

# INSPIRE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GUILFORD'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



June! Several have stated that this year is moving at record speed. I agree. Here we are venturing into summer months filled with graduations, confirmations, and hopefully some respite time too.

As life ebbs and flows, we are planning ways to make meaning and step out in faith. Our visioning team continues to seek ways to connect our internal ministries with the community and wider world. Please share your dreams for our congregation. If you are interested in being our publicist, call the office. We need you. There are amazing opportunities at First Church. Just last month we celebrated our Sr. Adults (70 plus) with a breakfast, marked another Pilgrim Fellowship service trip, marched and danced our way through PRIDE, had Bible/Book studies, engaged guest preachers and musicians in worship, and through many avenues called for justice in our government. We are currently working on a combined Bible School with the Episcopal Church for July, making plans for New Member Sunday on October 5th, and planning the Civil Rights History Trip for Friday, February 13th through Monday, February the 16th!

Even in what might feel like a spiraling and overwhelming world, we need to find and live in hope. When we isolate we can experience apathy, loneliness, and hopelessness too. Together let's pause, check in with one another, speak words of appreciation, nurture depth in relationships, and foster connected ways of being. In Second Timothy we read, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but rather power, love, and sound mind." With our collective minds and united hearts, may we find and practice the power of resurrected life and hope eternal.

Peace be with you, Ginger

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# WORSHIP AND EVENTS JUNE 2025

## Sunday, June 1

*Food Collection for Guilford Food Bank.*

9:15-9:45am Prayer Group – Chapel.

8:30am Worship/Communion – Chapel.

10am Worship/Comm., Children's Day/Confirmation – Sanct. (Sun. Sch./Nursery).

5pm Prayer Walk – meet in front of the church.



## Sunday, June 8

8:30am Worship – Chapel.

9:15-9:45am Prayer Group – Chapel.

10:00am Church Worship – Sanct.

*(No Sunday School/Nursery).*

3:00pm Shoreline Soul Gospel Concert (pre-rehearsal 1:15pm) – Sanct.

5pm Prayer Walk – meet in front of the church.



## Sunday, June 15

### Father's Day

8:30am Worship – Chapel.

9:30am Father's Day Remembrance – Memorial Garden.

10:00am Worship – Sanct.

*(No Sunday School/Nursery)*

5pm Prayer Walk – meet in front of the church.

## Sunday, June 22

8:30am Worship - Chapel

10:00am Worship – Sanct.

*(No Sunday School/Nursery)*

## Sunday, June 29

8:30am Worship - Chapel

9:15-9:45am Prayer Group – Chapel.

10:00am Worship – Sanct.

*(No Sunday School/Nursery).*

5pm Prayer Walk – meet in front of the church.



PHOTOS FROM PRIDE DAY 2025

\*Summer hours for worship begin the first weekend of July. One Service at 9:00am in the Sanctuary.

**Calling all First Church students** heading to college, graduate school, or post-secondary vocational training! The Pinchbeck Scholarship Fund offers financial assistance, and we encourage you to apply (<https://tinyurl.com/Pinchbeck2025>) or the QR code. Please reach out to Ellen Edens, Deacon, at 203-444-3024 or [Eledens@gmail.com](mailto:Eledens@gmail.com) with any questions.





## SUPPORT FCC WITH A STOCK DONATION

Donating stock is a smart, tax-deductible way to give. Use our free, easy transfer through United Church Funds. To receive 2024 credit, request and submit the Stock Donation Form by December 10: [trustees2@firstchurchguilford.org](mailto:trustees2@firstchurchguilford.org) or [office@firstchurchguilford.org](mailto:office@firstchurchguilford.org). Proceeds go to your Giving Statement or the Endowment Fund—your choice. If you're 71+, you can also give from your 401(k) or IRA RMD. Questions? Contact Keith Bishop: 203-627-6589 or [trustees2@firstchurchguilford.org](mailto:trustees2@firstchurchguilford.org).

