

DECEMBER 2024



Dear Friends,

Our December issue of National Geographic has already arrived. It sits on our coffee table ready to be savored. In this final sweep of 2024, the magazine features images of our planet and its people from deserts and disasters to penguins and petroglyphs.

I wonder at the anthology of photos and images you might select for your retrospective of 2024. Maybe there have been the additions of new family members to your dining table or the searing absence of beloved ones no longer there. Maybe you can recall that special birthday celebration or revisit the photos from a family trip and a treasured time with your nearest and dearest. Maybe you moved this year and home is still someplace new.

Perhaps, you, too, have been changed profoundly by the world around us. The relentlessness of war across the globe. The desperate images of famine and displacement. Climate disasters and hurricanes. A Presidential Election.

Into all of this mayhem, mess and memory, the storied season of Advent and Christmas comes! Just in time. We'll decorate the tree, sing carols, play some bells and hear the familiar nativity stories of the season. We'll celebrate the traditions and rituals of our faith that help us to know where we came from and the truth of who we are. Once again, we'll hear from ancient prophets of old like Zechariah in the gospel of Luke who finds his voice and sings of how "the impossible becomes possible" (1.37) and we'll reimagine the ways in which God-with-Us, *Emmanuel*, abides in us, even now. We'll recall what one poet called, "a humble scene in a backward place where no one important ever looked." Far from sentimental, these scripture stories invite us to consider the courage it takes to stand up to empire and pay attention to another way home.

(continued on page 4)



Senior Choir Schedule

To all members of the Senior Choir - Thanks for such uplifting singing in November!

Here is what December is looking like:

Wednesday, December 4: Rehearsal at 7:30 pm.

Sunday, December 8: Singing at the 10:00 am service with a rehearsal at 9:15 am.

Wednesday, December 11: Rehearsal at 7:30 pm

Sunday, December 15: Singing at the 10:00 am service with a rehearsal at 9:15 am.

Tuesday, December 17: Quiet Christmas Service at 6:30 pm for those able to participate.

Wednesday, December 18: Rehearsal at 7:30 pm

Sunday, December 22: Singing at the 10:00 am service with a rehearsal at 9:15 am.

Tuesday, December 24: Rehearsal at 7:15 pm, Services at 8:00 pm and 10:00 pm.

Wednesday, December 25: No Rehearsal - HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

Sunday, December 29: NO CHOIR needed at the 10:00 am service.

Wednesday, January 1, 2025: No Rehearsal - HAPPY NEW YEAR!

**Many thanks and best wishes to all,
Simon**



Handbell Notes

The handbell season had its first rehearsal on Wednesday, November 13, with every position filled. It was a terrific hour of ringing with lots of enthusiasm. The season will be full of good music to play and enjoy. We are also enjoying two new people to the group and new to Old Lyme—Matthew and Kate

Rice. They come to us from Rhode Island with a good deal of handbell ringing experience. We are most happy to welcome them!

The month of December will see the Old Lyme Ringers ringing in worship twice: on the 15th, when they will ring “Good Christian Folk, Rejoice” and on the 22nd, when they will ring “Gloria.” Both pieces are very familiar carols and will be easily recognized! Also, the congregation can again look forward to the bell peal this Christmas Eve. Five octaves of bells and also the BIG C2 bell will be heard as the bells peal the announcement of Christ’s birth. At least 16 people get involved in the ringing of this special peal. There is much joy and excitement as the Sundays of Advent and Christmas Eve will be filled with wonderful music!

Children’s Handbell Choir

There is a new handbell choir that is being formed just for children in grades 3-6. This group will focus on learning to read music, the basics of handbell ringing, and an experience in bell ringing in front of a congregation. The children ringers will meet on Wednesday afternoons from 4:15 to 4:45, starting on January 8 and continue until April 9. If you have an interest in having your child participate in this unique experience, please contact Gary Jungkeit, either in person, or by email: gjungkeit@charter.net, or by text: 423-782-6308.

Ladies Who Stitch (LWS)

It’s been another very busy month for us culminating in a super successful - over \$3300 - Holiday Sale. Thank you to all who donated, helped, created, shopped, purchased or just visited during our festive event in the Sheffield Auditorium. We’re already planning for next year.





Some of our newer 2024 creations included: coiled rope fabric baskets and hot pads, hand painted and gnome ornaments, woolen Christmas tree pillows, necktie and cork creations, fabric cats, Christmas stockings, snowmen and more. We still have some of these available in the Partnership Store through December.

We also found new homes for our vintage fabric and linens, and most of the woolen clothing items donated during the White Elephant Sale - all at bargain prices.

