

CrossWays

The Newsletter of
The Congregational Church of Brookfield
160 Whisconier Road,
Brookfield, CT 06804
203-775-1259

FEBRUARY 2015

We'll leave the light on
for you



AND GOD SAID, "LET THERE BE LIGHTS IN THE EXPANSE OF THE HEAVENS TO SEPARATE THE DAY FROM THE NIGHT. AND LET THEM BE FOR SIGNS AND FOR SEASONS, AND FOR DAYS AND FOR YEARS."
– *Genesis 1:14*

During this stewardship season, we again celebrate the light that emanates from our church and church family. Stewardship is both our responsibility and our privilege. The fruits of our giving have supported the buildings in which we gather, sustained the clergy and staff that serve us, and enable the work of our committees and members that serves the communities within and beyond our own.

Though bold in expressing our faith, we are decidedly less forthright when speaking about money, finances and budgets. Yet we, the members of your Stewardship Committee, are duty-bound to speak and we are blessed to be supported in our efforts to inform our members about the budget needs, to highlight the benefits of pledging (for you and our church), and ultimately to ask you to pledge to the fullest extent possible. It is our contribution to the health and well-being of this church that we love and that has loved us back in more than equal part.

It's time for the important work of discerning how our collective pledges will fund the needs of our church property, community and ministries for fiscal year 2015-16. As you prayerfully consider the pledge you will make this year, know that your church family is profoundly grateful for your pledge and your commitment in making it. **Kindly return pledge cards before February 15th. All pledges will be dedicated and celebrated on February 22nd.**

Faithfully, Your Stewardship Committee

Sally Markiewicz, Desere Edwards, Alan Peck, Tom Grogan, Dan Smolnik, Richard Nyers, Tom Brown, Pete Lane and Sissy McKee

Meeting of Church Council: January 13, 2015

In an effort to keep the congregation informed as to the actions taken or being considered by the Church Council, we include a summary of significant actions in the monthly CrossWays.

Council Nominated/Appointed Positions: Mark & Lyn Lyon and Wendy Elsen offered to serve as Fair Chairs in 2015. Council approved their service. The Nominating and Personnel Committees will each have an opening at the end of the current term. Council will discuss candidates at the February Council meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Thanks to the congregation's efforts to catch up on pledges and generosity over the holidays as well as our committees' conservative spending we are in the black.

UCC Christmas Fund (formerly Veterans of the Cross): Jennifer asked if there had been any donations to the Christmas Fund of the UCC included in the Christmas special offering. This offering would have been in a special envelope labeled as such, and is not the same offering or envelope as the one that is sent out with the yearly Christmas letter.

Investment Treasurer's Report: A total of \$1,619.44 will be returned to the Buildings and Grounds Endowment Fund, representing unused money appropriated for the solar panel installation and the workshop project at the cottage.

Worship: We had more than 500 people attend Christmas Eve services. The Healing Prayer Service on December 28th was very well received. The committee is planning to offer this service again.

Church House: The committee is working on improving the comfort level in the education wing hallway. They are making adjustments to the heating systems so the hallway will be warmer without overheating the classrooms. Dave Glatzel, who plows the parking lot and shovels the walks, was involved in a serious auto accident. Thanks to Ken Arifian & Larry Ruschmeyer for assisting in clearing the parking lot.

Nominating: The committee is entering its busy period leading up to the Annual Meeting. Please keep them in prayer. The Christian Education committee has been their biggest challenge in recent years. They are still working on recruiting a Vice Moderator and an Assistant Treasurer.

Deacons: The deacons discussed bringing back the "Winter Privilege" gatherings, but moving the time to the fall, during warmer weather, which will make attending meetings easier.

Stewardship: The committee asks everyone to turn in their pledges early.

Welcome: The Greeter program needs new volunteers. Anyone interested should speak to Tom Young.

Church-in-Society: The ideas in the PTF package for CIS were well received. In response to questions from some about the work of the committee, a full description of the committee and the work it does will appear in the March issue of CrossWays. SERRV will have their Valentine's sale on Feb. 1 and 8.

Christian Education: The committee will be reconsidering Children's Chapel. Barbara is writing a stewardship curriculum for kids. The Sunday evening adult study group is also studying stewardship. A web-based discussion of the scripture of the week, the reading from the Sunday service, will be available soon. Holding adult study opportunities in between services was discussed.

Pastor's Report The family of Jim Conant was very pleased with the care they were given at Jim's memorial service and the reception beforehand. To show their appreciation they have donated \$1400 to the Building and Grounds Endowment Fund. We are grateful for the church's support of Bryn and Gordon Markiewicz's time at Stephen Ministry Leadership Training, which will greatly benefit our Stephen Ministry program.

