

The Beacon

March 2020



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

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights...”
Matthew 4:1-2

In this text, and similar ones in Mark and Luke, we find the origins of what we call Lent. Dating back to as early as the 4th century CE, Lent was originally the time when converts to the Christian faith would engage in daily study in preparation for joining the church during Holy Week. Over time Lent became a period of 40 days beginning on Ash Wednesday and lasting until Holy Saturday, exclusive of Sundays. This time frame is understood as mirroring Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness for 40 days following his baptism.

According to Wikipedia, the purpose of Lent is “the preparation of the believer for Easter through [prayer](#), doing [penance](#), [mortifying the flesh](#), [repentance](#) of sins, [almsgiving](#), and [denial of ego](#).” Thus, fasting was often seen as a way to observe Lent. Gradually this came to be understood as giving up some favorite food – like sweets – for the duration of Lent, rather than observing a complete fast.

In more contemporary Lenten observances the focus has shifted away from giving up something to taking on something additional – like adding a daily spiritual practice such as Bible reading and/or studying a Lenten devotional guide. In recent years Pope Francis has taken the unusual step of reframing fasting as a shift in the practice of how we treat others. Here is his list of 11 suggestions:

1. Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
2. Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
3. Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
4. Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
5. Fast from worries and trust in God.
6. Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
7. Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
8. Fast from bitterness and fill your heart with joy.
9. Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.
10. Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
11. Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

I like Pope Francis’ suggestions. They offer much in the way of spiritual exercise to strengthen and build up our souls as we engage in God’s work in the world.

So, as the Season of Lent begins, I hope you will take the time to be intentional in redefining your faith practice. A number of opportunities are described in this newsletter such as our worship schedules as well as other activities happening here in our wonderful church this month. Check it out and start planning! Better yet, start doing because Lent is what YOU make of it. I’ll be looking for you on Sunday!

Your friend in Christ,
Rev. Ruth



LENTEN WORSHIP SCHEDULE
through March

All Sunday morning services are @ 9:30am.
WORSHIP THEME FOR EPIPHANYTIDE:
Guided by the questions of Jesus

Sunday, March 1 – Worship with Communion

- ❖ Matthew 16:13-20
 “But Who Do You Say I Am?”

Sunday, March 8 (See special note below!)

- ❖ Mark 2:1-12
 “Why Do You Raise Such Questions...?”

Sunday, March 15

- ❖ Luke 10:25-37
 “What Is Written ... What Do You Read There?”

Sunday, March 22

- ❖ John 2:1-11
 “...What Concern Is That to You and Me?”

Sunday, March 29

- ❖ Matthew 21:28-32
 “What Do You Think?”



SET YOUR CLOCKS AHEAD ONE HOUR
Saturday, March 7!!!!

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Sunday, April 5 -- PALM SUNDAY

- ❖ Symbols Service & Communion
 (Sign up sheet for Readers outside Fellowship Hall)

Thursday, April 9 – MAUNDY THURSDAY

- ❖ Tenebrae Service @ 6pm in the Sanctuary
 (Sign up sheet for Readers outside Fellowship Hall)

Friday, April 10 – GOOD FRIDAY VIGIL

- ❖ Prayer Vigil in the Sanctuary from 12-3pm

Sunday, April 12 – EASTER SUNRISE

- ❖ 6am Service @ Misquamicut Beach

Sunday, April 12 – EASTER SERVICE

- ❖ 9:30am Festival Service with Processional, Easter Message and Special Music



The One Great Hour of Sharing offering will be received on Sunday, March 22nd.

This is a denominational offering of the United Church of Christ used to support disaster relief ministries and ministries with refugees as well as development efforts in poor countries.



Deacon Ministry

Diaconate Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone #</u>
3/1	Claire Calabretta	860-574-5962
3/8	Lynn Murray	401-539-7578
3/15	Ed Stratton	401-596-4740
3/22	Elvis Torres	860-245-4759
3/29	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!



INTRIGUED BY UCC Westerly?