We'll have at least three working Mondays in December - the 2nd, 9th, and 16th. December 23 and 30 are TBD. We will definitely be back to work on January 6th. Visitors, shoppers, and potential new members are always welcome to stop in during our Monday working hours - 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. - in the Sheffield Auditorium. Spread some joy over the holiday season. Questions: Contact Eunice Taylor via email - eunicetaylor@me.com

God's Neighborhood

God's Neighborhood will celebrate Advent during December as we prepare for the coming of Christmas once again! As the prophet Isaiah reminds us,

"For a child has been born for us, a son is given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6, SBL)



In a return engagement, Gavin Lodge will direct the Christmas Pageant for our youth and begin rehearsals the first Sunday of this month. This is always a magical time of year!

Sunday, December 1, 2024: The first candle of Advent will be lit, on our Advent wreath marking the beginning of Advent season. This candle represents Hope and reminds us that Jesus is coming. In God's Neighborhood we will rehearse the script and the music and read the Christmas stories.

Sunday, December 8th: Peace is our Advent candle for this second week of Advent. Our classes will rehearse their roles for the upcoming pageant. They will also prepare their costumes as they anticipate leading the congregation in a joyful celebration.

Friday, December 13th: God's Neighborhood and Youth Group are having a PJ Party in the Sheffield Auditorium from 6-8pm. Youth are invited to come dressed in their favorite Christmas PJ's to enjoy hot cocoa and hang out with friends and play games and watch a movie while their parents are in the fellowship hall for the church potluck!

Sunday, December 15th: Joy is our focus in the third week of Advent! Classes will continue to rehearse for the upcoming pageant, finalize plans for music and costumes as everyone gets excited for the upcoming pageant.

Saturday, December 21st: 3-5pm As the house lights in the sanctuary dim, the players of God's Neighborhood will take the stage for a dress rehearsal. Arrayed in their garb and demonstrating all they've learned, they will present their artistic interpretation in preparation for the next morning's pageant production! Pizza served at rehearsal, too!



Sunday, December 22nd: Love will fill our hearts and the sanctuary as our young people lead us in worship with their annual pageant at the 10am service. Performers will take center stage in the meetinghouse to delight the congregation with their rendition of the Christmas story. Will there be room at the Inn this year? Come and see... Holiday reception in Fellowship Hall after the service for everyone!

Tuesday, December 24th: Christmas Eve services are at 5pm for our "Living Nativity" tableau with our family and older students, as Mary and Joseph, shepherds, angels and wise Magi. Friendly animals may be in the neighborhood too! Services of Lessons and Carols will be held at 8pm and 10pm.

Have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! God's Neighborhood will be on break until January 5th.

Memorials

Donna Byrne
Sally Aubrey
Al Piela

Dear Friends, (continued)

In addition, we'll hear prophetic voices throughout the month from Immigration attorney and friend of FCCOL, Glenn Formica, on Tuesday, December 3rd along with other voices of conscience, author, Mark Braverman and Dr. Mazin Qumsiyeh from Bethlehem on Sunday, December 8th.

Within these pages are all the festivities, events and services of the Christmas season here at FCCOL. We'll offer a Quiet Christmas Service, a Christmas Pageant (with a wondrous cast of kids and teens and angels and shepherds and maybe a parrot or llama or two). And we'll celebrate three Christmas Eve Services at 5:00, 8:00 and 10:00 pm.

May we find many reasons to gather together at the manger of the Christ child. May the bringing forth of love again (and again) unfold in our lives. May we welcome the unexpected ones in our midst and imagine a *not-quite-here-yet* world, where ordinary people and families in all their glory and craziness are honored as holy, too.

As the year draws to a close, what are you treasuring and what are you ready to let go of? We'll keep exploring that question as a church community with the help of Convergence in the coming year. It's a good one to ponder in our personal lives as well.

Through it all, I hope you find some measure of merry and joy, stillness and eggnog awaiting you along the way!

With love,



Books:

