OCTOBER 2021

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses..."
-Hebrews 13:1

"Oh, When the Saints Go Marching In..."
-New Orleans Traditional Song

Dear Friends, I'd like to use this space to tell you about a series of events that we'll be hosting at FCCOL late in October that we're calling (with a nod to Paul Simon) *The Rhythm of the Saints: A Gathering of the Graces in Word, Song, and Film*. But first, let me set the backdrop. The final weekend of October (the 30th-31st) is when Protestant churches around the world mark All Saints' Day. That's when we find a way to remember, and to honor, all those who have died over the previous twelve months, even as we also use that time to keep the memory of long departed ancestors alive. It's a subdued affair in the North, though no less meaningful for that. Meanwhile, in the global South, similar celebrations take place, though often more demonstrative: in Mexico, for example, in Day of the Dead celebrations, people parade from house to house to venerate those who died the previous year, where music, and altars, and lavish feasts are all present. It's an all night affair that culminates in family gatherings in cemeteries around the graves of their loved ones (a few of us were able to witness those scenes in 2019 during a visit to Cuernavaca, Mexico). In Haiti, something very similar is celebrated, only there it is called Fete Gede (the festival of Gede - the spirit who governs the lives of the dead). There too music, food, and altars are integral components of the holiday. That tradition extends into New Orleans as well, which shares many traditions with Haiti, and with Mexico too. There too, families will gather in cemeteries to visit their loved ones. Often, they'll come with paintbrushes and gardening tools, to spruce up the graves of those they loved. These are rituals and celebrations that have the power to sustain and uphold the living memories we each possess of those who are no longer with us. They're ways of integrating grief and mourning, memory and loss, into a hopeful and life affirming present.

The end of October, then, presents us with an opportunity

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Here's what's happening at FCCOL

Walt's Potter Studio. Wanna Center Yourself? Try pottery! Walt's Pottery Studio (which is located in the church basement) is getting ready to reopen for classes starting in October. Email Paul Nager or Betsey Copp for details of schedule, fees, etc. at pfitz.nager@gmail.com.

Next Confirmation Class starts on Sunday, October 3rd. We'll meet on the first Sunday of each month through April, from 4-6 pm in Sheffield Hall. The class is open to all 9th and 10th graders. Please email Laura for details!

Bible Study with Becky Crosby continues every Thursday morning at 11 am. The Zoom link is open at 10:45 am, so please join early for a time of sharing news and building friendships. We will continue our study of the Book of Exodus, considering the sources for these writings, the audience, history, and how they relate to our lives today. All are welcome to join our group at any time. All versions of the Bible may be used— they actually make our study more interesting! If you are new to the group, email Becky Crosby for the Zoom link at rtcros@ftcrosby.com.

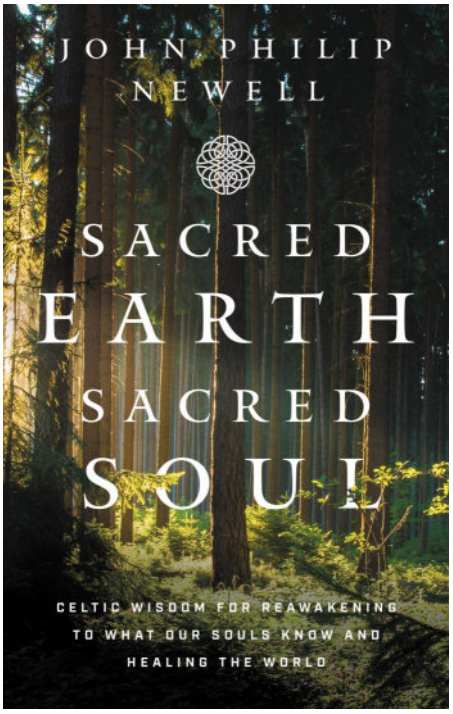
Writing at the Well will meet on Wednesday, October 13th from 9:30-10:30 am in the Fellowship Garden.

