OUR CHURCH’S MISSION STATEMENT

“To be a dynamic, welcoming, and caring community of Christian faith by weaving the thread of Christ into the tapestry of our lives.”

PASTOR’S POST

Dear Church Family,

Christmas this year will once again be very different for many of us due to the changes of 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic still impacts our lives, and while vaccinations and boosters have made a difference, the crisis is not over. We continue to lovingly navigate changes and want to show our care for each other and our community.

In this time of uncertainty, we have to remember that the promises of God remain sure and steadfast. The familiar Scripture passages of the Christmas story contain many themes, including: “Do not be afraid” (or the more emphatic translation “Fear not”). The shepherds, as well as Mary,
Joseph, and Zechariah, all needed this reassurance from the angels.
Our trust in God is one way to manage fear. During Advent we focus on the waiting time before Christmas. It is a time to reflect on the birth of Jesus, which shows God’s love for us. That love is the thing that carries us and inspires us. It is that same love that speaks to us in this time, to not be afraid, but trust that God is with us. And if God is with us, we are able to do anything.
We hope you will be able to attend the Christmas Eve services this week and celebrate the greatest news the world (and our lives) have known. Also, know that we will have a video of the service sent as soon as possible for those to celebrate as a church, however they feel comfortable and wherever they are this holiday season.

Blessings,

Pastor Malcolm

“But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, He is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:10-11).
Bible Study

(Pastor Malcolm will be away from December 27th until January 3rd. If there is a pastoral emergency, please call the church office.)

Communion, instead of the usual first Sunday of the month, will be on January 9th for Epiphany Sunday.

Daytime Bible Study is every Tuesday at 1:00 pm and Evening Bible Study is held the second and fourth Thursday at 7:00 pm. Bible studies will resume in January. Questions? Contact Pastor Malcolm.

Our next Loom Service will be Tuesday, January 11th at 7 p.m., in person, in the Gathering Room in the Parish House. Please invite your friends and neighbors to this new alternative service.

Our Loss and Grief Group led by Pastor Malcolm will hold their next meeting on Wednesday, January 12, 9:30, in the Library.
Thank you for your support of our **Fair Trade Sales** this year and for supporting the **Angel Tree**. Our **Homes for the Brave** collection brought in $320 to support our CT veterans.

We are still collecting for the **UCC Christmas Fund** which gives financial assistance to retired clergy and other church employees who are in need. The deadline is December 31st.

Our **January Outreach** Offering will be our annual contribution to the **Southbury Fuel Bank**. Although it’s been unseasonably warm thus far, frigid temperatures are coming!

**Save the date:** Sunday, January 30th—immediately following Fellowship Hour. We are pleased to be holding a **Women’s Clothing Swap**.

All of us on Outreach wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year! We appreciate all of your support.

Jodi, Chris, Cathy, JoAnn, Char, Lynn, Lillian, and Mary.
Wow! You did it!
We were able to deliver 120 cans of soups & chowders to the food bank.
This generosity means so much to so many!
Please keep it up.

Lainie

Guess what time it is! Sandwich Brigade Time!!! Outreach is looking for TEN sandwich makers for our January Sandwich Brigade. As always, bread, peanut butter, jam, gloves and hairnet will be supplied. Pick up of bags will be Thursday, January 20, after 10:30AM in the Gathering Room and completed sandwiches can be dropped off in the kitchen on Sunday, January 23 before church. If you would like to volunteer, please call or email Chris Dreton at holly422@gmail.com or 203-405-1052. One last thing - we are a bit low on Jam and would appreciate any donations. Thank you!
NEW START MINISTRY UPDATE

The New Start Ministry 10K, A Race Against Time, wrapped up on December 10 and I’m happy to report that we exceeded our goal of raising $10,000 towards local refugee resettlement.

Many, many thanks to those who joined Team SBCC For the Win, and also to the Outreach Committee, which donated a very generous $300 for the cause.

Our family is now well settled in their Waterbury apartment. The parents, who are native Pashto speakers, attend ESL classes from 8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. daily and are highly motivated to learn English so they can begin working. Both in their late 20s, they were professionals in Afghanistan but will start out in entry level positions as soon as their language skills allow. The son is enrolled in elementary school, where he has made friends, and the young daughter attends Pre-K at the YMCA. New Start team members visit daily to provide rides to medical appointments, the mosque and the grocery store, and to help with English, acculturation, financial literacy and more. The couple will welcome their third child in June.

