



The Steeple

March 2021

Interim Minister – Reverend R. Randy Day – revday@nmchurch.org
Pastoral Consultant – Reverend Shannon Wall – revwall@nmchurch.org
Music Director – Sarah Fay – musicdirector@nmchurch.org
Manager of Church Operations – Nicole Henderson – nhenderson@nmchurch.org
Bell Choir Director – Sarah Archer – bells@nmchurch.org
Director of Christian Education – Becky Passero – cedirector@nmchurch.org
Moderator – Susan Chapin – moderator@nmchurch.org
Vice Moderator – Joan Vill – vicemoderator@nmchurch.org
Treasurer – Evelyn LeCates – treasurer@nmchurch.org
Recording Secretary – Pete DelMastro – secretary@nmchurch.org
Financial Secretary – Katie McKay – financialsecretary@nmchurch.org
Room Manager – Mike Bensema – roommgr@nmchurch.org
Steeple Editor – Janet Wittmann – steeple@nmchurch.org

Office Hours: By Arrangement
Office Phone: 860.354.8232
Fax Line: 860.354.4327
E-mail: church@nmchurch.org
Web site: www.nmchurch.org

In-person Sunday services have resumed! We are asking people to sign up – please read the procedures and complete the registration form found on the main page of the church website, or call the church office if you plan to attend. Services will continue to be live streamed, if you prefer not to attend in person.

In an effort to keep people as safe and healthy as possible during these times, we ask that you please let us know if you have experienced symptoms or tested positive for Covid-19 within 14 days after you have been at a worship service or in-person meeting/event at the church. This way we can initiate contact tracing efforts. Be assured that names and medical information will be kept confidential to the best of our ability and following the guidance of the local health department.

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>

Remember to change your clocks for Sunday, March 14



Pastor's Page

During the month of March we will continue our spiritual journey through Lent, exploring the meaning of discipleship through Sunday worship services, daily devotions, and prayers. Near the end of the month we will ponder anew the familiar stories of Holy Week and the passion of Christ.

In 2021, the first Passover Seder will be on Saturday, March 27th, beginning at sundown. It will end at sunset on Saturday, April 3rd for Reform and progressive Jews and on April 4th for Orthodox and Hasidic Jews. In the Gospel of John we read: "Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him." (John 12: 1-2)

John continues to describe the scene by saying that Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard and anointed Jesus' feet and then wiped them with her hair. We receive this powerful story in the context of Jesus' coming passion. The dynamic of discipleship here clearly indicates the love and appreciation Jesus has for his friend Martha. It also captures her deep devotion to him in the act of anointing. We should not be surprised; after all, she witnessed him raising her brother from the dead. It seems as though she spontaneously, intuitively, and extravagantly models genuine discipleship. May she motivate us today while we continue to minister to one another as we enter year two of the global COVID pandemic.

As is true of many dinner gatherings, someone had a different opinion and did not hesitate to express it. John reports that Judas Iscariot asked: "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" John immediately inserts his commentary: "He said this not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it." Actually, this is another type of discipleship. We sense counterfeit compassion by one who is clearly perturbed by Mary's after dinner display of adoration. Greed rules Judas' heart and is not concealed by his pious chatter. In sharp contrast to Martha, he is the unfaithful disciple.

May we check our motivations during March, and may we review our actions or lack thereof during Lent. John 12:1-8 grants us permission to offer our own extravagant gifts of love, devotion, and acts of care and thoughtfulness to those whom we encounter, be they near or far.

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



Please check your email, social media, or the church website for details on services and activities for Holy Week.

Palm Sunday	March 28
Maundy Thursday	April 1
Good Friday	April 2
Easter Sunday	April 4

Easter Flowers:

Plants to decorate the Sanctuary for Easter will be available for \$10.00 each. This year Daffodils and Tulips and Lilies will be available. You may mail the form and check to the Church office:

The First Congregational Church,
36 Main St., New Milford, CT 06776
ATTENTION: Flower Committee

The deadline for ordering is Sunday March 28, 2021. Please make checks made payable to The First Congregational Church.

Please use one form per donation:

Indicate your preference: Tulip: ____ Daffodil: ____ Lily: _____

In Honor Of: _____

In Memory Of: _____

Dedicated By: _____

Your plants may be taken home after service on Easter Sunday to enjoy, then plant in your garden, or you may donate them to be planted in the Church yard.



Prayers

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

Board of Trustees

The parsonage sale has been finalized, providing us with a boost to our bank account, as well as savings going forward in our utility and insurance bills.

