

The Beacon

December 2019



GOOD NEWS from United Congregational Church of Westerly, UCC in Pawcatuck, CT

*“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God,
serve one another with whatever gift each of you
has received.” 1 Peter 4:10*

I saw this text come to life this week as I watched so many of you pitch in to create our Christmas Bazaar, making dreams and plans into reality. Folks have worked feverishly on everything from typing up Silent Auction item descriptions to making centerpieces for the Tea to baking yet more cookies, to pricing jewelry, to ... well, you get the idea. Anyone who has ever helped with the Bazaar knows that an incredible amount of work is involved. I have no clue how one would begin to calculate the hours involved since so much of it happens outside of the church. The Bazaar takes shape in people's homes, at the sales in local stores, at yard sales, and in backyards with robust evergreens. When one stops to think about it, which I suspect no one really does, the work, hours and effort needed to pull off this most amazing of all Christmas Bazaars is beyond comprehension. It literally cannot be calculated. This tells us the most important thing about our Bazaar that is now so well known that people who have left the area plan

weekend trips back to visit based around the Bazaar date.

Yes, the Bazaar is our most important fundraiser, literally balancing the budget most years. But that's not what makes it so beyond the pale. What makes it extraordinary is the love which gives birth to the Bazaar each year and which the Bazaar embodies to the community on behalf of our church. Our Bazaar is truly a labor of love. No one would work as hard as you all do just for the heck of it. Love is what keeps you going – to yard sale after yard sale, to clip evergreens in snowstorms, to bake more cookies in one day than some professional bakeries. Love is what polishes and mends the jewelry, lovingly unpacks and displays the antique linens and knick-knacks in the Nostalgia Boutique, creates unique gift baskets for every price range, endlessly makes more buckeyes or macarons, glue-guns the beautiful decorations on yet another wreath, tirelessly decorates little trees and centerpieces of all sizes. That can only be love in the flesh, the central meaning of the Christ Child's birth.

Each year the Bazaar crowds seem bigger. People start calling the church in October to confirm the date of the Bazaar, that's how much it means to people. That's how I know it's a ministry of love from our church to the community. At our Bazaar, gift giving becomes possible for folks without a lot of money. And all because this church – all of you – embody love in everything you do. In so doing you live your faith every day, usually without realizing it.

That, dear ones, is what it means to keep Christmas in your hearts. You teach me every year that the Christ Child is coming again, filling us and our community with the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love of Christmas. This is you, at your very best. Thank you for being you and loving God and our church as you do.

Your friend in Christ, *Rev. Ruth*



**ADVENT & CHRISTMASTIDE
WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

All Sunday morning services are @ 9:30am.

Sunday, December 1 – 1st Sunday of Advent – HOPE
Worship with Communion & Hanging of the Greens

Sunday, December 8 – 2nd Sunday of Advent – PEACE
Family Worship

Sunday, December 15 – 3rd Sunday of Advent – JOY
Family Worship

❖ Christmas Caroling @ 2pm! All welcome!

Wednesday, December 18 – Sanctuary “Blue Christmas”
Service

@ 6:30pm – Quiet, reflective service for those struggling with the Christmas season

Sunday, December 22 – 4th Sunday of Advent – LOVE
Lessons & Carols Worship Service with special music

Tuesday, December 24 @ 7pm – Christmas Eve
Traditional festive service of candles, carols, special music and Communion with a Christmas message from Rev. Ruth

Sunday, December 29 – Songs & Stories of Christmas
A relaxed, light-hearted service with stories, songs and even a birthday cake for Jesus!

Sunday, January 5, 2020 – STAR SUNDAY Epiphany
Celebration
Festive service of Communion, Light and Star Words for the coming year!



Deacon Ministry

Diaconate Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone #</u>
Dec. 1	Lynn Murray	401-539-7578
Dec. 8	Claire Calabretta	860-574-5962
Dec. 15	Ed Stratton	401-596-4740
Dec. 22	Dwayne Spurley	860-705-6152
Dec. 29	Bethany Foster	401-539-4003

Please feel free to call the Diaconate Person of the Week at any time with your joys, concerns and prayer requests. Your church family cares about you all the time, not just when you're in the building!



