



Indigenous ceremony to greet the new morning in Chicago

First Church in Jaffrey Weathervane

September - October 2023

While Chicago Slept

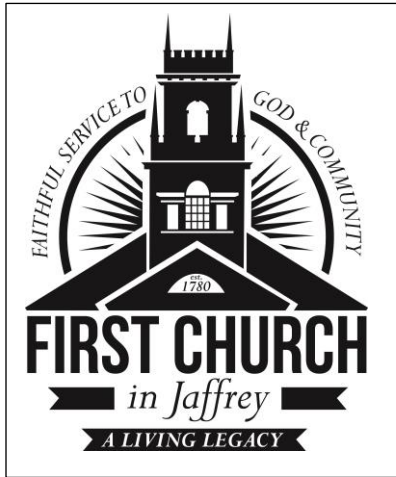
*(A glimpse of the 2023 Parliament of the World's Religions
which Steve attended in August)*

The walk from my hotel room to the conference venue was about a half mile, so I was up very early. This was the second full day of the Parliament. The first gathering of this day was an Indigenous fire ceremony to greet the new morning.

Because of my rich experience with my Lakota friends in Vermillion, SD I wanted to be present at this prayer. The fire circle was on the eastern most terrace of the enormous conference center which hung out over Lake Michigan. The 40 or 50 people that gathered to invite this primordial blessing were a small fraction of the thousands of spiritual pilgrims that would convene in myriads of ways later in the day. But this was to be the first invocation of this new day to remind all of us of the work ahead – a call to conscience through the defending of freedom and human rights.

A Lakota elder began the sharing, but in turn invited spirit guides from all over the world to offer their prayers. Indigenous Mongolians and Uzbeks from Asia, Zulus from Africa, and Quechua friends from South America each intoned blessings with the fire in their own native language – each with the same intention: *may there be peace in every corner of this world we share*. They had traveled from faraway places to be there – together – for this moment.

In the deep silence that followed, I became powerfully aware of what I had just experienced. While most of Chicago was still asleep, I had stood with *the world* while we quietly met together to join hearts and spirits in blessing. What a jolt of hope! Perhaps it is time for all of us to wake up.



News in this Issue:

While Chicago Slept – Page 1
Inside First Church – Page 2
2024 Church Calendar for Sale – Page 3
Sept/Oct Worship Schedule – Page 4
FCiJ Circles – Page 5
Neighbors In Need Offering – Page 6
Trustees Report – Page 7
106th Fair Report – Page 8
Pie Sales – Page 9
Ukraine Update – Page 10

Inside First Church

Fall Faith Series: Exploring the World's Religions

For 16 years, Steve taught a course at the University of South Dakota on the World's Religions. This fall Steve will adapt that course into a six-week faith study series. We will explore the essential nature of religious thought and then in turn examine Indigenous religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the three Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These educational gatherings will be held in person on Wednesday afternoons at 4:00 pm in the Parish House beginning on Wednesday, September 13, 2023. They will also be offered through Zoom using some new technology purchased through a generous gift to the church. Let Steve know if you have questions. We hope you will join us.



Steve with Muslim friends at the Parliament in Chicago

Continued on Page 3

Inside First Church (cont'd)

Our Summer Capital Funds Drive is a Major Success!

This summer, our trustee circle launched a small capital funds drive to raise \$25,000 to address several important issues that affect our historic buildings and grounds. We are pleased to announce that the drive has been **an amazing success**. We raised \$47,675! This included a major gift of \$20,000. We are so thankful to all of you for your generous sharing. Please watch the great work that is being done around our space: new paint on the parsonage and parish house, new carpet and flooring in the sanctuary, and a revitalization of our memorial garden and labyrinth! Let's celebrate the bounty of all our blessings. A festive luncheon for all after a Sunday service is being planned.

Blessing the Animals

In honor of the Feast of St Francis (the patron saint of animals), the Cathedral of the Pines will host a "Blessing of the Animals" service on October 1, 2023, at 2:00 pm on the grounds outside in the Francis Chapel. Steve will lead the service again this year and is happy to invite all of you to bring your beloved family pets to this simple and lovely service.

Monadnock Grace: Retreat Day

On Sunday afternoon October 15th, our church will host a small retreat called "Monadnock Grace" at the home of Tim and Annie Gordon. It will be a chance to be together in spirit for an extended time in the shadow of our mountain. Steve will lead us in music, prayer, reflection, movement, silence, and conversation. We will end with a simple soup supper and communion. The cost is \$20 per person (payable by cash or check made out to First Church, with retreat in the memo line). We have space for 15 people, so please sign up with Steve right away if you would like to attend.

