



**At the First Congregational Church, UCC of Wallingford, CT,
we have discerned the following vision and mission
for our faith lives together:**

Vision

***Our faith – rooted in the compassion and teachings of Jesus Christ – is
the foundation of our love for one another and service to the world
around us.***

We offer a home for those seeking deeper meaning or purpose in their lives through the exploration of Jesus Christ's teachings. The love and compassion found in those teachings commit us to uplift each individual and celebrate our shared humanity.

Mission

***We will foster spiritual growth, loving communication, and mutual care,
thereby empowering us to confront issues that impact our community
and the world, including poverty, isolation, and exclusion.***

We commit to developing a nurturing environment where all are loved, valued, and inspired by meaningful participation in the life of the church. Through our Christian faith, compassion, and service, we will dedicate ourselves to making a positive impact on the lives of people in our community and beyond.



The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

23 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT 06492

Church telephone: (203) 265-1691

Church Office Hours: Tues.– Fri. - 9:30am – 1:00pm

Email: officemanager@firstchurchwlfld.org (office)

Website: <http://firstwallingford.org>

We, the faith community of the First Congregational Church of Wallingford, United Church of Christ, aspire to live by the wisdom of Christ's teachings.

At the heart of our vision and mission is a commitment to inclusivity and acceptance.

We welcome everyone regardless of age; race; culture; sexual orientation; gender identity and expression; family configuration; economic circumstance; mental, physical, developmental, and emotional ability; and religious tradition.

Jesus Christ, in speaking to his disciples said this: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." (John 13: 34).

As current disciples of Jesus, we commit to maintain a nurturing environment where all are loved, valued, and inspired to meaningful involvement in the life of the church.

Jesus' teachings of love and compassion call us to uplift each individual and celebrate our shared humanity, both within the sanctuary of this church and throughout the community in which we live and serve.

Diversity in our world is a gift from God which we celebrate.

Guided by our Lord's wisdom, we offer an authentic and loving welcome to all who seek a relationship with God, and we proclaim ourselves an Open and Affirming church.



OPEN AND AFFIRMING COVENANT

Table of Contents

July Worship Offerings.....	4
Message from the Minister.....	5
Message from the Moderators.....	6
Mission Money at Work.....	7
Rummage Sale Thank You Letter.....	8
Summer Worship Service.....	9
Ministry and Team Organization and Structure.....	10
Letter of Thanks.....	12
Confirmands.....	13

July Worship Offerings at First Congregational Church of Wallingford

July 5, 2026 @ 10:00 am

"The Devil Made Me Do It"
Romans 7:15-25
Holy Communion

July 12, 2026 @ 10:00 am

"What's Soil Got To Do With It?"
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23
Rev. Dr. Charlene Bruce

July 19, 2026 @ 10:00 am

"The Land Down Under"
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

July 26, 2026 @ 10:00 am

"Parables! Parables!"
Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52



Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.

Revelation 3:20 (NRSV)



In 1998, I was part of a newly-formed company selling retail Internet access in Honolulu. For those of a certain age, you will remember this as the approximate birthdate of what was then called the “World Wide Web.” Back then, we were imagining the possibilities of broad mass communication. How would it be when you could learn about things that the local library would never have room on the stacks for.

Well, today, we can easily publish documents right at home with high quality printers. We can telephone almost literally anyone from anywhere, e-mail, text, video call, zoom, IM, and more.

And yet, we still, on so many levels, fail to communicate. And I think part of that is because we sometime forget that communication is always transactional.

That can be a difficult word, but it’s accurate. To exchange information, there must be a source and a receiver, and each must be in a position to fulfill their role. But there is so much more to it than that. Information requires a search, and a search requires a longing to be informed.

In that passage from Revelation, Jesus says that if a person hears him knocking at the door and opens it. Jesus will enter and eat with you. The person opening the door will have a conversation with Jesus.

One knocks, another opens the door. One is offered hospitality, another accepts. A meal is shared. Conversation ensues. The Good News is shared.

As we move into the Summer season here at FCCW, the installation of our new LED wall displays will be starting in the Sanctuary. I myself am very excited about this and look forward to the new opportunities to enhance our worship and augment the suite of communication tools we have in our tool kit. On July 18, we will gather for a mini-retreat and lunch to look at some examples of other churches using this equipment and take some practical steps towards developing the skills to use this equipment to enhance our work. Sound interesting, I hope you join in.

Message from the Moderators

Although you will be reading this message in the early days of the 2026-2027 program year at First Congregational Church, the message is being written during the last weeks of the 2025-2026 program year. As our tenure together as your co-moderators has not quite finished at the time of this writing, we are taking the opportunity to write one more message together, reflecting a bit on our time leading this congregation.

