

The First Congregational Church of Old Lyme
MARCH 2026



Dear Friends,

For the past three years, it has been our habit to gather on Maundy Thursday to read and to listen to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. In 2023 we read the *Inferno* in full, in a Meetinghouse glowing red from the flames of hell. In 2024 we read the *Purgatorio* in full, this time in a Meetinghouse lit up in green, to signify the emergence of new growth. Finally, in 2025, we read the *Paradiso* in full, now in a Meetinghouse bathed in blue, to signify the heavens above. Miraculously, many of you got excited about the project, and signed up to be readers each year. And not a few of you showed up to listen to portions of the poem, which lasted every year until nearly 1 AM. For my part, I thought it was glorious, and it is not an exaggeration to say that Dante nurtured something profound within me. The poem has become an essential component of my spiritual life, and I shall return to it for as long as I live.

But it is time for something new. And so this year, rather than circling back around to the *Inferno* (which I had originally thought to do), I began to toy with the idea of grappling with another epic poem, one that has had an equally powerful impact on people of faith across the centuries.

Yes, friends, it is time for a reading of Milton's *Paradise Lost*!

Why Milton, and why now? If Dante's *Divine Comedy* is the creative culmination of the medieval world prior to the Renaissance and the Reformation, Milton's poem is an outgrowth of the Reformation. In fact, it is the Protestant poem, par excellence. It was published in 1667, only two years after what is now Old Lyme was settled as a community, and only one year after our first minister, Moses Noyes, arrived in town. It is a poem that has shaped the world of Congregationalists for generations, in ways we scarcely recognize. But it has also shaped the thoughts of readers as diverse as Thomas Jefferson and Malcolm X, George Eliot and C.L.R. James. Its reach is vast, but its roots are roots we share in common.

(continued on page 6)

Don't forget to set your clocks ahead one hour before retiring on Saturday, March 7th!

HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING AT FCCOL

FCCOL Choir

Thank you for all your wonderful singing in February. Here is what March's rehearsal and service schedule is looking like:

Sunday, March 1: Singing at the 10:00 am service with a rehearsal at 9:15 am

Wednesday, March 4: Rehearsal at 7:30 pm

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

Wednesday, March 11: Rehearsal at 7:30 pm

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

Wednesday, March 18: Rehearsal at 7:30 pm

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

Wednesday, March 25: Rehearsal at 7:30 pm

Sunday, March 29: Singing at the 10:00 am service with a rehearsal at 9:15 am

Many thanks and best wishes to all.
Simon

Old Lyme Ringers and ReBELLion

The **Old Lyme Ringers** have been practicing diligently for the music that they will be presenting in worship on March 1. The ringers will be playing *What Wondrous Love Is This*. The congregation will hear both handbells and handchimes being used in this piece. While the tune of *What Wondrous Love* is relatively familiar, there is a "hidden" hymn heard in the middle of the piece--*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*. The arranger Anna Laura Page is quite clever in introducing a different hymn within this handbell hymn arrangement. Listen carefully to see if you can hear each of the two Lenten hymns.

ReBELLion continues to practice each week, but the group is still lacking the number of youth that is needed to make a full handbell choir. We are hoping by the first of March we will have a full group, as some of the children will be finished with other activities and will be able to join ReBELLion. Perhaps by the middle to late March we hope to have the piece *Simple Gifts* ready to share with the congregation in worship. The youth who have been coming to weekly practice continue to show enthusiasm and have boundless energy!

Ladies Who Stitch (LWS)

Please save your holiday cards for us! We use the front of cards, that have no writing on the back, to make sets of gift tags. These can be given to one of us, or left behind our curtain on the counter at the back of the Sheffield Auditorium.

Given the continuing cold winter weather, our knitted and crocheted hats, mittens, and scarves are still available and we are trying to keep up with the demand for "**Melt the ICE**" red hats, pins and bookmarks. Some of our other newer items include: A "My Bag of Worries" story and a variety of hearts with caring messages, glasses cases, zippered pouches, pillow covers, market bags, and elasticized bookmarks with pockets for pens, reading glasses and cell phones. We even have a few new pairs of our coveted **Bernie Mittens!**

We continue to consign things at the unique, non-profit gift shop, **Woman's Exchange/Lyme Tree**, located beside Subway in the Big Y Shopping Center. They reopened on February 4th and if you have never visited, you're missing a treat. The store is filled with wonderful creations from local artisan's and more. They are open Wednesday-Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.



