

The Church Mouse

The Reverend Craig L. Cowing, Pastor

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Georgette L. Huie, Minister for Children and Youth

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860-529-4167 Church

December 2017 Newsletter

RHCC e-mail address – <u>office@rhccucc.org</u>
Website: www.rhccucc.org
Office Hours – 9:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Friday
Sunday Worship Services – 10:00 a.m.

Childcare Available/Handicap Accessible



ADVENT & CHRISTMAS SEASON WORSHIP & EVENTS



Sunday, December 3 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

• Pot Luck dinner with the whole church and for the whole family! Join us in Chapin Hall for Christmas crafts, carol singing and games.

Sunday, December 10 4:00 p.m.

• A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. Share in the beautiful story of the birth of Christ as told in word and music. Reception to follow service.

Thursday, December 14 7:00 p.m.

 Blue Christmas Service to acknowledge that the holiday season is difficult for many who suffer from depression or who have experienced loss.

Saturday, December 16 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 pm

• Annual cookie walk. Buy a tin—fill it with dozens of amazing homemade cookies for yourself and for others.

Sunday, December 24 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m.

 Join us in the Sanctuary for Christmas Eve services as we await the birth of Christ.

Sunday, January 7 10:00 a.m.

Epiphany pageant during our worship service with the children and youth.



"In the Bleak Midwinter" is one of my favorite Christmas hymns. It is based on a poem by Christina Rossetti, published in 1870. The hymn first appeared set to music in a 1906 hymnal.

Rossetti wrote out of her own experience if winters in England. Anyone who grew up in a northern climate can relate to the image of cold winds blowing and the ground hard as iron, water as hard as stone. I can remember winters like that in northern New England. With climate change we're not seeing those typical conditions as much, especially in balmy Connecticut. However, the image persists.

The best way to see how this tag team of Christmas and winter functions is to see what Christmas is like outside of New England. We take for granted the Currier and Ives images of riding a sleigh carrying the Christmas tree home where pumpkin pie and a roast await, with the fireplace burning brightly. My first glimmer of this was in Arizona a number of years ago. Anita and I were there on our honeymoon, and we went to a Lowe's to see what they had for desert plants which we can't get here. I have the two cacti that we bought in my office at the church for the winter. It was mid-October, and just like anywhere else the Christmas decorations were up. Bear in mind that this was Phoenix, Arizona, hardly a winter climate. They had artificial Christmas trees for sale. It looked incredibly out of place, in the same league as the bright green lawn we saw in front of a Phoenix mansion, sprinklers running at full tilt.

It occurred to me that many people living in the area were transplants from somewhere else, people from colder regions where a live spruce or fir tree was not exotic, and this appealed to nostalgia for home.

I was in the Holy Land six and a half years ago in March, and it was cold some of the time, but not winter as we experience it. Jesus wasn't born in December anyway. The leaders of the early Church put his birthday there to counteract the Roman celebration of the Saturnalia, a bawdy, raucous holiday that they didn't want their people celebrating. Better to be celebrating Christ's birth than getting blind drunk, although that hasn't stopped anyone lately. For some, Christmas *is* the Saturnalia.

For many, winter is difficult. Those who grew up in northern climates often eat more, exercise less, drink more, and wrestle with depression. It's no wonder that Russia has one of the highest rates of alcoholism in the world.

So, even if Jesus wasn't born during the winter, the image of Christ coming to us in our winter is still an apt one. Jesus comes to us not when we are feeling good about everything, but when we struggle with all that bedevils us. That's the meaning of the Incarnation. Jesus comes to us when we aren't feeling very good about ourselves, the world, or each other. He comes to us in the midst of pain, loss, and fear. He comes to us in the midst of our own sense of mortality.

In Christ,

Pastor Craig

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

Sunday, December 10, 2017 4:00 p.m.

This special Christmas service is held by Christians around the world, in many and varied settings. In small churches and in great cathedrals, people gather to celebrate the story of Christ's coming, in word and music. The service reflects our desire to deepen your experience of Christmas. The original service was held in 1880, in a small wooden church in Truro, England. Through the years, the music and the prayers may change, but the spirit remains the same.

