

The Beacon

December 2021



*“In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.
Luke 2:1*

These are the familiar words that begin the Nativity Story – the first Christmas story. Long before dancing snowmen and frolicking reindeer, long before Santa Claus and presents, long before crazy lighting decorations and neon Christmas trees, this story ushered in a whole new way of understanding God than had ever been known before. God’s own self, powerful and mighty, chose to come to the earth God created in the most vulnerable form possible – a fragile new born baby. Born to humble, poor parents no less. No wonder this story has enthralled Christians for millennia!

So much of what Christmas was always intended to be has been lost in the years since that ancient journey to Bethlehem. Over the centuries, all kinds of stuff has been layered on top of what should have been a simple, straightforward story. Buried under scores of artistic representations of every possible kind, we’ve literally lost sight of the baby in the manger. Even that precious babe has been misrepresented as having blue eyes, fair skin and blond hair – a genetic impossibility for a child with Semitic ancestry. And let’s not forget how music has also obscured the gentle

breathing of the exhausted mother and baby sleeping, surrounded by dozing stable critters and a doting dad. Instead we have to endure all sorts of craziness like “Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer” and “Santa Baby.” Really? What do either of these have to do with the peace on earth the angels at the manger promised? Don’t get me wrong, I enjoy these songs as much as the next person yet I still grieve the role they play in obscuring Baby Jesus from our sight and our hearing.

So, this Advent and Christmas season, I invite you to join me in slowing down this year, taking care to really watch for and listen to that original Christmas story whenever it becomes visible. Join us for Sunday worship, online or in-person or both! Brave the cold evening air to confront the challenges this season brings to folks who are hurting as we gather for our annual Blue Christmas service. Bring a piece of your own nativity or creche set to our Christmas Eve service so it can be blessed for your family celebrations at home.

Dear ones, there is so much more to Christmas than what we usually settle for. Give yourself a real gift this year and invest in that original Christmas story, the one whose very opening words remind us that the world Baby Jesus was born into is not so very different from the one we have to live in each day.

May the shining light and sweet love emanating from the newborn Babe in the Manger fill your lives and your hearts with healing, hope and joy this Christmas Season.

Your sister in Christ and companion on the journey,

Rev. Ruth

PS! Rev. Ruth’s First Thursday COMMUNITY OFFICE HOURS AT THE SAVOY have returned! Upcoming dates: Dec. 2 & Jan. 6

**BEST WISHES FOR A MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND THE HAPPIEST OF NEW YEARS**
From your UCCW Staff

Rev. Ruth Carol Dav Joann Heather



January 2, 2022 – 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!



Deacon Ministry

Diaconate Schedule

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

All Sunday morning worship services are now in-person AND

broadcast on Facebook Live at 9:45am.

Masks & Social Distancing required for everyone. Full vaccinations strongly recommended!

November 28 – 1st Sunday of Advent Worship
Lighting the candle of the PROPHETS & The Hanging of the Greens

December 5 – 2nd Sunday of Advent Worship with Communion
Lighting the candle of the SHEPHERDS

December 12 – 3rd Sunday of Advent Worship
Lighting the candle of MARY

Thursday, December 16 – Sanctuary “Blue Christmas” Service
@ 7pm – Quiet, reflective service for those struggling with the Christmas season. Join the Mindfulness Group for cider and conversation at 5pm!

December 19 – 4th Sunday of Advent Lessons & Carols
Worship Service and lighting the candle of JOSEPH

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

December 26 – A BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR JESUS!
A light-hearted celebration of Jesus’ birth

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone #</u>
12/5	Joann Spurley	401-714-8948
12/12	Lynn Murray	401-539-7578
12/19	Bethany Foster	401-539-4003
12/26	Ed Stratton	401-218-8548
1/2	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!



A different version of the Homeless Awareness Vigil will take place once again. More details below.

Prayer notebooks are back at each entrance if you wish to write down a prayer request.

Anyone interested in joining the Board of Deacons? Please speak to any of us for more information. In the past, there were term limits, but that is no longer the case. Feel free to join or replace us.

Bazaar:
Many thanks to all the bakers, makers, movers, creators, donators, setter-uppers and all others who have helped make our bazaars a success. Our flexibility has enabled us to alter plans weekly as the weather changes. There is a good chance we will at least match last year's income. There have been so many positive comments from our shoppers, many of whom have visited us multiple weeks.

