

The Beacon

DECEMBER 2016



GOOD NEWS from

United Congregational Church of Westerly

United Church of Christ, Pawcatuck, CT

Sunday Worship ~ 9:30 am

FROM THE PASTOR ...

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers.’ For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, ‘Peace be within you.’ For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.” Psalm 122:6-9

At the risk of stating the obvious, the stunning results of the Election are still being processed by many. No matter which news network you watch, you have seen demonstrations for and against the results. It’s clear that some folks are just as angry and distrustful as ever. It’s clear that some folks – Muslims, the LGBTQ community, immigrants, people of color, even some women -- are deeply frightened by ugly incidents of verbal harassment and vandalism which have happened in recent weeks. Do they have reason to be afraid? How you answer this question depends on your perspective. That they are afraid is beyond doubt. So, where do we go from here? How do we move forward when the divisiveness which has plagued our country for so long seems only to get worse?

Enter Advent. Literally. Just look at the words above from Psalm 122. It is the recommended Psalm in the Lectionary for the first Sunday of Advent this year and, as has happened repeatedly to me in recent weeks, I am

overwhelmed by its appropriateness in this moment. If you substitute “the United States” for “Jerusalem” this is a perfect prayer for our country and where we are right now. What a powerful reminder that God is surely with us in the middle of everything that is happening. And, I believe, God is inviting each and every one of us to be a part of the healing so needed.

In our church, we mark the season of Advent with an Advent wreath containing five candles. We light one candle the first week, two the second week and so on until all five candles are lit on Christmas Eve when we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child. Each week of Advent has a particular focus or theme for the prayers and reflections we offer as we prepare ourselves for the gift of new life made possible when the Christ Child comes into our lives anew once more. Those themes as always are: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. This year my desire for all of us is that we develop a new understanding that these are not gifts God gives to us to be received passively, with barely a nod of recognition as to how precious they are, and how fragile. This year these four tasks of preparation for Advent must be our gifts to God and to ourselves. We must be the Hope we need and our loved ones need. We must be the Peace we need and our world needs. We must be the Joy the downhearted and frightened need. We must be the Love Jesus needs us to be for everyone, the people we like and especially the people we don’t, as we prepare to welcome Jesus once more.

So, this Advent Season, I encourage you to take on a simple spiritual practice, something you do each day from the beginning of Advent right through until Christmas. I urge you to do something hopeful during the first week of Advent, something to promote peace during the second week, something to celebrate joy the third week, and something to embody love the fourth week. What might these things be? That’s the challenge I am placing before you – to figure it out. Hint: Just go through each day mindfully looking for your chance to offer a gift to someone of hope, peace, joy and love and you’ll find it because I *know* it’s there. The real question is whether you will make the effort to see it and respond as God encourages you to.

If you need some assistance to undertake this Advent challenge, I’m not surprised. We all do! That’s why coming to worship on Sunday matters. The gathered community of the church on Sunday morning is literally where we ponder together what

to do, how to do it and why we do it. It's where we come to pray together and encourage one another in the midst of this glorious work entrusted to us by our amazing, loving God. It's where we grow into the people God needs us to be, one moment at a time. I'll be looking for you.

Your friend in Christ,
Rev. Ruth



**WE'RE
GOING**

CHRISTMAS CAROLING!!

And we hope you'll join us! Singing ability not required! We're gathering at the church at **2 pm** on Sunday, **December 11th** and our plan is to carol for a few members of our church who might like us to stop by (contact Rev. Ruth with your suggestions of folks for us to visit) and then come back to church for *hot cocoa, mulled cider and cookies!* Sound like fun?? Families with children of all ages are especially encouraged to participate. Sign-up sheet will be up after the bazaar. Please speak with Rev. Ruth or Dav with any questions.

BIBLE STUDY CONTINUES and Everyone Welcome!



Bible Study will meet only once this month on **Thursday, December 8th @ 6 pm** in the Parlor.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BAZAAR & TEA & SILENT AUCTION

Saturday, December 3, 2016

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Please support our annual event!

Bazaar Helpers are needed! Please **sign up** on the sheets now posted at the entrance to Fellowship Hall. We still have a few blank spaces! Especially needed are **sandwich filling makers** and **1 or 2 people to work the greens area the day of the bazaar.** It will now be in fellowship hall. Also the **kitchen** will need help the morning of the bazaar.

