



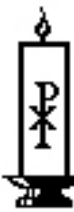
NEWSLETTER

Of The United Church of Rowayton

February/March 2012

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From The Pastor



During this time of year many people experience what is called the "Winter Doldrums." If you love to ski and have the opportunity to actually get away and go skiing, you may not feel the doldrums as strongly as others. However the reality is the gloom caused by Mother Nature each winter in much of the country is biologically felt to some degree by an estimated one in four of us, usually starting around October and then magically ending by April with spring's thaw. For most people, this feeling manifests itself as winter doldrums, the "I-can't-wait-for-winter-to-end" feeling that produces mild but manageable sluggishness.

If you are indeed feeling sluggish here are a few thoughts and prayers to help us get through the winter doldrums. Along with these inspirational words, coming to worship on Sunday mornings is a wonderful way to begin your week and get a jolt of God's uplifting love.

If the only prayer you ever say in your life is "thank you" it will be enough. (Meister Eckhart)

When people ask me "Where is God?" I tell them I would rather rephrase the question to "When is God?" Encountering God is not a matter of being in the right place, but of doing the right thing. God comes into our lives when we do things that make us truly human. When we help the poor, when we speak out for justice, when we get over our exaggerated sense of our own importance, when we learn to respond with child-like awe to the sun shining in summer or to the snow falling in winter, when we get over being stuck on ourselves, we make room in our lives for God.

(Rabbi Harold Kushner)

Remember....there is a deeper strength and an amazing abundance of peace available to you. Draw from this well; call on your faith to uphold you. The difficult times are often the best teachers, and there is good to be found in all situations. Reach for the good. Be strong, and don't give up. (Pamela Renfro)

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference. (Reinhold Niebuhr)

Live each day to the fullest. Get the most from each hour, each day and each age of your life. Then you can look forward with confidence, and back without regrets.

Be yourself...but be your best self. Dare to be different and follow your own star. Don't be afraid to be happy...enjoy what is beautiful. Love with all your heart and soul. Believe that those you love, love you.

When you are faced with a decision, make that decision as wisely as possible, then forget it. The moment of absolute certainty never arrives. And above all, remember that God helps those who help themselves.

*Act as if everything depended on you
And pray as if everything depended on God. (S.H. Payer)*

The first day of spring is March 20th – until then, if you are feeling the doldrums, reflect and pray, give me a call and come to worship.

With love,



Worship Schedule

- Feb. 5th Communion
Message: Sustaining Ministry
Mark 1:29-39
Annual Meeting following Worship
- Feb. 12th Message: Healing Presence
Mark 1:40-45
- Feb. 19th Message: Thin Places
Mark 9:2-9
- Feb. 26th Intergenerational Worship
Message: God's Loving Paths
Mark 1:9-15
- Mar. 4th Communion
Message: Always Close
Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16
- Mar. 11th Message: Beautiful Law
Psalm 19
- Mar. 18th Message: No Matter What
Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22
- Mar. 25th Intergenerational Worship
Message: Deep in Our Hearts
Jeremiah 31:31-34

Ash Wednesday Service - February 22nd - 8pm

Throughout the years this service has become very meaningful for many of us. It is a time to have our spirits lifted with moments of prayer and quiet reflection on the scripture lesson and readings shared. We also share Holy Communion and find strength and renewal in the Bread of Life and Cup of Love. We will also offer the imposition of ashes. We encourage you to begin looking toward Jerusalem by worshipping with us on Ash Wednesday.



Early Morning Lenten Worship

Pastor John Livingston will be leading early morning worship services during the season of Lent. These services will begin at 6:30am and last for a half hour. There will be time for quiet reflection and contemplation, personal prayer and the hearing of scripture. The services will be offered on Wednesday February 29 and March 7, 14, 21 and 28 and April 4.



60th Annual Meeting
February 5, 2012
Following Worship

Rethinking Christianity Adult Education Experience Continues!

You are invited by our Senior Pastor John Livingston and Associate Pastor Carla Dietz to once again be a part of this exciting adult education experience. **Rethinking Christianity - Living the Questions** is a DVD series featuring premier voices of our day, exploring an open, inclusive, broad-minded Christianity. This series brings together thirty-five acclaimed scholars, theologians and best-selling authors. The experience is simple - it is offered from 5 - 6pm on Sundays throughout the year. We will watch the DVD for that session and then take time to discuss, learn and share. This one hour, once a month, might just change your life and renew your faith and be just what you are looking for. You can come on as many Sundays as you are able. One or each and every one. Rethinking Christianity will be held on Sunday, February 26th and March 25th

4th Grade Communion Class

An exciting class which is endorsed by the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ provides the children of our Family of Faith with an understanding of the Lord's Supper, and eventually leads them to participate in the sharing of Communion. This class will be on Sunday, March 4th at 9:00am before worship upstairs in the Meeting House in Room 1 and is for 4th graders. The class will observe Communion on March 4th. On April 1st, Palm Sunday, 4th graders will make their First Communion. If your child is interested, please call the Church Office.



