

# FEBRUARY 2022



## Dear Friends,

Here is a marvelous little story that I recently came across. An Icelandic novelist named Sjon was taking a break from writing one day, and he wandered down to the beach, a short walk from his writing hut. There on the shore was a beached whale, as large as a bus. The creature died of course, and day by day, Sjon watched the body decompose. The smell was ghastly. Large birds ate much of the outer carcass, and then smaller birds began going inside the whale. One day, Sjon too decided to enter the whale's carcass. He crawled inside, where he noticed a huge bone, the size of his arm, which was a part of the whale's rib. It was slimy with decay, but he wrestled with it, and managed to extract the bone. He also noticed another bone, the size of an axe

head, which was a part of the whale's shoulder. That too he wrestled loose, and then he carried both bones back to his hut.

Sjon had to strip at the doorway, for he was covered with the stench of death. He left the bones outside, where it took a full three years of curing in the sun, rain, and snows of Iceland before they were worn smooth. Today, the bones are mounted in his writing hut, at each end of the main room. When he sits at his table, the rib is immediately behind him, while the shoulder bone can be found on the opposite wall. So it is that he writes, quite literally, from the belly of the whale. (See *The New York Times*, "Into the Belly of the Whale with Sjon," January 13, 2022)

Apart from making me want to read everything the man has written (I promptly ordered several of his novels!), that image sent my mind spinning across several dimensions. It made me recall all the ancient stories in which the belly of the whale is the site of dark and mysterious revelations. In the Hebrew tradition, there is the book of Jonah, of course, where the protagonist is swallowed by the great sea creature, and Jesus himself compares his own death to that earlier whale of a tale – his death and resurrection will be the sign of Jonah, he says. Similar tales were recounted by the Greeks (both Hercules and Jason were swallowed by sea creatures), and many other ancient and indigenous cultures also have stories of humans being swallowed

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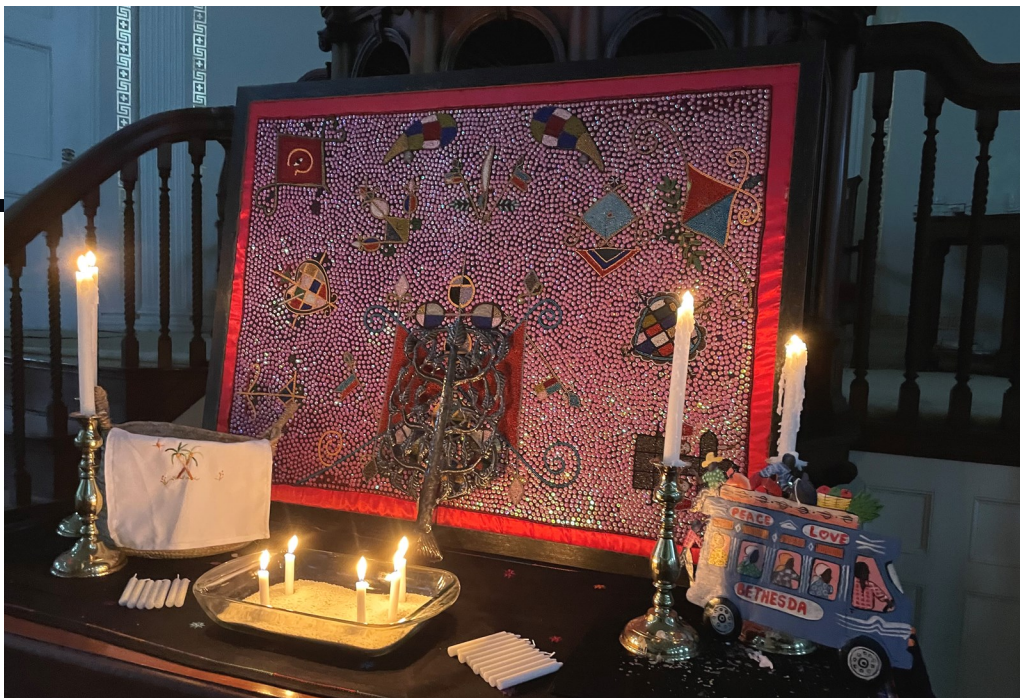


# HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING AT FCCOL

## Bible Study

Becky's Bible Study will resume again on Zoom on Thursday, February 10 at 11 am. We will study the Book of Revelation. The author of this book claims to be John of Patmos, who was in exile on the island. His actual identity is still debated. We will look at the historical circumstances around the first century BCE and the symbolic references in the writing to actual events. Periodically, we will look at illustrations of Revelation from the "Cloister Apocalypse" a 14th century English manuscript and from 9th and 10th century illustrations of the "Beatus of Liébana." I hope you will join us! All are welcome.