Enchantment: Awakening Wonder in an Anxious Age by Katharine May

Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings by Joy Harjo

Forest of Noise by Mosab Abu Toha

Cherished Belonging by Gregory Boyle

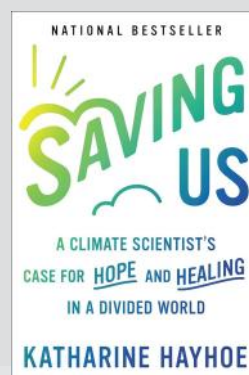
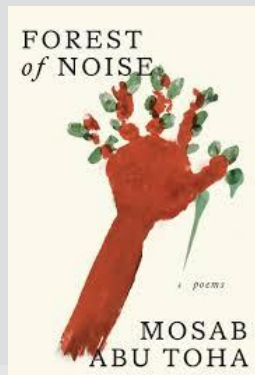
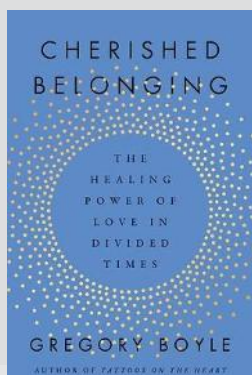
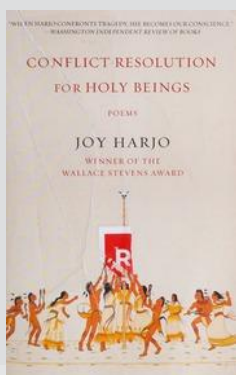
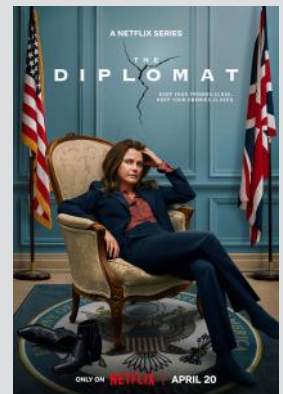
Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World

Watching:

Wild Robot (movie)

Documentary: Will and Harper

Series: The Diplomat and Matlock



A Nativity in Ruins: Gaza and the Prophetic Imagination

A Visit from Dr. Mazin Qumsiyeh and Dr. Mark Braverman

Sunday, December 8, 2024

10:00: Sunday Worship Service

11:30: Adult Forum in the Fellowship Hall

Reading the Bible Otherwise: Disentangling Scripture from the Logic of Colonialism and Genocide

A Brown Bag Lunchtime Bible Study with Mark Braverman

Monday, December 9, 2024

Sheffield Auditorium

During the past year, Dr. Mazin Qumsiyeh has reported from the site of an ongoing catastrophe, chronicling the carnage of Gaza from his home in Bethlehem. His dispatches have been essential tools for comprehending the inhumanity of that scene, while reminding his many readers that another way, more just and humane, remains possible. Indeed, for the past twenty years, Mazin has been doing just that from the Palestine Natural History Museum, a space of incomparable beauty surrounded by the horror of a military occupation. From there, Mazin has welcomed countless Tree of Life and FCCOL travelers over the years, sharing his singular vision blending the natural sciences and the work of human rights. Mazin is the author of several books, most notably *Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment* (2011). In this season of Advent, as we grapple with a widening crisis throughout the Middle East, Mazin's perspective from Bethlehem is one that we desperately need to hear.

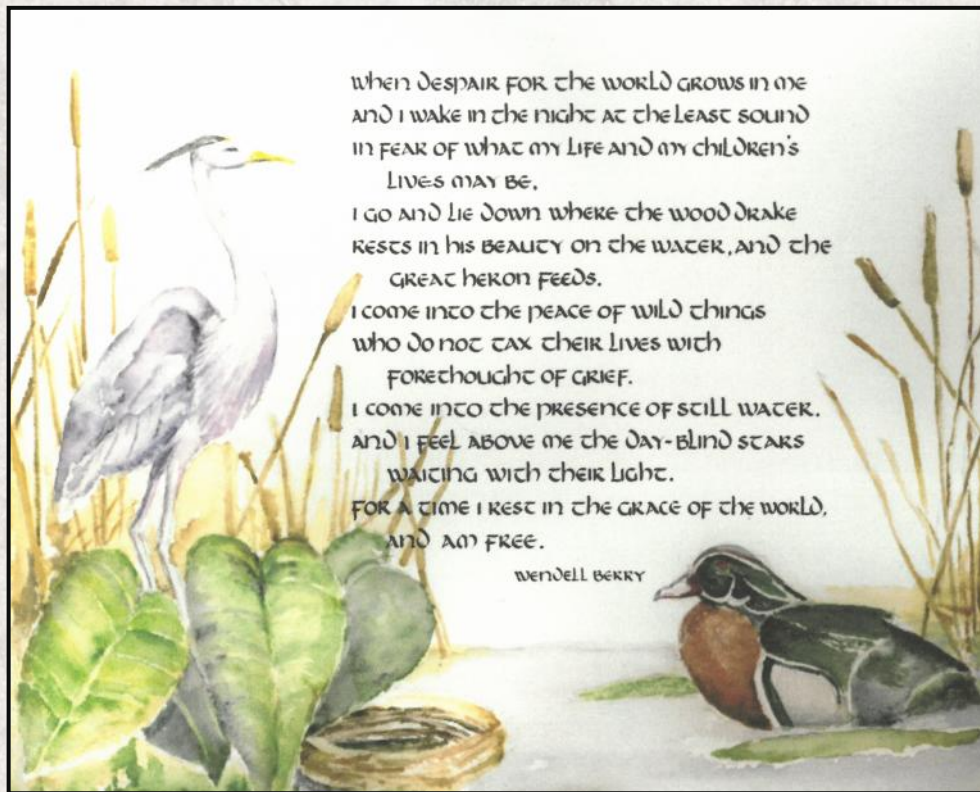
Mark Braverman too has been a long time friend of Tree of Life and of FCCOL. Mark comes to us from the Jewish tradition, and he is the executive director of Kairos, USA, an organization dedicated to helping Christians, Jews, and Muslims recover the moral and prophetic dimensions of their faith. He is the author of two books, *Fatal Embrace: Christians, Jews, and the Search for Peace in the Holy Land* (2010), and *A Wall in Jerusalem: Hope, Healing and the Struggle for Justice in Israel and Palestine* (2013). During the present crisis, Mark's voice has been crucial in disentangling Judaism and Christianity in particular from the logic and practices of nationalism, militarization, colonialism, and genocide. Mark's reverence for the Bible has led him to find surprising and beautiful insights providing hope in a time of devastation.