Exploring Some Changes with The Chancel Flowers

In addition to assisting Rev. Ruth with all the special worship services during this Advent season, the Deacons are always considering ways to make our worship experiences as meaningful as possible. We have found that sometimes it's the smallest details that can make a huge difference!

One such detail has been the flowers in the vases flanking the altar each week. Some of you are probably aware that the quality of flowers we have been receiving each week has gone steadily downhill for about the past six months. In checking around for other possible florists to oversee this for us, we discovered that the cheapest price we could get two vases of flowers for would be \$50 per vase! We currently pay McQuades \$30 for two vases. Clearly that price is no longer sustainable.

So, after much careful conversation within Deacons and with folks who regularly order flowers for Sunday worship, we are proposing some changes for the Chancel Flowers beginning January 1. Please note this is on a trial basis to see how it works! No final decision has been made! Here is the proposed new Chancel Flowers system:

- If you would like to have fresh flowers in church one Sunday, you must first reserve the date (like now) on the Flower Calendar in Fellowship Hall. Kindly note you are also asked to plan to take the flowers at the end of the service.
- Then, you order the flowers you would like from the florist of your choice and pay for them directly. This allows you to control both the cost and the colors. You may bring them yourself on Sunday morning (arriving by 9:15am) OR you may make arrangements to have them delivered at a time convenient to church staff.
- During the spring, summer and fall months, you may also bring in your own fresh flowers from your gardens on a date you have reserved.
- On the weeks when no flowers will be present based on the Flower Chart,

the Deacons will have high quality silk floral arrangements for the vases.

So, that's the plan! Please speak with any Deacon to let us know what you think! Thanks!



JUST A REMINDER!

It's almost People Plan time for 2022!

That means it's time for you to consider how you will be involved in the life and ministry of our church in the year ahead. If you are currently serving on a Board or Committee, now is the time to consider on whether you want to continue to serve in that capacity or feel like making a change. All of our board and committee appointments are for one year so that you have the choice of deciding each year how you will serve. That we need your active support is beyond question. How you choose to offer it is completely up to you.

MISSION MOMENTS

Holiday Donation Drive Change



Well, we are nothing if not flexible! Our plan for our Holiday Donation Drive to collect money to purchase survival blankets is now put on hold until January because there is an urgent need in our very

own community. We received a plea from the Jonnycake Center for gift cards and monetary donations to help our neighbors in need. They are NOT requesting gifts or toys, although other agencies in town are. They are requesting gift cards to local stores, so that parents can experience the joy of purchasing gifts for their own children. Parents know exactly what their kiddos need/want and are aware of current sizes. We are suggesting cards to Walmart, CVS, Walgreens, Stop and Shop, or McQuade's. The cards to the drug stores and grocery stores will "free up" a family's resources to enable them to purchase gifts. There is a special box on the display table at the entrance to the sanctuary. Kindly deposit your gift cards and/or monetary donations there. A member of the Mission Board will deliver the week's donations every Monday, so that Jonnycake can distribute them as soon as possible.



We remain concerned about our local neighbors and can reassure you that we are still collecting donations of non-perishable food supplies for the PNC. They have supplied a list of the most needed foods: **canned meats and fish, canned soups (clam chowder, in particular), healthy cereals and oatmeal, canned fruit. Please try to find the easy open cans, if possible. Little cups of fruit are also great for school lunches.**

LOOKING AHEAD



In January and February we will be participating in a **disaster relief mission** called **Blanket the World with Love** sponsored by Church World Service. We will have the opportunity to purchase blankets, either lightweight or heavy weight, that will be sent through-out the United States and overseas. The blankets cost \$10 each, but you should feel free to donate whatever you can afford. Donations will be accepted in envelopes that will be supplied in church, through the mail, or on-line. You will be able to view the blankets on a display in Fellowship Hall after the holidays. For more information on the ways in which these blankets have been used, please visit: <https://cwsglobal.org/?s=blankets>.

PNC

The Trustees are working on the budget for 2022, so if you haven't already done so, please get your pledges in. Thank you for all who have already sent in your pledges. We are truly grateful for your support.



from your Mission Board



Trustee Notes



The Mindfulness Group
*A new small group ministry
of UCC Westerly*

We are pleased to report that all of our guests and visitors to the Bazaar were most cooperative with our masking requirement for the indoor portion of the Bazaar.