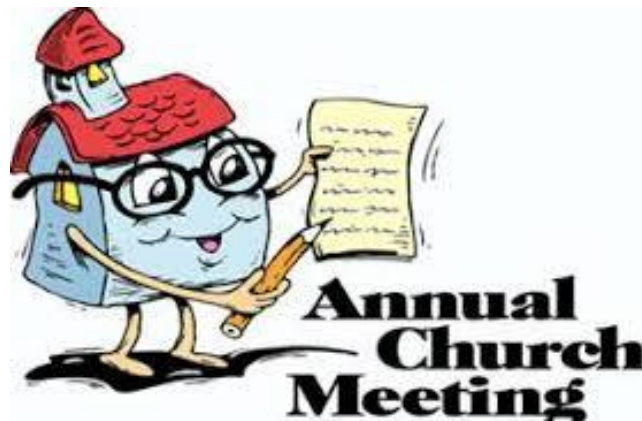
We are in touch with the State for guidance in applying for a second grant to complete Phase 2 of the Raise the Roof project, and anticipate progress in early 2021. No other major projects are anticipated at this time.

John Wittmann, Chair

Church Meetings

The next Church Night meeting will be Monday, **March 15**.

Our **Annual Meeting** will be held after the worship service on **Sunday, March 21**. The 2020 Annual Report will be available for review in the Member Documents section of the church website two weeks prior to the meeting.



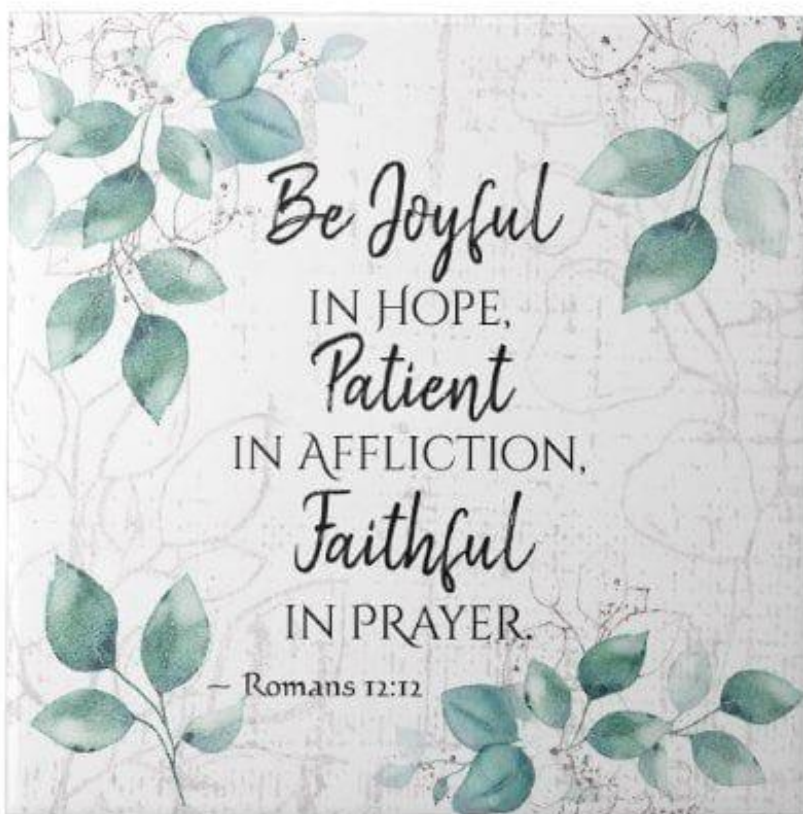
NOT EVERYTHING IS CANCELLED

sunshine is not cancelled
love is not cancelled
relationships are not cancelled
reading is not cancelled
naps are not cancelled
devotion is not cancelled
music is not cancelled
dancing is not cancelled
imagination is not cancelled
kindness is not cancelled
conversations are not cancelled
hope is not cancelled



