Please join us in April for Virtual Worship!

**April 5th**  
Palm Sunday  
10 a.m. via Facebook Live  
Rev. George Harris, preaching  
with Holy Communion from Home (see below)

**April 9th**  
Maundy Thursday  
8:00 p.m. via Facebook Live  
with Holy Communion from Home (see below)

**April 12th**  
Easter Sunday  
10:00 a.m. via Facebook Live  
Easter Reflections from Worship Leaders

**April 19th**  
Second Sunday of Easter  
Earth Day Sunday  
10 a.m. Virtual Worship via Facebook Live  
John Humphries, guest preaching

**April 26th**  
Third Sunday of Easter  
10:00 a.m. via Facebook Live  
Rev. Kevin Weikel, preaching

**Holy Communion from Home.** On Sunday, April 5th, Palm Sunday, we will share Communion in our Virtual Worship on Facebook Live.

Before the 10 o’clock worship time, you will want to prepare some bread, a slice or a small loaf of any kind of bread. In some parts of the world tortilla, rice cake, cassava are used as this element which is defined not as a wheat product but as the most common food of the people. Those who feel adventurous can have fun with this, using our favorite breakfast treat (a donut or pastry, maybe). Let it be something you alone or you with others in your house may break and share. Prepare a cup or cups of juice — perhaps grape, cranberry, or orange — or wine, with or without alcohol.

Set these elements in the living room or kitchen where you will participate in worship on your phone or computer. Perhaps you want to put them on an attractive cloth or fabric that reminds you of a special time or a person. Perhaps you will light a candle or place a flower or plant or the photograph of someone you wish to bring into the circle of faith beside the bread and the cup. Find a way to make your communion setting special for you.

Then, Pastors George and Kevin will bring us together around one (virtual) table to share the Bread of Life and the Cup of Blessing.
Several months ago, I asked a clergy colleague for whom I have great respect about her beliefs, in particular her belief in and about Jesus. Her answer at once surprised and resonated with me. She said, “I don’t really know what I believe about Jesus, and I’m not even sure how important that belief is to me personally. What I really believe in is the church.”

For some people, clear, strongly held beliefs are life-saving and sustaining, especially in hard times. It is also true, that some contemporary Christians are much less sure of what they believe, living life somewhere between faith and uncertainty, religion and science, and love and fear. This is as true for ministers as it is for those in the pews, and those at home Sunday morning with the New York Times.

Without diminishing the importance of what I believe about God and Jesus, it is my belief that God acts through the church that inspires, nourishes and sustains me. Beyond something we think or feel, our faith comes alive when we practice it together as the church. This has never been truer than in this past month, as we have come together in response to the coronavirus.

- Online worship has brought fresh energy and innovation to Sunday mornings. According to Facebook, over a thousand people viewed our March 29th service! That’s more than four times the number we typically reach on a Sunday morning. And many people took advantage of the invitation to type in their prayer requests in the Facebook Live comments, making the service truly participatory.

- Our Compassionate Response team, organized by Dr. Rob Cushman, has already reached out to our older and more vulnerable members, and is preparing to extend their assistance to members of the Simsbury Community. We are fostering and strengthening connections that wouldn’t have been made in our normal workaday lives.

- In addition to leading online Church School, Jessica Wolanin has started a Spreading Kindness Initiative with our young families, providing safe ways to share encouraging messages with others. And Rev Kev is breaking new ground with our Confirmation kids and church youth. He has learned that youth participating remotely from the safety, comfort, and “privacy” of their bedrooms, engage with a degree of intimacy and vulnerability that is sometimes absent when meeting in a large group.

We are experiencing a real loss by not being able to physically be together, but in each of these recent examples of being the church, we have also, unmistakably gained something in return. And the things we are learning will make a lasting and positive change in our church. Our community of faith will be larger and closer knit than ever before.

The Apostle Paul refers to the church as the Body of Christ. I don’t read this as a mere metaphor. Rather, when we come together to act in faith, we become Christ’s body. In the myriad ways we have gathered, worshipped and served together over the past month, Christ lives!

