

The Beacon

DECEMBER 2014



GOOD NEWS from

United Congregational Church of Westerly

United Church of Christ, Pawcatuck, CT

Sunday Worship ~ 9:30 am

FROM THE PASTOR ...

"Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way." Matthew 1:18

Thus begins Matthew's version of the Christmas story. It starts at verse 18 rather than verse 1 because Matthew opens the story with a long genealogy that links Jesus directly to King David and then all the way back to Abraham. Matthew's version of the nativity story is short and to the point. It takes all of seven verses, if you don't include the story of the three kings. The other version of Jesus' birth appears in the Gospel of Luke. Once again though, the story does not begin in the first verse of the first chapter. Instead, Luke begins the actual birth narrative in the first verse of the second chapter because he uses the entire first chapter to set the stage for Jesus. First he describes the birth of John the Baptist to Zechariah and Elizabeth and then he goes on to tell the beautiful story of the Annunciation to Mary by the Angel Gabriel and the Magnificat, Mary's response to Gabriel, which follows.

The story we think of as the Nativity Story is actually a composite of these two stories from Matthew and Luke but we seldom stop to consider that little tidbit. Instead, we

think of the Angel appearing to the terrified young Mary and then we leap to the long journey to Bethlehem, Mary clinging to the back of a donkey with ever patient Joseph trudging alongside. Before we know it the newborn Babe is safely snuggled into the straw filled manger surrounded by smiling animals, his beatific mother and strong yet gentle father hovering nearby. Then the shepherds stumble over themselves in their hurry to see firsthand the miracle the angels sang to them in sheep dotted fields. They are soon on their way only to be replaced by the royal entourage of three kings arriving on camels, laden with gifts. This is the Christmas story we know and love. We don't worry about the details and whether or not we have the timing and the details right. We just know this is Christmas. This is *our* Christmas story and it's what draws us to church during this time of year. This is *the* Christmas story – the real Christmas story which is not the Christmas story society tells or understands. Society tells us over and over again that Christmas is about twinkling lights, garish plastic lawn displays, and buying stuff, lots and lots of stuff – everything from a Mercedes sports car to Imagination Elmo. But *we know* that is not Christmas. Not really. Not ever.

Dear friends, we know the real story of Christmas. We know the truth of Christmas – that God loves us so much that God sent his own dear Son to live among us as flesh and blood. We know that Christmas is not about stuff. Christmas is about new beginnings for us all as we celebrate God's light and truth and hope breaking into the world all over again this Advent Season. May you claim the Christmas story as your own once more this Advent Season. May you revel in its details and luxuriate in the love of God it makes tangible in every telling. May you make the time to kneel at the manger once more, amazed and humbled by all that God has done, is doing, and will do in your life, if only you will make room in your heart for God.

Merry Christmas and the Happiest of New Years to you and all your loved ones.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Ruth

Schedule of Worship Services **Advent and Christmas 2014**



**Sunday, November 30 – 1st Sunday of
Advent – “Hope”**
Family Worship

**Sunday, December 7 – 2nd Sunday of
Advent – “Peace”**
Worship with Communion and Sunday
School

**Sunday, December 14 – 3rd Sunday of
Advent – “Love”**
Worship and Sunday School



**Thursday, December 18 @ 7:00 pm –
Winter’s Night Service**
This special service marks the upcoming
longest night of the year with candles, chant,
prayer and reflection.

**Sunday, December 21 – 4th Sunday of
Advent – “Joy”**
Worship with the “No Fuss”
Christmas Pageant



Wednesday, December 24 @ 7:00 pm
Christmas Eve Service
Festive service of candles, carols,
special music and Communion with a
Christmas message from Rev. Ruth

Sunday, December 28 –
A Birthday Party for Jesus!
Bring the kids to this unique and fun
celebration reminding us of the best gifts we
can give to Jesus.



**Sunday, January 4, 2015 – “Star” Sunday
and Epiphany Celebration**
An informal, relaxed service in which we
celebrate Communion, renew our baptismal
vows and celebrate our “Star” words from the
year past and the year ahead.

**ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BAZAAR &
TEA & SILENT AUCTION**

Saturday, December 6, 2014

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Please support our annual event!

Bazaar sign-ups are on the far wall in Fellowship Hall. If you have any questions, please ask any church member for details.

The Silent Auction – Do you have a treasure or “favorite thing” that you could part with for the Silent Auction? You may bring clean, saleable items to church and place them on a table in Fellowship Hall. Linda Evans will take care of them from there! Thank you.