Church Council Meetings are open to all and are scheduled for the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 in Brooks Hall. If you would like to have something put on the agenda for a Church Council meeting please contact Nancy Vodra, Moderator or Dave Goral, Vice Moderator.



**February Serendippers Gathering
Tuesday, February 10th at 11:45am**

**Author Nan Rossiter will be on hand to share her story
and speak about her recent writing projects.**

Our menu:
Valentine Punch
Nancy's Chicken with Artichokes
Rice Pilaf
Salad and Rolls
Delicious Apple Crisp with Ice Cream

Please contact Eleanor Loesch for additional information
OR you can contact the Church Office 203-775-1259
Hope to see you all there!

****NOTE: If school is delayed or cancelled, there will be no Serendippers.***



"Giving from the Heart"

Church in Society (CIS) is sponsoring a much-needed food drive for the Brookfield Food Pantry. We are told that the months of January, February and March are some of the more difficult ones for the pantry, after having their shelves stocked during the holidays.

We have placed bags in Brooks Hall that include a list of items that are requested. Please take a bag, and during your weekly shopping try to pickup a few extra items from the list and return it to the area by the Church mailboxes. A representative from CIS will deliver the bags to the Food Pantry on an ongoing basis throughout the month of February.

Even one item helps!

Many thanks -
The Church-in-Society Committee





Library Corner – (in the adult library off Brooks Halls before the kitchen)

To the Golden Shore by Courtney Anderson.

On February 19, 1912, Ann & Adoniram Judson sailed from Salem aboard the brig *Caravan* as two of the first missionaries to go out from North America. After a short stay in India, they carried the Good News of Jesus Christ to the golden shore of Burma.

Adoniram was a missionary under the Congregational church but became a Baptist in Burma. After studying the Bible on baptism, he felt more in line with the Baptist view than Congregational.

He struggled with his desire for material success and the inner call to serve God. His time in Burma brought bitter hardships, imprisonment, and family tragedy. Yet, he never wavered in his commitment to win people to faith in Christ and to translate the Bible into the Burmese language.

*** Please take some time to check out the resources in our library. Books from recent book club gatherings and adult studies are on hand, as well as many other resources. All are available to borrow.*

Valentine's Day 2015!



The **SERRV** booth will be open on **February 1st and 8th** following both the 8:30am and the 10:30 am services in Fellowship Hall.



Find a sweet something for your Valentine!
A wide selection of chocolate and heart themed products from around the world will be on display!
Help **SERRV** help others!!!



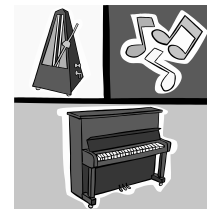
Church School News

We are learning about Stewardship in church school this winter. As Stewardship is discussed with our adults in worship, our students will be exploring stewardship of the Earth, Time, Talent, and Treasure. As part of this unit students will learn how to take care of the Earth by participating in a sustainable farming experience in which they will plant lettuce and be responsible for its care. Students will also explore stewardship of talent helping create Valentine “goody bags” for the seniors who use the Brookfield Food Pantry. Students will learn about Martin Luther King, create their own “dream of peace” for the world, and brainstorm service projects that they could spend their time performing in order to help God’s peaceful kingdom become reality. Finally, our church school children will learn about how God calls us to use our treasures to help support worthwhile organizations that are doing good work in the world by learning more about Souper Bowl of Caring and donating to the Junior Youth Fellowship collection for the Interfaith AIDS Ministry Food Pantry on Super Bowl Sunday.

At its core Stewardship means taking care of everything we have been given. God has given us so many good gifts. We are hoping throughout this month our children and teachers will learn different ways to take care of and use their gifts to help make the world a more peaceful, brighter place in which to grow and serve God.

Notes from the Choir Room

I recently told the Ecumenical Choir group at the Christmas concert that music was more than just notes on a page. As I thought about that, I made this connection to singing in the choir. Choir is about more than just singing an anthem on Sunday mornings. Music has a way of touching our souls, and singing together connects us. Music is a way to express deep feelings. Choir is sharing those feelings with others in community. Music crosses cultural boundaries to connect people of different backgrounds. Singing the music of different cultures and periods in history strengthens our ties and understanding of the world beyond us.



Choir is more than just people sitting in a room singing together. It is people sharing, caring, learning, growing, developing friendships, enjoying being a part of something bigger than themselves. Maybe it’s something you would like to experience. To coin our stewardship theme this year, we always keep the light on for newcomers to join us at anytime.