Many thanks for all the hard work that has been happening leading up to the bazaar. Folks who leave church on the Sunday before and don't come back until the bazaar must be amazed by the transformation. There was a time when we not only had an official bazaar chairperson or persons, but also a chairperson for each level as well as each room. Now it's a multitude of church mice that create our final event. Many thanks to all the hands.

One request going forward: If you do any post holiday shopping at the craft shops or dollar stores, please be on the lookout for items like mini trees,

ornaments, decorative picks, small light strings, and ribbon. We go through so many of these items when we create our final craft projects, and the time to buy them is when they are on sale. They can be stored at the church. Many thanks for all the helping hands throughout the season and the year.



Check out the **People Plan 2020** bulletin board in Fellowship Hall which will go up when the Bazaar Silent Auction set-up comes down. What you will find is a list of who is currently serving as an officer or on a Board as well as our various committees alongside a blank list for the 2020 officers, boards and committees.

You will recall that under our new organizational structure, all positions in the church are for one year only. You have the opportunity each year to decide what you want to do moving forward for the year ahead: Stay in your current role, move to a different Board or Committee or take a step back for a year.

All current officers and board members will be receiving a letter (by email or regular mail) from Carol in the church office after Christmas informing you of your options for 2020. You can either respond to her with your decision or, if you will be continuing in your current role or moving to another one, you can just sign up on the bulletin board.

This is always a dicey time of year to be asking folks to step up to volunteer for the church but such is the nature of our calendar. We hope you will prayerfully consider your options so that you have made your decision prior to the Church Council meeting on January 12. As you are considering what you will do, please hold on to this thought from a long ago PTA Conference: “No one can do everything but everyone can do something!”



DID YOU KNOW...

1. **Did you know that** there is a basket for donations out on the Fellowship Table every Sunday? This is how we pay for things like coffee cream, milk, coffee, tea and lemonade! It is not necessary for Fellowship hosts to cover the cost themselves. Your cash donation in any amount is greatly appreciated as are Coffee hosts and help! Please speak with Joann Spurley to volunteer.
2. **Did you know that** UCC Westerly rents out space for individuals and groups in the community in need of an affordable place to gather for meetings or parties? A flyer explaining what we have available, what it costs and how to rent a space is out in both narthexes. Pick a few up to share with people you know who might be looking for a place to rent!
3. **Did you know that** we have daily devotional guides available for anyone to take home to guide your daily connections with God? They are called *The Upper Room* and they are available on the shelf in the Bell Courtyard Narthex. Take one

for yourself or anyone you might be visiting!

4. **Did you know that UCC Westerly is the only church around that has its own Home Sunday School Curriculum called *Sabbath Circles*? Weekly lessons are posted on line on our website www.uccwesterly.org . They are also posted on our Sabbath Circles Facebook Group every Friday. For more information on *Sabbath Circles*®, please speak with Rev. Ruth anytime.**



Trustee Notes

We want to thank everyone for keeping up with pledged donations. Pledge donations through October were \$61,747, about \$5,670 more than expected. Our total income through October was \$91,535, about \$3,410 less than anticipated. Total income was boosted by our annual contribution of \$11,000 from the housing fund. The areas where the income is significantly down are:

- Gifts to the Church: \$1,550 versus expected \$4,583
- Loose Offerings: \$770 versus expected \$1,875
- Special Projects: \$4,566 versus expected \$11,667 (normally made up by the Christmas Bazaar)

Our total expenses through October were \$98,695 bringing our deficit to \$7,160. Our utility electric costs are starting to show signs of being on closer to our budgeted amount.

Trustees voted to contract with Coast and Country for snow plowing services this winter.

Our endowment fund is healthy; approximately \$6,000 of the interest generated by this fund is used as income to our yearly budget. Anyone interested in making donations to the endowment should see any of the Trustees.

