

The Messenger

**First & Wesley
United Methodist Church
89 Center Street
West Haven, Connecticut 06516
203-933-8795
March 2026**



Lent: Returning to the Heart of God



The season of Lent invites us into one of the most sacred journeys of the Christian year; a forty-day pilgrimage of reflection, repentance, renewal, and preparation for the victory of Easter. It is not merely a time to “give something up,” but a sacred opportunity to draw closer to God, to examine our lives honestly, and to realign our hearts with the purposes of Christ.

Rev. Frank Sarpong In Scripture, the number forty often represents a season of testing and transformation. Moses spent forty days on the mountain, Elijah journeyed forty days to Horeb, and our Lord Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness before beginning His earthly ministry. Each of these moments reminds us that spiritual growth often happens in the quiet, challenging seasons when we intentionally seek God. Lent calls us into that same holy space; away from distraction, toward devotion; away from noise, toward prayer; away from self-centered living, toward Christ-centered living.

During this Lenten season, we are encouraged to practice three important spiritual disciplines: prayer, fasting, and generosity. Prayer deepens our relationship with God and helps us listen for His voice. Fasting teaches us dependence on God rather than on temporary comforts. Generosity reminds us that our faith is not only inward but outward, expressed through acts of compassion, kindness, and justice toward others. When these practices are embraced sincerely, Lent becomes a powerful season of spiritual renewal.

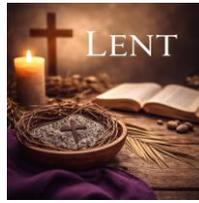
Lent is also a season of grace. It reminds us that even when humanity fell short, God did not abandon us. Instead, through Jesus Christ, He opened the way for forgiveness, restoration, and new life. As we walk through these forty days, we are not walking in guilt but in hope;

the hope that God is still shaping us, still calling us, and still transforming us.

Let this Lenten season be a time for our families, young people, and elders alike to pause and ask: Where is God inviting me to grow? What habits must I release? What new commitments is God calling me to embrace? As we journey together toward the cross and ultimately toward the empty tomb, may our hearts be renewed, our faith strengthened, and our lives more fully devoted to Christ.

May this holy season lead us to deeper humility, stronger faith, and a greater love for God and neighbor. And when Easter morning arrives, may we rise with renewed joy, proclaiming with confidence: Christ is risen, and we are being made new.

Rev. Frank Sarpong
Pastor, First & Wesley United Methodist Church



Lectionary Readings for March 2026



March 1, 2026

[Genesis 12:1-4](#), [Psalm 121](#), [Romans 4:1-5, 13-17](#), [John 3:1-17](#)

March 8, 2026

[Exodus 17:1-7](#), [Psalm 95](#), [Romans 5:1-11](#), [John 4:5-42](#)

March 15, 2026

[1 Samuel 16:1-13](#), [Psalm 23](#), [Ephesians 5:8-14](#), [John 9:1-41](#)

March 22, 2026

[Ezekiel 37:1-14](#), [Psalm 130](#), [Romans 8:6-11](#), [John 11:1-45](#)

March 29, 2026 (Palm Sunday)

[Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29](#), [Matthew 21:1-11](#), [Isaiah 50:4-9a](#)
[Psalm 31:9-16](#), [Philippians 2:9-11](#), [Matthew 26:14-27:66](#)

April 2, 2026 (Maundy Thursday)

[Exodus 12:1-4, \(5-10\) 11-14](#), [Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19](#),
[1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#), [John 13:1-17, 31b-35](#)

April 3, 2026 (Good Friday)

[Isaiah 52:13-53:12](#), [Psalm 22](#), [Hebrews 10:16-25](#), [John 18:1-19:42](#)



