

The Messenger

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



The Bible Class System: Reclaiming The Past For a Vibrant Future

Growing up in the Methodist Church, Bible Class was foundation for church growth. It wasn't just a meeting on a calendar; it was the heartbeat of the faith community. Long before megachurches and digital streaming, the Methodist movement swept across nations because of a simple, radical idea: the **Class Meeting**.

Rev. Frank Sarpong

At **First & Wesley UMC**, we have a rich history, but to move into the future, we are looking back at what made us strong. We are reclaiming the "Class System" which is small, intimate groups where faith isn't just taught, but lived out.

The Power of the Small Group

The original Methodist classes were groups of about 12 people who met weekly. They didn't just study Scripture; they asked one another, *"How is it with your soul?"*

In these small circles, no one is a stranger. When we start these new study groups, we aren't just adding another program to our church; we are building a support system. In a large sanctuary, it's easy to hide in the back pew. In a small group, you are seen, heard, and prayed for by name.

Why Now?

In a world that feels increasingly disconnected, people are hungry for **authentic community**. Our goal for First & Wesley is to create spaces where:

- **Scripture Becomes Personal:** We move beyond head knowledge to heart transformation.
- **Accountability is Natural:** We encourage one another to live out the teachings of Jesus in our daily lives.
- **Leadership is Developed:** Small groups are the perfect "greenhouse"

How We Begin

We are starting small, just like John Wesley did. We invite you to be part of this "new-old" way of being the church. Whether you've been a member for fifty years or five minutes, there is a seat at the table for you.

By returning to our roots, we aren't just reminiscing about the past; we are planting the seeds for a vibrant, growing future. Let's get back to the foundation. Let's get back to the Class.

Conclusion

This is a bold and unpopular step I'm encouraging you to take with me. Please let me know what you think.

Lectionary Readings for May 2026

May 3, 2026

[Proverbs 4:10-18](#), [Psalm 119:9-20](#), [1 Peter 2:2-10](#), [John 14:1-14](#)

May 10, 2026

[Ezekiel 34:1-7](#), [Psalm 115:1-11, 18b](#), [1 Peter 3:13-22](#), [John 14:15-21](#)

May 17, 2026

[Isaiah 45:1-7](#), [Psalm 21:1-7](#), [1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11](#), [John 17:1-11](#)



May 24, 2026 (Pentecost/Memorial Sunday)

[Numbers 11:24-30](#), [Psalm 104:24-34, 35b](#), [Acts 2:1-21](#), [John 20:19-23](#)



May 31, 2026 (Trinity Sunday)

[Genesis 1:1-2:4a](#), [Psalm 8](#), [2 Corinthians 13:11-13](#), [Matthew 28:16-20](#)

COOPERATIVE PARISH NEWS

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 Wednesday, May 20th at 7pm on Zoom. If you are interested, please contact Pastor Frank or Helen Smith.

THANK YOU! - FROM THE TRUSTEES

Thank you to everyone for all the help on our clean-up day with the outside and taking a LOT of things out for heavy trash. Also, thank you to Mike DeGennaro & Leanne Birmingham for taking several items to heavy trash!



First & Wesley United Methodist Church

May 2026



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Afterschool Program	2 Women of Faith 12-2p Luncheon
3 10:00a Family Worship Service & Sunday School (begins after Children's Sermon)	4 3:30p Afterschool 7p Adult Monday school	5 3:30p Afterschool 6p Healing Service	6 No Afterschool 7p Adult Group Study	7 10a-12p "K" Café 3:30p Afterschool 6p Bell Choir 7p Adult Choir	8 3:30p Afterschool	9 8a-12p Pancake & Plant Sale
10 10:00a Family Worship Service & Sunday School (begins after Children's Sermon)	11 3:30p Afterschool 7p Adult Monday school	12 3:30p Afterschool 7p Finance	13 3:30p Afterschool 7p Adult Group Study	14 10a-12p "K" Café 1p Prayer Shawl at Edith Mulligan's home 3:30p Afterschool 6p Bell Choir 7p Adult Choir	15 3:30p Afterschool	16 9:30a - Craft Corner 5p Agape Meal (Free) All Welcome
17 10:00a Family Worship Service & Sunday School (begins after Children's Sermon) 7p Worship Committee	18 3:30p Afterschool 7p Adult Monday school	19 3:30p Afterschool	20 3:30p Afterschool 7p Adult Group Study	21 10a-12p "K" cafe 3:30p Afterschool 6p Bell Choir 7p Adult Choir	22 3:30p Afterschool 7p Missions & Outreach	23 *Articles Due for the June Messenger
24 Pentecost 10:00a Family Worship Service & Sunday School (begins after Children's Sermon)	25 Memorial Day No Afterschool	26 3:30p Afterschool 7:00p Trustees	27 3:30p Afterschool 7p Adult Group Study	28 10a-12p "K" Café 3:30p Afterschool 7p Adult Choir	29 3:30p Afterschool	30
31 10:00a Family Worship Service & Sunday School (begins after Children's Sermon)						

