



The Beacon April 2022

“After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.”
Matthew 28:1

Thus begins the telling of the Easter story once again, the essential story of all Christians everywhere coming to us this year on April 17. The Empty Tomb of Easter morning is why Christians are Christians, or so we’ve been told. But is that true? Is believing that the tomb was indeed empty because Jesus had been raised from the dead essential to claiming the name Christian?

Well, that depends on who you talk to. Conservative evangelicals would absolutely say yes, this is a fact one must believe in order to be saved. Others have made lots of money selling books about all sorts of conspiracy theories explaining how Jesus didn’t really die that day so the tomb never held his dead body to begin with. It was all a plot to start a religion. Really?

One of our members asked me recently what I thought about this very question – was Jesus raised from the dead or not. I think my answer surprised her, and it may surprise you. Here it is: I don’t think it matters one way or the other. I don’t discount the resurrection and am perfectly comfortable accepting it as a “mystery” of the Christian faith. I feel no need to explain it away nor do I see belief in this one moment as critical to what makes me, or anyone else, a Christian. It just doesn’t matter. What is most important is that Jesus was a real person who came and changed the world just by teaching people to trust that, no matter what, God loves them. No matter what, God always wants the best for them. Jesus knew that the political and religious systems were corrupt and

he did not hesitate to speak out against them, time and time again. He knew that what God wanted for his beloved people was not the reality of their daily life and Jesus wanted the people to be quite clear that this sorry state of affairs was not ever God’s plan. Humans came up with the rampant injustice all on their own. And the leaders killed him for it.

That Jesus died for what he believed to be true about God and God’s beloved people is what I believe to be most important in the entire Easter story. Jesus was willing to pay the ultimate price for what he knew to be the work he was called to by the God he knew so well he called him “father.” His suffering was gruesome but the fact that he died was to make clear that sometimes we have to die for what we know to be true. Sometimes one life is not so important as the need to upend an entire system of injustice. Did Jesus die to atone for our sins? I think Jesus died because of human sins, the sins of arrogance and greed and total disregard for the well-being of others too much of time. I do not think Jesus’ suffering and death was needed to “justify” us with God because I do not believe God would demand such suffering from anyone, especially not God’s own son. That is a human concept originating with the Apostle Paul who was convinced humankind was irretrievably evil. Paul thought only such a blood sacrifice could possibly satisfy the God who was so disappointed in his creation.

Yes, the empty tomb is part of the story and yes, it matters to me but only because I believe something incredible happened that neither you nor I will ever completely understand or be able to explain. Through the resurrection you and I learn that death is never the final word for any of us. Death is not the end. Jesus taught us that and Jesus makes clear the path each of us is able to follow to find God. That’s why I believe the choice Jesus put before us is not whether or not to believe in the resurrection. The choice is whether or not to follow Jesus on the path that leads to the light, love and joy we can only find in God.

So, that’s what’s on my mind this Easter season. What’s on yours? I’d love to hear about it!

Your friend in Christ,
Rev. Ruth

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Our Sunday morning worship services
In person & on
Facebook Live
every Sunday at 9:45am.

**Note! Masks are now optional for fully vaccinated (2 shots plus booster) folks. Unvaccinated MUST wear masks at all times.*

Lent 5 – Sunday, April 3 Communion +
Jesus: Presence

Palm Sunday– Sunday, April 10
Palm Sunday Symbols Service

Maundy Thursday – Thursday, April 14
Tenebrae Service @ 7pm

Good Friday – Friday, April 15
Labyrinth Walk

Easter Sunday – Sunday, April 17
**Community Sunrise Service @
Misquamicut Beach – 6:30 am
Festival Service – 9:45 am

1st Sunday of Eastertide- Sunday, April 24
*Rev. Ruth will be off. Speaking in her
place will be Shannon Deperry of
Operation Fresh Start – New Beginnings,
a local nonprofit we are now helping out
with storage and work space! See details
on this later in this edition of the
BEACON.*

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>
4/3	Joann Spurley	401-714-8948
4/10	Bethany Foster	401-539-4003
4/17	Joann Spurley	401-714-8948
4/24	Claire Calabretta	860-574-5962

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!



