

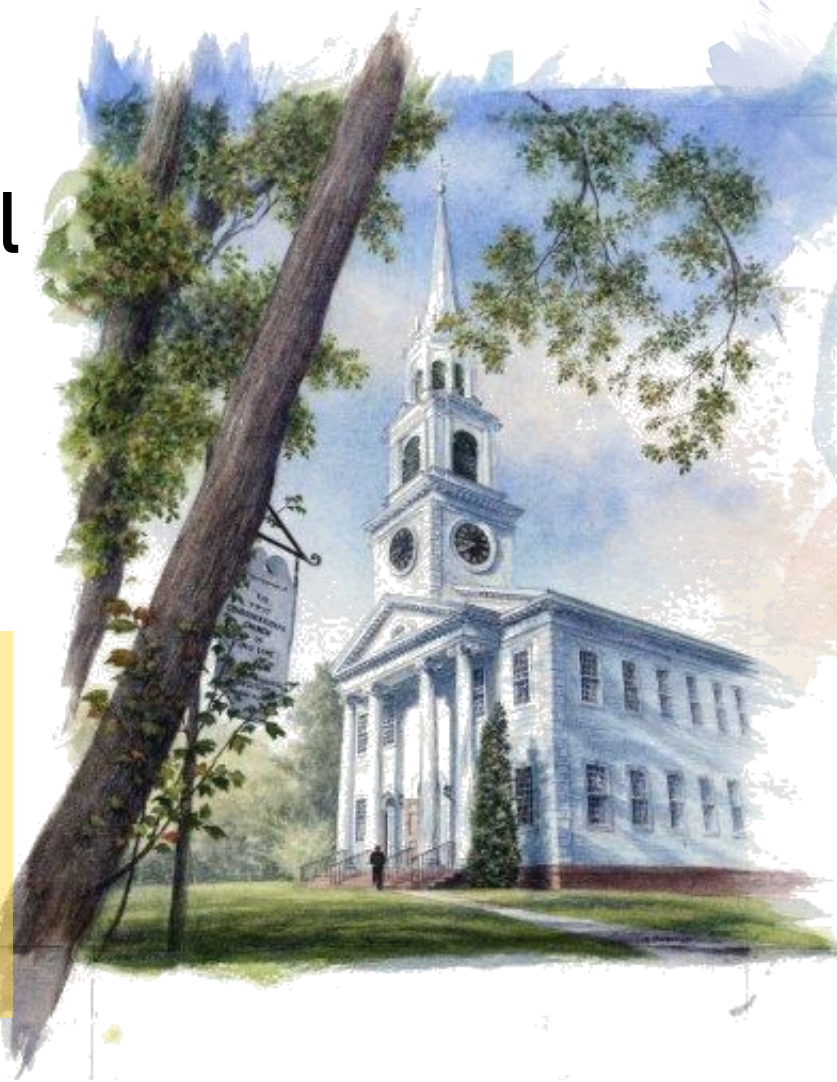
# The First Congregational Church of Old Lyme

May 2021



And what did you want?  
To call myself beloved, to feel  
myself beloved on the earth.

-Raymond Carver



## Dear Friends,

I know Easter seems like a long time ago now but resurrection is still very much on my mind. I've just arrived home after attending Miguel Torres' funeral. Steve and I officiated and were so grateful to see some of you in attendance. I know that many more of you are holding this beloved family in your prayers.

The crowd of relatives at the funeral home was dressed in flashes of yellow, Miguel's favorite color and they brightened up the solemn space like

a field of sunflowers. Heads were bowed and tears flowed freely. We shared prayers and memories, masked greetings and story after story of this noble, hardworking father from a family of 9; the patriarch of his extended family. There was a lot of love in that room.

Over this past week, so many of you expressed your own heartbreak at Miguel's death. The Torres family has become part of our church family and now, we've lost part of us. Miguel's children

attended our Sunday school, enjoyed sleepovers at the Jungkeit's and stopped for ice cream at Hallmark's in the summer. Their family story like so many in our country was fractured by inhumane policies that separates parents from children and destroys livelihoods and more. Yes, Glenda, Miguel's wife, did arrive home in time to see him. And we are deeply grateful for his legal team and all who helped to make that happen.

**Continues on p. #5**

# What's happening at FCCOL?

## Grief Group: Healing in Good Company

We will meet Thursday, May 27th from 5:30-6:30. We will meet outdoors in the side Fellowship Garden. Bring chairs! All are welcome. Any questions email Laura at [lfitz.nager@gmail.com](mailto:lfitz.nager@gmail.com)

## Bible Study

On Thursday, May 7, we will continue our study of the Gospel of Mark on Zoom throughout the month of May. All are welcome. If you wish to join this friendly group, please email Becky for the link [rtcros@ftcrosby.com](mailto:rtcros@ftcrosby.com). The study begins at 11 am each Thursday. We encourage participants to join 5 minutes early.

