

Thots From Tom

We are in the season of Advent, a season which leads to the day and season of Christmas. Advent is a season of waiting for something to happen; it is a time of expectancy and anticipation, as God's people wait for the return of the Messiah. In addition to our anticipation of the return of the Messiah, Advent is also that time when we look forward with great expectation to Christmas, where we will celebrate the birth of our Messiah.

Advent also comes at a time when we have the least amount of daylight, and the nights are the darkest. Accordingly, Advent is a time when we long and look forward with anticipation to the return of light, the return of longer days to our part of the world. It is no mistake that centuries ago Advent and Winter Solstice observances were mixed together, because Winter Solstice observances looked for the return of light (the sun) into their world as we, at this time of year, look during the season of Advent to the return of the Son (the Christ), into ours.

Historically in our church, Advent also includes time for a different kind of anticipation, one of a new year replete with new committee members and a new budget which reflects the needs, challenges and mission goals of our church. During the month of December our nominating committee seeks nominations for our various committees for presentation at our annual meeting, and our finance committee develops a budget based on the results of our Intentional Giving Campaign which is presented at our annual budget hearing and annual meeting. All this work anticipates yet another year of fulfilling service in ministry to Jesus Christ.

Two things that must be considered as we look ahead are first, will the church have the committee leadership necessary to accomplish the tasks we are challenged to meet in the coming year as a church called in service to do mission on behalf of Jesus Christ, and second, has the church received the necessary pledge promises required to meet those tasks and challenges as reflected in our budget? While we have never failed to obtain most of the committee leadership necessary to lead the church into each new year, to date it appears that the 2010 pledges are not sufficient for the church to meet the needs we have in our budget. We are a bit short.

So I greet this coming Advent season with greater anticipation than usual because the financial challenges placed on our 2010 budget and the decisions that will need to be made during this Advent season regarding those financial challenges will be at least equal to the challenges that we faced in 2009. The difficult economy still continues to challenge us! The response to the intentional giving endeavor just completed has not quite equaled the pledging we received in 2009, and unfortunately our current 2009 budget featured a forty percent reduction from the 2008 budget in everything except salaries (which were frozen) and utilities (which went up), and even with those reductions, we still had a deficit for 2009 that we had to eliminate. The consequences of those reductions was that we had to zero out our historical and traditional contributions to Our Church's Wider Mission (denominational and Connecticut Conference support) as well as other local missions advocated by our Committee On Social Action (COSA), and we cut spending on Christian Education curricula, building and office equipment maintenance, snowplowing and lawn care.. However, there was good news because our deficit

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reduction efforts at Easter resulted in the church eliminating the deficit for 2009, and we had enough left over so that we were able to make contributions to most of the mission and restore some funds to other areas where we had to make painful reductions.

So as we enter the season of Advent I anticipate that we may be faced with most of the same scenarios and painful decisions that we faced in 2009. However, I also further anticipate that we in the church will continue to meet the challenges placed before us as we struggle to answer the challenges and callings of being the church in this difficult economic time. We will not fail.

May God be with us on the journey ahead. Peace and good tidings during this Advent and Christmas season!

Peace,
Tom

Christmas Eve Service

Our annual Christmas Eve Candlelighting service, a service of lessons and carols will begin at 7:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve. Please come early to secure a seat!

Study Leave Time for Pastor Tom

The pastor will be taking his last of two weeks of study leave from December 25 until January 2. While the office will be closed on December 25 and 26, and will be open with perhaps some reduced hours the week between Christmas and New Year's, Tom will be on call for emergencies. Just leave a message on the church office answering machine if Ann is out of the office.

DECEMBER USHERS

Dec. 6	Sue Binge & Joyce Jasinski
Dec. 13	Tanya & Paul Provost
Dec. 20	Art & Donna Marsden
Dec. 24	Jill & Rick Walker
	And Joanne & David Kneeland
Dec. 27	??

Thanks to all members who have ushered this past year. A sign up sheet is always posted on the bulletin board under the clock in Fellowship Hall. We appreciate members signing up during coffee hour and giving of themselves in this special ministry.

Happy Holidays

Karen Gallmon and Billie Gerkey

MODERATOR

As we gather the final information on this year's pledge drive, I wish to extend my sincere thanks to all those that have pledged and to wish all a Merry Christmas and a much brighter New Year.