Music for the month of February:

February 1: Jubilate Ringers “In Celebration” by Childers

February 8: Adult Choir - “Ever With Me” (Walker)

Cherub and Alleluia Choirs - “Jesus Loves Me” (Wilkinson)

February 15: Adult Choir and Youth Choir - “Praise the Lord” (Handel)

February 22: Adult Choir - “Fairest Lord Jesus” (Hakes)

Alleluia Choir - “Follow Me” (Schwoebel)



More than 20 years ago, the Souper Bowl of Caring began with a simple prayer from a single youth group:

“Lord, as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us to be mindful of those without even a bowl of soup to eat.”

Since that day, more than \$90 million has been raised for local charities across the country through Souper Bowl of Caring. It has become a powerful movement that is transforming the time around Super Bowl weekend into the nation’s largest celebration of giving and serving.

Through this mission, young people learn what it’s like to make a positive difference in the world – as they collect food, raise money and volunteer to work in charities that provide shelter to the homeless, food to the hungry and compassion to those in need.

Join us in being part of this movement that is sharing God’s love with those in need. Share your spare change or more - the original Souper Bowl of Caring encouraged adults to contribute to those in their local communities suffering from food scarcity an amount equivalent to the amount they were spending that same day on Super Bowl snacks & drinks.

Sunday, February 1st the Junior Youth Fellowship will stand at our church doors with soup pots to collect your donations after worship. Every dollar donated goes to support the Interfaith AIDS Ministry (IAM) Food Pantry, our 2015 Souper Bowl of Caring Charity of Choice. Our JYF folks will be lending their time and talent at the IAM Food Pantry that afternoon as well.

Thank you in advance for your support and Enjoy the Game!

(If you would like to write a check for your donation please make it payable to “CCB” with “Souper Bowl” in the memo line.)

TIME, TALENT and Treasure

The Church in Society Committee often calls upon our congregation in times of need: Hurricanes, Food and Fuel Assistance, Holiday Time; and you always go above and beyond with your treasures. What we'd like to share with you now are opportunities you may not be aware of that can use your TIME and TALENT.

Women's Mission Trip – Just back from two days working in a homeless shelter and UCC camp. Interested in attending our next trip? See Marianne Gaffey.

Men's Mission Trip – Several times a year our very own men venture out to Boston or Silver Lake Conference Center to help serve meals or fix a room. Interested? See Dan McKee.

Want something closer? ARC (Associated Religious Community) in Danbury is looking for people to spend the night in their homeless shelter keeping the clients safe and sound. Interested? Please see one of our Pastors.

Want something happening in the spring? Think about the CCB Thrift Shop. Do you know we've sent \$5000 to Brookfield Social Services the past three years from our proceeds? We also donated extra clothing to the Veterans in Bridgeport, to school kids in Nicaragua, to our Second Hand Rose for the Yankee Fair, and to Goodwill. What can you do? Donate your gently used clothing to us; collections will begin again in May. We will also be looking for help sorting and getting the thrift shop ready.

Maybe you helped with Hillside Food Outreach Pack Night at the Matrix Center. There we packed already donated groceries to go out into the community to people who are unable to get out on their own. Interested in helping in the future? See Pastor Jen.

Maybe you helped CIS make sandwiches for Loaves and Fishes in New Milford. We gather the first Sunday of each month to put together lunches for those who may otherwise go hungry. Because we change rooms and times (either 9:30 or 11:30am) depending on church activities, look for our announcements. CIS supplies the makings; you bring your hands and spirit!

Perhaps you joined us in the fall for pizza and painting for Ben's Bell's. This is a Newtown program that reminds people of the benefits to the wider community of kind actions.

Perhaps you joined CIS along with Stephen Ministers for the movie, "It's Kind of a Funny Story" and pizza, followed by discussions on mental illness and suicide. If you would like to see more activities like this one, let us know.

Were you in church when Marianne Seiber from Brookfield CARES spoke? She was very informative about what is happening in Brookfield with our youth and issues they face today.

Hopefully you caught Kevin Hoogenboom speaking about Engineers without Borders. You will be happy to know that you helped out this wonderful program! With your pledge dollars we sent \$500 to this program at Lehigh University in honor of Kevin so that the next classes of bright young women and men can make this world a better place in which to live.

Or maybe you heard Kierstin Quinsland share about her work at Miriam's Kitchen in Washington, D.C. The little red bin in Brooks Hall is always ready to take your donations of travel sized toiletries for that ministry.