If you are not on Becky's Bible Study email list, please email her at [rtcros@ftcrosby.com](mailto:rtcros@ftcrosby.com).



Honoring earthquake victims in Haiti

## Writing at the Well

February 9th and 23rd, 10-11 am. Come write with us as we engage in writing practice and share the journey. No writing expertise needed!

For more information email Laura: [lfitz.nager@gmail.com](mailto:lfitz.nager@gmail.com)

## Poem

New Year's Day – 2022  
*A new dawn  
A renewed hope  
A prayer for health, for peace.  
One day, one hour, one moment at a time  
Doing what I can; Being who I am  
With what I have, right here, right now.  
Every day – A New Year's Day  
Every day – A New Day*

*Opportunities, choices;  
Pay Attention.*

*The work begins now  
The nudge, the calling, the ministry, the mystery.  
Life is good  
Pull a few weeds to see the hidden beauty...*

-Karen Stigliano, Writing at the Well group

## Habitat Build Day

We're gathering volunteers for a day of home construction with Habitat for Humanity. Our next build day is February 12th. We'll be working on a project in Norwich, where 10 homes are being constructed concurrently. We need a team of 10 to 12 volunteers who are willing to swing a hammer or help in other relevant ways. No construction expertise is necessary. If you're interested, please email the church office for instructions.

Image on left of Mary Tomassetti painting a window.

## Adult Forum

On Sunday, February 6th at 3:00 PM we'll host a screening and discussion of Mission Joy: Finding Happiness in Uncertain Times about the extraordinary friendship between Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. Bishop Paul Verryn, our friend from South Africa, will also be our special guest (we hope!). The screening is 1 hour with discussion to follow and will be shown in Fellowship Hall.



### Ladies Who Stitch

We have returned to our pre-COVID Monday hours of 10 am to 2 pm in the Sheffield Auditorium. We work masked and socially distant, and request that any visitors or shoppers do the same. Most of our creations are displayed in the Partnership Store so can be easily accessed for anyone who wants to come by during our working hours.

Due to the hugely successful Holiday Sale in November, the incredible support of our fans :) and

the fabulous talent of our members, the *Ladies Who Stitch* have contributed over \$6,000.00 to LBS/FCCOL from October through December. Of course, there have been some expenses and taxes taken out, but still..we are proud and grateful! Valentine's Day is just around the corner - come shop with us!

### Book Group

Our February selection is Fierce Love: A Bold Path to Ferocious Courage and Rule-Breaking that Can Heal the World by Jacqui Lewis. A healing antidote to our divisive culture, full of evocative storytelling, spiritual wisdom, and psychological insight—by rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis, the first female, Black senior minister at the historic Collegiate Church of New York. We will meet via Zoom on February 16th at 11 am. All are welcome! Please join us!

All new members, please email Martha Beaudoin for a Zoom link at [mrlake86@comcast.net](mailto:mrlake86@comcast.net).

### Grief Group: Healing in Good Company

February 17th 5:30-6:30 pm in Hoag Parlor. All are welcome. For more information email Laura: [lfitz.nager@gmail.com](mailto:lfitz.nager@gmail.com).

### Memorial

Mildred Taylor  
 Marcia Dean Moreno  
 Bob White  
 Janey Lee  
 Dan Manderosian

### Special Announcement: Laura on Sabbatical soon!

FCCOL has received a sabbatical grant to support Laura's upcoming sabbatical this spring. FCCOL is one of over 150 congregations across the United States selected to participate in this competitive grant program, which is funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and administered by Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. The renewal program enables congregations to "support their pastors with the gift of sabbath time away from their ministerial duties and responsibilities."

Laura will be away for three months starting after Easter. She'll begin her pilgrimage in Assisi, Italy following in the footsteps of peacemaker mystic, St. Francis. Laura and her husband, Paul, will hike and explore their way to England and Ireland. While in Ireland, Laura will visit the peacemaking community of Corrymeela in Northern Ireland. Stay tuned for more details!

## SENIOR CHOIR

To all members of the Senior Choir - Thank you for such a musically uplifting January! Your singing throughout the month was wonderful. Thank you for all your hard work!