We hope you'll join us on both Sunday, December 8 and Monday, December 9 as we hear from these exemplary voices of faith and conscience.

Community Meeting with Glen Formica

Immigration attorney and friend of FCCOL, Glen Formica will be here on Tuesday, December 3rd at 7:00 pm. Many of you may remember Glenn as the lawyer who helped us with Malik and Zahida during their time in sanctuary with us. Please join us for this conversation, all are welcome!





WHEN DESPAIR FOR THE WORLD GROWS IN ME
 AND I WAKE IN THE NIGHT AT THE LEAST SOUND
 IN FEAR OF WHAT MY LIFE AND MY CHILDREN'S
 LIVES MAY BE,
 I GO AND LIE DOWN WHERE THE WOOD DRAKE
 RESTS IN HIS BEAUTY ON THE WATER, AND THE
 GREAT HERON FEEDS.
 I COME INTO THE PEACE OF WILD THINGS
 WHO DO NOT TAX THEIR LIVES WITH
 FORETHOUGHT OF GRIEF.
 I COME INTO THE PRESENCE OF STILL WATER,
 AND I FEEL ABOVE ME THE DAY-BLIND STARS
 WAITING WITH THEIR LIGHT.
 FOR A TIME I REST IN THE GRACE OF THE WORLD,
 AND AM FREE.

WENDELL BERRY

In these times of turmoil, we on the church's environment committee offer this poem by Wendell Berry. The calligraphy is done by Betsey Webster, and the lovely illustrations are by her twin sister, Katryna. We have reprinted this poem a number of times, with Betsey's permission. It continues to give us some respite from our worries, and reminds us of the gift of restoration to be found in nature.



FCCOL Christmas Potluck!

Join us for a festive celebration of the season
 Friday, December 13th from 6:00-8:00 pm.
 Featuring pizza from New Britain. Bring a dish,
 salad or dessert and a pair of socks or warm gloves
 and hats for the giving tree. In Fellowship Hall.
 At the same time, God's Neighborhood and the
 Youth group will host a pajama party in Sheffield
 with a Christmas movie, pizza, hot cocoa and more!

Grief Group

This monthly support group is for those who have
 lost a loved one and those struggling with other
 losses. Next meeting: Tuesday, December 17th

5:00-6:00 pm in Hoag Parlor.

Parent and Families Support Group of LGBTQ and Trans/ Youth and Young Adults

For Parents, Caregivers and Family Members of Trans
 Youth/Young Adults: Our newly forming group will
 provide conversation, support, community
 and education for parents and caregivers around the
 issues of transgender, nonbinary, and gender-
 diversity. Join us for an informational meeting held at
 FCCOL on Thursday, December 12th at 5:30 in the
 Hoag Parlor. For more information: fccol@fccol.org.

Blood Drive

There will be an American Red Cross Blood Drive at
 the First Congregation Church of Old Lyme on
 Thursday, December 12th from 1:00 pm -6:00 pm.

News from The Crosby Fund for Haitian Education

In this our 20th Year, The Crosby Fund is pleased to announce that the 2024-2025 Haitian school year is underway and that schools from Pre-K through University are open and full of activity. Over the past 20 years, we have been able to offer 5,983 full scholarships, as well as Tutoring, Literacy Programs, and so much more. For more information please visit our website at CrosbyFund.org.

Despite the increased violence in Port-au-Prince, we are proud to announce that we have had five graduates in the month of November. Marc Evans Jerome and Witchkey Sando graduated from Canado Technique in Industrial Mechanics and Computer Networking. Juliadette Saint Eloi, Marc Firlande Valbrun, and Roberta Dorsainvil, received Nursing Degrees from University of Notre Dame in Port-au-Prince.

