

The Beacon

DECEMBER 2015



GOOD NEWS from

United Congregational Church of Westerly

United Church of Christ, Pawcatuck, CT

Sunday Worship ~ 9:30 am

FROM THE PASTOR ...

"They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord..."
Isaiah 11:9

The above text may have a familiar ring to it since it's part of the traditional prophetic readings so often a part of worship in Advent. The earlier verses may be more familiar: "The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them." This incredible image of the peaceable kingdom describes what it will be like to live in the peaceful reality God promises to the faithful, the righteous and the just. While this is often read as a metaphor for heaven, my Old Testament professor at Harvard, along with many other scholars, believes this is Isaiah's description of an actual situation Isaiah believed would unfold for Israel. Thus, this text is not about a metaphorical, otherworldly promise. It's about real life.

We need to hold on to these and other promises from God recorded throughout the scriptures which are intended to speak to us in the midst of real life. This is especially so this year, I think, as we face the Advent Season in the aftermath of the Paris attacks and the seemingly unrelenting negative, fear mongering media

reporting in its aftermath. Peace feels like a pipe dream, an unrealistic and impossible fairy tale in a world where violence is ever more prevalent and evil feels all too real. It's hard to even think about Christmas with its message of "peace on earth, good will to all" when peace seems to be quite literally out of reach for us all. The thing is, though, it's not. Not if we're ready to let go of our grip on fear reaching instead for the tiny, chubby fingers of the Christ Child whose birth we await as Advent begins.

The truth is that the Christ Child came into a frightening and frightened world. He wasn't even born at home because his parents had to be on the road to fulfill an imperial decree intended to make sure taxation of the poor was maximized. So this tiny baby who would change the world was born in a cold stable surrounded by the warm breath of cows and donkeys, snuggled by the mother and father who risked everything to parent him. Angels sung at his birth, beckoning shepherds in from the fields to see what marvelous thing had happened. A fairy tale? Perhaps. A story to explain the light of the world Jesus became as an adult? Most likely. An invitation from God to pause from our own frenzied activity and anxious thoughts long enough to remind ourselves how very precious we are to the God who created us? Absolutely!!!

Advent begins November 29 and with it begins our journey to reclaim the promises of God made to all of us. Those promises of hope, peace, joy and love are ones we especially need to hear this year. I hope you'll join us in our Advent journeying to give your worried, tired heart some much needed, well deserved respite from the negativity surrounding us ever more each day. May you dare to reach for the promises of God, embodied this Christmas season in the person of a tiny baby nestled in a manger. May you dare to trust that God's love is stronger than anything else you will encounter. May our wonderful church dare to imagine what God is calling us to do and to be as we celebrate the light of Christ breaking through the darkness of our world leaving our hearts filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Now wouldn't that make for a spectacular Christmas? Let it be so, God...

Your friend and companion in Christ,

Rev. Ruth

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

Saturday, December 5, 2015

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.

Bake Room – We are asking once more for your donations of homemade goodies for our Bake Room. Cookies, cakes, pies, breads, quick breads, candy, fudge, buckeye balls, baked beans, preserves, or any of your family specialties are welcome! Thank you for your continuing generosity.

- Carolyn LeRoy, Shirin Platt



Greens Room – We are looking for as many people as possible to create wreaths and arrangements. We will be working **Monday, November 30, and Tuesday, December 1**, in the *mornings and evenings*. Please bring clippers to trim the greens and a sharp object like an awl. 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, November 30th. Whatever we make for the Greens Room sells quickly! Thanks.

- Lynn Murray

Silent Auction – Items are needed! Please put in the medical equipment room on the lower level or leave in Fellowship Hall with a note.

- Linda Evans



YES! *There's lots going on for Children and youth in December!*

Sunday, Dec 6 – Art Engagement – Christmas Crafts!

Sunday, Dec 13 – Service Engagement – Gingerbread houses!