Join us as we meet to write pages together. Using informal writing prompts, participants will give voice to memories and the stories that make up our lives. Bring a notebook, chair, and a fast writing pen. No writing experience necessary...just a willingness to pay attention and tap into the wellspring. Facilitated by Laura.

Irish Currach. Try out the ancient art of Irish Currach Rowing. Saturday, October 16. Hain's Park – Rogers Lake, 11 am – 2 pm. Veteran and Newcomer Rowers are all welcome. Pre-register before October 15, and sign the Waiver. Please email row.currach.nl@gmail.com to request a form. There's no obligation to join. Sponsored by New London Currach Rowers, Chair Maureen Plumleigh, with Support from Ancient Order of Hibernians of New London County and the Irish Coastal Club. You don't need to be Irish to Row Irish!

Message from a Garden Friend. Have you enjoyed our Fellowship Garden on Ferry Road entrance? A beloved church member wants you to remember that "our garden is open to everyone. The beautiful flowers and trees are a pleasure to share and savor whatever the season. It's a place in this world to rest, relax and feel refreshed."

Adult Forums will be held monthly in Fellowship Hall following the 10 am service this fall on the following dates: October 17th, November 14th and December 5th. Join us!



Book Group's October selection is John Philip Newell's Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul. We will meet on October 19th at 11 am on Zoom. All Welcome! Hope to see you then. For more information, email Martha Beaudoin at mrlake86@comcast.net.

Grief Group: Healing in Good Company. "The deeper the sorrow, the deeper the joy."
-William Bake

The Grief Group will meet on Thursday, October 28th, 2021 from 5:30-7:00 pm.

This month we are including a 30 minute gentle relaxation session beforehand with yoga teacher, Lynn McCarthy in Fellowship Hall. Please bring a yoga mat if you have one and we'll wear masks indoors. Facilitators: Laura Fitzpatrick-Nager and Mary McGannon Kollman.

The Rhythm of the Saints: A Gathering of the Graces in Word, Song and Film, will start on Saturday, October 30th at 2 pm in the Meetinghouse. It will be followed by a screening of *City of a Million Dreams* and a discussion. On Sunday, October 31st, for our Sunday morning worship, Dr. Michael White's ensemble will lead us in a sacred jazz service.

Ladies Who Stitch. For now, we are keeping the work schedule we have been using during the summer — Mondays from 10 am - 1 pm in Sheffield Auditorium. Visitors and shoppers are welcome during that time — please wear a mask. Our next big sales opportunity will be with our FCCOL partners on **Saturday, November 20th**—just in time for your holiday shopping.

Our knitters have finally used most of the fabulous yarn collection donated by Joan Kelley's family and are in need of more high quality wool yarn. We also need 100% wool sweaters to make Bernie Mittens, and will accept all styles and sizes of denim jeans for various projects. New thread, all colors, and holiday fabrics are also welcome.

Questions: contact Eunice at eunicetaylor@me.com.

LBS Holiday Sale on Saturday, November 20th, 9 am - 3 pm.

Please join us for a very special Holiday Sale featuring unique items from Haiti, Palestine, Green Grass Reservation, South Dakota, and our own Ladies Who Stitch.

Ladies Who Stitch will sell one-of-a-kind handmade items — baby quilts, sweaters, placemats, shawls, mittens, hats, tote bags and much more; they make wonderful gifts.

Proceeds from sale of beautiful original art works and crafts by Haitians supports them in their latest crisis. Sale of olive oil, spices and soap benefits our Palestinian partners in Tree of Life Educational Fund. Purchase of unique art, crafts and jewelry will benefit the Lakota people on Green Grass Reservation.

Hand sanitizers available at entrance; we will limit the number of people at any one time in our very large space with new, state-of-the-art air ventilation. Face masks required regardless of vaccination status.