Do you have old ink cartridges or cell phones that you are looking to recycle? There is a basket in Brooks Hall to collect your used/old cartridges and cell phones. Those are sent to a program called *Phoneraiser*, which recycles them and gives the church a small amount of money in exchange. The money goes into the Future Mission Trips fund.

Have ideas that you'd like our congregation to get involved in? Don't hesitate to talk to anyone on our committee, or join us when we meet the first Tuesday of every month at 7pm in the adult library!

CIS members: Sue Slater, Michele Ostrom, Jeanine Hanewicz, Marianne Gaffey, Karen Underhill, Jennifer Garbus, Becky Bishop, Kathy Taylor



Solar Panels in Operation !!!!

The final electrical inspections on our new solar system were completed on December 29, 2014, and we have received final approval to fully operate the system as of that date. Obviously, solar production is reduced during the winter months, but we have been steadily producing electricity since Dec 29th.

We have access to a computerized monitoring system in addition to CL&P and Ross Solar monthly invoices, so we will have the ability to analyze how the system is operating as well as its effect on our utility budget. It will take a year or two of operation to quantify the system's effectiveness.

Ken Arifian, chair
Church House Committee

Time to start dreaming of summertime at the lake!

Silver Lake registration forms are here...

If someone in your family is interested in signing up for a week this summer at the Silver Lake Conference Center — our wonderful United Church of Christ camp in beautiful northwestern (Sharon) Connecticut — just stop by the Church Office and pick up a registration form, or you can register on-line at silverlake.ctucc.org.

Conferences are available for those entering grade 4 and older and focus on everything from an interest in critters and sailing to music, wilderness survival, and more.

If you are interested in taking a look around at Silver Lake you are invited to the Camp Open House on Sunday, May 17th from 2:00pm – 4:00pm.



NOTE: *Scholarship aid is available for campers through the church and the Association of churches. Please talk to Pastor Bryn or Pastor Jen if you need to apply.*

Let's Talk About It!!

When? Saturday, February 21st from 9:30am-12:30pm
Refreshments will be provided.

Where? Fellowship Hall

Who? Everyone!

(Members of CCB Committees are strongly encouraged to attend.)

Talk about what? The future of the Congregational Church of Brookfield

You are the program! We will have a chance to hear back from our committees about their responses to the feedback from the Planning Task Force Listening Sessions and share their dreams and visions for the future of our church....and have a chance to respond to the presentations as well.

A little history...

The Planning Task Force (PTF) was created by Church Council to lay the groundwork for a long-range plan for our church in regard to building projects, ministry initiatives, and vision. The PTF spent last summer and early fall hosting 12 listening sessions, which allowed for many of our church family members to come out and share their concerns, joys, and dreams for our church. The PTF assembled and analyzed the input of the congregation, shared that information with each committee whose responsibilities include feedback received, and now is prepared to host our Church's next ***Program Board*** in order for the committees to report back their responses to the feedback, visions for ministry initiatives and building projects, and more.

The input received in the Listening Sessions has provided the foundation for creating a robust plan for the future of the Congregational Church of Brookfield, and it will be a gift to hear together what ideas for programs, ministries, and projects have arisen.

We hope as many people as possible will be able to join us for this opportunity to speak and listen together to God's voice speaking through the voices of our brothers and sisters in Christ as we look toward the future of our church.



**2015 WOMEN'S RETREAT
AT SILVER LAKE CONFERENCE CENTER
223 Low Road, Sharon, CT 06069
March 20 - 22, 2015**

Please consider joining the women of the Congregational Church of Brookfield for our NINTH ANNUAL Women's Retreat at Silver Lake Conference Center.

We will leave Brookfield on Friday at approximately 5:30 PM and arrive in Sharon in time to share pizza and salad and a getting to know you game! The departure time on Sunday is 9:30 AM, in time to return for the 10:30 AM service. In between time? We fill that with wonderful conversation, walks on the grounds/labyrinth or exploring the area, delicious food that is prepared for us (!!), work on a few craft projects, learning to knit, watching a chick flick and of course massage and reflexology time!!

Lodging is in the CEDARS, which will allow us a minimum of 35 sleepers.

Cost has remained at \$130 per attendee for lodging and four meals.

Massage/reflexology minutes are extra.

Please see Pastors for scholarship aid if needed.

Please contact Susan Dodd if interested.

We hope you can join us this year!!!!

Thank you,
Sue Slater, Susan Dodd, Jeanine Hanewicz

Fellowship Of Concern



CONTINUING CONCERNS:

Judith Fisher,
Evelyn Gerowe,
Anne Hardin,
Ruthie Maxim,
Carlo Santi,
Shirley Stoppel,

SYMPATHIES:

Our sympathies are extended to the Rick Hardin and family on the passing of his mother, Jackie, on January 19th.