Bake Room – We are requesting your donations for the Bake Room. Cookies, cakes, pies, muffins, breads, baked beans, preserves, relishes, candy, biscotti and any family recipe you wish to make. We appreciate all you do. Thank you. - *Carolyn LeRoy, Carole Cravinho*

Trees – There are trees downstairs on the second level (3 doors down!) waiting for you to take home and decorate for the Bazaar. Help yourself to strings of lights and ornaments that you will find on the table. Please return them during Bazaar Week! - *Nancy Schilke*



Greens Room – We are looking for as many people as possible to create wreaths and arrangements. We will be working **Monday, Dec. 1**, and **Tuesday, Dec. 2**, in the *mornings and evenings*. Please bring clippers to trim greens. Also, we need piles of a variety of greens and berries to create these with. If you have any kind of greens in your yard or woods, please drop them off outside of Fellowship Hall before Monday, December 1st. Whatever we make for the Greens Room sells quickly! Thanks. - *Lynn Murray*

BOOKS IN THE PARLOR!



***Monday, January 12 @ 6:00 pm
at Becky Morrone's home***

We are reading DEAR DEB by Margaret Terry. RSVP is needed for this since Becky is inviting us for a soup supper! Please RSVP to the church office by phone (#860-599-1226) or email (uccwesterly@sbcglobal.net). Thanks!

Christmas Offerings

For those of you receiving copies of “The Beacon” by mail, offering envelopes are enclosed in your newsletter if you wish to make a special offering to your church for Christmas. If you receive your newsletter by email, you will find the envelopes on the tables at the entrances to the sanctuary.



December Birthdays

9 Bob Sicilian

20 Mark Dessaulles

21 Devin Moynihan

29 Trina Torres

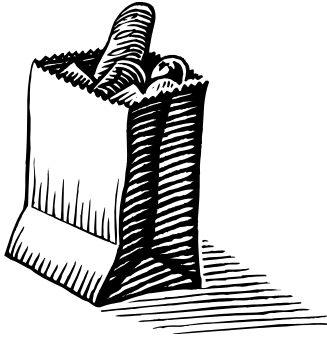
Happy Anniversary to:

Brian & Barbara Johnson – 12-1-79

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

Mission Memos

THANK YOU to *everyone* for providing donations to the Deacons Emergency Fund for the **WARM Center meal** in November. For **December 14** we will once again be relying on your generous monthly donations to the Deacons Emergency Fund in order to provide the meal. We appreciate your generosity.



The Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center (PNC) has requested our assistance in **December** with **cans of pineapple, mandarin oranges, and jello and pudding**. Please bring your items to worship on or before Sunday, **December 14** and we'll get them to the PNC!



Knitters, Crocheters, and Shoppers....The Mission Committee will once again be collecting children's hats, mittens, scarves, and boots for Westerly and Pawcatuck elementary

school nurses to distribute as needed. A paper tree with gift boxes will be set up near the main entrance to the sanctuary during the Advent Season. Please leave your donations in the boxes. Last year, our church provided fifty articles of warmth each to two local schools. We hope to meet this ever-present need again this winter.

The **Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center** is now helping to feed Westerly residents as well! Please know that our monthly dedicated offering is so appreciated. To encourage donations anytime, one Red Bucket will remain in the Bell Courtyard area of the narthex. Feel

free to contribute canned goods any Sunday. The need is so great!

The **PNC** is also accepting donations of **used children's books**. The books help keep children busy while parents are filling out forms. Children are also able to take the books home with them. Dixie Lufbery faithfully delivers the UCC donations to the PNC every week. Thank you, Dixie!

Thanks for all your help! Please speak to any member of the Missions Committee with your ideas and questions – *Sandi Davis, Melissa Stratton, Audrey Steinetz, Dixie Lufbery, Peter Hainsworth, Jenny Brummund, or Christina Brummund.*

Christmas Fund Offering

This offering will be received on Sunday, **December 21st**. This Fund which is administered by the UCC Pension Board, provides a financial safety net to individuals and families in need through gift checks to low-income retired clergy and their widowed spouses; emergency assistance to clergy in financial need; and funding for pension and health supplementation plans for low income retired clergy and lay employees. If you receive your "*Beacon*" via regular mail, an envelope is enclosed in the newsletter, but more are located on the tables at the entrances to the sanctuary for those of you who get the "*Beacon*" via email!

Dear UCC Church Family,

The time has come for me to make a change to more flexibility in my life. As of December 28, I will begin my retirement from being your organist/choir director. It has been a great opportunity for me to be able to express my love for God with music and singing, and I appreciate your encouragement and support over these years.

"May the Lord Bless You and Keep You".