We are grateful for another generous fabric donation - this time, elegant European remnants from the **Amelie Michel** company (www.ameliemichel.com) located in Essex. New things made from this fabric donation have already been made.

Ladies Who Stitch meet regularly on Mondays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the Sheffield Auditorium. Visitors, and shoppers are always welcome.

The Partnership Store is open while we work, on Sundays following the service, and during most special FCCOL events. We offer guilt-free shopping for goods from Haiti, Palestine, Tribal Crafts and LWS.

If you have questions, or you wish to receive the weekly LWS email updates, notify the church office, or contact Eunice via email - eunicetaylor@me.com.

God's Neighborhood

The Power of Firsts After all

**You don't know how strong the willow tree is
until
You see her arms dance in the face of the storm.
We remember this and
more so that we might imagine
a day for the girl without such firsts,
Where the wind opens the floodgate
for the river of women behind her.
We are here
not to be the first
but to refuse to be
the last. —Amanda Gorman**

*(Amanda Gorman is the first-ever Youth Poet
Laureate of the U.S.)*

During this month we've added new events to the calendar as we look forward to spring! We'll be learning more of the parables, many of our high schoolers will delight in their Confirmation Classes and our little ones will be thrilled to have more playtime while parents connect. Happy Women's History Month, too.

Sunday, March 1st Confirmation Class will meet from 4:00-5:30 pm in the Church Library.

Saturday, March 7th: Cup-of-Joe Café 8:00-10:30 am. Families that have Middle school (5th-8th grades) students and High School students volunteer for this Community Outreach

Opportunity: If you can help serve coffee and pastries to the people who come to the Shoreline Food Pantry, or if you have a group that you know would delight in serving, reach out to Laura or Jolene and let them know! Cup-of-Joe Café is set up on the first Saturday of every month. Respond to this email to volunteer at Laura's email:

lfitz.nager@gmail.com

Sunday, March 8th: Our students will continue learning about the parables that Jesus taught. The Parable of the Mustard Seed is the story of how something very tiny indeed can grow into something beyond our wildest dreams because of God's love. It will be a great lesson to hear about this Sunday!

Sunday, March 8th 11:15-12:15: "Parents of Younger Children (infants to 4th grade) Fellowship Hour" in the Hoag Parlor right after the service. Parents can meet and connect while the kids play!! We will be asking YG babysitters to be there to help!

Saturday, March 14th, 5-7PM: "All Parents: It takes a Village Night" Please put this on your calendar so we can see you!! This will be at the Brant house. 67 Whippoorwill Rd. Old Lyme. We will provide a charcuterie board and tasty beverages. Please bring whatever you'd like to share and let's come together to connect on what we're all going through right now as parents!! Also, what would you like to see on our calendar? (Kids are invited and can play the entire time without structure.)

Sunday, March 15th: Our learners in God's Neighborhood will be amazed to read about women throughout history who were agents of change who broke barriers, challenged conventions, and defied traditional limitations in order to reshape societal narratives.

Sunday, March 22nd: 4-6PM: "Dinner Church" (parents and students 5th grade - high school) Reach out if you'd like to help plan this again or reach out if you'd like to help in planning this beautiful night where our Youth Group comes together to cook at the church, pass the food family style while eating, then clean up and experience communion together in this magical way of forming bonds that will potentially last a lifetime.

Sunday, March 29th: 'Great and Holy Week' begins! Today is Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday. Today in Sunday School we will contemplate together everything we have learned through Lent and what we intend to honor in the week ahead.

Sunday, March 29th Confirmation Class will meet from 4:00-5:30 PM in the Church library.

Youth Group Opportunities: Baby Sitters Club sign up is available on the bulletin board at the church or downstairs in the Sunday School. If you like helping with children and want to help parents, sign up for the times you're available and see if anyone is in need. **And parents, if you need a babysitter, please sign up and reach out if you need help!**

Youth Group Book Club: We have a survey for our YG to vote for a book. After everyone has voted, we will read it together and discuss it during a Sunday School class once a month. Please vote for the book you think sounds the most interesting! That survey is also hanging on the bulletin board upstairs or you'll find it downstairs in the Sunday School as well.



Grief and Loss Group

This monthly support group is for those who have lost a loved one and those struggling with other losses. Our next meeting will be on **Wednesday, March 4th** from 5:00-6:00 pm in Hoag Parlor.

