

The Beacon

JUNE-JULY 2020



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

*“For everything there is a season, and a time
for every matter under heaven...”
Ecclesiastes 3:1*

I don't know about you but I have a whole new appreciation of this familiar and beloved verse as we mark three months into our Coronavirus altered reality. When we first made the decision to close the church, none of us had any appreciation of what lie ahead. I don't think any of us expected our churches to be closed for more than a few weeks. In fact, as the shut-downs of churches, and everything else, took hold, it still seemed like some odd sort of blizzard without any snow. After all, we New Englanders are used to closing down because of snowstorms. We count ourselves lucky if we get through a whole winter without needing one. So, with that as our only frame of reference for shut-downs, it makes sense that we kind of automatically slipped into short-term thinking and planning. Only as Easter came and went did the reality that this was not going to be over and done within a few weeks

really begin to sink in. And that, dear ones, was painful for all of us.

So here we are, now more than 90 days in to this complete upending of everything we know and love about our church suspended. We miss the solace of Sunday morning worship together in our beautiful sanctuary. We miss comforting hugs from friends at social hour and board and committee meetings. We miss working together on Bazaar preparations and the Community Yard Sale. We miss the Dine to Donate events at Stonington Pizza, our fundraising partner on so many of our special projects here at church. We miss each other! We miss the conversations about mundane things while looking at each other face to face. We miss the always delicious food showing up at almost every occasion. We just miss us – the wonderful church family we have come to know and love. And we miss the new folks just becoming part of that family! The rug got pulled out from underneath all of us just as we were getting to know you! Yikes!

But, dear ones, God is in the middle of this crazy situation too, just as God has always been in the middle of everything we do as a church. We have moved our worship services online through Facebook Live and an amazing number of you have been able to join us for those virtual services broadcast from my home. Plus, we have even more folks from the community and even across the country joining us too! Our virtual worship attendance is easily triple what it would have been in the sanctuary. That's exciting! It also means that broadcasting our worship services is here to stay and what that will mean promises an exciting season of creative work for the Deacons and myself! For those of you not accessing our virtual worship, you are still receiving the weekly worship resource and sermon for your use at home, along with an expanded version of "News & Notes" from the Sunday bulletin. I've also continued my Community Office Hours doing a virtual version on Facebook Live on Thursdays @ 2pm. I've even experimented with a virtual

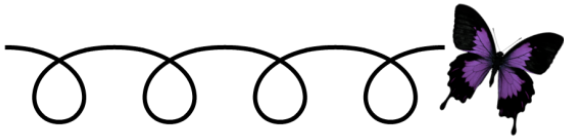
Bible study for a few weeks. I'm excited to see what more we can come up with to expand our outreach into the community even more as Fall rolls around in a few months.

I have also been so pleased and delighted at how our boards have continued to function well, learning how to meet virtually via Zoom! The work of the church barely missed a beat! And we should all be so proud of the Face Masks Ministry spearheaded by our Missions folks as their primary project during the shut-down. UCC Westerly definitely was not and is not closed! As I put up on some signs on our doors, we are just in "Holy Spirit Mode!" You will read here in the *Beacon* about our plans for re-opening as well as the ongoing efforts of our Deacons, Trustees, Missions, and Pollinator crew and I urge you to check it out! What you will find is proof positive that God is still speaking in our wonderful and amazing church as we make our way through this bizarre season of all our lives.

Looking forward to our being together once more even as we acknowledge that each of us and our church will be forever changed by the pandemic in more ways than I think we will fully appreciate for a long time. Nevertheless, God is doing a new thing in our midst and inviting us to be a part of it! How wonderful and exciting is that!

Your friend in Christ,

Rev. Ruth



Deacon Ministry

Diaconate Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone #</u>
6/21	Dwayne Spurley Dows	860-705-6152
6/28	Ed Stratton	401-596-4740
7/5	Lynn Murray	401-539-7578
7/12	Claire Calabretta	860-574-5962
7/19	Bethany Foster	401-539-4003
7/26	Joann Spurley	401-714-8948
8/2	Ed Stratton	401-596-4740
8/9	Dwayne Spurley-Dows	860-705-6152

(First service broadcast from Sanctuary!!!)