As well as these previous graduates, because of your generosity, The Crosby Fund is able to provide these wonderful young people with tuition, room & board, computers and so much more.



Weekly Sunday Flowers

We're scheduling members and friends who would like to provide pulpit flowers for a week. If desired, flowers can be given in memory of a loved one, with the loved one(s) mentioned in the bulletin. Flowers or greenery can be fresh from your garden or ordered from florist. A house plant from home displayed for the morning would be lovely, as well. To sign up for a future week, please call Jill Harned, 603-398-9004. Thank you.

Housing Wanted

We regularly hear from folks who are in need of an affordable rental. If you have any information that could be helpful, please let Anne in the office know. One woman we know of would be grateful even for a room to rent for a period of time.

Shoreline Soup Kitchens and Pantries

It was a Saturday morning like many before it: The Fellowship Hall was set up with food stations ranging from fresh produce and eggs to pasta, meat, beans, soup and bread, each with assigned volunteers smiling and chatting with families. There was a unique mix of music playing, and volunteers sang or swayed to the tunes. Guests waited for their numbers to be called by our Front End volunteers, who then provided an empty carriage and bags, after they checked in with our Registrar.

What made this week special was a kind gesture from a lovely woman who attends regularly. She stopped to let me know that every single volunteer here greeted them genuinely – and they were just *so nice* each time her family came through the line. I graciously accepted her feedback and felt proud of what we'd accomplished: a well-run food pantry with both happy guests and volunteers who truly wanted to be a part of it.

Our guests come to us from all walks of life and from different circumstances, and if they need assistance – we are happy that they have found us. Their experience should be discreet, positive, and supportive. I am so proud of my Saturday crew – each person has a job they are good at, that they look forward to doing each weekend. Not to mention I'm proud of my numerous behind-the-scenes volunteers who also make this a reality: teams on both Thursday and Friday take great care in our food bank deliveries and shelf stocking, as well as food transport and setup in the Fellowship Hall – it truly takes a village. Even with all the unrest in the world, it's comforting to know that – simply put–people still want to help each other.

I'm very happy that when we were ready to start serving indoors again, after surviving the worst of the pandemic curbside, FCCOL trusted us to come back in with a solid plan to safely utilize the church – my goal is to always have a calm, chaos-and-drama-free setting – warm, bright and clean– in the lovely Fellowship Hall. Having all our staff, volunteers and guests on the same floor makes a difference. Many thanks to our ministers, office staff, our Sexton, Sean, assistant Bill, and our cleaning service, who all support our mission.

Happy Holidays!

Audrey Brainerd

SSKP Old Lyme Pantry Manager

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

On Sunday, December 22nd our church will be serving the supper at the New London Soup Kitchen (now named DINE). Because this is so close to Christmas this year, knowing that this is a busy time for so many folks, we're reaching out to ask if there are any volunteers who would be willing to **make a main dish casserole ahead of time and freeze it for us to use that night.**

The Board of Missions has allocated money that can be requisitioned if that would help; because sometimes the ingredients can be expensive to purchase. Just call Carleen (860-304-2070) if you'd like to know more about how to do that!

Our in-house committee chairs, Julie Kuja, Charlie Hosley and Cathy Gentry are doing incredible work as they engineer the system that enables our church to serve once a month at DINE. Each month a major board within the church assumes the responsibility for the food. But December is always a challenge and they would welcome **any** and **all** help as they plan for this Christmas-time meal.

The numbers of folks seeking food is increasing, and on our Sundays we prepare food for the Homeless Hospitality Center and another outreach program within the city. We have been serving roughly 120 meals each month; but as winter approaches we anticipate that number to increase by at least 50. It is an enormous task and we are very grateful to all those who help!

You can call the church office and let Anne know you're willing to help (860-434-8686) or you can leave Julie Kuja a text message at 617-921-7850. Thank-you, thank-you, thank-you. Carleen

Diaper Bank Saturday: Information for New and Not so New Members

The Diaper Bank is now in its 5th year of operation. Once a month, on Saturdays, in conjunction with the Food Pantry, diapers, baby food, and wipes are distributed to families with infants and toddlers in need. There have also been the unexpected gifts of knitted hats, nearly new baby clothes, and books. Since its inception, 2,193 packages of diapers have been donated and disseminated.

During its first year, also, the Diaper Bank was faced with the catastrophic COVID pandemic. Every pantry guest with children in need, received diapers regardless of where they lived. During the height of the pandemic, diaper distribution reached 90 babies in one month.

Guests outside our service area are now receiving diapers at sites established in their communities as a result of the pandemic. Currently, monthly diaper distribution in Old Lyme stands at 40 – 50 babies.

