

The Beacon

JULY/AUGUST 2017



GOOD NEWS from

United Congregational Church of Westerly

United Church of Christ, Pawcatuck, CT

Sunday Worship ~ 9:30 am

FROM THE PASTOR ...

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?"

Matthew 5:13a

This is one of those verses we know well. It comes from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, early on in the beginning of Jesus' ministry. We can almost picture him standing on the hilltop, people seated all around him, raptly listening. The true genius of Jesus' approach whenever he spoke with people was to use simple examples to explain the points he was trying to make. He used everyday items people were familiar with so they were able to grasp his points and connect them to their own lives. Surely this verse is an excellent example of this ingenious teaching style of Jesus. Only thing is, how well does it really translate to us in the 21st century?

This is a legitimate question I think when we now live in a world where salt is sometimes suspect. For example, we know that too much salt can cause high blood pressure. We also know there are lots of different kinds of salt – Sea Salt, Kosher Salt, Garlic Salt, Pink Salt, etc. Then there are the kinds of salt that have nothing to do with eating: Epsom salts, rock salt, bath salts, etc. So, the clarity of Jesus' simple message to us about being the salt of the earth gets pretty murky unless

we slow down and ponder what he was really trying to say. To do that we need to understand that in Jesus' day, there was one kind of salt, the kind that was mined from the ground. It was a precious commodity, critical for preserving food in a time without refrigeration. This kind of salt, left exposed and out in the air, gradually lost its saltiness. It evaporates into the air and the mineral substance left behind becomes useless.

So what is Jesus' point here? Not the salt itself, that's for sure. His point is that if you don't take care of yourself when it comes to your relationship with God, if you don't take the time and make the effort to nurture your faith, it will eventually evaporate away, leaving the empty husk of what it used to be. Jesus is saying that faith taken for granted or even ignored, is at risk of fading away. Jesus is saying that it takes work and effort to be a person of faith. It takes more than showing up on Sunday and being a good person the rest of the week. Being a follower of Jesus is not, and never has been, a spectator sport. For too long churches have slipped into a way of operating that encourages being spectators or consumers of the religious experience. And much like what happens when you get tired of watching reruns on television and just turn the TV off to do something else, people get bored with the church and end up walking away.

This is where the church generic finds itself in the early part of the 21st century. Too many options compete with the time traditionally set aside for church on Sunday mornings: youth sports of course but that's only one. How about grocery shopping if you work a lot of hours? How about just sleeping in if you're exhausted because juggling a job and kids and the demands of life in general just wear you out? How about catching up on your reading, or staying in touch with folks on Facebook or just having coffee with a friend? The simple truth is that church is only ONE option among dozens of how to spend that hour on Sunday morning. As a result, folks everywhere are losing their saltiness when it comes to living and learning and being church together. Folks are just too exposed to too many other options, obscuring the value of church, of Christ being an active part of life. Their saltiness in the faith is evaporating away, or already gone.

That's why I love that this verse ends with a question and I think it is THE question the church of the 21st century has to answer, each church for itself. "How can saltiness be restored?" How can

we help people who have been worn down by life and exhausted by too much being asked of them too much of the time? How can we help these people in our own community go from blandly gliding through life to becoming salty practitioners of the life of faith we share together? That is our task. That is our challenge and it is not an easy one. It will require doing some new things in new ways. Think the Pollinator Garden Project and the ONA Committee as examples of this. It will require holding on to traditions which anchor and sustain us, like Sunday morning worship and the many events this church is known for like the Christmas Bazaar and the Valentine Tea and more recently, Almost Iron Chef. And it will require experimenting with important ministries by trying some new things. You've seen a little of this in the evolution of Sunday School into the YES program in recent years. Our changing demographics continue to push this change and we are excited to announce we will be spending the summer developing an entirely new Family Ministries program not tied to Sunday morning— *Sabbath Circles* – which we hope will be a rejuvenating, educational and fellowship endeavor the whole church will enjoy.

In the meantime, as these summer weeks slide by, I encourage you to take some time to consider your own saltiness, your own connection with Jesus and God and the Holy Spirit. What are your questions? What are your reservations? What are your joys? What are your truths? Ponder these questions this summer. Pray them. And come fall, let's see what God has in store for us all. I'm pretty excited myself...

Your friend in Christ,
Rev. Ruth

***Rev. Ruth is looking
for some suggestions!!***

I am going to be doing a sermon series this fall based on favorite children's books and I am looking for suggestions! What was your favorite children's book as a child? What did you read to your children and grandchildren? Leave me a note, send me an email or give me a call!!!



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

Come and chat about whatever. Or come for a nice cold drink and sit with me. The iced chai lattes are my favorite but I understand the iced coffee is pretty good too. Join me some Thursday and find out! Don't forget I will be away on vacation on the following Thursdays: July 27, August 3, and August 10th!
Your friend and chatting partner, Rev. Ruth

**AN INVITATION TO ALL
THE LADIES OF THE CHURCH**

Please join us for a return to a wonderful tradition –

**The Women's Fellowship
Summer Picnic!**



***Wednesday, July 12 from 12 – 2 pm
Hosted by Sally Panciera at
115 Winnapaug Road, Westerly***

Sign-up sheet is outside Fellowship Hall!!