From the outside looking in, serving as a moderator may look like carrying a load of tasks to be accomplished and issues to be addressed. While the need to attend to such tasks and issues certainly ebbs and flows, we want to emphasize the aspects of serving as a leader that the congregation might not see and those that we might not otherwise take the time to mention as we tick off items on our to do list. Our vantage point as moderators has allowed us to see the incredible amount of commitment, inspiration, service, and devotion that this congregation offers to First Congregational Church and the community. Emerging from its love of God, love for one another, love for our neighbor, love of its history, and love of community, this congregation works so hard in the service of God. We have seen this love on a weekly basis throughout our time serving together as moderators, and this love will continue during the leadership of others, just as it has over the past 350 years.

Like any other family, our church family has moments of disagreement, differences of opinion, and, yes at times, some bickering. But, what we have observed as moderators is that in those moments when we appeal to one another's shared love of God and shared love for First Congregational Church, amazing things are possible. When we truly listen to each other and feel supported enough to share our thoughts and ideas, we become a stronger community of faith, and we perform incredible acts of kindness and service that allow us to fulfill all the values and goals included in our Vision and Mission statements and Open and Affirming Covenant. When we welcome one another to be who we are, we allow the strengths, skills and talents of each other to shine through in the service of Christ and his teachings.

So, serving in the role of co-moderator has given us a front row seat for all kinds of inspiration as we've watched this love and service unfold. We have been able to watch individuals step up and step into projects that grow our faith, grow our worship, grow our care to our congregation, grow our membership experiences, grow our mission and outreach to others, and grow the health of our physical church and finances. We hope we have succeeded in some small ways to pass this inspiration on to others. Our greatest joys as moderators are moments when we are approached by others with ideas for ministry, and our task is to find ways to help their inspiration grow and flourish within our organization.

We hope you take all of this to heart as you consider where you will find your passion and your ministry in the next program year. Our Ministries and Teams need your love, participation, and ideas. Let's continue to walk together as an amazing, dedicated, and loving congregation, committed to serving God, living out Christ's teachings, and using the wonderful talents we have been granted.

With the grace and peace of Christ,
Lori Folk-Barron & Greg Whitehouse, Co-Moderators

MISSION MONEY AT WORK

As the scripture says: “And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” Hebrews 13:16.

The Mission Funds Distribution Team uses your donated mission money to support organizations that are consistent with First Congregational’s Vision and Mission. In June 2026, we made the following donations:

SIRUM (Supporting Initiatives to Redistribute Unused Medicine), www.sirum.org

SIRUM (Supporting Initiatives to Redistribute Unused Medicine) is a social enterprise committed to expanding healthcare access for those in need. Incubated at Stanford University, SIRUM leverages the power of technology to save medicine to save lives. As the nation’s largest redistributor of surplus medicine, they help organizations like health facilities and pharmacies to donate their unused/surplus medicine and get it to where it’s needed most, via a network of community partners who dispense to patients. They have already helped 500,000+ uninsured and underinsured patients get access to life-saving medicine. We donated \$250 in support of this organization.

Trans Voice & Visibility-365, 155 Wyllys Street, Hartford, CT 06106; www.mcchartford.com

TV-365 is a 501c3 ministry of the Metropolitan Community Church of Hartford dedicated to uplifting and supporting the well being of transgender individuals in Connecticut by providing basic human needs, information and referral, service coordination and support to individuals. This ministry also works to support and collaborate with relevant support groups and service providers. Their emphasis is on those most underserved, neglected, victimized and oppressed. This includes, but is not limited to, transgender women and men of color, those with disabilities, youth and elderly, immigrants (documented and undocumented), low income and victims of crime. TV365 is an outreach ministry serving the Greater Hartford area and more broadly (as necessary) within the State of Connecticut. We donated \$500 to this organization.

The Xerces Society, 1631 NE Broadway Street, #821, Portland, OR 97232, www.xerces.org

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation is an international nonprofit organization that protects the natural world through the conservation of invertebrates and their habitats. The Xerces Society is a science-based conservation organization, working with diverse partners that include scientists, land managers, educators, policymakers, farmers, and communities. By utilizing applied research, engaging in advocacy, providing educational resources, addressing policy implications, and building community, they endeavor to make meaningful long-term conservation a reality. We donated \$250 to this organization.