First & Wesley United Methodist Church

March 2026



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10:00a Family Worship with Communion & Birthday/Anniversary Celebration	2 No Afterschool Program 7p Adult Monday school	3 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 6p Healing Service	4 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 7p Adult Group Study	5 10a-12p "K" Café 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 5p Youth Choir 6p Bell Choir 7p Adult Choir	6 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 7p Missions In person	7
8 10:00a Family Worship Service & Sunday School (begins after Children's Sermon)	9 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 7p Adult Monday school	10 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 6p Bell Choir 7p Adult Choir	11 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 7p Adult Group Study	12 10a-12p "K" Café 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 5p Youth Choir	13 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program	14 8a Men's Fellowship Breakfast (Kendall Hall) 10:30a Women's Brunch
15 10:00a Family Worship Service & Sunday School (begins after Children's Sermon) 7p Cooperative Parish Meeting 7pm Worship Committee-Zoom	16 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 7p Adult Monday school	17 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 6p Bell Choir 7p Adult Choir 7p Finance	18 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 7p Adult Group Study	19 10a-12p "K" Café 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 5p Youth Choir	20 *Articles Due for the April Messenger No Afterschool Program	21 9:30a - Craft Corner 5p Agape Meal (Free) All Welcome
22 10:00a Family Worship Service & Sunday School (begins after Children's Sermon) 2:15p Joint Finance meeting	23 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 6p Bell Choir 7p Adult Choir 7p Adult Monday school	24 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 6:30p Trustees	25 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 7p Adult Group Study	26 10a-12p "K" Café 3p-6p Prayer Shawl 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program 5p Youth Choir	27 3p-5:30p Afterschool Program	28 9-11a Community Breakfast with Easter Bunny! 11a Egg Hunt
29 Palm Sunday 10:00a Family Worship Service & Sunday School (begins after Children's Sermon)	30 3p -5:30p Afterschool Program 5:30 pm VBS meeting 7p Adult Monday school	31 3p -5:30p Afterschool Program 5p Youth Choir 6p Bell Choir 7p Adult Choir		2 7p Maundy Thursday Service	3 7p Good Friday Service	

For more information go to the church website at www.firstwesleyumc.org

Zoom Link for all Worship Services and meetings!

(exceptions – SPR, CNLD,)

Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/147691027>

Call-in: [1-646-876-9923](tel:1-646-876-9923) Meeting ID: [147691027#](https://zoom.us/j/147691027#)

Maundy Thursday & Good Friday

Holy Week, we will be having our regular Maundy Thursday (April 2nd) and Good Friday (Apr. 3rd) services at 7pm. Let us join together to remember our Lord and Savior and what he endured for our salvation.

COOPERATIVE PARISH NEWS

Our cooperative Parish consists of 9 churches: Branford UMC, Clinton UMC, Faith United UMC (North Haven), First & Summerfield UMC, First & Wesley UMC, Ghana Emmanuel UMC, Hamden Plains UMC, St. Andrews UMC, and Westville UMC. One or two lay members and their pastors meet once a month to discuss and share ongoing ministries and to see how we can support each other. In the past we have shared VBS resources, put together a fantastic Advent Concert, shared a game night, a Jell-o-bration with games, etc.

We are in need of one or two lay members who would be willing to attend this monthly meeting. Our next meeting is on Zoom on Sunday, March 15th at 7pm. If you are interested, please contact Pastor Frank or Helen Smith.

Healing and Wholeness Services

You are Welcome and Needed!

Our Healing and wholeness circle will meet in the pastor's office on Tuesday, March 3rd at 6pm. If you could use some extra support or have a prayer concern which is on your heart, you are welcome to come and pray with caring prayer partners. If you are not able to attend in person, you may send your prayer requests to Pastor Cindy Dodd through text to 203-889-6934 and your request will be read during the service.

If you have any questions, please feel free to give me a call
Pastor Cindy Dodd, 203-889-6934

First & Wesley UMC

Tuesday, March 3rd at 6pm (**New Time**)

(1st Tuesday of each month)

Branford UMC

Wednesday, March 11th at 1pm in the sanctuary

(2nd Wednesday of each month)

Hamden Plains UMC

Wednesday, March 25th at 11am in prayer room

(4th Wednesday of each month)

