

The Beacon

November 2020



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

*“... a time to embrace and a time to refrain
from embracing”
Ecclesiastes 3:5b*

As I write this morning, I am awash in so many emotions on so many different levels for so many different reasons. Of course, the election uncertainty two days after the conclusion of the election ranks high on everyone’s anxiety scale these days. But that’s not what weighs most heavily on my heart this day. That would be our decision that we need once again to suspend in-person worship as infections spike in our area and the CT Guidelines roll back to previous stricter levels. Governor Lamont himself has asked churches to return to virtual worship as has Governor Raimondo in Rhode Island.

Our Pandemic Response Team (PRT) convened this past Tuesday evening on Zoom at my request to discuss what we should do. We know we are meeting if not exceeding the requirements for continuing in-person worship but it just does not feel right to go against the recommendations of the Governors, the states’ official recommendations and the recommendation of the United Church of Christ itself. So, knowing how difficult and painful this decision will be for the small group who have been faithfully attending in person each week, please believe our hearts are breaking over this decision we have to make. Be assured we will return to in-person worship just as soon as the state guidelines change to encourage that. Of course, that will only happen when infection rates fall and the experts tell us that is unlikely to happen as the weather turns colder and we spend more time inside. So, the likelihood that our return to virtual worship will be our reality for a while seems high. However, the PRT wants you to know they will continue to revisit this decision on a monthly basis.

Of course, this change also means our thinking and planning for how we will hold our much beloved Christmas Bazaar this year has also been upended. That group met last evening on Zoom and once again they astonished me, and I suspect themselves, with their creativity in figuring out the best and *the simplest way* to move ahead with the Bazaar under these unique circumstances. Their decision is described elsewhere in this newsletter and I hope you will read it and do what you can to support this incredible endeavor “under construction” by a wonderful group of our amazing folks.

So, dear ones, this is one of those times to recall and trust the words of Ecclesiastes which remind us that in life there are times when we must refrain from embracing for the good of everyone. It is so counter-intuitive for us because we are surely a “huggy” bunch who loves being together. But, for right now, that is just not possible. I promise, though, that it will

be again some day soon. In the meantime, we can still provide each other with “virtual” hugs that take the form of phone calls, notes and letters. Above all, we can take comfort in the Angel Gabriel’s response to Mary when she agreed to be the mother of the Christ Child – a gutsy decision to become an unwed mother in a most unusual way. Gabriel told her, “... for nothing will be impossible with God.” Exactly the words we need to focus on in these frantic, worrisome days.

Your friend in Christ,
Rev. Ruth



WE'RE BACK!!!!!!
to only virtual Worship
on Sundays @ 9:45am!

As explained in Rev. Ruth's article, changing CT Guidelines for the Coronavirus have made it necessary for us to return to virtual only worship for the time being. Rev. Ruth will be broadcasting worship from the sanctuary live each week on the *Facebook Live* streaming platform @ 9:45am. Dav will be providing our music as usual and a Deacon will be assisting as always. Please note everyone will be receiving by either email or regular mail the *Worship Resource* for each Sunday along with the *Weekly Update*. Copies of the sermon will be provided by request only. Speak with Rev. Ruth or Carol to receive one!



Deacon Ministry

Diaconate Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone #</u>
11/08	Lynn Murray	401-539-7578
11/15	Bethany Foster	401- 539-4003
11/22	Joann Spurley	401-714-8948
11/29	Ed Stratton	401-596-4740

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!



From the Deacons:

Once again, many thanks for the continued support of the Deacons fund. We greatly appreciate your on-going donations.

SPECIAL NOTE: The Deacons Fund has received a large anonymous donation to be used to support the food and housing insecurities offered by WARM Center in Westerly. The donor has given permission for some of those funds to be used to cover a portion of our annual financial meal pledge to WARM of \$1200 per year. This means that the Missions Board is able to regear for a more traditional Advent Missions project the details of which appear elsewhere in this *Beacon*.

Christmas Bazaar

The famous and much loved UCC Westerly Christmas Bazaar is regearing in the face of the changing CT Coronavirus Guidelines for events. Those Guidelines now restrict indoor events, like the Bazaar, to 25 people maximum calling into question proceeding with even a scaled-back version of our traditional Bazaar format. This combined with the decision to return to only virtual worship makes holding a traditional indoor Bazaar inadvisable.