Weekly Bible Study

The Book of Exodus: Please join us as we continue to discuss The Book of Exodus: Stories of Exile and the Search for Freedom. We meet every Thursday from 11:00 -12:00 pm in the Library. Call or email the church for the Zoom link.

The Benevolent Society's March Luncheon

Ready to escape? It's time to put the cold, snowy start of 2026 in the rear-view mirror and enjoy a warm brunch-inspired meal prepared by our own chef Rick Strickhart at the Benevolent Society's first spring luncheon on **Tuesday, March 10th**. As always, lunch will be served at noon, so arrive in time to get seated and comfortable.

Chef Rick will also be entertaining and educating us with a presentation, beginning at 1pm, that reflects on his travels last year in Korea and Japan. Along with his spectacular photographs, he will discuss topics which include Sumo, Geisha, Shintoism and Korean Costco. Suggested donation for the luncheon and program is \$5 per person, plus a nonperishable food item for our food bank or a package of disposable diapers for our diaper bank. If you plan to join us at the luncheon, please call the FCCOL office (860)434-8686 by Friday, March 6th to make a reservation.

TransParent Group Meeting

Meets monthly on the 3rd Wednesday of every month 5:30-6:30. Next meeting is on **March 18th**. For Parents, Caregivers and Family Members of Trans Youth/Young Adults: Our group provides conversation, support community and education for parents and caregivers around the issues of transgender, nonbinary, and gender-diversity. For more information email us at: fccol@fccol.org.

Walt's Pottery at FCCOL: Two Classes Offered

Are you interested in throwing clay on the wheel and getting into some mud up to your elbows? Already working on your throwing skills? Need a new soup bowl? Morning and evening classes begin Tuesday,

March 17th through April 14th. Glazing week will be April 14th followed by a potluck celebration. Open to adults of all levels. Tuesdays 10:00-12:00 pm or 6:00-8:00 pm.



Email fccol@fccol.org to reserve a spot. Seating is limited. Cost: \$195 plus materials.

Instructor Betsey Copp will teach Tuesday mornings 10:00-12:00 pm.

Instructor Paul Fitzpatrick-Nager will teach Tuesday evenings 6:00-8:00 pm.

ARC Blood Drive



American Red Cross Blood Drive in March at The First Congregational Church of Old Lyme will be on **Thursday, March 19th** from 1:00 pm -6:00 pm. in the Fellowship Hall.

FCCOL Moth Night and Potluck Dinner

It's Back! Due to popular demand, another **FCCOL Moth Night** has been scheduled for Friday, March 20th, at 6:00 pm. Bring the whole family for heart-warming stories, grand fellowship, and a hearty potluck meal all in one!

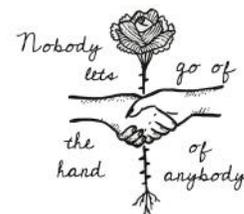
All ages are welcome. Please bring a dish to share if you are able. If you would like to help with the set-up/clean-up, please contact Deb Heminway at: dheminway9@gmail.com

Writing at the Well

Join us on **Friday, March 27th** at 10:00 am in the Hoag Parlor as we meet to write pages together and share our spiritual journeys as we go. Using informal writing prompts, participants give voice to memories and the stories that make up our lives. No writing experience necessary...just a willingness to pay attention and tap into the wellspring.

Palm Sunday Service

Join us Sunday, March 29th to celebrate Palm Sunday at 10:00 am in the Meetinghouse.



Adult Forum “But the Bible Says It’s Wrong:” Reflections on Biblical Strictures About Same-Sex Relations

Join John Loughery on **Sunday, March 15th** after the 10:00 am worship Service for a talk that will focus on the critical perspectives and outright prohibitions against same-sex intimacy in the Old and the New Testament. He will present a survey of the ways in which different progressive priests, ministers, theologians, and people of faith have reinterpreted these passages in books published over the last fifty years, ending with a recommendation of a recent and highly original examination of the subject, *The Widening of God’s Mercy: Sexuality Within the Biblical Story* by Christopher B. Hays and Richard B. Hays (Yale University Press, 2024).

John Loughery is the author of several award-winning and *New York Times* Notable books, including *John Sloan: Painter and Rebel* (a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize in Biography), *The Other Side of Silence: Men’s Lives and Gay Identities*, and *Dagger John: Archbishop John Hughes and the Making of Irish America*. A native of New Britain, CT, he lived for many years in New York City, where he was a teacher, art critic for *The Hudson Review*, and book reviewer for *The Washington Post*. He now lives in Berlin, CT.