Sunday School



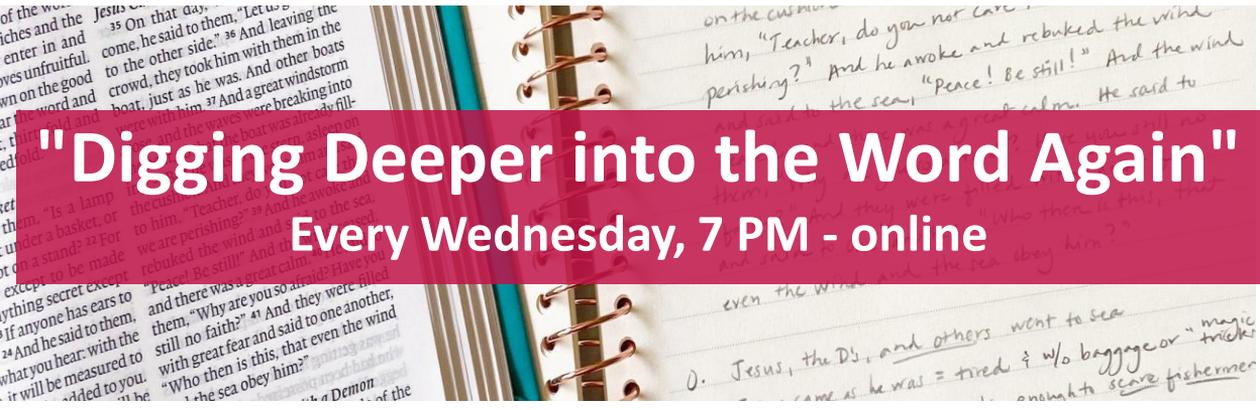
Come learn about the character of God, the work of Christ, and the means of living in right relationship to God and all people.

We meet Sunday mornings following the Children's Moment during the 10:00 service.

Our program is open to all children ages 4 and up. Our youth are invited to rotate through as helpers. On 4th Sunday of each month a Sunday school class is held for grades 6 & up. The regular class will meet at the same time in their regular location.

Please go to the church website to register your child/youth for Sunday School or ask a Sunday School teacher for a registration form.

ADULT BIBLE STUDY*



"Digging Deeper into the Word Again"
Every Wednesday, 7 PM - online

- ▶ Do you have any questions about the Sunday Service sermons?
- ▶ Have you experienced something or have a story that connects with those sermons?
- ▶ Do you want to explore the texts, themes, or theology used in the Sunday Service?

If so, you're invited to join our Wednesday Bible Study!

This will be a time to dive deeper into the Scriptures preached in the previous Sunday's service.

ADULT 'MONDAY' SCHOOL

The Adult Monday School will be starting a Lenten study for 7 weeks starting on Monday, February 23rd. They meet every Monday at 7pm on Zoom.

The book they will be using is Give Up Something Bad for Lent by James Moore. This invites us to go further than chocolate by seeking God's help to give up spiritually something we would be better off not doing.; giving up things like procrastinating or feeling envious, one bad habit, one week at a time. As we do this, he invites us to 'fully embrace the Good News of Easter.' Please ask Helen Smith (203-444-2362) for a book if you would like to join for this short term study!

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST NEWS



Men's Breakfast Invitation

March 14, 2026



Hello Men,

Please consider joining us for the next Men's Fellowship Breakfast second Saturday at 8 a.m. for a delicious hot cooked breakfast.

Our February gathering was nicely attended by nearly 30 guys with about a half dozen new men who have never attended before.

This is a BYOB event which means bring your own Bible.

We will be reading chapter 1 of Ephesians together followed by a round table discussion.

Our breakfast is open to all men, so consider inviting a guest. So we can best plan please let Kel Youngs know you will be attending.

Can't make it this month? We meet every second Saturday of the month – feel free to join us in the future.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP BRUNCH

March 14, 2026

10:30am-12:30pm

We hope you can join us for a time of fellowship, spiritual nourishment, encouragement, planning, visioning, support and care!



COMMUNICATIONS

We would like to make sure that everyone receives information that is sent out by the church via either e-mail, snail mail or text.

E-mail - If you do not receive an e-mail from the church at least once a week, please check your spam/junk folder. If it is there, move it to your inbox. If it is not there, please contact Helen Smith, 203-444-2362 to see if we can get that working again!

