



## *The Steeple*

*Winter 2020 – 2021*

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As the restrictions imposed to curtail the spread of Covid-19 are eased, please watch your email for Constant Contact updates about church services and activities. The Board of Deacons publishes a Constant Contact e-mail newsletter periodically to the congregation. If you do not currently receive this and would like to, please e-mail [news@nmchurch.org](mailto:news@nmchurch.org) to be added to the mailing list, or call the church office with your updated e-mail address.

Regular services and events continue to be postponed or cancelled, as we all keep a safe distance. Many members of the congregation and community have been watching our **10am Sunday worship** services **live-streamed** from our newly repaired sanctuary. Find the link at [www.nmchurch.org](http://www.nmchurch.org)

**Your continued support for our church is critical while attendance at services is restricted due to COVID-19. Please visit the main page of the church web site and click, "Donate to the Church!" to find out how you can keep your regular pledge or donation to the church current.**

Please see the link below to review guidelines for community/faith organizations regarding COVID-19. Please visit the CDC website for updates; information can also be found by dialing 2-1-1.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/guidance-community-faith-organizations.html>



## **Pastor's Page**

The calendar always moves us rapidly this time of the year. Thanksgiving immediately gives way to Advent, the beginning of the Christian year, and then rolls on toward the Christmas pageant, Christmas music, and all the traditional events we cherish. They seem all the more important this during the Covid lock-downs and mounting stress for so many.

Pastors usually remind the congregation that Advent is a season of reflection and preparation. True, but it is with some trepidation that I mention these themes this year. I can just hear members saying, "I've been reflecting ever since early March when the pandemic hit and forced me to stay home, forced me to curtail radically my social outings including going to church and church events like coffee hour. I never knew I would miss coffee hour so much!"

We will, nevertheless, prepare ourselves for the coming of the Prince of Peace. We need prayer like never before as we pray for peace in a troubled world, a deeply divided nation, and within our families and local communities, plus our individual spiritual lives. I have often found that a prayer from a different culture enables me to think about a traditional theme in a new way. Recently, I ran across the following prayer by Wanda Lawrence of the Chippewa community of the Great Lakes region. As you may know, an eagle in Native American tradition is often a carrier of prayer:

"We pray that someday an arrow will be broken,  
not in something or someone, but by each of humankind,  
to indicate peace, not violence.  
Someday, oneness with creation,  
rather than domination over creation,  
will be the goal to be respected.  
Someday fearlessness to love and make a difference  
will be experienced by all people.  
Then the eagle will carry our prayer for peace and love,  
and the people of the red, white, yellow, brown and black communities  
can sit in the same circle together to communicate in love  
and experience the presence of the Great Mystery in their midst.  
Someday can be today for you and me. Amen"

May your December be filled with eagles!

*Grace and peace,  
Rev. R. Randy Day*



## **Deacon's Bench**

Out of the darkness, into the light...

The days are growing shorter and the nights longer. The air turns crisp then cold. We hibernate spending more time hidden in our dens. Winter looms and we snuggle deeper into the blankets. As December melts into January it becomes easier to embrace the darkness and the solitude of the long winter. It becomes easier to turn inward, draw the curtains and tune the word out, accepting obscurity.

The darkness can be overwhelming. But the light of God is a beacon in the dark. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:15) Our faith in the power of God's love brings us out of the darkness and into the light. We have faith. Faith leads us through the darkness of uncertainty, through the darkness of despair, through the darkness of change. Our faith in the power of God's love lets the light shine in each of us, a blessing and a gift.

From Godspell: "You are the light of the world! But if that light is under a bushel, it's lost something kind of crucial. You've got to stay bright to be the light of the world....So let your light so shine before men, let your light so shine, so that they might know some kindness again. We all need help to feel fine ..."

Don't give in to the darkness, don't hide your light. Embrace each new day as chance to shine in the love of God. Face the changes and the challenges knowing that whoever believes in the Light of the World will never walk in darkness.

"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'." (John 8:12). May the light of God shine brightly on you and in you.

"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine...Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. For you and me, let it shine for you and me...I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine for you and me...Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine..." (Harry Dixon Leos)

*Sharon Millard  
For the Board of Deacons*



### **Sunday Bulletin Deadline**

Announcements are due to Nicole Henderson [nhenderson@nmchurch.org](mailto:nhenderson@nmchurch.org) by **Tuesday** for the bulletin. **Please note:** let Nicole know if you would like them printed in the bulletin or read at the start of service. Thanks!

### **Prayers**

Anyone wishing to submit a prayer request during the week is asked to send an email to [prayer-requests@nmchurch.org](mailto:prayer-requests@nmchurch.org) or call the church office.