### The Widows Who Lunch

If you are a widow or have lost someone close, please join us for our noon luncheon on Wednesday, June 18, at Pa's Place, 514 Whitfield St., Guilford. For more information and to RSVP, call or text Pam D'Amico at 860-338-4811

## Prayer List

In the kinship of faith, we pray for: the people of Israel, Palestine, and Ukraine; those impacted by natural and human-made disasters; the people and communities shattered by guns and violence; those who are losing or fear losing their jobs and benefits with government changes; Cynthia Hirni and family on the death of Bob Raines; Kendrick Norris, a former FCC minister; Rosie Champlin and family; Christine Gill and family on the death of John Eismeier; Bob Howard; Susan Blaszak; Mark Harris; John Van Steenberg and family; those who are going through divorce; those who are ill or suffering; those who are grieving, those who are homebound, struggling, awaiting diagnoses, or going through treatments; family and friends of those who have completed or are contemplating suicide; those living with chronic diseases, dementia, cancer, and the families who care for them; those living with domestic violence; families dealing with addictions; for all world leaders; for our church and all congregations involved in the Visioning process; peace and health for all.

## In Memoriam

Robert Raines  
July 12, 1926 – April 21, 2025



## Deacon of the Month

The Deacon for June is Anita Soucy (203)-980-6947. Please contact Anita if you have questions or reflections about the spiritual life of the church.

## Parish Care Person of the Month

Karen Kalbfeld will be the Pastoral Care Team (PCT) contact for June. Please reach out to her at (203)-435-2591 if you know of any births, adoptions, or if someone would appreciate a card, meal, or prayer shawl as a gesture of First Church's love and prayers.

## ***Update on Gaza and the West Bank:***

Protests around the world in response to starvation and bombing of Palestinians in Gaza and bulldozing refugee camps in the West Bank by the Israeli Government.

- 13 Airlines suspend flight to Israel including Delta, Austrian, British Airways, Swiss, Airfrance, Lufthansa, Brussels, AirEuropa, Eurowings, ITA Airways, Iberia, WTZZ, Ryanair
- United Nation's top humanitarian official delivered his assessment of Israel's barbaric war against the Palestinian people, intentionally making life unlivable in Gaza.
- Norway's sovereign wealth fund announced that it has divested entirely from Israel's Paz Oil Company Ltd., citing ethical concerns.
- The Spanish prime minister, Pedro Sanchez described Israel as a "genocidal state" and said Spain "does not do business with such a country," marking his strongest language yet on the issue.
- Norwegian hotel cancels Israeli tourist booking over Gaza genocide.
- University of San Francisco has announced it will divest from Israel.

Show support of the Palestinian families and children for water, food, medial assistance, and the end of the bombing.

- Call your representatives: Senator Richard Blumenthal: 860-258-6940, Senator Chris Murphy: 860-549-8463, Representative Rosa DeLauro: 203-562-3718.
- First Church supports the Palestine House of Friendship serving children and families of the West Bank. You can make a donation at:  
<https://palestinianhouseoffriendshipcom.wordpress.com/donate/>
- UNRWA: United Nations organization supporting schools, family health care, safety and support in neighborhoods throughout Gaza. Donation:  
<https://donate.unrwa.org/int/en/general>

Peace Affirmation and Justice Committee.





## VISIONING UPDATE!

First Church's Visioning work continues! The team has drafted a purpose statement to answer the question: why do we exist? what is First Church's purpose? The draft will be presented to Church Council in June, and then to boards, committees and gatherings for feedback.

A desire for more fellowship opportunities was one of the most common responses on the Visioning survey. To that end, gatherings will be offered beginning in the summer. Thank you to those who have offered to host a time of fellowship. We are looking for additional people to host either at their home or in the Minear Library. If you are interested, please speak with or contact Gail Tomsich ([gail@newenglandthreads.com](mailto:gail@newenglandthreads.com)) or Anne Godsey ([annergodsey@gmail.com](mailto:annergodsey@gmail.com).)

