

The Beacon

February 2021



*“... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”
Galatians 5:22-23*

As we make our way into February 2021, we also move closer to the one year anniversary of everything changing when the Coronavirus Pandemic shut down much of our lives as we knew them. Our church shut down on March 13, 2020 for what we believed would be a short time so that we could help “flatten the curve” of infections, buying time for the medical community to get a handle on this nightmare disease. We all know what happened then.

A few weeks of closure for churches and schools and many businesses turned into 6 weeks and then stretched on into months. Churches, including ours, scrambled to move worship and as much of our life as a congregation as was feasible on-line. Schools did the same. Meanwhile, the economy was devastated as the hospitality industry took the hardest hit of the now widespread closures. A dip in infections over the summer months allowed us to return briefly to in-person worship but, alas, this was short-lived. And throughout all this, things that should never have become problems suddenly were, like wearing face masks to reduce spread. Like whether or not to take a vaccine. Like denying the outcome of an election. Geesh, enough already! We made it through the toilet paper

shortage of last spring. Haven't we been through enough? Come on, God. What's happening here?

This question is one we've all been struggling to answer since this unwanted adventure began. Given that it's early February, I can't help but consider the wisdom Bill Murray's character in the movie *Groundhog Day* discovered when he seemed doomed to repeat the same day – Groundhog Day – over and over again. What he finally figured out is that what mattered in his bizarre situation was that he made the best of every single day of his life, even if that was the same day over and over again. He learned to play the piano. He made friends all over town. He did kindnesses for people he didn't know. In short, he became a great guy who just happened to be living the same day over and over again. The other people stayed the same. The situation stayed the same. The location stayed the same. But he changed into a completely new person and that was when he escaped the time warp which had held him captive and began a whole new life.

Dear ones, this is the challenge before us as we endure a pandemic, vitriolic political discontent, an economic downturn and the ongoing isolation from the people and friends we love. In spite of all this bad stuff swirling around us, how is God inviting us to make the most of each day? How is God encouraging us to use this very moment in our lives, in history, to become the best persons we can be, the people and the church God needs us to be? How is God inviting our church to be a part of God's plans for the vastly different reality we will all encounter as we emerge from Covid?

It is no accident, I think, that these questions surface for us as we head into the season of Lent, the time in the church year when we are encouraged to “go deeper” as we reflect on who we are and who God needs us to be. This is why our focus this Lenten season will be on what the Apostle Paul identifies as “the fruits of the Spirit.” This is Paul's list of the attributes he believes a committed follower of Jesus should have. They are the characteristics which should define who we are as the beloved people of God and how we make our way through life each day. A copy of our Lenten flyer for 2021 is attached to this edition

of the *Beacon* so you will know what is planned. A special Lenten devotional will be included with the Weekly Update the week Lent begins on February 17 when an Ash Wednesday Service will take place online, broadcast from my home, inviting you to a new way of experiencing the “ashes” which serve as our doorway into Lenten.

So, welcome to the first day of the rest of your life smack in the middle of this crazy world we live in these days. I hope you will join us as we wrestle together with Paul’s challenge to exemplify the fruits of the Spirit, the best of ourselves, each day because the world has never needed this more.

Your friend in Christ,
Rev. Ruth

Schedule of Worship Services



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

Epiphanytide 2021 – Meditations on Healing

February 7 -- Searching for healing
A Future with Hope Jeremiah 29:1,4-14

February 14 – Getting ready for healing
Temptation Abounds Matthew 4:1-11

Lent 2021 – Gifts of the Spirit

Wednesday, February 17 – ASH WEDNESDAY
6:30pm Service

February 21 – Our focus matters
Love, Joy and Peace Romans 14:13-22

February 28 – Wisdom & strength needed
Patience James 5:7-11

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

A note about worship: In an abundance of caution, the Deacons in consultation with the Pandemic Response Team have determined that we need to restrict the number of people in the building at any given time as much as possible. Therefore, Sunday morning worship will be led only by Rev. Ruth and Dav Cranmer, Organist. No Deacon nor Tone Chimes Choir for the time being! Also, do note that we may need to switch to Rev. Ruth broadcasting from her home without notice as happened on January 3. Flexibility is key as we all are learning!



Deacon Ministry

Diaconate Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone #</u>
2/7	Joann Spurley	401-714-8948
2/14	Claire Calabretta	860-574-5962
2/21	TBD	
2/28	TBD	

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!