Affiliated with Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services in New Haven, New Start Ministry is an interfaith group working to mobilize the community and create opportunities for refugees fleeing war, terror and persecution. We work to provide basic resources and support to help individuals and
families build new lives and work towards self-sufficiency in Connecticut.

This fall, IRIS welcomed 370 Afghan evacuees in less than 60 days, a number usually spread over a year’s time. They have committed to welcome about 400 more in the first nine months of 2022. Their advice to community resettlement groups like New Start Ministry is to “expect the unexpected.” At this time, some 25,000 to 35,000 Afghan evacuees remain on U.S. military bases. There is much work yet to be done.

Donations are welcome and can be made at newstartministryct.org

For additional information, visit the website or contact Jean Dunn at mailto:jdunn463@hotmail.com or 203-217-5711.

-FAITH FORMATION-

In Sunday School, we have been working on making our own advent wreaths and have enjoyed insightful conversations about our weekly themes: Hope, Love, Joy and Peace. Stop in to meet us at Fellowship Hour and see our work!

We are also thinking about what Christmas means to us and making ornaments to show how we feel. Check out our
bulletin board in the Gathering Room to learn about our ideas.

"Why do we decorate Christmas trees?"

Follow this link for a glimpse at the history of this beloved tradition. [Why do we have Christmas trees? The surprising history behind this holiday tradition.](nationalgeographic.com)

This poem caught my eye while looking at a small book titled “Christmas Programs for Children. I imagined myself as a shepherd listening to an angel telling me about the birth of a child lying in a manger, his name was Jesus. Then I was a king bringing a gift to this wondrous child.

Let us bring the gifts of Hope, Joy, Love and Peace this season to family, friends and our neighbors.

Merry Christmas and Blessings,

Miss Krista
Christmas Then and Now
by Kay Hoffman

Heaven’s glory filled Judean skies
That Christmas long ago
When angels sang glad tidings
To Shepherds in the fields below.

“Fear not—In Bethlehem this night,
A Savior’s born for all;
You’ll find Him wrapped in swaddling cloths
And laid in a manger stall.”

With trembling hearts the shepherds went
To find this wondrous thing,
And humbly knelt and worshiped there,
The little Savior-king.

Wise men studying eastern skies
Behind the brilliant ray,
Bearing gifts they followed the star
To where the Christ child lay.

We cannot kneel at the manger bed
As shepherds did of old
Nor bring rare gifts as wise men brought,
Myrrh, frankincense and gold.

We cannot do these things, it’s true,
“Our time” is not as then;
Still we can open our heart’s door,
Invite the Christ child in!

-PUBLIC RELATIONS-

Festive Sunday Dec 26

The day after Christmas is a Sunday. If you are still functioning after the holiday, please join us for Festive Sunday. Dress up in your festive attire, be it an ugly sweater or Santa hat! Whatever brings a smile to your face and joy to your heart!
Let's add some flavor and fun to the service!

Your PR Team
The new year is fast approaching and this is the perfect time to stop into our Library to select one of our many Daily Devotionals. The copies may be older, but the thoughts and lessons have the same message year to year. Come by and choose one of the devotionals set up on the library table. Worried about due dates? No problem! Due dates are in the new year of 2023 when you’ll be able to pick another devotional for that next year! Stop in, light the fire and sit for a while enjoying the Christmas decorations and help yourself to some chocolates.

Pastor’s Recommendation for a good read…

Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis

If you are looking for a book that talks about the basics of Christianity without being too confusing…this is the book for you. C.S. Lewis, as a writer in general, is really accessible. He shares complex ideas in simpler ways and helps answer things that we have probably wondered about. He explores the logical validity of Christianity. He defends the religion from critics, and looks in detail at what the life of a Christian is like. If you want to kick start your theological understanding or just refresh this is a great book for you.
Our Beautiful Crismon Tree

"Chrismon" is a combination of the words "Christ" and "monogram," and means "symbols of Christ." Chrismon’s are gold and white, representing majesty and purity. Ideas for fashioning them are developed from early Christian symbols, the Bible and church histories.