In this, I believe. In this, I find hope.

In Christ,

George
A Message from Rev. Kevin Weikel

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

~ Deuteronomy 6:4-9 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

It isn't often we can say we are experiencing something that no living generation has experienced before. Our collective lack of practice with pandemics makes this an especially anxious time.

We are slowly coming to the understanding that people we know might get sick and maybe even die. We are only now fully appreciating the role that healthcare workers and grocery store employees play in our lives and society. We were surprised that anything could keep our professional and college sports leagues from playing their seasons. We see with our own eyes the jobs and businesses we were so sure about one day could disappear the next, and how quickly so many people's lives can be pushed economically and emotionally to the brink.

The reports are not all in agreement, but we know that we have not yet hit the crest of the wave, and we do not know when that wave will end or what it will leave behind. But there is one thing we've all come to learn during this anxious time: Good things can be found, even in a pandemic. I can honestly say this something I did not know before.

My intention is not to downplay these painful and challenging times, but if you're like me, you've probably reconnected with an old friend or two, and have grown closer with friends you've had all along. You are learning new things about the people in your own house, gaining further insight into what your spouse does every day, and what your kids are learning in school. I'll admit that, when times were busy, I'd sometimes go a little while without calling my parents, and now I'm calling them almost every night to see how they are doing.

When it comes to church, our worship services have brought about a level of creativity I'm not sure we knew we had, and we are finding a lot of meaning in leading them. Our church meetings and gatherings on zoom are more intimate than I would have guessed as well. From Church School to youth groups, from staff meetings to coffee hour, everyone is cooped up in their own homes, surrounded by the uniqueness of their most comfortable rooms or in front of their favorite virtual backgrounds. And the Compassion Care Team that church member Dr. Rob Cushman put together is being the hands and feet of God to many of our more vulnerable church and community members.

Friends, I am not trying to downplay the coronavirus, or suggest that God created it to teach us a hard lesson. I am saying that if we keep looking for the goodness of God in our midst, and reaching out in love to one another, we might give future generations the gift of a connectedness that they might not have otherwise known was possible. Let's make it so.

God's peace to you,

Kevin
Musical Notes

Hi, Everybody – So here we are, in the throes of something that we’ve never dealt with before. A pandemic. Shortages. The inability to be with each other, and, for some, the inability to go out at all. These are lonely, scary times. We were certainly warned, but, really, who’d have ever thought?

Sometimes change is thrust upon us, and we are forced to adapt somehow – dragged kicking and clawing into a place that in no way would we have ever chosen to go. Mandates aside, no one wants to get sick, or make each other sick, and this is serious business indeed. I’m sure that, by now, we have all heard of that poor choir that, for the love of singing, got together to rehearse with dire consequences. Should the conference not delivered their recommendation to close the churches, where would we be ourselves? There but for the grace of God…..really.

I have always touted that group singing is a huge remedy for what’s ailin’ ya. We lock into each other’s endorphins. The sound is like nothing else, and even those of us with voices that are challenged can create something that’s unbelievably beautiful. Not to mention that being human for most of us is to want to hang out together. We are social beings. These days are not where we should be.

I am, admittedly, at a bit of a loss. Zoom, for all its benefits, does not present itself as viable medium for ensemble singing. True, we can sit at home and croon along with what’s going on, usually about 2 ½ seconds behind where everyone else seems to be. We’re done, but on our computer, even though our friends visually have finished their line, the sound isn’t done yet. There’s nothing like sitting and singing next to one another in real time, and it’s no wonder that this unfortunate choir in Washington really wanted to do it. But we can’t right now. So, even though some of us in the choir have gotten together in virtual world, we are still just a bit unfulfilled. I miss all the choirs. I miss being with you. I miss rehearsing. I miss singing on Sunday mornings. I miss the chills that we get when something goes really well. I miss hearing your individual voices, singing in time (theoretically) with each other. Looking forward to Palm Sunday; trumpets and timpani on Easter; the kids on Mother’s Day; Women’s Praise energy; the Men’s Choir with those overtones that are chillingly in tune; the Bells with 11 people playing like they’re one entity. But I promise that I will make a concerted effort to make good things happen with what we’ve got for now. I still plan on doing the “Hallelujah Chorus” at some point. Stay tuned for that!