Join us for an Inquirers' Gathering - Part II
"UCC 101"

As we discuss what we believe and why
Sunday, March 22 @ 11am in the Parlor
Questions and queries expected!!!!

For more information or to receive copies of
the materials provided at the first
gathering, please
speak with Rev. Ruth anytime.



The Board of Deacons would like to thank everyone for their consistent support of the Deacons' Fund on communion Sundays. This fund allows us to provide assistance where needed, both within the church and in the community. We recently supplemented the Dine to Donate effort by the mission committee to bring our annual WARM Center donation up to the committed amount of 1200 dollars. Also recently, we restocked the pew racks with tissues & hand sanitizer. Again, thank you for your continued support.

Many thanks for all the hands that made the Valentine Tea a huge success. It's true that it takes a village, but this year, the village became a city! The scone making day was nothing short of amazing. People (all novice scone bakers), ingredients, and tools all showed up, and in 3 hours, more than 400 scones – 4 flavors – were made. Set up of fellowship hall and the narthex happened when almost no one was looking. The cookie baking, sandwich making, cookie & sandwich plating, carafe filling, scone heating, serving, and clean-up took place like a well-oiled machine. There were compliments all around. One guest summed it up when she filled out the slip requesting to be notified of next year's tea. On it was a note that said, "Thank you for the lovely time."

From the Financial Secretary

Inquiring minds like to know...."How much did the Valentine Tea make?"
Total sales for the Tea were \$1,680. The Basket Raffle made \$675, for a grand total of \$2355. Thank you all for your hard work as well as your loving dedication to detail that makes the Valentine Tea such a favorite event!

DID YOU KNOW...

1. **Did you know that** there is a *Lenten brochure* that includes the full range of Lenten services and programs here at the church? Pick up a copy in the Bell Courtyard Narthex!
2. **Did you know that the deadline** for ordering a memorial/honorarium *New Centural Hymnal* is March 15? Hymnal order forms can be found in the Bell Courtyard Narthex.
3. **Did you know that** there is a donations basket out on the Fellowship Table every Sunday? This pays for things like cream, milk, coffee, tea and lemonade! Your cash donation in any amount is greatly appreciated as are Coffee hosts and help! Please speak with Joann Spurley to volunteer.
4. **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.
5. **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 in the Bell Courtyard Narthex. Take one for yourself or anyone you might be visiting!
6. **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 are off to a good start.

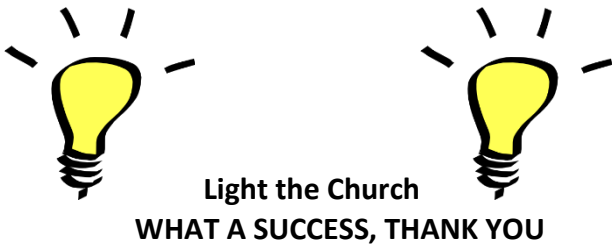
Pledge donations in January were \$6,854, about \$1,000 more than expected. We also had a very generous gift to the church of \$3,000. Total income for January was \$14,317, \$4,700 more than anticipated. Total expenses for January were \$14,668, only \$350 over anticipated expenses.

Our utilities bills continue to be a large part of our expenses during the year. We ask everyone to be mindful of turning off lights and keeping the thermostats tuned down as much as possible. If anyone would like to make special donations to help offset these utility costs please see any of the Trustees.

One additional unforeseen expense that we will incur this year is asbestos removal. It was noted by the company that services the organ that the enclosure for the organ blower is lined with asbestos and is showing signs of deterioration. We have had the material tested by Mystic Air Quality Consultants and their recommendation is to have the box removed by a licensed asbestos abatement contractor. We have started to receive quotes ranging from \$2,300 to \$2,500. We are awaiting one more quote before selecting a contractor.

2020 will be another challenging year for us since a deficit budget was approved at the Annual Meeting.