BUT – NEVER FEAR!! Our incredibly creative Bazaar Planning Team has come up with an innovative and do-able (we hope) solution:

A POP-UP MINI CHRISTMAS BAZAAR
This Saturday, Nov. 8
10am – 2pm
Our Upper Parking Lot

This greatly scaled back version of the Bazaar will have a selection of most of your favorites including:

- An assortment of Gift Baskets in a range of prices and themes
- A variety of beautifully decorated artificial wreaths and mini-Christmas trees
- A selection of homemade goodies including canned goods, jams and maybe even a baked good or two
- A selection of items from the Nostalgia Boutique including antique linens and unique small gift items,

The plan is to give this pop-up format a try and see how we do. If the Bazaar Team determines it to be worth the effort, and the weather cooperates, the Pop-Up Mini Bazaar will be available on a few more weekends

between now and December 5. There will also be a virtual, on-line piece of the Bazaar as well. This will be the Bid to Beat baskets (see separate article) and our SERRV gifts ordering.

Bottom line, our plan moving forward is to sell what we already have ready to sell through this and possibly other pop-ups. So, with the exception of baked goods which will always be welcome, we are NOT looking for additional item donations at this time. We ARE looking for folks willing to lend a hand with set-up, selling and clean-up for future pop-ups. Please speak with Lynn or Rev. Ruth to volunteer.



BAZAAR BID-TO-BEAT GIFT CARD BASKETS



A new feature for this year's Christmas Bazaar being hold virtually through our website will be "Bid-to-beat" Christmas gift card baskets. This is an effort to help out our local small businesses, especially those that have helped our church in the past, raise some extra money, and

have some healthy and fun competition, all at the same time.

How does it work, you ask??

- 1. Bidding on all gift card baskets will have a minimum “bid-to-beat” that would be the value of the gift card. As higher bids come in (via email to Sandi Davis) the bid to beat will be adjusted routinely.**
- 2. So, if you check back regularly on those one or two baskets you really want, you can easily adjust your bid and improve your chances!**
- 3. Bids will close after worship on Sunday, December 6. Winners will be contacted and arrangements made for them to pick up their prize!**

Any questions? Please speak with Sandi Davis anytime!



Trustee Notes

Trustee Notes

As noted earlier, we have made the difficult decision to return to virtual online worship only of Sunday morning worship, broadcast from the sanctuary. During the week the church facility is

open for administrative purposes only. This means that only employees and others conducting church business (financial and maintenance) are allowed in the building. No visitors are allowed in the building. The support groups sponsored by the church are still allowed to hold weekly meetings in Fellowship Hall. When visiting, please remember to sign in and out on the forms at each entrance and to use the hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes.

Recent accomplishments are:

- Hands free soap and towel dispensers have been installed in each of the bathrooms.
- Touchless hand sanitizers have been placed at the Bell Courtyard and Upper Parking Lot entrances.
- The hand-rail at the Bell Courtyard has been replaced.
- Approved installation of a remote internet access point in the sanctuary to stream Sunday morning worship service. Funded by the Diaconate Board.
- Purchase and installation of a new computer for the office. Cost will be covered by a generous donation from Dwayne Spurley and Kevin Dows.
- Online giving through Vanco is up and running on the church website thanks to the efforts of George Gray and Jenny Brummund.

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. Budget figures will be updated in the December *Beacon*.

The next Trustee meeting will be November 24 at 6:30 PM via Zoom.



HAS ARRIVED AT UCC WESTERLY!

To participate, simply go to the church website, www.uccwesterly.org and click on the “Donate” button. Supported by the on-line giving platform provided by Vanco, be assured this is a completely safe and secure way to make your donations to the church. All donations made this way will appear on your quarterly statements from the church. After clicking on the “Donate” button, you will have options to make a pledge, pay a pledge, make a one-time gift or support one of the special Offerings of the church (Deacons Fund, etc) or the United Church of Christ. You can pay by credit card or by pre-authorized withdrawal from a bank account. Please keep in mind that the church pays a small service charge for each donation processed so paying more than one week’s offering makes your money go further! You can also choose to offset part of the church’s expense incurred, if you would like to. Be assured we are thrilled by whatever you can give!! What you give makes a real difference to the life and ministry of this very special church.

MAKE A NOTE!

December is the month when the UCC’s Annual Christmas Fund offering is received! This is the offering which supports the Clergy Emergency Financial Assistance Fund administered by the UCC Pensions Board.



UPDATE!

UCCW Pandemic Response Team

As reported earlier, the Pandemic Response Team has made the difficult decision to return to online worship only for the time being due to changing CT Guidelines for the Coronavirus. Please know the Team continues meeting regularly to monitor and revise our worship protocols as changing circumstances warrant. They are meeting next via Zoom on Sunday, December 29 in the evening. This group is also involved in plans for the Christmas Bazaar now underway. Any questions regarding the Pandemic Response Team should be directed to Bethany Foster at 401-539-4003.