As it turns out, creativity finds a way. The technology, albeit flawed, really has enabled us to be with one another – almost. We can talk with each other, hear music, exchange ideas, and keep up with those that, under “normal” conditions, we would not have had the opportunity to do so. I’ve been in touch with more friends that otherwise I would have been too busy to contact. Plus, I hear music on Facebook that people usually would have been too shy to exhibit. Young. Old. Most without a music degree, or performing experience. Real stuff. People are feeling a real need to do this. They are encouraged by others that are doing this as well, and there is an open acceptance, a lack of judgment, and a friendly, supportive attitude that, a month ago, I wouldn’t have seen on this medium. This does my heart so much good. The judgment of others may raise the musical bar, but it also can deal a fatal blow to self-expression. People have gained the insight that we’re all in this boat together, and that everyone is paddling like crazy, doing the best they can. Encouragement and acceptance are huge things for us as humans and as music lovers. And when we can finally be past this thing, go our separate ways and, once again be too busy to take note of what really matters, I hope that we can take some of this with us. I hope it makes us better human beings, with an increased sense of what we can do when we love, hear, and appreciate each other. Easter is coming! And when we’re back, we will truly know that making music together one of the most wonderful things in the world!

Wishing Hope, Health, and God’s Love — Mark
The Daily Devotional through the UCC today ended with “God didn’t send this disaster, but God will for damn sure use it.” Every day I’ve been thinking about how the world is changing, immeasurably, each day during this worldwide pandemic. As a mother, I have hope that the world is changing for good. I posted on Facebook that even during these anxiety-ridden times, I am choosing to see the beauty around me. I am enjoying the extra time with all three of our kids under our roof. I’m embracing the opportunity to teach our eldest, Grayson, as he advances through the pre-k curriculum. My husband, Andrew, and I are taking advantage of the time in our home to organize and purge unneeded items. And all the while, I am giving thanks for the safety and comfort of my home.

I am hopeful that you are enjoying this “forced” togetherness too but I also know that many of you are experiencing more of the sadness, stress, and fear that inevitably is present during this strange time. Some of you may also be at the same stage that I’m at, constantly floating between this state of concern and this joy of embracing the moments with family. Others may be feeling the anxiety of leading the distance learning journey in your home. And boy is it a journey. I feel like every single day I am winging it, and as much as I’ve tried to come up with a plan, a schedule, a to do list- it just ends up going back to winging it. I’ve decided to give myself grace and remember that this is a season.

I hope that God will use this time of change, this time of uncertainty, this time of fear to propel us into a deeper faith journey. I hope that this experience will bring us closer to God, that it will slow us all down and allow us to appreciate things more. But until we all find our way through this pandemic and are on the other side- just know that we’re all just winging it! Let’s band together to choose to be present. Choose to take advantage of our extra time with our children because they’re only little for such a little while. And choose to spread kindness along the way.

As a church school family we are starting a kindness initiative. Each family will be paired up with another family who they will sprinkle kindness to. This can be in the form of holding signs up with uplifting messages, “chalking” each other’s driveways, or using Zoom to connect with one another. All opportunities to make each other smile and to be present for one another while also practicing social distancing. If you’d like to participate please go to our website to sign up. It is my hope that through this kindness initiative, we will help each other to always remember that even when we are in the middle of a challenging time such as this, you are never alone. We are with you. God is with you. Always.

Blessings to you and yours,

Jessica
COVID-19 Information, Resources, and more about our Community Response Team!

First Church of Christ has created a task force, a **Community Compassionate Response Team** (“CCRT”), organized by Dr. Rob Cushman, and composed of a wonderful team of First Church volunteers. The team is reaching out to contact and assist members of our church and wider community during this COVID-19 crisis. The statewide mandate to remain at home, except for essential work and shopping for food and daily needs, means lots of social isolation. An initial round of telephone calls has been completed to check in on some of our members who, by virtue of their age or prior health issues, are at highest risk if they contract the virus, so for whom really staying safe and secure at home is critical.