The Diaper Bank is staffed by volunteers, the same volunteers that signed on 5 years ago. We continue to meet a need that improves the health of every child who comes through our doors. Those 2,193 packages mentioned earlier, came from generous monetary gifts and donations of diapers from members, Church boards, friends, and anonymous individuals who heard about our work.

The mission of the Diaper Bank remains constant: offer hospitality and support the dignity of our guests who we greet on Saturdays. Gifts of diapers can be left on or near the Food Pantry box located at the top of the stairs leading to the basement level.

The Meetinghouse Christmas Tree

This year we will once again be gathering items that are helpful for the Homeless Hospitality Center in New London. They are requesting coffee and socks! (all kinds of socks and the coffee should be ground please). Please bring your gifts and place them beneath the tree anytime between now and Christmas Day. They don't need to be wrapped; though you can wrap if you'd like!

If you'd rather give a monetary gift to the Homeless Hospitality you can leave a check made out to HHC in a sealed white envelope and we'll be sure they receive it. Our Board of Missions and the Ladies Benevolent Society

An Update on the David W. Good Memorial Fund

Shortly after David Good's memorial service this past April, FCCOL invited members and friends to contribute to a fund established in his honor. Thanks to the generosity expressed by many of you, that fund now stands at a little over \$22,000, and counting. To reflect David's long commitment to mission partnerships and education, the ministers, in consultation with the Board of Trustees and the Endowment Committee, have decided that the fund will be used to support the ongoing work of our partnerships. The fund will be invested along with our endowment, though unlike the endowment itself, it will be available for use when needed. Whether for Green Grass or Palestine, for South Africa or Haiti, or a newer venture, the David W. Good Memorial Fund will be used to expand upon the work that David began, and that we continue in his memory.



**A QUIET CHRISTMAS SERVICE
TO LIGHT UP THE DARKNESS**

Tuesday, December 17th
at 6:30pm at FCCOL

Join us for a contemplative service of music, prayer and candle lighting as we gather to create sacred space for one another this Advent. This event features the music of Elm City Winds, a woodwind quintet from New Haven.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT
Sunday, December 22nd at 10:00 AM

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Tuesday, December 24th

THE LIVING MANGER

5:00 PM Service for families with
young children

***CANDLELIGHT SERVICE OF
LESSONS & CAROLS***

8:00 PM and 10:00 PM Services

CHRISTMAS DAY

Wednesday, December 25th the church will be
open for prayer and meditation.

EPIPHANY SERVICE AND BRUNCH

Sunday, January 5th at 10:00 am
in celebration of 3 Kings Day

Judges Farm Excursion

On November 20th, the Environmental Committee sponsored a field trip to Judges Farm in Old Lyme. Led by Mariette Brown, an enthusiastic group from FCCOL was treated to a tour of the beautiful facility by co-owner Matthew Griswold. Nestled into Griswold Point, the 10-acre farm specializes in growing potted perennials, annuals, herbs and vegetables for wholesale distribution to garden centers and nurseries across the northeast. Sadly, for you holiday shoppers, the farm no longer grows Christmas trees for sale. During peak season, the farm provides jobs for over 50 employees.

The owners of Judges farm (Matthew and his brother Martin) are dedicated to targeting long-term sustainability, and to that end, have incorporated several environmentally friendly innovations into their operation. The planning has increasingly focused on expanding the farm's line of native plants and seeds (of which they currently grow over 90 varieties). As noted in the farm's website, "*Natives are tough, disease resistant, deer & rabbit resistant, drought & flood tolerant, even salt tolerant in some cases. Finally, native pollinators know & love native plants, and the two go hand in hand.*"

The farm has also made great strides in reducing fossil fuel consumption and in achieving "home grown" energy independence. Staggered between the native seed beds are arrays of some 388 photovoltaic panels that generate over 120KW of solar power. These panels produce over 300% of the farm's electric needs and have been oversized to accommodate the farm's next new investments – electric farm equipment and Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) trucks. With four trucks on order, the owners hope that the 500-mile range of these new electric vehicles will facilitate all the farm's northeastern area delivery needs.

Our thanks to Matt and Mariette for a fun and informative afternoon and a special thanks to Judges Farm for donating the plants sold each year at the FCCOL White Elephant Sale!

Tom Sherer
FCCOL Environmental Committee



Bible Study with Mark Braverman

Monday, December 9th at 12:00 pm. Bring your own brown bag lunch!

Civil Rights Town Hall:

Join us for this Civil Rights Town Hall Event hosted at FCCOL. Please mark this date on your calendar and make a note to RSVP so they know you are coming. Town Hall meetings like this are being held all over our state.