MISSION MOMENT

November and December



“Back to Basics”

Decorate our Mission Tree

This year, more than any other in recent history, too many families in our local communities are suffering from lack of the basic necessities: food, fuel, and housing. In light of that, our Mission Holiday Drive for November and December is focused on going Back to the Basics.

We are planning to conduct this drive in a manner similar to last year’s Decorate the Mission Tree for the Homeless. For every \$5 donation you make a colored ornament will be placed on our Mission Holiday Tree.



Red ornaments: Fuel Assistance



Silver ornaments: Housing Support



Gold ornaments: Food Assistance

We are asking that all donations be made by Sunday, December 20. All donations will be sent to the Johnnycake Center this year.

You may place your donations in the collection plates at either entrance to the sanctuary or mail them to the church. Please mark them "Mission Holiday Drive" and be sure to indicate which basic necessity you would like to support. To keep everyone safe this year, only members of the Mission Board will place the ornaments on the tree.

We thank you in advance for making this the most beautiful Mission Holiday Tree we have ever decorated!!

Looking ahead

Anticipating the increased threat of food insecurity during the winter months ahead, we will be accepting the challenge to supplement the local food pantries by having the largest food drive we have sponsored since our Fill the Pews events.

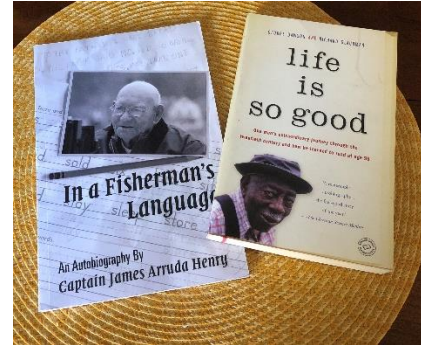
During January and February we will be Filling the Altar (and hopefully some of those pews that we can't use due to COVID) with as much non-perishable food as possible. While you are stocking your own pantries in preparation for possible food shortages this winter, please consider throwing some extras in your cart for this event. We are NOT collecting food now but will be starting the first of the year. Plan ahead!!



AN UPDATE FROM THE POLLINATOR TEAM!

- *As the gardens get ready for their winter's sleep, we celebrate all the accomplishments of the past year including our designation as a part of the Stonington Pollinator*

Pathway. If you enjoy any local honey at your Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations this year, be sure to thank a member of our Pollinator Team!!!



We'd love to have you join us at

BOOKS

A group of folks who love books and talking about books!

Join us for our next gathering in the new year:

Thursday, January 7, 2021

6pm - via Zoom!

Please contact Rev. Ruth for the Zoom link.

WHAT WE'RE READING:

Two fascinating books written by men in their 90'S

In A Fisherman's Language

By James Henry

&

Life Is So Good

By George Dawson & Richard Glaubman

A REMINDER FROM REV. RUTH...

That she is available for personal conversations by phone or Zoom or even socially distanced face to face outside, weather permitting. Please be in touch with her directly to schedule an appointment.



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.

Stewardship Sunday will be celebrated on November 15! This year's theme is *Let's Talk About Giving* with our focus scripture being "For God so loved the world God gave..." John 3:16.

Plan now on joining us for the Virtual Stewardship Brunch!!! Participating is easy!

- 1) Make the dish you would have brought to the real brunch.
 - 2) Take a photo of it.
 - 3) Send the photo to Rev. Ruth and it will be posted on our Facebook page.
 - 4) Make a "reservation" for the virtual Brunch by emailing Rev. Ruth and she will send you the Zoom link.
 - 5) At the appointed time, click on the Zoom link and join the brunch with your food ready to enjoy while we chat together over Zoom while we eat!
- No, it won't be the same BUT do know this means you CAN have a mimosa with your Brunch this year.....



November Birthdays:

- Megan Gray – 5
- Kali Woodhall – 6
- Amanda Hainsworth – 8
- John Walker – 21
- Rev. Ruth – 21
- Vera M. Leming – 23
- Christina Brummund – 25
- Caleb Stratton - 29

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



PRAYER LIST



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

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





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@gmail.com**
Website: **www.uccwesterly.org**
Office Hours: Monday and Thursday 9am – 1pm



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!

HAPPY THANKSGIVING from your UCC Westerly staff!

Rev. Ruth
DAV Carol Joann Heather