Do You Need A 2024 Calendar?



There will be a 2024 First Church/Monadnock calendar this year, thanks to requests from people who enjoyed the 2023 version. Proceeds from calendar sales, still priced at \$10 per calendar, will be added to this year's Fair earnings to help meet wider community needs as well First Church's operating expenses. The calendar measures 11" wide and 17" top to bottom when hanging from a single punched hole at the top and has room for writing appointments and other reminders. All photos are in full color and focus on Jaffrey and immediate surroundings.

If you would like to order a calendar, or perhaps a few calendars, please contact Carol Hess at: hessjaffrey@gmail.com. Printing will occur in late September. The calendar is an excellent way to share the beautiful area where we live with friends and family. Thanks for urging me to do this again.

Carol 603-532-4255 (cell)

2023 September/October Worship at First Church

Meditation text in bold; Call to Worship text in plain font

This fall our sanctuary will be re-carpeted. While this is going on, we will move our Sunday morning worship to the Meetinghouse. Those dates will be announced later in September. Please watch for them!

September 3, 2023

“Keep the Fire Burning”

Exodus 3:1-15

Psalm 105

Communion

October 1, 2023 –

World Communion Sunday

“Our First Medicine”

Exodus 17:1-7

Isaiah 12

Communion

September 10, 2023

“Do You Know What Time It Is?”

Romans 13:8-14

Psalm 119

October 8, 2023

“The Fourth Commandment”

Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

Psalm 19

September 17, 2023

“Thoughts and Prayers”

Matthew 18:21-35

Psalm 103

October 15, 2023

“How Can I Keep from Singing”

Philippians 4:4-9

Psalm 23

September 24, 2023

“Mudita”

Matthew 20:1-16

Psalm 145

October 22, 2023

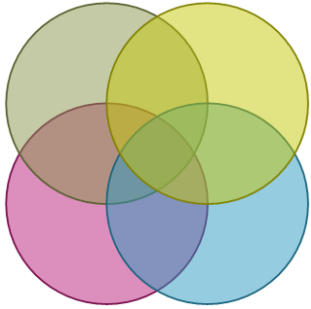
“Be Not Afraid”

Exodus 33:12-23

Psalm 96

October 29, 2023

Guest preacher



The Wheels on the Church Bus Go Round, Round, Round

Will you join a Circle to help us move forward?

The congregational vision of faith and spirit means specifically that the ministry of the First Church in Jaffrey is a shared effort – everyone has a part to play in our community.

FCiJ Circles are inclusive groups of the church’s members and friends charged with accomplishing specific tasks. Equally important, they also provide opportunities to share ideas, concerns and matters of the spirit.

The following are the core Circles, our essential “wheels.” Some meet monthly, others less frequently. For information, talk to the contact person.

Executive Circle – Composed of the Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer (all elected) and the chairpersons of each circle. Oversees and coordinates the work of the church. Monthly meetings welcome visitors. Contact: Sam Greene, Moderator.

Trustees Circle – Responsible for the church’s financial stability and operations, as well as maintenance of buildings and grounds. Members (6) are elected for staggered terms. Monthly meetings welcome visitors. Contact: Janet Grant, chair.

Worship Circle – Works with Minister and Minister of Music to reflect on our worship services and explore resources and opportunities that help deepen faith and enrich lives. Supports Sunday worship and congregational involvement by recruiting volunteers to serve as Sunday greeters, ushers, and worship leaders. Coordinates flower donations and decorations for holidays. Meets regularly and is always searching for new members and their ideas. Contact: Steve Miller or Nancy Elder-Wilfrid.

Benevolence and Social Justice Circle – Selects and funds well-established programs that benefit local, regional, and broader communities. Oversees annual allocation of funds raised by the Fair and other projects, based on research and suggestions from congregation. Selects recipients for scholarship awards. Oversees 5 for 5 UCC special offerings, such as One Great Hour of Sharing. Meets quarterly, actively seeks new members. Contact: Marcia Breckenridge, chair.