Jerry Gerkey



Y2K December Calendar

Wednesday, December 2
5:30-6:45 Bring \$4 for tacos

Wednesday, December 16
5:30-6:45

CHRISTMAS POTLUCK

Bring a dish to share- dessert provided and-
Bring a wrapped \$5 gift for a grab bag game
Friends always welcome!

Christmas Tree of Ribbons and Love

Beginning December 6, our Christmas tree will be in the sanctuary ready to be covered in red ribbons of remembrance of our loved ones that have passed away. Ribbons will be in baskets near the tree. Tie as many ribbons as you choose to branches of the tree, and bring the special people from our lives into our sanctuary as we share the Advent and Christmas season.

Wall of Christmas Greetings

When you're addressing your Christmas cards be sure to send one to the church (PO 237) and we'll display it on our wall of Christmas greetings in Fellowship Hall for all to enjoy!

Third Sunday of the Month Lunch Bunch December 20 after coffee hour

Come share a pay as you go lunch at Rossini's, and enjoy catching up with friends or meeting some

new folks you've been meaning to get to know, as we count down the days until Christmas!! Let Jill Walker know during coffee hour that day if you plan to attend.

Christmas Pageant Reminder:

1st graders and older that are in the pageant need to be at church at 8:30 on December 20th. Prek/Kind arrive at 9:30. Also- there is no Church School December 27 and January 3. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all from the Christian Education committee!

Kudos Korner

Jerry Gerkey for replacing the light switch in the back of the sanctuary, Jed Dolde and members of the Buildings and Grounds Committee for replacing the steeple lights, and Ed Loveland of EL Construction for installing an underground storm drain in the side yard of the church. Bill and Karen Evertson, Deb Robinson, Jerry Gerkey, Ann Bur-rachi, Jill Walker and Tom Kennedy for their tireless efforts on developing our Intentional Giving Campaign, and all of the "Tour Guides" who shepherded the "Tour Bags" along their "tours" back to the church, and all of those who made a pledge to the church for 2010. THANK YOU!

Thank you to the following church mice:
Special thanks to Carol Mandigo and her band of merry bakers for baking pumpkin breads to be included in the Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets, provided by our Food Bank- Sue Carr, Lynn Hastings, Jeanette Knotek and Betsy Gates.

Helping Hands

Be sure to let Jill Walker (860-267-7180) or the church office know if you or someone you know of



from our church family is in need of some extra helping hands. We have folks available to provide meals, rides to appointments, help with simple household tasks or just come over and visit! Thanks to the following for lending a helping hand in November: Karen Gallmon, Marianne Kelsey, Whitney Fielding, Anita Guerin, Billie Gerkey, Lorraine Barlow, Lynda Tinney, Donna Marsden, David and Joanne Kneeland.

SEEDS OF HOPE TRIP INFORMATION

Saturday, June 26- Saturday, July 3, 2010
School For Life, Appalachian Mountains,
Gary, West Virginia

Visit Schoolforlifeinc.com for information
and video clips

Work Options: Volunteers will have the option to do home repairs for the full day **OR**- home repairs for the morning and then assist with a 2 hour Bible Camp that we provide in the afternoon. Other opportunities include visiting at the nursing home, home visits, interacting with village children by organizing impromptu activities.

Details: We will be staying at the School For Life - bunkrooms, kitchen, bathroom facilities, and outdoor recreation area. We will be preparing our own meals. We will have the opportunity to learn about the poverty issues of the area, as well as experience the natural beauty of the mountains and surroundings

Itinerary: Depart Saturday, June 26 app 10:00 AM for a 6 hour drive
Overnight at the Church World Service Brethren Center, New Windsor, MD

with dinner and breakfast, recreational areas at center

Depart- 9:00 AM for a 6.5 hour drive to Gary, WV
Return: July 2- Depart Friday afternoon 2PM for Brethren Center (dinner on the road). Depart Saturday after breakfast 9:30 AM, return app 4:00 PM

Estimated cost: \$500 before fundraising. Our

goal is to raise \$300 for each participant which would make the out of pocket cost \$200 plus personal \$\$

Final cost will depend on the number of participants as well.