The Trustees are already taking action to control and reduce expenses. We have approved changes to our insurance coverage including increasing the deductible amount from \$1,000 to \$2,500 thus reducing our premium by \$1,200. We are also looking into changing our phone/internet service provider to reduce those monthly expenses. Finally all the light bulbs throughout the building have been replaced with energy efficient LED bulbs.



In order to reduce our electric bill, the Trustees sponsored a “Light the Church” campaign to raise funds to replace the CFL bulbs throughout the church with LED light bulbs. We took a lesson from Missions who successfully raised money this year by selling shares in Beehives, to raise money for Heifer International, and shares to purchase items needed for the homeless in our area.

On Sunday, 8 February, we started selling “shares” for \$5. Each share went towards the purchase of 2 LED light bulbs. We had planned to continue this campaign through 8 March, the start of daylight saving time. By the end of the week we had collected over \$400 thanks to two very generous donations to the campaign, thus ending the campaign with more than enough money to change the bulbs. As of today all the light bulbs throughout the church (Sanctuary, Fellowship Hall, Bathrooms, and Hallways) have been replaced with LED bulbs. The excess monies will be used to upgrade the outside lighting to energy efficient fixtures.

Once again we wish to send a great big thank you to all who donated.

MISSION MOMENT

Reminder: Please return the Mission surveys that were in last month’s Beacon as soon as possible, so we can continue with our planning for the year ahead. Thanks to all of you who have already done so.



Many of our neighbors who patronize the PNC food pantry still follow the Lenten tradition of limiting their consumption of meats for 40 days. Therefore, we thought it appropriate to have a collection of non-perishable foods that honor that tradition. So, this month we will be collecting tuna, whole-grain pasta, meatless healthy soups and sauces, beans (dried are the best choices), and canned vegetables. We’d like to remind everyone that the PNC cannot accept items past their expiration date or items that have already been opened. As a reminder of our commitment to healthy food choices, we ask everyone to please follow the guide lines listed below. Thanks again for all that you do for our community and the world beyond. What you do makes a difference.





Every Neighborhood Needs Healthy Food

BEST FOODS TO DONATE (see lists below)

1 in 7 Americans rely on food pantries and soup kitchens to survive. Promote their health with healthy donations! *Give to the best of your ability.*

Donations to Avoid: Food in glass jars <> Expired cans and boxed food items <> Damaged, already opened food items <> Rusty or unmarked cans of food <> Homemade food items <> Soda and sweetened drinks <> Sweets: cookies, cakes, candy <> Ramen noodles <> Any food you would NOT eat or feed your family

Fruits & Vegetables

“No sodium”¹ canned vegetables, including tomatoes
“Reduced sodium” (and “low sugar” if available), shelf-stable² tomato/vegetable pasta sauce
Canned fruit in 100% juice and shelf-stable fruit cups (no artificial sweeteners)
“Unsweetened” applesauce cups; Dried fruits and vegetables with no added sugar or salt

100% Whole Grains

Unflavored Oatmeal, Cream of Wheat, Rolled Oats
Whole-grain cereal with fiber (3+ grams) low in sugar (3g or less) such as Cheerios, Total, Special K, All Bran, etc.
Whole-grain or 100% wheat or brown rice crackers
Whole wheat, high fiber, or multigrain pasta; Brown or wild rice, whole wheat couscous, and barley
Whole-grain rice cakes, granola or cereal bars low in fat

Protein

Canned chicken, tuna, and salmon “in water”
Canned, “reduced sodium” and “reduced fat,” bean, chicken, or vegetable soup
Dried beans, peas, and lentils
“Low sodium” or “reduced sodium” beans (black,

kidney, cannellini), black-eyed or chick peas
Peanut butter
Quinoa
“Unsalted” or “low salt” nuts and seeds (almonds, walnuts, cashews, peanuts, sunflower)

Other

“Low sodium” or “no sodium” chicken or vegetable broth
Virgin and extra virgin olive, canola, or sesame oil
Shelf-stable and “low fat”, vitamin D-fortified regular, soy, almond, or rice milk
Boxed, “unflavored”, “low fat” regular, dehydrated milk or canned evaporated milk

