

# The Meeting House Times

The Congregational Church of Salisbury, United Church of Christ

December 2012

Services: Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

Worship & Communion, 1st Sunday of the month at 10:00 a.m



Pamela Wyeth, Editor



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*No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!*



## FAITH IN ACTION



Our generous congregation opened their hearts to the people in the greater Bridgeport area who were affected by Hurricane Sandy.

Working in partnership with United Congregational Church in Bridgeport we collected warm winter coats, boots, clothing, food, toiletries and money to support the hundreds of people who are served by the UCC's Food and Clothing Pantry.

The first load of donations was delivered on November 15th. On November 20th a team of ten volunteers from our church traveled to Bridgeport for the day to put our faith into action. We sorted clothes and books and worked in the kitchen preparing food for a Thanksgiving feast expected to serve 650 people.

Watch for more opportunities to support our neighbors through our partnership with United Congregational.

~ Pastor Diane



## CHRISTMAS PAGEANT Sunday, December 16th - 11:15

During Sunday School the children will be costumed as shepherds, angels, kings, and animals, and the annual Christmas Pageant will take place in the parish hall after morning worship. This informal but endearing retelling of the Christmas story takes about fifteen minutes and may be the most-photographed event of the church year! Extra hands to help costume the cast and help backstage are always welcome.



## ALL ABOARD THE CHRISTMAS CAROLING BUS



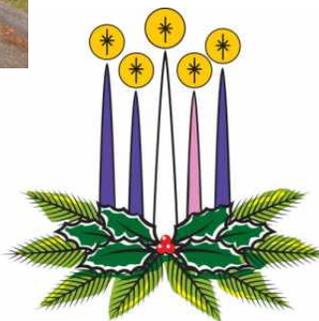
On **Sunday, December 23rd at 4:30**, we will board a bus to take the message of God's love at Christmas to our members and friends who are not able to get out of their homes for holiday activities.

Singers and non-singers of all ages and abilities are invited to take part.

We will return to the parish hall at about 6:00 for a delicious spaghetti dinner. This is a great chance to be together with friends while bringing the joy of Christmas to the hearts of others. Students home for the holidays are especially welcome for a time of reunion.

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## HARK!

There is something remarkably wonderful about babies. A baby reminds us of all the goodness in the world, of our capacity for gentleness, of the simplicity of trusting. On November 18th I had the privilege of baptizing Henry Logan Stempski, and I was deeply

moved by the joy that beautiful baby was able to evoke from the gathered congregation. With his beatific smile and his melodious gurgles, he had us all entranced. Unbeknownst to him, he had us all in his power. So it must have been with the baby Jesus – a bright light shining in the darkness.

As we begin the season of Advent, a time of waiting, of anticipation, let us be mindful of the lessons we learn from babies and children. Advent is a time to prepare our hearts for the coming of a king – one who will reign over us with the power of love – a love that saves us from evil and shelters us from harm. The holiday season can become so hectic that we forget the peace that Christ brings. The UCC *Stillspeaking Writers Group* has entitled their Advent devotional booklet “HARK!” The introduction says “We chose ‘Hark’ because it means listen and pay attention, pay close attention...listen well and look carefully.”

This Christmas season listen for the voice of God calling out of the wilderness, offering opportunities to experience *Emmanuel (God with us)*. Pay attention to the world around you – watch for miracles, for the work of the Holy Spirit in your daily lives. Share these experiences with others. Let this be the gift that you bring to each person you encounter during Advent. Offer each person a bit of childish wonder and awe – delighted surprise at an ordinary encounter. Listen for the words of a familiar carol with new ears – sing with the abandon of a second grader.

As you are perusing catalogs or standing in line at department stores, think of baby Henry's smile at his baptism. Recollect the joy that was felt when he gurgled his assent to this question, “Do you promise, according to the grace given you, to grow with this child in the Christian faith, to help this child to be a faithful member of the church of Jesus Christ, by celebrating Christ's presence, by furthering Christ's mission in all the world, and by offering the nurture of the Christian church so that he may affirm his baptism?”

As we approach Christmas, remember that you too were baptized into Christ's church, affirming the promise to grow in faith and celebrate Christ's presence. This Christmas, let us learn from the babies among us how to greet the world with joy. HARK!

Wishing you and your families a joyous, grace-filled Christmas.