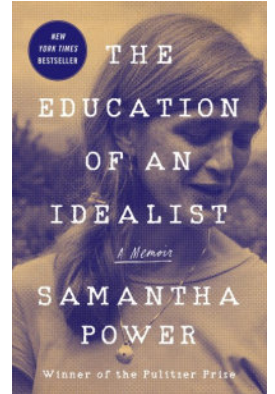
## Walking Group

We will meet Wednesday mornings in May from 8:00-9:00 am (new time!)

## Book Group

Our pick for May and June is The Education of an Idealist by Samantha Power.

Please join us on May 11th at 11:00 am for a stimulating discussion! Contact Martha Beaudoin at [mrlake86@comcast.net](mailto:mrlake86@comcast.net) for further information and the zoom link. All welcome, even if you have not read the book!



## The Ladies Who Stitch

The **Ladies Who Stitch** have received a great gift - this beautiful afghan crocheted by Gary Jungkeit - and we have decided to hold a "silent auction" via email in order to maximize our fund raising for FCCOL.

The afghan will be on display during some of the outside FCCOL Sunday services, and also can be seen on Mondays between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. while LWS-ers are at work in the Sheffield Auditorium. The afghan pattern is "Victorian Lace." Made with soft acrylic yarn, it is warm water washable. Its dimensions are approximately 60 x 86 inches and it will be "packaged" in a specially made LWS tote bag.

We have an opening offer of \$200. Bidding ends on June 19th so that we can announce the winner on Father's Day, June 20th. Email your offers to Eunice at [eunicetaylor@me.com](mailto:eunicetaylor@me.com) and she will respond to let you know your standing.

Eunice Taylor  
Coordinator for Ladies Who Stitch



## White Elephant Sale: Canceled

Regrettably, the ministers and WES board decided to cancel this year's White Elephant Sale.

There were just too many variables since we start staffing in May and set up begins in mid June. Given that most other major July events have been cancelled, it was the prudent thing to do.

We are eagerly looking forward to next years sale when vaccinations should be widespread, herd immunity has taken hold and we will have learned to live with Covid.

Mark your calendars for July 8-9, 2022 when we will have our 84th WES.

## MAY is National Baby Month: Diaper Bank CHALLENGE

In honor of babies everywhere, we will be distributing an entire case of diapers to each family that comes to the Diaper Bank on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Each guest will also receive baby wipes and baby food. This is a special occasion and to celebrate, guests will receive twice as many diapers as usual. We would not be able to do this without your continued support.

To date, 26 cases of diapers, including a \$300 gift to purchase diapers, has been donated as part of the Diaper Challenge. We are thrilled with your response and have until the end of the month to reach our goal of 40 cases!

Donations of diapers can be dropped off at Church on Thursday afternoons, or Friday and Saturday mornings. If you can't come to the church, please contact Karen Stigliano at 203-623-2774 (kcstig@gmail.com) for a pickup.

A special thank you goes out to all our anonymous donors and the gentleman who comes every Friday morning with his gift of baby food. *The need is great. Our response has been greater!*



Church member, Joseph Kazadi, is now a volunteer firefighter for Old Lyme!

## New Members to Join in May

On May 16th at our outdoor worship we'll receive new members into our church fellowship. ( If it's a rainy Sunday we'll move to the following week – May 23.) Please let us know by leaving a message at the church office (860-434-8686) if you'd like to learn more about membership. Steve or Laura or Carleen will return your call. We'd love to welcome you into our church family!!!



## Memorial

- John O'Neill
- Wendy Kerop
- George Haag
- Miguel Torres

# Dear Friends Continued

No matter the extent of his own suffering, Miguel was remembered as the one with the shining smile in a rakish straw hat who fed everyone and showered those he loved with random acts of kindness. No matter the tragic circumstances that led to his untimely death, Miguel left the world a far better place than when he entered it. His legacy of love, resilience and joy remains with all who knew him...and that love is very much alive.

Standing outside with the extended Torres family as we said goodbye, I felt the deep comfort

that emanates from a community of love. I heard the prophetic words of those traveling with Jesus that day along the dusty Emmaus Road who later, still shining from his presence, said to one another, "were not our hearts burning within us when we were with him?" (Luke 24:)

As we go on with our lives and enjoy the month of May blossoming around us, we can give thanks for those moments of friendship and grace that Miguel shared with us. We can look forward to all that will be in this season of abundance

and possibility. In these pages, you'll find plenty to keep you busy and connected with one other. We hope to see you on the front lawn some day very soon. May you know how beloved you are and keep your eyes open for splashes of gold along the way.