In addition, the CCRT has created teams of folks who are poised to assist by eliminating the need to go out to the grocery store to obtain food. We have worked out an arrangement with Fitzgerald’s Foods, whereby we can take “grocery list” orders for our First Church members/family over the phone, submit them to Fitzgerald’s staff, who then fill the order and alert our team when the order is ready for pick-up & delivery to the community member’s home by our volunteers. **At this time, we are imploring our membership to use this valuable service, so you can stay safe and healthy!**

*(Please Note: Even folks who have already been users of Fitzgerald’s own telephone order and delivery service [whether long-time or just recent], are invited/encouraged to temporarily switch over to using our CCRT Ordering and Delivery services, as this will greatly help the Fitzgerald’s staff, as the recent dramatic increase in demand for this type of service has been stretching them beyond capacity. Please know that Fitzgerald’s Foods owner, Bryan DeVoe, endorses this “invitation,” and is very appreciative for the willingness of our team to help them during these stressful times.)*

If you would like to use our CCRT Ordering and Delivery services, please fill out the form available on our website here, entering just your name and phone number, and a member of our CCRT will call you back promptly to take your grocery order. Orders submitted to Fitzgerald’s by noon should be able to be filled by late afternoon the same day. Otherwise, they can be delivered on the day of your choice, starting the day following your order being taken by our phone volunteer. First Church will subsequently send you an invoice* for the cost of your grocery order. (*After receiving the invoice, checks should be made payable to First Church of Christ, with “Food Delivery” in the memo line. Be advised this payment is not tax deductible as you are receiving goods and services.)*

If you need assistance of any other kind, or know someone who might benefit from our outreach and support initiatives, please do not hesitate to fill out this form or call the Church Office at (860) 651-3593. We will strive to help in any ways that we can!

Please join us for Virtual Worship via Facebook Live at 10 a.m., followed by our Virtual Coffee Hour at 11 a.m.!

Pastor George is also offering Virtual Bible Study on Wednesday mornings at 10 a.m. via Zoom! [Read more.](#)
Join First Church during Holy Week
Experience the promise, fulfilled

Sunday, April 5th, 2020

Palm Sunday Worship:
Virtual Worship via Facebook Live
Complete with waving palm fronds and shouts of “Hosanna!”

Thursday, April 9th, 2020

Maundy Thursday Service:
8:00 p.m. via Facebook Live
Service of Holy Communion (the Last Supper) from home

Sunday, April 12th, 2020

Easter Sunday:
10 a.m. Easter Service
Virtual Worship via Facebook Live

Holy Communion from Home

On Sunday, April 5th, Palm Sunday, and on Maundy Thursday, April 9th, we will share Communion in our Virtual Worship on Facebook Live.

Before the 10 o’clock worship time, you will want to prepare some bread, a slice or a small loaf of any kind of bread. In some parts of the world tortilla, rice cake, cassava are used as this element which is defined not as a wheat product but as the most common food of the people. Those who feel adventurous can have fun with this, using our favorite breakfast treat (a donut or pastry, maybe). Let it be something you alone or you with others in your house may break and share. Prepare a cup or cups of juice — perhaps grape, cranberry, or orange — or wine, with or without alcohol.

Set these elements in the living room or kitchen where you will participate in worship on your phone or computer. Perhaps you want to put them on an attractive cloth or fabric that reminds you of a special time or a person. Perhaps you will light a candle or place a flower or plant or the photograph of someone you wish to bring into the circle of faith beside the bread and the cup. Find a way to make your communion setting special for you.

Then, Pastors George and Kevin will bring us together around one (virtual) table to share the Bread of Life and the Cup of Blessing.
Dear Church School Families,

I hope that this message finds you and your families well and banding together to get through these next few weeks. This is a scary time for our nation and also an important one where we strive to share God’s love with our neighbors.