### **Christmas Poinsettias**

If you would like to purchase a Christmas Poinsettia for the sanctuary, in honor of or in memory of a loved one, please contact Debbie Poole [debpoole@charter.net](mailto:debpoole@charter.net) or 860-354-1440. Orders must be received by December 9<sup>th</sup>. Cost for each plant is \$10.00.





# **NEW CHRISTMAS TRADITION**

**Beginning December 1st,  
Read one chapter of  
The Book of Luke in the Bible  
each evening.**

**There are 24 chapters.**

**On Christmas Eve you will have read  
an entire account of Jesus's Life  
and wake up Christmas Morning  
Knowing WHO and WHY  
We Celebrate!!**

## **Website**

More information is now available on the church website, [www.nmchurch.org](http://www.nmchurch.org). You will find updated announcements, the weekly bulletin for the service (usually available on Friday before the service), and the link to the livestream. You can also find email links to staff. Be sure to check this site often.

## **Remembrance Sunday, November 22, 2020**

Memorials given to the **Book of Remembrance** by our church family and friends were dedicated in memory of those dearest to their hearts. Contributions are put into a special fund and are used to enhance the beauty of the church and its spiritual ministry. In addition, with your generous support of the **A. Russell Ayre Scholarship Fund**, we are able to offer financial assistance to deserving college students.

### **BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE**

#### **In Loving Memory of:**

Charles H. Aldrich, Jr.  
Frederick N. Aldrich  
Vi (Elvira) & Clarence Burden  
Clifford C. Chapin  
Lillian & Ed Colligan  
Glenn S. Curtiss  
Rutledge W. Curtiss  
Rosemary & Carl DallaRiva  
Albert Hipp  
Evelyn Hipp  
Agnes & Sam Knowles  
Ethel Kranepool  
Cynthia Landry  
Marjorie Landry  
Jerry McGiver  
Emma McKittrick  
Lillian E. Strain  
John Strain

#### **Given by:**

Thelma O. Aldrich  
Thelma O. Aldrich  
Doris Curtiss  
Sally Spring Rinehart  
Barbara McGiver  
Doris Curtiss  
Doris Curtiss  
Barbara McGiver  
Scott & Beth Klingensmith  
Scott & Beth Klingensmith  
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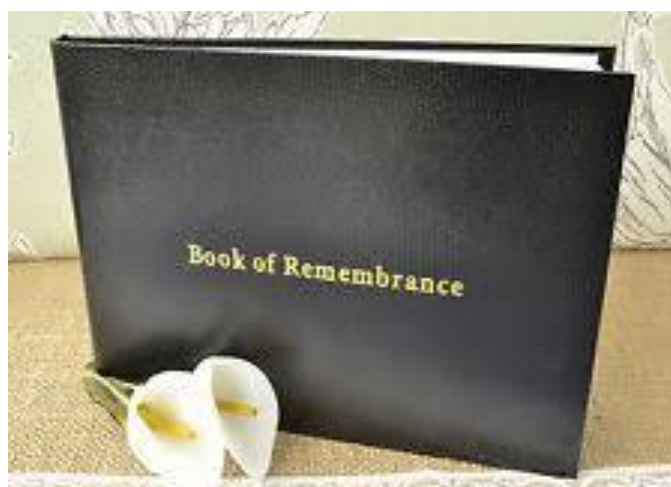
### **A. RUSSELL AYRE SCHOLARSHIP REMEMBRANCE**

#### **In Loving Memory of:**

Toky VanAsch VanWyck  
The Wells Family

#### **Given by:**

Maurits & Martin VanAsch VanWyck  
Fred & Marion Warman



## **Music Committee**

Sarah Fay, with help from Chris Fay, is producing choir videos for a virtual Christmas concert. Sarah has been leading weekly socially distanced rehearsals for participants who have recorded their parts for the videos.

Choir videos made earlier this year are now being featured as anthems in our Sunday services, and can also be [viewed on Facebook](#).

Sarah Archer and four members of the bell choir played the prelude and postlude at the November 8 service to welcome back members during Re-opening Sunday. Due to social distancing, only a few bell ringers can participate at one time. Unfortunately, since the church has been closed again to in-person attendance, it is uncertain if the bell choir will be able to play until services are re-opened.

The Music Committee thanks everyone who has contributed to the music program during the pandemic.

*Dave Elmore, Chair*



## **Church Night**

There will be **no** Church Night meeting in December. The next meeting will be Monday, January 18.

