



The Steeple

April 2021

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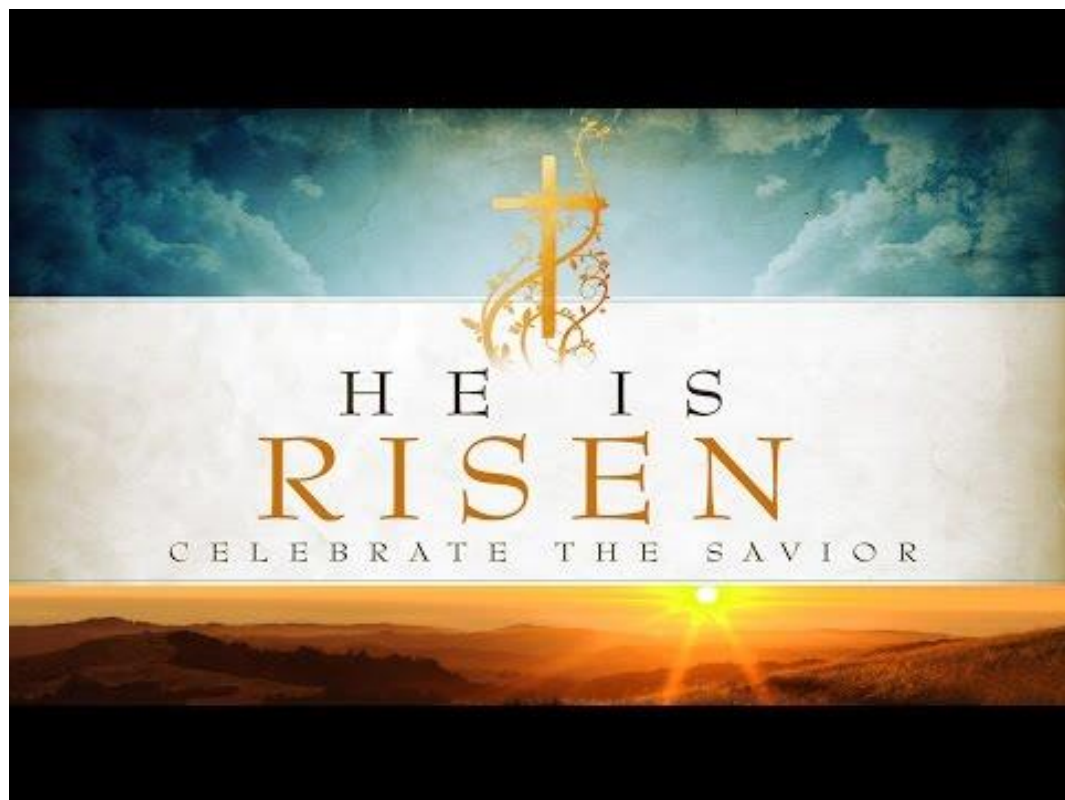
In-person Sunday services have resumed! We are asking people to sign up – please read the procedures and complete the registration form found on the main page of the church website, or call the church office if you plan to attend. Services will continue to be live streamed, if you prefer not to attend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



Pastor's Page

The first Sunday in April is Easter. What a splendid way to enter the month! With Easter comes a deep sense of new life here on earth, as well as eternal life. We welcome new beginnings, often symbolized by butterflies. We welcome members and friends back to in-person worship if and when they are comfortable. Masks will be an essential part of our Easter attire.

We have come through a pandemic-wracked year during which we have done our best to console those who have lost loved ones to COVID-19 and other causes, and we have tried to be responsive to the needs of our community. We pray that Easter will bring some much needed relief. We rejoice in vaccines becoming available to nearly all segments of society. We yearn to help the rest of the world by sharing.

April also includes Earth Day (22nd) which invites us to embrace spring here in the northern hemisphere while we renew efforts to save our planet. The theme this year is "Restore Our Earth." When we consider that the vertebrate populations have decreased by 60% since 1970, that 18 million acres of forests are cleared each year, and that the Arctic ice is melting at an alarming rate, we understand the need to restore. Our creator gave us this earth which provides us with food, water and air. May we give this some serious thought during April, including how to share all of this with other species which God also created.

Let's fully enjoy the early spring flowers, plant our gardens, and tend to our indoor plants. We may have to continue in semi-lockdown for a while longer, yet we need not be in hibernation from one another. Call someone, walk with someone, send a note to someone. As Easter people, we celebrate our church and community family.