We hope you will attend our Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 10 at 4:00 p.m. There is no admission charge, though a free-will offering will be taken to support the Rocky Hill Food Pantry. As always, a lovely reception will follow.

We encourage you to share the peace and hope of this lovely service with others. Please share the invitation on Facebook, by phone, in person, or with our lovely postcard invitations. With your help we had our best-attended Lessons and Carols ever last year, and were able to give a big donation to the Rocky Hill Food Pantry. Please help us do the same this year.

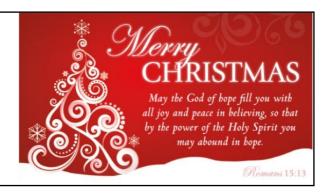
Sincerely, Your Music Committee





Christmas Worship Sunday, December 24 at 10am & 5pm

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13



S.P.I.R.I.T. Church School News

Robert Emmons is considered the world's leading expert on "Gratitude." It was great timing as we enter the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, that he came to speak this past month at Yale's Youth Ministry Institute. Dr. Emmons, who teaches psychology at the University of California, Davis, gave us compelling reasons why we would want to build a grateful character in ourselves and the young people we meet. Recent psychological studies show that:



- Gratefulness increases emotional well-being
- Grateful people get along better with others
- Grateful people are less depressed
- Grateful people achieve more
- Grateful people pay it forward
- Grateful people are more resilient to trauma

These results are compelling and so too, is the Bible. It is filled with expressions of gratitude, which indicates to me at least, that walking in the Christian way is not just about being moral, i.e., following rules, but about being grateful to the core. Emmons offers "three foundational stones of gratitude":

- 1. Look for the good (Joy)
- 2. Take in the good (Grace)
- 3. Give back the good (Love)

As we lift up these activities in ourselves, we will naturally be modeling them for young people and showing them the way. What a wonderful world it would be, wouldn't it, if everyone we encountered had hearts filled with gratitude. Let it begin with us.

Church School

From December 10-17, Pre-K to 5th graders will be studying a unit called "Christmas Around the World." They will:

- hear and experience the story of the magi visiting the Christ child;
- experience Christmas customs from around the world;
- study the stars and connect to the magi as astrologers of their time;
- create gifts to be given to shut-ins or to a neighborhood food pantry.

6th-8th graders will be discussing the following topics: Trust, Faith.

From December 24-31, all church school classes will begin preparation for the Epiphany Pageant. On Saturday, January 6, rehearsal for the Pageant will be held from 10am to 11:30am. And on January 7, the children will gather at 9am to dress and rehearse one last time for the Pageant, which will be presented during worship.

S.P.I.R.I.T. Church School News

Youth Groups

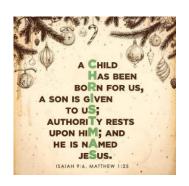
In November, the Middle School Youth Group went bowling, some for the first time. Their natural athleticism showed, as great improvement happened in just ten frames. The group also baked cookies for the Cookie Walk.



The High School Youth Group was treated to a dinner of Judy Graham's famous mac-and-cheese, followed by ice cream sundaes. The kids split into teams and went on a scavenger hunt throughout the church building. They then got to know each other even more over a game or two of Jenga. It was a nice way to spend a Sunday evening. The group also put on the Baked Potato Fundraiser, raising \$320 towards the Mission Trip to West Virginia.

In December, the Middle School Youth Group will celebrate Christmas on December 10, after Lessons and Carols. There will be no youth group meeting on December 24.

The High School Youth Group will help with the Advent Event on December 3, and will celebrate Christmas on December 17. There will be no youth group meeting on December 31.