First of all, many thanks for such generosity in response to the Deacon fund request for aid to Ukraine. Over \$750 was collected in just 2 Sundays! Thank you all.

Secondly, the Deacons welcome Christina Brummund to our board. Many thanks for your commitment, and we look forward to having you among us.

At the request of a church member, we will be singing, 'Let There Be Peace on Earth' as our hymn of benediction until the crisis abroad has ended.

Barbara Murano Scholarship:

It's that time again to submit applications for our annual Barbara Murano Scholarship. It is for post-secondary education or training programs and is open to any graduating high school senior, current college student, or adult who is a member of the church. This year, we would like applicants to respond in an essay to one of the following topics:

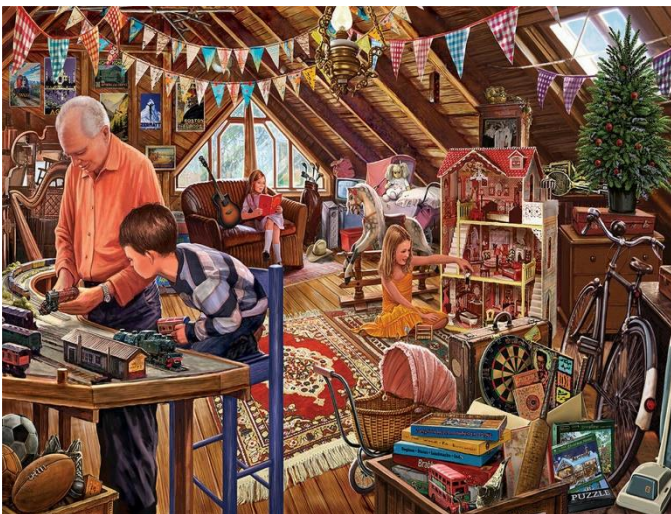
- Compare/contrast this past school year with the previous year in school.

- What have been the positives and negatives of your current school year?

We ask that your letter of application with the essay be received at the church in care of the Deacons by May 1st, so the board can review them at our May meeting. Scholarships will be presented on June 5th during worship, where you will have the opportunity to share your response.

We are currently working with Angelo at Stonington Pizza Palace regarding our Dine-to-Donate scholarship dinner. At last check, he was hoping to soon have enough staff to accommodate the crowd we always bring in.

Lynn Murray,
Deacon chairperson



ANNOUNCING ATTIC TREASURES!!!!

**Saturday, May 14
8am – 12pm**

Here's an incentive to do your spring cleaning: Donations of usable items will help ensure the success of this popular event. We will be having our Attic Sale on Saturday, May 14th from 8-12. We will be doing our fill-a-bag for \$5 sale, outdoors if possible.

We will need donations of all kinds, plus help that day to set up, man stations, then pack up. On Sunday, May 8th, help will be appreciated moving tables (mostly card tables) upstairs after worship. A sign-up sheet will be available soon.

MISSION MOMENTS - APRIL



The Missions Board convened on March 1 and took the following actions.

- The Board approved to receive the national UCC offering for the One Great Hour of Sharing on Sunday March 27th.
- A progress report regarding the Altar Avalanche Initiative continues having a positive response from the congregation. There was an announcement that donations would be received until Sunday March 27th. Volunteers packed the donated items and transported two carloads of foods to the PNC. Thanks for the assist especially Claire and Eileen for delivering the two carloads of stuff to the PNC!
- The Board decided to shuffle the Mission projects switching to Holy Joe's Café. The committee will prepare a display reflecting this change for display on Sunday April 1st. Donations supporting this project will be received throughout April and May.
- The project for June has yet to be determined. A discussion focused on supporting Operation Fresh Start. T.jastermsky@holtjoes.org
- Sandi Davis has volunteered to be the liaison between our church and Operation Fresh Start. She will be writing a separate article regarding the status of this initiative.
- The church will continue to support community teachers and students. School supplies will be received in July and August for distribution to both the Westerly and

Stonington Middle Schools. The Board will be contacting these schools to find out what supplies they will need.



