

From the Pastor...

“Prepare the way of the Lord”

Mark 1:3b

This text from the Gospel of Mark is how the story of Jesus' baptism, which is a key liturgical event in the month of January, begins. This phrase comes from Isaiah but is used in this passage to describe John the Baptist, the one to whom Jesus turns for baptism as he prepares to begin his ministry on earth. John is being depicted here as the one preparing the way for Jesus by calling people to repent and be baptized as a sign of their desire to be free from sin. John makes no claim to be the Messiah himself, according to Mark, but instead insists that the one to come after him is even more powerful than he. Jesus presents himself to John for baptism and as Jesus comes back up out of the water, Mark says the heavens are torn apart and the Spirit of God descends on Jesus like a dove.

This story of Jesus' baptism and the beginning of his ministry is a key one in the Christian faith. It shows us that even Jesus had to take time and effort to be prepared to answer the call from God for which he was born. Even Jesus humbled himself before God in the act of baptism. Even Jesus took that first step of faith in faith, not knowing where it would lead him or what might be asked of him. I love that in our church we have a tangible reminder of this important, foundational story front and center in our sanctuary. Hovering over our baptismal font is an incredibly lifelike dove hand-carved for us by one of our members, Bob Sicilian. The dove is really quite extraordinary, recalling as it does that moment in time when Jesus received what he needed from God to respond to God's call to him. Hovering in front of us each week, the dove is our own reminder that God indeed calls each of us to a new way of life in Christ. And that new way of life is meant to be lived and practiced in the midst of a community of faithful folks trying to do the same.

So as the new year at the United Congregational Church of Westerly in Pawcatuck begins, I want us to consider together all the ways God is asking us to work together to “prepare the way of the Lord” in our little corner of the world. What new things is God inviting us to consider? What new possibilities are out there for us to try? And what of our long standing traditions and history are important to emphasize or even rekindle if they have slipped into inaction? It is indeed an exciting time for our church as the new year dawns. We have already done so much together and there is so much more we can do. I can't wait for our New Year to begin! How about you?

Blessings,

Pastor Ruth

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

Elizabeth Ball	Ann Brown	Jimmy
Charlie Wright	Barbara	Barbara Simmons
Madelyn Stratton	Sandi Davis	Fred
Catherine	Jeff	Jim
Millie Silver	Debbie	Shirley Harrington
Beverly and Family	Carole Lennon	Lisa
Vince Amkhamavong, U.S. Marines		John Dillon
Susan & Devin	Sheryl	David Jones
Doris	Charlie	Joe & Joyce
Jennifer Clancon	Marg Madill	Beverly Ravenelle

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

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

The next **Church Council meeting** will be held on Sunday, **January 13th at 11:00 am** in the Parlor. All Council Members please submit your reports for the meeting to Carole Cravinho by **January 3rd**. Electronic submissions are preferred. (Carole's email address is jcravinho@comcast.net) Thank you.

- *Congratulations* to **Erin Blake** who is a 6th grader at Pawcatuck Middle School. She was chosen as 1 of 2 sopranos from her school to sing at the Connecticut Music Education Association Music Festival, which will happen on March 7 and 8, 2013!

Mission Memos

We hope to encourage and increase our monthly donations to the **Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center** by providing you monthly with a specific foodstuff that is especially needed by the community. For the month of January, if you are shopping and can purchase an extra or two and/or see a great sale, please consider adding to your grocery cart: **baked beans, tuna in oil, Spam, Chef Boy-R-Dee, instant mashed potatoes, and canned fruit: mixed fruit, peaches, pears and pineapple.** Of course, any and all donations are so needed. There are red buckets in Fellowship Hall and in the upper parking lot sanctuary foyer. Every second Sunday, the Mission Committee will place an in-worship collection basket on the chancel (near the altar), to help remind us to make food donations part of our monthly or weekly offering. Thank you again for all you do for others in need. Remember the words from Micah 6:8: "...what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Equal Exchange, Fairly Traded items are available on the cart in Fellowship Hall. We have *coffee, tea, baking cocoa, and chocolate bars*. Please **stop at the Mission Cart to purchase these items** and to check out these products—*Organic Chamomile Tea, Organic Peppermint Tea, Organic Darjeeling Tea, Organic Espresso Bean Chocolate, & Organic "Mind, Body, & Soul" coffee (medium Vienna roast)*. You may help yourself or ask a Mission Committee member for assistance. The price list & collection tin are on the cart. We sell "at cost" with no mark-up.

