

SEPTEMBER 2020



# MEETINGHOUSE MONTHLY



**Ministers:**

The Members of FCCOG

**Senior Pastor:**

Reverend Patrick Collins, patrickc@fccog.org

**Minister of Music:**

Dr. Craig Scott Symons, craigs@fccog.org

**Director of Faith Formation:**

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

**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 a.m.  
on Facebook or YouTube**

*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.*



## From the Kettle Quilters

### KETTLE QUILTERS GIVE TO COMMUNITY



The Kettle Quilters have continued to be busy these last few months. Our main focus is the 2020 Women's Fellowship Raffle Quilt and we hope to conduct the raffle once we are all back together!

We completed a baby quilt for an auction item for our Pre-School Children's Art Auction in the spring. These are a great keepsake as fabric squares alternate with embroidered animals and shapes for a child to identify.

The next Raffle Quilt is pieced and we hope to be on the quilting frame soon. If you have ever wanted to try quilting, this will be a great opportunity for you to start. If you can sew a running stitch and follow some simple rules, you will be most welcome. We meet every Monday morning, but watch for starting dates. We can be reached at [kettlequilters@gmail.com](mailto:kettlequilters@gmail.com)

The Kettle Quilters are pleased to be making quilts for over 50 years to benefit charities that support women and children locally, nationally, and internationally.

## Thank you, Kathy Riley!

FCCOG Women's Fellowship Board expressed their gratitude to Kathy Riley for her 20 years of service as Treasurer.



Kathy's gift was a lovely framed photo of the front of the church with the pink dogwood in bloom, taken by Pat Larrabee.

We wish Kathy and Bob the best as they move from Old Greenwich to Charleston SC. We hope the Rileys will find a special spot for the photo in their new home.

Dear Friends,

It has been six months since we have gathered as a large community for in-person worship services and fellowship. I deeply miss the opportunity to share in our worship together and the conversations and hugs after church. At times, I find it difficult to think ahead to when this period of isolation and separation will end. When I do find myself in those moments, when the world seems upside down and inside out, I do find assurance in knowing that eventually this too shall pass.

In this strange transitional time we all find ourselves in it is my hope and prayer that you, too, will find comfort and solace in knowing that the time will come again when we will meet again. Yes, it will be different. We are working on doing all that we can to ensure that when we do worship together again in the Meetinghouse it will be safe and inspirational.

Patrick

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## A Refreshed Communication Strategy



For a number of years First Church published and distributed a paper copy of this monthly publication we call the Meetinghouse Monthly. The monthly publication was, and is, mostly a look forward to events that will occur at the church in the coming month. For years, this served as a sustainable model for getting information out and as a good marketing tool.

In recent years, the effectiveness of the monthly publication as a means of keeping up with current events has waned. Specifically, even prior to COVID-19, the timely delivery of the publication at the beginning of the month was spotty, at best. This caused us to create earlier deadlines, which led to incomplete and missing information in each publication.

With the approval from Church Council I present to you, the congregant and friend of First Church, a bold new communication strategy. This communication strategy will occur on multiple fronts and utilize the technology we have on hand. First, our website, Friday email blasts, and announcements from the pulpit will be the primary source for up to date information on upcoming events. So, make sure you are signed up to receive those emails. Our biggest change will be in this publication. The Meetinghouse Monthly will now shift to a quarterly news magazine. The articles in the Meetinghouse News will highlight major accomplishments and projects of the congregation. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to celebrate and showcase all of the wonderful things we do here at First Church. I also see this as a potentially vital marketing tool we can hand to prospective new members.

This new communication strategy will go into effect immediately. At this time, you can email Craig Symons ([craigs@fccog.org](mailto:craigs@fccog.org)) with upcoming events for the Friday email or for the website. The first quarterly publication will premiere in December of 2020.

Peace,  
Patrick

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## OUTREACH VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COMMUNITY

### Neighbor to Neighbor

Volunteers are needed to pick up food from the farmer's market in Old Greenwich and deliver to Arch Street Teen Center on Wednesdays. [Sign up here for farmer's market delivery.](#)

Daily volunteers are also needed for sorting pantry items and shelf stocking at Arch Street Teen Center. Contact Kristen Shapiro at [info@ntngreenwich.org](mailto:info@ntngreenwich.org) to volunteer to work at Arch Street.

### New Covenant House

In order to continue our program to provide a lunch on the first Monday of the month, we have arranged with Garden Catering in Old Greenwich to put together and deliver 125-boxed lunches to New Covenant.