What to do next: Talk to Jill if you need more information. Once you've decided to be part of our group please submit to Jill a \$75 deposit by December 6. Check is payable to Congregational Church of East Hampton. Our next meeting will be Sunday, January 10th after church.

Be Part of Seeds of Hope
Even if you're Staying Home!

**Bring in clean bottles and cans (leave them in the furnace room) for recycling

**Purchase a 2010 calendar during coffee hour thru December 20th

**Purchase gift/prepaid cards each Sunday during coffee hour and we receive a percentage of the face value. Some merchants donate up to 15%! You shop anyway so put your money to good use twice! Remember to buy Shaw's cards every week you shop and we earn 4%!!

COSA

COSA would like to thank everyone who donated food to fill the Thanksgiving Baskets distributed by the East Hampton Food Bank. Non-perishable food items for the Food Bank can be left in the basket outside the church office at anytime.

The Christmas season has always been a time of generous giving by our congregation. COSA is working with the East Hampton Food Bank, The Dept. of Children and Families, and Middlesex Hospital's Family Advocacy Program to provide gifts for children and necessities for families in our area. Look for the tree decorated with tags in Fellowship Hall. Take a tag and purchase the requested item. Return it by the date on the tag so the agencies can distribute them before Christmas.



MISSION MOMENT

It is no longer news to anyone that the world has been in the grips of the worst recession since the Great Depression since late 2007. Lower-income annuitants have been hit especially hard.

Thankfully, the people of the United Church of Christ were particularly generous in their support of the 2008 appeal for The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund.

The proceeds from the Christmas Fund Offering are used to provide gifts to clergy and lay employees in all stages of their lives and ministries to and through the UCC. The availability of these funds is critical to the ability of the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance to help ensure a sustainable quality of life for those who ultimately receive the gifts.

Since the spring of 2008, the Pension Boards has seen a dramatic increase in the number of requests for assistance. During the first quarter of 2009, we averaged one new request for assistance every day. We are responding to those requests with dollars given to the Christmas Fund, which go directly to those who serve or have served the church, in their moments of critical need. Currently, nearly 1,600 families have received either a one-time grant or are receiving continuing assistance as a result of your gifts to the Christmas Fund Offering.

In 2008, the Christmas Fund raised a record \$1,597, which is providing assistance during 2009. Our goal for 2009 is to raise \$1,650,000 for this important ministry.

During these tough economic times, we have become accustomed to hearing stories of declining donations; however, the amount raised by the Christmas Fund has increased each year for the past five years! This is a wonderful witness to the faithfulness, generosity and caring hearts of the members of the United Church of Christ. Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose lower-income annuities make it difficult to meet increasing living costs. This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care.

Your generous contributions can and do make a difference in the lives of many.

The high school class will be using the kitchen for the month of November to benefit an organization called SHADE (SisterHood in Action for Development and Education). This organization helps young girls and poor women in their local villages of Kenya to promote education and to empower women as they establish economic activities. See Nancy Dolde for more information on the SHADE project. Look for sweets in December! These would make great Christmas gifts.

The East Hampton Village Lions Club would like to extend an invitation to all the members and friends of the Congregational Church of East Hampton to attend our "Belltown Winter Wonderland" Silent Auction and Holiday Reception on Sunday afternoon, December 13th from 3-5 PM. This fundraiser will be held at the Community Room, adjacent to the Library, at 105 Main Street. All proceeds from the event will go directly to the East Hampton Fuel Bank. Let us get together here for a common cause, to benefit those in need in our own community during this holiday season. Let's give something of ourselves to brighten lives.

The donated items will be exhibited at the East Hampton Public Library from November 30th thru December 12th.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee is looking for parish members to fill open positions for our church boards and committees effective May, 2010. A sign up poster will be in Fellowship Hall soon with the available slots. Please consider serving our church as Jesus would have us do. We are the church.

Thanks,
Teri Schlosser



MUSIC COMMITTEE

Come and enjoy an evening of family fun to begin the Christmas season.

Please come to the Plum Pudding on Sunday December 6th at 5:30.

Bring a potluck dish to share, and your singing voice. There will be carols to be sung, the Sr. & Children's Choirs will sing, the Bell Choir will ring, and the Youth Choir will play. The evening will end with the procession of Plum Puddings. Come and enjoy !!!!!