Our Food Pantry, run by the Shoreline Soup Kitchens and Food Pantries (SSKP), has continued its Saturday morning distribution from 9- 11 am in front of Sheffield Auditorium. The number of families seeking assistance with food remains stable, at between 50 and 66 each week. We are fortunate to have great support in donations from the community. A wonderful addition has been the diaper bank which distributes diapers on the first Saturday of every month. Thank you to Karen Stigliano and Dale Bernardoni for helping with this. And a special thanks to Emily Fisher who helps pick up fresh vegetables from area farms every Friday; and to Steve and Diane Hart, Joyce Kundrat, Cathy Mathis, Bob Kistner, Tom Johnstorn, John and Angie Falstrom, John Higgins, Henry May, Liz Edmonstone, Anita Allen, Bill Jackson and Dave Roberts, who, together with a great number of other community volunteers, keep this important mission running smoothly. We are also fortunate for Audrey Brainerd, whose able leadership as our SSKP site coordinator has been invaluable. Thank you all!

Senior Choir. To all members of the Senior Choir—Thank you for such an uplifting start to the Church year! Your singing in September has been fabulous. Here is the schedule for October!

Sunday, October 3: Singing at the 10:00 am service with a rehearsal at 9:15 am.
Wednesday, October 6: Rehearsal at 7:30 pm
Sunday, October 10: Singing at the 10:00 am service with a rehearsal at 9:15 am
Wednesday, October 13: Rehearsal at 7:30 pm with Brian and Carleen
Sunday, October 17: Singing at the 10:00 am service with a rehearsal at 9:15 am
Wednesday, October 20: Rehearsal at 7:30 pm
Sunday, October 24: Singing at the 10:00 am service with a rehearsal at 9:15 am
Wednesday, October 27: Rehearsal at 7:30 pm
Saturday, October 30: Service at 2:00 pm with a rehearsal at 1:15 pm. More details about this service to come!
Sunday, October 31: NO CHOIR NEEDED TODAY!!

Many thanks,
Simon

Memorial.
Pam Childs
David Downs
Virginia Greenleaf Koch
Chip Miller
Tom Whitaker
Adela Wilmerding

Diaper Bank Haiku

Diapers are not gifts
They provide health and safety
Basic human needs addressed.

A mom goes to work
She has dignity with grace
Diapers for daycare

Dryness brings comfort
Mom, dad meeting baby's needs
Feeling relief; Breathe.

An expensive need
Not covered by the "system"
Thank God for donors.

Will this need lessen?
Will struggling families find work?
This is not enough.

Hard to ask for help
Grateful for diapers and food
Living week to week.

God bless the children
May they grow strong and healthy
They are our future.

-Submitted by Karen Stigliano

On the Environment

Climate Change and Us

This summer's heat waves, droughts, fires, storms, and flooding in the U.S.—nearly a third of Americans live where a federal disaster occurred—reawakened us to the reality of climate change. Carleen's July 11 sermon, "In Praise of the Lowly Hummingbird," proposed two responses: urgency and hope. Several organizations are squarely facing climate urgency and offering hope by suggesting ac-

tions, from the personal to the communal.

- Do some basic things:
  - Drive less; fly less
  - Cut back on meat and dairy products
  - Make purchases that will last
  - Divest from fossil fuels; the website *FossilFreeFunds.org* is helpful
- Support education and communication projects
  - The Alliance for Climate Education (*acespace.org*) educates and supports young people to pursue action on climate change
  - *ClimateCentral.com* reports on climate change and its impact on the public
- Sign up with a group of geezers
  - *thirdact.com*, launched by Bill McKibben, is a group of "experienced people" (Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation) "working for a fair and stable planet"
  - *EldersClimateAction.org*, another over-60 group, is harnessing collective wisdom, resources, and anger to force policy changes
- Join/support campaigns to reduce fossil fuel subsidies and use
  - The online newsletter *Heated* (*heated.world*) reports a range of efforts opposing fossil fuels
  - *CleanCreatives.org* calls on advertising agencies and social media platforms to pledge not to work with fossil fuel companies
  - *AdsNotFitToPrint.com* targets the *New York Times*'s creation and publication of ads for the fossil fuel industry.