Adult Forum: Sunday, March 29th, A Morning with Emily Dickinson

Julie Fitzpatrick delves into the art of acting through scenes from *The Belle of Amherst*, a play based on the life and words of Emily Dickinson by playwright William Luce.

Julie Fitzpatrick is a writer, actor, and theater teacher who has performed Off-Broadway, regionally, and in TV/short film. Recent roles include Emily in *The Belle of Amherst*, Narrator in *Let’s Get Together* and Deb in the musical *Ordinary Days*. She is a member of The Guilford Poets Guild, Ensemble Studio Theatre in New York City, and is a “regular” with The Moses Gunn Play Company. Julie teaches “Acting For Adults” and “Create Your Own Solo Show” classes through Legacy Theatre. More information can be found at www.juliefitzpatrick.com.

Church World Service Blanket Drive

During February and March, The Benevolent Society collects the annual offering for the CWS Blanket Drive. The Blanket and Kit program was created by CWS to aid those who have lost everything due to disasters. Through your support 17,317 Blankets, 5,400 Emergency Cleanup Buckets, 71,760 Hygiene Kits, 39,000 School Kits and 1,600 Disaster Preparedness Kits were distributed in 2025. Each blanket costs \$10. Please make checks payable to TBS, indicating on the memo line “Blanket Drive.” CWS envelopes are available in the pews and may be placed in the offering plate or sent to FCCOL, 2 Ferry Road, c/o TBS. Thank you for remembering those in their time of need.

IRIS (Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services)

IRIS supports refugees, immigrants and the homeless, and is especially in need of warm adult clothing and twin-sized bedding. Twice a month, a FCCOL volunteer travels to New Haven to deliver collected items. LWS helps by accepting new and gently-used donations for IRIS and for the New London Homeless Hospitality Center. **Please leave donations in the marked bin on the Sheffield Stage** and we will see that they get delivered.

But another reason is the backstory: Milton had taken part in a revolt against the monarchy in his time, in an effort to move England toward a fledgling form of democracy. That effort failed, and so Milton wrote his massive poem about the rebellion in heaven, of the fall, and of the consequences of free will. In other words, Milton was grappling with some of the same issues that are emerging once again in our own time, though in a different form. This is a poem that we need right now, for all of its theological, moral, and aesthetic complexity.

Did I also mention that it's fun to read?

Here's how we'll do it. *Paradise Lost* is divided into 12 books, or long chapters. Reading four of those books/chapters out loud will take about as long as it took to read each of the three parts of *The Divine Comedy*. We'll cover the first four of those books this year, on Maundy Thursday (April 2). In 2027, we'll cover books 5-8. And in 2028, we'll read books 9-12, ending our sequence.

And I've done the math. If we have 33 or 34 readers, as we did with Dante, each reader can take approximately 117 lines of the poem, which will take 8-10 minutes to read. We'll take breaks between books to stretch our legs, and to get snacks and coffee.

This is going to work!

Instead of reading it deep into the night, we're going to read it throughout the day of April 2nd. We'll start promptly at 10 AM. We should finish by 5 or 6 PM. Throughout, we hope to have selections of music sung from Haydn's *Creation*, much of which was inspired by *Paradise Lost*. Then, when we're finished, we'll gather for a simple dinner of soup and bread, followed by the sharing of communion.

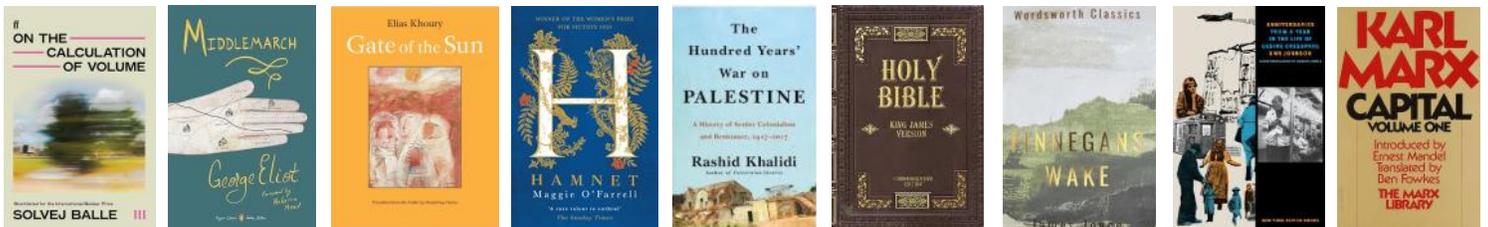
Sign ups for readers will follow soon. But if you wanted to start preparing, you could do worse than to pick up a copy of the poem, joined by a reading of Orlando Reade's newish book, *What In Me Is Dark: The Revolutionary Afterlife of Paradise Lost*. It's a lively and informative guide.