EQUAL EXCHANGE

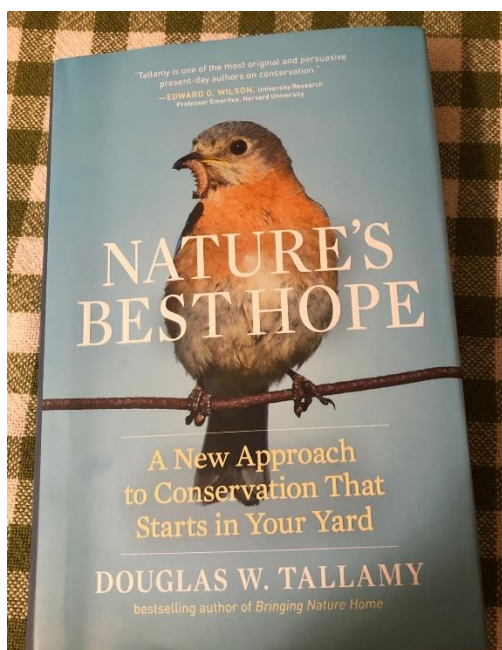
Don't forget that the cute red cabinet just inside the door of Fellowship Hall holds a treasure trove of Equal Exchange items that you can purchase each week. Buy some excellent organic chocolate bars, cocoa, coffee, tea, etc. and realize that you are helping the world's needy population in the process.



It's almost that time!! Easter is quickly approaching. Our Easter Flower Order Forms will be included in the March 15th Order of Worship. Lilies are \$9.00 and Daffodils and Tulips are priced at \$8.00. We ask you to have your order forms into the office no later than March 30th. Thank you and Happy Spring!!

¹ Quotes indicate terms you will find on nonperishables.

² Those items that do not require refrigeration.



DINE TO DONATE!

Lunch, Dinner, and Take-out

Thursday, March 26 @ Stonington Pizza Palace

530 Stonington Road (Route 1) 860-535-0886

15% of all profits will benefit the UCC Church of Westerly's
Pollinator Garden / Labyrinth Project



We'd love to have you join us at

BOOKS

OUR NEXT GATHERING:

Thursday, April 2, 2020

@ 6pm

Potluck Supper at the church
with beverages provided.

WHAT WE'RE READING:

NATURE'S BEST HOPE

By Douglas Tallamy

We are especially excited to invite members of the Pollinator Team and the Board of Trustees to join us as we read this book which captures perfectly the vision of our church's amazing Pollinator project. Anyone with a passion for the natural world and what it will take to save it for generations to come should read this book and we hope you will. Then come join us to talk about what you've read.

What is the "Pollinator Garden / Labyrinth Project"?

As an eco-justice ministry of UCC of Westerly, our vision is to create a public space that people can freely visit for contemplation and prayer, and to connect with and be enveloped by the beauty of God's creation: the fragile, interdependent eco-system of "unsung heroes" (birds, bees, butterflies, beetles, etc) that are critical to the web of life, and the flowers, grasses, shrubs and trees that sustain them.





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**

What do people come and talk with me about?
Anything and everything! Questions about God and the church, sharing frustrations and worries about life, just passing time! No topic is off limits and every word is confidential. Hope to see you soon...



NEW THIS YEAR!
Lenten Retreat:
Practicing the Presence of God

Saturday, March 28
9am – 2pm
Here at UCC Westerly
Led by Rev. Ruth
Pick up the flyer at church!!!



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.



March Birthdays

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

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



The Office is looking to update its computer and keyboard. If you are upgrading your current one, might you consider donating yours to the church? Our only request is that it can run Windows 10 and has a good memory capacity. Thank you for all you do!



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. You can reach her any time on her cell phone at #401-663-7934 or by email at revruth1121@aol.com. Thank you!!!



Rev. Ruth

DAV Carol Joann Heather

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!