Beginning on April 3 and continuing throughout the months of April & May, we will be collecting cash donations in support of
HOLY JOE'S CAFÉ



Holy Joe's Café began as a ministry of one of our sister church, The First Congregational Church of Wallingford, CT and has now grown into its own 501c3 organization. Quoting from their most recent press release on February 24, 2022:

Holy Joe's Café is seeing an urgent increase in the need for coffee and support for U.S. military chaplains in response to the Russia–Ukraine conflict. [Holy Joe's Café has supported U.S. military chaplains since its origin at a UCC church in Wallingford, CT in 2006.](#) The organization provides coffee to military chaplains to help them make connections with active-duty military personnel. The simple act of providing coffee to soldiers gives chaplains a comforting way to reach out to troops and often initiates conversations that might not have occurred in the regular daily routine, giving these troops a place to talk, share concerns, and get guidance that can help keep them mentally and spiritually healthier in their work.

Donations for Holy Joe's Café can be made by cash or check made payable to UCC Westerly with "Holy Joe's Café" noted in the Memo Line. Those donations can be left in the donation box just outside the sanctuary doors in the Bell Courtyard Narthex.

For any questions on the work of the Missions Board please speak with Peter Hainsworth at any time. Peter's cell is 401-243-3347.

UCC MONTHLY NIGHTS-OUT ARE BACK!!!

Stonington Pizza Palace
530 Stonington Rd. (Rt. 1) Stonington, CT
Wednesday, April 20
5:00--??

The Congregational Life Committee is happy to announce the return to our very popular UCC Nights Out, a fun "group" to which all of you belong!! Our promise to you: no business to be discussed, no budget to consider, and no workdays to schedule! Once every month (hopefully on the third Wednesday) we will be visiting one of our local restaurants or watering holes, just to hang out together and enjoy each other's company and some tasty food. These evenings grew in popularity before COVID ruined all of our fun, but now we are back in business!

Everyone in the church should be acquainted with the wonderful support that Stonington Pizza Palace has given us through the years, and it is our honor to have our first Night Out at one of our favorite haunts. Their menu is diverse, their libations are varied, the food is delicious, and Angelo and Agathi are wonderful hosts. There will be a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the hallway for this event, but you are free to attend even if you have forgotten to sign up or to decline if you just aren't in the mood for fun that night (although we hope that you come!). We just need an approximate number, so we know how many tables to grab when we get there.

Come early, arrive late, stay as long as you'd like (but they close at 9), bring a significant other or friend or come alone. This is planned to be a very unplanned, casual get-together! Hope to see you there!!

(For those of you who like to plan ahead, we will be heading to Vetrano's Restaurant in Westerly on May 18 and to Grey Sail Brewing on June 15. The sign-up sheets for those dinners will appear later.)

Can't wait to everyone again!



The Mission Board invites the entire congregation to join us in welcoming Operation Fresh Start—New Beginnings to our church. This recently formed non-profit organization will be housed in the middle room of the lower level of our church as part of our community outreach program. Operation Fresh Start was first imagined by Pawcatuck resident, Shannon DePerry, to help “foster children and adults who have aged out of the foster care system have a fresh start. By providing household items to set up apartments for the adults, backpacks full of items for the children, and a helping hand when needed, Operation Fresh Start serves our neighbors in southeastern Connecticut.” It has grown since its inception to help our community in many diverse ways.

Much like our Mission Board, Operation Fresh Start has monthly collection drives for needed items, such as diapers and wipes, welcome baskets filled with basic household supplies, toiletries, backpacks, pajamas, Christmas gifts, etc. These items are then given to local agencies for distribution or to specific individuals in need. The organization raises money to send needy local children to summer camp and to purchase playground equipment for underserved areas by accepting donations, selling flowers in the summer, having plant and artisan sales, etc. If Shannon hears of a need in the community for furniture or supplies, she puts out a plea for donations (usually through her Facebook page), and, invariably, the needed items are donated by someone in the community.

