

The Beacon

MARCH 2016



GOOD NEWS *from*

United Congregational Church of Westerly

United Church of Christ, Pawcatuck, CT

Sunday Worship ~ 9:30 am

FROM THE PASTOR ...

*“Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.”* Matthew 5:7

Mercy is a word we know in the sense that we're familiar with it, but usually in a vague, abstract kind of way. The dictionary on my office shelf defines the primary meaning of mercy as “more kindness than justice requires; kindness beyond what can be claimed or expected.” (*Thorndike Barnhart Desk Dictionary*, 1953) The Bible Dictionary (*The New Combined Bible Dictionary and Concordance*, 2005) sitting just a few books away from the regular dictionary defines mercy simply as “kindness.” In searching for bible verses containing the word mercy, they were more difficult to find than I had anticipated. I was working from a concordance written for the King James Bible and, as sometimes happens, the translation differences between a King James and an NRSV Bible can be substantial. Of the half dozen verses I looked up, only one was still translated as mercy in the NRSV. That's the one which appears above. All the others translated “mercy” as everything from “steadfastness” to “justice” to “love” to “kindness.”

I'm going into detail on all this because I think the difference between the King James and the NRSV Bibles on the word “mercy” explains a lot about our contemporary ambivalence toward both the word and the concept it attempts to define. We just don't encounter the word “mercy” all that often anymore so we don't really stop to think about what it means. We see it perhaps in the names of hospitals or on Catholic schools, but it's not a word we use in everyday conversation with each other, and that's too bad. Whether you think of mercy in terms of love or justice or extraordinary kindness, it's something our world needs desperately and yet is in ever increasing short supply.

This is why I have identified the “Works of Mercy” as our focus for Lent this year. With ancient roots in the Christian tradition, the Works of Mercy are specific actions which when performed as a spiritual discipline assist you in understanding God's grace by experiencing it in living a Christian life through the practice of mercy. The Works of Mercy fall into two categories, physical and spiritual. Physical works are what you can do to alleviate suffering in another person. Spiritual works are what you can do to deepen your own faith or someone else's. There is a list of specific actions for each category and they are drawn from the Parable of the Nations in Matthew 25. A complete list of the Works of Mercy and suggestions for incorporating them into your life can be found in the Lenten Experience Guide available at the church. I will also be preaching on the Works of Mercy during Lent and would love to chat with you about your observations and questions about mercy during fellowship time each week.

Mercy – that experience of kindness beyond all measure and expectation – is something we all need at some point in our lives. And our fractured, broken and hurting world needs it desperately. No wonder Jesus included it in his wonderful litany of those things which bring us blessing, those beautiful and challenging words of the Beatitudes. “Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.” This Lent, as we prepare for the miracle of Easter once more, let's explore together how mercy might hold the key for becoming the church God is calling us to be now and in the future.

Your friend in Christ,

Rev. Ruth

Our schedule for **LENT** and **HOLY WEEK**



Sunday Morning Worship weekly
at **9:30 am** focusing on
"the Works of Mercy"



Palm Sunday – March 20th @ 9:30 am

*Festive service with the distribution of Palms
by the YES kids.*

Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service
with our Confirmands on
March 24 @ 7:00 pm in Fellowship Hall

Good Friday Community Service –
March 25th @ 10:00 am in Wilcox Park,
Westerly

Easter Sunrise Service – March 27th
on Misquamicut Beach @ 6:30 am



Festive Easter Service on Sunday,
March 27th @ 9:30 am

CONFIRMATION REMINDERS

- The **Confirmation Retreat** will be at Irons Homestead on March 11 – 12. A flyer and registration form has been provided to all Confirmands.
- Confirmands will be participating in the Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service on Thursday, March 24 @ 7 pm.

"BOOKS" will be meeting just before the Beacon goes to press so plans for our next gathering will be announced via the Weekly Email Update.

REAL GOOD CHURCH



Saturday, March 19 @ 5:30 pm

Join us for an old fashioned church potluck supper and some excellent conversation on the future of our church. Bring your favorite potluck supper dish and your willingness to have a conversation about what some exciting new possibilities for our church might be. We will be using the ideas described in the book *Real Good Church* by the Rev. Molly Phinney Baskette as a starting point for our conversation and our dreaming. Copies of the book are available to borrow through the church office. We're counting on seeing you there! Call the church office if you would like a ride!

Mission Moments



Ready, Set, Go!!!

The first Annual Fill the Pews Competition!!

Let's get that competitive spirit flowing!! During the month of March we will see which side of our congregation can fill the pews with the most visitors and non-perishable food items! The front pews will be reserved for non-perishable food items for the PNC and the rest of the pews will be open for visitors that YOU will invite to join us!

Rules: Each non-perishable food item will earn your side of the church one point. Each guest will earn your side a whopping 20 points!! There will be a "Guest Basket" in each of the front pews where your guests should leave their completed visitor's cards.

The contest will run through Easter Sunday, but we are hoping that the spirit of filling our pews with new friends and our mission buckets with donations will continue indefinitely!

The winning side of the church will be recipients of bragging rights for the next year and will also be honored at a special fellowship hour sponsored by the Church Council.

Good Luck!

Thanks to the Men's club for providing the **March 13th WARM meal.**

New **Fair Trade items** are available in Fellowship Hall – *dark chocolate Easter eggs, dark hot chocolate, fruit and nut bars, dried mango, and almonds!* We also have our usual favorites: flavored coffees, chocolate bars, and teas. A list of prices is available on the door of the red cabinet.

