



The Beacon **December 2023**

“But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.” Luke 2:19

How is it possible that another year has gone by and we are once again celebrating the beginning of a new year in the church? Many of us forget that Advent is, in fact, the beginning of the church or liturgical year, because it focuses on the impending birth, and then the birth itself, of God’s Son Jesus in the brief season of Christmastide. It makes sense that this celebration of the birth of the Christ Child is a time of new beginnings, not just in the church, but everywhere in our lives. But, I wonder, how open are we to this notion of new beginnings for ourselves? How open are we to inviting God into our lives in a more direct and personal way? That is the question for us to be pondering this time of year, but one which too often receives short shrift in our way too busy lives.

I have always loved the stories of Christ’s birth, even when I didn’t get to sing the solo at the Christmas pageant in my little Presbyterian church when I was 12. Even when I was so pregnant and uncomfortable the year Jack was born, not even realizing I was in labor as I participated in leading 3 Christmas Eve services that year. Even as we picked these beloved stories apart in Harvard Divinity School. For me, these stories of Advent and Christmas are simple and magical. They invite us to set aside our cynical, anxious thoughts so we can fill our minds and hearts with the love of God overflowing for us as God’s incarnation in the form of a vulnerable newborn baby is revealed.

That’s why this year I invite you to take Mary’s advice and example of thoughtfulness before God as your own this holiday season. Dare to approach

all these stories of that first Christmas with humility, treasuring all the words and pondering them in your hearts. Dare to imagine yourself kneeling at the manger and marveling at the tiny miracle before you. Dare to believe, to trust that God’s love for you can and is that real. This is truly what Christmas is all about. Nothing more and nothing less, despite what the world might want you to believe. Merry Christmas.

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.

December 3 – Advent 2 – PEACE

Communion & Hanging of the Greens

December 10 – Advent 3 – LOVE

December 17 – Advent 4 – JOY

Lessons & Carols

Wednesday, December 20 @ 12 noon – Blue Christmas

Prayer Service

December 24 – Christmas Eve Service 4pm**

December 31 – Blessing of the New Year Service 9:45 am

**** Remember to bring your creche piece home for a blessing and your bells to help welcome the Baby Jesus! AND invite a friend or family member to come with you on Christmas Eve!! Let’s fill our sanctuary with the blessings of the newborn Christ Child!**

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



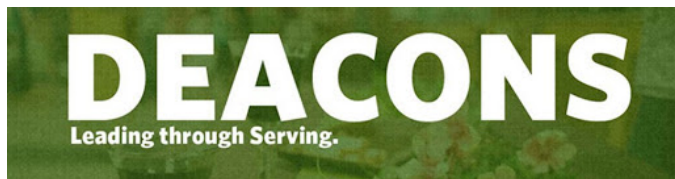
Diaconate Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone #</u>
12/3	Allana Allik	860-599-5212
12/10	Christina Brummund	860-599-1719
12/17	Joann Spurley	401-714-8948
12/24	Lynn Murray	401-539-7578
12/31	Allana Allik	860-599-5212

Please know you can call any Deacon 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!

Prayer Requests Always Welcome!

As many of you know, we have had an active prayer tree for quite some time. This is a way for prayers to go out quickly when they are requested. We have both phone branches, and an email group. If you would like to be put on the tree, or to withdraw your name, please let any of the Deacons know.



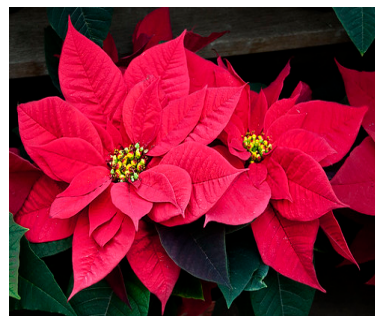
The Deacons & Pastor Ruth have agreed to make Christmas Eve convenient for all by having one service at 4 pm. This is because Christmas Eve is on a Sunday, and we respect

plans that folks may have, including being on the roads to visit family. It has been nice to see folks attend worship in person, and we hope to see more as the Christmas season goes on. As always, if anyone is interested in joining the board, please speak to any of the current deacons.

Many thanks to all who took part in the bazaar in any way, from baking, setting up, counting funds, escorting customers and their goods to their cars, and all the many tasks that make it such a success. So many guests spoke not only about our products, but also how welcomed they felt. It all contributes to our success!

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn Murray, Deacon chair

REMINDER!! Order deadline for poinsettias for Christmas Eve is December 8!!!



Yes, it's that time of the year again! We are taking Poinsettia orders for adornment of our Christmas Eve Service in our lovely sanctuary. The price is \$8.99 for one, \$12.99 for 2 with your choice of Red, White or Pink. Please fill out the order forms provided in the sanctuary, or attached to the Order of Worship and get them back to us no later than December 8th. Any questions, please contact Carol.



Trustee Notes

Pledges for October were \$7068, \$1002 more than the anticipated pledge amount of \$6,066. Total income for October was \$22,687. Total expenses for October were \$25,064. Thank you to everyone who has already pledged for next year. This is a big help to the trustees as they begin to develop the budget for next year! The trustees would like to remind everyone to be mindful of turning off lights, locking doors and putting the heat back and please speak with any trustee if you see something that needs attention. Thank you!



DECEMBER MISSION PROJECT and OPERATION FRESH START



We are blessed this Christmas season to be supporting Operation Fresh Start by adopting a needy family in our community.

Our family consists of three children, aged 5 yr., 3yr., and 18 months, and their mom and dad. Their needs and wishes are written on gift tags that are hanging on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall. Please take as many tags as you may wish to fulfill and do the following:

Purchase the gifts suggested on the gift tag(s).