Bake Room – We are asking once again for your homemade goodies to sell in the Bake Room. Cookies, cakes, pies, biscotti, fudge, buckeye balls, English toffee, baked beans, jams, jellies and relishes or pickles are all welcome items. Any of your family specialties are too, as well as gluten free items. It is also helpful if you package items. We have containers for cookies, candies, and other items. See Carolyn, Shirin or Sally Panciera. Thank you. - Carolyn LeRoy, Shirin Platt



Greens Room – We are looking for as many people as possible to create wreaths and arrangements. We will be working **Monday, November 28,** and **Tuesday, November 29,** in the *mornings and evenings.* Please bring clippers to trim the greens and a sharp object like an awl. Also, we need piles of a variety of greens and berries to create these with. If you have any kind of greens in your yard or woods, please drop them off outside of Fellowship Hall before Monday, November 28th. Whatever we make for the Greens Room sells quickly! Thanks. - Lynn Murray

JOIN US AT
The Harvest Table Dinner Ministry
Wednesday, December 21
5:30 – 7:00 pm



This month's theme: "Coping with the Holiday Blues"

Join us for an informal gathering to enjoy a simple soup supper as we gather to sing, pray and talk. All ages welcome! Special activities for children provided. Soups will be vegetarian/vegan. Gluten free bread will be available. Come as you are, assured of welcome, refreshment and renewal.

If you are unable to participate in this event but would like to support this important and growing new ministry of our church, kindly consider donating a homemade soup (enough for 8-10 people) for one of the gatherings. Please speak with Rev. Ruth for more information anytime.

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Diaconate Schedule

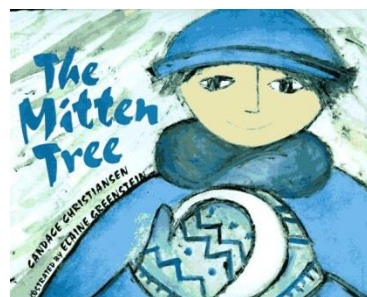
<u>Date</u>	<u>Name & Telephone</u>
Dec 4	Claire Calabretta 860-536-3625
Dec 11	Lynn Murray 401-539-7578
Dec 18	Elvis Torres 860-599-5572
Dec 25	<i>to be determined</i>

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2017 Pledges

Pledges for the upcoming year are still being received. We are off to an excellent start, but we need your support to meet the pledge goal for 2017. Thank you!

UPDATES FROM OUR MISSIONS COMMITTEE



International Mitten Tree Day

THE MITTEN TREE is up just outside the sanctuary entrance from the Bell Courtyard narthex and ready to receive your donations of warm hats, mittens, gloves and scarves. The ones made at the Polar Fleece Express event are decorating it now and will be until they are disbursed in the community on International Mitten Tree Day the first week of December. Then our Mitten Tree will need to be filled once more with your donations accepted through the end of December. Items do not need to be handmade; it's the warmth of the fabric and in your heart that counts. Give someone in need the gift of a little warmth this Christmas!!

Please don't forget our on-going non-perishables collection for the PNC. The red bins are at both entrances.

Thanks to Elaine DeCiutiis and donations received in the Hospitality Room at our Christmas Bazaar for the December WARM meal.

The Christmas Offerings

Each year our church actually receives two different and distinct Christmas offerings so we thought it might be helpful to explain as clearly as we can the purpose of each.

The Christmas Offering is an annual offering intended for the church itself for our officers to use as they see fit with the fiscal year coming to an end. You could actually think of this offering as a sort of Christmas gift to the church. Friends and visitors often make

contributions through this offering but anyone is welcome to contribute.

The Christmas Fund Offering is a designated offering received on behalf of the national church. It is used specifically to offset the small pensions of clergy who have spent their careers serving either as missionaries or in small, poor churches in the United States which were unable to fund a regular pension for them. It also goes to fund an “emergency fund” created to provide emergency financial assistance to retired clergy encountering special circumstances for which their financial reserves are inadequate.

Offering envelopes for both of these – and they look very similar this year – are available in the sanctuary for those of you receiving the Beacon electronically. These envelopes can be placed in the offering plates during any of our worship services between now and the end of December. Please know that your gifts in any amount for one or both of these two offerings are deeply appreciated. They do make a difference, here in our own church and literally across the breadth of the entire denomination.



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December

Birthdays

- 9 – Bob Sicilian
- 20 – Mark Dessales
- 21 – Devin Moynihan
- 26 – Jack Hainsworth
- 29 – Trina Torres

Happy Anniversary to:

Brian & Barbara Johnson – 12-1-79

Please add in your special days by calling the church office!



MUSIC

NEWS

Holidays Tone Chime Choir is still welcoming folks to perform on Sunday, **December 18th**. No previous experience or musical ability needed. If you can count, you’re all set. Watch this space and the order of worship for specifics on rehearsal times on upcoming Sundays. You can also speak with Dav Cranmer, our organist and choir director, for more information.

If you are unable to commit for December 18, there will be other opportunities. For example, we are planning another anthem with tone chimes for January or early February.



**SUNDAY
SCHOOL**
Make the Connection

SAY YES!