Amen. -- Darla



Diaconate Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name & Telephone</u>
Dec 7	Jay Macko (860) 705-3512
Dec 14	Ane Torres (860) 599-5572
Dec 21	Becky Morrone (401) 596-1070
Dec 28	Elvis Torres (860) 599-5572



Deacons' Notes:

The Deacons would like to issue an invitation to the congregation for anyone who would like to *participate in Sunday worship*, especially during the **offertory prayers**. No previous experience is necessary, just a willingness to be an active part of worship. Please see any deacon with questions or to volunteer.

CHOIR NEWS



***Open Meeting of the
Music Committee
Sunday, December 7
@ 11 am in the parlor***

With Darla's impending retirement (please see her letter elsewhere in this edition of the *Beacon*), we have an opportunity to build on her wonderful legacy of music ministry here by engaging in an intentional exploration of all the possibilities for our Music Ministry moving forward. Exciting changes are already underway in our music program and we're excited to see where God leads us as one ending leads to new beginnings. We'd love to hear your thoughts! Let's see what happens when we dare to "sing to the Lord a new song!" Please speak with Doug Brummund or Brenda Cornell with any questions.

ALMOST IRON CHEF II

***Saturday, January 24th
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm***



The last day to submit your suggestion for the key ingredient is *November 30!* Our "secret" ingredient for this competition will be pulled from the box at the Bazaar on December 6th. The Iron Chef Winner will be selected by vote of the participants present at the event.

***Competitors Registration Opens & Ticket
Sales Begin: January 4, 2015***

***Competitors Registration Closes:
January 18, 2015***

***Please Note: COMPETITION LIMITED TO 25
COMPETITORS THIS YEAR!
REGISTER EARLY!***

THANK YOU....



...for all the donations and help filling shoeboxes for **Operation Christmas Child**.



SWEET HOUR OF PRAYER

Thursday's Sweet Hour of Prayer will be scattered rather than gathered this winter!

As we looked at the church's very busy December calendar, we realized there was only one week when it would make sense to hold Prayer Group. Then, when we looked at the January calendar and thought about all those cold, snowy days to come, we wondered if perhaps it might make sense to try a "scattered" format for Sweet Hour of Prayer for a while, resuming our gatherings once more as Lent begins in late February. What this means is that you are invited, whether you have participated in Sweet Hour of Prayer or not, to participate in our prayer discipline. Wherever you are on Thursdays between 5:30 – 6:30 pm, take a few minutes for prayer and as you do, we will form together our Sweet Hour of Prayer group in scattered form. It's pretty simple, really. Just stop wherever you are sometime during that hour for a few minutes and say the Lord's Prayer, read a Psalm, and hold folks that come to mind in prayer. As you do, realize that we do not have to be physically with each other to be connected powerfully in prayer. When we gather once more during that first Thursday of Lent, we will talk with each other about our scattered prayer experiences. I think you'll be surprised at just how powerful they can be.

To request prayers from the Sweet Hour of Prayer Group, please contact Rev. Ruth either through the church office or on her cell at #401-663-7934!

To request the Prayer Tree be activated for more urgent prayer needs, please be in touch with Deacon Ane Torres at #860-599-5572. Thank you.

CHRISTIAN ED NEWS:



- ❖ Sunday School during the month of December on the 7th, 14th, & 21st!
- ❖ **Christmas Pageant** on Sunday, *December 21st*!
- ❖ All the children and youth of the Sunday School are invited to participate in the annual Christmas Bazaar! All hands on deck to staff our booth, help with other tasks of the day AND carry out "stealth missions" for Rev. Ruth at various times all day...
- ❖ Mark your calendars now for the **Sunday School/Youth Lock-In** at church on Friday, **January 30!!!** Details to come in January *Beacon*.



Women's Fellowship Epiphany Luncheon!

Our plans are still being finalized so watch the Sunday bulletin and the Weekly Email Update for specifics of day, time and place. *Suggestions welcome to the Church Office!*



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

Ann Brown	Barbara
Madelyn Stratton	Sandi Davis
Fred	Catherine
Jeff	Jim
Millie Silver	Debbie
Shirley Harrington	Lisa
Beverly & Family	Carole Kus
John Dillon	Brian Madill
Sheryl	David Jones
Doris	Jennifer Clancon
Eugene Ravenelle	Kim Brown
David Stratton	Beverly
Karen & Bill	Doris Whitehead
Scott & his parents	Vivian Roode
David Hall	Paul Whitehead
Marcia Holly	Family of Nina Poeta
Ron Carlson	Shirley M.
William Underhill III	Gerry
Martha	

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: Darla Rines

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.