

The Beacon

December 2020



“Now the birth of Jesus took place in this way...” Matthew 1:18

So begins Matthew’s telling of the story of the birth of Baby Jesus. It’s a fitting text to consider as we begin our journey through Advent during this upside down, Covid year. Surely we are looking at a very different holiday season than what we are used to, what we look forward to. Already we’ve seen our beloved Christmas Bazaar morph from a day long extravaganza that takes over the whole building to a series of delightful pop-up mini bazaars. We’ve had to rely on our very own “elves” to hang the greens and trim the tree in the sanctuary for us instead of our traditional Hanging of the Greens celebration on the first Sunday of Advent. And we are all trying to wrap our heads around a Covid Christmas Eve here in the church and at home. Yikes!

But, as the angel Gabriel told the terrified young Mary, “Fear not!” All will be well. The Deacons and I have been pondering how best to guide our Advent and Christmas celebrations this year and we hope you will plan now to join us for the many worship opportunities we will be offering. The complete listing appears here in the BEACON. I have also created a special resource for celebrating Advent and Christmas at home

this year included in this mailing as well.

Yes, it’s true that many things will be different this year for our Christmas celebrations and that it is always hard. But, many things – the important things – will remain the same whether we are celebrating Advent and Christmastide together or on Facebook Live or just in spirit. What matters is that we will once again hear the stories and songs of this joyful time of year. What matters is that no matter what, the Christ Child will be born in our lives and hearts anew this Christmas. Dear ones, nothing can keep Christmas from coming to us this year – not Covid, not post-election craziness, not financial worries, not distant families remaining at a distance. Nothing can keep Christmas from coming to us this year because God is God, this year and always. Christmas is the season of our renewed relationship with God who assures us with hope that miracles still happen, that peace doesn’t have to remain elusive, that joy is life-giving and that love changes everything.

Merry Christmas, Dear Ones, and may God’s love illuminate every corner of your life revealing every blessing so easy to overlook when days are dark and stressful. May you hold on to the truth that nothing is impossible with God.

Your friend in Christ,
Rev. Ruth

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA ORDERS!



Due Dec. 10!!!

\$7.50 each

Red or “Dealer’s Choice”

Available for pick-up immediately after Christmas Eve service or on Monday, Dec. 28, 9am-1pm. Speak with Carol in the office to order!



Deacon Ministry Diaconate Schedule

Schedule of Worship Services Advent and Christmas 2020

*All Sunday morning worship services are
broadcast on Facebook Live at 9:45am.*

November 29 – 1st Sunday of Advent Worship
Lighting the candle of HOPE

December 6 – 2nd Sunday of Advent Worship with
Communion & Lighting the candle of PEACE

December 13 – 3rd Sunday of Advent Worship
Lighting the candle of JOY

Thursday, December 17– “Blue Christmas” Service
@ 7pm on Facebook Live – Quiet, reflective
service for those struggling with the Christmas
season

December 20 – 4th Sunday of Advent Lessons &
Carols Worship Service & lighting the candle of LOVE

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

December 27 – Rev. Ruth will be off but you can
choose from several online worship experiences the
links for which will be provided through the Weekly
Update

January 3, 2021 – STAR SUNDAY Epiphany
Celebration
Festive service of Communion, Light and Star
Words for the coming year!

*Kindly Note: Copies of sermons will be provided
by request only. Speak with Rev. Ruth or Carol
to receive one!*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone #</u>
12/6	Dwayne Spurley	860-705-6152
12/13	Claire Calabretta	860-574-5962
12/17	Claire Calabretta	860-574-5962
12/20	Bethany Foster	401-539-4003
12/24	Joann Spurley	401-714-8948
12/27	Lynn Murray	401-539-7578

***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:

Many thanks for all the hands who have made our pop-up bazaar Saturdays a success. We are grateful that the weather has been perfect. Also many thanks go out to the creators, bakers, haulers, set up and break down folks, and those who stayed for the day to assist our grateful and happy customers. We have had several repeat customers, as well as those who helped spread the word. To date, we have brought in over

6200.00. Thank you all! Fingers crossed for one more nice Saturday. The one addition we will hope to offer will be greens arrangements, If anyone has greens and would like to create a few.

The Deacons are once again so grateful for the generosity of folks toward the Deacon Fund. Many thanks for your support.

††††



DON'T FORGET
UCC WESTERLY'S
VIRTUAL
CHRISTMAS
BAZAAR 2020

#1 -- Go to the
website @
www.uccwesterly.org

#2 -- Click on the link to the Bazaar Page

#3 -- Once there you can....