Sunday, Dec 20 – Story Engagement during worship – ***The “Spontaneous Christmas Pageant”***

Sunday, Dec 27 – No program – Christmas Weekend

Sunday, January 3 – No program – New Year's Weekend



**WE'RE
GOING**

CHRISTMAS CAROLING!!

And we hope you'll join us! Singing ability not required! We're gathering at the church at **2 pm** on Sunday, **December 13th** and our plan is to carol for a few members of our church who might like us to stop by (contact Rev. Ruth with your suggestions of folks for us to visit) and then we'll be returning to the neighborhood around the church to carol for our neighbors and invite them to come back to church with us for *hot cocoa, mulled cider and cookies!* Sound like fun?? Just show up and off we'll go! Please speak with Rev. Ruth or Dav with any questions.



December Birthdays

9 – Bob Sicilian

20 – Mark Dessaulles

21 – Devin Moynihan

26 – Jack Hainsworth

29 – Trina Torres

Happy Anniversary to:

Brian & Barbara Johnson – 12-1-79

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

CAMPAIGN UPDATES!

Thanks so much to everyone for their wonderful support on Stewardship Sunday! We are off to an excellent start with more than 60% of our pledges having been received and more than 60% of our goal met!!! If you haven't sent in your pledge yet, we would very much appreciate hearing from you. Pledge cards are available at the church on Sundays or call the church office and ask that one be mailed to you. Do know that our excellent Stewardship Committee will be following up with folks we haven't heard from within the next few weeks.

Be sure also to check out the newly updated Capital Campaign bulletin board in Fellowship Hall for the most current information on the progress of the Next 50 Years of our Church campaign. Gifts and pledges still warmly and gratefully received.

Mission Memos

For December



During the month of December please bring in **gloves, hats, mittens, scarves, and socks** for the homeless in the area. Your donations may be placed on the **Giving Tree** in the sanctuary or in the collection boxes beside the tree.

The **Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center** helps to feed Westerly residents too. *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!

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



CONFIRMATION REMINDERS

- We're counting on your help with the Bazaar!! Please check with Lynn Murray to see where you're most needed.
- Please check out the list of special worship services and activities happening during Advent and Christmas. Remember you need to attend *at least one* of these special services!
- Our next "class" will be on Sunday, **December 20th** in the Parlor @ **11 am.**

BOOKS IN THE PARLOR!



**Monday, December 14th
@ 5:30 pm**

Join us for some finger foods (which you will bring) and great conversation about a lovely Christmas story we have chosen as our next book. *Paper Angels* by Jimmy Wayne is available through interlibrary loan. It's also available online as an e-book or you can purchase a copy of the book through Amazon for as little as \$4.

BOOKS is also planning ahead a little so you can too! Our first winter book will be *I Am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai with Christina Lamb. Malala is the girl who stood up for education in Afghanistan only to be shot by the Taliban. She miraculously survived and continued her advocacy for education for which she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014, its youngest recipient ever.

The Christmas Offerings

Each year our church actually receives two different and distinct Christmas offerings so we thought it might be helpful to explain as clearly as we can the purpose of each.

The Christmas Offering is an annual offering intended for the church itself for our officers to use as they see fit with the fiscal year coming to an end. You could actually think of this offering as a sort of Christmas gift to the church. Friends and visitors often make contributions through this offering but anyone is welcome to contribute.

The Christmas Fund Offering is a designated offering received on behalf of the national church. It is used specifically to offset the

small pensions of clergy who have spent their careers serving either as missionaries or in small, poor churches in the United States which were unable to fund a regular pension for them. It also goes to fund an "emergency fund" created to provide emergency financial assistance to retired clergy encountering special circumstances for which their financial reserves are inadequate.

