



The Beacon **March 2024**

"For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength."
1 Corinthians 1:25

Paul's comments in this letter to the church in Corinth are among some of the most pointed, and poignant, of the Scriptures. In this particular section, he is reflecting on how the rest of the world regards God and Jesus, especially Jesus' death on the cross, as foolishness. I've had that conversation with more than a few people in recent years and I get why. Too many people have been badly wounded by the institutional church. Too much evil has been undertaken in the name of Jesus. Too little credence has been given to the simple message of Jesus in the Gospels, that our call as Christians is simply to love God and love the other as ourselves.

Often, I hear or read the news about the latest nonsense being spouted in the name of God – like the recent Alabama Court decision putting IVF and all sorts of fertility treatments in doubt. And I just do not understand the arrogance in reasoning behind it. It seems to me that the folks making these pronouncements are so convinced that they are right and all the rest of us who gather in churches every Sunday, who pray and read Scripture and gather in fellowship – that we are all completely wrong.

The truth is, dear ones, this is the most grievous sin – the sin of arrogance, the sin of daring to claim you, and you alone know the mind of God. Did you know this was the sin Moses' committed and for which he was denied entry into the promised land? It is, as recounted in Numbers 21. This is the story of a time when the Israelites wandering in the desert with Moses complained about being thirsty. So God gave Moses very specific instructions about how to provide water by hitting his staff against the rocks. Moses did as God

told him, except he hit the rock twice instead of just once. God still saved the people with water, but he punished Moses for taking it upon himself to do something other than what God told him to do. Seems awfully petty of God, doesn't it. Scholars disagree on the real meaning of this text for obvious reasons. For our purposes in this moment as March begins and Holy Week is waiting, I think it's a perfect reminder that sometimes it's just way too easy to slip away from what God intends and replace it with what we want. That, dear ones, is sin. Lent is the time to acknowledge our sin, ask for forgiveness and move forward in hope.

May we open our minds and our hearts as Holy Week approaches to see the places in our lives where we fall short of God's hopes and plans for us.

Yours in faith,
Rev. Ruth



WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Lent – Holy Week & Easter

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

Lenten theme this year:
How do we understand sin?

*Sunday, March 10 – Wiser than Human
Wisdom
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25*

*Sunday, March 17 – Cheap Grace
Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10*

**Sunday, March 24 – PALM SUNDAY
SYMBOLS SERVICE*

**Thursday, March 28 – Maundy Thursday
Tenebrae Service*

*Friday, March 29 – Good Friday Vigil at the
Labyrinth*

*Sunday, March 31 @ 6:15 am – Sunrise
Service – Stonington Point in the Boro*

*Sunday, March 31 @ 9:45am – Festival
Easter Service in our sanctuary*

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

**Sign up sheets for Readers for these services will be posted beginning Sunday, March 10!*



Diaconate Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Telephone #</u>
3/10	Lynn Murray	401-539-7578
3/17	Christina Brummund	860-599-1719
	3/24	TBD
	3/31	TBD

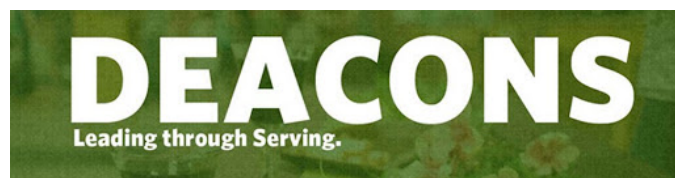


Please know you can call any Deacon at any time with your joys, concerns, and prayer requests. Your church family cares about you all the time, not just when you're in the building!

Watch the Weekly Updates for ordering info on Easter flowers!

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.



NEWS FROM THE DEACONS

The Deacons have been in conversation with Gary Davis about the new placement of the wooden cross that used to be in the cross window before the window was replaced. It is temporarily next to the Deacon chair in the sanctuary. Please let Gary or any of the Deacons know what you think of that location, or any recommendations you may have. Thank you to Gary for taking on this project. We have also discussed how to replace the sign by the road that tells our worship time. One side blew away during one of the wind storms, and we'd like ideas on how to move forward with something more durable and visible. We'd love input on this as well. We appreciate Pastor Ruth's decision to have the service virtually on that snowy Sunday. With amounts differing from town to town, it was the best way to keep everyone safe. Hopefully we won't have any more severe weather, but if we do, be sure to check your email for any updates so you don't miss out or try to drive in bad weather.