I hope you'll consider being a part of this spiritual and literary journey throughout Lent, but especially during Holy Week. It promises to be a powerful and orienting experience.

Love to you all....



Reading: *On the Calculation of Volume, Part II*, by Solvej Balle; *Middlemarch*, by George Eliot; *Gate of the Sun*, by Elias Khoury; *Hamnet*, by Maggie O'Farrell; *The Hundred Years War on Palestine*, by Rashid Khalidi; *The King James Bible* (Genesis - Deuteronomy); *Finnegans Wake* (selections), by James Joyce; *Anniversaries* (selections), by Uwe Johnson; *Capital, Vol. 1* (finished!), by Karl Marx.



Listening: "Purple Rain," by Prince ("Purple Rain Melts Ice," a sign in Minneapolis read); *Crawfish Fiesta*, by Professor Longhair; *Deface the Currency*, by The Messthetics and James Brandon Lewis; *Bleeds*, by Wednesday.

Watching: *The Werckmeister Harmonies*, dir. Bela Tarr; *Senso*, dir. Luchino Visconti; *L'Aventurra*; *La Notte*; *Red Desert*; *Blow-Up*, all directed by Michaelangelo Antonioni; *Pluribus* (Apple TV).

SECT Faith Based Community Organizing Project: Sunday, March 22nd

We're living in challenging times right now, and many of us want to take action to create lasting positive change. At FCCOL a small team of people have joined with other congregations in SECT to begin to identify issues for potential policy change. Other congregations in the area are doing the same thing.

The charges for our team (FCCOL Core Team) are to hear people's concerns; to identify where these concerns might overlap with those in neighboring towns; and to create a collective plan of action.

Therefore, we want to know what is on your heart. What keeps you up at night? What worries you? And what would you like to help change in and around Old Lyme or in New London or Middlesex Counties?

Please join FCCOL's Core Team on Sunday, **March 22nd at 11:15 am** in Sheffield Auditorium to share your experiences and to listen to others too! Lunch will be provided.

Our collective experiences about what matters to us will be gathered with those of other congregations across SECT. We'll see where our issues converge resulting in an actionable item that Congregations will take up for policy change in our region.

Come share your experiences and concerns for change as we build a faith-based power base committed to systemic change in SE CT and across the State!

To RSVP, email Bill Colihan at wjcolihan@gmail.com

All This Sainted Difference: A Spiritual Pilgrimage to Brazil August 10-20, 2026

In her poetry collection *The Cachoeira Tales*, Marilyn Nelson writes of a contemporary group of pilgrims, each with a story to tell, traveling together not to Canterbury, but to Cachoeira, Brazil. There, the pilgrims



encounter the Sisters of Our Lady of the Good Death, who blend African, Indigenous, and Catholic ritual elements. Founded by those who had been enslaved during the 19th century, the sisterhood was established to serve the poor, while keeping alive the sacred traditions of Africa, handed down as a precious inheritance from one generation to the next. Every year in Cachoeira, the Sisters offer a three-day celebration of music and of dance, where the Orixas (African divinities who bear a striking resemblance to Christian saints) come in order to bless, heal, chasten, and encourage contemporary people. It is in Cachoeira that the pilgrims in Marilyn's poems converge. And it is in Cachoeira that pilgrims from FCCOL shall converge this coming August.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to explore the African ritual traditions of Brazil. Visiting not only Cachoeira, but locating ourselves in and around the city of Salvador, we'll encounter the rituals, music, dance, foodways, and visual art that have sheltered and protected human lives through generations of hardship. We'll visit *terreiros* (house temples) around the city and throughout the surrounding countryside. And we'll discover how these dynamic and aesthetically charged spiritual systems (Candomblé and Umbanda) have evolved across time. The centerpiece of our journey will be the Feast of Our Lady of the Good Death, where we shall witness how the Sisters become a living bridge between this world and the other.