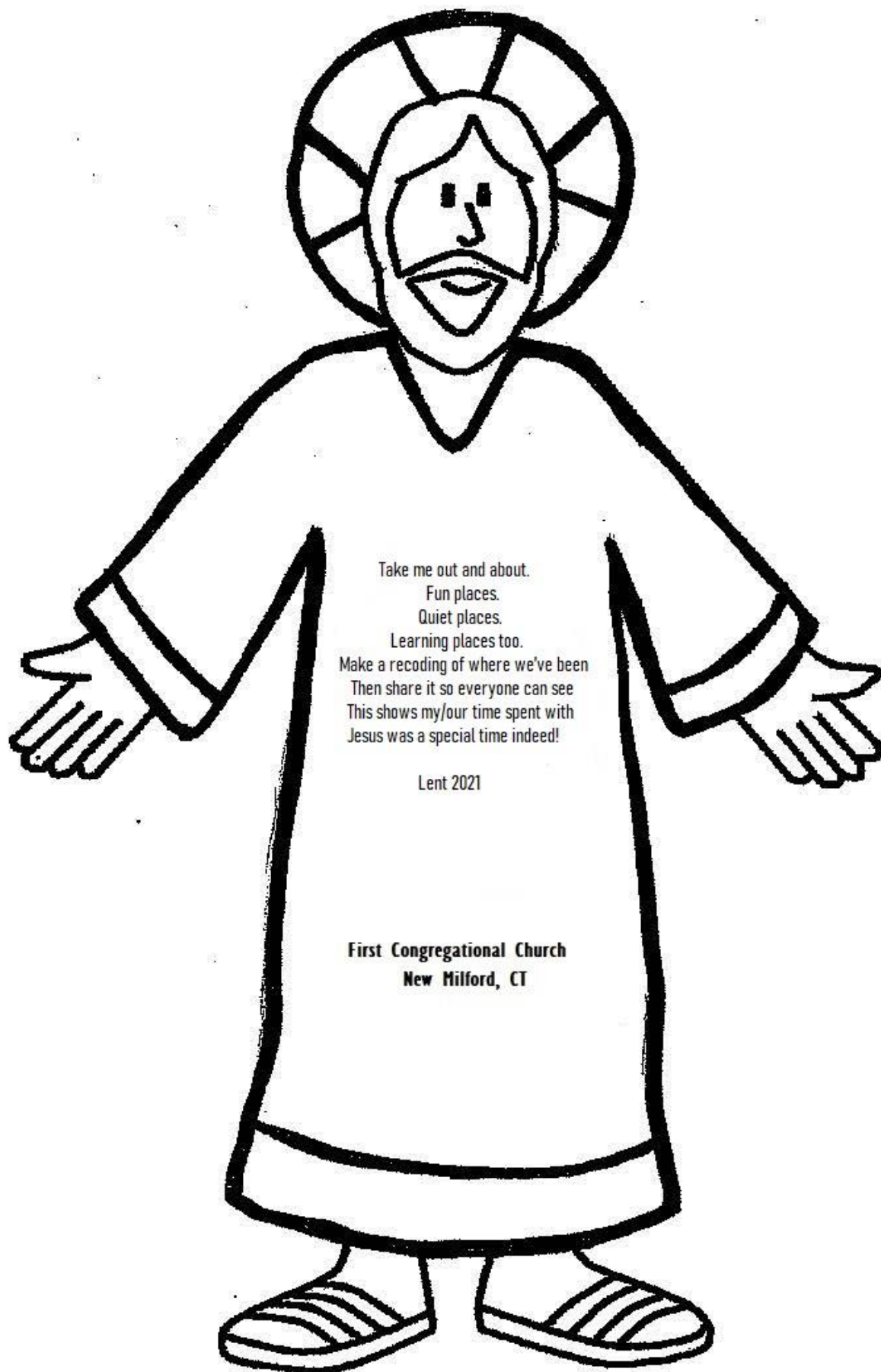
Sunday Bulletin Deadline

Bulletin information and announcements are due to Nicole Henderson, nhenderson@nmchurch.org, by **Tuesday**, each week. Please let Nicole know if you would like them printed in the bulletin or read at the start of service. Thanks!



Christian Education

Plush Jesus is here this Lent! Plush Jesus will be making the rounds of Church School family homes during Lent. Our program owns several, so this will be done in a very safe and hygienic manner. Each week, Plush Jesus will spend time with a family. He will do whatever your family does during the week: scouts, dance, gymnastics, sports, skiing, sledding...you get the idea. Just take a short 20-30 second video or two with Plush Jesus doing one of these awesome things and send it to Becky Passero (cedirector@nmchurch.org). She will make a video of all of them to share during the week of March 28th. Flat Jesus is joining too for those who would like to participate in a safe and socially distanced way. Please print and color the picture of Flat Jesus on the following page, then take him on your journeys and send Becky photos and videos too!



Take me out and about.
Fun places.
Quiet places.
Learning places too.
Make a recoding of where we've been
Then share it so everyone can see
This shows my/our time spent with
Jesus was a special time indeed!