REMINDER: The **WARM CENTER meal** for Sunday, **January 13th**, is going to be the responsibility of the *Choir and Music Committee*.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday to:

Judy Bartlett - 3
Douglas Brummund - 9
Carolyn LeRoy – 11
Lindsay Walker - 18
Nancy Schilke – 23
Sonya Johnson – 26
Jamie Foster - 28
Ben Macko - 31

Happy Anniversary to:

Dan & Jan McCrary – January 7th

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

- Attention All **Knitters and Crochet-ers** – We need more **prayer shawls!** We are down to one!



Diaconate Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone</u>
Jan 6	Ed Stratton	(401) 596-4740
Jan 13	Chris Fuller	(401) 315-2282
Jan 20	Brenda Cornell	(860) 599-3580
Jan 27	Melissa Stratton	(401) 596-4740



CALL TO MEETING

***Annual Meeting of The United Congregational Church, United
Church of Christ
Sunday, January 27, 2013
following the worship service.***

ANNUAL REPORTS ARE DUE

on Thursday, January 10th, 2013

and can be submitted (to Susan) as early as possible!

***The reports will be ready for distribution on
Sunday, January 20th, 2013.***

All groups, Boards, and organizations should submit an annual report as well as all Treasurers. *Reports can be left in the office, mailed in, or emailed in. Our email address is uccwesterly@sbcglobal.net. **Electronic submissions are encouraged** because this makes the job much easier for everyone involved.*

If you need more time to complete your report, please contact the church office and let us know. Thank you.

INCLEMENT WEATHER/STORM CLOSING POLICY

As recent weather events have reminded us, bad weather can be upon us and change plans quickly. The Deacons at their December meeting reviewed their storm closing policy and have recommended the following which we will be using in the months ahead:

- We have requested to participate in the closure notices on television channels 8 (CT) and 10 (RI). This means you should be able to view our notice of closing on either of those channels once they have been submitted. We will make sure those notices are submitted by no later than 7am on Sunday mornings which means they should appear on the stations by 7:30am at the latest.
- We will also change the recorded phone message on the church answering machine to indicate the closure status on Sunday mornings. This means you can find out what's happening just by calling the church phone (860-599.1226) and listening to the message.
- Those of you with email can also receive closure notifications via email. Just email the church office and ask to be added to the church's newly established "Email Notification List." Folks on this list will receive the earliest notifications of closure decisions on the church. Folks on this list will also have the option of receiving the church newsletter in an e-version to save on postage!

If you have any questions or concerns with regard to this policy, kindly speak with Claire Calabretta, Chris Fuller or Pastor Ruth at any time. Thanks!

PASTOR RUTH'S ADULT EDUCATION UPDATE!

Kindly note that Pastor Ruth is offering a number of adult education opportunities in the months ahead to include:

- The BAD Bible Study which will be meeting on Sunday, January 6 and Sunday, January 20 at 11am in the Parlor to continue our study of the Barbara Essex book *Bad Girls of the Bible*. Everyone is welcome to sit in on these discussions regardless of whether or not you are reading the book.

- A book discussion group on the book *Why Bad Things Happen to Good People* by Harold Kushner is planned for Lent. Watch for details as to time and place!
- A midweek daytime prayer group is also planned for Lent. This group would meet for one hour weekly for the study and practice of prayer, day and time to be determined. If you are interested in this group, kindly advise Pastor Ruth of your preference.

Be listening for details on a Women's Fellowship Potluck being planned by Pastor Ruth for some time in January. Please let her know what day and time would work best for you!

Annual Chili Cook-Off

Date to be determined!

(Please watch upcoming Sunday bulletins)

Dinner at 5:30 p.m.

***Open to the public! No admission charged,
but please bring in non-perishable food items***

for the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center and bring your best pot of chili and come hungry! Prizes will be awarded for the 3 entries with the most votes. If you are not a chili maker, bring your favorite casserole. Donations of corn bread are welcome, as well as toppings to accompany ice cream!

Beverages and Dessert will be provided.

Souper Bowl Supper &

Swing Music

Saturday, February 2nd

Open to the public.

Mark your calendar and reserve **February 2nd** for another great evening. Once again, Jay Macko has some talented friends who are in a band called **Thames River Big Band** and they will be entertaining us with **swing music** for your listening and dancing pleasure!

Enjoy an endless bowl of homemade soups, delicious desserts, & wonderful live music. Start filling your bowl at **6:00 pm** and be ready for music following dinner (around 6:30 pm).

Cost: \$10.00 – for an endless bowl of soup

*price includes our delicious homemade desserts and beverage

When the sign-up sheet is available, please sign up to make soup and/or dessert, and to set up or clean up.

Signing up for COFFEE

Please sign up on the sign-up sheet in **Fellowship Hall** (next to the Flower Chart) to be a **coffee host** for any Sunday in the coming months. Refreshments are NOT A REQUIREMENT for the coffee host. There is often something in the freezer that can be used. *If you are baking at home feel free to make extra and tuck it in the church freezer.* Thank you for your help.