This is a more expensive option than the chili, so we are asking for donations to add to the monthly budget to keep this commitment going. Your donations go a long way as Garden Catering is providing the meals at a generously discounted rate. Thanks to them and all who have donated so far.

Click [here](#) to support the Soup Kitchen Fund, text "FCCOG SKF" to 73256, or scan the following with your Smartphone reader



New Covenant House also needs hands on volunteers to sort fruit and vegetables on Mondays from 10:15am – 12:15pm. Email David Lovegreen if you would like to help. [DLovegreen@CCFC-CT.org](mailto:DLovegreen@CCFC-CT.org)

### Inspirica

Inspirica is in need of daily dinner for 35 people in their family shelter. Dinners must be delivered by a restaurant to 141 Franklin Street before 5:30pm. Contact Sydney DeLago at [sdelago@inspiricact.org](mailto:sdelago@inspiricact.org), or phone 203-388-0122, if you would like to arrange a dinner for an evening this fall.

Gardening volunteers are needed at the **Inspirica Women's Emergency Shelter**. Opportunities can be tailored to meet your group's needs, size and availability. Activities include planting, assisting with landscaping and deep cleaning. Volunteers wishing to plant flowers or shrubs must bring their own supplies and tools. If you are interested email Sydney DeLago at [sdelago@InspiricaCT.org](mailto:sdelago@InspiricaCT.org) or phone 203-388-0122.

**The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Inspirica Walkathon** will be a virtual event from September 20 – October 4. Proceeds will support Inspirica's work in moving individuals from homeless to home. Individuals and teams are welcome. [Sign up and find all details here.](#)

## Fabulous Seamstress Available (+ Support a Lovely Local Family)

CLOTHES NEED ADJUSTING? CURTAINS HEMMED? Professional seamstress Zahra is receiving jobs. Zahra has worked at high-end dress shops in Greenwich and was f/t at Darien Sport Shop making alterations until they closed because of coronavirus. She does excellent, fast, reasonably-priced work by hand and with professional-grade machines from her home near Fairway Market in Stamford. Now's the time to tackle your pile, before she returns to f/t work! And you'll also be helping a wonderful family.



# Zahra Sewn

QUALITY ALTERATIONS + ALL OF YOUR SEWING NEEDS

Text Zahra at 475-419-5482. Please provide your name and describe your job.

*(For more information or assistance, feel free to contact Shelly Cryer, [scryer@erols.com](mailto:scryer@erols.com).)*

## From Caring Ministries

by Sheila Bennett

***Let all that you do be done with love  
1 Corinthians 16:14***

Caring Ministries - Are you interested being part of our activities? – all adapted for social distancing – we welcome all and any small acts of kindness that can help to care for our congregation

- *Donate a frozen container of soup or a meal for Soup for the Soul (for fellow congregants or friends)*
- *Prayer shawl knitting (arrangements to pick up wool and knitting instructions)*
- *Card ministry (send monthly cards to those who are homebound)*
- *Telephoning the homebound or those going through difficult times*
- *Pray for others as part of First Church's prayer group (receive prayer requests through email)*
- *Be a member of the Wellness committee (zoom meetings a couple of times a year)*

If interested, please contact Sue Asselin ([susana@fccog.org](mailto:susana@fccog.org) or 203-637-1791 Ext 821) or Sheila Bennett ([sheilabennettms@gmail.com](mailto:sheilabennettms@gmail.com)) or Mary-Ann Assing ([maryannassing@gmail.com](mailto:maryannassing@gmail.com) or 203-532-0082).

## Hats Off Book Study Group Update

by Debbie Berner

We have fond memories of our last book study meeting in mid-March before Covid-19 cancelled all church activities.

Now our readers chose some favorite reads we would like to share with you that we enjoyed throughout the summer.

- **"The Likely Resolutions of Oliver Clock"** by Jane Riley
- **"I Capture the Castle"** by Dodie Smith
- **"The Nickel Boys"** by Colson Whitehead
- **"Just Mercy"** by Bill Stevenson
- **"The Book of Longings"** by Sue Monk Kidd



We all long to meet again in our beautiful lounge at FCCOG!!

## *We're in this Together*

Amid the closet cleaning and home improvement projects, I hope you found time for some rest and relaxation this summer. We are blessed to be in a town that is simply lovely for a stay-cation.

Here at First Church, we've taken small steps forward to cautiously and safely re-open. As I write, we have had 2 in-person, outdoor worship services in the Memory Garden. We're learning to follow the experts' recommendations about social distancing, mask wearing, and hand hygiene.

