

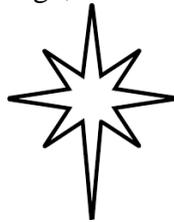
The NCC UCC *LIFELINE*

January/February 2018

Pastor's Thoughts

I write this on January 1, 2018, a day of blazing sunlight and sub-zero temperatures. We live in a place where such contrasts are not uncommon. The cold clear air seems to bring out the brightness of the moon, which in turn gives us contrasts of black branches and white snow.

Rather than last night's moonlight, or today's sunlight, however, the symbols of Epiphany speak of illumination as messages from the divine. January 6 is the date traditionally assigned to the arrival of the 3 Sages in Bethlehem, wise men who interpreted starlight as assign from God. Humans have marveled and wondered at stars since the beginning, and all our current scientific knowledge can hardly dim that wonder. So, this Epiphany season, we can celebrate that happy marriage of wonder and increasing knowledge;



As Christians, we look particularly to Jesus as the one who enlightens us. One ancient symbol for this was the lamp, a simple household article that was so essential for daily living. Rather than look outward to the greater cosmos for inspiration, we use the symbol of the homely lamp to remind us that Jesus, the Light of the World, spent much of his time in humbler settings, gathered around a table in the evening, sharing conversation and food. So, this Epiphany season, we can celebrate that happy marriage of fellowship and the life of the Spirit:



As Christians in the Protestant tradition, we find particular fuel for the spiritual life in words based on the Word. Yesterday, our final hymn in worship was 'Ring Out, Wild Bells' which is found in our Pilgrim Hymnal. The text is part of Tennyson's *In Memorium*, and the tune is the stirring *Deus Tuorum Militum* (which some find hard to sing at first try ☺). Written in 1849 as a requiem for a dear university friend of Tennyson's, it contains many phrases which have made their way into common speech, such as "red in tooth and claw" and "'tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." The verses chosen for the hymnal, however, speak to our desire for a new start, for new light to be shone on our relationships and our common life in community. So, this Epiphany season, we can celebrate that happy marriage of music and word...this year, I was particularly struck with;

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

With our historic bell in the church steeple, we have our own symbol for our work in the world. We can ring it to gather people into worship; we can ring it to send messages of sorrow or celebration to our community, we can ring it to speak when our voices fail us. May we, above all, 'ring in the common love of good' through our prayer, our actions, our conversations with each other, and our witness in the world.

I close with the opening words of *In Memoriam*:

We have but faith : we cannot know ;
For knowledge is of things we see ;
And yet we trust it comes from thee,
A beam in darkness : let it grow.
Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell ;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before....

Mary

Annual Meeting Warning

**Warning of the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Norwich Congregational Church, UCC
Notice is hereby given of the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Norwich Congregational Church, UCC
to be held after worship on Sunday, February 11, 2018 to transact the following business:**

- to hold opening prayer;
- to elect a Moderator for this meeting;
- to approve the minutes of the 2016 Annual Meeting;*
- to discuss and adopt a budget for 2018;
- to hear and act upon the reports of officers and Ministries
- to conduct whatever other business may properly be brought before the meeting

The meeting will be preceded by a potluck lunch; please bring food to share. In case of inclement weather, the Annual Meeting will be held at 7:00 pm on Tuesday, February 13, 2018.

**Minutes will be printed in the Annual Report*

Church Council Minutes - December 3, 2017

Present: Ryan Calsbeek, Brittny Calsbeek, Willemien Miller, Hillary White, Mary Brownlow, Doug James, Terri Ashley, Christopher Ashley

1. Mary led us in an opening prayer
2. Ministries

Worship and Care

Church Council approved forming a Committee to investigate possible reconfiguration of the pews and the replacement of the carpet. Jenn Langhus will represent the MofW&C. Doug will approach Brooke Trottier to represent the MofB&F. Mary and Chipper Ashley volunteered to be on the committee. Other possible members (and who will approach them): Keith Warren (Mary), Sonya Stover (Chipper), Doug Lufkin (Willemien). Dan Goulet and Peter French were mentioned as experts to consult.