**To
SUNDAY**

SCHOOL

Here’s what’s happening in December!

Sunday, Dec 4 – Story Time

Sunday, Dec 11 – Pageant Prep!

Sunday, Dec 18 – *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever!*

Sunday, Dec 25 – Christmas Day! – No **Yes!** program

For more information please speak with CE Contact Kathy Tarasuk, 401-364-9052.

Please be sure to check out *The LIGHTHOUSE*, UCC Westerly’s unique newsletter for families with children and youth. Very special thanks to Elaine Budnick deCiutiis for serving as editor of this exciting new resource for our families!



The Pollinator Garden & Labyrinth Working Group

continues to meet regularly with our next gathering scheduled for

**Wednesday, January 11
at 6:30 pm in the Parlor.**

All welcome to attend our meetings. We also plan to offer educational opportunities here at the church and off-site as well, so keep watching for the latest details on our progress on Facebook!



“BOOKS” Continues ...

and our next gathering is planned for Tuesday, **January 17th**. We will be meeting at Haversham’s in Westerly at **6 pm**. Our book is *Look Again* by Lisa Scottoline. Read all of the book, part of it, or none of it – you’re still welcome to join us for an evening of great to the sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall!



Rev. Ruth’s Community Office Hours! Thursdays from 2 – 4 pm at The Savoy Bookstore & Café in downtown Westerly

Come and chat about anything! The hot drinks at the Savoy are awesome and don’t get me started on the cookies...

NO Community Office Hours on December 1st!

HELP NEEDED!



For a first of its kind event in our church – a **Homeless Awareness Sleepout!** Rev. Ruth has wanted to organize one since she became our pastor and now’s the time!! The Sleep-out will happen Saturday, **January 14** – Sunday, **January 15**, noon to noon. Here’s what we need at this point:

- Large empty card board boxes (think large appliances)
- Portable outdoor fireplace
- Folks willing to lend a hand with preparing three meals, soup kitchen style
- Folks willing to participate in shifts!!!

This event will be anchored by our youth and we will be inviting youth from other UCC churches in the area to participate as well but we need lots of adult assistance! Details still being finalized but if this is something you’re interested in, please speak with Rev. Ruth anytime.

Storm Closing Information



If we have a cancellation at the church due to severe weather, the cancellation will appear on **Channel 8 in Connecticut** and **Channels 6, 10, and 12 in Rhode Island**. You will also receive an emergency email from Pastor Ruth. You can also call the church office (860-599-1226) to hear a special recorded message announcing any cancellation plans.



ALMOST IRON CHEF

**returns on
Saturday, January 28th,
2017**

We are excited to announce the return of the popular Almost Iron Chef event again this year! So get ready to enjoy the culinary talents of our members as well as folks from the community as our amateur chefs gear up to compete once again.

The Key Ingredient is HONEY! The categories for dishes are Appetizer, Main Course, Salad and Dessert.

Registration for chef competitors and ticket sales for tasters opens December 5th.

Registration forms for chef competitors are available in Fellowship Hall, through the church office or can be downloaded through the church's website. Please note the number of chef competitors is limited to 25 again this year! You will also want to note that seating for tasters is limited to 75 again this year and only pre-paid tickets are guaranteed seating the night of the event. Remember, chefs, to encourage your friends and family to attend to stuff the ballot boxes for you that evening!!! Tickets for chef competitors and tasters will be \$10 again this year. And once again, one ticket = one official AIC ballot! No charge for children age 6 and under.

Watch for additional AIC details in the Weekly Email Update, the weekly Sunday morning bulletin and the Facebook page!



*From your staff:
Rev. Ruth, Dav, Susan, and Joann*



Please pray for the following members and friends of our church:

Madelyn Stratton	Sandi Davis
Fred	Jeff
Catherine	Millie Silver
Carole Kus	Shirley Harrington
Lisa	Beverly & Family
Brian Madill	David Jones
Eugene Ravenelle	Jennifer Clancon
Karen & Bill	Kim Brown
Shirley M.	Hope
Gerry	Timothy Nugent
Scott & his parents	William Underhill III
Family of Gary Dobson	
Connie	Nicci & Jeff
Bob & Ann	Allie
Rae Drager	Family of Doris Whitehead
Mark Bottineau	

If you would like anyone added or removed from this list for the next newsletter, please call the office or let one of our deacons know. Thank you.

OUR STAFF

Pastor: The Rev. Ruth Shilling Hainsworth
Organist: David Cranmer
YES Program Contact: Kathy Tarasuk
Secretary: Susan Perreault
Sexton: Joann Spurley
Web Master: Heather Stratton
Lighthouse Editor: Elaine deCiutiis

CHURCH OFFICE SPECIFICS

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