Designed to resonate and to link with our travels to Haiti, Cuba, New Orleans, and West Africa, our pilgrimage to Cachoeira and Salvador will be organized with the help of our friend Ned Sublette, and his vast network of contacts in Brazil. It is a fabulous opportunity to explore a beautiful part of Latin America (it will be winter in Salvador, meaning we can expect temperatures in the 70's and 80's), together with the history and spirituality of the African descended peoples of Bahia.

Contact Steve Jungkeit for more information, at steven@jungkeit.net.

The Crosby Fund for Haitian Education

Celebrating Resilience: The Crosby Fund for Haitian Education is immensely proud to announce the graduation of two of its longtime scholarship recipients, **Nadlee Lundy** and **Gadot Joseph**. At a time when the Haitian people face unprecedented challenges across the country, these two students stand as extraordinary



examples of perseverance, fortitude and grit. This past December, Nadlee Lundy successfully completed her program at the **Unity School of Business**, earning her degree as an Administrative Assistant., and Gadot Joseph graduated from the **University of Notre Dame in Gonaives** with a degree in Accounting. Their achievements are a testament to the power of education and its ability to create a brighter future for Haiti and its young people. School in Haiti isn't free, and since 2004 The Crosby Fund has provided over **7,368 scholarships**, enabling students across Haiti's rural Artibonite Valley, from pre-K through University to achieve educational goals that would have been otherwise impossible. During this time of national instability, Nadlee and Gadot stand as beacons of hope, and we are

honored to share their achievements with you.

If you would you like to learn more about The Crosby Fund and its work in Haiti, please visit crosbyfund.org or email Becky Crosby at execdirector@crosbyfund.org.

Board of Missions: Food and Shelter

The preponderance of donations made by the FCCOL Board of Missions are sent to agencies that provide food and shelter to individuals in need. In our February meeting, donations were made to the Covenant Shelter in New London, the FCCOL Diaper Bank, FRESH New London and the Lyme/Old Lyme Foodshare Garden. Knowing that the gardens will soon become active as they prepare for their spring plantings, we anticipated they will need to replenish their supply of seeds, starter plants and tools. In our March meeting, we will begin to plan for visits to our CT benevolences sites and assess their current needs as well as discuss possibilities to join some of the agencies in their work. Stay tuned...

Immigration Ministry

Our FCCOL Immigration Ministry is continuing to support families who are struggling after losing a family member to a detention center or to deportation. Our volunteers regularly check in with the families we have been supporting over the past many months. We have been supplying groceries, or grocery cards, rides to appointments, clothing, and emotional support and will continue to do so for an indefinite period. FCCOL generously reimburses our volunteers for food expenses. Rides and donations of clothing are contributed by our volunteers, as well as by members of our church community.

We are currently working to establish a working relationship with a Rapid Response team in New London. This group is new and still building their network. We expect there to be many more opportunities for our volunteers to lend a hand in conjunction with the work of this rapid response organization.

Thank you, all, for patiently waiting to be called upon. We appreciate you and have not forgotten you! At FCCOL our basic framework of family support for our immigrant neighbors is in place. We are ready to move if, and when, needs escalate in our region of CT. Peace/Love, Christine Harrington and Carolyn Hartsfield

If you would like to know more about our ministry please email us at: lovingkindness025@gmail.com.

Pollinator Pathway Initiatives

Let's join the local churches of our towns that support Pollinator Pathway Initiatives. And let's celebrate! Many have worked hard to sustain the bees and birds and pollinators that assure the health of our habitats; and now, on Saturday, March 28th from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at Ballek's Garden Center in Salem, we celebrate a milestone. The Lyme Pollinator Pathway is celebrating its fifth anniversary. It's time to party!

Please come. The party is a fundraiser, and as such it needs the help of us all. Let's make sure our church contributes to the essential work of learning "why grow native?"

And this spring let's see how we can introduce native plants into our formal gardens and learn together what a difference our care can make. Thanks, Cynthia Willauer

Giving Matters Testimonial by Matt Muehl-Miller

Hi, I'm Matt Muehl-Miller, and it's an honor and, to be honest, oddly surreal that Carleen asked me to speak with you today about my journey with this church. When my family first started looking for a church, we had a specific wish list: a positive, progressive message, women in leadership, good childcare and education for the family we had planned, and—if possible—some really good music.

But even with all those parameters met, I'll be honest, I came in as a bit of a skeptic. I'm one of those "Nones," the people who check the box for "nothing in particular" when asked about religion. While Nones tend to run the gamut from atheist to agnostic, we generally harbor some disbelief or skepticism of religion. Speaking for myself, I came out of the early aughts with a profound distrust of organized religion and a distaste for anything that strikes me as performative religiosity.