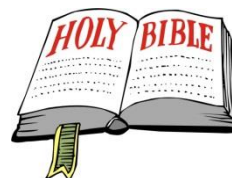
Offering envelopes for both of these – and they look very similar this year – are available in the sanctuary for those of you receiving the Beacon electronically. These envelopes can be placed in the offering plates during any of our worship services between now and the end of December. Please know that your gifts in any amount for one or both of these two offerings are deeply appreciated. They do make a difference, here in our own church and literally across the breadth of the entire denomination.

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Diaconate Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name & Telephone</u>
Dec 6	Becky Morrone (401) 596-1070
Dec 13	Gary Davis (860) 599-4279
Dec 20	Lynn Murray (401) 539-7578
Dec 27	Carole Kus (860) 822-3787

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***Have you ever
wondered if you could
read the WHOLE BIBLE?***

We're going to attempt to do just that in 2016, guided by the book *THE BIBLE CHALLENGE: Read the Bible in a Year*. But, you'll also need a good, readable bible to participate as well. If you're interested in ordering a new bible for this ambitious endeavor, please speak with Rev. Ruth as soon as possible.



ALMOST IRON CHEF
Saturday, January 23rd,
2016

We are excited to announce the return of the popular Almost Iron Chef event again this year! So get ready to enjoy the culinary talents of our members as well as folks from the community as our amateur chefs gear up to compete once again.

Step One for AIC is to **identify the Key Ingredient** and we need your help to do that! The suggestion box and form will be out at church this Sunday and you are invited to stuff the box with your suggestions! Invite your friends to do the same when they visit the Bazaar or any time by contacting the church office. Deadline to submit suggestions for the Key Ingredient is *Friday, December 18 @ 1:30pm*. Do know the AIC Planning Committee reserves the right to reject any suggestions it deems unreasonable or inappropriate.

Step Two for AIC is to **pick the Key Ingredient**. This will happen at the end of worship on *Sunday, December 20* immediately following the benediction.

Step Three for AIC is that **registration for competitors and ticket sales for tasters** open on *Monday, December 21*. Registration forms for competitors available through the church office. Please note the number of competitors is limited to 25 again this year! You will also want to note that seating for tasters is limited to 75 again this year and only pre-paid tickets are guaranteed seating the night of the event. Remember, competitors, to encourage your friends and family to attend to stuff the ballot boxes for you that evening!!! Tickets for competitors and tasters will be \$10 again this year. And once again, one ticket =

one official AIC ballot! No charge for children age 6 and under.

Watch for additional AIC details in the Weekly Email Update, the weekly Sunday morning bulletin and the Facebook page!



Sound System Updates in Process
Have you seen these missing pieces
of our sound system????

We are undertaking some simple, low cost updates to our sound system in the sanctuary as we seek to improve everyone's ability to hear everything that's going on! The sound system could use a major upgrade but that will take time and money. In the meantime, we are trying to maximize our use of the equipment we already have. A recent audit of that equipment has revealed that two key pieces of equipment seem to be missing:

- A Samsung C77 hand-held microphone (used to sit on the Deacons' table in a gray case)
- A Shure 4TN receiver for a lavalier microphone.

We are not sure how these items have ended up missing from where they should be and frankly, that's water over the dam. Our intent now is only to find out if someone in the congregation might have seen them someplace in your work in the various parts of the church OR if someone might have taken them home for some reason. If you remember seeing these component parts somewhere in the church, please let Rev. Ruth know. If you just now remembered you borrowed one or both, kindly return to the church at your earliest convenience. They and you will receive a hero's welcome!

Storm Closing Information



If we have a cancellation at the church due to severe weather, the cancellation will appear on **Channel 8 in Connecticut** and **Channels 6, 10, and 12 in Rhode Island**. You will also receive an emergency email from Pastor Ruth.

Please tune to one of these stations for more information about the cancellation of worship or other church events.

Rev. Ruth wishes to offer her sincere thanks for the wonderful birthday surprise on Sunday, November 22! If you weren't here, talk to somebody who was! ☺



From your staff:

Rev. Ruth, Dav, Susan, and Debby



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

Website: **www.uccwesterly.org**

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