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!



The Board of Deacons has been meeting virtually and has received updates from the Pandemic Response Team (formerly called the church re-opening committee.) We encouraged Rev. Ruth to stream services from home, and the Deacons' fund covered the cost of the music license, enabling her to use more music resources. Many thanks to Doug Brummund for his beautiful original music, to Dav for recording organ music to be replayed

during services, and to Gary for fixing the box so the organ could be used again. We also greatly appreciate those who have continued to support the monthly Deacons' fund offering along with your pledges.

On Angelo's recommendation, we have postponed the May Barbara Murano Scholarship dine-to-donate event at Stonington Pizza Palace until a later date. We hope you will continue to support his business in the meantime, as he is currently open for take-out and delivery. We also decided not to have our scholarship recipients go through the application process this year, as they have been busy completing the year's education in such a new manner, with some of them unexpectedly moving home in the meantime. We will still award the scholarships, but it is uncertain if we will still have our traditional Scholarship Sunday, or if they will receive the scholarship in a different way. Here are this year's recipients:

John Walker - entering his junior year at Eastern CT State College

Anna Tarasuk - entering her sophomore year at Rochester Institute of Technology

Erin Blake - entering her sophomore year at Eastern CT State College

Sydney Walker - entering her freshman year at CCRI, after finishing her HS senior year there.

Congratulations also to **Lindsay Walker**, who graduated from URI this year, and to **Emma Stratton**, who graduated from Westerly High School.

The Deacons have returned to having a Deacon of the Week. That list appears in the Weekly News & Notes. Feel free to contact any of the Deacons at any time. Also, if you are not already on the prayer tree, receiving notifications when prayers are needed, and wish to be, please let any of the Deacons know and you will be added.



UCC Westerly Pandemic Response Team update

A committee was formed and met twice in May to discuss the re-opening of our church. Our goal is to consider CT, RI and UCC Conference guidelines to work towards the safest possible opening for our church members and guests.

The current decision is for church to open for in-person worship on Sunday, September 13. This decision will be reviewed during each meeting. Services will continue to be broadcast online via Facebook Live for those who feel more comfortable to remain at home. A practice run of preaching from the sanctuary while broadcasting live will be done on August 9th.

The church will remain closed for weddings, funerals, special groups and activities. All these will be evaluated to resume on or after September 13. The church is also closed except for our essential church workers.

The committee will continue to meet on a regular basis and updates will be shared via the Beacon, the weekly email and announcements on Facebook

Our next meeting is June 16 and will focus on current recommended guidelines and logistics of re-opening.

Thanks to the committee members - Pastor Ruth Hainsworth, Gary Davis, Joanne Spurley, Carolyn LeRoy, Ed Stratton, John Blake, Melissa Stratton, Lynn Murray, George Gray, Cathy Gray and Bethany Foster

The church applied for and received the Payroll Protection loan for \$11,000. If the funds are used only for payroll and documented as such, the loan will be forgiven. Many thanks to George Gray and Gary Davis for their work on this loan.



Trustee Notes

From the Financial Secretary

Hello all!

You can expect your half-year financial statement by mail, just after the month of June. There was no 3 month statement. Please check your statement carefully and if you have questions, please contact me by phone, letter, or email, all of which are available in our Directory, or from Carol in the office.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to Ed Stratton and Bill Street, our Assistant Financial Secretaries. Throughout this "shelter-in-place" time, they have been preparing the bank deposits for our church (bi-weekly), and patiently waiting in line at the drive-through in order to be sure all your pledges are safely placed in the bank! My role has been to come into church periodically and record your donations on the computer, using the "Church Windows" program. We will continue this system throughout the summer. I thank Bill and Ed for their time and dedication!