Georgette Huie

The icon for December is Sandro Botticelli's Madonna of the Book, painted around 1480. The original is in a museum in Milan, Italy. This icon was in an exhibition in Boston earlier this year. An image such as this is obviously not a Byzantine icon, but it was intended as a devotional image. This painting would have been done for a very wealthy client, as Botticelli lavished the most expensive of pigments, ultramarine blue, on Mary's robe. It is called the Madonna of the Book because it depicts Mary reading her devotional prayers while the baby Jesus sits on her lap. *Visit anytime for prayer and contemplation in the Weil Chapel*.



Missions Update:

In November, the Board for Missions and Diaconate combined efforts to make our "Turkey and a Thirty" drive for Foodshare a huge success. **The Thanksgiving offering topped \$3,000** and we collected 51 turkeys – all to help Foodshare, which fights hunger throughout Hartford and Tolland Counties all year long. Thank you for your generosity!

During Sunday morning worship on November 19, the Board for Missions and Diaconate organized an observance for the Transgender Day of Remembrance. Pastor Craig led a litany and prayer for transgender persons who have lost their lives, through murder or suicide, in the past year. Though this act of worship, we renewed our commitment to welcome, and advocate for, the transgender community. The Board for Missions designated a **\$250 donation**, made on behalf of our congregation, to Hartford-based "True Colors" -- an organization that works with social service agencies, schools, organizations, and within communities to ensure that the needs of sexual and gender minority youth are both recognized and competently met.

A \$500 donation was made to Rocky Hill High School "Project Graduation." The donation supports safe activities for the graduating seniors. Our church has supported Project Graduation for many years.

Finally, we've received many nice THANK YOU notes for our congregation's gifts for 2017 Hurricane Relief in October. Church World Service, a faith-based organization that responds to hunger, poverty, displacement and disaster, sent us this nice message:

"Dear Friends of Realty Hill Congregational. Thank you for your recent gift of \$1,666.81 for

"Dear Friends of Rocky Hill Congregational. Thank you for your recent gift of \$1,666.81 for CWS emergency response! Hurricane response is a process that takes months or even years. Your gift helps CWS clean up from the recent hurricanes while also looking at addressing the hidden and long-term needs. Thank you!"

Upcoming Mission Opportunities

Tom and Doris Schreier Warm Heart Tree

Help us decorate the Warm Heart Tree in Chapin Hall with new, donated hats, gloves, mittens, and scarves for all ages. In addition, tube socks for men are also very much needed. This year, the tree is named in memory of Tom and Doris Schreier, who started the tradition. Donations will be collected all through December to January 7. The donated items will benefit the Foster Children's Association of Rocky Hill; St. Agnes Home; MALT Mobil Hospital Van; and WAIM, an organization that provides clothing and other assistance to families in the Windham area. For questions, please contact Gail Tine.

Missions Update:

Covenant to Care for Children

We support a Covenant to Care social worker all year long. In December, we'll present the social worker with gift cards, so she and her fellow case workers can shop for Christmas gifts for many of the teenagers they serve. You can purchase gift cards on your own, or through the church's Scrip program (for example, donate \$25 via our Scrip program, indicating "Covenant to Care," and the church will purchase gift cards for our social worker). Gift card suggestions include Target, Walmart, iTunes, Amazon, and movie theaters. For questions, please contact Heather Collins. Or visit the Scrip table in Chapin Hall after worship each Sunday.

March of the Toys! - Sunday, December 10



We'll collect unwrapped toys on Sunday, December 10. The toys collected will be brought to the Hartford Seminary where they will be distributed to Hartford area families in need. Many social workers in the area 'shop' at the Hartford Seminary for the families they support. If you're unable to attend worship on December 10, please contact any member of the Board for Missions to arrange an earlier drop-off.

Diaper Drive – Sunday, January 7

The Diaper Bank distributes free diapers to poor families, food pantries, soup kitchens, day care centers and shelters throughout Connecticut. We'll collect diapers during the Epiphany Pageant on Sunday, January 7.