Be well,



# Immigration Committee



It is with mixed emotions that I bring you news of the Torres Family. As many of you know, we have been working for the past two and half years to bring Glenda home. Glenda is the beloved wife to Miguel and mother to Nathaly and Keneth. Glenda was deported to Honduras in August of 2018.

As a reminder here is the NPR story regarding Glenda's deportation:  
<https://www.wnpr.org/post/theyve-destroyed-my-family-story-mothers-last-minute-deportation>

It has been a very difficult several years for Miguel, Nathaly and Keneth. We have been blessed to know this family and relieved that we could offer our FCCOL hospitality during these difficult years.

A few weeks ago, Miguel was doing some yard work and a nail pierced his foot. He was hospitalized for treatment and a complication caused him to go into cardiac arrest, he was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit.

The Immigration Committee was already working with Attorney Formica's office on a second humanitarian parole application for Glenda. Due to Miguel's medical condition and other family struggles, we were able to get assistance from Senator Blumenthal's office and Kica Matos of the Vera Institute to expedite the application.

Joyfully, I can now tell you that Glenda was granted humanitarian parole and returned to her family on April 11th. Glenda is now with her children and was

able to return to her husband, Miguel.

Sadly, I also need to let you know that Miguel passed away on April 16th at St. Mary's Hospital Intensive Care Unit. The Torres family is devastated and are quietly mourning Miguel's passing.

As a compassionate and loving community, we helped Miguel keep his promise to Glenda, he desperately wanted her home. We are incredibly grateful to all those who were instrumental in helping Miguel keep that promise.

We will continue to work with Attorney Formica's Office to assist in any way we can to push forward Glenda's Immigration case. Our hope is that she will receive legal status and will raise her children in the United States as Miguel would have wanted.

Monetary donations to help the Torres family may be sent to the church office and made out to FCCOL. Please put "For The Torres Family" in the comment line.

Please keep the Torres Family in your prayers.  
with gratitude,

Lina Tuck  
Immigration Committee  
Chair



# God's Neighborhood

**May 2** — We will meet at 9:30 in the back parking lot to learn about our Beatitude, we will also hear "The Recess Queen" Book and participate in relevant games and projects.

**May 9, 11 am** — This morning we will meet to talk about taking care of our Natural World by planting Native plants and do a planting project during the church service.

**May 16, 9:30 am** — We will prepare for Children's Day and hear a Bible Story about a person who was an Upstander.

**May 23, 9:30 am** — We will prepare for Children's Day and Review the Beatitudes.

**May 30** — We will not meet at this week.

JPF and SPF will be camping on Selden Island this weekend-travel is by boat! JPF families (grades 6-8) will camp on Saturday night. SPF (grades 9-12) families will camp on Sunday night. We will be participating in service projects and enjoying campfire tales and songs at night. Please RSVP to [godsceneighborhoodfc-col@gmail.com](mailto:godsceneighborhoodfc-col@gmail.com).

**June 6**— Children's Day



The Beatitude we are learning about in May is:

"Blessed are those who stand up for righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

— Matthew 5



## Photos

Title photo: God's Neighborhood Monthly hike (April 18) to pick up trash, enjoy each other's company and to leave our Peace Rocks where other's might find them.

Left: Painting Peacemaker Rocks on April 11.

Above: God's Neighborhood Gathers to Walk for Hunger and donate to the Food Pantry on March 28.



# On the Environment



## Conservation Ranching

More good news on the environmental front. Yay! And meat lovers can be part of the solution! Audubon members are no doubt aware of this program, but for the rest of us – the Audubon Society is running a terrific program working with ranchers that restores grassland ecosystems while ranching in a

regenerative way. They use a grazing rotation schedule on smaller areas, instead of allowing cattle to free range, which mimics the actions of wild grazers (bison, in our case) and allows the land to rest for a longer period of time between grazing. The grass-fed beef is healthier, biodiversity is allowed to flourish, and carbon sequestration is greater because of the

increased organic material created by allowing the grasses to actually become established.

In exchange, Audubon connects the ranchers with premium markets in which to sell meat certified by Audubon. Participating in regenerative agriculture is open to everyone. If you are interested in buying top-shelf meat certified by Audubon, or in learning more about the program, search online for [Audubon Conservation Ranching](#), or 'where to buy Audubon certified beef'. Many ranches ship nationwide, and offer more than beef.