Return the gift(s) to the church, **unwrapped**, unless it is for a parent, and **tape the tag to the gift** by **Tuesday, December 14**.

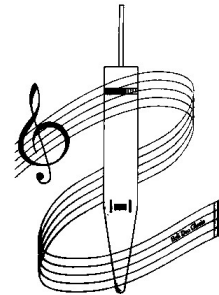
It would also be great to include a roll of gift wrap and tape with your gift so the families can have the supplies to wrap the gifts for their children. If you purchased a gift for a parent, though, please wrap

it and attach the gift tag, so the parent can be surprised on Christmas morning!

Time is of the essence, though, so please heed the deadline for returning your gifts. Again, the deadline is **Tuesday, December 14!**



Let's fill up the space under our sanctuary Christmas tree with love for others in our neighborhood.



Organ Fund Update

Foley-Baker completed its work on our Wick's organ in mid-November, and finished with a tuning. There are a few other smaller things that could be repaired in the future; perhaps the Organ Committee can meet soon to go over a long term plan to maintain the organ.

The committee continues fund-raising. Janet Allen's granddaughter Brittany has once again created ceramic Christmas ornaments, which were on sale at the bazaars, and will continue to be on sale after church for a week or two in December. Martha Evans has kindly agreed to donate the bazaar proceeds of her beautiful hand-painted notecards to the Organ Fund. Thank you both! The committee plans to have at least one fund-raising event a year to pay back the Sicilian's generous bequest to the Endowment Fund and/or rebuild the Organ Maintenance Fund. As of now, about \$37,750 has been raised (including a previous balance from a long ago donation by choir member Lois Ledbetter). We plan to host another Card and Game Party in 2024. Watch for further details!

Most importantly, we thank all of our UCC members and Friends for their generous donations in the past couple of years!! Future donations are always welcome, simply

mark your check memo accordingly. This repair seemed like a huge challenge when we first heard about it; however, I think our humble church certainly rallied its talents, time, and ingenuity to raise a lot of money in a short time...not to forget the fortuitous gift from our faithful friends, the Sicilians! So many blessings to be thankful for!

For the Organ Committee,
Jenny Brummund



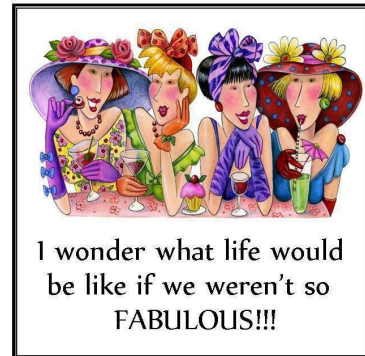
UPDATES FROM CONGREGATIONAL LIFE!!

We are very excited to announce that our own Erin Blake will be performing in this year's Christmas offering at the Granite Theater in Westerly which is *Miracle on 34th Street*. We had hoped to get a group from the church to go together but we were too slow and the matinees all sold out! That means the best way to get tickets is on your own directly with the Granite Theater for the date and time that works best for you. The show will run December 1-17 on Thursdays-Saturdays at 7:30pm. Erin will be playing the role of Finley and Sharon's Parent. Provided below is a link to learn more about the show and to purchase tickets. It would be a pleasure to have you all there to see it. 😊

Link for Show Tickets and

Description: [https://](https://www.granitetheatre.org/miracle-on-34th-street)

www.granitetheatre.org/miracle-on-34th-street

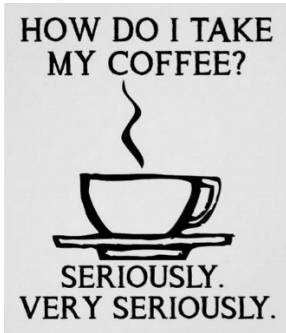


ANNOUNCING

a new group for the ladies of UCC Westerly...
UCCW LADIES WHO LUNCH

This is a new fellowship group for the ladies of our church, members and friends, old, young and in-between, single and spoken for to meet once a month for lunch, conversation and generally frivolity. **NO AGENDA FOR THIS GROUP OTHER THAN FUN!** Sometimes we will eat out in restaurants (each person orders off the menu and pays their own bill) and other times we will gather in someone's home for a potluck lunch.

FIRST GATHERING is planned for
Wednesday, December 20 @ 12:45pm
VETRANO'S in Westerly
RSVP to Rev. Ruth by Monday, Dec. 18
HOPE TO SEE YOU THEN!!!



Rev. Ruth's Community Office Hours will return after the first of the year. Location and times TBA. Thank you for your patience!

Join us for a BYO Lunch & Beverage
DESSERT PROVIDED!!

WHAT WE'RE READING:

THE SALT PATH By Raynor Winn



EVERYONE WELCOME!

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

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.



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 24, 2024 @
12:30pm

The Sunshine Cards Ministry is Updating their Birthday and Anniversary lists. If you are unsure if we have your birthday/anniversary on record please contact Carol in the office.

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!

Linda & Ernie Evans
312 Pequot Trail, Pawcatuck, CT 06379

Robert MacVicar
4 Holmes Street, Westerly, RI 02891

Lisa Ornberg
5 Wayland Street, Bradford, RI 02008

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!



December Birthdays:

Mark Dessauls – 20

Jack Hainsworth – 26

Trina Torres - 29

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

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**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND THE
HAPPIEST OF NEW YEAR'S!**

Love,

Rev. Ruth, Dav, & Carol



OUR STAFF

Pastor: The Rev. Ruth Shilling Hainsworth

Organist & Choirs Director: David Cranmer

Office Administrator: Carol Lindsay

CHURCH OFFICE SPECIFICS