

The Beacon

MARCH 2018



GOOD NEWS from

United Congregational Church of Westerly

United Church of Christ, Pawcatuck, CT

Sunday Worship ~ 9:30 am

FROM THE PASTOR ...

"...for terror and amazement had seized them..."
Mark 16:8

Easter struggles with odd timing this year. For one thing, it falls on April Fool's Day – April 1. Still processing that one. The other odd thing about the timing of Easter this year is that it splits Holy Week away from Easter Sunday itself as March turns to April on Holy Saturday. Easter also comes after the time change on March 11 when we all set our clocks ahead one hour so we can "Spring Forward!" Yay! This also means that sunrise on Easter will be at 6:30am with a 6am Sunrise Service. All I can say about that is – dress warm!

Truth be told Easter always struggles with its identity. Is it just about springtime and tulips and chocolate bunnies, pastel baskets and jelly beans? Or is it a religious holiday – some would argue the holiest day of the Christian year – since it is a celebration of Christ's resurrection from the dead? Is it somehow both? I would argue that yes, it is both in some ways but that this togetherness is not always easy. For example, chocolate crosses???

NO. Just NO. Still Easter is both secular and sacred in several ways. The flowers of Easter are "bulb" flowers, recalling for us the new life contained within the dead looking bulb. The candies of Easter remind us of the sweetness of this new life we are offered through the Resurrected Jesus. Easter Eggs – the dyed ones and even the chocolate ones – are another symbol of the new life at the heart of the Easter Celebration.

Easter is a wonderful mish-mash of spring celebrations and mysterious stories about Jesus dying and coming back to life. Holy Week offers us a path to walk with the man Jesus as he enters Jerusalem on the back of a donkey on Palm Sunday and then emerges from the tomb as someone else entirely on the following Sunday, Easter. If we let it, the journey we Christians walk together from Palm Sunday to Easter can open our hearts and soothe our over-thinking brains. Easter offers us the possibility of transformation into the new Creation in Christ we are promised. The anger, fear and sadness of the events that transpire in the days of Holy Week hold so much in common with the lives we live outside the walls of the church. This is why church matters. This is why, even if you're not so sure about all this resurrection stuff, this Jesus stuff, this new life stuff, it's worth your time to just be in the midst of an experience which celebrates hope in the midst of indescribable pain, light to dispel the darkness and a new lease on life for all ready to take a risk on the "foolish" story of Easter.

So, I invite you to consider all the options available to you here at our church this month to enable you to "go deeper" with Easter. In particular I commend to you the Poverty Game experience being offered at Harvest Table on the 21st as well as all the wonderful worship and meditation opportunities available throughout Holy Week. Easter and everything connected to it is a gift from God to you. Whether or not you accept this incredible gift is completely up to you. Here's hoping you will...

Your friend in Christ,

Rev. Ruth



March Birthdays

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

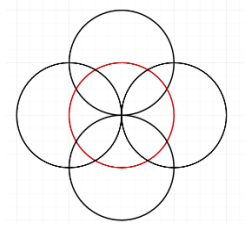
Please add in your special days by calling the church office!



Rev. Ruth's Community Office Hours
every Thursday from 2 – 4 pm on March 1st,
8th, 15th (til 3:30 this day), 22nd, and 29th
at The Savoy Bookstore & Café
in downtown Westerly

Come and chat about whatever is on your mind and heart. *Do remember these are all subject to change without notice if the weather gets bad!*

Your friend and chatting partner, Rev. Ruth



SABBATH CIRCLES NEWS

March Study Materials will be available in hard copy at church on March 4th. Please note that during Lent, the Sabbath Circles will be using the same scriptural focus as worship – exploring the issues of homelessness and affordable housing through the lens of the parables of Jesus.