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



Palm Sunday - March 28	10 am Worship Service 11am-Noon Drive-through palm pick up
Maundy Thursday - April 1	7 pm Service
Easter Sunday - April 4	10 am Worship Service



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.

Deacon's Bench

Belief: A state or habit of mind in which trust is placed in something.

What compels us to believe in God? Where is the tangible proof of God that we as humans crave? How do we know that believing will bring us not only to, but *through* the gates of Heaven?

I'm here to say that I don't know why I believe in God. But I do. And I don't know what the tangible proof of God is. But it's here. And I don't know that believing in God will get me through the gates of Heaven. But it will.

Here it is: I have faith. "Faith is believing when common sense tells you not to." (Miracle on 34th Street). I believe in the power of prayer. I believe in the strength of a community united. I believe that the sun will rise every morning. And I believe that anything is possible. "All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen." (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

There have been times in my life, and likely in all of our lives, that we lose sight of the unbelievable but amazing love, comfort and power of God. It happens. We derail. But I believe that God is always there, waiting in the wings, and offering himself even when we aren't receptive. "Just because you can't see the air doesn't keep you from breathing. And just because you can't see God doesn't keep you from believing." (The Preachers Wife)

It isn't always easy to hold a belief in God. And I believe that that's okay. "Faith consists of believing when it is beyond the power of reason to believe." (Voltaire) Remember life's little miracles: a bird in flight, a shooting star, a baby's first step. And life's wonderful gifts: the kind word of a stranger, a bouquet of flowers from a friend, a kiss from the one you love. And know, believe, in your heart of hearts, that God is not only watching over you, but holding you in the palm of his hand. "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:22)

Sharon Millard
For the Board of Deacons

Church Meetings

The next Church Night meeting will be Monday, **April 19**.

A **Special Meeting** of the church will be held after the worship service on **Sunday, April 11**. We will vote on the Constitution Revision Committee's recommendations.



Lawn Mowing Sign-up

The Trustees have asked for volunteers to mow our very limited lawn area each weekend from April through October. Please email Nicole to sign up. This effort saves the church quite a bit of money each summer. Volunteers will be sent a reminder of the date they have chosen. Thank you for helping to keep our church grounds inviting!

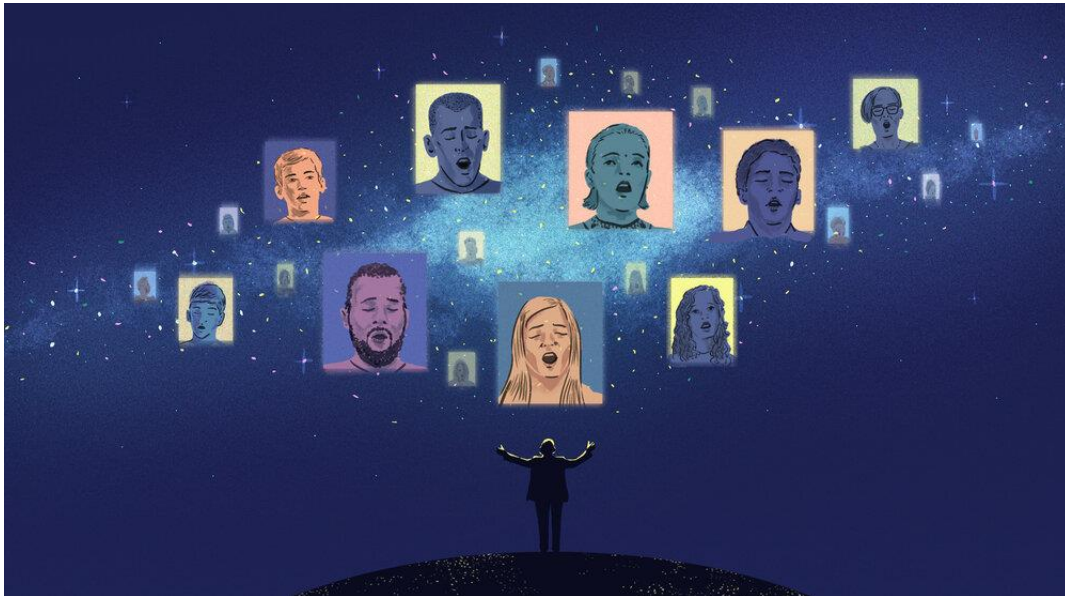


Music Committee

Thanks to all who are keeping music in our services. The Senior Choir is continuing to sing virtually. Sarah Fay is hosting Zoom rehearsals weekly to help members prepare the pieces. There is good participation by choir members who have access to the technology required.