Your children are home from school, and I’m sure you are trying to find activities to keep them active and engaged while they’re home. There is a multitude of resources on our Children’s Ministries page, as well as fun games and crafts to do at home during Holy Week and every Sunday for Virtual Worship on Facebook Live! Please join us at 9 a.m. on Sundays for Virtual Church School via Zoom!

The board of Christian Education has started a “Spreading Spring Kindness” initiative during the month of April. During the month of April, families will be assigned another church school family that they will spread kindness to. Some examples of spreading kindness include: making cards to give to each other, chalk each other's driveway, etc.

If you and your family would like to participate, please complete this form. This initiative will begin on Sunday, April 5th. You will get your assignments on Friday, April 3rd. If you have any questions, please email Jessica at jwolanin@fccsimsbury.org, or call (860) 682-0796.

Vacation Bible School 2020

Sadly due to the coronavirus, VBS has been cancelled for June 2020. Refunds will be processed in the coming weeks for those who already registered.
First Church Youth and Young Adults

Dear Youth Families (Confirmation, JF, and PF),

Our Youth Advisors and I are thinking about you. The Coronavirus and physical distancing must be taken seriously, but that doesn’t change the fact that pre-teens and teenagers are social beings, and this is hard. These are also uneasy times. If there is any consolation, it is that we are all feeling anxious together.

Since Sunday, March 22nd, we’ve been holding “virtual” JF, Confirmation and PF meetings. With everyone all cooped up and isolated, these meetings over Zoom feel extra special. It is nice to see each other in the uniqueness and comfort of our individual homes, to check in with one another about how we are holding up during this challenging time, and to consider God’s presence even in the midst of this dark time.

I asked our students if they would like to continue meeting virtually until the time comes for us to come together in person again, and responses were overwhelmingly, “Yes!” Please see below the revised JF, PF, and Confirmation schedules:

**JF (Junior Fellowship), for 7th and 8th graders**
- Meets on Zoom every other Sunday at 6 p.m. In April, these dates are April 5 and 19.

**PF (Pilgrim Fellowship), for 9th through 12th graders**
- Meets on Zoom every Sunday at 8 p.m., including Easter Sunday.

**Confirmation**
- Thursday, April 9, from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Virtual Confirmation on Zoom, “What is Holy Week and Easter?” Followed by the Maundy Thursday Service on Facebook Live.
- Sunday, April 12, from 10-11 a.m. Virtual Easter on Facebook Live
- Wednesday, April 22, from 7-8:30 p.m. Virtual Pizza with the Pastors on Zoom
- Sunday, April 26, from 6-8:30 p.m. Virtual Confirmation on Zoom, “The Faith Journey Continues.”
- **Wednesday, April 29, from 6-8:30 p.m. Makeup Confirmation on Zoom. If you missed more than 3 sessions, you will be asked to join this meeting.**

- Month of May: Individual student / family Zoom meetings to share faith statements and discuss Confirmation decisions.
- Wednesday September 16 and 30, Soup Kitchens at South Park Inn. Students that were unable to service in the spring of 2020 will have the option to choose the date that works best for them.
- Saturday-Sunday, September 19-20, Confirmation Retreat at Camp Jewell
- Sunday, October 18, Confirmation Sunday (better late than never!)
- *Tune into worship on Sunday’s at 10am on Facebook Live and complete your five worship reflections in the back of your Confirmation Guidebooks.

*The Summer Mission Trip to St. Louis with AMEN St. Louis is still on, at least for now. Three spots remain available. Interested? [Click here for more information](#).*

JF and PF meetings will include highs, lows and outs, as well as an icebreaker game (we’ve come across some creative ideas for this!). These meetings will also include a devotion and discussion, as well as a closing prayer. We are not planning a hard stop time with our JF and PF meetings, though we imagine will run approximately an hour and a half. Teens can feel free to hop off as needed or stay on for extended conversation at the end. Teens are welcome to share the link to JF and PF Zoom meetings liberally. If there is a friend that might enjoy and find meaning in JF or PF, please invite them to join us. Just like before, we will send weekly emails for each group every week, with the time, Zoom link, and an overview of the content (if you haven’t downloaded Zoom for your device, please do so, it’s free, and it’s easy).