The next Trustee meeting will be 17 December at 6 PM.

MISSION MOMENTS

Operation Survival: Fill the Mission Christmas Tree



Buying "shares" in our hive project worked so well (we actually funded 23 hives through Heifer International) that we are continuing that process for our Holiday Mission Project. In the past we have sponsored three projects during the holidays. We realize that that is asking way too much of our congregation and that we are spreading all of us way too thin. This year, we are limiting our project to just ONE drive that will benefit the area homeless, the people who need our help the most. Homelessness is not something that we, as a congregation, can solve. However, we CAN educate, contribute, and do our best to help our local homeless population survive the cold winter months ahead.

This year we are pairing with WARM and creating Operation Survival that will also serve

to decorate our Mission Christmas Tree. According to the officials at WARM, the three most needed items for our local homeless population are tents and large tarps to provide shelter from the elements, and bike locks to prevent theft of their personal much needed transportation.

We realize that these items can be pricey, so we will be selling "shares" of these items in November and December. A \$10.00 donation will earn you a colored ornament that you can place on the Mission Tree, which is traditionally in the front narthex.

Each \$10.00 donation will buy:

An entire bike lock! Or

$\frac{1}{4}$ share of a tarp, or

$\frac{1}{5}$ share of a tent

Want to buy an entire tent? You will be able to place 5 ornaments on our tree! You may specify what you'd like your donation to support, or just put it wherever the need is the greatest. AND, YOU don't have to do any shopping!!!

PNC for the holidays



Although our bins for the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center will remain out to receive donations of non-perishable items (especially individual rolls of paper towels and large-sized diapers), we will NOT be collecting specific items during December. Instead, we are responding to a request to us from the PNC to help with the packing of the Christmas food baskets that they provide for their clients. There will be a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board. Come join the fun and experience how

blessed donating an hour or two of your time with your neighbors can make you feel!

EQUAL EXCHANGE

Don't forget that the cute red cabinet just inside the door of Fellowship Hall holds a treasure trove of Equal Exchange items that you can purchase each week. Buy some excellent organic chocolate bars, cocoa, coffee, tea, etc. and realize that you helping the world's needy population in the process.

SERRV

Stop by the SERRV table at the Christmas Bazaar to pick up unusual gifts for you friends and family! There is always a beautiful display of unique gift items. You can also shop on-line to benefit our church. Just use this link: <https://www.serrv.org/?a=UCCWesterly>

DINE-TO-DONATE



WHERE: Stonington Pizza Palace

WHEN: Thursday, January 16, 2020, 11 am to closing

WHAT: Pizza and much more! Take-out, too!

WHY: to benefit WARM (as part of the Annual Homeless Awareness Event)

Welcome Back Carol!!

We are very pleased to welcome back our secretary Carol Lindsay from her recent medical leave. We missed you! Carol is back in the office as of Friday, December 7. Office hours return to usual as of that date. Special thanks to Susan Perrault for filling in on Fridays while Carol was off. It was great to have you with us!!



We'd love to have you join us at
BOOKS

*A group of folks who love to read,
talk about what we read
or just talk & everyone is welcome!*

OUR NEXT GATHERING:

*Thursday, January 23, 2020 @ 6pm
Pizza Supper at the church
with beverages provided.*

WHAT WE'RE READING:

*The Book Woman of Troublesome
Creek*

By Kim Michele Richardson



The Stewardship Committee would like to thank you for the wonderful response to this year's Stewardship Campaign! We've heard from almost everyone but a few of you have yet to respond and we're counting on you! So, kindly get those pledges in as soon as you can.

What each person does and gives really makes a real difference in how our wonderful church is able to move forward into the future! For any questions on our Stewardship campaign for this year, please speak with any member of the Committee, Joann Spurley, Shirin Platt, Sally Panciera or Jack Hainsworth.



NEW HYMNALS IN THE WORKS!