THANK YOU from the Board for Missions: Heather Collins, Anita Hawkins, Bob Inderbitzen (co-chair), Marge Murk, Elaine Sellenberg, Sue Speers, Wendy Ware (co-chair), and Benevolence Treasurer Kathy Morgan



Our Blue Christmas service is held to acknowledge that the holiday season is difficult for many who suffer from depression or who have experienced loss. December is the darkest month of the year, and the coinciding with a joyous holiday season can be difficult. This will be a meditative service of music, prayer and readings. Join us on Thursday, December 14, at 7:00pm.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Note from the Trustees: The heating season has started; this is a reminder to let Theresa know if you are planning a meeting or activity at church. We use the church calendar in the Office to

schedule heat. When rooms are not being used, we lower the temperature to the low 60s to save energy and costs. If you have questions about heating, contact Dave Sageman.

We would like to express our appreciation to Steven, Glenn, Gary & John Hunter. For the lovely and much needed gift - the portico installed on the side door of our meeting house, given in memory of their Mom, *Dot Hunter*. All members are encouraged take a look at the portico and the new plaque hung on the wall inside the Old Main Street side entrance.



Thank you, Judy Graham, board member.



The Stewardship Committee would like to thank everyone who attended the Consecration Sunday service and dedicated their pledge as an act of worship. We are especially grateful to Victoria Bower for her inspirational and moving sermon about giving: Giving your heart and your time to someone in need.

About serving the Lord, like Joshua. If we all give back some of our time, talent and treasure, we will be walking with Jesus, and the world will be a better place for everyone. If you were not able to attend but would like to make a pledge, please contact Barry Wilcock (860) 563-9865 or pick up a pledge card in the church office.

RHCC Newsletter

Submission deadline for the January issue of The Church Mouse will be Friday, December 15. We want to hear from you! Send your articles and photos to: office@rhccucc.org. The mailing date will be Tuesday, January 2nd.



WEATHER CANCELLATION POLICY

In the event of winter weather on a Sunday morning, our first priority is to ensure the safety of church members. If worship is canceled, a notice will be posted either Saturday evening or early Sunday morning on the following media outlets:

- 1. Channel 3 WFSB-TV
- 2. Our facebook page https://www.facebook.com/rhccucc
- 3. Our website rhccucc.org

Additionally, an email will alert church leaders of the cancellation.

You should also note that if the town of Rocky Hill has a parking ban due to snow, then worship is automatically cancelled as well. As always, call the church office and leave a message with your phone number for any pastoral concerns, and your call will be returned as soon as possible.







It's the most wonderful time of the year!

15th Annual Cookie Walk

Saturday, December 16, 2017

10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

In Chapin Hall

Come fill a tin with homemade cookies and treats!

(Snow Date – December 17, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)

It's that time of year again! Cookies are in the air!

We are looking for people who can bake for the 16th Annual Cookie Walk.

Cookie walk involves A LOT of baking, setting up, and most importantly people to buy those luscious treats!

It's simple...bake if you can or come to Chapin Hall on the day of the walk and buy a tin of your choice and fill it up! Sign up for baking after church in Chapin Hall or if you prefer call Linda at 860-633-8413.

Proceeds from the walk will benefit the Youth trip in July and the Music Ministry.



All are invited to attend the
22nd Annual Memorial Tree Lighting Ceremony
on Wednesday December 6 at 6:30pm.

It is an evening of celebrating and remembering loved ones.
Giuliano-Sagarino Brooklawn Funeral Home
511 Brook Street, Rocky Hill
60-721-0087



CAC December Report



The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISAD) conducted a 2.5 day anti-racism training October 17-19, 2017. Thirty-two clergy from the Greater Hartford Sponsoring Committee attended along with eight CAC staff and board members. The First Congregational church of West Hartford generously hosted and sponsored the training. The training was challenging, but helped us all to understand and engage racism from a systemic and institutional level. We learned that before we move into being anti-racist institutions, we must first face the racism that is endemic in our own congregations. As the PISAB trainers reminded us, racism in not a failure of the system, but the design of the system.