Our plans for this month:

- Sun, Mar 4 Worship with Communion – The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard
- Sun, Mar 11 Worship – The Parable of the Rich Man & Lazarus
- Sun, Mar 18 Worship – The Parable of the Sower
- Wed, Mar 21 HARVEST TABLE featuring The Poverty Game
- Sun, Mar 25 Worship – PALM SUNDAY
 SYMBOLS SERVICE
Confirmation Class meeting with Bible 101 group in Fellowship Hall @ 11 am!

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Diaconate Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone #</u>
Mar 4	Lynn Murray	401-539-7578
Mar 11	Ed Stratton	401-596-4740
Mar 18	Claire Calabretta	860-536-3625
Mar 25	Bethany Foster	401-539-4003

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Lenten Plans & Holy Week in March!

Sunday, Mar 4 Worship with Communion &
Rev. Ruth preaching

Sundays, Mar 11 & 18 Worship with Rev. Ruth
preaching

Sunday, Mar 25 PALM SUNDAY SYMBOLS
SERVICE (Check out the sign-
up sheet if you would like to
read!)

Thursday, Mar 29 MAUNDY THURSDAY
TENNEBRAE SERVICE @
6:30 pm

Friday, Mar 30 GOOD FRIDAY VIGIL AT THE
CROSS in our sanctuary from
12 noon – 3 pm (Watch for
details!)



Sunday, April 1 EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE
@ Misquamicut Beach, **6 am**
9:30 am -- FESTIVE EASTER
PROCESSIONAL & SERVICE



"BOOKS" IS ON THE ROAD AGAIN!

Our next gathering is on **Tuesday, March 13**
@ **6 pm** at Shirin Platt's home. **Speak with**
Rev. Ruth or Shirin for directions!
Potluck Supper!

Our book for this gathering is:

Bear Town by Fredrik Backman

Copies available to borrow through the Wilcox
Library in Westerly on the second floor!
Just tell them you're part of the UCC Westerly
book group!

TIME CHANGE THIS MONTH!
SPRING FORWARD ON SATURDAY,
MARCH 10 or be late to church on
March 11.... ☹

MISSION MOMENT



HOMELESS AWARENESS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

are the focal points of our Lenten Mission
projects. Stay tuned for announcements in
Rev. Ruth's weekly emails and the Sunday
bulletins and on posters around the church for
information on the ways in which we can make
a difference in our community.



CANNED SOUPS AND FRUITS

are our collection items for the PNC for March.

WARM

Thanks to the Choir for providing the
March 11th meal for WARM.

HARVEST TABLE

A unique experience
of community, God and Creation



Wednesday, March 21 at 5:30 pm - ?

Theme: Poverty, housing and food insecurity
as faith issues

*You are welcome to bring a Gluten Free
Vegetarian soup, salad or bread to share or
just bring yourself!*

PROGRAM FOR THE EVENING: The "Poverty Simulation Game"

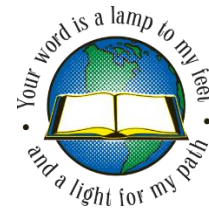
*Join us for a unique experience for all ages
highlighting what it means to live in poverty in
the United States in 2018.*

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

The next **Church Council meeting** will be held on Sunday, **March 18th at 11:00 am** in the Parlor. All Council Members please submit your reports for the meeting to Cathy Gray by **March 12th. Electronic submissions are preferred.** (Cathy's email address is graygc@mindspring.com) Susan will send you a form via email on March 5th to help you make out your report.



Please note: Because Easter falls on April 1 this year, we will have a "hard" deadline of **March 14** for information to be included in the **April Beacon**. We would like to be sure and get all the information to you either electronically or printed by the last Sunday of March! Thank you.



BIBLE 101! Not your usual Bible Study!!

Originally conceived as a Lenten bible Study, the group which gathered for our first meeting on February 18 quickly realized that we did not want to have to stay within any specific constraints, calendar consistency among them. Instead, we chose to take a cue from the BOOKS group and plan our sessions together from gathering to gathering.