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 Meeting ID: [147691027#](https://zoom.us/j/147691027#)



Prayer Shawl Ministry

Next Meeting, May 14th

We hope you can join us!

Our Prayer Shawl group will be meeting Thursday, May 14 at 1:00 pm Edith Mulligan. You can call Edith at 203-821-7533 or Sharon Ewen 203-464-1995 if you need any information.



Can we “Needle” you into becoming “Hooked” on this Ministry?

Our shawls are in the Church Office and bags and tissue paper if someone needs one to give. Be sure to sign your name and the person it will go to. You can also contact Edith Mulligan or Sharon Ewen if you would like to pick one up.

Our Prayer Shawl Ministry has been a success thanks to these women: Susan Hackett, Judy Holcomb, Amy and Joan Sablone, Linda Kopec, Edith Mulligan, Mary Rolfe and Sharon Ewen.

The Blessing of our shawls will be in November.

Anyone wishing to join is more than welcome to come. The more the merrier.

Healing and Wholeness Service

You are Welcome and Needed!

Our Healing and Wholeness Circle will meet in the pastor's office on Tuesday, May 5th at 6pm. If you could use some extra support or have a prayer concern which is on your heart, please come and pray with caring prayer partners. If you are not able to attend in person, you may send your prayer requests to Pastor Frank through text to 860-938-1845 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, May 5th, 6pm

Branford UMC - Wednesday, May 13th, 1pm

Hamden Plains UMC - Wednesday, May 27th, 11am



VBS

SNOWBALL MOUNTAIN CHALLENGE

July 12th to 16th

**“Find Your
Strength in
God”**

You may have noticed that there is a collection point on the long tables in Fellowship Hall. Currently we are collecting EGG CARTONS. The plan is to **build an igloo** for this summer's Vacation Bible School entitled **“SNOWBALL MOUNTAIN CHALLENGE.”** We will love the idea of an igloo when VBS happens in July!

Sunday School

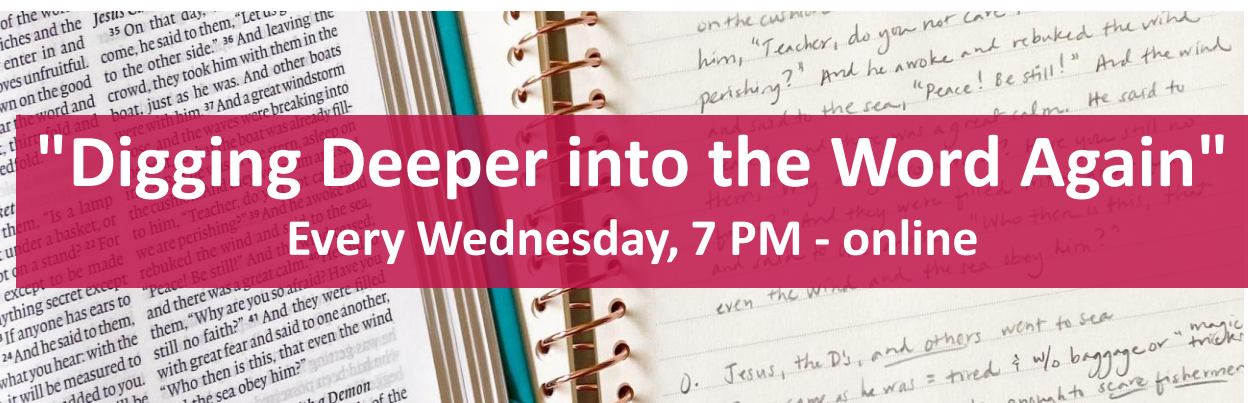


Come learn about the character of God, the work of Christ, and the means of living in right relationship to God and all people.

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 the 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"

We hope you can join us Mondays online for our Adult Sunday School class. We just started using the book Familiar Stranger by Tyler Staton. If you cannot make it every Monday, you are welcome to come when you can. Books are available in the church office.

