



CHURCH STAFF

Thomas L. Kennedy, Pastor 267-6540

Jill Walker, Director of Parish Life, Development and Education 267-7180

Carol Westcote,
Director of Music & Church Secretary 267-2654

Jerry Gerkey, Chatter Editor 267-9513

Church Office 860-267-4959

Fax Number 860-267-7424

E-Mail Address cceh@juno.com

Website <http://www.cc-eh.org>



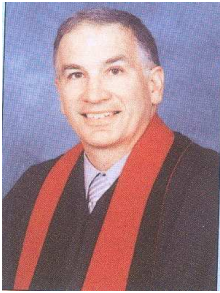
THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

P.O. BOX 237, Main Street
East Hampton, Connecticut 06424

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THOTS FROM TOM



The season of Advent is here! It is hard to believe that it is December already! This year, as we observe the season of Advent, we will again use the color blue for our Advent wreath candles, using blue candles for three of our Advent Sundays. We will use a pink candle for the last Sunday of Ad-

vent. You may wonder why we made the change from having purple candles. At the request of the Diaconate, I am sharing with you excerpts from my December, 2006 *Chatter* column, which explained why we made the change of color in our Advent candles.

Traditionally, both seasons of Advent and Lent were penitential times of preparation. Advent prepared for the birth of the Messiah, and Lent prepared for the death of the Messiah. The color purple has been historically connected with both seasons. In Lent, the color was associated with penitence, suffering and fasting. In Advent, the color was also associated with penitence, but since purple also connotes royalty, it was additionally associated with welcoming the Advent or coming of the King. The use of the same color purple for both of the seasons of Advent and Lent made an interesting connection between Jesus' birth and his death, because the Nativity, or the Incarnation, cannot be separated from the Crucifixion. Jesus came into the world, making the "Word made flesh." He dwelt among us and through his life and teaching, revealed God and His grace to the world. Through his suffering, he experienced death, and revealed the promise of resurrection to the world.

However, in the last ten years or so, as Protestant theologians and church leaders have reflected on the meaning of the season of Advent, and reviewed its traditional theological connections to the

season of Lent, there has been a growing desire and movement among them to want to give the season of Advent an identity separate and apart from the season of Lent. Because of this, as we prepare for the coming or return of the Messiah, there is now increasing emphasis on Advent as a *season of anticipation* rather than it being seen as a *season of penitence*. This shift in emphasis is reflected in a change of the colors used in many churches to observe the Advent season.

Today, many Protestant churches now use blue to distinguish the season of Advent from the season of Lent, where purple is still the color that is used. Blue, like purple, is also a color that is used to symbolize royalty. The color blue also symbolizes the night sky, and the waters of Genesis 1, which points to the beginning of a new creation, and the anticipation of the impending announcement of the King's coming.

Since in our church's observance of Advent we are now placing more emphasis on the anticipation of the coming and return of Christ, rather than on the penitential aspects of the season, our Board of Diaconate made a decision last year to change the color for the season of Advent from purple, to blue.

This year we have added another dimension to the Advent wreath. Our candles are now oil filled, and in their style match our altar candles. The candles will now not burn down and spill wax everywhere as they have done in the past! We have also moved the pink or "joy" candle from being lit on the third Sunday to being lit on the fourth Sunday of Advent, signifying the climax of the Advent Season on the last Sunday before Christmas. I hope you enjoy the new color and our new candles and find renewed meaning and appreciation for this important season.



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On a personal note, I was so moved to see how many church people came forward to assist with the funeral of Evelyn Pasternak. Evelyn was a much-loved member of our church, who was approaching her fiftieth anniversary of church membership. Your assistance with hosting the funeral service, baking things for the reception afterwards, and being on hand to help during the reception meant a lot to her daughter Cindy. The presence of the church family was a great source of comfort. Thank you to all who assisted.

Finally, Lois and I want to wish all of you a wonderful holiday season. May your Christmas be memorable and joyous, and may your new year be fun and full of meaning. I will be taking some time away, beginning on Christmas day, and ending on January 2. On Sunday, December 30, in my absence, the deacons, Carol and I have prepared a service that features the singing of Christmas carols. This is a particularly meaningful service, one that evokes many memories of Christmases past.

Have a blessed holiday season!

Peace,

Tom

Christmas Eve Candlelighting Service

Our traditional Christmas Eve candlelighting service will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve in our sanctuary. This service will feature scripture lessons and carols from our Pilgrim Hymnal. We will conclude the service as we do every year with the singing of "Silent Night" by candlelight. Come early to get a seat. Note: this is a family service; your young children are welcome to sit with you. Childcare will not be provided for this service.

DEATHS

Our whole church family is saddened by the sudden death of Evelyn Pasternak on November 12. Evelyn was an active and faithful member of our church for 44 years. We extend our love and sympathy to Evelyn's daughter, Cindy, and to all her family and friends.