Our first meeting involved a presentation by Rev. Ruth on how the Bible came to be the document we have before us. We agreed to use the same resource our Confirmation class is using this year as well – *The Unofficial Handbook of the United Church of Christ*, Caldwell & Preston, editors. The Bible Study resource in this book is entitled "60 essential Bible stories" and the group agreed to the same assignment given to the Confirmation class: Each person is to pick ONE story from the Old Testament and ONE story from the New Testament from this list and come to our next gathering ready to share their thoughts, insights and questions arising from each story.

When is that next gathering you ask??? **Sunday, March 25 (PALM SUNDAY) @ 11am** in Fellowship Hall. Look for us in the far corner! And, the Confirmands will be joining us for this conversation which should make it very interesting!!!

If you would like to join us, please do! If you need a Bible to use or would like to order your own copy of the *Handbook*, please speak with Rev. Ruth. She can also provide you with a copy of the 60 Essential Bible Stories list so you can get started!!!

COMING UP IN APRIL!

THE POLLINATOR GARDEN GROUP IS ORGANIZING A THEATRE OUTING TO TRINITY REP! We're going to see a new comedy entitled "Native Gardens" at Trinity Rep in Providence. Details pending!



ATTENTION
CONFIRMANDS!

***Important dates coming
up for you!***

Wed, Mar 21 @ **5:30 pm** HARVEST TABLE &
THE POVERTY GAME

Sun, Mar 25 @ **9:30 am** PALM SUNDAY
SERVICE
@ **11 am** CONFIRMATION
CLASS with the Bible
101 group

Thu, Mar 29 @ **6:30 pm** MAUNDY
THURSDAY SERVICE

*Watch for an email from Rev. Ruth with details
on Confirmation from now through
Confirmation Sunday on May 20!!*

**JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT
BRAINSTORMING SESSION!**
**This Sunday, March 4 after worship
in Fellowship Hall!**



Thanks so much to all who participated in our Annual Meeting Sunday on January 28 including worship, the Annual Meeting and the Brainstorming Lunch which followed. The day was successful beyond anything we had hoped for! There was so much energy and enthusiasm that we decided we need to continue to meet to figure out how we want to organize and structure ourselves to move forward into the future God has in mind for us. Everyone currently serving on Boards and

Committees agreed to serve one more year as we continue this brainstorming process and decide how it is we need to redo the by-laws. Our next brainstorming session will be on Sunday, **March 4** immediately after worship. All welcome and urged to attend!!

Our brainstorming work centers on these three questions which everyone is encouraged to consider:

1. What work needs to be done in the church & how do we do it? Said in another way – What boards and committees need to continue and what can we let go of or combine together?
2. How can we make it easier for folks to participate in the work of the church?
3. Who will do the work needed and for how long? (Term limits – yes or no, and if yes, how???)

Join us at our next brainstorming session and share your thoughts! We need everyone! And, if a schedule conflict will keep you away on March 4, please email Rev. Ruth or any of our moderators with your ideas! We'll be looking for you!



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

After a much-deserved winter hibernation, the Pollinator Committee is kicking into full gear for the spring growing season! Our future meadow, too, has been "under wraps" all winter. Beneath the blue tarps, nature's micro-organisms along with heat from the sun and deprivation of moisture, will slowly but surely decompose the existing turf grass, creating a "palette" for our meadow installation.

In early March we are meeting with members of Wild Ones, the Connecticut College-based local chapter of a national organization dedicated to sustainable gardening practices. We will seek their advice on seed source options, amount of seed to purchase for the size of the

meadow, and the possibility of creating multiple “test” plots, where we can compare results of side by side plots. Variables might include use of organic herbicides vs. “mechanical” weed control (i.e., hand pulling), seeding with meadow flowers vs. grasses, and sewing seeds vs. planting plugs (small plants with a bit of a head start). In the coming year we envision leveraging our successes and our lessons learned to teach church members and folks from the community about how they, too, can support pollinators and indeed the whole web of life through their home lawn care and gardening practices.