A special note from the Deacons:

It has been a very different almost year for all of us. We are missing in person worship & coffee hour. Meetings are now being held virtually. Our plans changed for our traditional Christmas bazaar & tea, although the alternate plan that was pulled together on short notice & lasted for 5 weekends was amazing. We are now missing prepping for the Valentine Tea. Maybe we can’t see our family members like we are used to. And sadly, we haven’t been able to say good-bye to some of our loved ones and celebrate their lives in the way we would have liked. We know some folks are alone and lonely. It’s clear that our church family has been great at reaching out with phone calls and

cards and helping wherever possible. This says a lot about our wonderful church family. But we can't be sure of what everyone wants or needs at any given time. While folks well beyond our prayer tree list and Deacons have been reaching out to those we think might need a contact, we would like to issue a reverse invitation. If you are someone who is alone or lonely, or simply feeling stuck at home or out of touch, please reach out....to a Deacon, someone on the prayer tree, anyone from the directory, or someone you are especially missing seeing or being in contact with. It could make their day as well as yours. The church directory has phone numbers, email addresses, and mailing addresses. Choose a name, choose a way of contact, and reach out. More than likely, that recipient will then pay it forward, and our family will be connected to even farther reaches than it has been. Until we meet again....



MISSION MOMENT



February is “HAVE A HEART” donation month

for the PNC and Jonnycake Center

Our Have a Heart Donation Drive for the PNC and Jonnycake Center will continue until Valentine's Day, Sunday, February 14. During this time we are urging members of the congregation to set collection tubs or bins outside their homes with signage to indicate that these tubs are for non-perishable donations that will be delivered by church members to the PNC and Jonnycake Center. Since it is difficult for many people to deliver their own donations to the PNC and Jonnycake Center during their regular collection times, these bins provide an easy alternative for donating. On Saturdays and Sundays our big, red bins will be placed outside the upper parking lot doors to the church all day, and they will be ready to accept all donations that you have collected in your personal bins. From there, our Mission folks will make the deliveries to the PNC and Jonnycake Center. To date we have delivered to the PNC twice and Jonnycake once. The red bins are clearly marked for the RI collections to go to Jonnycake and the CT collections to go to the PNC. Not able to put a bin in front of your house? Not a problem! Deliver your own donations to the church on Saturday or Sunday and place in the appropriate red bin. No Valentine Tea this year??? Come to the church on Valentine's Day anyway and help to fill the red bins with love. Although all donations are welcome, particular items are especially needed:

- Nutritious canned soups and stews
- Canned meats and fish
- All healthy breakfast foods
- Canned beans
- Coffee
- Hot chocolate

More from the Deacons:

Although services are not in person, there continues to be a Deacon of the week to receive news of any joys and concerns. Their name and number are listed in the weekly worship resource. A reminder that we are still receiving donations on the first Sunday of the month, or any time really, to our Deacons Fund. This fund has a dual purpose – to assist with some expenses for worship (like purchasing candles and Communion supplies) AND more importantly to provide financial assistance to folks in dire need in our congregation or the community. Thank you for your generous support recently and in the weeks and months ahead!!

If you have any questions on any of the above, please call Lynn Murray, Chair of Deacons at 401-539-7578.





LOOKING AHEAD

In March we are planning to focus on our Furry Friends with a collection of food, litter, and treats. April and May will see a return of our Annual Babies and Ladies Collection of basic necessities. Our summer collection of In the Middle School Supplies will return for June, July, and August. Again, thank-you so much for all of your support. Together we are making a difference.



Trustee Notes

Due to the ongoing Covid 19 Virus pandemic; 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.

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 want to thank all who have been able to give generously to financially support the church during this past year. We understand that some may be unemployed (hopefully only temporarily) or have had a reduction in their income. We actually had a very good year financially. As of the end of December we had received \$67,152 in pledges, \$3,304 (5%) less than the anticipated amount of \$70,456. Thanks to some very generous gifts to the church (\$15,605), our total income was \$114,815 only \$581 less than the budgeted amount of \$115,396. Thanks to the Paycheck Protection

Program loan which covered employee salaries during the Covid-19 Pandemic, our total expenses was only \$106,681, \$9,951 less than the budgeted amount of \$116,631. We ended the year with a surplus of \$8,135. This surplus will be used to offset 2021 expenses.

The Trustees have completed a proposed budget for 2021 which was accepted by the Church Council (in lieu of the annual Congregational Meeting). It is a challenging budget with an estimated income of \$99,587 and estimated expenses of \$115,998 with a deficit of \$15,411. The Congregation will be asked to approve the budget as soon as we are able to hold a Congregational meeting.