- Place an order with SERRV, whose delightful international items are a feature of our Bazaar. SERRV shopping allows you to make a difference by purchasing fair trade gifts and crafts from a range of countries.
- Place a bid on our Bid to Beat Gift Card Baskets featuring gift cards purchased to support local businesses. Call Sandi Davis with any questions. 806-287-0051

- Place a bid on one of 50 unique Silent Auction Items where treasures await! Any questions please call Linda Evans 860-599-5066.

The Virtual Bazaar will run from Thanksgiving Week through December 13. Be sure to follow the instructions for shopping or bidding for each separate component.



Trustee Notes

Due to the increase in the number of Covid 19 Virus infections, Sunday morning worship in the sanctuary has been suspended. 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. Two of the three 12-step programs did not agree to our meeting regulations during the pandemic. If you do have a need to enter the facility, please remember to sign in and out on the forms at each entrance and to use the hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes.

We are going through our fall inspections and servicing:

- The boilers were inspected and passed.
- The fire extinguishers have been serviced.
- The fire alarm system is scheduled for servicing and testing on 22 December.



- The Fire Marshall inspection will take place in December.

We have identified three major maintenance projects:

- Replacement of the cracked cross windows
- Repair of the crumbling chimney
- Re-shingling the slanted roofs

We will be seeking quotes for these much needed projects as well as determining how to fund them. 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. As of the end of October we have received \$55,302 in pledges, \$3,411 (4.5%) less than the anticipated amount of \$58,713. The total income was \$81,201. Thanks to the Paycheck Protection Program loan to cover employee salaries during the Covid-19 Pandemic, our total expenses were only \$85,250, \$9,122 less than the budgeted amount of \$94,372. Our current deficit is \$4,049. The next Trustee meeting will be on December 22 at 6:30 PM.



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 Tuesday, January 12, 2021. Any questions regarding the Pandemic Response Team should be directed to Bethany Foster at 401-539-4003.

MISSION MOMENT 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 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 Help



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 make your donation through our online giving platform on the church website, www.uccwesterly.org or mail your donation checks 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!!

PNC

Although our official holiday drive will benefit the Jonnycake Center this year, we ask that you not

forget the Pawcatuck Community Center, which is also doing a stellar job in supporting our neighbors in need. They are accepting non-perishable food and living closet donations during the week and monetary donations by mail or through their web site. Your Missions Committee is doing the best we can to spread our thinner-than-usual resources over the community this year. Remember that you can always donate to other organizations through their web sites and Facebook pages.

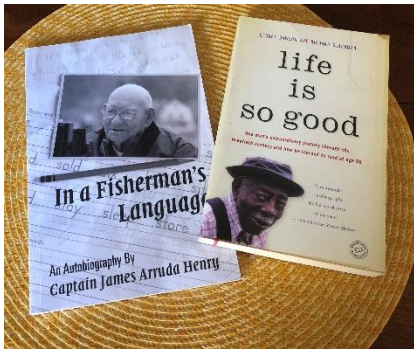
Looking ahead

Anticipating the increased threat of food insecurity during the winter months ahead, we will be accepting the challenge to supplement the food pantry at the PNC by having the largest food drive we have sponsored since our Fill the Pews events. At this point we are not sure how this food drive will look this year. Please stay tuned for updates as we assess the COVID situation.



AN UPDATE FROM THE POLLINATOR TEAM!

- *As the gardens settle in to 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.***

THIS & THAT!!

- *Families are invited to contact Rev. Ruth for a link to download an **Advent Family Devotional Guide** with activities for the whole family including coloring pages and bible stories.*
- *Also sent out with this issue of the BEACON is the "**Celebrating Advent and Christmastide with UCC Westerly**" guide. It includes easy to follow instructions for making your own Advent wreath at home and suggestions for each week of the season.*
- *A special invitation to the elders in our church family to participate in a special Zoom gathering on Wednesday, December 16 @ 4pm to learn more about the Westerly Village concept. Westerly Village is a plan for creating a community of mutual support for older adults in Westerly. For more information and to register for the Zoom, please speak with Sarah Cote at the Jonnycake Center of Westerly, 401-377-8069, ext. 110.*
- *Mark your calendars now for a unique opportunity to attend **the General Synod of the United Church of Christ**, an entirely virtual event happening this summer, July 11-18. General Synod is a microcosm of everything that makes the UCC the unique and diverse denomination it is. Usually restricted to delegates and visitors willing to travel to a distant location and stay in hotels, this year's virtual Synod will allow this wonderful experience to be open to everyone. Worth considering for sure! Check out the details here: <http://www.generalsynod.org/>*

PRAYER LIST



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

Madelyn Stratton	Beverly & Family
Brian Madill	
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

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
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!



December Birthdays:

Bob Sicilian – 9
Mark Dessales – 20
Devin Moynihan – 21
Jack Hainsworth – 26
Trina Torres - 29

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



Rev. Ruth

DAV Carol Joann Heather