If you have suggestions for nonprofit organizations whose missions align with FCC’s Vision & Mission and who may benefit from our financial support, please feel free to contact any of the following members of the Mission Funds Distribution Team: Joan Bushey, Lori Folk-Barron, Jenn Hally, Deanna Holloway, Nancy Mueller, Nancy Tipping, Brant Walker, or Kathy Wallace.

RUMMAGE SALE THANK YOU TO MY CHURCH FAMILY

How do I say THANK YOU to ALL of you?? How do I express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for making this past Spring rummage sale the BEST SALE EVER?

I keep using words like it was amazing, overwhelming, unbelievable, awesome! Every spring and fall all of you respond to make our rummage sales a true mission project for not only folks in the Wallingford area but also other various parts of the world. Thank you for your numerous donations of clothing, household goods, linens, pocketbooks, kids toys, stuffed animals...and the list goes on. Thank you for working so hard to sort everything out and discard the items that are stained, ripped, torn, broken, or in poor condition. Thank you for coming to work the 3 days of the sale. Thank you for coming to help set up and/or take down all the tables and rummage items in Congregational Hall. Thank you for making this a true church family event with **all of you** participating in whatever way you do.

With good reason I called this the best sale ever because our total earnings for this Spring 2026 Rummage Sale was **\$7,711.51!!!!**

Is it possible to do a repeat or come close to this amount again in the fall?? We can always try!! Over the summer, keep us in mind!! Our next sale will be **October 15-17, 2026.**

In the meantime, please know how deeply grateful I am to all of you for all your help and contributions. Thank you!

In Christian love,
Bernie Annunziata



Join us in the air-conditioned Congregational Hall
for our summer worship services

Sundays July 5 through September 6,

10:00 a.m.

Coffee hour fellowship will follow immediately
after the service.



First Congregational Church of Wallingford Ministry and Team Organizational Structure

Arising from our Core Values and Vision statement, our Mission statement was discerned to be the following:

“We will foster spiritual growth, loving communication, and mutual care, thereby empowering us to confront issues that impact our community and the world including poverty, isolation, and exclusion.”

The VISION BOARD empowers our work towards our church’s Vision and Mission and delegates to the following Ministries and their Teams the authority to achieve these goals. It serves as the executive body of the church between meetings of the congregation to manage our strategic issues. Vision Board officers include the Moderators, Treasurer, and Clerk.

WORSHIP MINISTRY assists the minister(s) with the Church’s regular and special services of worship and provides for the supply of the pulpit in the absence of the Ordained Minister. It determines the appropriateness of any use of the sanctuary and chapel. The Worship Ministry oversees the following Teams: Sacramental Ministry Team, Music Team, Altar Team, Flower Team, Choir, Audio Team, Greeters and Ushers Team, Bell Choir, Live Streaming Team, Bell Ringers.

FAITH FORMATION MINISTRY works with the staff to plan, coordinate, and implement spiritual and faith development programs for children, youth, and adults. Faith Formation Ministry oversees the following Teams: Adult Education Team, Church School Team, Confirmation Team, Youth Group Team, Bible Study, Youth Mission Trip, Women’s Fellowship Breakfast.

MEMBERSHIP MINISTRY designs and carries out fellowship programs and events for members and for welcoming and recruiting new members to the congregation. It develops and supports communication avenues to inspire people. It works to welcome our involvement in fundraising activities. Membership Ministry oversees the following Teams: Communications Team, Book Club, Fellowship Events Team, New Member Team, Nominating Team, Scholarship Team, Rummage Sale Team, Fundraising Team, Church Fair Team, Golf Tournament, Sing from the Heart, Historian, Delegates to the Association.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE MINISTRY initiates and oversees plans and programs for the care and welfare of members. Congregational Care Ministry oversees the following Teams: Good Cheer Team, Hospitality Team, Pastoral Relations Team, Visitation Team, Prayer Shawl, Helping Hands.

MISSION AND OUTREACH MINISTRY is responsible for the education and involvement of the congregation in the needs and social concerns of local and worldwide communities. Mission and Outreach Ministry oversees the following Teams: Monthly Mission Drives Team, Mission Funds Distribution Team, Open & Affirming Team, Scouting, FedEx Ministry Team, Books to Prison Team, Pop Up Drives Team, Home Benevolent Fund, Warming Tree Team

ADMINISTRATION MINISTRY holds, cares for, and conserves the physical property of the Church, and it manages the investment and dispersal of funds of the Church. It employs and oversees staff in conjunction with the Minister as specified and appropriate. It prepares a budget to submit to the Vision Board. The Administration Ministry oversees the following Teams: Investment Team, Finances Team, Personnel Team, Property Team, Stewardship Team, Counting Team, Monday Morning Crew.