Patsy McCook,
For the Environmental Committee
Donald Gonci, co-chair

God's Neighborhood

During the month of October participants will learn about one of the virtues of a good friend—RESPECT through games, stories, discussions and activities. Our middle school and high school students will be meeting and having discussions about Respect. They will be thinking about that virtue as they venture to NYC to participate in the Breakfast Run and while watching To Kill A Mockingbird. Please join us!

October 3, Sunday morning—Blessing of the Animals during Children's Sermon. Bring pictures of your pet or your stuffed animals to be blessed! Special Program about Respect for Animals .

October 3, Sunday afternoon—JPF, SPF, Confirmation Class from 4-6 pm Conversations around Respect, Games and Service Projects (Make Cookies for Breakfast Run and Bridge Design Project.)

October 10 , Sunday morning We will share an Indigenous Peoples story about the virtue of Respect and follow up with some hands-on activities.

October 16, Saturday morning at 6:00 am—Middle School and High School will participate in the Breakfast Run and attend a performance of To Kill a Mockingbird in NYC. RSVP required.

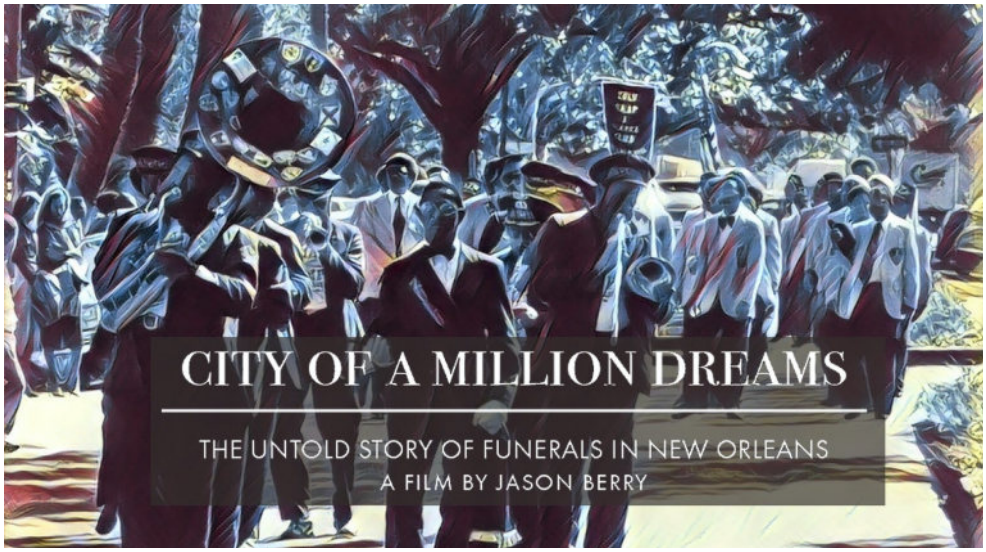
October 17, Sunday morning— We will hear a Bible Story about Nehemiah and King Artaxerxes and do an activity based on this story.

October 24, Sunday morning—Everyone Needs Respect: How to give our friends the respect they deserve. Story and activities.
Grades 4 and 5 to host Fellowship Hour

October 30, Saturday afternoon—Children and Youth are invited to watch the Pixar movie, Coco, at 4:30 pm in Fellowship while parents attend program in Meetinghouse. Bring a blanket if you want to sit on the floor!

October 31 Sunday morning: Children will join their parents in the Meetinghouse for a special musical service. No Sunday School but nursery care will be available.