How can we help, you say? Every month we will give you an update in the Beacon of the activities sponsored by Operation Fresh Start. Please realize that these are donation drives sponsored by our new friends and will usually be different than our

own Mission donation drives. Our main focus is to provide Shannon with a secure location to store her donations and space in which to organize them, but we are also inviting you to participate in helping this very worthwhile organization. There will be special buckets next to our red Mission buckets by both entrances for donations. We ask that you NOT place items outside the room downstairs. The door to that room will be locked, and the room will not be accessible to members of the congregation. Note: The donations should be new and not used.

Want to learn more? Please spend some time reading about the wonderful work that Operation Fresh Start—New Beginnings does by going to their Facebook page [Operation Fresh Start- New beginnings | Facebook](#) or their web site [OPERATION FRESH START INC: NEW BEGINNINGS - Home](#). In addition, you will often see Shannon requesting various items on the Facebook Community Gifting page, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/606736606428762>.

Shannon has accepted our invitation to introduce herself and to explain her phenomenal work to the congregation. She will be delivering the morning message on Sunday, April 24. Please join the Mission Board in welcoming her to our church. Any more questions? Please feel free to contact Sandi Davis.



OPERATION FRESH START—NEW BEGINNINGS APRIL DONATION DRIVE

We have many young adults and families moving into their new houses/ apartments.

Would you like to help make their house a home?

We are collecting items for welcome baskets filled with all those items that make a house a home 🍌🍌🍌🍌🍌

Tall kitchen trash cans/ bags

Cleaning supplies

Dinnerware

Laundry baskets/ detergent

Brooms dust pans

Mops

ETC.

If you would like to donate, feel free to drop items off in the bins at the church or to email Sandi Davis for Operation Fresh Start's QR Code for their Walmart registry. Note: The donations should be new and not used.



Trustee Notes

Pledges through February were \$11,278, about .6% less than the estimate amount of \$11,746. Total income through February was \$13,100, \$5,926 less than the anticipated income of \$19,026. Expenses through February were \$17,694, \$1,909 less than anticipated expenses of \$19,603. We ended February with a deficit of \$4,594. We want to remind everyone to try to keep up with their pledges during the year.

A presentation of our investment portfolio was given to the Trustees by Patrick Connelly of PPG Wealth Management. The total value of our portfolio, which includes the Barbara Murano Scholarship, Broadfoot Endowment, Endowment, and the Westerly Housing, is currently \$916,151. Since its inception in 1996 with an investment of \$146,758 the portfolio has shown an annualized performance of 5.06%

The Trustees continue to search for a new sexton to replace Joann Spurley who retired on February 15. If anyone knows of anybody who may be interested in the part time sexton position to contact the church office.

Pastor Ruth gave a report on the progress of the Organ Committee. They hope to have a plan for funding the repairs by May. A Congregational Meeting will be called once the plan is finalized for approval by the congregation.

XC Media Design was selected to help design a new web site for the church. Carol and Rev. Ruth will be working with them on the design over the next several months.

The Trustees approved to allow Operation Fresh Start-New Beginnings to use the center room (Samuel Mills Room) on the lower level as storage and a place to assemble donations for their clientele. An agreement has been finalized and sent to Operations Fresh Start. Currently the agreement is awaiting their signature after which they will be issued keys to the lower parking door and the room. A new door knob was installed on the room and they will be issued a key and a key will be kept in the church office.

The Trustees approved to provide two youths with 20 hours of volunteer service this spring. This is being done through Stonington Youth Services. We can use them to do spring clean-up inside and outside the building but they need to be supervised at all times.

Kathy Tarasuk was elected as the New Chair of Trustees, replacing Gary Davis, who is retiring from the Board of Trustees.

If anyone would like to join the Board, please speak to Pastor Ruth or any member of the board.

A spring clean-up has been scheduled for Saturday, April 30th.

The next Trustees meeting will be held on April 19th at 6:30 p.m. in person and via Zoom.