Continued on Page 6

FCiJ Circles (cont'd)

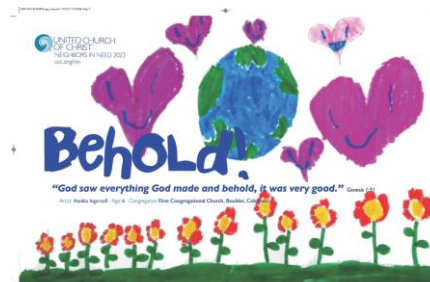
Communications Circle – Promotes First Church’s theology, worship opportunities, and community service through press releases, a bimonthly newsletter, and website. Handles publicity for church events. Currently adopting electronic communication technology to reach a wider audience. Meets as needed, looking for new members with communication and social media skills. Contact: Carol Hess or Mary Jo Marvin.

Fellowship Circle – A “circle in progress” to focus on welcoming new people as well as hosting opportunities for fellowship through coffee hour and other gatherings. It could also be involved in liaison with groups from the community who use our building. Speak to Steve if you are interested in this very important initiative.

Pastoral Relations Circle – Consists of minister and three individuals selected from the congregation. Monthly meetings provide confidential opportunities for the minister to solicit guidance, explore concerns and discuss any congregational issues that impact our common life in the church. Welcomes input on pastoral matters from congregation. Contact: Bobbie Gilbert chair.

Email admin@firstchurchinjaffrey.org or call the church office (leave a message) to request a directory (print or electronic) which contains the contact information for all Circle leaders. Or, talk to them after the worship service.

Neighbors in Need Special Offering



In 2023, the UCC Neighbors in Need special offering will be collected on *Sunday, October 1, World Communion Day*. Using the overreaching theme of “**BEHOLD!**” this year’s focus is on environmental justice. Plastics, electronics, and other non-compostable wastes are being shipped across, and even tossed into, our waterways, launched into space, as well as buried in landfills. As people of faith, we believe these egregious acts are sinful and unholy. We must be better stewards of our planet!

First Church joins UCC congregations across the country in promoting this campaign. One-third of the offering supports the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds are used by Justice and Witness Ministries to provide grants to UCC churches and organizations as well as supporting a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects. For information on the wide array of projects supported by the NIN offering, go to the UCC website.

Special envelopes will be available. Donations in any amount are welcomed.



Trustees Update: A Busy Summer to Spruce Up and Fix Up

You probably have noticed a flurry of activity around our buildings and grounds this summer. Basement windows have been repaired, reglazed and painted. Painting is underway on the front wall of the Parish House, the Blackberry Lane side of the parsonage and the upper back wall of the Parish House. In preparation for the fall recarpeting of the sanctuary and narthex, touch-up painting on the pews has been completed. Light fixtures in the Parish House were de-bugged. A new fire alarm system (and some new smoke detectors) was installed. We thank the following volunteers who undertook many of these projects and all contributors who helped pay the costs of the contractors we hired for others:

Window repair, reglazing, shutter repair and painting: Steve Brackett and Dan Wilfrid

Shrubbery trimming: Roy Lake

Weekly Trash Transfer (July-September): Bruce Hill

Light Fixture Debugging: John Raleigh, Dan Wilfrid

Pew Touch-Up Painting: Janet Grant, Dee Poole, Miki Osgood, Joyce Petkovich, Steffie Kyte and Dan Wilfrid

Noticing and Reporting What Needs to be Done: Pam Hill, Janet Grant, Carol Hess

Along with new carpeting to be installed this fall (and the volunteer tasks to prepare for it), we are also gathering cost estimates for tree removal, path improvement and extension, and invasive weed mitigation around the Memorial Garden to renovate a welcoming place for reflection and remembering. We are also seeking a carpenter willing to replace rotted wood in the church tower before it is painted. Projects awaiting volunteers this fall include Parish House window and storm window washing and cleaning and painting of window wells. Please speak to Dan Wilfrid if you can help with that.

First Church 106th Fair Celebrates Community!



The weather was perfect and eager buyers found an incredible variety of treasures that came from many, many generous donations. By Wednesday, workers of all ages had again performed the three-day miracle that transforms the Meetinghouse, church buildings and the common into a festive summer FAIR. Music, tasty food, people strolling around to greet friends, children playing, and colorful venues under tents scattered around the historic buildings created a memorable experience. “This is a great Fair!” echoed throughout the afternoon.

Under the excellent leadership of the Fair Chairs – Bruce and Pam Hill and Janet Grant – the 106th Fair raised close to \$16,000 (in three hours) to share with community social services and scholarships for Conant grads. This event depends on roughly 100 volunteers to set up, sort, sell, park cars, and clean up. While the church’s congregation plans and organizes the Fair, two-thirds of the workers come from the wider community.