Here is the schedule for February:

Wednesday, February 2: Rehearsal at 7:30 pm

Sunday, February 6: Singing at the 10:00 am service with a rehearsal at 9:15 am

Wednesday, February 9: NO REHEARSAL! Please make the most of your free evening!

Sunday, February 13: Singing at the 10:00 am service with a rehearsal at 9:15 am

Wednesday, February 16: Rehearsal at 7:30 pm

Sunday, February 20: NO CHOIR NEEDED TODAY!

Wednesday, February 23: Rehearsal at 7:30 pm

Sunday, February 27: Singing at the 10:00 am service with a rehearsal at 9:15 am

Many thanks,  
 Simon



# GOD'S NEIGHBORHOOD

God's Neighborhood Sunday School will be hearing stories and participating in activities that highlight the Friendship Virtue of Kindness. We'll kick off a Kindness Challenge during the month of February remembering to "encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

**February 6**—We will hear a Bible Story and find out about sticking out your neck to be kind. We'll write Valentine's Day cards and send them to our church buddies.

**Pilgrim Fellowship** — we will meet from 4-6 p.m. for conversations and a service project with a very special guest.

**February 13 11:30** — Pilgrim Fellowship and God's Neighborhood Sunday School be



participating in the IRIS Run for Refugees in New Haven and Old Lyme. Look for more details or please email Lisa at [GodsneighborhoodFCCOL@gmail.com](mailto:GodsneighborhoodFCCOL@gmail.com). We will also post a video lesson and hear a story of kindness and friendship.

**February 20** — This morning we will have a special musical guest, tell stories and participate in a kindness challenge (baking treats included!).

*Martin Luther King Day  
Public Art for Racial Justice Education  
Mural Unveiling in Norwich*

**February 27** — We'll complete our Kindness Challenges for the month and engage in art/storytelling.

*\*\*We are planning to meet in-person with masks but will be flexible depending on health and safety concerns as we go!*

# GREEN GRASS

The story of our partnership with the community of Green Grass, SD continues to flourish. Despite a global pandemic, we have remained in contact with our Lakota brothers and sisters through Facebook, phone calls and text. Unfortunately, for a second year in a row, in order to minimize risk to our friends and help slow the spread of this pandemic, we postponed the trip to South Dakota. While we surely miss our dear friends, we know this was the best decision for all.

But beauty abides in the story of missing our relatives! In lieu of our trip, we were able to reallocate funding and send two wonderful gifts of love.

1. Just after the New Year, as temperatures plunged below -8, we sent the D&R propane truck to fill the tanks of 18 households so that folks can

feel the warmth of our love and friendship.

2. We hired our Lakota sister, Kayla Howe, granddaughter of Suella High Elk, to purchase and deliver care boxes to every home at Green Grass. Because of Kayla's close ties within the community, she was able to hand-select items that each household would find both useful and special. Kayla was thrilled and eager to support us in this endeavor, and with a young family to support, the additional income made Christmas bright for her and her family.

*"We just received a basket of goodies from Old Lyme. Abe, Sean, Benny and I thank you so much! Happy Holidays from our Tipi to yours. Miss you & Love y'all's 🙏💕🙏💕"* ~ Grace Kasto

*"Just wanted you to know that Kayla did an amazing job on the food and Christmas baskets they are awesome and a lot of stuff that I could really use right now. God Bless you and the rest of the Old Lyme group... I sure do miss y'all"*  
~ Rhonda Frazier

*"A big Thank you to all of you at Old Lyme, sure appreciate the gifts from you all. May the Creator watch over all of you at all times."*  
~ Suella High Elk

We extend our thanks to the Missions Board, LBS, and all of you who through maintaining friendships, made this possible. We are forever grateful, and remain hopeful to visit our Lakota family in 2022.

Mitakuye Oyasin, we are all related, Stephanie Kenny on behalf of Green Grass Committee

# DEAR FRIENDS, CONTINUED

by whales. But more contemporary versions exist too – think of Pinocchio, for example, or even of *Moby-Dick*, where a character falls into the entrails of a whale while the Pequod's crew is busy butchering the creature. In each and every instance, the belly of the whale is a kind of magical cave revealing difficult – and healing – secrets.

What if we thought of our New England winter, and these years of the plague, as something akin to living in the belly of a whale? What mysterious and marvelous magic lurks inside this darkness? What might we learn to perceive, if we conceived of ourselves as living under the sign of the whale? What have we learned already?