WITH THANKS:

To the members of the Prayer Shawl Ministry,
When the yellow and blue prayer shawl was given to me I was overcome by the thoughtfulness of your ministry. Life has been difficult as of late but surrounded by the warmth and compassion known to be in the work that created the shawl has made me feel as though all will work itself out. Thank you very much. Your kindness will never be forgotten.

Blessings, Dorothy L. Baker

To my church family and friends,
I wanted to say thank you for your thoughtfulness. It has helped me through the tough times. Thank you all for being there for me with your prayers and support. It means so much to me.

Love, with all of my heart,
Miss Debbie

Thank you to all of you who helped make the memorial reception and service for Jim Conant such a meaningful and special way for his family and friends to bid him farewell. Due to your generosity, kindness, and hospitality, Jim's family has chosen to make a donation to the Buildings and Grounds Endowment Fund in Jim's memory in hopes that it will help us as we move forward with accessibility and other building projects for the future.

CrossWays Deadline

The deadline for the March 2015 issue of CrossWays is **February 15th**. You can e-mail articles to Jeannine McCullough at office@uccb.org or leave them in the CrossWays mailbox outside of the church office. Please e-mail or call Jeannine McCullough, Office Manager at 203-775-1259 if you have any questions.



Welcome to the Welcome Committee...

The Welcome Committee was once called the Church Growth Committee. As members of this committee, we feel we are especially charged by the church to follow the credo "No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here." We strive to apply this idea to all who walk through our church's doors, whether for the first time or the ten-thousandth time.

Before and after each service, a member of Welcome is stationed at the Brooks Hall entrance or the door at the base of the stairs. There we greet incoming and exiting worshippers – and offer help with the lift when needed. We appreciate it whenever the keen eyes of other CCB members spot someone who might be "church shopping". If possible, we'll start a conversation and offer a "Welcome Bag" with church information. Keeping track of frequent attendees allows us to issue special invitations to one of the 8 -10 visitors' gatherings we hold before and/or after worship throughout the year. Groups of new members generally join about four times each year, following a reception in the library.

Other actions we have taken to encourage visitors include providing the "Ask me why I love my church" buttons – with the photo of the church's steeple – which so many members proudly wore at the Yankee Fair. We have also found new venues for advertising and published an updated pamphlet about CCB. The pamphlet is included in the Welcome Bag; the laminated version is in each pew.

To serve current members, two years ago we worked with Fellowship on the well-received "Three and Forty" dinner, to which we invited relatively new members (under three years) and long-time members (over forty years). Each year, we hold the Confirmation Breakfast for our newest young members, their families, and the confirmation mentors. Over one year ago, it was decided that it was time for a new church directory – definitely a more complex task than just sitting and smiling for the camera. When members who attended the Planning Task Force listening sessions shared a desire for more connection among members, Welcome decided to institute the Greeter program so members could know each other better. (Please see the "Greeter" page in this month's Crossways!)

Our meetings are normally scheduled for 7PM in the Library on the 4th Tuesday of the month. You are welcome to come up and see us sometime.

"I will show love to those who were called unloved and to those who were called 'not-my-people' - I will say 'you are my people,' and they will answer 'you are our God.'" (Hosea 2:23)



Greeter Ministry

When you read this, the CCB Greeter Program will have just hit the six month mark of its existence.

So what exactly is involved in being a Greeter?

Weather and other situations permitting*, fifteen minutes prior to the worship, Greeters station themselves to say “hello” to people who enter at the front of the church**. (This is a prime spot for first-time visitors.) If possible, it is great if the Greeter can also stand at that door with one of the pastors at the end of worship, just like a Welcome Committee member “works” the Brooks Hall door. After services, we ask that Greeters show up at coffee hour to provide congregants with the opportunity to talk with them about what new information they learned from the Greeter’s biography in that Sunday’s bulletin.

We are at the point at which most of our first crop of Volunteer Greeters has kindly participated in this ministry more than once. Please prayerfully consider being a Greeter for 2015.

*Congregants who have other duties can have their “Greeter Day” scheduled around the days they are on-call for choir, church school, ushering, etc.

** We would like to give all members – as well as consistent church-goers - the opportunity to be Greeters. If the only obstacle to someone saying “Yes” is the time set aside for the actual physical greeting of people who enter and exit the church, we can work around that. Of greater importance is the connectedness members are feeling with one another as they learn more from each greeter’s mini-biography.