The Pandemic Response Team wishes to thank everyone for their patience and support as we have worked to keep pace with ever changing Covid precautions. We are pleased to having been able to make the decision to masks optional for fully vaccinated (2 shots plus booster) individuals. Non-vaccinated persons must still mask. We have also been advised by the Ledge Light Health District folks that we can return to our usual food and beverage servings for fellowship time following worship. Volunteers will be needed to help with this! For any comments, questions or concerns with regard to the Pandemic, kindly speak with PRT Chairperson Bethany Foster at any time. You may reach her at 401-539-4003.



A WORD FROM THE POLLINATOR TEAM!

First, a reminder 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. Wait several weeks after the last freeze to clean up your yard and gardens!



Second, for those folks who have ordered Easter Flowers and do not wish to keep your bulbs, the Pollinator Team would gratefully accept them so they could be used to beautify the church lawn. Thank you!



Lastly, In addition to our Attic Sale scheduled for Saturday, May 14, the Pollinator Team will again be sponsoring a Plant Sale. Our inaugural venture into selling our green wares proved to be quite successful last year, so we are hoping to have even more plants to sell this year. The Pollinator Team has been planting seeds since the beginning of March, but we need all the green donations we can get!

As you clean out your gardens, please think of us! Do you have an abundance of herbs, perennials, thinned out bulbs or rhizomes? Pot them up in any pot you have available and drop them off at the church the week before the sale or even the morning of. Feel like starting some fast-growing seeds now? Go for it! You'd be surprised at what people are looking for. Last year we sold almost every green item that was in our area!

Perennials, veggies, flowers, bulbs, you name it, it sold!

We also would appreciate any donations of pots that you may have hiding in your garage or basement. You can drop those off at the church any Sunday between now and the sale. There will be a box at the door in the upper parking lot narthex to receive them. Questions? Feel free to contact any of the members of the Pollinator Team: Christina Brummond, Claire Calabretta, Shirin Platt, or Sandi Davis.

Thanks so much! Now, get those hands dirty!!!



The Grief Group

Of UCC Westerly is open to anyone in the church or community who is struggling to live with the loss of a loved one. Our purpose is just to offer a place to talk with others going through the same thing. You are free to talk or just listen. Often resources to share are available.



*Our April gatherings:
WEDNESDAY, April 6 & 20
@ 2pm in the Parlor
NEW MEMBERS ALWAYS WELCOME!
Please speak with Rev. Ruth for more information.*



An Invitation to Join us at BOOKS

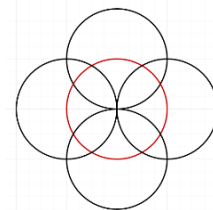
OUR NEXT GATHERING:

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20 @ 12:30pm
Bring your own lunch and drink but
Dessert provided!!!
IN PERSON AT CHURCH!!!!

WHAT WE'RE READING:

Your choice of anything by
AGATHA CHRISTIE
featuring Miss Marple!

EVERYONE WELCOME!



SABBATH CIRCLES

AT HOME SUNDAY SCHOOL materials are posted @ UCC Westerly on Facebook every Saturday evening! These materials were written by Rev. Ruth uniquely for this church and are based on the "parents as first teachers of the faith" model developed originally by William Willimon. The materials focus on the Scripture lesson for worship on the Sunday following. For any questions on Sabbath Circles, please 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!

The Stratton Family
71 School Street, Westerly, RI 02891

The Sugar Family
81 Elmridge Road, Pawcatuck, CT 06379

James Stott
293 Woodville Rd., Ashaway, RI



April Birthdays:

Pam DelPozo-Waldron – 6
George Gray – 26
Emily Sineiro – 28

April Anniversaries:

Rev. Ruth & Peter Hainsworth – April 23
Douglas & Jenny Brummund – April 25

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



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
Donald	Emma
Scott	Evan
Anna Michael	Paula

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



OUR STAFF

Pastor: The Rev. Ruth Shilling Hainsworth
Organist: David Cranmer
Secretary: Carol Lindsay
Web Master: Heather Stratton

CHURCH OFFICE SPECIFICS

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Pawcatuck, CT 06379

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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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