Our plans are to continue the masking requirement for Sunday morning worship and the special services during Advent. Social distancing is still strongly recommended. Individual group meetings held at the church are free to make their own determinations about whether to mask or not during their gathering.

Finally, with deep respect, we strongly urge everyone to be fully vaccinated. Thanks so much to everyone who is cooperating fully with masking and social distancing. Your support on these matters makes everything easier for us all. The Team continues to meet monthly to monitor and revise our worship protocols as changing circumstances warrant. Any questions regarding the Pandemic Response Team should be directed to Bethany Foster at 401-539-4003.

Our next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, January 11, 2022 @ 6:30pm on Zoom.



Christmas Frenzy a Problem???

You're not alone!

*Make some time to breathe at our
Blue Christmas Service*

7:00 on Thursday, December 16.

*Come early at 5:00pm for Mulled Cider,
Christmas Cookies and a calming
conversation.*

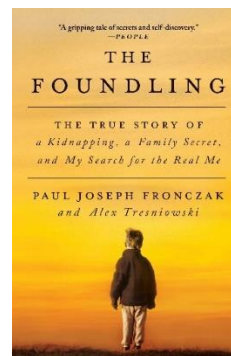
*An Invitation to Join us at
BOOKS*

OUR NEXT GATHERING:

*Wednesday, January 12, 2022 @
12:30pm*

*Join us for a pizza lunch!
Pizza, cold beverages and ???*

*IN PERSON AT
CHURCH!!!!*



WHAT WE'RE READING:

*THE FOUNDLING
By Paul Joseph Fronczak*

EVERYONE WELCOME!

Available to borrow through your local library or for purchase through your favorite book store. If you would like to borrow a copy from someone who has purchased it, kindly be in touch with the church office.



**DID YOU KNOW UCC WESTERLY
HAS A LENDING LIBRARY???**

We do and you will find in the Bell Courtyard Narthex some samples of the kinds of books for all ages and interests that we have for you to borrow! Check them over and if you find one you like, just fill out an index card with your name, the date and the title of the book and it is yours to read and return! Check out the Library at the end of the office corridor to see what else we have!



A reminder from the Pollinator Team to help your gardens have a good rest and still take care of pollinator insects who may be over-wintering in the stalks of your garden. Let sleeping critters rest!

Merry Christmas From the Pollinator Team!!!



*A Reminder...
The Grief Group
usually meets on Thursdays in the Parlor
at church. We had been meeting at 4pm
but with the time change and shorter days,
we are moving that time to 1pm.
Due to the Christmas holidays,
There will be only one gathering this
month on
DEC. 16 @ 1PM
NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!
Please speak with Rev. Ruth for more
information.*



**SAVE THE DATE!
SATURDAY, JANUARY 15 @ 6:30PM
A new take on the
Homeless Awareness Vigil**

This year it will be an actual candlelight vigil service with prayers, songs and reflections. Watch for more details in the Weekly Updates! Any questions, speak with Rev. Ruth anytime.



Brighten Someone's Day...

We don't see each other as often as we would like to these days. Here are a few suggestions of folks who might like to receive a card or note from you! Check out the newest Church Directory for more!

Charlotte Korean
11 North Drive, Ashaway, RI 02804

Martha Evans
7 Scot Circle, Charlestown, RI 02813

Anna Olszewski
1176 Bayshore Drive, Unit 104
Fort Pierce, FL 34949

Our thoughts and prayers are especially with Sandra Hoffman and her family as they mourn the loss of Bill Hoffman on November 23, 2021.

BEACON PRAYER LIST



Our church has a very active and vital prayer ministry which involves our Prayer Tree, requests for prayers during Sunday morning worship and

this invitation in the Beacon each month to pray for specific folks who are requesting prayers here. So, that means we have multiple active prayer lists at any given time! How wonderful is that! Below is this month's list for the Beacon Prayer List.

Madelyn Stratton	Ruth King Roes
Shirley M	Jennifer Woodhall
Bill Hoffman	Donald
Emma	Paula
Scott	Evan
Anna Michael	

If you would like anyone added or removed from this list for the next newsletter, please call the office. Thank you.



December Birthdays:

Mark Dessaulles – 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!!



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 9 am-1 pm and Thursday 9 am-3 pm

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