It's my belief that we can all help take care of one another by reminding each other politely about observing the safety guidelines (in italics/bold below) compiled by the First Church Re-Opening Task Force for safe worship service attendance.

Sometimes it's easier to notice non-adherence to the rules as an observer than when one is entrenched in a task. So please do feel empowered to politely remind someone to comply with the rules. In response, when someone suggests room for improvement, please take the suggestion gratefully knowing that we're looking out for each other's wellbeing. At Greenwich Hospital, we call this the ***culture of 200% accountability***. This means that I'm responsible for me, but I am also responsible to remind another. It's a 2-way street. And the way to promote that healthy culture is to accept constructive critique gracefully.

Sometimes it's difficult to find the words, but that will get easier as we go. Here are 2 examples:

***"Can you please move farther apart to keep everyone safe?"***

***"Please pull up your mask to cover your nose and your mouth. I appreciate it."***

A reply like "Thank you for the reminder!" will ease any tension and promote a healthy loving environment. I really want to encourage any and all of you to remind each other to act safely. The deacons, ushers, and staff members are not alone in this responsibility. We truly are ***in this together***, and collectively we have the power to take good care of each other.

## **Safety Guidelines**

***If you have any underlying issues that put you at higher risk of complications with COVID-19, had a temperature greater than 100.4, experienced shortness of breath, a cough, felt ill, been in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, or if you traveled to any of the states on the restricted travel list in the last 14 days, then we ask that you forgo in-person worship and join us for the 10 a.m. livestream worship service out of respect and care for the First Church community.***

### **Safety Measures**

- ***Please check-in with a deacon at one of our welcoming tables***
- ***Attendees above the age of 2 are required to wear masks at all times when on the First Church campus.***
- ***We will have masks available at the welcoming table if one is needed***
- ***Restroom facilities will not be available***
- ***Please bring your own chairs or blanket. We will not provide seating of any kind.***
- ***Please bring your own hand sanitizer and use it after touching common surfaces.***
- ***Please feel free to bring your own reusable water bottle (filled) as water/drinks will not be provided.***
- ***Worship materials will be provided on the FCCOG website prior to the service.***
- ***You are invited to use your phone or tablet or print those materials before arriving.***
- ***We will not hand out paper materials***
- ***Please park in the back parking lot and walk around to the Memory Garden***
- ***Please keep 6 feet of distance from other worshipers at all times***
- ***There will be no communal singing at this time***

### **After the Service**

- ***Please remain seated after the benediction.***
  - ***Deacons/Ushers will release attendees from back to front.***
  - ***In the interest of protecting people's health, please do not congregate.***
  - ***Head directly to your vehicle after the service***
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Being a musician during this pandemic certainly challenges everyone who makes music or rehearses groups of musicians. Using the digital technologies we've suddenly learned over the last few months is how we will continue to maintain the relationships between conductor and ensemble member and, probably most important, the relationships with the members of an ensemble. The reasons why maintaining these relationships are important are numerous, but the most compelling is connecting to our faith with our voices. Because our voice is the most personal of instruments, we continue to tell our stories, and the stories of those who came before us, through song.

Despite not being together physically, at least for the time being, there are many aspects of being a musician that can be rediscovered during this time. We've really been given a great opportunity to focus on the skills we use in our regular rehearsals, but we often set those aside because we're too busy preparing for worship or a holiday or a concert. Sharpening the tools we need to be our best selves as musicians is important.

We will use the digital tools to build the relationships with each other in the respective ensembles. We will spend a significant time in our Zoom (or other video conference capabilities) meetings refreshing our musicianship skills, remembering the basics that many of us learned as youngsters (in the case of adults), educating our youth in those areas that need brushing up, as well as introducing new concepts and skills to make our rehearsals even more proficient when we are able to meet together again.

Here are all the choirs, age ranges, directors, and their rehearsal times:

**The Cherub Choir  
(Kindergarten through 2nd grade)**

First rehearsal: Sunday, September 20

Carol Woodman – director

email: [woodmom@gmail.com](mailto:woodmom@gmail.com)

Debbie Berner, Lynn Hawxhurst, Andrea Osker – accompanists

Until we can gather together physically as a group, the Cherub Choir will meet over Zoom twice a month for one and half hour sessions. Every week we will be sending out video/audio recordings of new music for each child to "play" with until our group chat. We will be encouraging the children to sing with parents and siblings and add homemade instruments and/or motions to the songs they are learning or to songs with which they are already very familiar. Our hope is that the Cherubs will have the opportunity to sing, dance, play instruments, read poems – and share with us those things that have impacted them during the course of the week. We will lovingly encourage them to delve into their spiritual and creative side with us all.