While these are anxious and troubled times, and we do not have the benefit of meeting in person, I do wonder if these trying days might provide us with an even greater connection with God and one another. These groups might be more critical, and maybe even more meaningful, now more than ever.

God Bless You,

Kevin
A New Way to Join First Church!

Are you interested in joining First Church?

Becoming a Member is simple: all you need to do is meet with Pastor George or Rev. Kevin about your interest in joining the church. They would love to get to know you!

To schedule your meeting, please call the church office at (860) 651-3593, or email the church office at admin@fccsimsbury.org.

Once you’ve had a meeting with one of the pastors, you are asked to fill out a simple form and then you are ready to be officially welcomed into the church on a third or fourth Sunday of the month!

We look forward to hearing from you!

Photographing Opportunity!

Do you enjoy taking pictures during church, or already have photos of you and others engaged in church activities?

If so, we encourage you email them to admin@fccsimsbury.org so we can keep the NEW church website relevant with up-to-date photos! Thank you!

Silver Lake Conference Center
Register for Summer Camp Today!

Registration is now open for the summer conferences at Silver Lake Conference Center! Check out the various conferences for kids and youth by visiting their website at www.silverlakect.org! A large poster with the list of 2020 Summer Conferences is also located outside of the church office for your review!

Update from the GHIAA Education Team

The Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA) education team has some very positive news to report. Since our founding in October of 2019 ten superintendents representing school districts in and around Hartford have each committed to the following:

- Implementing one anti-racism training for a small group of teachers/staff/administrators in their district during the 2019-2020 school year.
- Creating an on-going plan to provide anti-racism training for all staff, administrators and teachers in their district. This plan will be completed by August 2020.
- Selecting a district representative who will attend bi-monthly support meetings with GHIAA leadership.

These are important first steps as we strive for equity in all of our schools. A second meeting with the superintendents is tentatively scheduled and we will keep you informed on further developments.

Kevin Borla
GHIAA Education Team

The Friendship Center at St. Elizabeth House — Breakfast Volunteers Are Needed!

Please join us as we prepare and serve breakfast on the third Tuesday, each month, from 7-9 a.m. at The Friendship Center at St. Elizabeth House.

The Friendship Center at St. Elizabeth House is a shelter and facility that supports homeless people and those at risk for homelessness in downtown Hartford. Scan the QR code to sign up!
Capital Campaign Payments

When writing a check towards the Capital Campaign, please clearly mark in the memo line “Capital Campaign.”

If you choose to have your payments made via your bank web bill pay, it is important the check makes mention of the Capital Campaign. Failure to do so, may lead to donations being posted toward an incorrect fund.

If you have further questions, please contact Shannon Lindsay in the office at (860)651-3593 or slindsay@fccsimsbury.org.
Board of Trustees Email

If you have a work order request or a suggestion for the Board of Trustees, you may now email them directly at trustees@fccsimsbury.org. Please include your work order or suggestion, name, and contact info. Thank you!

Don’t Forget:
First Church is an Amazon Smile Charitable Organization!

How to Benefit First Church as an Amazon Smile Charitable Organization:

Go to Amazon Smile (smile.amazon.com), you will be prompted to select a charitable organization. Note: You can change your selection at any time. Search for “First Church Simsbury” and select “First Church, Simsbury, CT” as your Smile Charitable Organization.

If you already use Amazon Smile; to change your charitable organization:

Sign in to smile.amazon.com. From your desktop, go to Your Account from the navigation at the top, and then select the option to Change your Charity. Or, from your mobile browser, select Change your Charity from the options at the bottom of the page. Search for “First Church Simsbury” and select “First Church, Simsbury, CT” as your Smile Charitable Organization. Be sure to shop from smile.amazon.com!

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Women’s Ministry Event—The Journey of Wholeness: The Second Half of Life

"Each of us has a soul and...there is a buried treasure in the field." - C.G. Jung

Dates:*

Wednesday, May 20, 2020
Wednesday, June 17, 2020

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Place: Parson's Study

Address: First Church of Christ, 689 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury

Please join us for this special two-part workshop on the second half of life!