Thanks for all your help! Please speak to any member of the Missions Committee with your ideas and questions – *Sandi Davis, Melissa Stratton, Claire Calabretta, Darla Rines, Kathy Sugar, or Peter Hainsworth.*



YES!

PROGRAM

SCHEDULE

Sunday, Mar 6 – **Nature Engagement** – Anna's Barrier Beaches Presentation

Sunday, Mar 13 – **Service Engagement** – Palm Crosses & Easter Cards

Sunday, Mar 20 – **Palm Sunday**
Easter Egg Hunt & Egg Dyeing

Sunday, Mar 27 – **Easter!!!**



CONGRATULATIONS to our **ALMOST IRON CHEF WINNERS** for 2016!

- **Overall Almost Iron Chef** – **Whitney Stamm**
- Best Appetizer – **Lynn Murray**
- Best Main Course – **Sandi Davis**
- Best Side Dish – **Justin McKenna**
- Best Dessert – **Whitney Stamm**



March Birthdays

- 1 – Fred Tarasuk
- 1 – Madelyn Stratton
- 5 – Cathy Gray
- 7 – Shirin Platt
- 10 – Adam Tarasuk
- 12 – Emma Stratton
- 19 – Edward Stratton
- 30 – Brenda Cornell

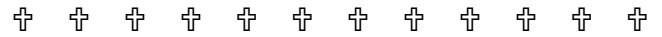
Happy Anniversary to:

Ed and Nancy Schilke – March 16

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

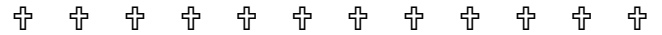
Conference Dues

The Rhode Island Conference of the United Church of Christ has voted to raise the per capita dues from \$18 to \$20. This decision was made after our offering envelopes were ordered. We do our best to meet this commitment, but also understand this is not possible for all. Feel free to adjust your contribution if possible. Thank you.



Diaconate Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name & Telephone</u>
Mar 6	<i>to be determined</i>
Mar 13	<i>at their next meeting on</i>
Mar 20	<i>Thursday, March 3</i>
Mar 27	<i>at 6:30 pm.</i>



Earth Day Sunday

Church Clean-Up & Cookout!

Sunday, APRIL 24,



- Some Capital Campaign Updates:**
- The Trustees are sending out Requests for Proposals to three area roofing companies for the next phase of roof repairs. A subcommittee of the Trustees will be overseeing this project and will keep the congregation updated.
 - Sandi Davis, Lynn Murray, Claire Calabretta and Rev. Ruth are continuing to investigate grant funding for a variety of potential projects here at the church.

Mark your calendars now!
Come to church for worship in your garden grubbies and bring your tools as we honor God's Creation literally in our own backyard!

MISSION TRIP 2016

A New Twist!



As many of you are aware, we have enjoyed two very successful congregational mission trips the last two summers based in “The Providence Experience” at Irons Homestead in northern Rhode Island. Our focus was to understand better the issues of homelessness and food insecurity right in our own area. These trips have been amazing offering unique opportunities to travel and learn together even as we deepened our relationships with God and each other. BUT, these wonderful experiences have been limited to a few people for any number of practical reasons.

In discussing this reality at its recent meeting, the Missions Committee came up with the wonderful idea of offering a Mission Trip experience to a broader audience through a variety of “day trip” opportunities over the course of the summer. Some of the ideas on the table for these day trips include:

- A return to the Abbey of Regina Laudis in Bethlehem, CT to experience firsthand the interweaving of the rhythms of daily life grounded in prayer and sustainable agriculture.
- A journey to Ground Zero in New York City as one way to understand how Muslim Christian relationships in this country have become what they are.
- A visit to a local Muslim Mosque to learn the truth of genuine Islam as a religion of peace and tolerance.
- A Sunday morning visit to the Friendship Breakfast at Mathewson Street Church in Providence to work and experience firsthand the reality of homelessness in our cities.
- A work day at one of the area farms which grows produce for the local food

pantries to support those important efforts in tangible ways.

- A train trip to the Semitic Museum and others at Harvard University in Boston to see firsthand artifacts from the amazing history of our living faith.

These are just a few of the ideas we are considering. Do you have others? Which ones are you willing to help organize? Speak with Rev. Ruth or any member of the Missions Committee and let’s all enjoy some wonderful “Mission Days” this summer!!

2016 SUNDAY WORSHIP BULLETINS

This special ministry of the church includes the regular Sunday bulletins and also bulletins that are purchased for special times during the church year (Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, etc.) as well as funeral bulletins. Of course we also have the cost of paper for the regular bulletins and the toner and “wear & tear” on the copier machine to consider. For \$30.00 you can provide bulletins for an **entire month** for your church family. Please sign up on the sign-up sheet that has been posted near the Flower Chart in Fellowship Hall. Make a check out to the church for the bulletins. Thank you.

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

The next **Church Council meeting** will be held on Sunday, **March 13th** at **11:00 am** in the Parlor. All Council Members please submit your reports for the meeting to Cathy Gray by **March 6th**. **Electronic submissions are preferred.** (Cathy’s email address is graygc@mindspring.com) Susan will send you a form via email on February 29th to help you make out your report.



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

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

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

Sunday School Contact Persons: Tanya Sylvestre
and Susan Lanphere

Secretary: Susan Perreault

Sexton: Debby Johnson

CHURCH OFFICE SPECIFICS

Mailing Address: 9 Castle Hill Road
Pawcatuck, CT 06379

Telephone # & FAX: **860-599-1226**

E-mail: **uccwesterly@sbcglobal.net**

Website: **www.uccwesterly.org**

Office Hours: Monday, Thursday, & Friday
from 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.