Education

- Danielle is exploring Vacation Bible school February school vacation week.
- Sherri Gouwen will join the MofEd to help coordinate adult education projects.
- -Mary is exploring a youth trip to North Carolina in April. She is working with the 4 local UCC church group. The trip's focus would be racial understanding.

Outreach

- Minutes were distributed; no questions about their activities.

Building and Finance

- The MofB&F is waiting for financial inputs- both the Stewardship results and the budget requests.
- They are investigating if it is possible to change how the income generated from 3 of the smaller designated funds is transferred into the operating budget. They hope to use the same process as from the larger general trust fund. Willemien will contact Gary Brooks about the process.
- The need for major work on the clock and the weights, and the lack of knowledgeable experts was mentioned.

3. Nominating process for Ministries for 2018.

-Mary reported the while the by-laws call for the Church Council to appoint a Nominating Committee, some of the ministries we already discussing how to re-populate, if it was necessary. Following discussion it was decided to as Gretchen Maynard to act as an Nominating Coordinator- not to recruit people but check in with the 4 Ministries to make sure they have their necessary recruits and that they don't conflict. Terri will talk to Gretchen.

4. Follow-up from the Caring Communication Workshop

- Following discussion we decided to ask Nancy Brown back for a short follow-up session. Ryan will contact her.
- Mary will sort out what happened to the follow-up email and attachments that Nancy sent after November 4th.

5. Pastoral appraisal

-Willemien distributed the results of the appraisal compiled by Ryan. There were 14 individual replies to the questionnaire and a personal essay. Following discussion three avenues for further discussion were identified:

- 1)There was much to celebrate in the feedback we received.
- 2)We need to reach out to Congregation members who are sick and not in church; hopefully eliminating gaps in our ability to connect.
- 3)We need to try to expand the Congregation by making our church more relevant in the community. Hillary added that we need to make the church more relevant to our local community while being true to who we are, and doing more to show our community who we are. She suggested making a companion pamphlet that is more extensive than the pew flyer and that has pictures and short narrative language (which she volunteered to draft and pass by Mary) for visitors or our less involved members to pick up at the back of the church or get online etc.

No action was taken on regarding the appraisal.

6. Next Church Council meeting:

January 14, 2018 after worship

Christopher Ashley



New Member Profile: Ginny Hazen

Born in Hanover, NH., Ginny grew up as the third of eight children on Brookside Farm, which is located on Rte. 5 south between Norwich and Wilder. She graduated from Hartford High School, received her BS from Colby Sawyer College and her MBA from UNH's Plymouth branch. She moved from Wilder to Norwich in 1972.

Although it is unusual in this day and age, Ginny's entire working life was spent at Dartmouth College (46 years), where she started as a secretary in the President's Office. She finished her career with 26 years of service as Director of Financial Aid, retiring in 2015.

Ginny lives with her husband, Larry Ranslow – a retired police detective – on Maple Hill Road where they enjoy the company of their three dogs. Larry spends time teaching bird hunting skills to two of the dogs while Ginny teaches obedience and agility to all three. She has successfully trialed her Lab, Lucy, in Rally Obedience, placed with her in the Vermont State Polices' Green Mountain Iron Dog Competition and the Lucy Mackenzie Humane Society's 5K-9 fun run.

Larry and Ginny enjoy gardening, growing and preserving most of the vegetables they consume. They also enjoy fishing and boating. Ginny is an avid hiker (a two-time member of the New Hampshire's 4000 footers club) and can be found weekly climbing mountains, hiking sections of the Appalachian Trail or walking local trails with her faithful companion, Lucy, and her sisters. Ginny is also a voracious reader and shares her love for reading by volunteering at the Norwich Public Library and mentoring an elementary student through the Everybody Wins Vermont reading program.

Pastor Evaluation Input

There are two subjects I wish to comment on regarding our journey together as a congregation that aspires to grow as a caring, connected and inspirational community:

1. **“Who We Are”:** As I have mentioned to some of you, I was talking with a visitor one recent Sunday about our reorganization efforts, in particular about how we aspire to ask people what we can do for them, rather than what they can do for us; how we aspire to ask ourselves: what endeavors “spark joy”, how can we best live In Community, how can we best grow our energy. This visitor was very interested, further commenting that this aspirational attitude within our church had not been apparent, although they liked the worship service. So, this brings us back to a perennial question we have had about outreach: What practices and output do we have (in addition to a new pamphlet that is currently being designed for the pews) for visitors to know “Who We Are”? How can we get word out to our own congregation, visitors and our local community that illuminates “Who We Are”? How can we grow our energy within the church – Pastor, Church Council, Ministries, Congregation?