It's a complex set of questions, and like all revelations, answers may unfurl over a long period of time. But one of the most powerful learnings of the past two years has come from taking a long look at our connection to the Black Atlantic world – in New England and in Old Lyme as well. That hadn't been a secret, exactly, but it took entering the belly of the whale, so to speak, to perceive what was before us all along. Throughout the month of February, we'll be returning to those themes in selected

moments, learning more about that history. On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the four poets who gave voice to several of the enslaved people who lived in Old Lyme will be with us in our worship service. Antoinette Brim-Bell, Marilyn Nelson, Kate Rushin, and Rhonda Ward will bring those voices to life on that morning, while some guest musicians from the region will also help to connect our present and our past. We'll also be creating a few more segments for our Stories from the Deep North series, and so be on the lookout for those. In addition, we'll be hearing from a few scholars and practitioners of the Black diasporic religions, which have been widely misunderstood by Christians, and which have often been singled out for persecution by Protestants in particular. It's time to begin healing that rift, and the first and best way to begin is through education. In time, I hope it leads to much, much more.

Winter, and a lingering pandemic have brought the sign of the whale upon us. It's worth lingering there, for the revelations may yet be profound. As an actor reflecting on our shared condition recently put it: "Don't run from it. Don't look for the fun thing to escape and lighten up. Go deeper, go darker into it. And

come out with more light." (See *The New Yorker*, "Break Room," from "The Talk of the Town," January 3 and 10, 2022).

In other words, hang in the belly of the whale a little longer. Let's learn together what light may yet emerge.

My love to all of you. Stay human, here in the belly of this beast...



Reading: *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, by John Thornton; *Exterminate All the Brutes*, by Sven Lindqvist; *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, by James Cone; *Jesus Before Christianity*, by Albert Nolan.

Watching: *Station Eleven* (HBO Max) – Don't neglect this one. For real!

Listening: Seun Kuti, *From Africa with Fury*; Mulatu Astatke, *Mulatu Steps Ahead*.

# DIAPER BANK

The Diaper Bank officially opened its doors for business on September 5, 2020. At that time, 12 families completed applications and received diapers once a month on Saturdays in coordination with the Shoreline Soup Kitchen and Pantries (SSKP).

In 2021, the need for diapers grew rapidly in response to COVID. In January, 20 sleeves of diapers were distributed to our guests. By June this number rose to 41. The Diaper Bank ended the year distributing 64 cases of diapers to 47 families. Several families have 2 or 3 children in diapers!

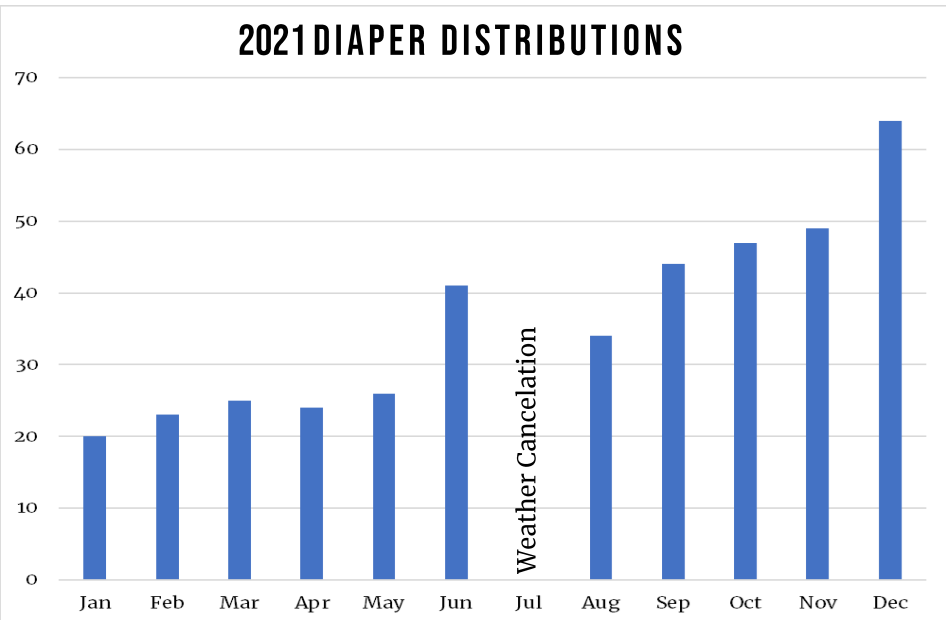
During 2021, we have seen many babies and toddlers grow, as families request a bigger size diaper for their little ones. There have also been numerous inactive guests. Possible reasons for inactivity include: child has grown out of the need for diapers; family has moved out of the area.