The bell choir resumed practice on March 3 with seven members participating in the Spring season. The bell choir plans to play on Easter Sunday.

Dave Elmore, Chair



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!

Psalm 23: Line by Line

Meaning

The LORD is my shepherd = **RELATIONSHIP**

I shall not be in want = **SUPPLY**

He makes me lie down in green pastures =
REST

He leads me beside quiet waters =
REFRESHMENT

He restores my soul = **HEALING**

He guides me in paths of righteousness =
GUIDANCE

For his name's sake = **PURPOSE**

Even though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death = **TESTING**

I will fear no evil = **PROTECTION**

For you are with me = **FAITHFULNESS**

Your rod and your staff they comfort me =
DISCIPLINE

You prepare a table before me in the presence
of my enemies = **HOPE**

You anoint my head with oil = **CONSECRATION**

My cup overflows = **ABUNDANCE**

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the
days of my life = **BLESSING**

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

- *Call and Consequence: A Womanist Reading of Mark* by Raquel St. Clair

General Reading

- *Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart* by Alan D. Wolfelt
- *Unafraid: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times* by Adam Hamilton
- *Understanding the Book of Revelation* by Gordon L Boggs



Thank you to Dawn Kraft and Pete Richardson. Nicole is so happy to have two of the best volunteers back!

Remembrance Sunday, May 30



Book of Remembrance: Memorials given to the Book of Remembrance by our church family and friends will be 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. Donations may be sent in any time of the year to the church office, in care of the Book of Remembrance. Those gifts received later than **May 9** will be dedicated in November. The list will be posted on the bulletin board by the side door entrance of the church on **May 23** for review.

A Russell Ayre Scholarship: With your generous support we are able to offer financial assistance to deserving college students. Donations of any size may be sent in any time of the year to the church office, in care of the Scholarship Committee. Please indicate who your gift is in memory/honor of, as well as to whom an acknowledgement should be sent. Those gifts received later than **May 9** will be dedicated in November. The list will be posted on the bulletin board at the side door entrance on **May 23** for review.

Please make check payable to: **The First Congregational Church**

Memo: Book of Remembrance OR A. Russell Ayre Scholarship

(Note: A. Russell Ayre Scholarship and Book of Remembrance are separate checking accounts.)