As I suggested at Church Council recently, we can gather content using words, images, music, poetry, etc. that provides examples of our aspirational goals, and that uses words that inspire us (for example, the recent and profoundly thoughtful Statement of Purpose for Education Throughout Life, from the Ministry of Religious Education on the goals of our education

program). We are fortunate to have many people with many talents and an abundance of output that might be useful for additional content. Such content could be included in a pamphlet available at the back of the church, as well as online, and used by Pastor, Church Council and Ministries (as desired), such that the congregation and visitors and our community can better understand “Who We Are”. If we are inspired to work on this endeavor, it might help cement and extend our efforts of renewal over the past few years and help broaden our Outreach within our own church community and within our local community.

2. **“How Can We Listen and Talk, with Love, without Judgment”**: Our workshop in early November 2017 on “How to Listen So People will Talk” is a good start for learning how to grow In Community and learning how to develop language that enables us to care about each other in a *non-judgmental* way. Central themes of the New Testament and our Covenant with God are: that Love is the greatest commandment, and to Judge Not. This is true, *especially* today, here and now, in these troubled times when people are so polarized about so many “issues” of the day, and when political, racial, and religious divides appear to be so great. Can we learn to love across those divides *without judgement*? It takes an open heart, practice, fearlessness and daring greatly.

How can Pastor, Leadership and Congregation do this? My musings: Each of us, of course, has the freedom to hold and discuss our own political beliefs. But the Church (our Congregation, our Leaders, our Ministries, our Pastor), all of us when within the Public Face of the NCC UCC, might consider keeping in mind the Universal Truths of Jesus that are timeless, that endure over millennia, while listening non-judgmentally across a divide to what another might hold individually as their own political “truth”. For example, two issues some of us in the church, coming from diverse sides, have grappled with are immigration and gun laws/violence: We might honor both sides of a divisive issue by naming the Universal Truths that Jesus talked about: to honor and acknowledge that *all* people should be free from tyranny. If inspired to do so, then, let us work on behalf of immigrants to the US. But let us also mention *all* displaced peoples of the world who are fleeing from tyranny. Interestingly, in conversation with a wise person in our congregation, they mentioned that they do exactly this: when they have conversations with people about racial divides, they acknowledge the injustice and also mention the suffering of people around the world who are struggling to be free. On another political front, maybe the humble tax collector in the time of Jesus is equivalent to the struggling “deplorable” in our time. Let’s learn to talk using *inclusive* language that crosses the divide: let’s talk about not just immigrants, but what about the communities that might be upended who receive so many of those immigrants; not just gun violence that harms innocents, but what about people who fear the disintegration of their communities. Let’s speak up against divisive language, independent of which side of the divide it is on. Let’s switch to inclusive language. And let’s also learn to listen with an open heart.

While we are largely mindful within our church community of keeping our eyes and hearts focused on promoting all-inclusive language and being open-hearted, we are not particularly good (yet) at “lovingly encouraging” people to avoid using judgmental spoken language (and body-language) in our day-to-day interactions (especially regarding the polarizing politics of today’s world). It is my hope that the Pastor, Church Council, Ministries and Congregation can all strive together to emphasize the importance of this particular practice of inclusive and “judge-not” language. By doing so, we will enrich our journeys in life, make our work more meaningful and satisfying, and strengthen our community.

In humility, Hillary White

Epiphanies Education Class postponed

Looks like we will have to wait a bit longer to have our "Aha!" moments. With sadness, we inform you that Kenneth Cracknell's Bible study class is postponed due to a death in the family. Information to follow soon, when plans become more definite.