Cheers!  
-Mariette Brown

# Stewardship

Many of you have already made a commitment to the 2021 Stewardship Campaign, for which we are extremely grateful. To keep our programs, outreach, and ministries going, to serve those who depend on us, we need a little more help. If you are able to make a commitment for 2021, it would have a very significant impact and be deeply appreciated.

With our sincere thanks,  
The Board of Stewardship

Leslie Alexander, Jody Belluzzi, Tom Grant, Ross Higgins, Doug Kneeland, Sandy Long  
Doug McCracken, Wayne Mountz, Mike Winterfield

## Message from the Treasurer

We have received a check in the amount of \$1,647.73 from Fidelity Investments, but the donor is not identified. If you are the donor, please contact me at 860-326-1206 or [rfmccracken@comcast.net](mailto:rfmccracken@comcast.net), and we can give you the proper credit!

Thanks, Bob McCracken,  
Treasurer

# Tree of Life



Image above from <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/premium-israel-s-vaccine-apartheid-1.9578125>

Here is an edited version of a letter I sent to our Congressional Representative. I urge you to consider writing your own letter, whatever your perspective might be.

## **"ISRAEL'S VACCINE APARTHEID"**

Dear Congressman Joe Courtney,

In **Haaretz**, the Jewish Israeli journalist, Amira Hass wrote an article, entitled, **"Israel's Vaccine Apartheid"** in which she expressed her outrage that while Israel has been praised for vaccinating most of its population, it's done almost

nothing to provide vaccinations for the millions of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank who live under Israel's military occupation.

Back when you were first elected in 2007, a few of us met with you to share our newly established Tree of Life Educational Fund and our efforts to champion Palestinian human rights. You listened patiently and politely then as you have on every subsequent meeting. Since then, we've had over 500 travelers take part in our annual Tree of Life journeys, and those travelers have included many in your district — Christians, Muslims, Jews and those of no particular faith identity. Many have been high school and college students, many of whom have become political activists on behalf of our Palestinian and Israeli friends. It might surprise you that I include "Israeli" as well, but I do so because many of our Israeli friends realize that Israel does not





Not only is “Vaccine Apartheid” morally repugnant; it is also scientifically ignorant.

equal Judaism and how embarrassed they are that Israel has become an apartheid state — Jim Crow with regard to how Arab Israeli citizens are treated and apartheid vis a vis West Bank and Gaza.

I write to request that you listen to Amira Hass’ prophetic indignation and do what you can to bring vaccinations to those who live in the West Bank and Gaza.

Imagine your outrage if Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were made available to everyone in Connecticut except those in your congressional district. Imagine the outrage if Southeastern, CT became a Covid-19 ghetto with a feeble attempt to wall it off as the rest of Connecticut returns to “normal.” Not only is “Vaccine Apartheid” morally repugnant; it is also scientifically ignorant. No wall is impenetrable enough to stop the spread of this virus. A universal approach is not only essential; it’s also the right thing to do. Joe, we need your moral leadership to make vaccinations available for the Palestinian people. I know you to be a man of conviction and conscience, and your voice is so sorely necessary at this time.

As you know, the story of Easter includes several appearances of the resurrected Jesus, one of which was on the road to Emmaus. The resurrected Jesus walked with two followers, and then, reflecting on that experience, they said to one another, “did not our hearts burn within us as “we walked with him and talked with him” along that road?”

Joe, I hope and I pray that you and I might have that same sensation. When we speak openly and honestly about such things as justice and human rights

and human decency, and as we talk with one another about the daily crucifixions all around us, I hope we would feel a certain burning sensation in our hearts. Some might call it righteous indignation; others might call it the voice of Conscience or perhaps even the voice of the resurrected Jesus present within each one of us.

Metaphorically, the “Road to Emmaus” is a road we all must travel. Ultimately, it will lead to a bridge that will take us to a new and better future for both Israelis and Palestinians. The arc of that bridge – like the radius of the Edmund Pettus/John Lewis bridge – “bends toward justice”. but in order to cross that bridge, we all need to feel that “burning sensation” in our hearts, that righteous indignation exemplified so nobly by those such as Amira Hass.

Thank you for listening,

The Rev. David W. Good  
Founder, Tree of Life Educational Fund

# From our Congregation



## How I Survived and Thrived during a Pandemic

When the world came to a screeching halt in March 2020 I felt like I couldn't breathe. The kids were distance learning and flailing. I was out of work for two months. I cried everyday, drank too much, and was feeling quite desperate. Then, I sought the fellowship of my hiking buddies. Every Sunday we took to the trail for a nice long hike. We hiked 5-10 miles every Sunday in our pilgrimage for inner peace and sanity in a world full of turmoil.