White is the liturgical (or Church) color for Christmas and symbolizes that Jesus was pure and perfect. Gold symbolizes His Majesty and Glory. Often displayed on an evergreen tree during the Christmas season, symbols such as stars, crosses, fish, crowns, and the alpha and omega remind us of Christ's identity, his story, and of the Holy Trinity.
This past Sunday in church I heard a beautiful sound that I haven’t heard in our church for years. That sound brought me much JOY. As I recall that sound it still brings me JOY. It was the sound of a small baby’s coos and gurgles.

I felt compelled to text the grandmother of that little baby and asked her to convey the following message to the baby’s mother, Tatyana: “I LOVED seeing and hearing Ahlani in church this morning. The sounds of little children have always been “music to my ears”. I LOVE, LOVE, LOVE it! I hope she comes with the baby a lot more!”

It’s a wonderful sound that I hope and pray brings JOY to all who hear it and I hope we are blessed to hear it often.

Seeing young children coming to church regularly and hearing a baby’s chatter are gifts for us to nurture and love.

Wishing you all the gift of joy of the voices of little children,

JoAnn H Bolin
A special thank you to all who supported our Victorian Tea on December 11. If you contributed to baked goods, your baking was deeply appreciated. There were a lot of elves scurrying around that day, making, and serving lunch to our guests. As always, the knitting was a hit! Most of all, we like to think the Tea provided a peaceful respite from a busy and sometimes overwhelming time of year. Thank you to all.
Enjoy this awesome clip of the Christmas Story! The adult actors are just as good as the child narrators. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suowe2czxcA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suowe2czxcA)

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**26 ACTS OF KINDNESS**

In memory of the Sandy Hook tragedy, the anniversary of which is the 14th this month, you are invited to participate in 26 Acts of Kindness. For the remainder of December, sprinkle one or up to 26 (or more!) acts of kindness throughout your day and share some of the things you did by emailing: [mailto:sbcc_secretary@yahoo.com](mailto:sbcc_secretary@yahoo.com). If you know how the act was received, share that story, too! Our acts can uplift one another and many people in our communities! Below are a few of the “acts” we have heard of so far:

1. My next-door neighbor uses her condo as a second home and was going to be coming up for Fourth of July, so she had packages delivered by Amazon and asked if I would put them in her garage. I had the automatic door opener as I had done this before. But packages came and she did not. No phone calls or texts. Shortly before Thanksgiving more packages arrived. I thought, oh she’s coming for Thanksgiving. Found out she broke her foot. Now more packages arrived, 17 to be exact. Then four days ago, two grocery bags marked perishable arrived, but not my neighbor. Yesterday she arrived after broken foot, operation, and rehabilitation.
Plus finishing up an old job and getting a new one. I was glad to help but now Amazon leaves packages at her house if they can’t find the correct condo.

2. The young woman who helps me clean and do heavy jobs called me at 10:00 pm and asked me if I could help her by picking up her car. I got dressed and we picked up the car. She was very apologetic and upset, but she didn’t have anyone to help her. I said she was helping me too, because I needed to do 26 good deeds!

3. I visit a friend's mother weekly. She recently turned 100. She has short term memory loss, but she lights up when she sees me. I try to visit at lunch time, because she sits at a large table with other residents. Over the past year I have become acquainted with them and call them my friends. I watch them eat and start asking questions, before long, they are talking with me and to each other. I came to cheer them up, and when I walk away, I find that I am feeling so happy as if I am walking on air.

4. My neighbor has a hard time walking, and she has a bedridden husband. I noticed that she would take her trash bags to her car and drive them to the garbage bins. Whenever I see those trash bags outside her door, I get them, they magically disappear, and I get extra steps in for the day.

5. Whenever I am in church or in fellowship hour, I make sure to reach out to people, not only to my friends, but to people who may be new or to people who are sitting alone.

6. I have a neighbor who has had to work two jobs this past year. I asked him if it would be helpful if I took his dog out for an early evening walk. He was so grateful. Molly is a happy dog, and with permission I kept her out for hours sitting with the neighbors during the summer evenings.
7. As I grew older my dad told me that if you see something that needs doing do it. I complained that my brother never saw anything to do. Dad said, “Your brother has missed those opportunities”. To this day I employ that idea. I look around to see what needs doing and I do it.

8. Noticing is something that is part of my nature. I notice people looking pretty or handsome. I notice people who do things that others may not see. I notice new outfits. I notice people’s eyes, their smiles, their manner etc. and then I tell them what I notice about them. People enjoy being acknowledged.

