

The Meeting House Times

The Congregational Church of Salisbury, United Church of Christ
December 2011



Pamela Wyeth, Editor



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

30 Main Street, P.O. Box 392, Salisbury, Connecticut 06068 ~ 860.435.2442 ~ www.salisburycongregational.org

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

Christmas Concert

The annual Christmas Concert will be given at **2:30 on Sunday, December 4th.**



Seasonal selections will be played by the Bell Choir. The Choir will sing five carols and J. S. Bach's Cantata 140, "Sleepers, Wake!" with instrumental accompaniment.

Soloists for the cantata will be Sabrina Manna, soprano, and Jack Brown, baritone.

There will also be opportunity for audience participation in singing several carols. The public is cordially invited to attend this free concert, so bring your family, your neighbors and your friends. A reception in the parish hall will follow the concert.

Al Sly, Minister of Music



Our Christmas Giving Tree

Add someone to your Christmas list this year who doesn't already have everything. In early December the **Christmas Giving Tree** will be set up in the Parish Hall. The ornaments on the tree list gifts for families in need.

On **Sunday, December 4th and December 11th**, members of the congregation who wish to participate should choose an ornament and purchase the gift indicated. The wrapped gift, WITH THE ORNAMENT ATTACHED, should be brought to the church on or before **Sunday, December 18th**. During worship that day, the Sunday School children will receive and bless the gifts.

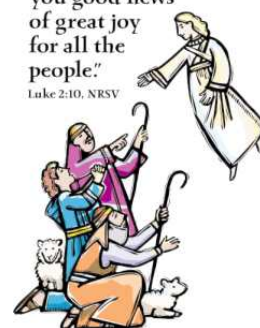
Our gifts will be given to families in Amenia and Millerton, and to mothers and their children living in a shelter for abused women. Your past generosity to people in these stressful situations has been overwhelming and greatly appreciated!

*Jeanette Weber and Jane Capecelatro,
Board of Christian Action*

Lessons & Carols

At **6:00 on Saturday evening, December 24th**, we will gather for our traditional Service of Lessons and Carols. The Christmas gospel and prophecies relating to the birth of the Messiah will be read by members of our church family. Between readings we will sing carols and listen to musical offerings from our wonderful Senior Choir. The service ends with candlelight and joyful hugs. Plan to arrive early to hear the Bell Choir prelude.

"I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people!"
Luke 2:10, NRSV



Keep in **Christ** Christmas



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HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND A JOYFUL NEW YEAR!



Growing in Faith Together

FOR UNTO YOU A SAVIOR IS BORN.



Advent: a time of anticipation, a time of joy, a time for reflection.

I hope that this description will characterize your days in this month of December. The holidays are upon us and it is a good time to take a deep breath and remember the reason for Christmas. The reason that we have large

gatherings, festive decorations, gift exchanges and worship services is to recognize and celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The anticipatory nature of advent reflects our expectation of a miracle. A child is born who will change the world and our lives forever. That is certainly worth celebrating.

It is easy to get lost in the preparations and forget that it all culminates on December 24th when we journey to the stable in Bethlehem with Mary and Joseph. Think of how many times and how many ways in the month of December you will see or hear the Christmas story told. Each time can be part of the preparation, the anticipation, and the excitement. Let each musical note find its way into your heart. Allow yourself the joy of anticipating a miracle. Open yourself to new ways of preparing and celebrating this holy day.

Advent is a good time to develop a daily prayer ritual. Set aside a few moments at the beginning of each day to read or pray or meditate. Think of it as a gift that you are giving yourself.

You can share the gift of prayer with any number of people. Try offering a brief prayer after each encounter you have this month. As you are walking away from dropping your children off at school, say "Thank you God for the teachers who care for my children." As you are doing your grocery shopping, try saying "Thank you God for the people who grow my food." If it snows again, and it likely will, say "Thank you God for the people who plow the roads while I am sleeping."

This Christmas season, spread the gift of prayer throughout the community. Say to people, "I'm praying for you." You will be surprised at the joy such a comment will bring. It is one of those presents that people love to get, it is a pleasure to give and it is free!

Let God's light shine brightly this season in and through you.

Wishing you and your family a blessed Christmas.

Pastor Diane

Email: 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. We will follow the model we used for the Lenten Prayer time last spring. 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 has an abundance of resources. Goshen College and Luther Seminary both offer reflections written by their students. 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 18th, 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 bring your pledge cards to the December 11th service.



MISSION TRIP SIGN UP

Our plans are set for traveling to Oaxaca, Mexico next summer for a week of Christian action. We will work with Simply Smiles to prepare for their monthly food distribution, assist with building the new school and any other project they may assign. We will leave

on Saturday, July 21st and return on Saturday, July 28th. It is important that we purchase our plane tickets early to ensure the best possible group rate. If you would like to participate in the trip, please confirm your participation with Pastor Diane by the end of December. The first payment, toward air fare, will be due at the end of January. For more information about Simply Smiles' projects visit www.simplysmiles.org.