During the summer, the next part of the process will broaden our scope into our community. Various groups with knowledge of the needs of residents will be contacted: Guilford Social Services, Women & Family Life Center, Guilford Police Department, the Selectman's Office, Guilford Interfaith Ministries, and the Guilford Foundation, among others. If you are interested in being part of this data gathering, please speak with or contact Penelope Rebuzzini ([penelope@firstchurchguilford.org](mailto:penelope@firstchurchguilford.org)). With this input the process will move to discerning what God might be calling First Church to address in this time and place.

We celebrated a Time & Talent Sunday on May 4th. There are many gifts within our congregation that enable us to put our faith into action for our various ministries. Recognizing that not everyone has time to serve on a committee or board, there are many areas that could utilize smaller pockets of time, or for specific events. Gathering this information allows us to invite more people into ministry and connection. The intent of the Time & Talent form is to capture new interests or availability. If you are already serving on a committee/board, making bread, ushering, etc, -thank you! - and we have that information. If you have not submitted a completed Time & Talent form, please complete the form on the next page of this InSpire and email it to Penelope at [penelope@firstchurchguilford.org](mailto:penelope@firstchurchguilford.org), or mail the hard copy in to the Church Office, 122 Broad St, Guilford. Extra copies are available in the narthex and the Church Office.

Let this also be a reminder of two prayer opportunities: a prayer group meets on Sunday mornings in June at 9:15am in the Chapel to prepare for worship; and on Sunday afternoons at 5:00pm a walking prayer group gathers in front of the Church to stroll and pray for congregational and community needs. All are welcome.

Yours in faith,

The Visioning Team

Jill Benton, Stephen Dudley, Ellen Durnin, Ellen Edens, Anne Godsey, Penelope Rebuzzini, Peter Rebuzzini, Andrew Rouillard, Gail Tomsich, Rev. Dr. Ginger Brasher-Cunningham



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

First Congregational Church of Guilford -- Invitation of Time & Talents May 2025

As we envision together where God is calling First Church, please consider where you feel a call to put your faith, gifts and passions into action through the life of this congregation. Thank you! Visioning Team: Ginger Brasher-Cunningham, Jill Benton, Stephen Dudley, Ellen Durnin, Ellen Edens, Anne Godsey, Penelope Rebuzzini, Peter Rebuzzini, Andrew Rouillard, Gail Tomsich, Kathy Westgard

WORSHIP

- Usher/Greeter
- Welcome Bread baker
- Welcome Table?
- Visual Arts
- Movement/liturgical dance
- Flowers

EDUCATION AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

- Church School/Faith Leader Opportunities
- Artists to assist children w/ Bible lessons
- Crafters to assist children w/Bible lessons
- Singers to assist during Children's Chapel
- Tech support
- Work with young teens
- Vacation Bible School
- Pilgrim Fellowship adult advisor (age 25+)
- Confirmation Mentor
- Adult education/current topics
- Bible Study

SPENCER HOUSE (Church Office)

- Office volunteer
- Library volunteer
- Tech support
- Web site design/administration
- Photography
- Historian (archive & research)

FELLOWSHIP/COMMUNITY BUILDING

- Coffee Hour
- Coordinate/help with gatherings, events, picnics, dinners etc

MUSIC PROGRAM

Adult Choir

- Children's Program (grades K-2)
- Kid's Music & Arts Pgm (grades 3-7)
- High School singers
- Vocal soloist
- Instrumentalist (Instrument: \_\_\_\_\_)
- Rehearsal pianist/Accompanist
- Handbells
- Organist
- Joyful Noise! Concert Series

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

- Inside tasks
- Outside tasks
- Landscaping, weeding/mulching
- On-call snow removal help
- Memorial Garden weeding
- Decorating

HARVEST FAIR

- Estate Treasures
- Baked goods/candy
- Furniture
- Handcrafts/knitting
- Luncheon/refreshments
- Jewelry
- Tools
- Set-up/Clean-up
- Greeting
- Parking Attendant (shifts)
- Donation pick-up