Some folks have been making a monthly donation to the Deacons' Fund, which is so appreciated! If you choose to do this, it is somewhat easier if this check could be made out to UCCW Deacon's Fund (Treasurer of the Deacons' Fund), rather than to UCC Westerly. These are actually two different accounts and a separate check saves an extra step in our accounting procedure. However, if you include(d) a Deacons' Fund offering in your pledge check, with the appropriate memo, it *will* make its way to the Deacons' Fund; rest assured!

The financial "team" wishes to thank our faithful members and friends for all their pledges and donations! We are so impressed with the dedication and loyalty you show to our church through your continued offerings. As the Trustees will surely echo, your pledges keep our church functioning, even in our absence. We *will* meet together again...and until then, I pray for your good health and comfort and I thank you again for your dedication to our faith community.

- Jenny Brummuund

Even though our worship services have been suspended and the church building closed due to the Covid-19 virus, the Trustees continue to monitor our finances and to make the decisions necessary for us to continue to function through these difficult times.

First we want to thank all who have been able to give generously to financially support the church. We understand that some may be unemployed (hopefully only temporarily) or have had a reduction in their income. Pledge donations through April were \$21,151, about \$2,330 less than expected. Total income through April was \$35,600, about \$2,900 less than anticipated. Total expenses through April were \$41,817 which leaves us with a deficit of \$6,200.

On behalf of our church, the Trustees applied for and were granted a forgivable loan on May 27 for \$11,386. This was a Paycheck Protection Program loan made available through the federal Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. As long as 75% of the loan is used for salaries it will be forgiven. In March the Trustees agreed to close the church facility and requested that the employees not report for work, however we would continue to pay their salaries. Our secretary was given limited assignments that she could do from home.

We reopened the church facility on May 26th for administrative purposes only. This meant that only employees and others conducting church business (financial and maintenance) would be allowed in the building. No visitors would be allowed in the building and the support groups sponsored by the church would not be allowed to hold weekly meetings. Employees were requested to report to work that week and a schedule was designed to reduce the number of employees in the facility at the same time. Sanitizing wipes and a sign in/out log were placed at each entry.

DID YOU KNOW...

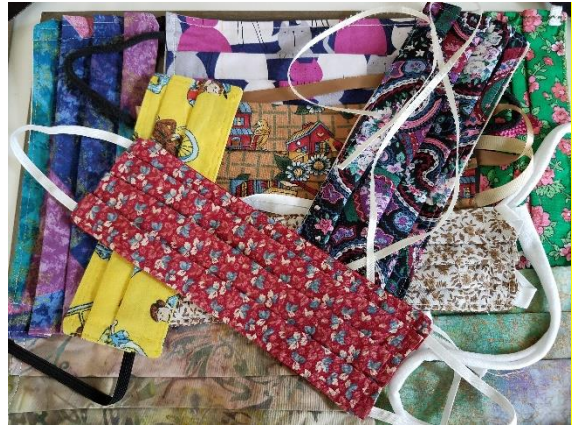
1. *That you can easily learn more about the Black Lives Matter demonstrations and just what is going on with these protests happening all across the country. Here are some excellent resources to check out through our Southern New England Conference, UCC:*

<https://www.sneucc.org/racialjustice>

Please be sure to reach out to me with any questions or concerns you have in this regard. Also, please know I will be participating in the Westerly-Pawcatuck Clergy Association's planned Sunday of Preaching on the Sin of Racism on June 28. I hope you can join me for this Facebook Live event followed by our Zoom Fellowship time when I will be happy to answer questions and hear your comments.