Thank You

Thank you to the church family members who said prayers and sent cards during the loss of my mother Evelyn. Thank you also to Jill and her "helping hands" committee for the delicious luncheon following the funeral. Your thoughtfulness was greatly appreciated during this most difficult time.

Cindy Pasternak

Thank You

Thank you for the many cards and words of sympathy since my mother passed away. Your outpouring of love, concern and support continue to be a great comfort during this difficult time. May God bless you all.

Lorraine Barlow

ANNUAL REPORTS DUE

Each board and committee of the church is asked to submit a report for 2007 to the church office by Sunday, January 6. Please try to honor the date—the window for preparation of the reports is tight. Thank you!

Carol



Women's Fellowship Potluck

at the home of Nancy Dolde
10 Bevin Blvd
Monday, December 3
at 6:30 p.m.

All women are invited!

Bring a dish to share and join us for
great food and conversation
January book discussion "Walk in a Re-
laxed Manner"
By Joyce Rupp

Y2K December Calendar

Wednesday, December 5
5:30-6:45 p.m.
Bring \$3 for pizza
Friends welcome!

Wednesday December 19
Christmas Party Potluck
5:30-6:45 p.m.

Bring a dish or dessert to share
that has the color red or green AND
a \$5 wrapped gift for our exchange

Kudos Korner

Thanks go out to everyone who helped with setting up, serving food and clean up for our Vendor Fair. Special thanks to Lisa Aarrestad and Emily Wilson for chairing the event. Thanks to all the church

mice that brought in coats for the New Britain Street Ministry and donations of food for the Food Bank Thanksgiving baskets.

Thank you Carol Mandigo and her helpers Ross Gates, Lorraine Barlow, and Jeanette Knotek for baking all the pumpkin breads for the Food Bank Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets. Thank you Pony Express Trail Bosses and everyone that made the delicious assortment of chili for our Thanksgiving lunch! Kudos also to the Y2K Youth Group for baking all the corn bread for the meal. Remember to let Jill Walker know if you see a church mouse in action so we can thank them in future Kudos Korners.

Helping Hands

Our Helping Hands are available when you or someone you know from our church family is in need of some meals, a ride to appointments, friendly company, or help with simple household tasks. Please call the office (267-4959) or Jill Walker (267-7180) to request some Helping Hands.

Also, please let Jill know if someone from our church family would appreciate receiving a greeting card of condolence, congratulations or cheer. Karen Gallmon has been our truly church mouse-like card minister for the last two years. Many of you have received her kindhearted words on behalf of the church family.

Seeds of Hope Update

Our mission trip to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota will be July 19-25. Adults and current High School students are invited and encouraged to participate. Talk to Jill Walker ASAP for more information or to reserve a spot. A \$75 deposit is due at this time. This will be the 5th summer we volunteer with the Re-Member organization and exploration has begun to do a mission pro-

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ject at a different location in 2009. So, if you've been thinking about helping at Pine Ridge, then as Nike says, "just do it" before you miss the chance!

Thanks to everyone who purchased Christmas greens. They will be available for pick up on Sunday, December 9.

Bring your empty bottles and cans to the furnace room on the first floor for recycling.

Make your Christmas gift cards list and place your Scrip orders soon! Sunday, December 16 will be the last day to order Scrip with a guaranteed delivery for Christmas. Stop by the table in Fellowship Hall to check out the extensive list of retailers, restaurants, recreation, travel and home services businesses that participate.

The next Seeds of Hope meeting will be after church on Sunday, January 6.

Church School Pageant

Church School children will present "The Road to Christmas" during worship on Sunday, December 23. Any church school family who did not receive a letter with rehearsal details can get the information from Jill.

Nate Abraham is directing the pageant for his Confirmation class project. Nate is a Freshman at EHHS and has performed in Community Theater for many years.

Reminder: No Church School on December 30th-Happy New Year!

Prayer Chain Information

Did you know that we have a Prayer Chain made up of over a dozen people? During their personal times of prayer each week these folks include prayer requests received from the congregation. Knowing that others are praying for you or special people in your life can be comforting, and reassur-

ing that God travels all roads with us.

Dave Kneeland is our Prayer Chain liaison. He provides an updated prayer request list most weeks via email, though the list can be mailed the old fashioned way. Prayers are then said on behalf of all those listed.

In order to respect privacy, the following improved guidelines are provided:

**When you contact Dave (email address is Joda625@aol.com, phone number 267-9553) to request prayers for yourself, include any information you choose pertaining to your request (i.e. medical diagnosis, life situation, etc.)