To my colleagues on the Board of Trustees, and Ross in particular, I apologize for never volunteering for opening or closing prayers. Now you have a better idea of why.

As my family started showing up, I kept finding reasons to stay. The people were genuine. Everything about the church's mission just felt real and relevant. The messages were thoughtful and challenging.

On the subject of challenging messages, I connect deeply with the challenges to orthodoxy presented by Biblical criticism. So, Dr. Braverman, I'm the target audience for some text translations from the original Greek. Don't let me down.

So, 5 years ago, when Carleen asked me to serve on the Board of Missions (the group that oversees church support for its outreach missions, both local and abroad), I'll admit I wondered how the church actually spent its money. But the more I saw (first on Missions and later on the Board of Trustees), the more I realized—they truly live out what they preach. We don't dodge the hard teachings of Jesus; we wrestle with them. The church shows up for the community and puts their time, money, and hearts where our values are.

In the end, this place surprised me. What I found here wasn't just a church - it was a community that believes in doing the work together.

And if you find yourself, as I do, on that spectrum that includes unbeliever and uncomfortable believer, know that this place more than welcomes you. It needs you. So, when Carleen asks you (or Steve and Laura), I encourage you to participate as you can. Our church is open to challenge conventional thinking and inclusive of anyone who shares its values... even if you don't lead public prayers. Thank you for your time.

Deacons Emeriti for 2025

Moe Ancil

Moe is a master carpenter and craftsman and he has, for many years, generously contributed his talents to make this church facility more beautiful. From the fence alongside the garden off Ferry Road, and its arch on which the roses grow, to the frames for the Adlai Harding Biblical casts on the walls of Fellowship Hall, he has crafted beauty all around us. And he has helped in countless ways on more hidden projects - the refurbishment of the porch of the Pilgrim House and bookcases in Steve's study in the parsonage. Moe's work is all around us. Thank you, Moe.

Wendy Knight

Wendy's death just this past November stunned us. She was an integral part of the hospitality ministry of our church. She was selflessly generous with her time - planning, shopping, organizing all our coffee hours and special events. She worked tirelessly behind the scenes in many ways, but it was her constant presence at our social gatherings that has left what now seems to be a big missing piece in the fabric of our social lives together. We will long remember her generous good will and her gentle, mothering, nurturing presence.

The Deacons present to you both Moe and Wendy as our Deacons Emeriti for the year 2025.

Reflections on Laura's Sermon

As I listened to Laura's sermon on February 22nd, her stories of visiting our immigrant friends in detention in R.I. and MA. all I could think of was "What can I do." Is there something all of us can do? We can connect spiritually, with the men and women in detention. By this I mean we could consciously commit to sit quietly for 10 minutes each day with our focus on those in detention; we can connect heart to heart with them. For that two things are necessary. One, that those in detention know that we are praying, connecting, and in communion with them, and two is that they are not forgotten