2. *That you can spend some time social distancing and visiting with Rev. Ruth on Wednesday afternoons outside while we work on weeding the pollinator gardens together! Bring your gardening gloves or a chair to sit on while Rev. Ruth gardens. And wear your mask!!!*
3. *That it's still not too late to order a hymnal as a memorial or celebration of a loved one. Hymnals are \$19 each. Email the office for details on how to order OR if you can't remember whether or not you already ordered one (or more)!*

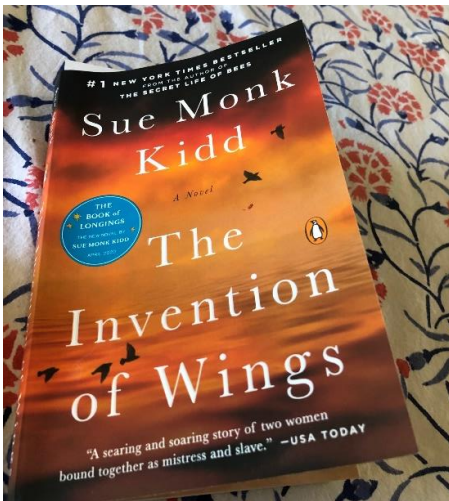
MISSION MOMENT OPERATION FACE MASK



During this COVID pandemic our mission activities have continued in full force. A small, but dedicated group of us has cut, sewn, and distributed over 1400 cotton face masks of every shape, color, size, and design imaginable. Fabric, elastic, and ties were donated by more people than we could possibly count. Some very sweet ladies even crocheted ties for us. Due to the impact of social media, many community members also made donations of materials and completed masks. The list of recipients is pages long and will be posted, along with several thank-you notes, on a bulletin board when we are able to return to church. Know that those recipients stretched all over the country, not just in our immediate area, although most of the agencies and nursing/elderly care facilities were local ones. We accepted no payment from anyone, but donations were made to our church and various food banks near and far as expressions of gratitude for the masks. We still have some masks in our "bank" and will have them available for members of the congregation when we return in September. If you or a loved one need a mask now, please contact the church office and Carol will forward your request to the team.

PNC

Obviously, we have not been able to contribute non-perishable foods to the food pantry at the PNC. If you would like to continue to support them, please feel free to mail your checks directly to them. Some people have also learned that ordering through Amazon and having the order delivered directly to the PNC works beautifully.



We'd love to have you join us at
BOOKS

The UCC Westerly folks who love books and
talking about books!

Join us for our next gathering:
Thursday, June 25

6pm - Socially distancing on the front lawn at
church! Bring a chair and wear a mask!

WHAT WE'RE READING:
The Invention of Wings
By Sue Monk Kidd



*SOME UPDATES FROM THE
POLLINATOR TEAM!*

- *The name of the game for this summer is socially distanced weeding in all the gardens and we need your help! Don't worry about pulling out the "wrong thing" because we have so much of everything the gardens need thinning!*
- *We are looking forward to supporting the efforts on the Stonington Pollinators group of which we were just made aware.*
- *Looking for a good book to read this summer? Check out Doug Tallamy's NATURE'S BEST HOPE: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Own Yard. We're hoping to have a congregation-wide conversation about this book sometime this fall.*



*Rev. Ruth's Community Office Hours
Have gone virtual!!!*

*Join her on Facebook Live
Thursdays @ 2pm
Interact via comments or schedule an
appointment for a private Zoom conversation.*

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	Jake Shultz
Jennifer Woodhall	

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.



June Birthdays:

Eric Sadowski – 5
Victoria Tosti – 20
Sally Panciera – 20
June Sicilian – 23
Emma Sugar - 28

July Birthdays:

Kevin Dows – 3
Jimmy Stott – 4
Mark Comito – 13
Joann Spurley – 14
Bobbie DelPozo-Waldron – 19
Ane Torres – 21
Jim Cornell – 27
Elvis Torres – 30

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!!

Bobbie & Pam DelPozo-Waldron – 6-6-92
Ed & Judy Stratton – 6-6-70
Elvis & Ane Torres – 7-20-02
Gary & Sandi Davis – 7-20-74

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
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Telephone: **860-599-1226**

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Website: **www.uccwesterly.org**

Office Hours: Monday and Thursday
9am – 1pm



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!