Phone - Also, please update your cell phone number. We are working on getting a voluntary text program up and running, so if you would like to receive a text from the church and NOT get all the pings when people respond, that is the goal.

Snail Mail – if you have moved recently, please update your address – Helen Smith 203-444-2362



MISSION & OUTREACH

Sock and Underwear Collection



Wow! Let's Celebrate! Given the short window of opportunity to kick off the Sock and Underwear drive due to the wintry the weather,WE DID IT!

I sense this was a whole church endeavor since a lot of prayer and generosity went into the effort. Unfortunately, you were not able to see the faces of the people at Columbus House when I dropped off the boxes. They were thrilled at the donation. People in the lobby were even saying, "wow! Thank you for your generosity".

We were able to commission a total of 486 pair or socks and 98 pair of underwear. We are so grateful for not only the donations of socks and underwear, but also the cash donations that made our efforts together a success.

FREE ANNUAL EASTER BREAKFAST AND EGG HUNT

Saturday, March 28th

Breakfast and crafts from 9-11am with an Easter Egg hunt that begins at 11am. Bring the kids and take photos with the Easter Bunny! (please bring your own camera) – more info on next page!



VBS MEETING

Monday, March 30th –
5:30pm – in-person

*"Find Your
Strength in
God"*

We will be planning for our summer Vacation Bible School. The title of the program is "Snowball Mountain Challenge". Please come, share your ideas, set a date, what **you** can help with (whether before, during, or after) Hope to see you there)

DENTAL CARE KITS



We are having a regular collection of toothbrushes, toothpaste, etc. that you get from your dentist that you do not use. It is time for many of us to visit our dentist for our annual check in and cleaning. **Since many of us use an electric toothbrush, please consider donating the dental care kit that you receive from the dentist.** There will be a collection point in Fellowship Hall where you can drop your dental kit. Also, it wouldn't hurt to ask your provider to throw in a few extra kits.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Next Meeting, March 26th

We hope you can join us!



Our Prayer Shawl Ministry was started by a past member **Julius McGregor** in 2005. This year, we celebrate 20 years of comforting and supporting our church community. Through these two decades, our group has lovingly created countless prayer shawls, offering a tangible sign of God's love to those facing illness, grief, or life's transitions. Each shawl is made with prayer, hope, and compassion, and given freely to remind others that they are never alone.

The modern Prayer Shawl Ministry was founded in 1998 by Janet Severi Bristow and Victoria Cole-Galo, who developed the idea as an outgrowth of their studies in applied feminist spirituality at the Women's Leadership Institute at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut. They combined a love for knitting and crocheting with the intention of creating a spiritual practice to comfort, support, and celebrate.

- The Founders: Janet Bristow and Victoria (Vicky) Galo aimed to create a tangible, "wearable hug" for people in need of comfort or in times of joy.
 - The Process: The ministry involves knitting or crocheting shawls while meditating, praying for the recipient, and often using a pattern of three stitches (representing Trinity, or faith, hope, and love).
 - Expansion: Following their 1998 start, they launched a website, shawlministry.com, which has helped the grassroots, interfaith movement spread internationally.
 - Origins: While the modern ministry began in 1998, the concept of a prayer shawl has roots in ancient Jewish traditions regarding the tallit.
- The shawls are intended to be given away freely to provide comfort and solace to those in need.

FREE COMMUNITY BREAKFAST

Easter crafts,
photos* with Easter Bunny
& Egg Hunt
Ages 1-10

*Free photos with the Easter Bunny
(Please bring your own camera)

SATURDAY, March 28, 2026
BREAKFAST & CRAFTS: 9-11 AM
EASTER EGG HUNT: 11 AM

First & Wesley United Methodist Church
89 Center Street, West Haven, CT 06516
203.933.8795 firstwesleyumc@gmail.com
www.firstwesleyumc.org

Handicap accessible



Finance Corner

At the Leadership meeting held on January 31, it was mentioned that some people in our congregation do not know how their pledges are being used for by the church. At the Charge Conference held on November 1, 2025, those members in attendance approved the 2026 Operating budget. The approved budget and the Adjusted Budget is as follows:

	Budget	Adjusted Budget
Payroll & related expenses	87,952	102,459
Church Building related expenses	41,429	41,429
Apportionments	19,953	19,953
Missions & Outreach	11,800	11,800
Admin & operating expenses	6,100	6,100
Parsonage	5,700	5,700
Program Supplies	<u>2,875</u>	<u>2,875</u>
Total projected expenses	175,809	190,316

The Operating Budget expenses do not include direct expenses (salaries & program costs) to run the After School Program. That comes from the Whitley Bequest and is to be refunded with grants.

In future Messengers, we will explain what expenses are included in the above line items.

A snapshot of January 2026 activity shows that January revenues (income) of \$11,885.82 along with \$1,095.67 (part of the left-over funds from 2025), we were able to pay the expenses of \$12,981.49.



Pot Pie Fundraiser

Wednesday, April 15th

4-5pm Pickup orders

5pm Eat at the church

Our next fundraiser will be our Pot pie Dinner. Each dinner includes a chicken or beef pot pie, salad, dressing, and a dessert for \$12. We will have to-go and eat-in options. On line ordering is available. Orders are due by

April 8th. Contact Helen Smith if you have any questions – see flyer in this newsletter!

March Birthdays

- 3 - Janet Francois (Lentini)
- 5 - Amy Sablone
- 7 - Timothy Geiger
- 9 - Jennifer Shove-Sisson
- 11 - Nia Flippin
- 12 - Mason Argentino
- 19 - Karen McGregor
- 20 - Susan Cascio
- 24 - Alex Lynn Simone
- 27 - Doris Hunter
- 28 - Anna Bartozzi
- 29 - Rose Cook Ali

PLEASE NOTE: If you do not see your birthday or anniversary listed, please let the church office know so we can update our list and make sure you are not missed.

Also, please send information re any name changes, address changes, marriages, births, deaths, etc., to the Church Office, or by Email to: firstwesleyumc@gmail.com



Native American Coin Collection

We continue to collect coins for the Native American Ministries. We would like to send many thanks to our Church Family for helping us to continue with this Ministry. FYI – in 2025, we collected \$510.65 – THANK YOU!

Being Alone in the Church

For those of you who need to go into the church, do not forget to sign in each time you enter the church. If you are going to be working in the church alone, please make sure someone knows you are there, and let them know when you leave.



Craft Corner

Card Ministry

Reaching Out with Care

Our **Card Ministry** creates and sends *Get Well* and *Thinking of You* cards to those who could use a little extra encouragement or support.

Contact Gail if you would like a card sent to someone or have questions about the group. You can call the church office or e-mail Gail at gbartozzi@yahoo.com. We meet on the third Saturday of the month from 9:30 - 10:30.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Pastor, Rev. Frank Sarpong
860-938-1845 (phone or text))
franksarpong@nyac-umc.com

Layleader, Mary Rolfe
475-988-7666 (phone or text)
mary.kate527@icloud.com

POT PIE DINNER

Individual pie w/salad & dessert

Pick-up or Eat-in

Wednesday, April 15th

PICK-UP: 4-5PM

EAT-IN: 5PM



scan to order

Place orders by April 8th



\$12 each for each dinner

Pick-up Eat-in (please check one)

NAME _____

PHONE # _____

E-MAIL _____

_____ Chicken Pot Pie dinner(s) @\$12 each

_____ Beef Pot Pie dinner(s) @12 each

TOTAL DUE _____



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Phone (203) 933-8795

www.firstwesleyumc.org

Email: firstwesleyumc@gmail.com

Facebook Page at www.facebook.com/firstwesleyumc.

Pastor Frank Sarpong

“Sunday Worship Time: 10:00am”

The March 2026 Newsletter

STRONGER TOGETHER



“We can do all things
through Christ who strengthens us.”

(Philippians 4:13)

IN-PERSON & ONLINE SUNDAY WORSHIP @ 10:00 AM

COME JOIN OUR CHURCH FAMILY!