## **The Chapel Stitchers**

The ladies of the Prayer Shawl Ministry continue their mission, but are currently working in their homes. If you need a shawl or know someone who does, please call the church office or email Leslie Schlemmer at [news@nmchurch.org](mailto:news@nmchurch.org). Donations of yarn are always welcome.





## **Social Concerns and Missions Committee**

We have completed five of the six week virtual discussions in our series, "Be the Church," which kicked off in October. Here is what we have discussed so far:

- October 14 - Justice for Children
- October 21 - Voting
- October 28 - Hunger
- November 11 - Disabilities/Mental Health
- November 18 - Racial Justice

Here is what remains on the calendar:

- December 2 – Gun Violence

Meetings are from 7:00-8:00. Please contact Dan Martin if you would like to participate in the discussion, or would like to just listen to the discussion.

Our church once again responded in an amazing way to a need from the New Milford Food Bank. The church set a goal to see if we could collect 100 cans/jars of gravy in less than a week for the Thanksgiving food distribution. The result? We collected 120 cans/jars and 30 other items for donation.

We closed out a successful year with our shared garden. We plan to improve three plots in the spring by boxing them in. We also plan to dedicate more space to fewer items, since the culinary school used some vegetables more than others and we want the garden to be as productive and effective as possible. We are also looking at options to improve the irrigation of some of the high water using crops.

*Dan Martin, Chair*

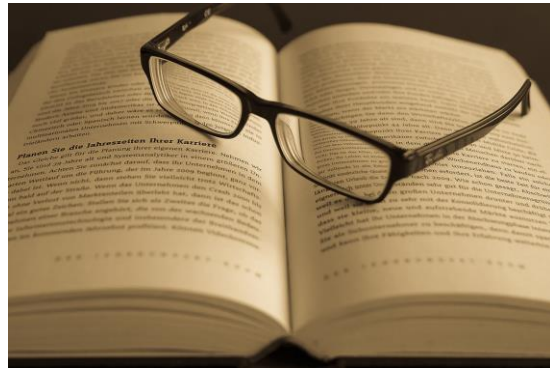
## **Investment Committee**

Values for the investment accounts were down over 3% at the end of October compared to September month end, reflecting the volatility of the stock market as the election neared and the pandemic surged. However, in the first part of November the values of these accounts have improved and now are at their highest point since last January. Uncertainty about the economy because of COVID-19 is likely to create swings in the stock market in coming months. The church is invested in funds which have been less volatile than the stock market at large.

*Dave Elmore, Chair*



## **Rev. R. Randy Day's Recommended Reading**



Please refer to the September, October, and November 2020 issues of *The Steeple* for comprehensive lists of recommended books and articles. Here are some recent additions:

### **Quoted in Sermons**

- *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* by Roland Bainton
- *Night* by Elie Wiesel
- *And the Sea Is Never Full: Memoirs, 1969-* by Elie Wiesel

### **General Reading**

- *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* edited by John McManners
- *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World* by the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu
- *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson
- *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Revised and Updated) by Miroslav Volf
- *Africa* by Olivier Follmi
- *12 Major World Religions: The Beliefs, Rituals, and Traditions of Humanity's Most Influential Faiths* by Jason Boyett

### **Meetinghouse Restoration Committee**

There is no change in our status since the October report. We are waiting for the State to return our documents. Here are the next steps:

- The SHPO administrator will have her signature witnessed and notarized on our 15 Year Covenant of Restrictions document
- She'll then get it to the CT Attorney General's office for final signoff
- SHPO will then expedite the final document to us
- We then file the document with Noreen Pritchard, our Town Clerk, and send the confirmation to SHPO
- SHPO releases the payment
- Evelyn LeCates has already been in touch with SHPO for our direct deposit data

Dan Martin, Chair



To all who came out on November 21 for the annual Fall Clean-up.

To Sarah Fay and all of our soloists for the beautiful music.