COMFORT AND CONVERSATION

It is not easy to lose a loved one and often we are left feeling lonely and sad. On Tuesday afternoons, from 4:00 -5:00 in the parish hall, a group gathers to talk about loss and to share feelings and concerns about grief and all the ways it affects our lives. You are invited to join us – everyone is welcome.

For more information, speak with Pastor Diane.



THAT'S ONE STRONG CUP OF COFFEE!

We are now selling Simply Smiles Coffee in the parish hall. The coffee is a product of the people in Oaxaca, Mexico with whom Simply Smiles works. Proceeds from the coffee go directly to help sustain the farmers and their families. Cost is \$10 a bag – available in caffeine and decaf.



BELL CHOIR CONCERT



In addition to numerous concerts during the holiday season (see the calendar on page 5), the Bell Choir has been invited to participate in a fund-raising program at the Church of St. John's in the Wilderness in Copake Falls, New York, on **December 11th at 3:30**. The church is listed twice on the National

Register of Historic Places, once as an example of 19th Century rural church architecture, and again as part of the Copake Iron Works Historic District.

The distinctive bell tower has been weakened by weather and needs to be carefully rebuilt. The hope is for the bell to ring again on Easter 2012, the church's 160th year.

We are pleased to be part of their fund raising efforts, and hope some of our congregation will join us in Copake on the afternoon of the 11th of December.

Mary Davidson, Director, Bell Choir

NEIGHBORS IN NEED



The Neighbors in Need (NIN) offering, which we will receive on **Saturday, 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, 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 Hocak 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

All Aboard the Christmas Caroling Bus Tour



On **Sunday, December 18th at 4:00**, 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 our famously 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.



A REMINDER TO VISIT
THE
GLOBAL CRAFT BOUTIQUE

Salisbury Congregational Church



The opportunity to purchase wonderful Global Crafts, with additions from SERRV, will be open to the whole community on **Saturday, December 3rd, from 10:00 to 4:00** and on **Sunday, December 4th, from 11:15 to 3:00**



during Salisbury's Hometown Holidays. (*SERRV is a nonprofit organization with a mission to eradicate poverty wherever it resides by providing opportunity and support to artisans and farmers worldwide.*)

Please encourage your friends and neighbors to take advantage of the opportunity to purchase crafts from third world crafters.

Mindy Fitting, Board of Christian Action

"The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God."

—C.S. Lewis

267TH ANNUAL MEETING, PART 1

On Sunday, November 13, 2011, the congregation gathered for the 267th Annual Meeting, Part 1. Opening with the primary business of the fall meeting, presentation of the 2012 budget, Treasurer John Arnold reviewed proposed budget figures mailed to the members in mid-October. John thanked the Trustees and budget committee members Tom Key and Ted Sands for thoughtful analysis of the needs and potential income and expenses.

Characterizing this as a "tough budget", John highlighted such expense items as an increase in heating fuel cost and the effort to rebuild the "replacement reserve" fund to more accurately reflect long-term expected costs of maintaining our buildings.

On the income side, John cited anticipated reduction in rental income due to a period of vacancy at the parsonage and reminded the congregation of the loss of several beloved, older members who had been long-time contributors to the Every Member Canvass.

After some questions and discussion, the congregation voted unanimously to approve the 2012 budget, as recommended by the Trustees.

Bruce McEver, chair of the Finance Committee, then reported on the work of church's investment advisors, Wilkinson O'Grady & Co. Giving a brief overview of the current market outlook and of Wilkinson's investment strategy, Bruce commended them for diligent oversight and informed choices which have produced a 5.9% annualized return for the five years ending September 30, 2011.

Ward Belcher reviewed the progress to date and next steps for the Handicapped Access Committee. Phase 1, including a new walkway and steps from Library St., and that a wider door into

... continued next column →

POT LUCK &
CHRISTMAS CRAFT WORKSHOP



There will be a potluck supper on **Friday, December 9th, at 6:00** for anyone and everyone who would like a casual evening out. Bring a large main dish or salad (either 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. Do you need a ride? Are you wondering if winter weather has cancelled the event? Give one of us a call: Barbara Collins (860-435-0051) or Sarah Rydingsword (860-435-9479).

**BRINGING GENERATIONS TOGETHER
FOR WORSHIP**



Children learn to worship not by going to Sunday school, but by worshipping side by side with their parents and other adults in the congregation. Experienced leaders in Faith

Formation are calling us to find meaningful ways to bring together the generations for worship and learning. This is why you will see our children remaining in church on Communion Sundays and on other special days. Their presence enriches us all.

I attended two workshops on intergenerational worship in November, led by the Connecticut Partners in Education, an extraordinary select group of Connecticut UCC Christian educators. These sessions are part of a year-long series dealing with a variety of faith formation topics and contemporary issues and ideas. The leadership is inspired and the dialogue of the participants is stimulating. I never cease to be amazed at the energy and creativity of Christian educators, whether we come from a small church, a large church, a thriving church, or a struggling church.