Adult Bible Study: "Goodness, Greed and Grace: Journeys through Genesis and Exodus"

Curious about what we do in Bible Study? Wondering about the problem of evil and where the heck God might be found on any given day? Bible Study is every Thursday at 11:00 am in the Hoag parlor and on Zoom. Join us for rich discussion and wanderings as we pick up our reading of Genesis with Joseph, his brothers and that famous technicolor coat. Our companion book this fall will be *Reading Genesis* by Marilynne Robinson. Robinson wrote, "The whole of human existence is like some sweet parable told in the most improbable place and circumstances...God values our humanity. One of the things that's fascinating about the Hebrew Bible is that it declared and was loyal to the fact that God is good and creation is good."

A Quiet Christmas Service

Tuesday, December 17th at 6:30 pm

For those of us desiring a more contemplative and meditative Christmas, please join us for a quiet Advent service of music, prayer and candle lighting in the name of healing and peace for one another and the world. Featuring the wonderful woodwind quintet, Elm City Winds, from New Haven. For more information: call 860-434-4366. www.fccol.org.



Additional option for making online contributions.

For several years there has been the option on the church's website Donate Page to make contributions by credit card. There is now an additional option to have funds transferred from your checking account. We hope this new option will make it easier for some to send in their contributions. Also, to make it easier to access the Donate page, just scan this image with your phone! Thank you to EVERYONE who supports our church financially!

Bob McCracken, Treasurer

GIVING MATTERS

What does Stewardship Mean?

For many the concept of stewardship is about money. Members and friends have it and the Church needs some of it. However, an exclusive focus on money confuses ends with means. A more spiritual understanding of stewardship requires a more enlightened view.

Making God's love and justice available where and when needed requires resources. FCCOL freely offers services and widely promotes justice without compensation. But pastoral counseling, community outreach, and mission partnerships are not free. So, stewardship contributions – congregational generosity – make the good that FCCOL does possible. Stewardship contributions are a means to a compassionate end.

The love that compassion offers is unconditional. It is not judgmental. It is offered freely without any expected return. So, it is not transactional or strategic. It may not be deserved. It may be offered to people you don't know, or to people with very different political views, or even people you don't particularly like. Compassion is a radical form of love. It invites a deep empathy into the suffering of others. It empowers action to help relieve that suffering.

A biblical example is found in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan makes no judgement. He effectively provides a blank check to help heal the poor soul that was badly beaten on the dangerous desert road between Jerusalem and Jericho. Closer to home many members and FCCOL friends help feed SSK&P guests, help shelter the homeless, educate Haitian children, resettle refugees, provide diapers to parents who need them. Is every recipient deserving? Do we like their politics? Compassionate action is judgement free.

So, a spiritual way to think about stewardship at FCCOL is that it is about unconditional compassion. Money helps provide the means. But compassion – radical empathy with the suffering of others – is the end. Stewardship is about a type of love. Love we offer unconditionally. As a community of faith, we are ultimately concerned with the welfare of others. Our Stewardship contributions enable FCCOL to activate our values. As we take action, we are remaining true to our founding 'Pilgrim Tradition' as seekers. We are seeking to build, nurture, and maintain more meaningful connections with each other and with the wider world. Why? Because being connected enables us to rely on one another so no one is alone.

When you think about where your philanthropic contributions can make a real difference, consider a generous donation to FCCOL. Why? Because FCCOL is a good place to do good.

Please complete your commitment card or online donation. FCCOL needs and deserves our support.



NOTE FROM THE TREASURER

As we approach the end of the year we hope that everyone will be able to satisfy their pledge commitments for 2024. Almost a year ago we reluctantly had to present a deficit budget to the congregation since our projected income was not forecast to cover expected expenses. As always, and especially this year, additional contributions are welcome and needed. Early in December we will be mailing 2024 contributions statements to ensure our records match yours. Please call Julie or me in the church office (860-434-8686) with any questions or concerns.

Thanks to all who faithfully support our church!

Bob McCracken, Treasurer

DECEMBER 2024 CALENDAR

FCCOL Science Discussion Group *Sunday, December 1st at 11:30 am* in the Hoag Parlor.

Ladies Who Stitch *Monday, December 2nd at 10:00am* in the Sheffield Auditorium.

Community Meeting with Glen Formica *Tuesday, Dec. 3rd from 7-9 pm* in the Fellowship Hall.

Sally Aubrey Memorial Service *Wednesday, December 4th at 11:00 am* in the Meetinghouse.

Board of Missions Meeting *Wednesday, December 4th at 4:00 pm* in the Library.

Handbell Ringers Rehearsal *Wednesday, December 4th at 6:30 pm* in the Sheffield Auditorium.