Lynn
Deacon



Murray
chair

Trustee Notes

Pledges for January 2024 were \$7277.50 which is \$1767.50 more than the anticipated pledge amount of \$5510. Total

income for January was \$20,018.89. Total expenses for January were 17,476.23. The Trustees are pleased to welcome back two community support groups to our building! As always please speak with any Trustee if you see something that needs attention. Thank you!



MISSIONS NEWS UPDATE!

Here's where the calendar of Missions Projects for the church stands for 2024. What we do does make a difference!

March - ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING (A UCC Five for Five offerings) in support of refugee ministries, disaster ministries and development ministries of the UCC.

- We are also conducting a donation drive for the PNC specifically focusing on non-perishable food for pets and people! A special Missions Moment during worship on March 17 will provide details.

April - LADIES & BABIES donations of feminine hygiene supplies and baby/toddler diapers in all sizes

May - STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH (A UCC Five for Five offering)

June - GENTS donations of men's grooming products like razors, beard care, etc.

July & August - SCHOOL SUPPLIES drive

September - TBD (suggestions?)

October - NEIGHBORS IN NEED (A UCC Five for Five offering)

November & December - TOYS drive & ADOPT A FAMILY through Operation Fresh Start

MISSION MOMENT



OPERATION FRESH START—NEW BEGINNINGS

Thanks so much for all of the toiletries donated by church members during the month of February. You certainly demonstrated your love and compassion.

APRIL

In April we will be collecting underwear of all sizes. New underwear is the #1 item rarely donated to help those in need. How about giving our foster children, homeless young adults, and families in crisis a helping hand? Underwear and tee-shirts needed in all sizes, especially:

Toddler boys and girls 2T—5T

Boys and girls 6—14

Women's small to 3XL

Men's small to 3XL

Bras for young girls and all sizes for women
Socks in all sizes

MAY



Our annual plant sale will take place on **Saturday, May 18**, so start those seedlings soon!!! We are also in need of themed baskets for the basket

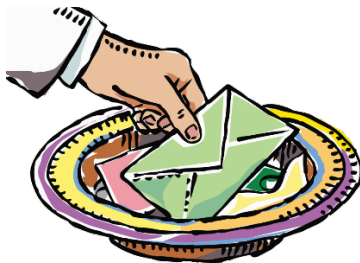
raffle. More info in the April Beacon.



A Word from our brothers & sisters in faith

At Congregation Sharah Zedak

If you would like to show your support of our local Jewish community in these days of growing antisemitism, please consider attending their monthly Theater Night, the second Tuesday of every month, at the United Theater in downtown Westerly.



From the Financial Secretary

Thank you, as always, for your faithful donations to UCC Westerly!

For those pledgers who do not use envelopes, I am including a monthly reminder of donations to supplement your basic pledge. These are, of course, voluntary. Please choose what is meaningful to you- or create your own special donations.

Annual Conference Member "Dues" (which is actually one of our Five for Five Offerings!): \$20. The one this month is ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING. See Missions article for details.

Beacon (to support printing, paper, and mailing costs) \$12 or other amount

Special Offerings being received now:
Lent & Easter

Jenny Brummund, Financial Secretary,
Michele Mitchell, Edward Stratton, and William Street, Assistant Financial Secretaries



Organ Fund Update

Announcing our first fundraiser to support the Organ Fund so we can keep the organ in the best shape possible. The amount Foley-Baker estimates will be necessary for this is \$4000 annually!

Watch this space for details on the Dedication of the refurbished organ in the fall! Lots of fun ideas in the mix. Do you have any to share??

The Organ Committee



March Potluck Soup Supper

Please come to a Soup Supper on Saturday, March 9th, from 5 to 7 pm. A sign-up sheet can be found on the lighted bulletin board outside Fellowship Hall. You can opt to bring a soup, bread, or dessert. Coffee, tea, punch, and water will be provided. Donations will be gratefully accepted to benefit the Organ Fund.