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST NEWS



Men's Breakfast Invitation



Hello men! The men's fellowship breakfast has been a good experience for each participant. We usually host about 20 men but sometimes more. What is a given is a delicious hot cooked breakfast. We follow our meal with some sort of ice breaker, read a portion of scripture together, and usually have someone share a short talk. We always get out by 10 am so we can get to our Saturday chores.

We are not meeting in May due to the church Pancake Day fundraiser on the 9th. Please plan to come to that and bring a friend and buy them breakfast. There will be opportunities to pitch in as well. (Contact Mary Rolfe, text or call at 475-988-7666 if you are able to help)

Looking ahead, our June Breakfast will be on June 13th. We will be discussing our summer schedule and hopefully launch some sort of outreach event.



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP



Women of the Church! We hope you can join us on

Saturday, May 2nd, 12-2pm for a Mother's Day Luncheon hosted by Claire Webster. This is a great time of fellowship, spiritual nourishment, encouragement, planning, visioning, support and care!

WORSHIP COMMITTEE NEWS

Memorial Sunday and Pentecost will both be observed on May 24th! To celebrate Pentecost, please wear red to church as a symbol of the Holy Spirit that was given to all of us. Since this is also Memorial Sunday, we will be honoring those who died while serving our country. We have a list of names that will be included, however if you would like to add names to our list to be recited during our service, please submit those names to Helen Smith at drsmith@snet.net, or text them to (203) 444-2362 by **May 19th**.

Children's Sunday is on June 7th this year! Our Sunday school children will be helping to lead the worship service. Let us support and encourage our youth! Also, if you have a high school or college graduate, please let Helen Smith know by **(June 1st)** as we will present them with a gift and celebrate their accomplishment during the worship service.



MISSION & OUTREACH

Ephesians 4:11 teaches that we are being equipped for works of service to build up the body of Christ. First and Wesley UMC has over 20 activities that can be considered missions and outreach. Please check out the revolving message center in Fellowship Hall to see all the things we do. There are also updates and thank you notes posted there as well. Check the table for collection points for things related to our outreach. Currently we are collecting dental care kits and empty egg cartons that will be used in this year's Vacation Bible School

The committee has been working on evaluating each outreach activity. We are interested in identifying the purpose of each activity, who is responsible to make the activity a success -including the people resources and physical resources needed, and evaluating how well the activity is meeting its goal of serving people and meeting needs.

This Easter a successful Breakfast and Easter Egg hunt was held at Church to engage the community. There were lots of hands on deck to make the event a success. Thanks to those who ran the craft corner, donated candy and filled Easter eggs, prepared and served breakfast, greeted guests, and the person who arranged the Easter Bunny's visit. Children were given coloring books explaining the Bible's perspective on Easter, Adults were given Business sized cards with an Easter reflection. Thank you to everyone who made this event successful.

Just around the corner is our Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser. Although this is a fundraiser it is also an opportunity to practice hospitality and introduce people to the mission of our faith community. Please invite people to attend this event.

And before you know it, July will be here and we will swing our doors open wide to offer **Snowball Mountain Challenge**, our Vacation Bible School. We have already started to collect empty egg cartons in order to build an igloo. One thing we can do right now is to PRAY for God to bless everyone involved in our VBS.

LOOKING - AHEAD TO THE FAIR

Tag Sale – for years we have had a tag sale in our gym. The amount brought in for the past few years has been declining and what is involved with doing this part of the fair is **extremely** time consuming.

If anyone is interested in taking this on to do all of the necessary work – organizing a crew to set up tables and bring boxes down, organize helpers to unpack boxes, sort, and price items, be available the day of the Fair, and coordinate a crew to pack up boxes, sort through what needs to go, and take down tables before our After School Program on Monday, please let Mary Rolfe know.

If we do not hear from anyone by June 15th who would be willing to do this, we will be giving the items we have in our storage to appropriate places (Savers, IRIS, etc.)

Finance Corner

In our discussion of the make-up of the Church's operation budget, we are now looking at the Church Building operating expenses.