MARCH 2026 CALENDAR

- Reading the Bible in One Year Discussion** *Sunday, March 1st at 11:30 am* in the Sheffield Auditorium.
- Confirmation Class** *Sunday, March 1st at 4:00 pm* in the Library.
- Ladies Who Stitch** *Monday, March 2nd at 10:00 am* in the Sheffield Auditorium.
- ReBbellion Rehearsal** *Wednesday, March 4th at 4:00 pm* in the Fellowship Hall.
- Board of Missions Meeting** *Wednesday, March 4th at 5:00 pm* in the Library.
- Grief Group** *Wednesday, March 4th at 5:00 pm* in the Hoag Parlor.
- Handbell Ringers Rehearsal** *Wednesday, March 4th at 6:30 pm* in the Fellowship Hall.
- Choir Rehearsal** *Wednesday, March 4th at 7:30 pm* in the Sheffield Auditorium.
- Bible Study** *Thursday, March 5th at 11:00 am* in the Library.
- The Shoreline Food Pantry & Diaper Bank** *Sat, March 7th at 8:30 am* in the Fellowship Hall.
- Cup-A-Joe Café Youth Group** *Saturday, March 7th at 8:00 am* in the Library.
- Day Light Savings:** Set your clocks ahead one hour *on Saturday night March 7th.*
- Ladies Who Stitch** *Monday, March 9th at 10:00 am* in the Sheffield Auditorium.
- The Benevolent Society Luncheon** *Tuesday, March 10th at 12:00pm* in the Fellowship Hall.
- Board of Trustees Meeting** *Tuesday, March 10th. at 7:00 pm* in the Library.
- ReBbellion Rehearsal** *Wednesday, March 11th at 4:00 pm* in the Fellowship Hall.
- Handbell Ringers Rehearsal** *Wednesday, March 11th at 6:30 pm* in the Fellowship Hall.
- Choir Rehearsal** *Wednesday, March 11th at 7:30 pm* in the Sheffield Auditorium.
- Bible Study** *Thursday, March 12th at 11:00 am* in the Library.
- The Shoreline Food Pantry** *Saturday, March 14th at 8:30 am* in Fellowship Hall.
- Musical Masterworks** *Sat, March 14th at 5:00 pm and Sun, March 15th at 3:00 pm* in the Meetinghouse.
- Adult Forum with John Loughery** *Sunday, March 15th at 11:30 am* in the Sheffield Auditorium.
- Ladies Who Stitch** *Monday, March 16th at 10:00 am* in the Sheffield Auditorium.
- Walt's Pottery Classes** *Tuesday, March 17th 10:00 am and 6:00 pm.*
- April Newsletter Deadline** *Wednesday, March 18th.*
- ReBbellion Rehearsal** *Wednesday, March 18th at 4:00 pm* in the Fellowship Hall.
- TransParent Meeting** *Wednesday, March 18th at 5:30 pm* in the Hoag Parlor.
- Handbell Ringers Rehearsal** *Wednesday, March 18th at 6:30 pm* in the Fellowship Hall.
- Choir Rehearsal** *Wednesday, March 18th at 7:30 pm* in the Sheffield Auditorium.
- Bible Study** *Thursday, March 19th at 11:00 am* in the Library.
- Blood Drive** *Thursday, March 19th from 1:00 - 6:00 pm* in the Fellowship Hall.
- Board of Stewardship Meeting** *Thursday, March 19th at 4:00 pm* in the Library.
- Moth Stories and Potluck Dinner** *Friday, March 20th at 6:00 pm* in the Fellowship Hall.
- The Shoreline Food Pantry** *Saturday, March 21st at 8:30 am* in Fellowship Hall.
- Reading the Bible in One Year Discussion** *Sunday, March 22nd at 11:15 am* in the Sheffield Aud.
- SECT Church House Meeting** *Sunday, March 22nd at 11:30 am* in the Fellowship Hall.
- DINE New London** *Sunday, March 22nd departing FCCOL at 3:30 pm.*
- Ladies Who Stitch** *Monday, March 23rd at 10:00 am* in the Sheffield Auditorium.
- The Benevolent Society Meeting** *Tuesday, March 24th at 10:00 am* in the Library.
- Walt's Pottery Classes** *Tuesday, March 24th 10:00 am and 6:00 pm.*
- Board of Deacons Meeting** *Tuesday, March 24th at 7:00 pm* in the Library.
- ReBbellion Rehearsal** *Wednesday, March 25th at 4:00 pm* in the Fellowship Hall.
- Handbell Ringers Rehearsal** *Wednesday, March 25th at 6:30 pm* in the Fellowship Hall.
- Choir Rehearsal** *Wednesday, March 25th at 7:30 pm* in the Sheffield Auditorium.
- Bible Study** *Thursday, March 26th at 11:00 am* in the Library.
- Writing at the Well** *Friday, March 27th at 10:00 am* in the Hoag Parlor.
- The Shoreline Food Pantry** *Saturday, March 28th at 8:30 am* in Fellowship Hall.
- Emily Dickinson Adult Forum** *Sunday, March 29th at 11:30 am* in the Sheffield Auditorium.
- Confirmation Class** *Sunday, March 29th at 4:00 pm* in the Library.
- Ladies Who Stitch** *Monday, March 30th at 10:00 am* in the Sheffield Auditorium.
- Walt's Pottery Classes** *Tuesday, March 31st 10:00 am and 6:00 pm.*

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF OLD LYME

Staff

The Rev. Dr. Steven R. Jungkeit, Senior Minister (203-430-3208)

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

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 - 10:00 a.m.

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

13/100

Bill Steene

**THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF
OLD LYME
2 FERRY ROAD
OLD LYME, CONNECTICUT 06371**

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



The submission deadline for the April Newsletter will be Thursday, March 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!



A painting of our Meetinghouse by Childe Hassam..