★ HAPPY ★ BIRTHDAY!

July Birthdays

- 4 – Darla Rines
- 4 – Jimmy Stott
- 13 – Mark Comito
- 14 – Joann Spurley
- 19 – Bobbie DelPozo-Waldron
- 21 – Ane Torres
- 27 – Jim Cornell
- 30 – Elvis Torres

August Birthdays

- 1 – Rosemary Jette
- 10 – Liz Dessaulles
- 13 – Amanda Dessaulles
- 20 – Bethany Foster
- 30 – Shirley Miller

Happy Anniversary to:

- Elvis & Ane Torres – July 20, 2002
- Eugene & Carolyn LeRoy – August 4, 1962
- Andy & Heidi Schilke – August 4
- George & Cathy Gray – August 23

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

HARVEST TABLE

will be meeting on
Wednesday, July 19 & August 16
at 5:30 pm
in Fellowship Hall.



A simple supper will be created using the bounty everyone brings that evening. Items to bring include: lettuce of any type, tomatoes, garden veges, cheeses, fruits, breads – regular & GF, butter.

We will share in the meal, a brief time of prayer and reflection and then time spent working in the gardens.

Do watch the Weekly Email Updates, Sunday bulletin News & Notes and the UCC Westerly Facebook page for updates on special programs we may offer!

Please speak with Rev. Ruth for any questions.



Here's the latest buzz on the Pollinator Garden Project!

❖ The next Pollinator Garden Committee meeting is **Wednesday, July 5 at 5:30 pm.** Come and learn about the project timeline and special work events to be scheduled!

❖ Weeding and edging the existing gardens is always going on until we get them well established. If you would like to assist, and learn some amazing info in the process, please speak with either Claire Calabretta or Sandi Davis to find out the best time to join the work crews!

Be sure to check out the Pollinator Garden bulletin board in Fellowship Hall for the latest info and for gardening tips and suggestions of all types!

MISSION NEWS



The summer months are here, and everyone knows what that means!!! Yes, that's right, our third annual **IN THE MIDDLE school supplies drive** for local middle schools!!

In conjunction with the ***Blessing of the Backpacks*** on Sunday, August 27th, we will be collecting school supplies to help children in need during the summer months. Thanks to local middle school teachers for their help in compiling this list of needed supplies:

- Pencils of good quality (like Ticonderoga) that sharpen well
- red and other colored pens and pencils for students to correct their work
- thin markers
- highlighters
- zippered "folio" type binders, 3-ring binders (1½ inch)
- 3-ring binder paper
- pencil cases that go in the 3-ring binders and small change purses
- one-subject notebooks
- cap erasers for pencils and regular erasers
- glue sticks
- backpacks
- And to help the teachers, boxes of tissues for the classroom

Since those back-to-school sales will be starting sooner than we'd like, our Mission buckets stand ready to receive our donations all summer long!

Please don't forget that our food collection for the PNC is on-going. *They have requested **juice boxes and macaroni & cheese boxes** as needed items now!* The need doesn't disappear during the summer.

Vacation Time



Rev. Ruth's Summer Schedule

Rev. Ruth will be on vacation from Monday, July 24 through and including Sunday, August 13th.

For pastoral care issues when Rev. Ruth is on vacation, please contact the Diaconate Person of the Week or the Chair of the Deacons, Lynn Murray at #401-539-7578.

Susan will be out of the office on her vacation on Monday, July 31st, and Thursday & Friday, August 3rd & 4th.



SUMMER OFFICE HOURS

Susan will be in the office on Mondays and Fridays from 8:30 am – 12:30 pm, and on Thursdays from 8:30 am – 1:30 pm. These hours will begin on Monday, July 3rd, and end on Friday, August 25th. Then I will return to working all 3 days until 1:30 pm. *Enjoy your summer!*

ATTIC TREASURES SALE



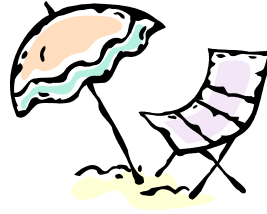
The Attic Treasures Sale is back and will take place in August. The date will be made known once I know what my school summer professional development commitment will be. Mostly it will be the same, but with a few changes that hopefully will lighten the work that the hearty work crews of the past took on.
-- Lynn

Some things to know:

- ALL items should be brought to church the week leading up to the Saturday sale, not ahead of time.
- Prior to that, colored, pre-priced labels will be available for you to take home.
- Any items coming in should be cleaned and priced prior to arrival at church.
- There will be layouts of the sale set-up available, and tables will be clearly marked with signs signifying placement of treasures.
- Help will be available with picking up of items, as well as unloading of your vehicle.
- Items should be priced to sell, but please, not lower than 50 cents or a quarter.
- Staffing hours will be made available so folks know when drop off times are, and when they can be available to help.
- Help will be needed that week bringing up items leftover from previous sales that are downstairs. I will try to clean, organize, and price prior to that.
- Help will also be needed setting up tables the Sunday leading up to the sale.
- If folks want to bring clothes, be sure they are in decent shape. If they don't sell, they will be donated.
- NO Large Furniture & NO Electronics please!
- Remember: *If you wouldn't buy it, use it, or wear it, don't bring it.*

Many thanks to Linda and her work crew for carrying on the tradition for so many years.

