



The Beacon

January 2023

*"I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert." Isaiah 43: 19b*

Embarking on the life journey which begins afresh each January 1 can feel a lot like hiking into a forest. The path is inviting, the scenery rich and yet what we will find when we make our way around that first corner, or down that first hill remains out of sight. We are hoping against hope everything will line up for the new year to be as wonderful as we want it, need it, to be. But, at the same time, we're realistic enough to accept that the new year will be filled with joys and challenges. That's just the way life is.

This is why I cannot fathom attempting to make the journey through life each day without my faith to ground me. I turn to God when I feel overwhelmed by the possibilities as well as by the problems. I count on Jesus to accompany me through the days, walking with me even when I forget he's there. I rely on the Holy Spirit to keep me energized and creative as the challenges of ministry in particular and life in general come at me, wave after wave. In other words, dear ones, my faith is my life. It is the flashlight that illuminates my next step when I can't see the way myself. It is the sustenance I need when I am too tired to function. I am indeed richly blessed by this faith that frames my life and work.

As I preach and lead worship, you get glimpses of my faith and my prayer life. You can tell, I hope, that I try my best to walk with Jesus each and every day. Admittedly, some days I do better than others! Also, by now, you have a sense of how important the Bible is to me. Indeed, Scripture provides the framework for my life as a follower of Jesus and my work as your pastor.

So, as yet another way for me to share my faith with you even as I encourage you to do the work needed to grow your own faith, I would like to invite any of you who might be interested to join me in a writing project I am working on this year. My goal is to write a devotional book which will offer folks the opportunity to pray their way through the Bible, beginning to end. What I need your help with is identifying Scripture verses to include. I already have several dozen identified, but I would like many more. That's where you come in. I would very much like it if you could write me a note or send me an email with a list of your favorite Bible verses and a very brief description of why they are important to you.

Sound like an interesting project? I hope so! I have no timeline in mind but I know from previous experience, writing tends to languish if left to its own devices so the sooner you can get those favorite verses to me, the better! Who knows? Perhaps we can publish this devotional I am envisioning as a fundraiser for the organ or a mission project or who knows what! But, first things first – appropriate as the New Year begins. Send me the Scripture verses and we'll see what develops! Until then I remain,

Your sister in faith,
Rev. Ruth



WORSHIP SCHEDULE

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

Please mask if you are feeling unwell or are unvaccinated.

Celebrating the Simple Together

January 1 – Christmastide Sunday with Communion

The “Back to Basics” Sermon series

January 8 – Our Epiphany Celebration featuring Star Words
and a special message on Baptism of Christ Sunday

January 15 – What About Racism?

Text: Acts 10:25-48

January 22 – What About War?

Text: Matthew 24:4-14

January 29 – What About the Church?

Text: Ephesians 4:11-16

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>
1/1	Ed Stratton	401-218-8548

1/8	Christina Brummund	860-599-1719
1/15	Joann Spurley	401-714-8948
1/22	Bethany Foster	401-539-4003
1/29	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!



The Deacons still continue to have updated discussions regarding communion protocols. Feedback & suggestions are welcome any time. We also urge anyone who is considering joining the Board of Deacons to speak to any of us with questions. Most of us have been on the board for years & would welcome new members. We appreciate the participation on Lesson & Carols Sunday, as well as the planning Pastor Ruth put into planning for the Advent season. Happy New Year to all!

Lynn Murray,
Deacon chairperson



CALL FOR THE 59th ANNUAL MEETING
UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF WESTERLY
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Annual Meeting shall be held on January 29, 2023 immediately following worship.

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

A Reminder: if you are someone who will be submitting an Annual Report, the deadline is January 15th. Electronic Submissions preferred.



PLAN NOW TO JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL MEETING BRUNCH!

Sunday, January 29, 2023
Immediately following the Annual Meeting.

A sign-up sheet will be up this coming Sunday! Plan now to come because our Brunches are AWESOME!!!



Trustee Notes

Pledges through November were \$63,939, \$666 less than the anticipated amount of \$64,605. Total income through November was \$111,351.

Expenses for November were \$124,478, \$16,861 more than the anticipated expenses of \$107,617. Thanks to everyone who has sent in their pledge for the upcoming year!

If you are interested in the church property and its financial affairs then the Board of Trustees is the place for you! Please speak to Pastor Ruth or any member of the board (Kathy Tarasuk, Dwayne Spurley, Melissa Stratton, Bill Street, or John Blake)

The next Trustees meeting will be held on January 17th at 6:30 p.m.



MISSION MOMENTS

January

Our Missions Board has not met since before Thanksgiving but we will be meeting shortly to plan our Missions projects for the first half of this year.

Until then a reminder that our efforts to support the food pantry at the PNC are ongoing as visits to local food pantries are dramatically increasing. So, in January, please continuing bringing your donations of cereals, canned vegetables and canned meats. Donations can be left at any time in the basket(s) under the altar.

Thank you! Your Missions Board



THANK-YOU!



Operation Fresh Start—New Beginnings was able to fulfill the Christmas wishes of at least 160 local people in need this holiday season. Donations arrived from every corner of our neck of the woods, including toys donated by you, members of UCC Westerly. Local restaurants and businesses adopted entire families and fulfilled specific requests of adults and children alike. Shannon was also able to contribute an abundance of toys to the Stonington Police Department's Fill-a-Cruiser event, Stonington Human Services, Groton Human Services, and other agencies working to make Christmas happen for those in need on both sides of the river. A special thanks goes out to those elves who helped sort out all of those gifts and then deliver them to the families before Christmas. Our Church was definitely transformed into Santa's workshop. Add to those gifts, over 300 pairs of pajamas were donated during the November pajama drive. Every child had new jammies for Christmas. Just amazing!