Lent 2021

**First Congregational Church
New Milford, CT**

Rev. R. Randy Day's
Recommended Reading



Please refer to the past few issues of *The Steeple* for comprehensive lists of recommended books and articles. Here are some recent additions:

Quoted in Sermons

- *Where Do We Go From Her: Chaos or Community?* by Martin Luther King, Jr.
- *Cross Examinations: Readings on the Meaning of the Cross Today* by Mary Solberg
- *The Death of Race: Building a New Christianity* by Brian Bantum
- *Insurrection of the Crucified: The Gospel of Mark* by Ted Jennings
- *Learning To Lead from Your Spiritual Center* by Patricia D. Brown
- Film: *Schindler's List*
- *Letters and Papers from Prison* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- *Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- *Ethics* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own* by Eddie Glaude, Jr.

General Reading

- *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be: An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania* by Frank Bruni
- *Faith and Politics* by John Danforth
- *A Promised Land* by Barack Obama
- *100 All-Time Favorite Hymns* by Rollin Smith
- *The Devil You Know* by Charles M. Blow
- *The Walk: Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life* by Adam Hamilton
- *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster* by Bill Gates



Thank you to Rev. Dr. Pat Nicholas for joining us at the pulpit this month.

Thank you to Sarah Fay and the soloists for beautiful music each week.



The church would like to establish a small team of volunteers to help support audio and video during services and other events. Team members will assist the Deacons with audio and video during livestream broadcasts. You will learn to operate the camera and audio boards and to set up microphones or other audio equipment as needed. This is open to high school age and older. To learn more about the A/V Team email Dave Elmore (elmore@nmchurch.org)

Offering Envelopes

If you need envelopes and have not yet done so, please let Katie McKay or Nicole Henderson know.



Called to Care Ministry

This church has always embraced our mission to reach out and support those in need of caring and assistance. The pandemic and all the related problems it brought has challenged us to all do more to help those in need.

You may not have formerly volunteered to be part of our Called to Care mission, but in the past year so many of you have stepped up and reached out. It is uplifting to hear and see all that is being done to help those in need of food, clothing, heat, and so many other necessary items.

Please keep up your mission. While it is still not possible to give a hug or even see your face – a kind note, phone call, email or social media posting shows we are still connected, and we care. Thank you for all that you are doing and continue to do to keep this congregation and our world connected.

The many facets of our mission include:

- **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 or at 860-355-9388.

Jan McCarthy



THANK YOU!

First Congregational Church's 2021 Collection

raised:

\$95 and 337 food items

Thanks to your efforts this year, more dollars have been raised, more lives have been changed and the nation has seen the impact of people working together to help those in need. Thank you for working to transform the time around the Super Bowl into the nation's largest celebration of giving and serving.



February 7, 2021



Alison Reese
Executive Director
Souper Bowl of Caring



Souper Bowl of Caring – February 7th

First picture: Sophie M, Amy P, Ruby M

Second Picture: Sophie M., Ruby M., Amy P., Olivia P., Maggie P.

Baby Bundles



As the song goes, "Baby, it's cold outside!" – and that also describes our monthly distributions this winter. Luckily our distribution Wednesdays be snow-free, but the temperature has certainly been exceptionally cold. We have held our distribution at the front door of the Parish House, but we haven't been able to display the many baby items that have been donated. Needless to say, we are counting the days until warmer weather arrives.

We are fortunate to have the support of our Church School. They will again sponsor a Lenten Mission Project to benefit Camella's Cupboard and Baby Bundles by collecting diapers, wipes, feminine hygiene and personal hygiene products. Collection will take place outside the church office during the six weeks of Lent.

We continue to work closely with Social Services and the VNA Nurse-Family Partnership. It is encouraging to know that we have so many church and community members willing to help out the many families in need.

Thanks to all of you for the donations and support that you continue to provide.

Jan McCarthy, 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.**

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

✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂



Shrove Tuesday Virtual Pancake Brinner



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 from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to 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), 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 will result in a donation.

[illegible]

Plush Jesus will be taking field trips home to visit with our Church School families. We would like for each who has the opportunity to get him, to take Jesus on an adventure, and record a 20-30 second video and email to Becky at cedirector@nmchurch.org. These videos will be strung together and shared with the church family during Holy Week. Please email if your family would like Jesus to share a visit.



Diaper, Baby Wipes and Feminine Hygiene Product and Personal Hygiene Product Drive

When: February 21 - March 28, 2021

Where: FCCNM

For: Camella's Cupboard

Sponsored by:

The Church School and Baby Bundles

Donations of:

Diapers sizes 3 & 5, Pull-Ups, baby wipes, feminine hygiene and personal hygiene products including: tampons, maxi pads, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, bar soap, shampoo, conditioner, shaving cream, disposable razors.

*****All items must be new and unopened*****