Dear Friends, Continued



to reflect on the many losses that have taken place in our lives during the past year and a half. More than a few of us have lost spouses, or parents, or friends. But we also lost the ability to mourn those losses in public, ritual ways, since it wasn't possible to conduct memorial services. While that may not feel like a tangible loss, it was. The solace that comes in such events was missing, as were gatherings of friends and family to share memories and stories of the one who died. But so too was the narrative arc of God's presence that is affirmed in such events, when we are assured of God's accompaniment through all the moments of our lives, including the end of life. For many, that has resulted in the sense of unfinished business, as if a last goodbye hasn't been permitted, as if a final assurance of grace has not been pronounced.

As ministers, we wish to construct an event that can help to capture some of that loss, but one that can also provide a sense of healing, and an assurance of God's abiding presence within our lives. To that end, we'll be conducting a community memorial service on Saturday, October 30th, at 2:00 in the afternoon. It's meant to honor each of our members who has died since the beginning of Covid. But it's more than that too. It's meant to help memorialize the nearly 700,000 US citizens who have died of Covid (1 in every 500 US citizens), and the nearly 5 million worldwide who have succumbed to the virus. And it's meant to capture the smaller losses that each of us has felt over the past 19 months – the cancellations, the missed opportunities, the closures, the disorientation, and the anxiety. All of it. Whatever you're carrying in your heart these days, whether a burden large or small, I hope you'll come to the Meetinghouse, and that the music and words spoken on that day can help you to lay those burdens down.

To assist in this task, we've asked a number of special guests to join us. For the 2:00 service, Dr. Michael White and his traditional New Orleans Jazz Ensemble will be with us. To hear Michael's music is to experience a spiritual release, as he guides his listeners through cycles of sorrow and of joyful transcendence, in which the presence of God is not only affirmed, but heard, and felt. It will be a gift to have Michael's ensemble with us for the memorial service.

But that's not all. Another very special guest will join us that day as well. Jason Berry is a historian, a music writer, a journalist and a filmmaker (Jason was also the subject of a short film made by *The New York Times* recently, about how he broke the story about clergy sex abuse in the Catholic Church back in the 1980's, fifteen years before *The Boston Globe* picked it up, when nobody was willing to listen – it's a beautiful portrait of Jason's courageous journalism, and of his faith journey as well). Jason just completed his own documentary film called *City of a Million Dreams* about the black funeral tradition in the city of New Orleans. It's a project twenty years in the making, and it hasn't been released to the general public yet. But we'll be among the first to see it. We'll screen Jason's film in the late afternoon of the 30th. Then, after the screening, we'll have a chance to converse with Jason, as well as Dr. Michael White and another member of his band, Gregg Stafford, both of whom are featured in the film. *City of a Million Dreams* is a story about what it means to grieve and to mourn, and what it means to celebrate life even in the midst of that grief. It's a story that teaches the paradoxical skill of dancing out of the cemetery gates, of tapping our toes during the requiem, and of giving thanks to God even in the ruins of what we

sometimes feel. As we each of us work through our own losses, great and small, from these past 19 months, the wisdom of the African American traditions of New Orleans can provide us much needed wisdom and perspective. So too, as we continue to work through the racial reckoning that intensified during the past year, the New Orleans music and funeral traditions can help us to sense the healing and joyful reconciliation that is available if we but reach for it. It will be a tremendous honor to have Jason with us for the weekend.

The final event for our *Rhythm of the Saints* Weekend will be our Sunday morning worship service, held at 10:00 in the Meetinghouse. Dr. Michael White's ensemble will lead us in a full sacred jazz service on that day, giving us a further glimpse into the healing transcendence of music in this fraught and difficult time.