JANUARY DONATION DRIVE



Not much else needs to be said! Kids, adults, girls, boys—everyone needs new undies, and these are rarely supplied by local agencies. No need to go to Victoria's Secret! Just plain, basic, serviceable undies will do!!

FEBRUARY DONATION DRIVE



Diaper
and
Wipes
Drive

**A cause you can
really get behind.**



In February we will be sharing Valentine love with babies by collecting diapers and scent free baby wipes. Please, though, only diapers size three or larger because OFSNB already has an abundance of those smaller diapers. Just remember that little ones grow into bigger ones rather quickly, so the smaller sizes are not needed for very long!



From the Financial Secretary "Looking Back and Looking Forward: Pledge Notes"

Folks found this information helpful, so we are providing it again!

As Financial Secretary, I manage and record our pledges throughout the year, with the very able assistance of our Assistant Financial Secretaries: Ed Stratton, Bill Street, and Michele Mitchell. Over the last several years, methods of submitting pledges have changed, primarily due to COVID. During the pandemic, we could not attend church, so we mailed in our pledges and started an electronic donation method, via our church's website. Even though we have returned to in-person worship services, many of us prefer to continue pledging with these newer options. Others simply give one annual amount (or semi-annually, etc.). In the above cases, pledge envelopes may not be needed. They are, however, a convenient reminder for people who give more incrementally during the year.

I just want to give a reminder that there are some specific donations that traditionally have been included in pledge envelope boxes. They are also options in the electronic method. One is simply an option to make a special donation for holy holidays and seasons, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, Lent and Advent. Some members even donate to mark days that are personally meaningful to them...birthdays of a departed loved one, wedding anniversaries, etc. Holiday donations are your extra gift to the church.

We still include an envelope to defray the cost of our newsletter, "The Beacon". Most of us now

receive it electronically, but a good portion of our members are homebound, and/or elderly and receive "The Beacon" through the mail. Your Beacon Offering helps pay for postage, paper, copy machine supplies and maintenance, as well as our Secretary Carol's expertise to create and disseminate both the electronic and hard copies. Consider including the suggested Beacon Offering of \$12 each year.

The last item included in envelope boxes is called "Conference Dues." Newer members may benefit from further explanation. I asked Reverend Ruth to provide some information about the Dues Donation. I paraphrase her words...

Our church is part of the larger denomination called the "United Church of Christ," a national denomination, broken up into regional sections called Conferences. We are now a part of the Southern New England Conference, which encompasses all UCC churches in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. The Conference

is the way we and cooperate fellow churches various clergy



primary connect with our in ways: training,

educational opportunities for all ages, and fellowship. When churches are in need of a pastor, the Conference helps in the Search and Call process; additionally, it helps prospective pastors prepare for ministry. The Conference is a source of information which is specific to local churches. Each UCC church supports the work of the Conference and the national denominational affiliation by sharing a percentage of its budget with the Conference. We have found it helpful to request this percentage as \$18 per member "Dues." In turn, our Treasurer George Gray submits one check to the Conference, which includes all our members. Paying your Conference Dues enables our church to allocate less of its own operating budget toward the necessary and beneficial expenses of the Conference. Consider including your \$18 Conference Dues with any donation!

"Looking Ahead," you may want to set aside these special donations for 2023! In order for us to accurately allocate your donations, please label either your check Memo, envelope, or include a slip of paper stating your donation's destination, such as: Pledge, Conference Dues, Beacon, Holiday

Offering, etc. These can always be combined into just one check!

If you have not yet turned in your Pledge Form, you can call the office to ask for one. Even if you pledge electronically, as knowing pledge income for the 2023 budget is very helpful.

Thank you, as always, for your generosity to our church and its missions.
Respectfully submitted,
Jenny Brummund

An Invitation to Join us at BOOKS

A group of folks who love to read, talk about what we read or just talk...

OUR NEXT GATHERING:

Wednesday, January 11, 2023 @ 12:30pm

Join us for a BYO Lunch & Beverage

DESSERT PROVIDED!!

IN PERSON AT CHURCH!!!!!!

WHAT WE'RE READING:

WISH YOU WERE HERE

By Jodi Picoult

EVERYONE WELCOME!

This book is available to borrow through your local library or for purchase through your favorite bookstore.

BOOKS is an on-going discussion group ministry of UCC
Westerly.

Please speak with Rev. Ruth for any questions.

A WORD FROM THE POLLINATOR TEAM!



A reminder that your gardens and yard are "sleeping" right now but they still provide valuable food for the many critters in your area! Look for the beauty of nature all year long, especially in your own back yard!



The Grief Group

Will be meeting twice in January:

Wednesdays

January 11 & 25

@ 2pm in the Parlor.

This group is for anyone struggling with life in the midst of loss of a loved one, a job, a change of life status never imagined. Please speak with Rev. Ruth for more details.

The Pandemic Response Team wishes to let everyone know they are still monitoring the situation and will continue to advise church leadership as we move forward through this "post pandemic" time. 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.



Our newly redesigned website is live!
Check it out at www.uccwesterly.org!



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! This month we are featuring our newest members!

Heidi and Paul Grillo
14 Meadow Ridge Road, Westerly, RI 02891

Michelle MacDonald
114 Granite Street, Unit 308,
Westerly, RI 02891



Bill & Carol Budnick
332 Burdickville Rd., Charlestown,
RI 02813

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

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
Sexton: Ed Curtin

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; 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!



January Birthdays:

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!!

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