthcare employees, so they won't have to worry



## My Covid-19 Story, cont'd

about shopping for the basics. We have a recorded meditation line available to us, and we can call in to speak directly to a chaplain.

That's not to say it's all rosy. Administration has banned any vacation plans indefinitely, as we are currently in disaster mode. And the personal protective gear, though still available, is not ideal. But I can see many instances of the administration trying to make this tough time more bearable - finding concrete ways to show support and appreciation - and it means a lot. There are weekly video Town Hall meetings which are recorded, and lately weekly mental health video meetings as well.

There is a ritual of playing a few bars of "Here Comes the Sun" over the loudspeaker of the entire hospital with each successfully discharged patient. We pause together, with these victories; a smile might come to my face, and sometimes tears. Most times no one can see either through all the protective equipment. I was surprised by the tears the first time that happened- I suppose I was overwhelmed with relief or gratitude or hope. We celebrate those getting better. We mourn those we lose. When someone

passes we play soothing music in the room, call loved ones when practical and possible, and make human connections as we stay with the patient on their journey. There are tablets specifically in use for zoom video conferencing with families, and "floaters" like me, make the rounds offering to connect patients to family via video.

The story is not over yet. It's still playing out. I'm thankful to help those needing care. Helping makes one feel less helpless - I highly recommend it. All of us can perform acts of kindness that can be done from home. A phone call to someone who lives alone, will benefit both parties.

One practice I find helpful for coping:

I made a Gratitude List, and I look for things to add to it.

A few items on my list: A very secure job, Family to help me when I am sick, Friends that encourage me, Access to medical care, Kindness of people.

The list is long, so I might share it in a future article. I encourage you to look for the bright spots and jot them down when they are revealed to you.

## Zoom Meetings? Sure, FCCOG Knows How to Adapt!

Due to the pandemic, most First Church meetings have incorporated some of the latest technology by using the Zoom app. The recent Church Council meeting had 21 people remotely meeting together. A record breaker for us! The community hour after each Sunday service has been adapted to using Zoom and a Kids' Zoom Room has even become part of that community hour! Many, heart-felt thanks to the media team, led by Patrick and Craig, for allowing our community to continue to feel the togetherness we love so much!

To see live Zoom choir videos, see [page 7](#), which has links to the youth choir singing for the Sunday service a few weeks ago.



# May 2020 Church Calendar

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					<b>1</b> Balance & Focus Tai Chi with Will Morrison 8:30-9:30 am (see below) Fridays on Facebook with Rev. Patrick Collins (Click <a href="#">HERE</a> to join) 3:00 pm	<b>2</b> AL-ANON Virtual Meeting 10:00-11:30 am (To join our, click <a href="#">HERE</a> Meeting ID: 971 319 608 or contact <a href="#">KAREN</a> for more information)
<b>3</b> Online Worship Service (Click <a href="#">HERE</a> to view) 10:00-11:00 am Virtual Community Hour 11:00 am-12:00 (see page 3 for more info)	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> Balance & Focus Tai Chi with Will Morrison 8:30-9:30 am (see below) FCCOG Staff Zoom Meeting 10:00-11:00 am	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Balance & Focus Tai Chi with Will Morrison 8:30-9:30 am (see below) Fridays on Facebook with Rev. Patrick Collins (Click <a href="#">HERE</a> to join) 3:00 pm	<b>9</b> AL-ANON Virtual Meeting 10:00-11:30 am (To join our, click <a href="#">HERE</a> Meeting ID: 971 319 608 or contact <a href="#">KAREN</a> for more information)
<b>10</b> Online Worship Service (Click <a href="#">HERE</a> to view) 10:00-11:00 am Virtual Community Hour 11:00 am-12:00 pm (see page 3 for more info)	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> Balance & Focus Tai Chi with Will Morrison 8:30-9:30 am (see below) FCCOG Staff Zoom Meeting 10:00-11:00 am	<b>13</b> Church Council Zoom Meeting 7:00-9:00 pm	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Balance & Focus Tai Chi with Will Morrison 8:30-9:30 am (see below) Fridays on Facebook with Rev. Patrick Collins (Click <a href="#">HERE</a> to join) 3:00 pm	<b>16</b> AL-ANON Virtual Meeting 10:00-11:30 am (To join our, click <a href="#">HERE</a> Meeting ID: 971 319 608 or contact <a href="#">KAREN</a> for more information)
<b>17</b> Online Worship Service (Click <a href="#">HERE</a> to view) 10:00-11:00 am Virtual Community Hour 11:00 am-12:00 pm (see page 3 for more info)	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> Balance & Focus Tai Chi with Will Morrison 8:30-9:30 am (see below) FCCOG Staff Zoom Meeting 10:00-11:00 am	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> Balance & Focus Tai Chi with Will Morrison 8:30-9:30 am (see below) Fridays on Facebook with Rev. Patrick Collins (Click <a href="#">HERE</a> to join) 3:00 pm	<b>23</b> AL-ANON Virtual Meeting 10:00-11:30 am (To join our, click <a href="#">HERE</a> Meeting ID: 971 319 608 or contact <a href="#">KAREN</a> for more information)
<b>24</b> Online Worship Service (Click <a href="#">HERE</a> to view) 10:00-11:00 am Virtual Community Hour 11:00 am-12:00 pm (see page 3 for more info)	<b>25 MEMORIAL DAY</b>	<b>26</b> Balance & Focus Tai Chi with Will Morrison 8:30-9:30 am (see below) FCCOG Staff Zoom Meeting 10:00-11:00 am	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> Balance & Focus Tai Chi with Will Morrison 8:30-9:30 am (see below) Fridays on Facebook with Rev. Patrick Collins (Click <a href="#">HERE</a> to join) 3:00 pm	<b>30</b> AL-ANON Virtual Meeting 10:00-11:30 am (To join our, click <a href="#">HERE</a> Meeting ID: 971 319 608 or contact <a href="#">KAREN</a> for more information)
<b>31</b> Online Worship Service (Click <a href="#">HERE</a> to view) 10:00-11:00 am Virtual Community Hour 11:00 am-12:00 pm (see page 3 for more info)						