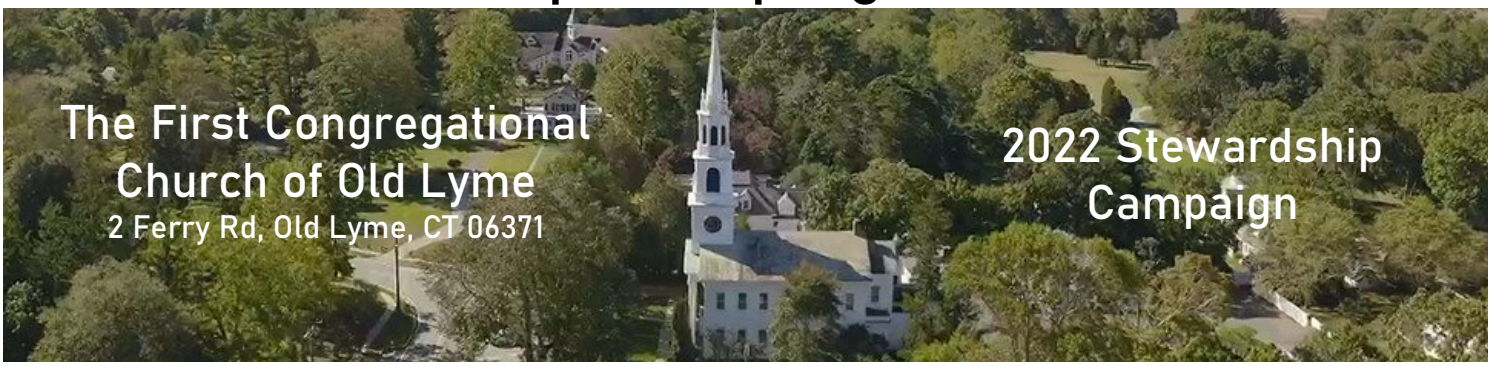
I hope you'll join us for the entire cycle of *Rhythm of the Saints* events on October 30 and 31st. I hope you'll sense the gathering of grace that can occur in such settings. And I hope, as ever, that it will assist us all in our efforts to stay human.

My love to all of you...

Steve

Reading: *City of a Million Dreams*, by Jason Berry; *Lead Us Not Into Temptation*, by Jason Berry; *Avengers of the New World* by Laurent Dubois; *The Half Has Never Been Told* by Edward Baptist.
Listening: Dr. Michael White, *Blue Crescent*; Dr. Michael White, *Dancing in the Sky*
Watching: *The Rumba Kings*

2022 Stewardship Campaign



The earliest Christian communities called themselves the Way – not the Answer – emphasizing the importance of action over static beliefs, of finding a way ahead through unknown terrain.

The First Congregational Church of Old Lyme is a community of faith that does just that. We strive to translate our faith into action – to make our church not just a picturesque gathering place, but a Way through the luminous dark.

Your support of our 2022 Stewardship Campaign is urgently needed to continue to light the Way. **Now is the time to take action**. Your contribution matters.

You recently received a mailing including a Commitment Card for the 2022 Campaign.

Please return your Commitment Card as soon as possible.

We would love to receive it by mail or in person by October 10th.

If you have lost your Commitment Card, contact the church office 860-434-8686 or by email fccol@fccol.org to request one, or to make your 2022 Commitment.

2022 Stewardship Campaign payments may be made by check to the church (FCCOL) at First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, 2 Ferry Road, Old Lyme, CT 06371. Please note Stewardship Campaign on the memo line. Or payments may be made online using a credit card at the church website at fccol.org/donate.

Thank you! Your compassion and generosity are what enable us to translate our beliefs into a vibrant Way through the world around us.

FCCOL Board of Stewardship
Sandy Long, Chair; Leslie Alexander; Jody Belluzzi; Tom Grant; Ross Higgins; Doug Kneeland; Doug McCracken; Wayne Mountz; Mike Winterfield

The First Congregational Church
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Old Lyme, Connecticut 06371

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The next Newsletter will be for November; deadline is October 20th.

Please e-mail the church office at 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!