

The Beacon

JANUARY 2022



“Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access to this grace in which we stand...” Romans 5:1-2a

The new year, not to mention the month of January, is upon us! This fall has simply flown by and Christmas was one big blur, at least for me. But we made it. We're into a new year and hoping we have left behind many of the challenges and struggles of 2021. I admit, with the Covid omicron variant surging, it doesn't feel too much different from last year so far. Yet, we do have hope because we are in such a much better position than we were this time last year when vaccinations were a promise on the horizon, most everything including our worship services were online and we were mired in the election that just refused to recede into history. This year we have vaccines and boosters with most folks taking full advantage of the safety they offer. Schools are in session and, while we are on a temporary pause for in-person worship, we anticipate it will be short-lived.

Life has indeed gone on, carrying us through last winter and into spring. Our pollinator gardens bloomed gloriously throughout the spring and summer. Fall was spectacular and, once again, with decent weather for five Saturdays in a row, we pulled off yet another very successful Christmas bazaar season. Advent slipped quickly by and before we knew it, we were celebrating Christmas Eve services with an excellent on-line response and more in-person folks,

including more than a half dozen visitors, than we have seen in some time. It was truly a joy.

How is it that we made it through these last 12 months with all its joys and challenges? How did we manage to hang on through the roller coaster ride of ups and downs 2021 proved to be? As Paul states so beautifully in this text, it was faith that carried us through. Faith that somehow, all would be well as we just put one foot in front of the other. This plodding, forward movement brought us peace as we grounded ourselves in Jesus. Through Jesus we receive and celebrate the hope and joy of living each day through, as Paul puts it, “this grace in which we stand.”

“This grace in which we stand” is all we need to embark on the journey through another year in our wonderful, amazing and vital little church. One thing I have become absolutely convinced of these last few years is that we may be small but there are very few churches who are as vital in so many respects as we are. Our prayer ministries and worship life, our mission projects, our commitment to providing a strong community presence on environmental issues and socio-economic and racial injustice puts us on an entirely different playing field than churches in our community who may be larger than us when it comes to people and budgets, but their heart is no match for ours.

This is what gives me so much hope as we prepare to move forward into 2022 with joyful anticipation. The Homeless Awareness Vigil moved back to February will be revamped to be more inclusive of the entire community. And, thanks to the generous donation of the June and Bob Sicilian Art Collection, we will be able to realize a long held dream of mine for hosting an Art Show right here in our beautiful church sometime late spring or early summer. Of course, our many other programs like BOOKS, and the Mindfulness and Grief Groups will continue, and maybe even expand a smidge. Perhaps this will be the year we get a Bible Study up and running consistently! Literally, the sky's the limit! All we need to do is work to keep our feet solidly rooted in “this grace in which we stand”. Here's hoping you're with us every step of the way!

Your sister in faith,

Rev. Ruth



WORSHIP SCHEDULE
Our Sunday morning worship services are on a temporary pause for in-person but still broadcast on Facebook Live every Sunday at 9:45am.

Masks & Social Distancing required for everyone at in-person worship when it resumes. Full vaccinations strongly recommended!

During this season of "Epiphanytide," Rev. Ruth is offering a sermon series based in a few of the Star Words folks received on STAR SUNDAY, Jan. 2nd

- Sunday, January 9** "Love & Renewal"
- Sunday, January 16** "Faithfulness & Intelligence"
- Sunday, January 23** "Purpose & Excitement"
- Sunday, January 30** "Generosity & Service"
- Sunday, February 6** "Humor & Playfulness"

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

Diaconate Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone #</u>
1/9	Joann Spurley	401-714-8948
1/16	Lynn Murray	401-539-7578
1/23	Bethany Foster	401-539-4003
1/30	TBD	
2/1	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!



Dear Members and Friends of UCC Westerly, Once again I am literally speechless at your incredible generosity with the Christmas gifts presented to

me this year. Please know the gift cards will be put to good use in the months ahead and I am thrilled with the two unique and beautiful Christmas Creche sets included as part of the gift. You will see them next Advent for sure!