**When requesting prayers for someone else, it is important to inform that person of your intentions so you can confirm with them what information should be included with the request. However, if you would like to request prayers for someone without their knowledge or before you talk with them simply, provide no personal information other than "please include prayers for Bob Smith, brother-in-law of John Doe".

**Be sure to update Dave so he can keep the list accurate and current.

You can also contact Dave to become part of the prayer chain list. He will provide you with simple guidelines on prayer chain participation.

Beginning in mid-January, we will be starting a weekly **Prayer Circle** that will gather in the library every Sunday at 9:45 a.m. for group prayer. A lay person will be the welcomer and will convene with a prayer or meditative thought. Participants will then have the chance to offer or listen to personal prayers of celebration, contemplation, petition for God's presence, thanksgiving, or whatever the heart desires. Prayer is powerful and uplifting when shared in a loving place. Come on in as often as the spirit moves you.



Christmas Tree of Ribbons and Love

During Advent, our sanctuary will be decorated with traditional seasonal greens including a Christmas tree that over the years has become significant to all of us. Our church school children will create ornaments for the tree.

Each week in December there will be baskets of red ribbons in the entrance to the sanctuary and on the coffee table in Fellowship Hall. Please take as many ribbons as you want and tie them, in memory of loved ones, to the branches of our tree. As the weeks go by the tree will be transformed into our Tree of Ribbons and Love. Christmas is an especially poignant time to sense the absence of our special people. The memorial ribbons bring them into our midst as we wait to celebrate Jesus' birth.

A Wall of Christmas Greetings

If you are sending out Christmas cards, you are invited and encouraged to send a greeting card to our church family. The cards will be displayed for all to enjoy in Fellowship Hall. The church address (just in case!) is P.O. Box 237, East Hampton, CT 06424.

Building and Grounds

Our building is really not much different from our homes - a place that we love but requiring tender love and care. Our group gathers once a month or as needed to tend to some of these needs. Let Brian McLellan (267-4554) know if you notice something in need of attention.

In November the group met to declutter the storage rooms, do dump runs, replace the outside storage area door due to vandalism, clean the kitchen, put

down the storm windows, trim the bushes along the sidewalk, repair our movie screen hanging over the stage, and begin cleaning the miles of wood work in the halls. The names of the people who assisted with this last job are being withheld to protect them from their spouses lest they end up doing this work at home!

The sub-committee is also in the process of establishing a capital needs assessment to determine the larger scale needs of our facility to present to the Finance Board in 2008.

MUSIC COMMITTEE

Music Needs Assessment Survey

The Music Committee has created a Music Needs Assessment Survey. This survey will help the committee with the music outreach of our church and will provide helpful information for the Music Director Search Committee. The survey will be available the first two Sundays in December and a copy is included in this Chatter (see page 8). The Music Committee is asking everyone to fill out a survey so we can address the music needs of our church.

Heartbeat Dixieland Jazz Band

The Music Committee welcomes back the popular Heartbeat Dixieland Jazz Band. On January 13th they will provide the music for our morning worship service.

Linen, Clothing, Book Sale

The annual Linen, Clothing and Book Sale will be held on February 23. More information will be provided in the January Chatter.



MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM COSA

'Tis the season for the spirit of giving. COSA has many opportunities for you to help our community this Christmas!

CHRISTMAS WISHES

The Middlesex chapter of DCF has identified 15 children in need of sponsorship this Christmas. The list and tags will be on display in fellowship hall, along with the due date. These gifts should NOT be wrapped.

FAMILY TO FAMILY

The Middletown Family Advocacy group has a family that we have adopted this Christmas. They have identified their wishes as well. These wishes will also be on display in fellowship hall along with their due date. The gifts should not be wrapped but if you would like to attach wrapping paper that would be appreciated.

PROJECT CHRISTMAS

The East Hampton Social Services department had identified 5 children to whom we could provide Christmas gifts of warm clothing. The tags flew off the tree (all in One Sunday). Thank you very much for your generosity. These gifts are due back on December 3rd for distribution to the families that week. They should not be wrapped, although you may add wrapping paper with the gift if you would like.

GIVING TREE

Each year we decorate the giving tree with donations of socks, hats, gloves, mittens, and scarves for the needy this winter. The tree will stay up until

after the holiday and the items will be distributed in January. The food bank has indicated that they are in great need of men's socks this year.

COAT DRIVE

Thank you to everyone who donated winter coats. The coats were delivered to the New Britain Street ministry as well as our local Food bank.

PROJECT THANKSGIVING

Thank you to all those folks who donated items for the food bank. Your contributions were greatly appreciated! The food bank supports over 50 families in our town, as well as many seniors. We would like to give a special thank you to Carol Mandigo, and her helpers Ross Gates, Lorraine Barlow, and Jeanette Knotek. They baked over 150 pumpkin breads for our town Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets. Together with your generous food donations, our church family has made the lives of some East Hampton neighbors much happier this Thanksgiving!