We continue to offer diapers to all families who are guests of the Old Lyme Food Pantry. Since the

pandemic, the policy of SSKP is to turn no one away who asks for food. The Diaper Bank has followed their lead.

Although we did not intend to distribute food along with diapers and baby wipes, some kind gentleman had other plans! Every week several cartons of baby food are donated, found in its usual place, on top of the food pantry box at the top of the stairs. What was thought to be an occasional donation has become a dedicated weekly commitment to feed the babies who come to us.

The FCCOL has been very supportive of this ministry to assist those in need in our local communities. No one knows what 2022 may bring, however we do know that the Diaper Bank made a difference to 47 families this year. It's worth repeating: 333 half cases and 64 full cases of diapers were distributed in 2021. Families, friends and members of our church community have made a powerful statement, resulting in a significant difference to our neighbors.



# BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

## Please Help the 2022 Stewardship Campaign

If you have not yet made your commitment to the 2022 Stewardship Campaign, now is the time! If you have already made a commitment, but now find you are able to do more, we would love to hear from you! We have not yet reached the amount needed to maintain our operations and to continue to fund the many charities and services that depend on us for help.

Without normal income from Sunday collection plates and with 2 years of no White Elephant Sales, Stewardship funds are more vital than ever.

In our church, we strive to translate our faith into action, to make a vibrant Way through the world, to help others. We cannot do it without you. Please give as generously as you can to help FCCOL stay strong in its ministries and missions. Your generosity will ensure that FCCOL can continue to provide a pathway for so many for the year ahead. Please send us a valentine!

With our heartfelt thanks, The Board of Stewardship  
Leslie Alexander, Jody Belluzzi, Tom Grant, Ross Higgins, Doug Kneeland, Sandy Long, Doug McCracken, Wayne Mountz, Mike Winterfield

# THE ENVIRONMENT



## The future of food: Grim? Or Grand?

Well, I guess it depends on how you feel about lab grown meat, bugs or beans!

Almost everywhere we look anymore, it's looking pretty grim. We see disruption and mayhem in the global food supply, both from the pandemic and climate disruption. It's not hard to imagine a disastrous future. I don't need to describe it, we all know.

It's also clear that food as we know it in the developed world has drifted far from its roots, literally. But here's the thing—under 'normal' circumstances, undisturbed nature *grows*. Undisturbed nature *produces all by itself*. It doesn't require 'inputs', it's self-sustaining.

I recently read of work being done in Brazil, using a system called syntropic farming<sup>1</sup> (look up 'Agenda Gotsch') to restore degraded land using agroforestry, and using the wisdom of the land to restore the soil, draw down carbon and produce abundant local, native food. This is similar to Permaculture<sup>2</sup> and the ideas used in creating Miyawaki forests<sup>3</sup>, and other restorative efforts. These ideas are mimicking natural ecosystems to restore, protect and produce, instead of the *entropic* (i.e. mechanised) farming methods, which are not sustainable. It's a whole different mindset.

Kind of like eating bugs.

The EU recently approved locusts and mealworms for human consumption! (I know! Keep an open mind, will you?) Other cultures have done this forever. This is a viable form of protein that is available at a much lower carbon cost. We all need to eat lower on the food chain if we are

all to thrive. Insects are being produced right now as ingredients in animal feed, but they are being developed for inclusion in our 'meat' substitutes which, you have to admit, have gotten pretty darned good. It's a possibility that could really help get us back on track.

It's up to us to create a grand new world. Everyone can thrive and grow, just like in a good ecosystem.

For the Environmental Committee, Mariette Brown

<sup>1</sup><https://agendagotsch.com/en/what-is-syntropic-farming/>

<sup>2</sup><https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permaculture>

<sup>3</sup><https://urban-forests.com/miyawaki-method/>

## 2022 Offering Envelopes

For those who have asked for or are expecting to receive 2022 offering envelopes, they are available on a table in the Connector. Members who desire envelopes but don't find one there should leave their names on the clipboard provided.

**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 Newsletter will be for March; deadline is **February 14.**

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!