Circles of Care February Vacation Bible Camp

Norwich Congregational Church, UCC

February 19-23, 9:00am-12:30pm

Ages 5-11

To register call 802-649-1433 or
Email norwichcongregational@gmail.com



Care of Self, Care of Family, Care of Church and Community
Care of Global Community, Care of Planet

Epiphany: Feast and Season

The word ‘epiphany’ comes from two Greek words from (epí = ‘upon’) + phaínō = ‘I shine / appear’), but has come to be translated as “manifestation.” In this case, it refers to the manifestation of Jesus as the one foretold by the ancient Prophets: the “Suffering Servant,” the light to those who “walk in darkness,” the Virgin-born Immanuel, the one who will bring justice to the nations, the preacher of good news to the poor and deliverance to captives. In the weeks following Christmas, the Sunday readings focus on the various ways Jesus is revealed to be this promised Messiah.

This journey of manifestation begins on the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6) with the revealing of the infant Jesus to the Magi. Responding to a command from King Herod, who was convinced that the time had come for these prophecies to be fulfilled, these foreigners recognized that they were in the presence of something remarkable when they arrived at the place where the Jesus was. In the weeks that follow the Feast of the Epiphany, the lectionary leads us through the stories of Jesus’ baptism, miracles, and his proclamation that the Reign of God was very near. These Gospel readings are paired with readings from the Old Testament prophets, which foreshadow the ministry of Jesus and illuminate its meaning.

The message of all of this is that we are called to seek Jesus in unlikely places, and as a visual (and edible!) lesson, the sharing of a Kings’ Cake has been a long tradition in Christian households. In every Kings’ Cake a toy baby Jesus (or sometimes a coin or a bean) is hidden. The person who finds the treasure in his or her piece of cake is given the responsibility of baking next year’s cake for Epiphany.

The Season after the Epiphany (note, not the Season OF Epiphany) lasts from the 6th of January (which is the official end of the Christmas Season) until Ash Wednesday, so it varies in length from year to year. But it is always a season of light, hope, wonder, and joy, and draws us more deeply into the mystery of the Incarnation: that counter-intuitive declaration at the heart of the Christian faith that the immensity of God is revealed in the most seemingly-insignificant of human events.

Susan White

Norwich Congregational Church - Outreach Ministry
Mission Offering for January & February 2018

UCC Disaster Ministries

"Where Faith Meets Works" - UCC Disaster Ministries is a nationally recognized ministry that engages volunteers, congregations, UCC Conferences and partners to serve the unique needs of disaster survivors.

Every year hundreds of disasters in the United States leave impacted families in need of spiritual, physical, financial and psychological support. UCC Disaster Ministries provides assistance with acute and long-term disaster effects which can last years following an event.

With a special focus on serving in communities where long-term needs persist, UCC Disaster Ministries volunteers' work and support extend beyond that of many disaster response organizations. Through our network of Conference Disaster Coordinators and local congregational connections, volunteers are organized for early clean-up work and long-term rebuilding efforts. UCC Disaster Ministries also provides resources and support for preparedness and technology-caused disasters

To donate to the UCC Disaster Ministries Fund, please use the yellow Mission Offering envelopes in the pews during January & February, 2018



New Member Profile: William and Donna Gleeson

Bill and Donna met at age ten, grew up together in the Presbyterian church (and each gave a sermon on Youth Sunday their senior year in high school), began dating at 19, and married at 22. They have been blessed with three children and now eight grandchildren. Kristin home schools her sons in Los Angeles; Michael is a gastroenterologist/hepatologist at the VA Hospital in White River Junction; and Todd is a Navy doctor in DC who specializes in infectious disease.

Bill spent nine years in the Marine Corps after graduating from the Naval Academy, followed by 26 years in industry, and then 14 years in financial services. All of this resulted in 20 moves and homes in nine states.

This grand adventure made Donna a camp follower who focused on teaching, mothering, and then studying to become a registered dietician (after three different schools in three states over ten years). Donna's college experience as a theater major who designed costumes did not quite prepare her for the life she enjoyed. She is now totally content cuddling babies at DHMC.

Bill loves the great outdoors which includes hunting and fishing as well as hiking. Donna goes along on hikes and occasional fishing trips, but draws the line at attending frequent hunting gatherings. Both Donna and Bill enjoy reading, viewing films, and attending live theater performances. And now this tough Marine has signed up to become a baby cuddler!

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**AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION
WORSHIPING ON SUNDAYS AT 10 AM**