*Pastor Diane*

Email: [pastor.diane@salisburycongregational.org](mailto:pastor.diane@salisburycongregational.org)

## PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD!

The gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke all make reference to the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”

This is our instruction for Advent. We are called to prepare ourselves and the world for the birth of Jesus Christ. There are several opportunities this month for you to prepare your heart for Christmas.

**Advent Prayer:** We will gather in the Meeting House on Wednesday evenings from 6:45 to 7:15 for a time of quiet prayer. Pastor Diane will read scripture, devotional writings or prayers, interspersed with periods of silence. You are invited to join us at any time.

**Daily Devotions Online:** During Advent several websites offer daily devotions delivered right to your email box. Explore some of the possibilities from the comfort of your own home. [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org) has an abundance of resources. Goshen College and Luther Seminary both offer reflections written by their students. [www.henrinouwen.com](http://www.henrinouwen.com) offers a daily reflection taken from the works and writings of Henri Nouwen. There are countless others. I encourage you to find one that resonates with you and start a practice of e-praying.

**Advent Wreath Lighting:** Each Sunday in Advent we will light a candle on the Advent wreath. There are prayers and responses that accompany each one. Volunteers from the congregation are asked to lead this part of the service. This is a great opportunity for families to do something together in the spirit of Advent. Contact Pastor Diane if you would like to participate.

**Christmas Caroling:** You are invited to share the gift of music with members of the congregation who may be confined to their homes this season. Join us on Sunday, December 23rd, as we travel about town to bring Christmas cheer to all. We will share a meal afterward in the Parish Hall.

**Worship:** Each Sunday we will listen to the word of God and discern its meaning for our lives. We will gather to pray, lift our voices in praise and thanksgiving and to seek Christ's peace. On December 24th at 6:00 pm we will have a traditional service of lessons and carols. We will also have a special Christmas message for the children. All are welcome – bring your families and friends.



### STEWARDSHIP REMINDER

Please remember to send or bring to the church your pledge cards.

## BOARD OF CHRISTIAN ACTION

The **Global Crafts Boutique** will be open during **Salisbury's Hometown Holidays**. Be sure to stop by on **Saturday, December 1st from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** and on **Sunday, December 2nd from 11:15 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** to purchase unique gifts for people on your Christmas list. The boutique will feature hand-crafted items from 10,000 Villages, SERRV, and the Center for Amazon Community Ecology. All sales support the artisans from third-world countries.



## MEETING NEEDS

Also the Board of Christian Action will be setting up the **Christmas Giving Tree** on **December 2nd** in the parish hall. Be sure to stop by and select one or more "ornaments" on the tree that list gifts for families in need (see article to the right). This is also the season of many food purchases for the holidays. Remember to save your LaBonne's sales receipts and drop them off in the special box in the parish hall corridor.

We want to thank the tremendous generosity of our congregation for all the donations of clothing, food, and personal care items for the Hurricane Sandy Relief Project! Cynthia LaPier and Janet Kaufman coordinated the donations and took the many boxes down to Bridgeport. We hope to continue our outreach to this area by sponsoring one of their Weekly Community Suppers. Watch for further information on this project.

~ Jeanette Weber

## CHRISTMAS AT SILVER LAKE December 7th - 9th

Join your friends and make new ones, as we anticipate Christ's birth at Silver Lake, with or without snow! We will get busy and creative with Christmas crafts, outdoor games, play, baking, worship and lots of singing of Christmas songs around the fire.

The cost is \$105 for the weekend (Friday, Dec. 7th, at 7:00 p.m. through Sunday, Dec. 9th, at 11:00 a.m.). You can register by going to [www.silverlakeect.org](http://www.silverlakeect.org).

Bring your boots, and snow wear (just in case), hats, gloves, and your usual weekend retreat gear: toiletries, towel, sleeping bag and pillow, and bring your favorite Christmas music, songs, or instruments, if you play... and your Silver Lake Spirit! And let's celebrate Christmas, Silver Lake-style! There are two retreats this weekend: one group of **5th and 6th graders** and another group of **7th and 8th graders**. Each group will stay in a separate building.

For more information, email [jenncc@ctucc.org](mailto:jenncc@ctucc.org) or call 860-364-5526.

~ Jennifer Kronholm

### Note from the Financial Office

If you are intending to make a contribution to the church that you would like included in 2012 reporting, please be advised that the financial records will be closed for the year on January 11th.