Offering Envelopes

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



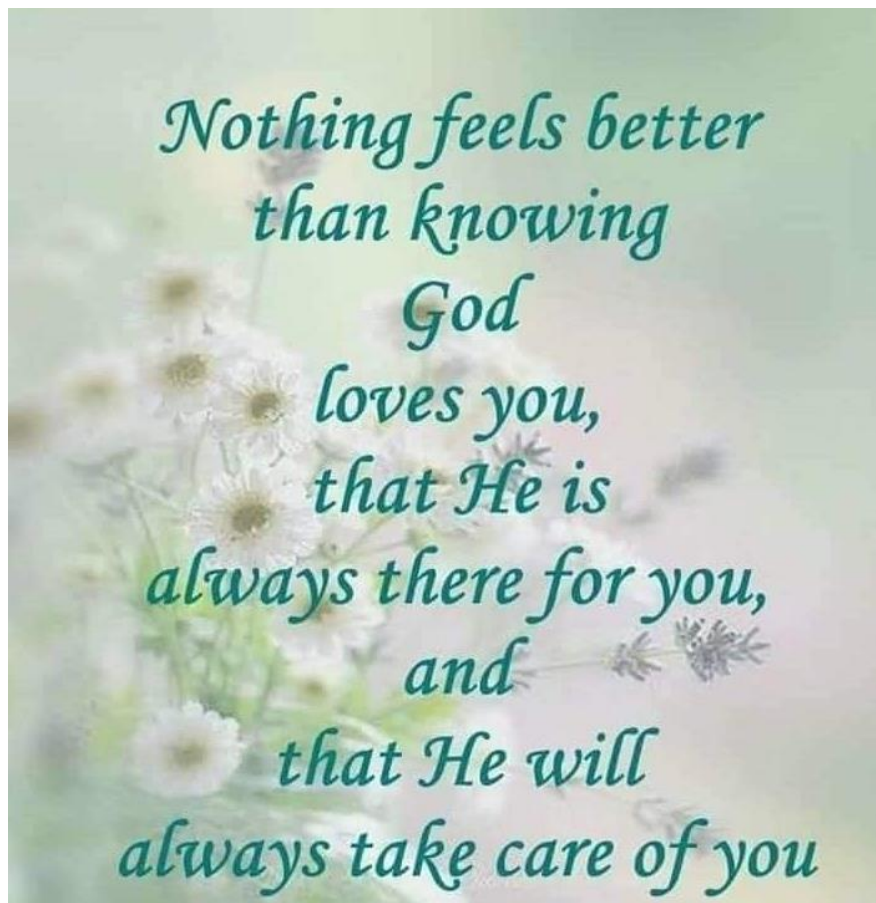
Social Concerns and Missions Committee

Loaves and Fishes has asked us to consider using our kitchen for the balance of the year, while they have some work done at the Richmond Center. The Social Concerns and Missions team believes this is a great opportunity. The Loaves and Fishes team has examined our space, and are in the process of reviewing if it would work for them operationally.

- This would be a 7 day a week operation
- There would be 3-4 volunteers each afternoon preparing and distributing meals
- There would be some storage requirements in Fellowship Hall, but there would not be any issue with having Sunday Fellowship, if we decide to resume live fellowship after services.

This was discussed, voted on, and approved at the March Church Night Meeting, Right now the estimate is that church operating costs will increase about \$10-\$15 per day to have the kitchen open each day. The Social Concerns and Missions team believes that we can raise the funds from our congregation, our out of town former members, and the community to cover any incremental costs associated with this work.

Dan Martin, 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.



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



Have you moved? Do you have a new email address? Please keep the church office undated!



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.

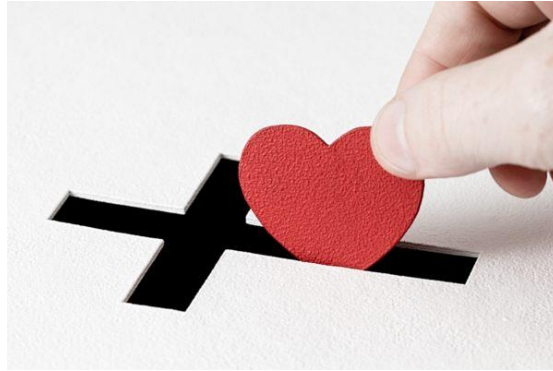
To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to smile.amazon.com to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile. You use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping 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.

The Chapel Stitchers

The Prayer Shawl Ministry will meet on **Sunday, April 11**, the second Sunday of the month. All are welcome – beginners as well as advanced stitchers. Our informal meetings are a great place to relax, enjoy friendships, share experiences, and learn from long time experts!

Join us as we gather outside the church weather permitting or via Zoom for a time of faith and fellowship at 11:30 am. Can't wait to see everyone! If you need a shawl or know someone who does, please call the church office or contact Leslie Schlemmer at news@nmchurch.org. Donations of yarn are always welcome.





Investment Committee

The committee has invested the funds received from the sale of the parsonage, the balance of funds remaining unspent from 2020 investment withdrawals not needed to support the operating fund in 2020, and monies carried over from Meetinghouse restoration.

The end of February balances were mostly up a little. The investment account was down due to a drop in the recently purchased shares at the end of the month. A recovery in those shares happened in early March.

Dave Elmore, Chair



Church School News

April 2021

This Easter may your love be renewed and may your hopes be revived.
May all good things you dream of come true for you and your family.
Happy Easter!

Regular, In-person Church School will return Sunday, May 2, 2021!

Time is still to be determined, so stayed tuned.

All Covid protocols will still be in place including social distancing, mask wearing, sanitizing, and temperature taking upon entering the Parish House.

While we are very excited to offer the opportunity to return to "normal," we do this with caution, so we will continue to offer Virtual Church School too.

Stayed tuned and watch your emails and Facebook for more information!



Mark your **CALENDARS!**

VBS is BACK!

Join us this **June 28—July 1, 2021**
for a week filled of crafts, snacks, games, and God's Love with...

BARNYARD BASH!

Space will be limited.

Registrations will be available beginning May 1, 2021.
More details will be available then.

We are so excited and hope you are too!!!

~ The VBS Team