BOOKS ON THE BEACH



**Tuesday, August 22nd
@ 6:00 pm**

We will be meeting at the Pavilion at Misquamicut State Beach. Bring a bag supper and something to drink. Everyone is invited to bring one or two of their *favorite Children's books* to discuss. Come and join us! Everyone welcome!

SAVE THE DATE!!

Sunday, September 17

WARM CENTER SUNDAY!



Once again we will be incorporating the preparation of the WARM Center meal we provide each month into Sunday morning worship as we put the faith we profess into practice!

Details will appear in the September Beacon.

The First Tri-Conference Meeting!

On June 17th, four representatives from our church attended a meeting held in Hartford, CT to hear presentations and vote on whether the Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts UCC Conferences should *pursue* the goal of joining into one joint conference.

Rev. Ruth Shilling Hainsworth, Peter Hainsworth (outgoing Past President of the RI UCC), Jenny and Christina Brummund (delegates) had discussed the upcoming vote

with the June Church Council attendees and it was decided that we would vote “no” as a group, mainly for the reason that after several members had attended RI UCC meetings to collect questions and concerns about the possible idea of a merger in the previous year, no other alternatives appeared to have been investigated. There were concerns about costs of the legal requirements to attain such a goal, travel distances involved for delegates, and the fate of the RI Conference's endowments, such as Iron's Homestead.

At the meeting in Hartford, there were presentations about the possible benefits of a merger, such as reduced/streamlined operating costs and shared resources. The organizational model in mind is that each state's conference would maintain their own board, but there would be a Tri-Conference Board that makes decisions for all three state conferences as a block.

Each state then independently held an open discussion forum and took a vote as to whether to move forward with the idea. Unless all three states voted “yes”, the process would not continue. The RI Conference did, indeed, have a “yes” vote overall, with about one-quarter of the assembled group voting “no”. CT and MA also voted “yes”!

What will happen now? In the next year, committees will collect information about costs, legalities, administration, etc. and present their findings at the next Tri-Conference Meeting to be held in Springfield, MA in June 2018. At that meeting, a *final* vote will be taken to approve or disapprove the merger. What an exciting time to be a delegate; consider volunteering at the next Annual Meeting in January!

Please feel free to speak to any of the above attendees if you have further questions.

Respectfully submitted,
Jenny Brummund
Delegate

Coffee Fellowship Committee



A very informal Coffee Fellowship Committee is in place, working with the Deacons to coordinate set-up, refreshments, and clean-up for the congregation after worship. *If you have questions or would like to learn how to help out*, speak to one of the following people: *Joy Liborio, JoAnn Spurley, Ed Stratton, Claire Calabretta, or Jenny Brummund*. Please feel free to continue to use the existing sign-up sheet if you would like to host on a particular week.

Since this is a relatively small group of volunteers, consider helping out by baking something extra to be kept in the church freezer! Hosts can simply pull out a tasty treat and defrost it “in a pinch.” *Please label and date your baked items*. Gluten-free and nut-free recipes are also needed.

*For the summer, lemonade and ice water will be served in lieu of hot beverages, to keep things cool and simple, with quicker clean-up required. If you would like to donate frozen juice concentrate of any kind, or ingredients for punch, or iced tea or coffee, that is another helpful option.

Another way to volunteer is to simply help to clean up after Fellowship Time; many folks attend meetings after church and we are always grateful to those who pitch in to get the kitchen back in order!

Thank you in advance for supporting this vital part of our Sunday morning together!

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Diaconate Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone #</u>
Jul 2	Lynn Murray	401-539-7578
Jul 9	Ed Stratton	401-596-4740
Jul 16	Bethany Foster	401-539-4003
Jul 23	Jenny Brummund	860-599-1719
Jul 30	Elvis Torres	860-599-5572
Aug 6	Claire Calabretta	860-536-3625
Aug 13	Jenny Brummund	860-599-1719
Aug 20	Lynn Murray	401-539-7578
Aug 27	Ed Stratton	401-596-4740

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PRAYER LIST



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

Madelyn Stratton	Shirley Harrington
Beverly & Family	Brian Madill
Shirley M.	Gerry
Scott & his parents	The Underhill Family
Connie	Nicci & Jeff
Allie	David Hall
Josh	Ben
Rev. Elizabeth King	Jesse B.
Bill Colprit	Bill & Phyllis Horne

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

Mailing Address: 9 Castle Hill Road
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Telephone: **860-599-1226**
E-mail: **uccwesterly@sbcglobal.net**
Website: **www.uccwesterly.org**
Summer Office Hours: Monday & Friday from
8:30 am – 12:30 pm; Thursday 8:30 – 1:30 pm