## THE GIVING TREE

*"It is in giving that we receive."*

One of the many ways our church reaches out locally is through our Christmas Giving Tree which will be set up in the parish hall on **Sunday, December 2nd**. Written on each paper ornament is a wish from needy children and their families who work with the Astor Early Childhood Program in Millerton and the Grace Smith House which is a shelter for abused women and their families in the Millerton area.

We ask members of our congregation to choose an ornament (or two!), purchase the item requested, wrap it with the ornament attached securely and place it under the giving tree by Sunday, December 16th.

Your past generosity to our neighbors in these stressful situations has been overwhelming and greatly appreciated!

~ Jane Capecelatro

## NEIGHBORS IN NEED

The Neighbors in Need (NIN) offering, which we will receive on Christmas eve, **Monday, December 24th**, is a special mission offering of the UCC that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the U.S.



The Neighbors in Need offering supports the UCC's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to fund a wide array of local and national justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects.

Through [UCCTakeAction.org](http://UCCTakeAction.org), our national Justice and Witness Ministries office offers resources, news updates, and action alerts on a broad spectrum of justice issues. Working with members of the UCC Justice and Peace Action Network (a network of thousands of UCC justice and peace advocates), Justice and Witness continues its strong policy advocacy work on issues such as the federal budget, voting rights, immigration, health care, hate crimes, civil liberties, and environmental justice.

Neighbors in Need also supports our American Indian neighbors in the UCC. One-third of the offering supports the UCC's Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM). Historically, forebears of the UCC established churches and worked with Lakota, Dakota, Nakota, Mandan, Hidatsa, Arickara, and Hockak in North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, and northern Nebraska.

Today there are 20 UCC congregations on reservations and one urban, multi-tribal UCC congregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota. These churches and their pastors are supported by CAIM. CAIM is also an invaluable resource for more than 1,000 individuals from dozens of other tribes and nations who are members of other UCC congregations in the U.S.

Please give generously to support this important work.

Mindy Fitting, Bd. of Christian Action

by Charlie Kuchenbrod

When a weekly prayer of confession was restored to my church's service, my teenaged kids had an interesting response. They felt that most of the prayers started out with some statement before God that I am nothing but worthless slime and went on to say I can only transcend this with God's forgiveness. Well, my kids, members of the self-esteem generation, don't feel like worthless slime. My son thinks the Katy Perry lyric is stupid because he has never felt like a plastic bag drifting through the wind.

So I was talking to Charles about why I liked the prayers of confession. I said no one is 100% self-centered and no one is 100% other-centered. God wants us to find the right balance: Jesus taught us (and Silver Lake affirms weekly each summer) to love our neighbor and ourselves.

Most of us, though, are out of balance: We are too self-centered and not other-centered enough. Confession is not about admitting that we are worthless slime or empty plastic bags. It emerges from our recognition of our excess of self-centeredness and shortfall of other-centeredness and how this keeps us from fully participating in God's plan for the world.

Charles was OK with this, meaning, I take it, that he is willing to confess to loving himself too much and his neighbor too little.

We may not be breaking any new ground when it comes to contrition before God, but I'm hard pressed to think of a sin that isn't rooted somehow in self-centeredness. And I know that I need a time of confession as a regular reminder of God's love and call.

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*Charlie Kuchenbrod is Associate Conference Minister for Endowment Ministries, and a member of South Congregational Church UCC in Granby.*  
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*From www.ctconfucc.org*



**BRINGING GENERATIONS TOGETHER**

Children learn to worship by worshiping. They need their parents and other adults in the congregation to role model

worshiping for them. Leaders in Christian Faith Formation and Education are calling us to find meaningful ways to bring together the generations for worship and learning. Our special Thanksgiving intergenerational service on Sunday, November 18th, was just such a day: we had a good-as-gold baby to baptize, a bunch of well-behaved children who were a credit to us all, and a supportive congregation which realizes that the presence of the children enriches us all. Congratulations to all!

*~ Barbara Collins, Coordinator of Christian Education*

**FROM THE DEACONS**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The beginning of the regular Sunday worship service contains some very important elements. The Prelude provides a musical interlude, a time for quiet reflection as we move from the outside world to the space of community worship. The entrance hymn follows and introduces the theme of the day's worship. These two musical moments gently lead the congregation to the beginning of the sacred time of prayer, when Pastor Diane asks if there are any joys and concerns to be added to the list already printed in the bulletin. We can also ask Pastor Diane ahead of service to include someone in prayer. These special requests are meant to bring us closer together as we begin our worship. It is an opportunity to clear our minds of the events of the previous week and to include our brothers and sisters in our day-to-day lives. Any joy or concern raised in this part of the service becomes a prayer held in our hearts through the whole service and into the next week.