From the Financial Secretary

Greetings to all...

Here are a few notes for 2021.

Please continue to use the same Pledge Number (found on the upper right corner of pledge envelopes) for the new year. You can place that number in the Memo line of your check. Do not worry if you do not know your number or if you pledge electronically. We can look up your number/name very easily. If you usually use pledge envelopes, please know that we will hold these at church until such time that we can worship together again. Perhaps making a note on your calendar each time you send in a contribution will help you keep pledges relatively current.

The Assistant Financial Secretaries, Ed Stratton and Bill Street will continue to "process and categorize" the pledges and other monies that come into church and then make a deposit about every two weeks or so. I will then go in and record the pledges on the computer for your statements. Know that there could be delays between when you send in checks and when they are deposited.

Year-end financial statements have been mailed out. They reflect your 2020 donations. **I just found a news release from The IRS with the headline "Special \$300 tax deduction helps most people give to charity this year even if they don't itemize." Here is the link to the article:

<https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/special-300-tax-deduction-helps-most-people-give-to-charity-this-year-even-if-they-dont-itemize>

As always, please check your statements for accuracy and call or email me or the church office if you have any concerns or questions.

Change for 2021:

A wise member of our congregation suggested that our financial statements should reflect any donations we make through the church, such as for our Monthly Mission Drives. Such offerings, although they do not go directly to our church or the UCC's Five for Five mission collections, are still made in the name of our church. This was a very sound observation! Beginning in 2021, I will endeavor to record any monetary Mission donation you make on your financial statements. If you ever donate simply CASH, and wish to have the Mission donation recorded in your statement, please put it in an envelope with your name/mission destination on it and we will be sure to record it. You can also make Mission donations through the new on-line giving option on our church's website! All on-line donations will be recorded on your statement.

Blessings to all in the coming year and Thank You for your faithfulness and generosity to our church!
Jenny Brummund

TUTORIAL FOR MAKING AN ONLINE DONATION:

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.

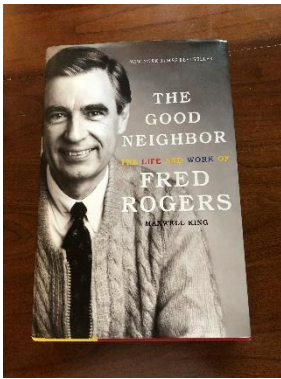


UCCW Pandemic Response Team

As reported earlier, the Pandemic Response Team has made the difficult decision to return to online worship 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 Thursday, February 4th. Any questions regarding the Pandemic Response Team should be directed to Bethany Foster at 401-539-4003.



A reminder from the Pollinator Team that our gardens may be sleeping but life stirs beneath the snow and winter landscape. Spring will soon be here!



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
February 25, 2021

Please contact Rev. Ruth for the Zoom link.

WHAT WE'RE READING:
*THE GOOD NEIGHBOR: The Life and
Work of Fred Rogers*
By Maxwell King



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.*



*Here's your chance to be part of our church's
plans for emerging from our Covid cocoon!
Rev. Ruth is looking for a team of 5-7 people to
help her plan an all church retreat sometime
after Easter. YOUR skills are needed! Please
call, text or email her to volunteer!*

Cell: 401-663-7934

Email: revruth1121@aol.com



Brighten Someone's Day...

Some of the folks in our UCCW family could use
some cheerful thoughts. Please send them a card
to let them know you are thinking of them and
keeping them in your prayers.

***Joy Liborio
375 Main Street
Apt. 1
Danielson, CT 06239***

***Eileen Rawnsley
c/o Mystic Healthcare
475 High Street
Mystic, CT 06355***

***Judy Stratton
71 School Street
Westerly, RI 02891***



**Annual Reports Are Due
As Soon As Possible**

We have postponed the Annual Meeting until sometime that we can all meet together, yet we would like to collect your reports as soon as possible while the particulars of 2020 are still fresh in your minds. All groups, Boards, organizations and Treasurers should submit an annual report. Please email yours to Carol at uccwesterly@gmail.com. Hard copies can be left on Carol's desk if email is not available to you. Thank you!!



February Birthdays:

- Dorothy Oehrle – 7
- Jimmy Cornell – 9
- Alice Dessauls – 12
- Katharine Tarasuk – 17
- Nick Comito – 20
- Gary Davis - 22

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 | 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

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