OUTREACH MINISTRIES

- Monthly food collection delivery
- Rummage sale

Refugee Resettlement

- Prison ministry backpacks
- Adult/Family service opportunities
- Civil Rights History tours
- Habitat for Humanity

ENVIRONMENT

- Environmental Ministries Team
- Community Garden
- Composting/Recycling

PASTORAL CARE

- Visitation
- Meals for those grieving, post-surgery, etc
- Provide transportation (worship, medical appts)
- Prayer shawl knitting
- Prayer team

FINANCE

- Annual giving campaign (Stewardship)
- Fundraising

COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLICITY

- Inspire newsletter
- Worship announcements (in order of service)
- Local papers
- Website

OTHER GIFTS/PASSIONS TO SHARE? Please

use the reverse side to record these.

CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND  
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

# VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

July 27-Aug 1, 2025 9am-12pm

Open to kids PreK-5<sup>th</sup> grade. All welcome!

Get ready for a week of exploring God's word and learning how we  
can work together to care for creation.

All kids between ages of four and 5<sup>th</sup> grade are invited to grow in faith  
as they play, learn, sing, and work to ReNew our congregation and  
community!

Open to all in the community.



Crafts, Music, Bible Stories & FUN!!



Page Pelphey  
[education@christchurch.guilford.org](mailto:education@christchurch.guilford.org)  
Deb Ruotolo  
[deb@firstchurchguilford.org](mailto:deb@firstchurchguilford.org)

Sign up as soon as you can! We are hoping to collaborate not only with Christ Episcopal Church on the Green but also with North Madison Congregational Church, North Guilford Congregational Church as well as St. John's Episcopal Church in North Guilford. We hope to have a great time with the children together. We are still looking for teachers who have skill sets and will volunteer as well as anyone who wants to do arts, crafts, music and gardening with the children even for an hour here or there. If you have any questions, please reach out to me.

## Pilgrim Fellowship 2024–2025 Year in Review

The 2024–2025 Pilgrim Fellowship program began with enthusiasm and a deep sense of purpose, setting the tone for a year filled with connection, service, and spiritual growth. The journey started with an overnight retreat at the peaceful Killam's Point, where leaders built bonds through reflection, shared meals, and fun activities. This spirit of community carried over into our Opening Picnic, where returning members warmly welcomed newcomers. Students shared treats, played icebreaker games, and began forging friendships, while parents engaged with our program through stories and presentations by the director.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Guilford Fund for Education, Pilgrim Fellowship embarked on 11 trips into the woods as part of our environmental service initiative. I had the privilege of leading groups along the trails of the Guilford Land Conservation Trust's Tanner Marsh Brook property. Together, we identified and removed invasive plant species, while also taking time to appreciate the beauty of nature and reflect on our responsibility as stewards of the earth.



In early fall, our members participated in the CROP Hunger Walk, proudly walking from First Church to the town dock and back, raising nearly \$350 for hurricane relief kits through our partnership with Church World Service. The glowing accessories worn by our walkers mirrored the enthusiasm and solidarity of our group.

October brought intellectual and ethical exploration when Dr. Kate Ott joined us for a powerful session on gender and stereotypes. Her presentation challenged students to reflect on their assumptions and inspired dialogue around inclusive language and social awareness.

As leaves fell, Pilgrim Fellowship students engaged in a beloved community tradition—leaf raking for local families. Armed with rakes, tarps, and leaf blowers, they worked side-by-side under sunny skies, embodying teamwork and generosity.



## PF RECAP CONTINUED

December was a whirlwind of joy and fundraising. We hosted our annual Santa Breakfast, Soup & Bread Dinner, and Holiday Cookie Sale—all made possible by the hard work of our students and the generosity of our community. These festive events not only brought people together but also helped raise funds for our anticipated spring service trip.

Throughout winter, our group continued its mission of learning and service. A visit from Adult & Teen Challenge offered profound insights into addiction recovery, sparking heartfelt conversations and compassion among students. We balanced these deep moments with levity, enjoying fun activities like Minute to Win It, where laughter and teamwork took center stage.