We were able to see different people on the trails seeking the same peace, although still sequestered behind their masks. We saw beautiful vistas and historical landmarks. Somewhere in the process of escaping the chaos, we began our spiritual journey. We took our weekly communion with the trees; inhaling the crisp pine scented air, while exhaling our stress. Sharing our hopes and fears and trials and tribulations with each other. At some point, I'm not sure when, I was able to sustain the peace all week. I still recharge every Sunday. I revel in the glory of the sunshine and the companionship of my friends. I'm happy I got to spend extra time with my family. I found new family in my hiking friends. But more

importantly, I know I am strong. I found strength walking amidst the nature God created.

Peace and Love be with you,  
Darcy Allen

## Response to "You Are Not a Ghost"

The following essay was written in response to Steve's Easter Day sermon which was entitled "You Are Not Ghost."

Whenever, as a child, I encountered someone "different" from myself I was admonished; "Don't stare- it's not polite." It felt as if I were being instructed to ignore them.

I am now in the 8th decade of life, and in this time of COVID isolation I've spent considerable time in rehab facilities. I could not go out to church, meetings, book clubs or lunch with friends. It was a time when I began to understand what it feels like to be ignored and treated as if I were invisible.



fighting to "have agency"

As I sat in my wheelchair, I had to fight to be recognized by people who would walk into my room and look past me as if I were a piece of furniture. In some ways, it felt like I spent the whole year fighting to "have agency." It took effort, persistence, and support from friends just to be able to hang onto even a semblance of visibility and dignity.

I am forever grateful to those who didn't react to me like a "ghost," though sometimes they seemed too few and



far between. As things begin to show signs of offering more opportunities for interaction, I hope I'll do my part to see that I use what agency I have on behalf of myself and all whom society tends to ignore. I want to cause "good trouble" and help others realize none of us are "ghosts."

By Pru Allen - abridged a bit by Carleen

## From our Youth

When I think about my involvement with the church, I think of more than what happened within the walls of the building. Though it's been over a decade since I regularly attended church, I still remember being told that the church is not the building, but the people - and not just those in pews beside me. My family hosted exchanges with Palestinian young people. I participated in the midnight run in New York City most winters and was shaped by conversations with those who we met in the frigid nights exchanging stories over sandwiches. I played a part in the annual Christmas Pageant often shepherding younger kids dressed as shepherds and sheep. By high school, I joined two trips with the Fuller Center and Habitat for Humanity, shar-

ing in the physical work and energizing labor of building and renovating homes in El Salvador and West Virginia. Years later, I set out to build my own tiny house with a good friend, and I used those sawing and drilling skills once again. I can see how slowly, but deeply, I was shaped by these experiences outside of the meeting-house which centered on building nuanced, caring, interpersonal relationships.

I have a clear image of standing in a circle with fellow JPFers while each of us prayed for who and what we wanted. At the end we often also prayed for "anyone who needs a prayer." So easily did we pray for good things to happen to people we knew and in the same breath extend this goodwill to anyone and everyone. It opens up the abundance of care that really is available and that I too can offer the world.

This duality between building and maintaining consistent partnership with who we consider our community, and also knowing that our work and care is abundant enough not to be bound only to those we personally know, seeds my current life view. I aspire for the care that I bring to stretch to those who

haven't yet been born, for whom I will fight for a liveable planet. It stretches to families torn apart by borders and cruel immigration systems, unhoused or hungry due to unjust economic and political circumstances, facing genocides and removal from land, harmed by the prison industrial complex, extractive industry, natural disasters, grieving lost loved ones, and more.

I have since left Connecticut and the church community, but I can trace the threads of values enacted in Old Lyme and in partnerships with communities around the world to my life now in the impact I want to have in the world.

Caroline Bruno just finished working for two and a half years mentoring students and advocating for institutional change in a college's sustainability office. Her work bridges the internal, community level, and systemic changes needed to address the climate emergency, extractive industry, and exploitation. Caroline was most involved with the church from 2000 to 2011.

The First Congregational Church  
2 Ferry Road  
Old Lyme, Connecticut 06371

U.S. Postage Paid  
Permit #7  
Old Saybrook, CT  
Non-Profit Organization

The next FCCOL Newsletter will be in June; deadline is May 20th.

Please e-mail the church office at <[fccol@fccol.org](mailto:fccol@fccol.org)> if you want to be removed from the newsletter mailing list and read it on the website. Please let us know if you would like an e-mail alert when the new issues are available on our website. Thanks for your help!