Please note the following dates on your calendar:

Wild Ones and the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center will host a native plant seed starting workshop at the Coogan Farm Art Barn again this year on Saturday, **April 14** from 1 to 4 pm. \$15.30 for members, \$20 for non-members, pre-registration required. (Limited to 20 participants.)

We are also hoping to schedule a work party with the Wild Ones on Saturday, **June 9**, to begin the meadow installation and plug planting.

Also, looking ahead, please mark your calendar for **October 24** at 4 pm. Linda Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs Landscaping will offer a tour of the meadow installed on what was formerly a large side lawn at St. David’s Episcopal Church in Gales Ferry, CT.

Stay tuned for details on this year’s Earth Day work party!



ARMED INTRUDER TRAINING

Recently, several members of the church attended the Armed Intruder Training presented by Officer Ed Cullen of the Stonington Police Department. The timing was certainly appropriate, as we all had and still have, Parkland, Florida in our hearts and prayers. The training was very informative, and there was much information to process. While none of us ever expects this kind of event anywhere in our surroundings, preparation is the key to preventing a tragedy

such as this from becoming even more horrific. There is no way to estimate how many more lives may have been lost in Parkland had the teachers and students not been trained for this kind of occurrence. It is best to be prepared and aware wherever we are: the movies, the grocery store, home, or even church.

We will be planning a forum to share this information with the congregation in the near future, as well as assessing our procedures going forward. We realized that we have one advantage over many church sanctuaries: folks sitting in our pews have a clear view of both entrances, unlike many churches, where the main entrance is behind all of the congregants.

One immediate change we have already implemented is to keep the door by the lower lot locked on Sunday mornings. Because of our paved walkway, there is access from that lot to the main entrance. While we evaluate other procedures, we are reminded that our current knowledge is a result of past tragedies, and the way we can honor those victims is to learn from them. From Columbine, we learned that hiding under a desk does not protect anyone from a shooter, especially when there is a door to the outside. From Sandy Hook, we learned that hiding in a closet or bathroom, with no way out, eliminates the possibility of escape. While it may be instinct to crouch under a pew, don’t.

We ask that you be aware of the various exits at church, or ask a deacon or trustee to show them to you. Did you know there is a door to the outside in the crib room? There is not one in the sacristy. The ends of our leveled hallways each have an exit door, and there is also one as you go downstairs to the lower levels. Making use of all of these prevents a traffic jam at any of them.

Wherever you are, take note of weapons of distraction that could be thrown at an intruder to interfere with their plans. At the movies, this could be a soda and box of popcorn. At the grocery store, a can of corn

thrown or even a grocery cart pushed at someone could buy a few precious seconds. At home, a chair or TV tray can be pushed over while you make your way out. And in our pews, we each have several 'weapons' at our fingertips: our hymnals and Bibles that can easily be thrown in someone's direction to disrupt their aim. Is this going to permanently disable an intruder? No. But it is the best way to buy a few precious seconds.

I realize this is intense and not what we want to think about, especially at church. I see the looks on my students' faces as they hear of these events, and ask, once again, what do we do if we are in this room? My response to them, and to you, is to be aware of your surroundings, be aware of those around you, and be the best person you can possibly be....to everyone.

Lynn Murray, Deacon Chairperson

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	Josh
Ben	Rev. Elizabeth King
Jesse B.	Bill Colprit
Bill & Phyllis Horne	Laura
Devyn Moynihan	Susan Moynihan-Freeman
Ruth King Roes	Mauri Hainsworth
Bill Hoffman	

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
Secretary: Susan Perreault
Sexton: JoAnn Spurley
Web Master: Heather Stratton

CHURCH OFFICE SPECIFICS

Mailing Address: 9 Castle Hill Road
Pawcatuck, CT 06379
Telephone: **860-599-1226**
E-mail: **uccwesterly@sbcglobal.net**
Website: **www.uccwesterly.org**
Office Hours: Monday, Thursday & Friday from
8:30 am – 1:30 pm