Senior Choir Rehearsal *Wednesday, December 4th at 7:30 pm* in the Sheffield Auditorium.

Bible Study *Thursday, December 5th at 11:00 am* in the Hoag Parlor.

Board of Stewardship Meeting *Thursday, December 5th at 4:00 pm* in the Library.

Jane Stubenbord Memorial Service *Friday, December 6th at 11:00 am* in the Meetinghouse.

Food Pantry and Diaper Bank *Saturday, December 7th at 8:30 am* in Fellowship Hall.

Musical Masterworks Concerts *Sat, Dec. 7th at 5:00pm and Sun. Dec. 8th at 3pm.*

Adult Forum with Mazin Qumsiyeh and Mark Braverman *Sunday, December 8th after the 10:00 am service* in the Fellowship Hall.

Ladies Who Stitch *Monday, December 9th at 10:00am* in the Sheffield Auditorium.

Bible Study with Mark Braverman *Monday, December 9th at 12:00 pm* in the Fellowship Hall

Board of Trustees Meeting *Tuesday, December 10th at 5:30 pm* in the Library.

Parent and Families Trans Youth Support Group *Wed, Dec 11th at 5:30 pm* in Hoag Parlor.

Handbell Ringers Rehearsal *Wednesday, December 11th at 6:30 pm* in the Sheffield Auditorium.

Senior Choir Rehearsal *Wednesday, December 11th at 7:30 pm* in the Sheffield Auditorium.

ARC Blood Drive *Thursday, December 12th from 1:00 pm -6:00pm,* in the Fellowship Hall.

Bible Study *Thursday December 12th at 11:00 am* in the Hoag Parlor.

FCCOL Christmas Party Potluck Dinner *Fri, December 13th at 6:00pm* in the Fellowship Hall.

Food Pantry *Saturday, December 14th at 8:30 am* in Fellowship Hall.

Ladies Who Stitch *Monday, December 16th at 10:00am* in the Sheffield Auditorium.

Grief Group *Tuesday, December 17th at 5:00 pm* in Hoag Parlor.

A Quiet Christmas Service *Tuesday, December 17th at 6:30 pm* in the Meetinghouse.

Board of Deacons Meeting *Tuesday, December 17th at 7:30 pm* in the Library.

Handbell Ringers Rehearsal *Wednesday, December 18th at 6:30 pm* in the Sheffield Auditorium.

Senior Choir Rehearsal *Wednesday, December 18th at 7:30 pm* in the Sheffield Auditorium.

Food Pantry *Saturday, December 21st at 8:30 am* in the Fellowship Hall.

Annual Christmas Pageant *Sunday, December 22nd at 10:00 am* in the Meetinghouse.

Ladies Who Stitch *Monday, December 23rd at 10:00am* in the Sheffield Auditorium.

FCCOL Office Closed *Tuesday and Wednesday, December 24th and 25th* for Christmas.

Christmas Eve Services *Tuesday, December 24th.*

5:00 pm The Living Manger for Families with Young Children.

8:00 pm Candlelight Services of Lessons and Carols.

10:00 pm Candlelight Services of Lessons and Carols.

Christmas Day the Church will be open for Prayer and Meditation.

Food Pantry *Saturday, December 28th at 8:30 am* in the Fellowship Hall.

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF OLD LYME

Staff

The Rev. Dr. Steven R. Jungkeit, Senior Minister (860-434-8686)

The Rev. Laura Fitzpatrick-Nager, Senior Associate Minister (860-304-9096)

The Rev. Carleen R. Gerber, Associate Minister (860-304-2070)

Simon D. Holt, Director of Music (860-705-3037)

The Rev. Rebecca T. Crosby, Minister for Haitian Outreach

Rebecca A. Francisco serves as minister to the South Lyme Union Chapel

Jolene Brant, Director of Youth Education/Junior & Senior Pilgrim Fellowship Leader

Rachael Jungkeit, Director of Children's Music

Robert McCracken, Church Administrator

Anne Koczka, Office Manager

Julie Mardjekaj, Bookkeeper

Sean McCarty, Sexton

Church Office Tel: 860-434-8686

Fax: 860-434-1135

e-mail: fccol@fccol.org

Website: www.fccol.org

Sunday Worship - 10:00 a.m.

South Lyme Union Chapel Worship - 9:00 a.m.

Counseling and Psychotherapy Tel: 860-434-3813

Cary Walker, LCSW

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF OLD LYME, Member U.C.C.

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The submission deadline for the January Newsletter is Wednesday, December 18th.

Please e-mail the church office at fccol@fccol.org if you want to be added to or removed from the newsletter mailing list, or receive your copy digitally!
Thanks for your help!



The reproduction of our Meetinghouse is from a sketch by William Steeves.