

## From the Pastor...

*“That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built.” Luke 6:48*

Good grief, what a winter this has been for us in our little corner of the world. And not just winter! Our struggles with the elements go back to the fall when Hurricane Sandy turned things upside down. When I heard the forecast for yet another weekend storm coming our way I admit it. I was annoyed. Actually, I was more than annoyed. I was angry. “Come on, God, how much of this disruption to the life and work of this church do we have to take?” I thought. “Let this one skip us, God” I prayed silently as a few of us gathered in the sanctuary for the Lenten midweek prayer service. Then this morning, as the sun streamed in through my kitchen window and the puffy clouds floated by in the crystal blue sky, I prayed to God for forgiveness for the anger of yesterday. Then I prayed to God for insight into what wisdom can be gleaned from the ridiculous weather of recent weeks and months. As I pondered, I realized that all these experiences and how we responded to them are real life examples of the rock on which our church, our congregation, is built.

First, I realized anew, and perhaps many of you have too, how really central Sunday morning worship is to the life of our community. Meeting together for that hour on Sunday morning to reconnect intentionally with God and each other truly provides the structure and foundation for our life together as church. We need the worship hour to pray together, to hear and reflect on Scripture together, to sing together and to sit in silence together. We need to be refreshed at the well of living water that worship offers us each week and this living water is not just about a good sermon or a beautiful anthem from the choir, although those things do add to our worship experience. The living water of worship is the refreshing energy we get just by the act of intentionally coming together in a sacred place dedicated to God, permeated with decades of prayers of all sorts and the life experiences of this community.

Second, I am reminded once again that we are the little church that just keeps going and going no matter what life throws in our path. The latest proof of this is that the Valentine Tea happened in spite of two back to back weekend snow storms, one of which was a full scale blizzard. The intrepid Tea leaders and workers just regrouped after the first delay and refused to surrender to the whims of the second storm so the Tea came off successfully with a slightly smaller crowd but really wonderful energy. I especially enjoyed visiting with a table filled with two young mothers and their daughters. They had never been to the Tea before and loved it, promising to make it an annual event for

themselves. If we had surrendered to the second storm, those two families would have missed something special. But we didn't give in. And that made all the difference.

Third, in the aftermath of all these weather concerns, I witnessed once more how genuinely you care about and for one another. I know from conversations with many of you that you went out of your way to make sure others in the church were okay. And we are now engaged in the process of developing some sort of church “buddy system” to provide a little more structure to what is already happening here organically. This is the *koinonia* community that is described in the book of Acts. This is what Jesus tells us discipleship is all about – loving God with all that we have and all that we are and loving each other as ourselves. That's us, folks. And I am so grateful to be your pastor.

So as we head into March, the entire month of which is dedicated this year to our preparations for Holy Week and Easter, I hope you will find the time to come to worship on Sundays and perhaps one or two Wednesday evenings as well. I know you will find refreshment and renewal there. I hope you will support all the activities and events the church is sponsoring this month which are described elsewhere in the newsletter because these are the building blocks of our community. I hope you will continue to pray for and love one another, because that's what we do as followers of Jesus.

Blessings,  
*Pastor Ruth*

***MAKE A NOTE!*** --Since the first gathering of **Pastor Ruth's Book Discussion Group** didn't happen as scheduled, Pastor Ruth has gone ahead and chosen the book - *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* by Rabbi Harold Kushner. This book has been around for a while but it still offers much excellent fodder for discussion about how *God* is acting in our lives. It should be readily available through the library, or in bookstores and on Amazon.com. The Book Discussion will happen Sundays after church at 11am in the Parlor on March 3, 10, 17. Please note that the *BAD Bible Study* will resume after Easter.

**CALLING EVERYONE WHO CARES ABOUT GOD'S CREATION!**

Join us in making the national UCC's initiative

**MISSION 4/1 EARTH**

Come to life in our church during April and May.

Looking for project co-leaders and volunteers to implement simple steps here at our church. Please speak with Pastor Ruth if interested.



**A REMINDER ABOUT OUR CLOSURE PROTOCOLS:**

As we learned during the blizzard, we need to communicate multiple ways when we have to cancel worship. Here's how we hope to do this moving forward:

- The closure announcement will be broadcast on Channel 8 in CT and Channels 6, 10 and 12 plus several radio stations in RI. Remember we are listed under Pawcatuck and not Westerly!
- Those of you participating in the email network will receive an email "Update" from Pastor Ruth.
- The Deacons will attempt to call everyone.
- Once our voice mail system has been upgraded, a special announcement will be available by calling the church office telephone.
- You can always call Rev. Ruth on her cell!