Greeter Biography

Because members of a congregational church enter into **covenant** to engage in ministry together, we believe getting to know one another is vitally important – both to our spiritual health as individuals and to our efficient functioning as an organization of disciples of Jesus Christ.

Please help Welcome Committee increase the connection between all our members by answering the questions below and e-mailing Tom Young at wilsonct203@aol.com. He will use that info – as well other information you provide – to write a short biography. There are usually a series of three back-and-forth e-mails before the deed is done. Your bio will appear in the bulletin on the Sunday you agreed to schedule yourselves as greeters.

A. Who are your family members? Whether they are here to greet with you or not or even “all grown up”, it would be great to read about them. (Please include children’s ages.)

B. Where do you live and work?

C. What is your family, faith, or educational background?

D. How did you come to the area?

E. What brought you to CCB?

F. What do you love about / enjoy at CCB?

G. What CCB projects / committees / initiatives have you been involved in? (Examples: Women’s Fellowship, Bible studies, prayer groups, prayer shawl ministry, usual booth or service provided at Yankee fair, mission trips, choir, bells).

H. What are some of your hobbies or passions?

CCB Mission Statement:

*As followers of Jesus Christ, and as a people gathered by the Holy Spirit,
we covenant together with God and each other to receive and share the Good News as we seek to live God’s Word in our church and in the world.*

Notes from the Flower Committee



Happy New Year to one and all...

Just a few thoughts to finish up the Christmas season. I wanted to thank everyone who made contributions to the Flower Fund for the holidays. I always find Christmas Eve, with its candlelight and profusion of poinsettias, particularly magical. I love our simple meetinghouse, and the greens and wreaths are so beautiful in the snow!

We still have one month available for anyone who would like to join the flower committee. Each committee member is responsible for a month during the year. If people would like to make flower donations for the altar, the flower person for the month coordinates that. Also, I will be "retiring" as Flower committee chair after Easter. I will continue on as part of the committee doing a month each year, but have been chairing it for a long time. I am hopeful that someone new will have fresh ideas and want to take over. Most months just take care of themselves, because we have a committee full of very competent members. The Chair(s) really only need to make arrangements for ordering palms for Palm Sunday, and ordering and decorating for Christmas and Easter.

If you have any questions about the Flower Committee, please feel free to call or email me.

All the best for a happy and healthy 2015,
Barb Sikorski

Did You Know?

Have you ever wondered about the origin of poinsettias and the Christmas season? How did this gorgeous red plant become a tradition? They are native to Mexico and Central America, where they grow as large shrubs or small trees! Odd isn't it, that they flourish in the heat? That is why we are not supposed to expose them to our frigid winter temperatures.

Their association to Christmas began in Mexico in the 1500s. Legend has it that a young girl wanted to give a gift for Christ's birth, but was too poor. An angel told her to gather weeds from the roadside to bring, and as she carried them into the church, they turned into beautiful red and green flowers. They were then named "Noche Buena"- "flowers of the holy night".

Poinsettias were first introduced to the United States by Joel Roberts Poinsett, who was the first US Ambassador to Mexico, in the mid 1820s. As an amateur botanist, he became very taken with these lovely red blooms and sent some back "home" to his SC plantation, to be propagated in his greenhouses.

Thanks from Your Pastors and the Community

Many thanks to all of you who donated gift cards to the Giving Tree this year, and who have donated money to the Pastor's Fund recently, or in years past. Because the pastors use their discretionary fund for a variety of church expenses that fall outside our regular budget, and many of them are discreetly offered gifts of financial assistance to families in need, we realize that many of you may not be aware either that such a fund exists or how much it is appreciated by those who receive assistance. The following thank-you note is offered for publication (with names and personal details removed) because it seemed to be the intent of the writer to not just thank us -- but to thank our whole church for the spirit of generosity that is shared.

Dec. 27, 2014

Pastors Bryn and Jen,

What can I say but from the bottom of my heart, thank you for remembering my family in such a generous way as I recover from my series of medical concerns during the holiday season. Shopping at Shop-Rite was a heart-warming, relaxing experience with the gift cards, instead of full of financial worry. I only wish I could let the person know who donated the \$100 how much it was appreciated. My children and I are eternally grateful for your thinking of us in our need. We are truly at a loss for words. Please, if you can, share our feelings with the people who made the donations to us through the Pastor's Fund.

We feel God's love!



Save the Date for our...

ALL CHURCH TALENT SHOW –

The evening of **Saturday, March 7th** beginning at 6pm. More information to come...

CCB Sunday Night Adult Study
"Climbing the Sycamore Tree: A Study on Choice and Simplicity"

Sunday Night Adult Study resumed our weekly **5-6:30pm meeting schedule -- in the Parsonage** -- on Sunday, Jan. 25, 2015.