9. Coming out of the grocery store, I heard a woman exclaiming something about a lost boot. I looked up to see an elegantly dressed woman cradling her toddler, who indeed had one bare foot hanging out in the chilly December breeze. I looked around quickly and we both simultaneously saw the little boot on the ground. Instead of making the mom try to juggle toddler and retrieval at once, I said, "I'll get this!" and got the boot back to mom and little girl.

10. We recently had an internet outage which Spectrum stumbled all over themselves to figure out and fix, so when I saw the work truck at the pole across from our driveway, I knew the crew was probably overworked. I was on my way to some errands so I grabbed a green-and-white candy cane and handed it to the guy (working solo!) through the car windows, thanking him for what he was doing.

11. I recently have begun the habit of looking for people that are alone, in church or other crowds, those who are sitting or standing by themselves, especially during the holidays when everyone seems to have someone to celebrate the season. The response has been so rewarding, the smiles and hugs are priceless. It makes me feel included in a circle too. One lady told me she thought no one liked her
when I approached her at church, where she usually sat alone. Love shared is so beautiful!

-THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS-

- Richard Broaderick
- John Picarazzi, Jr.
- family
- Joanne P.
- Mary Ann Wadas family
- Ray
- Al
- Mr. Gerund
- Linda M.
- Nora
- Cheryl
- Michele F.
- Diane
- Rita
- Jeff
- Andrew
- John
- Renee
- John
- Chrissy
- Nancy M.
- Larry S.
- Jennifer G.
- The DeForest Family
- The Merrill Family
- Pam Hine and family in the loss of her brother, Rob
- Rev. Peter Meister
- The Lawson Family in the loss of Linda Mitchell Lawson
- The Crane Family in the loss of Jerry.
- The Fortier Family in the loss of Lucien

- Andy S.
- Judy S.
- Peter C.
- Jean H.
- Tiernan
- Leon Saddler
- Sandy
- Cathy
- Brenda
- Bob Harrison
- Eva H.
- Debbie’s Sister-In-Law
- Luke
- Darlene
- David
- Robert
- Joyce H.
- George S.
- Richard
- Jack
- Nancy G.
- Bert
• Mary Sullivan’s nephew who has just been diagnosed with cancer.

-BIRTHDAYS-

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacon Lowell</td>
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<td>Krystna Isbell</td>
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<td>Natalie Dahl</td>
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<td>Cynthia Mather</td>
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<td>Sara Locke</td>
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<td>Judy Simpson</td>
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<td>Mary Sullivan</td>
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<td>Joan Kubista</td>
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<td>Joan McAleer</td>
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<td>Lynn Alexander</td>
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<td>Amy Crowdis</td>
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<td>Sue Torrey</td>
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<td>Sharon Wolf</td>
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<td>Isabella Watson</td>
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<td>Francesca Sergi (Graziano)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Riley Peterson (Cathy Peterson's son)</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cathy Somers</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amy Smith</td>
<td>31</td>
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Every Week:
- Sundays: Worship 10:00 a.m., Fellowship Hour, 11:00 a.m.
- Mondays: Dance, 4 - 6 p.m.
- Tuesdays: Knit-Wits, 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
  Daytime Bible Study, 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.
- Fridays: AA Meeting, 6 - 9 p.m.

Every Month:
- 2nd Tuesdays: Loom Service, 7 p.m.
- 3rd Sunday: Deacons Meeting (following services)
- 4th Tuesdays: Council, 7:15 p.m.
- 2nd Wednesday: Loss & Grief Group, 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
- 4th Wednesday: Council, 7 p.m.
- 1st Thursday: Property, 7 p.m.
- 2nd Thursday: ONA, 10 a.m.
- 2nd & 4th Thursdays: PR Committee Meeting, 11:00 a.m.
- 2nd & 4th Thursdays: Even Bible Study, 7 p.m.
- 3rd Wednesday: Trustees, 7 p.m.
- Girls Night Out: Dates TBD Monthly

Upcoming Events:

On December 26th, please join us for Festive Sunday. Dress up in your festive attire, be it an ugly sweater or Santa hat! Whatever brings a smile to your face and joy to your heart!

Save the date: Sunday, January 30th—immediately following Fellowship Hour. We are pleased to be holding a Women’s Clothing Swap.