Spring break marked the pinnacle of our service efforts. Forty-eight Pilgrim Fellowship members, supported by 14 adult volunteers, traveled to Johnstown for a transformative mission trip. From building ramps to painting and pavilion construction, our group worked tirelessly to restore homes and uplift spirits. The students not only completed meaningful physical projects, but also formed deep connections with the local community and each other—living out the true meaning of service and compassion.

Upon returning, we shared our journey with the community at our heartfelt Sharefest, a night filled with gratitude and storytelling. Our final meeting celebrated our graduating seniors, honoring their leadership and contributions as they prepare to carry forward the values of Pilgrim Fellowship into the next chapters of their lives.

This year has been one of growth, purpose, and profound impact. To our adult volunteers, Dr. Ginger Brasher-Cunningham, and the families who support our mission—thank you. Together, we've nurtured a generation of thoughtful, kind, and service-driven leaders.

**First Congregational Church Guilford**

## Church Council Highlights

May 13, 2025

Welcome at 7:00PM, with opening prayer by Reilly

**Clergy & Staff Reports**

Ginger: Deb Ruotolo is working with Christ Episcopal Church for a combined Vacation Bible School. Pastoral updates on church members who are/ave been ill.

Reilly: Tuesday morning Bible study returned for the month of May. Next week they will attend a Southern NE UCC Conference preaching camp at Silver Lake. Reilly will help to run a Silver Lake Summer Conference.

Bill: This Sunday is Pride Sunday. Non-traditional and fun music. Plant sale supports the Organ Fund. Group effort. Estimated \$2300 profit.

By-laws: Copies of Bylaws were distributed to committees, boards officers, clergy and staff

Representatives of committees/boards are asked to take back for review and editing, with changes brought back to the June Council meeting.

Treasurer & Finance Reports: Income versus expenses is doing well because the unpledged

income is much higher so far. IRS sent a \$41K check which is the second/last installment of the employee retention tax credit.

Stewardship: will meet in June to plan for fall campaign.

Trustee/Endowment: a trustee distribution will be received this month.

Human Resources: Youth-related safety online training needs to be completed by the end of June for insurance purposes.

Pilgrim Fellowship: Share fest and video two weeks ago. Senior send-off in a couple of weeks.

Applications now accepted for next year's leadership team. Committee trying to put in writing some of their institutional knowledge of PF.

Business Committee: East River Energy in process of replacing the HVAC system at 19 Church

St. Bids out for replacing the boiler at Spencer House.

Prior Minutes approved

New /Old Business: Visioning is working on a Purpose Statement. PAJ held brunch for Rosette

neighborhood to support tiny houses. North Madison CC will join us in our duffel bag ministry. Financial Secretary started a conversation with our IT team regarding improved security in our technology.

Praise Report: peony planted last year is ready to bloom; beautiful landscaping done and tended by Spencer House tenants; son and fiancée closed on a house; friend as guest preacher on Sunday.

Benediction

Meeting adjourned at 8:30.