FAMILY ADVOCACY

COSA recently was contacted by the Family Advocacy program in Middletown asking for our help. They are consistently in need of the following items to help the families they support. There will be a box in front of the office labeled Family Advocacy to collect the items (next to the food bank basket).

Diapers
Pull-ups
Baby Wipes
Food Cards (Stop and Shop, Shaws, CVS)



WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

On November 11, our church community was pleased to welcome into our membership two couples with young children.



Kevin and Alison Daley have four wonderful children, **Aidan, Ailie, Annin, and Abigail**, ages 1 through 8. Alison grew up in East Hampton, went away to college and graduate school, but soon after she and Kevin were married, they decided to buy a house in East Hampton. They say that they are very impressed with the sense of community in our church. Kevin is a social studies/history teacher in an agriculture school in New Haven and Alison is an Associate Professor/Pediatric Nurse Practitioner at Yale University School of Nursing and Yale New Haven Hospital. Welcome to the Daleys!



We are also thrilled to welcome the **Kohlers** to our

church. **Mark Kohler** grew up in a farming community in upstate New York and moved to Connecticut in 1998, when he obtained a job with Travelers Insurance in Hartford. After spending 6 years doing environmental claims, he moved to his current position at Travelers, managing litigation under various insurance products issued to, and for the protection of, private company executives. Mark attended undergraduate school at Bucknell University in PA where he met **Nancy**, who grew up on Long Island and moved to CT after graduating from Bucknell University. She received her master's degree in Early Childhood Special Education from St. Joseph's College and greatly enjoyed teaching kindergarten in the Durham/Middlefield school district for over 6 years. Mark and Nancy moved to East Hampton in 2005, and Nancy recently experienced a career change to fulltime stay-at-home mom. She enjoys cooking, crafting, and both she and Mark enjoy doing projects around the house, but their greatest joy comes from spending time with their precious 13-month-old daughter, **Leah**.

USHERS

December Ushers: Thanks so much for this special ministry to our church family.

- December 2 – Tom and Sheri McCabe
- 9 – Roger and Cindy Abraham
- 16 – Art and Donna Marsden
- 23 – Jim and Pam Magoon
- December 24 – Rick and Jill Walker
- Ron Hastings and Joanne Kneeland
- 30 – John and Jackie Hage



PONY EXPRESS UPDATE

Although our Pony Express intentional giving drive is at an end, there are a few results trailing in. Bill and I would like to thank all the Trail Bosses for their work, as well as the Parish Life Committee who aided us in preparing the trail bags. Also a big thank you to the cooks who prepared the kick-off breakfast and the cooks who contributed to our chili lunch at the conclusion of the drive.

Most of you are aware that the pledge drive forms the backbone of our annual budget and provides the bulk of our fixed operating expenses for the year.

With 110 of our regular donors accounted for, we have pledges in the amount of \$126,490, compared to last year's total of \$150,670 from 130 donor individuals and families.

At present, it is too early to say how the Finance Committee will deal with the shortfall. It is safe to say that it will cause some lively debate before a final budget is presented to the congregation in January.

Many thanks to all who have contributed.
Respectfully, Karen Evertson

Moderator

With our Pony Express results below last year's, that means all of us will have to donate more time and energy to make our fundraisers more profitable.

Our church is a vital part of our families and this community; it is like your home, it needs constant attention to keep it in good condition.

When the sign-up sheets go up asking for help, don't stand back to see if the person next to you will step up. We all have a vested interest in this church; it is up to all of us to make this the greatest church it can be.

Anyone that has ideas for fundraisers or how to cut expenses, please see me or put suggestions in the council box by the church office.
Thank you, Jerry Gerkey

MUSIC COMMITTEE NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Please check the types of music you would like to be used in our worship service.

- Gospel
- Contemporary
- Traditional (Pilgrim hymnal)
- Ethnic (Native American, African, etc.)
- Christian rock
- Other _____

Currently we have senior and bell choirs, please check other types of choirs that you would like to have.

- Barbershop/Sweet Adeline
- A cappella
- Chime
- Youth/Teen
- Other _____

Would you like to have special performances, recitals and musicals presented by the church?

- yes no

Please list any musical instruments that you would like to have played during our worship service.

Suggestions and ideas for our church's music outreach: _____

Place the survey form in the offering plate or leave it at the church office (POB 237).



POINSETTIA ORDER

Please complete this form if you wish to order a **poinsettia** for the chancel for Christmas. They are \$00 each. Indicate whether you wish to leave the plant or take it following the Christmas Eve service. Place the form with your payment in the offering plate or leave it at the church office (POB 237) by Sunday, December 16.

Given by _____

In memory of (or in gratitude for) _____

I wish to _____leave _____take the poinsettia.