As you know by now, conversations have been taking place in the Deacons and the Trustees about purchasing some *New Century Hymnals* for the sanctuary. These would be in addition to the current blue hymnals and the *Renew!* songbooks. The cheapest price we have been quoted is \$19 each and we would like to purchase 80-100. This number is based on the number of pew racks in the sanctuary.

Please note that this time it is not a requirement that the person being so honored/remembered be a member of our church. So, you can celebrate the memories and lives of anyone special to you with the purchase of one or more hymnals! Dedication placards will appear in the front of each hymnal.

If you are interested in supporting this, kindly add your name to the sign-up sheet posted outside Fellowship Hall. Do know the response has been wonderful so far and we hope to move forward with this after the first of the year.

Thanks so much!!





Celebrate Nature's Glory Throughout the Year

In case you missed this great article last month, we're including it again this month!!!

If you are wondering why the Pollinator Committee has not "tidied up" around our pollinator meadow and garden beds, it's because we are letting "nature have her perfect work."

In traditional gardening we've been taught to tidy up our gardens and lawns at the end of the growing season. Some of us are obsessed with orderliness - perhaps in this crazy world in which we live it helps to have at least our home grounds feel more "under our control." Many of us who are property owners or caretakers spend a huge amount of time and energy "deadheading" (trimming off spent flowers) and raking up leaves and throwing them away, or blowing them out of our sight or at least off our curb. Consider this: the flora and fauna of our region have co-evolved through the centuries. Spent flowers - especially those of native flowers and shrubs - are a critical winter food source for the many species of birds who overwinter here in New England. Seed heads left standing are like tiny neon restaurant signs announcing good eats for our beloved cardinals, chickadees, nuthatches, finches, even bluebirds. While it is beneficial to set up feeders for these birds, it is even better to let nature do the feeding for us!

Leaves left on the ground, or leaf litter, is winter habitat for butterflies, moths, and other beneficial insects in early developmental stages. When you rake up your leaves you are literally raking up next summer's pollinators! Over time leaves that are left in place become "black gold" - a natural lawn fertilizer and high quality compost. That's right, the same compost and fertilizer we will pay exorbitant prices for in the store next spring!

So next time you pull out the rake or the pruning shears let nature be your guide! And this winter, we challenge you to stop for a moment on your way to church or in between errands. Look for the beauty of the winter garden: notice how the frost or snow settles on the remaining seed heads and stems of grasses. Take a moment to study nature in all her intricate beauty, even (especially) in the dead of winter!

The Pollinator Committee

Please remember memorial gifts to the Pollinator Gardens in any amount are always welcome. Donation forms can be found on the Pollinator Table in the sanctuary.



**Rev. Ruth's Community Office Hours
on Thursdays from 2 – 4 pm
at The Savoy Bookstore & Café
in downtown Westerly**

All conversations with me at any time are always confidential.

PRAYER LIST



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

Madelyn Stratton	Beverly & Family
Brian Madill	Scott & his parents
Shirley M.	Gerry
Connie	Nicci & Jeff
Allie	Josh
Ben	Rev. Elizabeth King
Laura	Ruth King Roes
Mauri Hainsworth	Bill Hoffman
Emma	Crystal
Bea	

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.



December Birthdays

Bob Sicilian—9
 Mark Dessaulles—20
 Jack Hainsworth—26
 Trina Torres—29

Please add in your special days by calling the church office at 860-599-1226!!

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Please be aware that the Format and spacing for the BEACON may appear differently on your computer or device depending upon which WORD version you have. Thank you for your understanding!



OUR STAFF

Pastor: The Rev. Ruth Shilling Hainsworth
Organist: David Cranmer
Secretary: Carol Lindsay
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,
9am – 1pm

Rev. Ruth is generally in the office on Tuesdays, Thursdays and either Wednesdays or Fridays but the times vary. If you want to catch up with her in the office, she suggests you call first to be sure she is here. Thank you!!!



Rev. Ruth

David Carol Joann Heather