The journey of wholeness calls us to our deepest self. There comes a time in each of our lives when the question comes: "Is this all there is?" And so with that question comes the yearning to respond more fully to this spiritual call into our deeper truth and authenticity.

We are invited to step into the journey of the second half of life. This means leaving some of the familiar, what we know, and searching out God's call to us at this time of our life. What are those treasures yet to be revealed?

Your input, reflection, and sharing our time together will invite you to:

- Explore your journey up to this point in your life
- Begin to search and name your call through this next period of life

This special two-part workshop will be led by Sister Lorraine LaVigne. Sister Lorraine is a skilled marriage and therapy counselor, member of the Sisters of Mercy, and an inspiring spiritual presence. The group size is limited to 25, so we encourage you to sign up as soon as ‘registration’ is open!

*The dates above are subject to change due to preventative measures regarding the coronavirus.
Earth Day 2020 — 50th Anniversary

April 22, 2020 marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Since 1970, Earth Day has increased awareness of the planet we live on, pollution, climate change, endangered species, and many other environmental issues. As we wrestle with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has rightly taken center stage among world issues today, we can also acknowledge and celebrate the work, education, and behavioral change that are making a material difference in our use and care of Planet Earth. On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans — 10% of the U.S. population at the time — took to the streets, college campuses and hundreds of cities to protest environmental ignorance and demand a new way forward for our planet. The first Earth Day is credited with launching the modern environmental movement, and is now recognized as the planet’s largest civic event. Though this anniversary celebration may be muted, the legacy it honors is worthy of recognition and our ongoing participation and support.

A little goes a long way when it comes to being greener. Without risk or exposure, here are some simple ways to honor the spirit and purpose of Earth Day:

- Turn off your light when you leave the room
- Don’t idle your car for more than two minutes
- Bring a reusable cup to your favorite coffee shop
- Collect rainwater
- Try reusable batteries
- Use a cloth towel instead of paper towels
- Fix your leaky faucet
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Calculate your carbon footprint
- Leave the car at home
- Give your home a “green” makeover
- Turn the faucet off when you brush your teeth
- Unsubscribe from junk mail
- Go paperless
- Switch to e-books
- Unplug at night
- Recycle old electronics
- Add plants to your home
- Make your yard creature-friendly
- Start a garden
- Switch to reusable bags
- Repurpose jars (and other containers!)
- Make your own cleaning products
- Clean dishes by hand
- Shop eco-friendly clothing brands
- Start a “zero waste” challenge

*Stay Safe, Stay Home, Be Green*
Being Green, cont.

Earth Day is April 22\textsuperscript{nd}!

Since it started in 1970, Earth Day has been celebrated every year on April 22\textsuperscript{nd} to highlight important issues such as climate change, pollution, deforestation, and plastic waste. An important focus is on plastic pollution. Rubbish and plastics in our oceans are constantly washing up on beaches endangering animals and the beauty of the landscape, and every year, around 8 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean, rising to 160 million tons by 2025 at the current rate. All of this plastic breaks down into smaller pieces over time and has created a plastic soup in the Pacific covering an area twice the size of the US. So what can we do to help the plastic pollution problem? Here a dozen ideas from Emily Blackley to make a difference. Please pick one or two and be involved.

1. **Go on a beach clean** If you want to help get rid of some of the plastic waste in your area, going on a beach clean is a great and fun way to do this. They happen all year round in most coastal areas, and you can sign up easily online, on Facebook, or on a website such as Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound.

2. **Plant a tree** Trees and forests are extremely important for providing oxygen, homes, and resources to animals, which includes us. Deforestation contributes to greenhouse gases, with an estimated 15 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions are due the cutting down of trees. If you want to help make your area a bit greener and help reduce deforestation and climate change; plant a tree or even a forest! You can buy saplings from garden centers or order them online. Either buy a single sapling, or a tree pack, which contains up to 210 trees. You can even apply for free trees for your school or local community.