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS** – for the Confirmation "Faith Stories" Potluck supper on Saturday, April 6 @ 5:30 pm. This potluck supper is intended to be a living example of the unique community of the church for our Confirmands. They will be coming and bringing their families and having conversations with their Mentors and anyone else willing to join us for this special event. Please speak to Pastor Ruth for details.

**THE WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP**

will be meeting next on a Thursday in April at 5:30pm for a potluck supper and conversation. Watch the bulletins for the date!  
All the women of the church are welcome!!!!

**Corned Beef & Cabbage DINNER**

***Saturday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m.***

**Traditional Corned Beef & Cabbage  
Homemade Dessert & Beverage**

**Admission price:** Adults \$10.00; Children \$4.00

*Take-out is available. Walk-ins are welcome.*

Everyone is welcome to attend. Please wear your green!

**Help is needed** in the kitchen on Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, to cook the meat and do the vegetables. A sign-up sheet will be posted for desserts.



For your convenience an envelope is enclosed in this month's newsletter for those who wish to make a special offering to our church.





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	Jennifer Clancon	Christine Knox
Beverly Ravenelle	Brian Madill	
Captain Andrew McCarthy, Army Infantry		

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.

## Mission Memos

Thank you for your faithful donations to the **Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center**. Remember to mark the **second Sunday** of the month for an extra generous offering, which can be placed in the basket on the chancel (near the altar) before worship or during the first hymn. The following food items are currently running low: Pancake mix & pancake syrup, Chef Boy-R-Dee products, ketchup, paper plates, mayonnaise, & canned fruit – pineapple & mandarin oranges. Of course, any and all donations are so needed. There are red buckets in Fellowship Hall and in the upper parking lot sanctuary foyer. The “Living Supplies Closet” always needs #5 and #6 diapers, liquid dish detergent and laundry detergent.

**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, March 10<sup>th</sup>, is going to be the responsibility of the *Lay Life & Work Committee*. The Mission Committee appreciates everyone’s efforts in making meals for this important outreach mission every month.

## **One Great Hour of Sharing**

*SHARING BRINGS JOY*

*To us. To others. To God.*

It’s truly remarkable what your gifts will do! With our gifts to **One Great Hour of Sharing** the United Church of Christ offers hope and wellbeing to people around the world. Your gift brings shelter, food, water, and medical supplies to disaster survivors. You help refugees find safe shelter and begin to build new lives. You aid impoverished communities in securing dependable sources of food and clean water. And you help provide medical care and education that strengthen bodies and minds and create brighter futures. By the time a crisis becomes news, your offerings are already at work.

“In church, we talk about God providing us with blessings in abundance, yet every day we see people who live with far less. Ever think God wants you to be the channel through whom God satisfies the hungry, comforts the distressed, and brings hope to the hurting?”

Offering envelopes are available in the newsletter for your donations. The collection will be received at our church on **March 10<sup>th</sup>**. “*Create more joy in the world with your generous gift to One Great Hour of Sharing.*”



## **Barbara Murano Scholarship Applications**

Scholarship applications are available in the church foyer. Any member who is pursuing higher education may apply. Please submit completed applications by **Sunday, April 28, 2013**. Applications may be left in the Deacons' mailbox outside the church office. The presentation of scholarships will take place on **Children's Sunday, June 9**.

### **Blessing Boxes**

Over a year ago, some of us took Blessing Boxes to fill with coins, counting our blessings as we did. The Conference has discontinued the program, but I will gather the boxes, count the coins and see that the funds get to Andover Newton to help in educating prospective ministers. Please bring in your filled boxes and give them to me or put them in the offering plate. Thank you.  
– Carolyn LeRoy

### **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance**

Karen Meara has told us about the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program and the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Program. They offer FREE tax help for taxpayers who qualify. The VITA Program generally offers free tax help to people who make \$51,000 or less and need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals in local communities. They can inform taxpayers about special tax credits for which they may qualify such as Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and Credit for the Elderly or the Disabled. The VITA site in Westerly is at the Warm Shelter Office at the corner of Granite St., across from Wilcox Park. Please call 401-596-1167 to make an appointment. To prevent identity theft you will be required to bring the social security card of anyone you will be including on your taxes.