<b>First Congregational Church of Guilford</b> <b>June 2025</b>			<b>Abbreviation Key:</b> Ch-Chapel CR-Choir Room FH-Fellowship Hall GH-Griswold Hall MEB-Moore Ed. Bldg. SH - Spencer House	MG-Memorial Garden ML-Minear Library North-Narthex Out- Outside Sanct- Sanctuary SJCL- Social Justice Children's Library SOA - Scouts of America Troop 444	<b>In-person 12-step Groups:</b> Sun 7:15a AA-GH Sun 1p NA-GH Mon 8a Al-Anon - Women's Mtg-GH Tues 7p AA- GH Tues. 7p Ala - Rm.9 Tues. 7p AL-Anon - CH	Wed 10a Al-Anon-FH Wed 7p AA-GH Thurs NA 7:30p-GH Fri 7p AA- FH Sat. 7:30a AA- GH <b>*These mtgs. may change for 2025 and will be updated.</b>
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Donations Gathered for the Guilford Foodbank</b>						
<b>1 June</b> 8:30am Worship/Comm. - CH 9:15-9:45am Prayer Group - CH 10am Worship/Comm., Children's Day - Sanct. (Sun. Sch./Nursery). 5pm Prayer Walk - meet in front of the church.	<b>2 June</b> 7pm PCT - FH	<b>3 June</b> 10am Bible Study - FH 7:00pm Deacons Mtg. - ML	<b>4 June</b>	<b>5 June</b> 12pm Joy - Sanct. 7pm SOA - FH/TBD 7:15p - Adult Choir - CR	<b>6 June</b>	<b>7 June</b> Scouts - Evening Strawberry Social Festival Prep - FH
<b>8 June</b> 7-9am Troop Cleanup - FH 8:30am Worship - CH 9:15-9:45am Prayer Group - CH 10am Worship/Pentecost, Recon. Grads. - Sanct. (No Sun. Sch./Nursery). 3pm Soul Concert - Sanct. 11-4pm Scouts - Strawberry Social Festival - Guilford Green 5pm Prayer Walk - meet in front of the church.	<b>9 June</b> 7pm Business Cmte. Mtg - Narthex	<b>10 June</b> 10am Bible Study - FH 7pm Church Council - FH	<b>11 June</b>	<b>12 June</b> 12pm Joy - Sanct. 7pm SOA - FH/TBD 7:15p Adult Choir - CR	<b>13 June</b>	<b>14 June</b>
<b>15 June</b> <b>Father's Day</b> 8:30am Worship - CH 9:30am Father's Day Remembrance - MG 10am Worship - Sanct. (No Sun. Sch./Nursery) 5pm Prayer Walk - meet in front of the church.	<b>16 June</b>	<b>17 June</b> 10am Bible Study - FH 5:30pm PAJ - ML	<b>18 June</b>	<b>19 June</b> 12pm Joy - Sanct. 7pm SOA - FH/TBD No Adult Choir	<b>20 June</b>	<b>21 June</b>
<b>22 June</b> 8:30a Worship - CH 9:15-9:45am Prayer Group - CH 10am Church Family Worship - Sanct. (No Sun. Sch./Nursery) 5pm Prayer Walk - meet in front of the church.	<b>23 June</b>	<b>24 June</b> 10am Bible Study - FH	<b>25 June</b>	<b>26 June</b> 12pm - Joy - Sanct. 7pm SOA - FH/TBD No Adult Choir	<b>27 June</b>	<b>28 June</b>
<b>29 June</b> 8:30a Worship - CH 9:15-9:45am Prayer Group - CH 10am Worship - Sanct. (No Sun. Sch./Nursery) 5pm Prayer Walk - meet in front of the church.	<b>30 June</b> 7pm Pilgrim Fellowship Cmte. Mtg. - GH					

## THE INSPIRE: DEADLINE FRIDAY, JUNE 20TH FOR THE JULY EDITION.

Please keep in mind the following guidelines.

**InSpire Guidelines:** *Please limit articles to 200 words.* Articles are copy edited. We do our best to include as much as possible in each issue. At times, articles may be delayed to the next issue due to space constraints.

### First Church Acronyms Decoder

SOA- Scouts of America  
 CE - Christian Education  
 C&GJ - Community & Global Justice

EMT - Environmental Ministry Team  
 PAJ - Peace, Affirmation, and Justice  
 PCT - Parish Care Team  
 PF - Pilgrim Fellowship  
 WFO - Women's Fellowship & Outreach

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Barbara Catlin, Clerk (she/her)

in care of office@firstchurchguilford.org

We recognize the indigenous Menunkatuck band of the Quinnipiac peoples, who were the long-time stewards of this land. Together we share the ambitions that Guilford's founders outlined in the Covenant of 1639: to "...sit down and join ourselves together...to be helpful each to other in any common work."

-Madison & Guilford Interfaith Clergy Council