### **Called to Care Ministry**

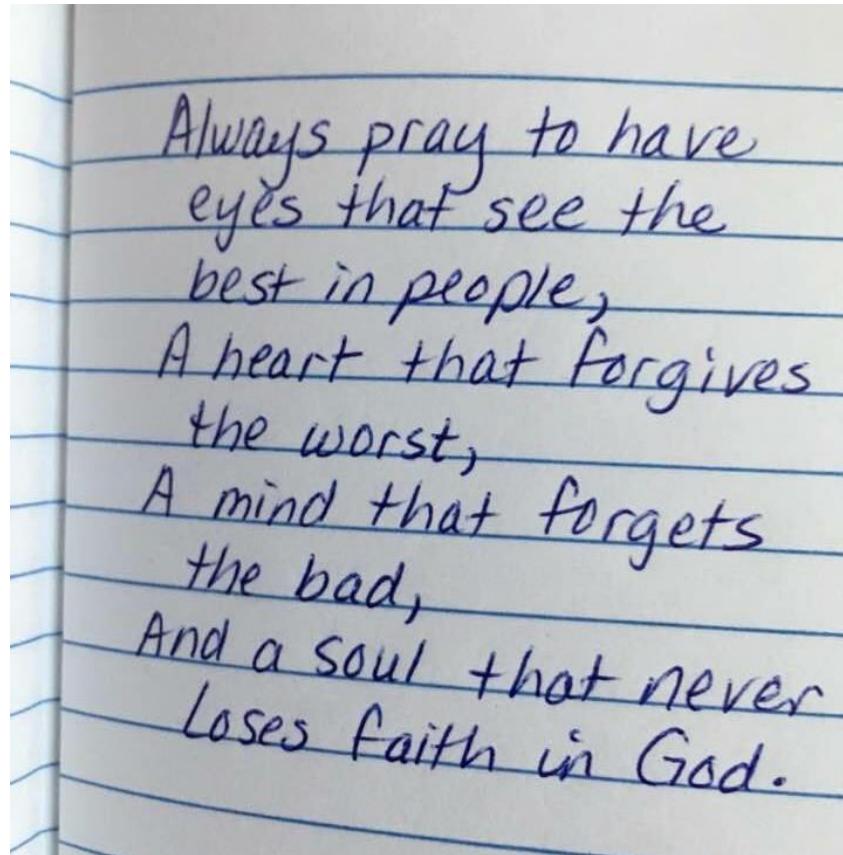
This program is our way of extending Christ's helping hand within our own congregation. We recognize that members come to our church family with diverse needs and talents. Called to Care is devised to match those two elements that we might first meet the needs of our own congregation, thereby equipping ourselves to go into the world as disciples of Jesus Christ. There is a need for:

- **Parish Friends** – congregants develop ongoing relationships with the other members through regular visits, over the phone or in person.
- **Parish Drivers** – serve the congregation by volunteering to drive those who cannot to church and, in rare cases, to the other crucial appointments.
- **Meal Chain** – church members make and deliver meals to those who have suffered a loss, welcomed a new child, or are in times of transition.
- **Prayer Ministry** – a prayer chain set up to offer prayers on behalf of congregation members and others in times of illness, difficulty, or joy.
- **Condolence Reception** – volunteers bake cookies, make finger sandwiches, and host receptions at funerals and memorial services.

If you would like to be part of our church's Called to Care Ministry, or have any questions, please call the church office at 860-354-8232 and leave a message. If you prefer, you can contact me directly by email ([jlmcc60@gmail.com](mailto:jlmcc60@gmail.com)) or at 860-355-9388.

*Jan McCarthy*





People are shopping online more than ever, and this will likely increase as we approach the holidays. If you are among this group, did you know that as you make online purchases at Amazon you can support the church at the same time? Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price - there is no additional cost, and once signed up, the donation to the church is automatic.

To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile. You use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same. On your first visit to AmazonSmile ([smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)), you need to select First Congregational Church, New Milford, CT to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. Your selection will be remembered, and then every eligible purchase you make at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) will result in a donation.

### **Baby Bundles**



We continue to work closely with Social Services and the Nurse-Family Partnership, a new program that is coordinated through the New Milford VNA. Donations of diapers and wipes are always welcome. Please call the church office to arrange a time to drop them off. Thank you for all the support you continue to provide.

*Jan McCarthy, Chair*

### **Stewardship Committee**

The Stewardship committee has been actively engaged in the 2021 Pledge Drive entitled: Celebrate & Renew. These past few months the Stewardship committee has been re-emphasizing the importance of pledging, which helps our leaders set future targets and make new plans to serve our members and our community. Once the pledge drive has concluded our committee will turn its attention to modernizing the ways our members can donate. We hope to tap into various technologies to make giving simpler and faster.

While our church and congregation faced incredibly difficult circumstances in 2020, we've seemingly overcome almost every obstacle. We're so blessed that our members continue to give generously to the church, fulfilling, if not surpassing their pledged donations. And now with ambitious goals set for church leadership and expanded mission work next year, there are new challenges ahead. In the meantime, thank you to all our generous members. Your support is very much appreciated.

*Jon Case, Chair*





**Planned Giving**

That's the name that has come to be associated with gifts to your church or other charity that happen after your lifetime. Simply put, you plan now, for a gift that will occur later. In our church, we recognize those who have declared they have arranged for a planned gift by receiving them as members of the Deacon Roger Sherman Society.