26-27 Ministry Coordinators and Vision Board Officers

First	Last	Phone	email
Moderator			
Greg	Whitehouse	203-909-1027	gkwhitehouse@snet.net
*Open position			
Treasurer			
Leslie	Spiars	203-600-8043	leslie36@snet.net
Clerk			
Kathy	Filkins	203-641-7107	kathyfbooks@gmail.com
Worship			
Bob	Westervelt	203-218-9537	bob-lorraine@optimum.net
Dawn	Charron	401-309-8763	pewabba@yahoo.com
Debby	Voelker	203-710-1550	debvoelker@sbcglobal.com
Sarah	Mather	203-605-7313	Sarah.mather.23@gmail.com
Michael	May	203-631-0303	Tat2mike@juno.com
Deanna	Holloway	860-595-6258	hollowaydeanna21@gmail.com
Faith Formation			
Amanda	Nesto	203-415-2762	amanda_nesto@yahoo.com
Gina	Phillips	203-605-8008	kit31080@att.net
Robin	Davies	203-379-6735	robin.davies419@gmail.com
Ken	Minkema	203-507-4896	ken.minkema@yale.edu
Lorraine	Westervelt	203-257-6964	Lorraine.westervelt@gmail.com
Membership			
*Open position			
Tina	Caldwell	860-995-5744	tina.caldwell520@gmail.com
Lori	Fast-Minkema	203-444-5724	thinkfastmink@gmail.com
Jolene	Pope	203-514-1789	Jp614u01@gmail.com
Beth	Whitner	203-507-4646	imetasequoia@gmail.com
Congregational Care			
*Open position			

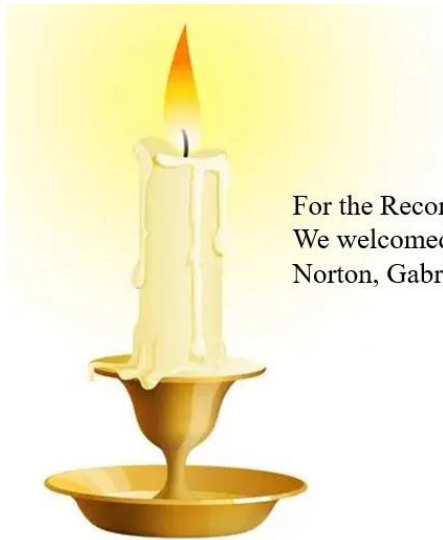
Rev. Charlene	Bruce	203-503-8379	charlenebruce@sbcglobal.net
Russ	Hinckley	203-889-7789	rhinckley9@gmail.com
Joan	Bushey	203-444-1900	joan37b@gmail.com
Ann	Gygax	203-269-6493	annbobgygax@gmail.com
Mission and Outreach			
*Open position			
Michele	Tarantino	203-228-7461	cheleot@yahoo.com
David	Wells	203-599-5422	detawells@sbcglobal.net
Nancy	Tipping	203-823-6962	nancy.tipping@gmail.com
Steve	Knight	203-265-3878	steveknight2248@gmail.com
Administration			
Kathy	Wallace	203-745-9842	kathywacct@gmail.com
Matt	Bushey	203-433-7327	m7bushey@gmail.com
Mike	Savenelli	203-996-0338	mikesavsr@gmail.com
Steve	Perkowski	203-710-5785	sperkowski@snet.net
Rich	Besitka	203317-7760	rbesitka@outlook.com
Delegates			
Rev. Charlene	Bruce	203-503-8379	charlenebruce@sbcglobal.net
Susan	Phipps	203-623-4992	snphipps@me.com



With a full heart, I want to thank the congregation for the kind words, flowers, and generous gifts given to me at the Annual Meeting as I completed my term as co-moderator. It is a privilege to have held this position and to have walked and worked with so many in service to this church we love. I look forward to continuing to work with you in different ways (some new & some old) in the year ahead as we continue to live into Christ's teachings at First Congregational Church.

With gratitude,

Lori Folk-Barron



For the Record - June, 2026:

We welcomed newly confirmed members Elizabeth Geremia, Kyla Nesto, Tessa Norton, Gabriel Paulson, Jeremy Phillips, Ryan Phillips, and Callie Tierney.

First Congregational Church of
Wallingford
23 South Main St
Wallingford, CT 06492

*The next Spire will be published in
August 2026. Spire submission deadline
for the August Issue is July 15th.*

Email the church office at:
officemanager@firstchurchwld.org