This insightful book by Ann Hagmann will be the basis for a new 6-week study that we chose to coincide with Stewardship season here at CCB, since it addresses issues of Christians and our finances -- namely, how we live out our faith through the choices we make in our lives.

Ann Hagmann is a chaplain at Hospice Austin in Austin, Texas, and founder of Whispering Hope Ministries for Healing and Wholeness. She was pastor of United Methodist churches in Oklahoma for ten years. Her reflections are deeply personal, inspiring, and biblically based, and they challenge us to do our own questioning as we think about the way we set priorities in our own lives.

The book is intended to be used for daily (5 times a week) reading sessions of only about 5-10 minutes, which can include journaling. The group then meets once a week to discuss each chapter's questions and share insights from the week's daily reading.

We hope you might consider joining us for one or two meetings, or for the whole series. The book is from the 1990s, and can be ordered for somewhere around \$1 to \$8 used on Amazon. If you have questions, or need assistance in ordering, please contact Pastor Bryn at [203-775-1259](tel:203-775-1259) (x304). There is one copy in the church library if you would like to preview the book before purchasing one.

**Note: There will be no meeting on Sunday, February 1st. Enjoy the Super Bowl!*



Junior Youth Fellowship (JYF) in February

Our Junior Youth Fellowship meetings are open to all 6th-8th graders.

Sunday, February 1st – Souper Bowl of Caring Collection – 9:30am & 11:30am

And work at the Interfaith AIDS Ministry Food Pantry — 12:00pm

Sunday, February 8th – Youth Room Block Painting & Decorating – 5-6:30pm

Sunday, February 15th – No Meeting Due to Long Weekend

Sunday, February 22nd – Teambuilding Night – 5-6:30pm

Senior Youth Fellowship (SYF) in November

Our Senior Youth Fellowship meetings are open to all 9th-12th graders.

Sunday, February 1st – Loaves & Fishes Sandwich Making – 10:30am

**Sunday, February 8th – *Mission Trip Information Meeting* and Food Pantry Goody
Bag Creation – 7-8:30pm**

Sunday, February 15th – No Meeting Due to Long Weekend

Sunday, February 22nd – Teambuilding Night – 7-8:30pm

Confirmation Class in February:



Sunday, February 8th – 12-2pm (*Sacraments*)

Sunday, February 22nd – 12-2pm (*World Religions*)

Note: These classes will take place in the parsonage.

There is a passage in 1 Chronicles (chapter 29 verses 1-19) where David calls on people to help give generously to the building of a house for God—the Temple—a house in which God can meet God's people. David was able to lead in the giving, offering a variety of materials for the building and decoration of this beautiful house of God, and then he asked the others among him if they would be ready and willing to freely join in giving. The account says that heads of families, leaders of the tribes of Israel, commanders and captains in the army, stewards of the king's affairs, and others stepped forward and gave willingly. Then, as David shared a blessing of the people and of God, the light bulb went off over his head, and he prayed, "But me—who am I, and who are these my people, that we should presume to be giving something to you? Everything comes from you; all we're doing is giving back what we've been given from your generous hand." There are plenty of stewardship lessons (and sermons even!) in the Bible, but this one helps us to get to the essence of what Stewardship is—first and foremost caring for what God has first given to us.

We have been working in both the church school and youth fellowship groups to help our children and youth learn about stewardship of time, talent, and treasures this winter and throughout our stewardship season here at CCB. In mid-January we sat down with our Senior Youth Fellowship group to have a discussion about stewardship of treasure—what that means in the church—and to "build the church." We invited our SYFers in small groups to build their ideal church. What would it look like? What would worship be like? What programs and ministries would be most important to them? Their answers were creative and timely—everything from a traditional building to a glass dome in the woods, from pews to bean bag chairs, from solar panels, different types of worship services, music and surround sound to youth programs, stewardship ministries, mission trips, retreats and more.

Then we got down to "brass tacks," as they say. What would we need in order to build these dream churches with these dream ministries? "Resources"...yes, resources! "Time"—certainly on behalf of the people who would be building and leading. "Talents"—definitely on behalf of the artisans, visionaries, and people who would contribute to programming. Treasures... "what?" Treasures....yup, even or perhaps especially treasures. We can't pay the builders, leaders, visionaries, and contribute to mission partners without treasures. We can't buy the materials for building or project creation without treasures. "Oh....treasures! Now we get it, and we might even be more willing to contribute some of our own to the work and ministries of the church."