Winter Barbecue

Join us for the Social Committee's Winter Barbecue during Fellowship Hour, on March 4th. Delicious hamburgers and hotdogs along with beverages will be provided. Please sign up in the Meeting House to bring a favorite side dish, salad or dessert.



Easter Baskets

This is a wonderful Lenten outreach project for the entire family to participate in. Please fill an Easter basket with small toys, candy and books and return to the Meeting House by Sunday, March 25th. Baskets will be delivered to Family and Children's Agency who will distribute them to children in need.

Associate Pastor's Study

Wednesday night Bible Study always proves to be a rousing experience and discussion! We ask, what is the Bible for, the present or its historical information? I lean on the side of studying the Bible for its relevance to our lives today in 2012. Some of our members are more historically minded or appreciate the analytical details of the social structure of the period it was written in. One thing is for sure, it is never dull to study our Holy Bible with this group and the "God Is Still Speaking" curriculum we are working with is pithy, to the point and uncomplicated. If you are up for some lively discussion (especially as we approach Lent) come join us, Wednesday February 8th and Wednesday March 14th. This is one of those studies you can jump into anytime, and this congenial group is happy to have you do so. We gather at 7:15 for fellowship and start the study promptly at 7:30, for an hour. Prayer, meditation, reflective notes are all part of the highly rewarding activities.

Church School is pumping iron this year. We have LOTS of 1st, 2nd, 3rd graders and the other classes have consistent attendance as well. One of the great joys of Christian Education is visiting the classrooms to hear how the kids are integrating the lessons into their lives. Our Seasons of the Spirit curriculum is used in all classes and as a point of reference in the weekly Order of Worship and sermon messages you hear most Sundays. All in all we as a church are getting the same lectionary-based lesson on the same Sunday. It's fun! Church School will be February 5, 12, 19 and Intergenerational Worship on February 26. In March we will be in Church School March 4, 11, 18, and Intergenerational Worship on March 25. The first Sundays are Communion Sundays, so 5th - Middle School stay in worship for those Sundays. EXCITING news - 4th Graders will stay in Worship on March 4th to Observe Communion in preparation for their First Communion on April 1st.

Youth Group is thriving with a group of 10 - 20 on any given Wednesday evening. It is a terrific group of caring kids who support one another. We have been to Hill Top Homes to play games and another time to sing Carols, we have made Halloween and Thanksgiving cards for our Church friends, had a scavenger hunt, done team building activities and scheduled a field trip to the Sound Tigers Ice Hockey game at Harbor Yard. February 1st is Ludlow Commons Bingo Night. February 8th is a Lenten Discussion and Activity. March 7th Tolerance is our topic and we'll be doing activities about avoiding bullying, acceptance and caring. March

21st is Movie Night and Discussion. Please do encourage your 6th, 7th and 8th graders to join in on the action. Our vibrant Youth Director Sarah and I are glad to have newcomers anytime.

Oaxaca, Mexico Simply Smiles Mission Trip

The Board of Christian Outreach and Simply Smiles are joining efforts for a trip to Oaxaca, Mexico April 14 - 21. It is a one-week trip during school vacation for anyone in good health 15 years old and beyond. If you have ever wanted to participate in a meaningful Service Trip to partner and work with people in need, this is a sensational opportunity. Our Souper Bowl of Caring fundraiser dollars will be going toward this trip to help with the cost for each individual. If you are interested in joining the group, led by Michael Harden and the Simply Smiles team, go online to www.simplysmiles.org where you can find all the details. You can also contact Mike Harden at wmharden@optonline.net or see him at Fellowship Hour where he sells Simply Smiles coffee, talking to folks about the trip and is happy to sign you and your family up! Contributions are encouraged even if you can't go. You can make the trip happen for another Church member.



My door is always open to you, so feel free to come by to chat anytime.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carla".

Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday

Since 1993, Souper Bowl of Caring has inspired youth to make a difference on hunger. More than 140 million Americans watch the Super Bowl. Imagine the impact we could have on hunger if every viewer gave \$1.00!!!! On Sundays, January 29th and February 5th the youth of our Congregation will ask you to help with a donation. Our Youth Group will be at the back of the Sanctuary to collect donations in big soup pots on behalf of the Annual Souper Bowl of Caring fundraiser. They will also hold a bake sale during Fellowship Hour on January 29th. **ALL PROCEEDS WILL GO DIRECTLY TO Simply Smiles mission trip to Oaxaca, Mexico.**



2012 Stewardship Drive

How high are we flying?

