

2017



The Epistle

The Official Newsletter of United Methodist Church of Hartford

Be Rooted in God's Love
Grow in Grace
Bear Fruit of
Justice and Peace

DECEMBER



From the
Pastor

TAKE TIME TO PRAY

"If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." 2Chronicles 7:14-16

Can you believe 2017 is already coming to an end? Time truly flies. 2017 has been a year of political upsets, human tragedy, economic unrest, and heated engages among our world leaders. In the midst of all that is happening around us (good or bad) we are constantly moving at the speed of lightning. Everything is moving fast--sometimes too fast if you were to ask me. With the constant hustle and bustle of life, I wonder how often people take time to pray.

Prayer is the lifeline for all Christians. It's essential for our lives, churches, and ministries. Recently, our new Connecticut District Superintendent, Rev. Alpher Sylvester encouraged us clergy to not only increase our own prayer life, but to challenge our congregations to do the same.

As most of us know, prayer is not just about asking God for something. It is also about listening and being obedient to Him. There's personal prayer time where each of us come to God in our own personal way to talk with Him. (Although, I would have to say that we should do more listening than talking.) Then there's corporate prayer where the body of Christ gather together to pray together. There are several types of the prayer (confession & repentance, thanksgiving, praise, adoration, supplication & petition), and the reasons for why we pray are innumerable. One thing is for certain, we need to pray.

So, in the midst of the hustle and bustle of life, don't forget to pray. God may just surprise you...

Peace,

Pastor Rhonda

Lectionary Readings for the Month of December 2017

December 3 – 1st Sunday of Advent (Color: Purple)

Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

Liturgist: Beverley Nepaul

December 10 – 2nd Sunday of Advent (Color: Purple)

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2Peter 3:8-15; Mark 1:1-8

Liturgist: John Brubaker

December 17 – 3rd Sunday of Advent (Color: Purple)

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; 1Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

Liturgist: Kathy Lahti

December 24 – 4th Sunday of Advent (Color: Purple)

2Samuel7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

Liturgist: Kevin Loveland

December 24 – Christmas Eve (Color: White)

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20

Liturgist: The Congregation

December 31 – 1st Sunday after Christmas (Color: White)

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

Liturgist: Marcia Ramos

**Please join us in joyous song and celebration
on Sunday, December 24, 2017 at 7:30 PM for our
Christmas Eve Candlelight Family and Friends Service.**

RESPONSE TO RECENT NATURAL DISASTERS – *THINGS WE CAN DO*

The New York Conference Disaster Response Office continues to be in contact with UMCOR, Conference Disaster Response and Volunteers in Mission (VIM) Coordinators, and other domestic and international partners as they develop a plan for effective response to the effects of the recent natural disasters. ***WHAT CAN WE DO?***

1. Pray for those whose lives have been impacted by hurricanes, tropical storms, and earthquakes.
2. Please also pray for Early Response Teams, disaster coordinators, and the many volunteers who are working tirelessly to provide relief.
3. Partner with UMCOR in responding to the needs of communities and individuals impacted the various natural disasters. At this time UMCOR is collecting domestic financial donations for the US Disaster Response (which includes the United States, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands).

To give by mail send your contribution to:

Advance GCFA • P.O. Box 9068 • New York, NY 10087-9068

Please note in the memo line: "Advance 901670."

To give online go to: umcor.org/donate.

UMC OF HARTFORD CHARGE CONFERENCE ~ THURSDAY, DEC. 28 AT 7:00PM

All reports are due by December 10, 2017. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact the church office at 860-523-5132.

What is a Charge Conference?

The charge conference is the basic governing body of each United Methodist local church and is composed of all members of the church council. The charge conference must meet at least once per year.

What Does the Charge Conference Do?

- Directs the work of the church and gives general oversight to the church council
- Reviews and evaluates the mission and ministry of the church
- Sets salaries for the pastor and staff
- Elects the members of the church council, including Trustees
- Recommends candidates for ordained ministry

What are the primary responsibilities of the charge conference?

Some of the responsibilities of the charge conference include:

- Review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church, receive reports, adopt objectives and goals recommended by the church council that are in keeping with the objectives of The United Methodist Church.
- Establish a limit to the consecutive terms of office for any or all of the elected or appointed officers of the local church, except where otherwise mandated. It is recommended that no officer serve more than three consecutive years in the same office.
- Examine and recommend candidates for licensed or ordained ministry who have been professing members in good standing of The United Methodist Church for at least one year; whose gifts, evidence of God's grace, and call to the ministry clearly establish them as candidates; and who have met the educational requirements.
- Inquire annually into the gifts, labors, and usefulness of the Lay Servants and Certified Lay Ministers related to the charge and recommend to the district and/or conference committee on Lay Servant Ministries those persons who have met the standards set forth for a local church lay servant and/or for certified lay servant and/or for certified lay minister.
- Shall receive reports annually on all local church organized Volunteer In Mission (UMVIM) teams, and the total number of local church participants in any UMVIM team, and shall forward the combined report to the annual conference and the general church through the regular annual local church statistical report. Receive and act on the annual report from the pastor or membership chair concerning the membership.

