



THOTS FROM TOM

Can you believe that the Advent/Christmas season is upon us? For weeks I have been preparing for winter, working on my coal stove, stockpiling tons of coal, mulching the leaves in the yard, cleaning gutters, and attaching the snowthrower and chains on to my tractor. Should I be surprised that Christmas is so soon upon us? I have been getting ready for winter for weeks!

But the surprise of Christmas sneaking up on us is the spice of Advent. Advent is the time when we look to the return of the Messiah, and because we do not know when that will happen, it will be a sudden surprise. Because we do not know when Christ will return, Advent is a time to *anticipate* that event.

Thinking about Advent and anticipating the return of Christ usually gets lost in the rush to secure all of those special gifts for loved ones and preparing for Christmas itself.

Take some time amidst your Christmas preparations to reflect on the birth of the infant Jesus, our Messiah, our Deliverer, and ponder the anticipated return of that Messiah, and what that means for all of us. While Christ's return may not happen in our lifetimes, we can nevertheless anticipate with awe this wonderful yet-to-be fulfilled event, and wonder, if it does come this year, *what will that be like?*

May God be with us on the journey ahead. Peace and good tidings during this Advent and Christmas season, and may you have a blessed New Year.

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 out of the office from December 25 until January 2, but will be on call for emergencies. If there is an emergency, please leave a message on the church office answering machine. All non-emergency issues will be handled when he returns.



2010 CHRISTMAS FUND

All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” (Matthew 1:22-23)

Grace to you and peace in this season of hope and promise!

Matthew’s Gospel begins with an affirmation of God’s covenant faithfulness. A troubled Joseph – caught between the harsh demands of the law and the tender leanings of his heart – receives assurance from a heavenly messenger. The inexplicable events that are unfolding reveal God’s greater plan for humankind, as prophesied by Isaiah more than seven centuries earlier. With the gift of God’s own Self – Emmanuel – humanity is redeemed and renewed.

In this holy season, our hearts turn toward Emmanuel, the Presence of God-with-us. As the Body of Christ, we are called to reflect that Presence in our relationships, with one another and with the world God so loves.

For 108 years, the Christmas Fund Offering for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a means by which we, as members of the United Church of Christ and its predecessor bodies, live out the mandate to be Christ’s Body in the world. The Christmas Fund, one of four Special Mission Offerings received annually in the United Church of Christ, is a ministry of compassion and care to those who serve our church. Your generous giving to the 2009 Offering enabled the Pension Boards’ Ministerial Assistance program, on behalf of the whole church, to provide \$1,504,420 to individuals and families in need.

Lower-income retirees continue to feel most keenly the financial stress brought about by the current

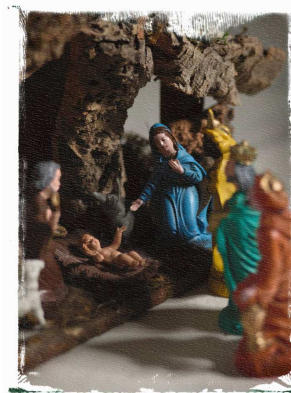
economic climate. Because of that, we ask you to prayerfully consider your response to the 2010 Christmas Fund Offering and give to the best of your ability. Reflect upon the ways in which your life has been touched by a retired pastor, a former youth leader, a Christian Education director, a church secretary, a custodian, or a minister of music, and honor their ministries in a way that will help them and others like them in these challenging times.

On behalf of the nearly 1,600 clergy and lay individuals and families who received some form of Ministerial Assistance since the last Christmas Fund Offering, I express heartfelt thanks to you for your generosity. May you continue to experience the blessings of Emmanuel – the One Who is with us, now and always.

THANKS

Thanks to overwhelming support and generosity to a recent "Moment for Mission" regarding the Creche that is placed on our church front lawn each Christmas Season, new nativity figures have been purchased, plans are underway to paint the 'stable' and secure it with a plexiglass enclosure and purchase new lighting. Please be sure to take a quiet moment during this Advent Season to walk down the front lawn, admire the new figures and reflect on the blessings of the season!

Thanks to all who donated so generously, both with money and enthusiasm !!





Y2K Calendar

Wednesday December 1st

5:30-6:45 PM

Bring \$4 for pizza

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 22

(Notice the week change!!!)

Christmas Party!!

Bring a potluck dish to share that has something red or green in it!

Also bring a wrapped unisex gift with a max. \$5 value for our gift exchange game.

Friends always welcome!

WOMEN'S POTLUCK

December 6 at 6:30 PM

at the home of Colleen Mellon

14 Blacksmith Hill Rd, Middle Haddam.

Bring a dish to share and come enjoy conversation and fellowship.