As of January 17 we have received pledges totaling \$323,000. Thank you to all who have responded thus far.



Like the youngster in the car who asks, "are we there yet" we must answer, "no we are not." We are waiting for the following, who are still on the ground:

1. Those who pledged last year but have not responded this year. If you haven't or are not sure whether you did or not, please contact the Church Office.
2. Those who are hesitant to pledge for the first time or used to pledge but no longer do. Come flap your wings and see how gratifying it is to make a difference in the Church by pledging. That is what members do.
3. Those who have children in Sunday school, sons and daughters in Youth Group, teens in Confirmation. Don't rely on others to fund these activities. Your pledge can make a difference.

By now you will have heard that UCR experienced a deficit in 2011 which was covered by money residing in savings from earlier years' surpluses. A deficit is projected for 2012 and the proposal is to cover that with money from interest from endowment as the surplus account no longer exists. If you are in one of the above three categories, your pledge will reduce the Church's dependency on savings and endowment funds in 2012.

Come, pledge, fly.
Your Stewardship Committee – Brian, John, Nancy



2x4s Tuesday Luncheon

The 2x4s meet the **SECOND** and **FOURTH** Tuesdays of the month in the Meeting House behind The United Church of Rowayton Sanctuary. The social hour starts at 11:30am

and lunch follows at 12:00 noon. Lunch is provided on the **SECOND** Tuesday. Bring your own lunch on the **FOURTH** Tuesday. Coffee and dessert are always provided. Donations are most welcome to help defray our expenses. Come and make some new friends. Everyone is welcome.

2x4s Resume March 13th.

Wildman Scholarships



Scholarships

The Jonathan Peter Wildman Memorial Scholarships are awarded to graduating high school seniors every spring. This fund was established in August 1997 following the birth and death of Kathy and Peter's son, Jonathan. Kathy and Peter have strong feelings and beliefs in the youth of the Church and would like to award this scholarship in the spirit of helping young people achieve a worthwhile educational goal and to recognize qualities of character and contribution.

Criteria for the scholarship include integrity and demonstrated Christian principles; membership in The United Church of Rowayton; contribution to the life of our Church and community at large and plans for formal education through trade school, technical college, college or university, though not restricted to a degree program.

High School seniors who want to be considered for this scholarship and be a recipient of a portion of the available funds should:

- Submit an essay to the Scholarship Committee expressing their interest, describing their qualification in light of the criteria and outlining educational plans, including the college or school they plan or hope to attend.
- Submit a letter of recommendation from a teacher or guidance counselor. We will accept a letter from another adult whom they have known for at least five years.

This information should be submitted no later than May 15th, as it has to be copied and distributed to members of the Scholarship Committee. Information received after May 15th will not be accepted.

The awards will be made by the Scholarship Committee and will be presented as part of worship on Senior Recognition Sunday, June 10th.

Spring Food Drive

Beginning on February 27th, our Board of Christian Outreach will conduct a Spring Food Drive for the Christian Community Action Food Pantry in South Norwalk to help them restock their shelves. Items desperately needed include **CANNED** foods (fruits, vegetables, stews, juices) peanut butter, pasta, rice. They are particularly interested in collecting soups. Please bring food bags (double bag, please) to the Meeting House no later than Sunday, March 6th.



Jazz & Pizazz

Gala Auction

Wine, Micro Brews, Hors d'oeuvres, Coffee and Desserts

Saturday, March 31, 2012

7:30pm

Preview Sunday, March 24, 2012 during Fellowship Hour

Save the date! This is going to be a night to remember as well as a wonderful fundraiser for our Church! Tickets for this event will be on sale during Fellowship Hours at the beginning of March and will be \$10.00 each.

We are hoping members of our Family of Faith will contribute what they can. We are looking for antiques, jewelry, china and collectibles in mint condition. In addition, we would love to be able to auction vacation rentals, sports, concert or theatre tickets. Perhaps, you patronize the same restaurant, salon or other retail establishment that you could solicit a donation or purchase a gift certificate from. Maybe, you yourself, could provide a service: financial planning, interior design, catering, sky diving, picnics, etc. Theme baskets (movie night, bath essentials, etc.) are also a great idea. Financial donations are also greatly appreciated for purchasing gift certificates.

Please fill out the form below and return it to the Church Office if you can contribute to our Gala Fundraiser.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Cell: _____

Town/Zip: _____ Email: _____

Description (Please give explicit details): _____

And Speaking of Jazz...

Save the date for our Jazz Worship Service on Sunday, April 29th at 10:15am!