The Youth Woodwind Ensemble will have two practices for the December 20th Pageant after its rehearsals on Dec. 6th & 13th. Any player for flute, clarinet, oboe and bassoon is welcome to join this group. Please contact Keumok at koheo@hotmail.com if you are interested.

The Senior Choir needs more singers for the Christmas Eve Service. If you want to sing for the Christmas Eve candle light service, please come to the practices in December. Practice is every Thursday from 7:10 to 8:30 PM.

INTENTIONAL GIVING

The report on our congregation wide pledge drive paints a familiar picture for our Church. At the time of this writing (Nov. 17th) and with only a few more pledges expected, our current total stands at \$141,188.00. Last year's pledge drive committed a bit over \$151,000 and that amount required the church to make a 40% reduction from an already bare bones budget.

Regretfully, this return is short of our goal and will mean another year of difficult decisions to be made through out the coming budget process.

If you are still considering making a pledge this coming year you can find the pledge cards outside the church office, in the narthex or by calling the church at 860-267-4959.

I personally would like to thank the rest of the Intentional Giving committee; specifically Deb Robinson, Jerry Gerky and my wife Karen for their efforts. Tom Kennedy, Jill Walker, Ann Buracchi and Liz Whitty also added much help and guidance. Parish Life and Development added much needed logistical help. Finally, our ten tour guides Tom Morariu, Jennifer Berkenstock, Tim Quackenbush, Anita Guerin, Rae Strickland, Betsy Gates, Ron Hastings, Cindy Shirshac, Ann Selger, and Cynthia Pasternack who shepherded their routes.





Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Evertson

Intentional Giving Committee



DECEMBER

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Girl Scout Leaders, 6:30-9pm Boy Scouts #57, 7pm	2 Art Class, 9:30-11:30am Youth Band, 5pm Y2K, 5:30pm Adult Bible Video, 7pm AA, 8pm	3 Girl Scouts, 3:15-5pm <u>Choir Rehearsal</u> Bell, 6pm Senior, 7:10pm	4	5 Christmas Tree Lighting 
6 <i>2nd Sunday of Advent</i>  <u>Communion Sunday</u> CE, 9am Worship, 10am <u>Pageant Rehearsal, 11:30</u> Bell & Senior Choir rehearsal 11:30am Youth Wind Ensemble rehearsal following the <u>pageant rehearsal</u> PLUM PUDDING FESTIVAL, 5:30pm AA, 8pm	7 Den 7 Cubs, 6-7:30pm	8 Boy Scouts #57, 7pm	9 Art Class, 9:30-11:30am Adult Bible Video, 7pm AA, 8pm	10 <u>Choir Rehearsal</u> Bell - NO REHEARSAL Senior, 7:10pm	11	12 <u>Choir Rehearsal</u> Bell, 9:30am
13 <i>3rd Sunday of Advent</i> Worship/Baptism, 10am <u>Pageant Rehearsal, 11:30</u> Diaconate, 11:30am Music, 11:30am Youth Wind Ensemble rehearsal following the <u>pageant rehearsal</u> Girl Scout Holiday Fair <u>Toy Drive, 1-6pm</u> AA, 8pm	14 Pack 57 Cubs, 6:30-9pm	15 Boy Scouts #57, 7pm	16 Y2K, 5:30pm Pack 57 Leaders, 7-9pm AA, 8pm	17 Girl Scouts, 3:15-5pm <u>Choir Rehearsal</u> Bell - NO REHEARSAL Senior, 7:10pm	18	19
20 <i>4th Sunday of Advent</i> (Kids arrive at 8:30am) CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 10am Lunch Bunch following coffee hour AA, 8pm	21 Pack 57, 6:30-9pm	22 Boy Scouts #57, 7pm	23 AA, 8pm	24  7pm Service No Choir	25 	26
27 <i>1st Sunday after Christmas</i> NO CHOIR Worship, 10am NO CHURCH SCHOOL AA, 8pm	28 Mom's Group, 10am Boy Scout Pack 57 sleep over	29 Boy Scout Pack 57 sleep over	30 AA, 8pm	31 NO CHOIR REHEARSAL <i>New Year's Eve</i>		