Donors and sponsors contribute significantly to the Fair’s success; they include Gordon Services, Jaffrey-Rindge Rotary Club, River Street Market (Circle K), Daffodils Flower and Gifts, Tieger Real Estate, Monadnock Disposal, Camp Wanocksett, Greg Walsh Auction Services, Bruce Bartels, Jim Banghart, Andy Card. In addition, Steve and Pauline Brackett, who managed Antiques & Collectibles and Furniture at the Fair, took many leftovers and held a post-Fair yard sale at their house in Jaffrey Center on Route 124. This extra effort netted over \$375 which will be donated to First Church. And, we have placed a painting on consignment with NH Antiques Coop; look for a report on that later.

Congratulations to all!



A test drive of the lamb rocker before taking it home from the Fair

Thank you to our contributors:

MaryJo Marvin, Steve Miller, Carol Hess, Pam Hill, Ilona Kwiecien, Bruce Hill, Janet Grant

Dear Pie Friends ...



Summer pie sales were highly successful. Every Friday for 7 weeks, the tables in the narthex were loaded with beautiful pies of many varieties, and most sold in 30 minutes after the doors opened at 2. We had several new people joining us, which helped boost sales. One local fellow has mastered the art of tortieres (French Canadian meat pies) and beautiful crusts, with help and guidance from his wife. A neighbor perfected her skills at creating picture perfect pie crust, and another lovely lady who has cut back on baking instead made a generous contribution to help pay for ingredients.

We sold pies from the last week in June through August 11, and our total in sales was \$5,500! That's just shy of \$800/week. People love pies, especially fruit/berry ones. I want to mention Sylvia who faithfully acted as cashier each week, while Dee, Mary Jo, and Pat took turns helping behind the pie table and Janet who covered us all each week. Congratulations to the dedication of our pie shakers and makers!

On August 17, I sold special Jaffrey Jubilee Pies from 2:30-3:30 and after 6:30 as a very small part of the day-long Jaffrey's 250th Commemorative Events on the Common. All proceeds will go to help Ukrainian children through the Ukrainian Refugee Relief Fund administered by First Church.

I am now officially done with pies for this year! Yippee ☺

Yours in pies, Pam Hill



Ukraine Update

From Ilona Kwiecien



Children's camp in western Ukraine

Thanks to a steady flow of contributions, we are able to continue supporting efforts in Poland and include a new initiative. As of July, we are no longer involved with the home in Lublin (Liliowa) which has been sold; some Ukrainians went back to their country while others moved out to new locations within Poland. The six individuals we helped move into their own apartment in Lublin are doing well on their own; four women are now working for McDonalds, and they have told Marcin they do not need our assistance at this time. (Marcin happened to go to the McDonalds where one of the ladies was working and got “special” treatment recently!) I plan on returning to Poland in early October.

Dom Matki (House for Mothers) in Warsaw

No major changes here. Their Children's Day celebration was a big success, and they continue their outreach efforts. We have sent funds monthly, and I hope to stop in to meet with their director again when in Warsaw.

Lapigua in Zamosc

We have been most active in working with Stephanie and her crew over the summer. Lapigua is currently focusing in two directions: humanitarian aid projects both in Poland and Ukraine and organizing activities at the new community center for Ukrainians. They are very grateful for our monthly support, saying that it is a rare source of regular funding they can count on. Though they have been successful in obtaining a grant to help renovate the community center, contributions from within Poland have declined.

One of their new initiatives involves a summer children's camp in western Ukraine, with whom they have trusted contacts. First Church has helped in two ways. First, we sent \$2,000 for Oleksii, Evgen, Maksim, Lillia, and Stefanie to be able to attend. Thank you to the “pie bakers” for their donation and expressing a desire that it be used to help children – that prompted my “discovery” that Lapigua is involved in this camp project.

Second, over the summer I received a request from a former hospice colleague, asking if I could help the Keene Lion's Club find a way to help Ukrainian children. Well, I connected them with Stephanie and they, too, have sent (through First Church's refugee support account) a generous amount for the camp.

Stephanie and I have also been talking about ways in which First Church might directly help out a family or small group of people. She has mentioned a few possibilities and will set up meetings when I'm in Poland. If anyone has any thoughts about this direction, please let me know.

Lukasz continues to be a trusted contact and travels to and from Ukraine. I hope to connect with him when in Lublin. That wraps it up for now. We hope to keep supporting worthwhile projects while there are funds; on my end I feel strongly committed to helping as the spirit moves for as long as I can. Thank you for all your support.