Expense Item	Cost	Remarks
Electricity	\$5,000	Covers the lights, air-conditioning, elevator, heat in pastor's office and hot water heater.
Gas	\$ 9,000	Gas supply to both the main boiler to heat on first & second floors, and the small boiler to heat Kendall hall and gym.
Water	\$ 500	Public water supply to church building
Sewer Use fee	\$ 600	This is service connection fees for hook up to the sewer system
Telephone & Internet	\$ 1,296	Covers phone and internet connection
Property & Umbrella Insur	\$20,000	Covers the church building, parsonage and professional liability
Snow Removal & mowing	\$ 5,000	Covers parking lot and sidewalk removal. Mowing of the Church and parsonage lawns

Now for the current financial position ending March 31, 2026. To meet our expenses in March, we used current revenue plus \$3,910.52 of the 2025 carryover. We still have \$8,865.41 in carryover money for future use. Any questions or comments, please contact me.

Jim Jerrell
Finance Chair

Pot Pie Fundraiser

Thank you to Peggy Jerrell and Mary Rolfe for making the DELICIOUS pot pies for our fundraiser. Thank you to Dave Smith for making all the brownies and helping to put the pies together. We made a profit of \$832.36. Thank you to all who ordered the dinners!!!

Info about our next fundraiser, *Pancake Day* on **May 9th** can be found at the end of this newsletter.

May Birthdays

- 2 - Amanda Medina
- 6 - John Poe III
Nana Osei-Sarpong
- 7 - Geoffrey Hulse
- 8 - Jodi Memmott
- 10 - Ralph Lawson III
- 12 - Alisha Braacker
- 17 - Rachael Memmott
- 19 - Cindy Geissler
- 21 - Steven Rockwell
Al Bartozzi
- 27 - Mary Rolfe
- 28 - Douglas Hunter
- 30 - Garrett Argentino

May Anniversaries

- 5 - Michele and Edward Gertsch
- 16 - Elaine and Matt Schwag
- 18 - Gail Pells & Fred Rubino

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

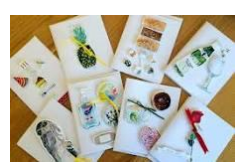


CONTACT INFORMATION

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

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.



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!



FUNDRAISER

First & Wesley UMC

PANCAKE DAY



Unlimited
pancakes,
sausages,
fixings, with
beverages
included

Donation: \$10 Ages 11+ | \$5 Ages 5-10 | \$30 Family of 4+

SATURDAY, MAY 9, 2026



PLANT SALE

For more information or to preorder plants, go to:
firstwesleyumc@gmail.com

89 CENTER STREET, WEST HAVEN, CT

VENDORS

**USED
BOOKS**



BAKE SALE

Come and celebrate May, get a baked good or plant for Mother's Day! To make sure you get the flowers you would like, you may order ahead (orders are due by May 3rd and plants are always subject to availability). See the next page for the plant order form.



Flower Fundraiser order form

(subject to availability)

ORDERS DUE BY MAY 2nd, 12PM
PICKUP ORDER ON MAY 9th, 8AM – 12PM
(during Pancake Day)

Name: _____

Phone number _____ e-mail _____

(Flat = 8 packs)

			#	#	COST \$	
Tomatoes:	Easy Girl	\$3.50 a pack(3 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(24 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	Big Boy	\$3.50 a pack(3 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(24 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	Beefsteak	\$3.50 a pack(3 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(24 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	Cherry	\$3.50 a pack(3 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(24 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	Roma	\$3.50 a pack(3 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(24 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Peppers:	Green Bell	\$3.50 a pack(3 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(24 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	Red Bull	\$3.50 a pack(3 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(24 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	Jalapeno	\$3.50 a pack(3 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(24 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

FLOWERS	Color (if available)					
Ageratum	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Asters	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Alyssum	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Begonias	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Coleus	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Cosmos	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(24 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Dahlias	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Dianthus	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Dusty Miller	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Impatiens	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Lobelia	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Marigolds	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Nicotiana	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Petunias	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Portulaca	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Salvia	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Verbena	_____	\$3.50 a pack(4 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$24 flat(32 plants)	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

4" - Geraniums	\$5 each	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$25 ½ doz	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
New Guinea Impatien	\$5 each	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$25 ½ doz	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Vinca Vine	\$5 each	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$25 ½ doz	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Spikes (if available)	\$5 each	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$25 ½ doz	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

GRAND TOTAL \$ _____

Contact Helen Smith at 203-444-2362(call or text), drsmith@snet.net or e-mail the church office at firstwesleyumc@gmail.com if you have any questions no later than **May 2nd at 12 PM.**



The Messenger

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www.firstwesleyumc.org

Email: firstwesleyumc@gmail.com


Facebook Page at www.facebook.com/firstwesleyumc.

Pastor Frank Sarpong

“Sunday Worship Time: 10:00am”

The May 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!