I am also deeply, deeply grateful for all the cards and notes I have received bearing Christmas greetings and especially those sent to me via email, text and postal mail following the death of my sister-in-law Lynn on Christmas Day. Your love and prayers were felt by myself and my entire family throughout that difficult week. Thank you for lifting us up when we needed that so much. I am truly blessed to be your pastor.

*Fondly,
 Rev. Ruth*



**CALL FOR THE 58th ANNUAL MEETING
 UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF WESTERLY
 UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

The Annual Meeting shall be held on January 23, 2022 at 10:45 in person in the sanctuary and also virtually via Zoom conference call. Reservations are required for those attending either meeting format. All are welcome to attend; only members of the church are able to vote.

The purpose of the meeting shall be to receive the yearly reports of Officers, Boards, Committees, Organizations and Departments; to elect officers; adopt the annual budget; set up plans for the new year; and vote on any other business that may come before the congregation.

The Treasurer's Report, duly audited, shall be presented.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Gray, Clerk



The Deacons continue to respond to the current COVID situation and have agreed to continue with communion as we have been doing. Discussion is underway for a different kind of Homelessness Vigil this year. Instead of an all-nighter, it will be a vigil service held outdoors. Stay tuned for more details. Also see the Beacon for an update on chancel flowers. You will still have the opportunity to donate and dedicate them, but due to declining quality, you will have the option of locating your own. We are in the process of creating silk arrangements as fill-ins. If you are talented in that way, feel free to create! Anyone is welcome to join the Board or to ask questions of any of us if interested.

The 5-week bazaar event was amazing! We set up, tore down, baked, created, adjusted when the weather changed, showed up each week to greet, work, count, and put away. Shoppers returned more than once, the comments heard were so appreciative and positive, and Santa even arrived on our last day! Our final total was about \$12,500! Amazing, when you consider the absence of the tea income. The decision has been made to downsize to 3 Saturdays next year to give ourselves a bit of a break. We will try to get more creative in advertising to get the word out more. Many thanks to all the hands that made it possible and such a success.

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



A huge thank-you to everyone who donated to our Holiday Donation Drive to benefit the clients of the Jonnycake Center of Westerly. Your generosity helped to provide many with the joy of the holidays.

January and February



During the first two months of 2022 we will be collecting non-perishable food and living closet supplies for the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center.

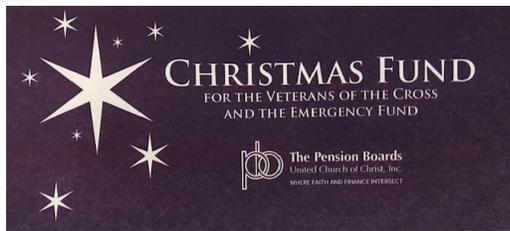
Most needed items are:

- Canned fish and meats
- Meat-based canned soups/stews
- Nut butters
- Bags or cans of dried beans and peas
- Whole-grain cereals
- Bags of plain rice and pasta
- Barley and quinoa
- Canned fruits in fruit juice or light syrup
- Canned vegetables
- Dish detergent
- Larger sized diapers
- Hygiene supplies
- Paper products, such as toilet tissue

Donations can be placed in the red buckets just inside the upper and bell courtyard doors and in the basket placed on the altar. If you can't make it to church, you can easily order food and hygiene items on Amazon and have them delivered directly to the PNC.

In next month's Beacon will outline our plans for the following months.

THE CHRISTMAS FUND



For many years now, our church has been very proud to participate in the United Church of Christ's Five for Five Collections.

Those collections are: The Church's Wider Mission, One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen The Church, Neighbors In Need, and The Christmas Fund. January is not too late to contribute to The Christmas Fund. You may contribute on-line or at church. If you choose to contribute at church, please be sure to note The Christmas Fund on your check or envelope.

The following information was taken from the United Church of Christ's web site: [The Christmas Fund 2021 Special Mission Offering \(Pension Boards UCC\) | UCC Resources](#)

"The past eighteen months have had a profound impact on UCC clergy and congregations--physically, emotionally, spiritually, and financially.