It is also worth noting that the Greater Hartford Sponsoring Committee, made up of over 50 multi-faith clergy, have begun to do one-to-one meetings with members in their institutions to identify leaders to form Core Teams and build power.

On July 11, 2017, tenants of the Clay Arsenal Renaissance Apartments (CARS), with the support of CAC, held a public action at Shiloh Baptist Church on Albany Avenue to demand better housing. Despite the Landlord, Emmanuel Ku, getting hundreds of thousands of dollars in tax abatements and \$1.6 million in federal subsidies from Housing and Urban Development (HUD), CARA residents were stuck trying to raise families in hazardous housing. Since the initial action, tenants have continued to organize and advocate for themselves and their families. Tenants have been successful in getting the City to re-evaluate and address its policies, procedures, and implementation capacity. The tenants remain strong in their resolve and the campaign continues.

In collaboration with the South Marshall Street Interfaith Coalition and Immanuel Congregational Church, CAC has hired Tieasha Gayle, a resident of South Marshall Street, to begin building connections with other residents on South Marshall. In addition to orientation and training on organizing, Tieasha has gotten in on the ground immersion experience by also working with the Clay Arsenal Renaissance Apartments tenant leaders on the no-slumlord campaign. To learn more about Tieasha, visit our website: www.cac.org

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

Rich Pawlich-Pagliccio

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All are invited to InReach's COMFORT FOOD DINNER Saturday, January 27, 2018, in Chapin Hall at 5:30 PM.



Menu: Tossed Salad & Rolls, Hot Vegetables, Meat Loaf, Mashed Potato & Gravy, Ham, Macaroni & Cheese, a variety of Desserts, and Coffee, Tea, Soda.

Then get set to be drawn into the soul and spirit of the delta blues by the acoustic blues-men of THE COFFEE GRINDERS! They pepper their show with some delta blues history and trivia, too!

Cost is \$10.00 – Adults; \$5.00 – 4 to 12 years; Free – Children under 4 years old; Family cap \$35.00. Please call to reserve tickets with Jeannie Alessi 860/839-1321. Tickets will be on sale during January Coffee Hours. Snow date: January 28, 2018.



To all church members and friends: Please save the date for the Ordination of Lisa Eleck. The Committee on Church and Ministry of the Hartford Association has approved Lisa's ordination and it will take place on Sunday, January 28, 2018. A formal announcement and invitation will be coming soon.



Celebration X event April 6 - 8, 2018, Portland, Maine. sponsored by the New England Women of UCC

The New England Women's Celebration takes place every 4 years at various locations in New England. The purpose of the Celebrations is to reach women in the pews and to involve them in learning and sharing their faith beyond the local church and Conference setting. It is organized by women from United Church of Christ (UCC) congregations across New England, however women from all denominations and religious traditions are welcome to attend. For more information and to register, visit:. http://www.uccwomenscelebration.org/



Remember to Honor your Loved Ones With Christmas Poinsettias







The plants will adorn the sanctuary for worship on Sunday, December 24th through the New Year.

The cost is \$12.50 per plant.

Ordering deadline is Sunday, December 17th

Please fill out the information below and mail to Kim Burghoff (see address below) Given by:
Daytime Telephone number:
Dedication ("in loving memory of" or "in honor of" etc.): 1
2.
This year a choice of either a Red or White Poinsettia is available. Please select: [] RED POINSETTIA [] WHITE POINSETTIA [] I will pick-up my plant after worship on Sunday, December 24th
OR [] Use my plant to decorate the church through Christmas and the New Year.
Maka yaur ahaaka nayahla ta

Make your checks payable to:
Rocky Hill Congregational Church with "Poinsettia" in memo line and mail to:
Kim Burghoff, 204 Gray Fox Lane, Rocky Hill CT 06067.
You may call Kim with questions at 860 563-3287.

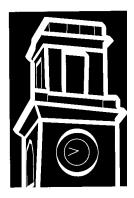
December Happy Birthday!