Never beens always welcome!

1ST FRIDAY WORSHIP SERVICE DECEMBER 3 AT 6:30 PM

Join us for our alternative worship time with a Hanging of the Greens service. Complete the decorating of the sanctuary, worship, sing and praise God as we await Jesus' birthday and all of its promise. Informal attire, friends and family welcome!

CHURCH SCHOOL PAGEANT INFORMATION

All Church School children are encouraged to participate in our Christmas pageant, "A Capital Christmas," which will be part of Sunday worship on December 19th. There will be rehearsal on Sunday, December 5 and 12 after church in the sanctuary. **1st grade and older are asked to be at church on December 19 at 8:30 for an 8:45 rehearsal. Preschool/Kindergarten can arrive at 9:30.** Please contact our coordinator Jodi Brazal at jdhbraz@snet.net or cell phone 860-604-4635 for more info or if you have questions about rehearsals.

Reminder: There will be no Church School on Sunday, December 26 and January 2.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

KUDOS KORNER

The church mice were out in full force this past

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(Continued from page 3)

month, helping in many needed ways:

Thanks to the Kitchen Cleanup Crew Lynda Tinney, Lorraine Barlow, Brian and Pat Day, Jill

Walker and Jerry Gerkey for repairing the vacuum cleaner and working on repairing the stove.

Thanks to the Building and Grounds Committee for taking care of numerous projects large and small.

Thanks also go out to Carol Mandigo and her merry bakers for providing almost 200 pumpkin breads for the Food Bank Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets Betsy, Eli, Rosse and Caleb Gates, Sue Binge, Jeanette Knotek, Lynda Tinney, Lynn Hastings and Sue Carr.

Thank you to everyone that provided items for the Food Bank Thanksgiving baskets. And finally, to Lynda Tinney (again!) for providing a ride for a medical appointment.

HELPING HANDS

Be sure to let the office (860-267-4959) or Jill Walker (860-267-7180) know if you or someone you know of from our church family is in need of some extra hands. We can provide meals if you are recovering from surgery or illness, rides, help with simple household needs, or just a friendly visit. We can't help if you don't let us know!

SEEDS OF HOPE UPDATES

** We have some spaces left for our Mission Trip to Biloxi, Mississippi June 26-July 2, see Jill Walker for more info. A \$75 deposit is due now from everyone planning to be part of the Mission Team this year.

**Thanks to everyone that ordered Greens and

Books. Greens can be picked up at church on Sunday, December 5. Books will be sent to you directly so see Jill on Sunday if you have a balance due.

** Prepaid gift cards can be ordered every Sunday in Fellowship Hall, but to assure Christmas delivery please order by Sunday, December 12.

** **Remember to use Goodsearch.com for all your web browsing and online shopping needs all year long.**

Our next meeting is Sunday, January 9th at 11:30.

HELP WANTED IN THE NURSERY!

Qualifications needed: loving arms to snuggle babies, ability to complete basic puzzles (shapes and fire trucks, mostly), able to stack at least 5 blocks to build a tower and not get too upset if someone else knocks it down.

Time commitment: one hour during church on a Sunday morning whenever you can fit it into your schedule (Lisa Aarrestad takes great care of the kids in the nursery every other week, but people are needed to fill in for nursery care on the alternating weeks – there's no commitment to a regular schedule required).

Exclusions: No changing diapers or dealing with endless screaming (that's what the parents are for)

Pay: Smiles from cute babies, smiles from happy toddlers, and smiles from very thankful parents who get to attend church.

Other benefits: Yummy snacks provided (goldfish for all!) and you can wear jeans (kids are messy and if you want, you can sit on the floor)

How to apply: Sign-up sheet in the nursery, so take your pick!



INTENTIONAL GIVING

It's not too late to return your pledge card and quilt square!

The quilt is a wonderful work in progress. The squares we have now are beautiful - each unique and special! A true representation of the gifts each of us has to offer and of our connection as members of this church. We are all part of God's quilt. Please be a part of ours.

The annual giving campaign wrapped up on Sunday, November 14th. At the conclusion of the campaign we had received 94 pledges. That is down 19 from last year. So far, we have received promised pledge income of about \$116,000. That is down from our current year's pledge income of \$151,000. Pledges are still coming in but since this is well short of where we are this year, we will need to have a second effort. This is in the planning stages. We anticipate a December 2010 launch.