But because of gifts to the **Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross**, the people who have been affected the most have known they are not alone.

Last year, donations to the Christmas Fund helped pay the rent for low-income retired ministers and bridged the gap for one active minister's family when her husband lost his restaurant due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Christmas Fund gifts took care of the unexpected expense of a major car repair, helped a retired minister attend his brother's funeral, and assisted in paying for daunting medical expenses, prescriptions, and groceries.

Gifts to the Christmas Fund bring relief and hope to those who have dedicated their lives to serving our churches. By supporting the

Christmas Fund, you make a huge difference and bring great joy!

The Christmas Fund provides Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks for retirees and those facing unforeseen financial hardship.

Join with others in the United Church of Christ to bring good news and great joy to those who have who have given so much to our church."



Trustee Notes

Pledges continue to come in at a higher rate than expected. As of November, we have received \$62,619 in pledges. This is \$6,577 more than the \$56,042 that was budgeted. We wish to thank everyone for keeping up with their pledges during the year. Our total income through November was \$126,908. Total expenses through November were \$136,503. This leaves us with a deficit of \$9,595. This is primarily due to some badly needed repairs to the church building including the new roofs over the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall and replacement of the Cross window.

The Trustees are currently working on the 2022 budget. If you have not submitted you 2022 pledge, please do so as soon as possible. We will finalize the 2022 budget at our January meeting. The 2022 budget will be presented to the congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting on 23 January.

The Trustees have had the outer doors rekeyed. If you have an old key, it will no longer work. The bell courtyard door and upper parking lot door use the same key. The lower parking lot door is a separate key. Please contact Carol in the church office if you need a key. You will have to sign an agreement form to receive a key.

The next Trustee meeting will be on January 16 after Worship.



At an emergency meeting held at Rev. Ruth's request on Monday, January 3rd, the members of the Pandemic Response Team (PRT) met via Zoom to discuss a Covid exposure which occurred at the church during the Christmas Eve service when two members of the choir later tested positive for Covid. Both became ill but are recovering well. In an abundance of caution, the decision was made to move to virtual only worship on Sunday, January 2nd and then meet for further discussion. At that meeting, the decision was made to continue virtual only for two additional weeks: January 9 & 16. The PRT will decide at its scheduled meeting on January 11 whether or not to continue the in-person pause. The hope is that this will not be necessary.

While we are on pause for in-person worship, all other in-person meetings will move to Zoom only.

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.

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

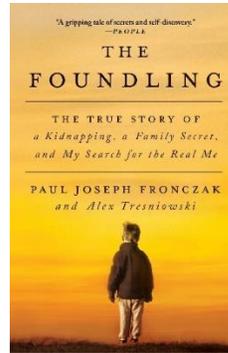


Next gathering:
Saturday, January 22nd
9:30-11:30am.

Kindly note we are hoping for in-person but we will be by Zoom if conditions warrant.

Our topic for this gathering will be remembering to breathe!

An Invitation to Join us at
BOOKS



OUR NEXT GATHERING:

Date TBD

*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!



CHANGE OF DATE!
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5TH @
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.



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!



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.
Meeting Date in January is the
27th.
***Kindly note the date is tentative since*
we are currently paused for in-person
worship and meetings.
NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!
Please speak with Rev. Ruth for more
information.



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!

Asael Hill
64 School Street, Apt. 2, Westerly, RI 02891

Bob MacVicar
4 Holmes Street, Westerly, RI 02891

Elvis & Ane Torres
63 Nantucket Drive, Mystic, CT 06355

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.



January Birthdays:

Judy Bartlett – 3
Peter Hainsworth – 5
Douglas Brummund – 9
Carolyn LeRoy – 11
Liz Walker – 15
Lindsay Walker – 18
Jamie Foster – 28
Anna Tarasuk - 31

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
Pawcatuck, CT 06379
Telephone: 860-599-1226
E-mail: uccwesterly@gmail.com
Website: www.uccwesterly.org
Office Hours: Monday 9 am-1 pm and Thursday 9 am-3 pm

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!