Most often we ask for prayers when we are concerned for someone else's well-being. Sometimes we offer thanks for a joyful occurrence in our lives. Rarely do we ask (out loud ) for a prayer during joys and concerns for simple, everyday moments of living – a child's success at sports or a raise at work. Concerns can include wanting to have meaningful work, to live in a generous community, to attend a church where the participants are truly caring and connected. We sometimes remember to pray for our leaders, both local and national.

Many of us are reluctant, even if deeply concerned for someone, to ask out loud that a name be added to the prayer list. Reasons for this reluctance may include concern for violating someone's privacy or embarrassing them. Some of us simply may just be too shy. As a Congregation, we are learning to pray for each other without knowing the "story" behind a request. This allows us to pray for a person without making that person an object of our pity. By leaving out the story, it frees us to ask for prayers for ourselves. Most of us will ask for prayers for others, but feel uncomfortable asking for ourselves. When we don't know the specifics of the prayer request, we must give up our idea of how we think God "should" answer our prayer for that person. It is a discipline of choosing to trust that God knows us better than we know ourselves, and that He will provide what is in our best interest and for the greatest good.

It is the hope of the deacons, and Pastor Diane that learning to pray in this manner will deepen and enrich our faith in God and each other.

*In Grace and Peace,  
Theresa Carroll*

**CHRISTMAS CONCERT**

**Sunday, December 2nd, at 2:30 p.m.**

*Christmas Cantata* by Charpentier will be the major work on this year's Christmas Concert. As usual the Bell Choir will perform seasonal music and the senior choir will sing a variety of carols. An instrumental group will accompany the Charpentier. Come and add your voices to carols.



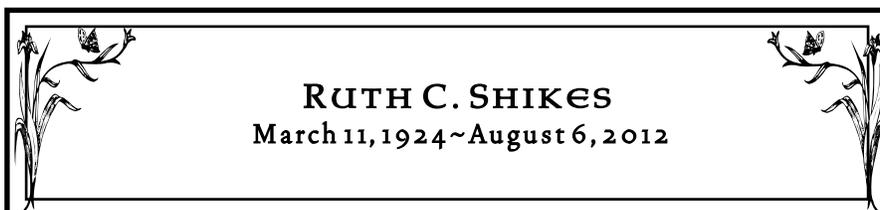
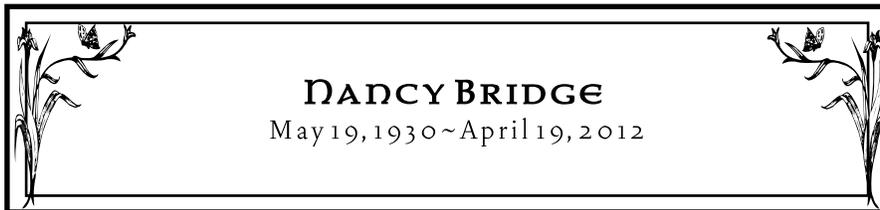
Plan to attend and bring friends. A reception in the parish hall will follow the concert.



# IN MEMORIAM

## 2012

As the year draws to a close we remember those people from our church family whose lives came to an end in 2011. We said goodbye to a number of people who had carefully guided our church and community over the years. Each one had shared their gifts and talents in their own unique way. We are reminded, by their passing, of our responsibility to steward the church in such a way to ensure that it will be here for future generations. We commend to God, with profound thanksgiving, the lives of



## *Coping with Special Days and Holidays After a Loss*

**H**olidays and special events can be challenging and stressful times during the best of circumstances. They stir up memories of the past, evoke powerful feelings, and force us to compare our life situation to the past and/or to an idealized version.

Dealing with a holiday or special event after death or loss can become even more difficult after the first year. Customary routines are ended, never to be repeated in quite the same way. Holidays can be significant, meaningful and enjoyable – and will be different.

### HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

- Get plenty of rest.
- Set reasonable expectations for yourself. Don't try to do everything and see everyone.
- Be realistic about what can and cannot be done.
- Schedule brief breaks to be alone.
- Try to tell those around you what you really need, as they may not know how to help you. Ask for their understanding if you withdraw from an activity that doesn't feel like a good idea for you.
- Acknowledge to yourself that the occasion may be painful at times.
- Let yourself feel whatever you feel.
- Express feelings in a way that is not hurtful.
- Don't be afraid to rethink traditions. Keep in mind that traditions, even long-standing ones, can be changed and can be resumed next year, or not.
- Limit your time – grief is emotionally and physically exhausting.
- Take time for yourself for relaxation and remembrance.
- Honor the memory of a loved one – give a gift or donation in his or her name, light a candle, display pictures and/or share favorite stories with supportive people.
- Discuss ahead of time with family and/or friends what each person can do to make this time special. Share in the responsibility, and see what can be eliminated or included to keep it less stressful.
- If celebrating does not feel right, try volunteering this year.
- Think about what part of this event you are not looking forward to, and discuss with other participants ahead of time what can be done to change it.
- Remember, it is okay to laugh and enjoy yourself.
- Leave an event early if you want or need to.
- Make a shopping list ahead of time and shop on a good day.
- Propose a toast to your loved one and invite people to share memories.
- Give yourself permission to cut back on holiday decorations, preparations and gift-giving.

# December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 10:00 - 4:00 - Global Crafts Boutique
2 10:00 - Worship, Communion & church school; New Members will be welcomed. OWL's Kitchen food collection. 11:30 - Board of Trustees 11:15 - 3:00 - Global Crafts Boutique <b>2:30 - Christmas Concert*</b> <i>First Sunday of Advent</i>	3 7:00 p.m. - Bell Choir concert at Geer	4	5 6:45 - 7:15 - Advent Prayer in the Meeting house* 7:30 - Choir Rehearsal	6	7 7:00 - Men's Inter-faith Bible Study 6:00 - Potluck Supper*	8 <b>Progressive Dinner</b>
9 10:00 - Worship & church school 3:30 - Bell Choir concert in Copake <i>Second Sunday of Advent</i>	10	11	12 6:45 - 7:15 - Advent Prayer in the Meeting house* 7:30 - Choir Rehearsal	13	14 7:00 - Men's Inter-faith Bible Study 6:00 - Bell Choir in benefit at Goshen Church	15
16 10:00 - Worship & church school <b>11:15 - Christmas Pageant*</b> <i>Third Sunday of Advent</i>	17	18	19 6:45 - 7:15 - Advent Prayer in the Meeting house* 7:30 - Choir Rehearsal	20	21 7:00 - Men's Inter-faith Bible Study <i>1st Day of Winter</i>	22
23 10:00 - Worship; no church school. Crib & toddler care available <b>4:00 - Christmas Caroling &amp; dinner*</b> <i>Fourth Sunday of Advent</i>	24 6:00 - Service of Lessons & Carols - Neighbors in Need collection* <i>Christmas Eve</i>	25  <i>Christmas Day</i>	26	27	28	29
30 10:00 - Worship; no church school. Crib & toddler care available <i>New Year's Eve</i>	31					* Article in this MHT

## DEADLINE FOR THE JANUARY NEWSLETTER: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19TH



### Happy December Birthdays!

- 4th Robert Haiko
- 6th Emma Visnapuu
- 11th Colin Maxwell
- 11th Taylor Maxwell
- 14th Sharon O'Connor
- 14th Thomas Iorio
- 15th Alice Gustafson
- 15th William Iorio
- 16th Armen Babigian
- 17th Bob Palmer
- 18th Joe Catania
- 19th Brad Haiko
- 25th Gavin Reed
- 28th Donald Reed
- 30th Sal Accardo

### POT LUCK & CHRISTMAS CRAFT WORKSHOP

There will be a potluck supper on **Friday, December 7th, at 6:00** for anyone and everyone who would like a casual evening out. Bring a large main dish or salad (homemade or take-out) to share. Bread, dessert and beverage will be provided. Bring a friend. Bring a family. There will be Christmas crafts to make and we will conclude the evening with a short Advent Candle Lighting service in the Meeting House.

Please join us for this evening of fellowship. There is no need to RSVP. Are you wondering if winter weather has cancelled the event? Give one of us a call: Barbara Collins (860-435-0051) or Sarah Rydingsword (860-435-9062).



### CHURCH SCHOOL CLASSES

There will be no Sunday School classes on Sunday, December 23rd, but there will be activities for younger children and crib/toddler care for the littlest ones. There will be no Church School classes on Sunday, December 30th. There will be intergenerational worship on Sunday, January 6th, with Communion and a special presentation for Epiphany written and directed by Duane Estes. Regular Sunday School classes will resume on January 13th.