UMW NEWS



“COOKIES WITH KIDS”

Saturday, December 9, from 1-3pm

United Methodist Women will be joined by the church's children in the making of Christmas cookies for the families at Prudence Crandall Center. The UMW members are asked to bring a rolling pin and several cookie sheets. Cookie cutters, dough and decorating items will be provided.

OUR CHURCH IS FACING MAJOR FISCAL CHALLENGES!

PLEASE SUPPORT THE CHURCH FORWARD VISIONING CAMPAIGN

In late August most church members and friends were sent a letter asking you to donate to the Church Forward Visioning Campaign. We all have visions for how this church can carry out our mission of sharing the Good News and creating disciples for Jesus Christ. Pastor Rhonda asked us to get off the sidelines and into the game to do this. To achieve our visions for the United Methodist Church of Hartford “we first must keep our doors open and our lights on.” This church is facing significant financial challenges and, although we’re not at the point of closing our doors and shutting off the lights, if something is not done soon that could someday become the case.

The church will likely face a \$30,000 to \$35,000 shortfall in this year’s budget. This is primarily due to loss of shared space income from the Little Angels Child Care Center, as well as a deficit in our special offerings income from such things as our tithing initiative, the mustard seed ministry, and the Church Forward Visioning Campaign.

These Special Offerings have raised about \$10,500 of the \$15,500 we anticipated for the year. Thus far we have received only about \$6,800 of the \$18,000 we had hoped for from the Church Forward Visioning Campaign. If you haven’t donated yet please do so. If you are one of the few who has donated, please consider making another gift.

Next year, if nothing changes, we anticipate facing a \$35,000 deficit. This time the Trustees do not have the funds in their unrestricted endowment to make up for this shortfall, as they have done in past years and will likely do this year. They can no longer cover a deficit in our operating budget.

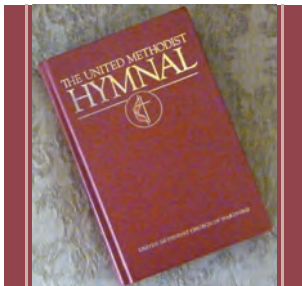
If income isn’t identified to fill the gap we will have no choice but to make further cuts to the operating budget. For this year’s budget we cut our program expenses to the bone. We are now faced with the reality that the only place left is reductions in our lay staff. That means our music director; Deanna, Marcia and John our choir section leaders; Jeffrey our sexton; and Joy our office administrator. The \$35,000 projected cut is about 60% of the \$62,000 we pay for our lay staff. If it becomes necessary, cuts will be substantial and painful. People will be let go or their hours will need to be significantly reduced.

Hopefully we won’t need to make such dramatic cuts. Hopefully we can generate some income from the space previously occupied by the child care center, ideally from organizations aligned with the mission of our church. Hopefully contributions to pledges and other offerings will increase to help close the shortfall. Hopefully we can raise money in other ways. But that can’t happen without you.

The good news is that you individually and as a congregation have been generous in your regular giving to the church. Income from pledges and other regular gifts to the budget have been coming in approximately at the anticipated levels. But we need to do more.

I ask you to pray for this church that we may close this financial gap in the budget and help us achieve our vision for church. You can do this by giving to the Church Forward Visioning Campaign and again when you make your annual pledge on Commitment Sunday at the end of November. Let’s get off the sidelines so that this church can continue to be a place where we worship God, address the needs of the people in our community and make disciples for Jesus Christ.

Kevin Loveland, Finance Committee Chair



OUR METHODIST HYMNAL

Take a good look at our red Hymnals. They were bought 28 years ago and have been in constant use. They were looking very ragged. Please notice that the spines of the hymnals have all been covered. The overly used corners have been covered as well, and we can again be thankful to have them in good condition. Thanks go to a great benefactor, Mary Cockram and her daughter, Rebecca, for funding and doing all the repairs. *THEY OBVIOUSLY LOVE THE CHURCH!*

Following their efforts in hymnal repairs, let us look at the hymns inside the books. In the United Methodist Church, the Hymnal is second only to the Bible for theological information. Hymns bring the message of the Bible in song. That message is never old. Only the books get old. Now read the following list:

15 REASONS TO USE A HYMNAL

1. Hymnals actually teach music.

We're making less music than ever before. To be sure, there is lots of music going on around us, but very few people are actually making it. We're just consuming it, or at the very most, singing along with music that other people have made. But even an untrained musician can look at the words and music and follow melodic direction and rhythmic value.

2. Hymnals set a performance standard.

Contemporary music performance is based on recording rather than notation. This is endlessly confusing opening up each song to individual interpretation. Without notation, it is exceedingly hard to sing well as a congregation. Hymnals fix that. Everyone has the same notation and can figure out how it goes.

3. Hymnals integrate the music and the text.

Words on a screen give no musical information. Hymnals fix that, too.

4. Hymnals allow you to sing anywhere.

When you depend on a screen to display texts, you're bound to do your singing in a place that has sufficient technology.

5. Hymnals allow people to take possession of the music.

I know people that like to get a list of the hymns for the following Sunday. They can refresh the text and the music ahead of time. That helps to make music a worshipful activity.