Barbara Collins, Coordinator of Christian Education

the Meeting House is nearly complete. Stair railings, door hardware, and new double doors with automatic openers will complete Phase 1.

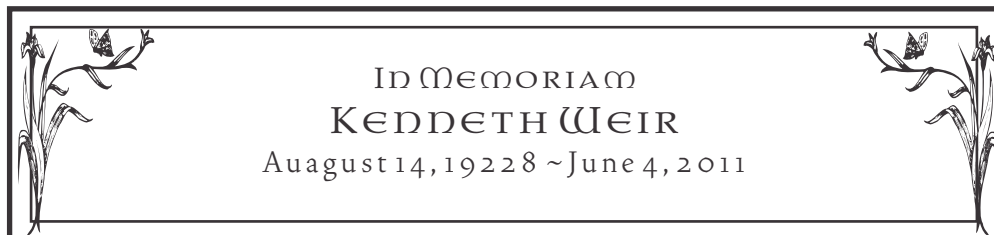
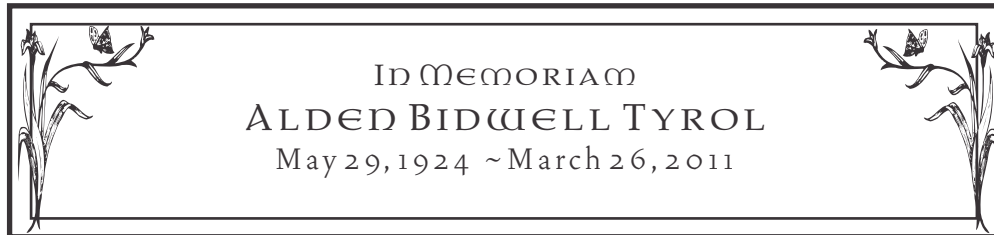
Meanwhile the Committee continues to deliberate the best configuration for the handicapped accessible bathroom, improved kitchen and meeting space, as well as storage, all to be fit within the parish hall. They are working diligently.

The meeting closed with praise from Pastor Diane for the careful stewardship of the church's assets and buildings, for the work of all the committees, and with an expression of her joy in serving with us.

Sue Morrill, Board of Trustees

IN MEMORIAM 2011

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

Holidays 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	2 7:00 - Men's Interfaith Bible Study <i>Brownie troupe using kitchen & parish hall</i> 5:30 - Bell Choir at Salisbury School Hanging of Greens	3 10:00 - 4:00 - Global Crafts Boutique*	
10:00 - Worship, Communion, Baptism. no church school; crib & toddler care available. OWL's Kitchen collection.* 11:30 - Board of Trustees 11:15 - 3:00 - Global Crafts Boutique* 2:30 -Christmas Concert* Second Sunday of Advent	4	5	6	7 10:00 - Prayer Group 6:45 - 7:15 - Advent Prayer in the Meeting house* 7:30- Choir Rehearsal	8	9 7:00 - Men's Interfaith Bible Study 6:00 - Potluck Supper & Christmas craft workshop* 7:00 - Bell Choir in benefit at Goshen Church	10 1:00 - Memorial Service for Bob Estabrook
10:00 - Worship & Church School. Remember pledge cards! 3:30 - Bell Choir Concert - Copake, NY* Third Sunday of Advent	11	12	13	14 6:45 - 7:15 - Advent Prayer in the Meeting house* 7:30- Choir Rehearsal	15	16 7:00 - Men's Interfaith Bible Study	17
10:00 - Worship & Church School 11:15 - Christmas Pageant* 4:00 - Christmas Caroling & dinner* Fourth Sunday of Advent	18	19	20	21 10:00 - Prayer Group 6:45 - 7:15 - Advent Prayer in the Meeting house* 7:30- Choir Rehearsal	22	23 7:00 - Men's Interfaith Bible Study	24 6:00 - Service of Lessons & Carols - Neighbors in Need collection* Christmas Eve
10:00 - Worship; no church school. Crib & toddler care available  Christmas Day 	25	26	27	28	29 Winter Solstice	30	31 New Year's Eve

DEADLINE FOR THE JANUARY NEWSLETTER: MONDAY, DECEMBER 19TH

* Article in this MHT

THIS MONTH'S Birthdays

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

OWL'S KITCHEN

Our new practice of bringing contributions for OWL's Kitchen on the first Sunday of the month is working very well. The children are doing a wonderful job of collecting cans and boxes of food and monetary donations from the congregation during the service and bringing them forward to be blessed. In addition to MANY food items, we were able to send \$132 in October and \$140 in November to OWL's. Thank you for your generosity. Of course, you are invited to bring donations on other days of the month as well. (OWL's Kitchen now has its own website: www.owlskitchen.org.)



CHRISTMAS PAGEANT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18TH - 11:15

During Church 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.

There will be no classes or activities for children on Sunday, December 25th and January 1st, but crib/toddler care will be available for the littlest ones. Church school classes will resume on January 8th.