## BALANCE & FOCUS THROUGH TAI CHI: TUESDAYS AND FRIDAYS, 8:30-9:30 AM

We are using Zoom Meetings. Download the Zoom app [HERE](#). Click [HERE](#) to join the meeting. Input the following Meeting ID: **611 450 5034**

Please consider donating \$10/class to one of these non-profits:

- For First Congregational Church of Old Greenwich, click [HERE](#) or text message FCCOG TaiChi to 73265
- For Riverhouse, an adult day care center for those with dementia, click [HERE](#).

**Tips:** You can participate with your camera on or off. While having it on gives me an idea of your posture, having it off gives you privacy. Press the camera icon at the top of the screen to turn off the camera once you have joined in the meeting.

Use the device that has the largest screen. It will make it easier to see the movements. If you have an Apple set-up, you can mirror to your apple tv and large monitor.

## Our World War II Letters Collection, cont'd

V

**PVT. BILL EATON TELLS  
TRAVEL EXPERIENCES**

April 18, 1942

Dear Benny:

Long time no write, so sorry. Have been doing considerable moving since I last saw you; in fact, it has been some thirty states and perhaps eight thousand miles since January.

I am feeling fine. Have met some very nice people and have seen some nice scenery. One place deserves more than passing mention and that place is Stamford, Conn. I was with a group that pulled in there via truck to stay at the armory for the night. We were broke and dirty and had a long evening ahead with no outlook for fun due to our financial condition. We pulled in and found the armory clean with cots set up and the Red Cross serving hot coffee and lunch. The showers were hot and as soon as you were cleaned up you went to the clearing desk for an invitation out for supper and dance. These were sponsored by different church organizations. The one I attended was at the Congregational church in old Greenwich village. The supper was perfect, every man received a gift of cigarettes. The evening was spent dancing with young ladies who were very attractive. (Why William!) Music was furnished by the local musician's union. At this party and all the rest I know of the girls were in the majority. It was impossible to spend money, even if we had had it.

The invitations far outnumbered the soldiers available to accept. Many invitations were from private homes. The police were picking-up any loose soldiers on the street and taking them to parties. The theatres were free; the lunch counters and restaurants would take no money.

To be brief, it is something most men in service hear or dream of, but don't believe exists. But it happened to me.

The people in the East are very war-conscious and do a great deal to entertain service men.

One Sunday in Boston we attended a stage show sponsored by the Police Commissioner. It lasted three and one-half hours, featuring all of the best entertainers playing on Boston stages and night clubs. Five dance

"News from Home" did not always contain good news. "being a Riverside boy, I know quite a few of the names mentioned in the paper and often with sorrow I read of the death of one who at one time or another I had the good fortune of knowing," wrote Corporal Ray Fawcett in January 1944 from "somewhere in India." Another wrote: "Circumstances force you to add an occasional Memoriam and it is this that makes reading the News more difficult, not so much for the men in service, but for those at home, particularly all Mothers, whose job in this crisis is tremendous."

To some soldiers, at least, Mrs. Fish's efforts were worth more than the words written on the newsletters' pages. "The paper itself is swell," wrote Corporal Caperine from Panama in 1944, "and knowing where and what our friends are doing in a way is comforting. However, that isn't the primary reason why I'm grateful to all you swell people. It's the thought, it's knowing that you people are thinking & praying for us, that is for what myself & the other men & women in the services are grateful for."

The pastors at First Congregational Church of Greenwich have not decided what to do with the letters, but Ms. Colegrove hopes a local museum will put them on display.

"I know we have something special here," she said. "It's a treasure of history."

Professor Waddell agreed. "I hope they donate the letters to some kind of special collection," he said. "Often things of this nature tend to be stashed at a local historical society, and that's fine for some collections. But this sounds like something else."

The final lines of the only surviving newsletter includes an observation about the effects of war that may be as appropriate in some communities today as it was 60 years ago in Old Greenwich. "Distances cannot break that bond of community kinship which we have known in other days," wrote Mrs. Fish. "They but draw us closer in a bond which grows more precious as weeks go by."

bands on the stage besides an orchestra in the pit. Best know of these was Miss Ina Rae Hutton, Jimmy Durafite, George Jessel and his wife; in fact, so much talent was on the stage during the evening it was difficult to remember individual acts.

It is getting late—ten more minutes before the lights go. Saw the Rocky Mountains, Denver, Salt Lake City, Reno, the Great American Desert and now California.

Must close. The Messenger is very welcome but hasn't been catching up with me very regular.

Goodnight,  
Pvt. William M. Eaton