6. Hymnals don't screw things up.

Unless someone has ripped out a page from the hymnal, you know that the hymn you're looking for is there. Technology let's us down all the time, and sometimes when we're in the middle of a song.

7. Hymnals are as helpful as the singer needs them to be.

It's hard to ignore a screen no matter how well I know the song. Like watching TV, it sends many people into a trance. One must pay attention to hymnal if the song they know happens to be sung to another tune than the one they already know. When that happens, you are grateful to have the help of the notation to let you know where you are singing. Otherwise, when you know a hymn very well, you may not need to look at the hymnal at all.

8. Hymnals are a theological textbook.

There is no perfect hymnal, but well crafted hymnals are reliable sources of theological information.

9. Hymnals involve tactile action.

Hymnals make people work. Picking up the hymnal, finding the right page, and holding it up to sing, grounds you in time and space.

10. Hymnals are not particularly distracting.

Screens are hard to follow. Whenever I must read a projected text, I am easily lost in the background, the colors or the movements. When I'm using a hymnal, none of that comes into play.

11. Hymnals preserve the aesthetics of the sanctuary.

There is rarely a good place to hang a screen. It may be secondary but it's also a theological one. I know of one beautiful sanctuary where a massive screen covered the well crafted organ pipes as well as a stained glass window. This took away from the aesthetics of worship.

12. Hymnals confront us with "new" hymns.

We tend to go back to our favorite songs too often. It's easy to fall into a rut. When I first started playing hymns on the piano, I only played those I knew. Later I started going through the hymnal page by page. Many "new" hymns became great sources of encouragement.

13. Hymnals give validity to "new" hymns.

New hymns are often judged by the company they keep. When new hymnals are published, if they are well done, they will introduce us to newer hymns that will be added to the ranks of hymnody. Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty and Glorious Things Of Thee Are Spoken add to their validity.

14. Hymnals make hymns less disposable.

Okay, you can throw away a hymnal but texts on a screen are there for a second and gone the next. There is no visible permanence. Hymnals are a symbol of consistency. They give life and breath to the great songs of ages. They demonstrate that what we sing is worth saving.

15. Hymnals give congregational singing back to the people.

Congregations watching a screen are at the mercy of the one sitting behind the computer. Holding a hymnal symbolizes the fact that the voice of the congregation is the primary instrument of corporate worship.

This list was made by Jonathan Aigner Flickr and was found online with the note that it may be copied and used freely. Please read it more than once and be sure it is understandable. I think each point is excellent and worth remembering.

Alberta S. Elliott



NEW YEAR'S DAY Open House

Peter and Dianne Antos invite the church family to their home for a **New Year's Day Open House**. Stop by anytime January 1st between 10:00am and 3:00pm. Enjoy a **Bagel Brunch** with church friends "old" and "new". Consider offering a ride to someone who wouldn't be able to attend otherwise.



United Methodist Church of Hartford 2017 Poinsettia Order Form

Given by:

Address:

Phone:

In Honor of:

In Memory of:

☐

I will take home

☐

Please give to shut-in

Orders will be taken until **Monday December 4, 2017** and flowers should be taken home after **Christmas Eve Service on December 24th**.

Size of Flower	Cost	Quantity	
Single Poinsettia	\$13.00	x	= _____
Double Poinsettia	\$25.00	x	= _____
Triple Poinsettia	\$40.00	x	= _____
		Total cost	= _____

Please make checks payable to United Methodist Church of Hartford and write "Poinsettias" in the memo section.

COMMUNITY BREAKFAST

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2017 • 8:30 AM

Thank you to everyone who continues to support the Outreach Ministry. Come join us December 10th for Breakfast! Also, please tell your family and friends about what we do, or invite them to come along with you. Our

Breakfast menu continues to change with the seasons. During the winter months, we will feature warm & filling items such as grits and hearty oatmeal.

We are also planning for our 2nd **Chili Weather Coat Drive** on Monday, January 15, 2018. If you would like to volunteer or donate items, please contact anyone from our Outreach Team.

Thank you again for your support, as we continue to connect with our community. Keep us in your thoughts and prayers.

If you have any questions please reach out to
Ashley Blount at 860-994-0100 or
soulfulrebirth7@gmail.com.



UMC of Hartford serves breakfast on the **2nd Sunday** of each month. The prayer is that people of the neighborhood will know that they are loved by God and cared for by the UMC of Hartford community.

Matthew 25:35 "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in."



DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS



BIRTHDAYS

ANNIVERSARIES

6 - Ashley Blount	20 - Timothy Smith	24 - Connie Dunlap	29 - Tony Muirhead
10 - Christine Welsh	21 - Eve Elliott Ellis	Connie Gomez	Elinor Prevost
15 - Olivia Craig (c)	22 - Tempie Williams	Christina Guglietta	
17 - Silbert Welsh	23 - Lola Elliott-Hugh	27 - Jasmine Swanson (c)	30 - Norma Burton
		28 - Henry Elliott, Jr.	Douglas Drayton

Beverley and Reggie
Nepaul
12/23



CHRISTMAS

BLESSINGS