If you have misplaced your pledge card, there are extras at church in the narthex and Fellowship Hall. There was a mistake on the pledge cards. When we asked if you wanted to receive pledge cards, we meant to ask if you want to receive offering envelopes. We will still order offering envelopes but will not send them to those who do not want them.

COSA MATTERS

COSA – the Christian Outreach and Social Action committee – is focusing on local outreach for the holiday season. The need this year is greater than previous years. The gift trees will be filled with tags. We will need the support of the whole Congregation.

The Christmas season has always been a time of generous giving by our congregation. COSA is working with the East Hampton Food Bank, The Department of Children and Families, and Middlesex Hospital's Family Advocacy Program to pro-

vide gifts for children and necessities for families in our area. Each of these agencies serves families in East Hampton.

Look for the tree decorated with tags in the Fellowship Hall. We'd appreciate if you could take a tag, write your name on the sign-up sheets, and return the purchased gifts **no later than Sunday, 12/12** so the agencies can distribute them before Christmas.

We are also working with our church's Helping Hands program and the community when there is need for a truck to help move or transport things.

There will be a sign up sheet at the COSA table for people willing to help with this.

The last of the donations for our October 17th CROP WALK have come in. We are finalizing our report and will give you an update in January.

FOOD BANK

The Food Bank will provide Christmas dinners, clothing and gifts for the East Hampton community. We anticipate nearly 150 families will sign up for the program this year. Our church provides clothing wishes for several of the families. Others in the community provide gifts and gift cards for the families with children. The food and other gifts will be sorted and distributed on Saturday, December 18th. All are invited to help with this project. If interested, you can report to the Town Hall annex at 9:00 am.

The Food Bank and all the offices at the Town Hall annex will be moving in January 2011. We will be moving to the Palmer Building near the intersection of Rte. 66 and Rte. 16.

We also want to thank Carol Mandigo and crew for baking homemade pumpkin bread for each Thanksgiving dinner. They are always well received. We even have enough to give to seniors and the largest families at Christmas time!



Poinsettia Order Form

Help decorate our sanctuary this holiday season by ordering a 6½” poinsettia in memory of a loved one or in honor of a special occasion or to celebrate the season, any reason will do!

Please include payment of \$8 per plant with your order. *Checks should be made payable to “CCEH” with “Poinsettia” on the memo line.*

**Orders are due in to the church office ASAP
but no later than Monday, December 14th.**

Red

White

Please let us know what you would like printed in the Christmas Eve Bulletin:

Given by: _____

Phone: _____

In Celebration of:

In Loving Memory of:



Following the Christmas Eve Service you may:

- Take your plant home OR
- Leave your plant for delivery to a member or friend of the congregation.

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHATELIER




December

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 Art Class, 9:30am Bible Study, noon Y2K, 5:30-6:45pm Parish Life, 7pm "Amich Grace" book discussion, 7pm AA, 8pm	2 Bell Choir 6-7:40pm Senior Choir 6:35-8:30pm	3 1 st FRIDAY Evensing Worship 6:30pm	4
5  Communion Sunday Worship/ New Members, 10am Pageant Rehearsal, 11am Plum Pudding Festival, 6:15pm AA, 8pm	6	7 Tiger Cubs, 6:30-7:30pm Boy Scouts, 7pm	8 Art Class, 9:30am Bible Study, noon Daisy Scouts, 6pm "Amich Grace" book discussion, 7pm Cub Scout Leaders/Parents, 7-9pm AA, 8pm	9 Bell Choir 6:15-7pm Senior Choir, 7:10-8:30pm	10 Eagle Scout Rehearsal, 7pm	11
12 Worship, 10am Pageant Rehearsal, 11am Deacons, 11:30am Eagle Scout Ceremony, 1:30pm AA, 8pm	13 Cub Scouts, 6:30-7:30pm	14  Poinsettia Order deadline Boy Scouts, 7pm	15 Bible Study, noon "Amich Grace" book discussion, 7pm Senior Choir, 7-8:15pm AA, 8pm	16 NO Choir	17	18
19 Pageant Sunday Pageant Rehearsal, 8:30am Worship/Baptism, 10am AA, 8pm	20	21 Boy Scouts, 7pm	22 Bible Study, noon Y2K, 5:30-6:45pm "Amich Grace" book discussion, 7pm AA, 8pm	23 NO Choir	24 Senior Choir, 6-6:45pm Christmas Eve Service, 7pm 	25 Merry Christmas 
26 Worship, 10am AA, 8pm	27	28 Boy Scouts, 7pm	29 Bible Study, noon "Amich Grace" book discussion, 7pm AA, 8pm	30 NO Choir	31  Candlelight Vigil	