3. **Buy a bag for life** Single-use plastic carrier bags are no friend to the environment, clogging up landfill sites, and posing great danger to marine wildlife. Please buy a reusable bag so that you never have to buy a carrier bag again. These are reusable bags that are very strong, and are available in most supermarkets and online.

4. **Don’t eat any meat** As a species, we love eating meat, especially in the West, but this is putting a great pressure on this industry. As well as potential animal welfare issues from intensive farming, the environmental damage animal products create is also a massive issue. Beef in particular uses up a lot of land, a lot of water, and produces many greenhouse gases. If you are a meat eater, cutting down on the amount you eat will have a beneficial impact on the environment. You could start small and go meat free for one day a week (it’ll even save you money, or even try go vegetarian. You never know, you might love it!)

5. **Go microbeads-free** Microbeads are tiny beads of plastic that are in many cosmetic products, such as face washes and toothpaste. They end up being washed down your sink into the ocean and can enter the food chain when marine animals consume them. Fortunately, a ban this year means that microbeads can no longer be used in cosmetic products. However, this does not cover ‘leave-on’ products such as make-up. So, make sure the next time you buy any cosmetic products, check the label first for the ingredients list. A great toothpaste product that has no microbeads and does not come in a horrible, non degradable tube is bitetoothpastebits.com.
6. **Walk or ride a bike** Cars contribute greatly to air pollution, climate change, and have a negative impact on human health. They produce dangerous gases such as carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxides, which then enter our atmosphere that we have to breathe in. Rather than taking your car, try to walk or ride a bike instead. This is also good exercise contributing to a healthy lifestyle. If you don’t have a bicycle, then even carpooling with others will help cut down your carbon footprint.

7. **Give up chewing gum** You might think that chewing gum is environmentally friendly, but it is actually made from a synthetic rubber, which is plastic. Around 100,000 tons of this plastic is thrown away every year, and a lot of it ends up on our streets. Next time you want minty-fresh breath, just brush your teeth rather than chewing on a piece of plastic.

8. **Buy a reusable water bottle** In 2016, over 480 billion plastic bottles were sold, which is over 60 for every person. If everyone had a reusable water bottle, then this number would decrease greatly. If you don’t already own one, then go out and buy a bottle that you can take with you everywhere you go. Cutting down on single-use plastic bottles also means drinking less juices and fizzy drinks, and is better for your health as they contain a lot of sugar and sometimes weird chemicals. If they are in a glass bottle, then this is a better option to reduce plastic waste.

9. **Stop using plastic straws** Plastic straws contribute greatly to the plastic waste in our oceans. The next time you go to a bar or restaurant, make sure say no to a straw, and even encourage them to stop using straws completely. If you have to use one, then buy an environmentally friendly one that is reusable. You can buy bamboo, metal, and glass straws online that you can wash and use rather than always buying plastic ones.

10. **Switch all of your bills to paperless** Rather than being sent your monthly bills by post, switch to online statements to reduce paper waste. It’s really easy to do and you are sent an email when your bills are available online to view. Decreasing the demand for paper will hopefully decrease the rate of deforestation.

11. **Start a compost heap in your garden** Food wastage is a massive problem all around the world. In Europe alone, the food wasted could feed approximately 200 million people. Starting a compost heap in your garden will help you get rid of kitchen and garden waste efficiently and you can use it to fertilize your garden with valuable nutrients. It’s really easy to start, you can either just put it in a pile, or in a container at the edge of your garden. And then you just have to wait for it to all decompose. At the bottom of the pile, you will then have a rich and fertile compost that you can spread around the garden.

12. **Spread the word!**
A Message from Pastor George

We all miss being together on Sunday mornings, the morning sun shining through the windows of our beautiful sanctuary, the sound of our choirs, and a warm greeting and handshake from our friends and neighbors. Though we are finding creative new ways to worship together, nothing replaces the Spirit that moves through the congregation when we gather in person. Though we don’t know exactly when we will return to our chapel and sanctuary, rest assured that when we do, we will mark the occasion with a joyous celebration of resurrection! I look forward to this day with hope and anticipation!