So then we took our SYFers to another room, and they literally built a church—one that you will see as we continue through our stewardship season. This church is one that will serve as the "thermometer" for our Stewardship Committee as we begin to receive pledges. As the windows light up in the replica of our church we will gain a sense of how freely willing and able we are to come together and joyfully give of our treasures to help support the building and ministries and outreach of our beloved church. Our time, talent, treasures and our pledges are things that we are able to offer back to our God who has first given so much to us. So may we do so with joyful hearts!

Many Blessings, *Jennifer*

Committee Chairmen and Church Council Reps

Please call these elected representatives with any questions or comments regarding any matter of interest or concern to you:

Moderator: Nancy Vodra
Vice Moderator: Dave Goral
Clerk: Kathy Wandelmaier
Treasurer: Sung Goral
Investment Treasurer: Greg Labas



Committee Chairs

Christian Ed	Melanie Shapiro
Church House	Ken Arifian
Church-In-Society	Sue Slater
Deacons	Sherrie Ruschmeyer
Fellowship	Eleanor Loesch
Nominating	Kim Downey
Personnel	Nancy Vodra
Stewardship	Sally Markiewicz
Welcome	Carol Eagan
Worship	Patty Moran

Church Council Representatives

Christian Ed	Dave Honeyford
Church House	Larry Ruschmeyer
Church In Society	Jeanine Hanewicz
Deacons	Mike Anastas
Fellowship	Sara Cline
Nominating	Kim Downey
Stewardship	Desere Edwards
Welcome	Jean Dorrell
Worship	Bob Brown
Historian	Gordon Markiewicz

Pastoral Relations Committee

Robin Murphy (chair), Leslie Sands, Bob Lambert, Larry Ruschmeyer

Personnel Committee

Nancy Vodra (chair), Dave Goral, Rev. Bryn Smallwood-Garcia, Barbara Anderson, Michael Matson, Olivia Quinsland, Karen Underhill

Senior Pastor	Rev. Bryn Smallwood-Garcia	bryn@uccb.org
Associate Pastor	Rev. Jennifer Whipple	jennifer@uccb.org
Organist/Choir	Toni Sullivan	sullivannt@gmail.com
Membership Care	Sue Ronan	sue@uccb.org
Church School	Barbara Crandell	barbara@uccb.org
Church Office	Jeannine McCullough	203-775-1259 office@uccb.org

Board of Deacons

Your Deacon Branch provides a way for you to have a specific member of the Board with whom to relate. If you have requests or concerns that you'd like to share with a lay person, your Deacon is available. Naturally, if you're more comfortable calling one of the other deacons, or one of your pastors, please feel free to do so. Such requests or concerns might include:

- a need for prayer
- a request for help (transport to a doctor's appointment, church function, etc.)
- a sorrow (illness, accident, death)
- a joy (a birth, graduation, upcoming wedding, etc.)
- something that particularly pleases you, or would better meet your needs in the worship service

Remember, if you don't know your Deacon, ask someone to introduce you. He or she will look forward to meeting you – in church or out!

Deacon Branches 2014-2015

A-BRI	Leslie Sands (Stephen Ministry)
BRO-C	Barbara Anderson
D-EA	Jan Labas
EC-F	Sherrie Ruschmeyer
G-H	Carol Howe
I-LE	Mark Lyon
LI-MA	Robin Murphy
Mc-MU	Mike Anastas (council rep)
N-RI	Margitta Savo (memorial garden rep)
RO-SC	Marie Immohr
SH-T	Dan McKee
U-Z	Gordon Markiewicz

Youth Deacons:

Jillian DeLucia
Shannon Downey
Zach Mangold

United Church of Christ (UCC) Education Corner

During this Stewardship season we wanted to share a note to those unfamiliar with our UCC ways: This church and its work are wholly funded by its members, and it is our tradition to share pertinent information with the congregation during worship throughout this month. This is the time of year when we discuss the needs of the church, the amount required to fund those needs and how the donations will be allocated (our stewardship of the church's finances). This is also the time we gather the commitments for this year's giving (pledges) from our members and friends. In order to spark our discussion we will be hearing some testimonies from some of our members and organizations in the community about how our church has been a light to them, as well as enjoying the creative skits created by our Stewardship Committee.

CrossWays – the newsletter of

The Congregational Church of Brookfield
160 Whisconier Road, Brookfield, CT 06804
203-775-1259 Email: office@uccb.org

Sunday Worship at 8:30am and 10:30am

The Rev. Bryn Smallwood-Garcia, Senior Pastor
The Rev. Jennifer Whipple, Associate Pastor
The Rev. M. S. Desmond, Pastor Emeritus

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