1 John Hoffman	15	Linda Grillo
2 Joe Kunzelman	17	Jacob Engel
3 Jennifer Cordes	20	Nicholas Jokl
4 John Hummel	24	Nancy Edwards
6 Marty Rowe	25	Jonathan Rutigliano
7 Robert Mullins	26	Janet Kunzelman
9 Amy Murk	28	Nathan Vann
14 Dave Hall	30	Krista Pender

Our Faith Formation Epiphany Pageant will be held during Worship on on Sunday, January 7th.

(Dress rehearsal for the Pageant will be on Saturday, January 6 at 10am.)





WORSHIP SCHEDULE Sunday Morning Worship Communion 1st Sunday 10:00 a.m. with childcare







4	5	
4	5	1
		6
7:00pm Women's AA 7:30pm Bell Choir	7:00pmBoards/Committees 7:00pm Hearing Voices	7:00pm L&C Choir 7:30pm Adult Choir
11 Office Closed Baking for	12 Baking for Cookie Walk ->	9:00am Breakfast Club Bob's Coffee Shop
7:00pm Women's AA	7:00pm Council	7:30pm Choir
18 9am LSP Christmas Party	19 Little Scholars Preschool closed until Jan 3→	20
7:00pm Women's AA 7:30pm Bell Choir	5:30pm Bonsai Group Christmas Party 7:00pm Hearing Voices	7pm LSP Board Mtg 7:30pm Choir
25 OFFICE CLOSED	OFFICE CLOSED	27 OFFICE CLOSED
Merry Christmas! 7:00pm Women's AA	7:00pm Hearing Voices	7pm Cedar Hollow 7:30pm Choir
Happy New Year! 2018		
	7:30pm Bell Choir 11 Office Closed Baking for Cookie Walk -> 7:00pm Women's AA 7:30pm Bell Choir 18 9am LSP Christmas Party 7:00pm Women's AA 7:30pm Bell Choir 25 OFFICE CLOSED Merry Christmas! 7:00pm Women's AA	7:30pm Bell Choir 11 Office Closed Baking for Cookie Walk -> 7:00pm Women's AA 7:30pm Bell Choir 18 9am LSP Christmas Party 7:00pm Women's AA 7:30pm Bell Choir 19 Little Scholars Preschool closed until Jan 3-> 7:00pm Bell Choir 19 Little Scholars Preschool closed until Jan 3-> 7:00pm Hearing Voices 25 OFFICE CLOSED Merry Christmas! 7:00pm Women's AA 7:00pm Hearing Voices 7:00pm Hearing Voices





2017

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2
	6pm Tamil School	
7 9:30am Music Together	8	9 Lessons & Carols Rehearsal
7:30pm Men's AA	6pm Tamil School	In Sanctuary 9am-6pm
9:30am Music Together	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	16 Cookie Walk 10:30am - 1:30pm.
Blue Christmas Service, 7pm	Cookie Walk baking	Chapin Hall Snow date: Sunday Dec 17
7:30pm Men's AA	6pm Tamil School	11:30am-1:00pm.
21 Tibetan Singing Bowls 7pm	22	23
7:30pm Men's AA	6pm Tamil School	Poinsettia delivery
28	29	30
OFFICE CLOSED	OFFICE CLOSED	
7:30pm Men's AA	6pm Tamil School	



Free-will food donations will be collected at the Festival of Lessons & Carols on December 10



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICES 10:00AM & 5:00 PM



Join us on Tuesday, January 2nd for the mailing of the Church Mouse. 9:30am in the Fiorilli Room.

ROCKY HILL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH 805 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill CT 06067 Telephone # 860 529-4167

Non-Profit Organization U.S. POSTAGE PAID Hartford, CT 06101

Permit #7

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED TIME VALUE MAIL

Mailed November 28, 2017



Jesus didn't turn people away.

Neither do we.

The United Church of Christ:

No matter who you are,

Or where you are on life's journey...

You're welcome here.

A Festival of
Nine Lessons and Carols
Sunday, December 10

4:00 p.m.



A free will offering for the Rocky Hill Food Bank will be collected.