**The Children's Choir  
(3rd through 6th grades)**

First rehearsal: Sunday, September 20

Craig Symons – director

email: [craigs@fccog.org](mailto:craigs@fccog.org)

Vance Briceland – accompanist

The Children's Choir will gather as a singing community via Zoom weekly for 30 minutes. During our sessions, we will continue our focus on proper singing, sight-reading, and other basic musicianship skills. In addition to learning new songs to sing, we will explore videos of other choirs to build our visual and listening skills from other outstanding ensembles. Creating virtual choir videos for inclusion in our Sunday worship will also be a focus of the year.



## **The Youth Choir (7th through Young Adult)**

First rehearsal: Sunday, September 20  
Danny Young – acting director  
email: [daniely@fccog.org](mailto:daniely@fccog.org)  
Vance Briceland – accompanist

Until it is safe to sing in person, The Youth Choir will be creating “virtual choir” performances. We will meet once a week at 11:15-12:00 on Sunday mornings, for 45 minutes. Each week we will be learning one new piece, and working on a longer project as well. A small portion of each rehearsal will go to learning about the history of choral music and how we connect to the millennia-long tradition. Excitingly, this year our Youth Choir will open up our enrollment to college and post-college singers in their 20s. We hope to make some beautiful art with growing musicians, and to create some fun videos on the way.

## **The Chancel Choir (ages 18 and up)**

First rehearsal: Thursday, September 10  
Craig Symons – director and accompanist  
Thursdays 7:30 – 9:00 pm

Our challenge this season will be to continue to maintain our voices in a COVID-19 environment, and continue to maintain our personal connections as well. Each week, the choir will spend time to hone our listening/visual skills as choral musicians, solidifying those skills that often get pushed aside due to the pressing deadlines of learning anthems for a Sunday or holiday season. As with the other choirs, we will rehearse via Zoom and learn our parts, and create 1-2 virtual choir videos each month. The best part of being part of this type of online choir is that you don't have to leave the comfort of your home! And if you'd like to join us in our virtual choir projects, you're certainly able to join in as you wish!

## **Palmer Handbell Choir (high school age and up)**

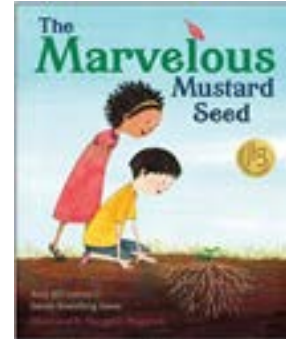
Craig Symons – director  
Handbells may begin to meet in person, in small groups, depending on building policies and re-opening phases.





## WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO DURING SUMMER 2020

Adjusting to the Covid 19 environment...school at home!, cancelled camps, missing each other, zoom fatigue, more time outside exploring God's good earth, some families adopted new pets, some families added to their backyard play areas, some families connected up and "quarantined together". We found many different ways to cope.



- **Delivered** 3<sup>rd</sup> graders bibles – *thank you Donna Hascher*
- **Delivered** summer camp totes to families who wanted them – *thank you Emma Olmsted and Mariel Laffan who are both at their new colleges now*
- **Began** a YouTube channel called "**Rosemary Reads**"...*thank you Rory Young*
  - **Continued** the weekly Faith Formation Emails – *truly intergenerational*
  - **Helped** plant a garden at Pilgrim Towers – *thank you Fong family*
  - **Came** to Zoom Rooms – *Church School children from all ages*
    - **Watched** the Hascher family robin's eggs hatch  
Surely you can add many things to this list!

### LOOKING AHEAD

Now that we are more accustomed to this new way of everyday being, we can be more creative, more daring, more consistent.

- **Planning** a Sunday Morning Church School experience for our children online and providing activities for families to grow their faith at home together
- **Continuing** "**Rosemary Reads**" on YouTube including Berenstain Bears stories, bible stories, God and Science talks, and sharing God's love for all
- **Seeking** ways to provide service and care to our community
- **Looking** for new ways to celebrate our seasonal traditions including Halloween, Advent, and Christmas

**AND**

**Welcoming our new Associate Pastor, Cydney Van Dyke!**

### FAITH FORMATION FOR ADULTS

There was a great deal of interest among the participants in the Sacred Conversations on Race that Patrick prepared in July to continue the conversation. Toward that goal, the Faith Formation Committee will be vetting relevant books to discuss together in the future. If you have read a book you think folks would like to read on the topic, please email Donna Hascher [donna.hascher@gmail.com](mailto:donna.hascher@gmail.com)

## Hanging Up One Hat



In the fall of 2001, I had a conversation with Sally Colegrove and John Stansell about taking over the direction of the Youth Choir. They were in need of an interim director, and since I was already very active with the SPF and had been the musical director for a number of shows over the previous eight years, it seemed like the natural thing to do. As you know, I fully embraced the choir and the position became permanent. It has been a great source of joy for me over the years to work with many young singers and guide them to share their talents as they enhanced our worship services. Although it was challenging at times, it's been very rewarding. The annual 9:00 Christmas Eve service has become my favorite service as alums come back to sing with us, or attend with their families, including their spouses and children.