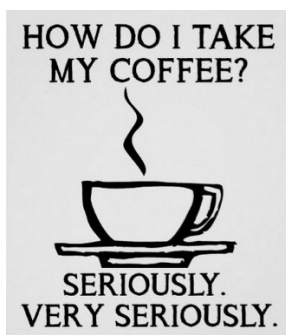
Gary Davis will set up areas to plug in crockpots; your soup could also be heated in the kitchen and later placed on one of the church's warming trays. If you bring a soup, please bring an accompanying ladle. Come celebrate the lengthening days and enjoy a warming, filling, and relaxing time with our church family.



UPDATES FROM CONGREGATIONAL LIFE!!

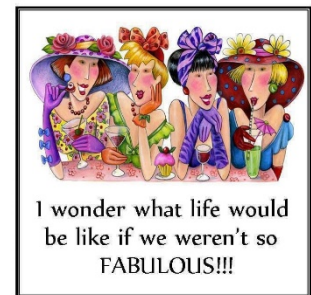
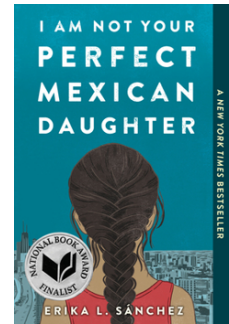
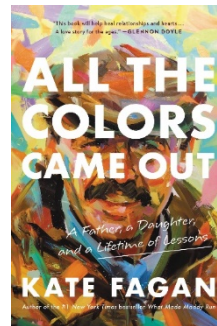
Here is a calendar of some of the upcoming planned events as created by the Board of Congregational Life: Please note these dates are subject to change without notice depending on weather and other factors so keep paying attention!

APRIL 13	ATTIC TREASURES INDOOR YARD SALE
APRIL 27	POLLINATORS EARTH DAY OUTDOOR CLEAN-UP & PIZZA PARTY
MAY 13	UCC WESTERLY NIGHT OUT Trivia Night at the Breachway Grill in Charlestown
JUNE 1	VENDORS CRAFT SALE (tentative - we need vendors!)



**Rev. Ruth's Community Office Hours will
return soon.**

**Location and times TBA.
Thank you for your patience!**



UCCW LADIES WHO LUNCH

This is a fellowship group for the ladies of our church: members and friends, old, young and in-between, single and spoken for. You are invited to meet once a month for lunch, conversation and general frivolity. NO AGENDA FOR THIS GROUP OTHER THAN FUN!

**NEXT GATHERING is planned for
Wednesday, March 20 @ 12 Noon
PIZZA PLACE in downtown Westerly across
from the library.**

Sign up sheet outside Fellowship Hall.

An Invitation to Join us at BOOKS

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

card or note.

OUR NEXT GATHERING:

Wednesday, April 3, 2024 @ 12:30pm

Join us for a BYO Lunch & Beverage

DESSERT PROVIDED!!

WHAT WE'RE READING:

I'M NOT YOUR PERFECT MEXICAN DAUGHTER by

Erika L. Sánchez

And/or

ALL THE COLORS CAME OUT

By Kate Fagan

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. Below is this month's list for the Beacon Prayer List.

Shirley M
Donald
Scott

Jennifer Woodhall
Emma
Evan

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



Brighten Someone's Day...

A few suggestions of folks who might enjoy a

Marc & Courtney Ainsworth & Family
9 Cleveland St. , Pawcatuck, CT 06379

Wade & Lori Simpanen & Family
250 Lewis Farm Road, Greene, RI 02827

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



March Birthdays*

Cathy Gray
Shirin Platt
Joseph Lanphere
Edward Stratton
Emma Stratton
Madelyn Stratton
Nathan Sylvestre
Adam Tarasuk
Fred Tarasuk

*We are no longer providing specific birthday dates as an added measure of confidentiality for folks. Hope you understand.

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

†††



OUR STAFF

Pastor: The Rev. Ruth Shilling Hainsworth
Organist & Choirs Director: David Cranmer
Office Assistant: Jerin Peloquin

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: Tuesday and Wednesday, 9am – 12pm
Thursdays 9am – 1pm

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BEACON may appear differently on your computer
or device depending upon which WORD version you
have. Thank you for your understanding!**