There are many ways to make a planned gift, and depending on your unique circumstances, some methods are better for you and for the church than others. Contact the Church Office for more details. The simplest and most direct way to make a planned gift is to include the church as a beneficiary on your life insurance policy. Your insurance agent can guide you on the specific forms and options available from your insurance company. Just tell them you want to add a beneficiary; the agent will take it from there.

When you have arranged your planned gift, be sure to let our Pastor know – no details, just that you made arrangements – so we can appropriately recognize your generosity. For your convenience, you may use the form below.

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**THE DEACON ROGER SHERMAN SOCIETY**

**A gift to First Congregational Church of New Milford is in my (our) estate plans.**

☐ *Yes!* **Please count me (us) as a Member of The Deacon Roger Sherman Society.**

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**Please Print Name(s) as you would like them to appear on recognition documents**

✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂

**Church Directory**

Our church directory is available to view on any web browser! Instant Church Directory — the program we use to build our church directory — has a free website for church members to view our directory online. You will be asked to enter in your email address as it's listed in our directory. If your email address isn't listed in the directory, let [news@nmchurch.org](mailto:news@nmchurch.org) know so it can be added.

The first time, click on the "Create a login now" under the Sign In button. Enter your email address and set up a password to be sent an email confirmation. Click on the link inside that email to confirm your email and log in with the password you just created.

## **Food Bank**

Non-perishable foods are always needed, but other items are also helpful. Government subsidies do not cover the purchase of laundry detergent or basic home cleaning products. Also appreciated are personal care items, and monetary donations.



Laundry detergent  
Cleaning supplies



Shampoo  
Soap  
Toothpaste  
Feminine hygiene products  
Adult incontinence products



Monetary contributions – make checks payable to FCC, with “Food Bank” written in the memo line. Drop off or mail to the church.



# Church School News

December 2020 / January 2021

## A Virtual Christmas Pageant!

Calling all Church School Kids and Youth!

It's almost Pageant time!

(Covid-19 won't take that from us!)

This year I am calling on all my youth readers to help read the traditional nativity story in chunks. You will record your portion at home and send it to me. Then it will be digitally strung together and presented on December 20th (traditional Pageant Sunday) during the regular worship service!

Not interested in reading but still want to participate? You and your child can arrange stop by to grab a costume and have me video you wearing it to be included in the Pageant video. (We have enough costumes that no one will have to share anything) OR you can grab your favorite stuffed animal or live pet and record yourself as a shepherd, make a crown or halo and become a king or angel, you get where I'm going with this. What we need is for as many of you to participate as possible to make this successful and lift the Christmas spirit of not only our congregation but of everyone who accesses our website. Will you help?

Please let Becky Passero know by December 1st if your child would like to be a reader. She will send your child the part to read. ALL recordings and pictures are due to Becky at [cedirector@nmchurch.org](mailto:cedirector@nmchurch.org) by Sunday, December 6th 12noon.

*Recording recommendations:*

- 1.) Need is to be able to see space around the sides and above their bodies from the waist up.
- 2.) Give a 5 sec start and ending before and after talking for editing purposes later. Remember to smile and speak slowly!
- 3.) Please rest your camera on a solid surface to reduce movement as much as possible.
- 4.) Before recording, the person recording, should check for uneven lighting (ex. shadows laying across the child's face/body, bright light on one side of the child, etc), noises
- 5.) Try not to be holding up the paper in front of their face.



## Advent Lessons and Crafts Bags



Advent is here! We have something special in store for this Advent season. We will be switching from virtual Sunday School lessons to Livestreaming stories and crafts each Sunday of Advent (November 29, December 6, 13, and 20) at 11am. We will also Livestream a story on Christmas Eve 10am. Each session will be recorded and saved to our Livestream library on the website so you can view when you are ready to watch.

Advent craft bags will be available to each family who would like one beginning Saturday, November 28, 9am - 12pm on the Parish House porch. After that, please contact Becky Passero at [cedirector@nmchurch.org](mailto:cedirector@nmchurch.org) to arrange a pickup. Each bag will include the craft for each Sunday, additional activities, and coloring pages for each Sunday of Advent; one for each child in your family. Each Sunday will have a theme: Angels, Shepherds, Star, Animals and Mary, Joseph and Jesus.

Each week, beginning on Monday, we will play a "Guess how many," game. Becky will send out a picture and ask your child(ren) to guess how many items there are. The child who comes the closest the following Sunday will receive the item delivered by Becky! All you have to do is email Becky back their guess...one from each child in your home. This for ALL AGES in our Church School program.

*This is the season of Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace.*