A number of years ago, Rick and I had made the decision that I would step down when our twins graduated from college, which they did this spring. I prefer "stepping down" to "retiring," which makes me feel old! Its purely a coincidence that we are in the midst of the COVID pandemic. I look forward to having more flexibility to travel on the weekends and to redesign my life going forward. I will continue to sing solos and sing with the chancel choir as much as I can. The best part is I will finally be able to join you in fellowship during coffee hour—that is, when we return to church!

I'd like to thank Craig, Patrick, and Vance for all their help, support, and collaboration as we worked together to design numerous worship services. The three of them, along with all the other ministers and staff I've worked with over the last twenty-eight years, have impacted my faith by sharing their faith with me. I have appreciated and felt blessed by the love and support from the congregation as well. It was Sally Colegrove who was responsible for very subtly recruiting me to work with our young people in 1992, and therefore helping me discover my passion for it. Sally, you have my deepest gratitude for launching me on this incredible journey.



I wish the Youth Choir all the best as they move forward, creating and growing in new directions as they share their music in our services.

I, of course, am NOT leaving the church, I'm simply hanging up one hat!

*Carolyn Paulus*

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## Church Council

by Pat Mendelsohn

The Church Council (which includes the 10 Chairs of our Standing Committees, the Senior Pastor, Clerk, Treasurer and Council Chair) continued to meet during the summer months via Zoom. As you will see from the reports in this issue of the Meetinghouse Monthly, the work of some of the committees has changed during this Covid period, but everyone is working towards delivering as full a program as possible.



Our talented team of Patrick, Craig, and Rosemary is ready to lead us in inspiring worship services through the weekly live stream until we are able to gather for in-person worship. Additionally, Craig's "Music on Mondays," Patrick's "Wisdom on Wednesday," and Rosemary's "Faith Formation" e-blasts are touch points for our congregation throughout the week. We are grateful and thankful to them and all the staff for providing us with continuous worship and connection to our church.

The Associate Pastor Search Committee completed its work with a recommendation to call Rev. Cydney Van Dyke to First Church. The congregation voted unanimously at a joyous Special Meeting on August 2 to accept their recommendation. Cydney will be joining us in October as our new Associate Pastor, and we all look forward to welcoming her. Our heartfelt thanks to Jim Shattuck, who chaired the Search Committee, and Gordon Assing, Patrick Collins, Connie Kurczewski, Pam Speer, and Peg Wentworth who all worked tirelessly and prayerfully to bring Cydney to First Church.

Although COVID-19 has made this a very different summer, the Council is committed to keeping First Church a vibrant, welcoming and connected community. As they say, "we're all in this together," and we look forward to being with all of you as circumstances allow.

Pat Mendelsohn  
Chair, Church Council

We welcome the following new members: Sheila Bennett, Chair of Caring Ministries, Lauren Ghaffari, Chair of Outreach, Pat Larrabee—Clerk, Pam Speer, Chair of Personnel, Tom White, Chair of Buildings & Grounds and Danny Young, Assistant Treasurer. The Council elected Pat Mendelsohn to serve as Council Chair.

The 349th Annual Meeting took place via Zoom on June 28 with over 100 members on the conference call. If you would like a copy of the Annual Report, please email our Administrative Assistant, Wendy Spezzano [WendyS@fccog.org](mailto:WendyS@fccog.org) or call her at 203-637-1791. The Annual Report includes reports from the clergy, staff, and Committee Chairs.



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## **The 56th Grand Re-Opening of The Rummage Room**

**Tuesday, September 8, 11:00 a.m.**

### **Store Hours**

**Monday - Thursday  
11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

### **Donation Hours**

**Wednesday & Thursday  
11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

***The store is fully re-stocked with all new merchandise. We would like to thank all the people who have been donating.***

***During this time we have seen a lot of new shoppers. A lot more younger people are discovering us.***

***Re-cycle, re-use -  
and it all goes to many great causes.***

