



**Bridgewater Congregational Church
United Church of Christ**

Good News

December 2022

PASTOR'S CORNER



“Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
For the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.” (Luke 1:48b-50)

From generation to generation, God has been showing up and surprising us in the most unlikely of places. From generation to generation, God has chosen to pursue us in the most unlikely of spaces and places. From generation to generation, God has continued to call us forward into this unexpected, often surprising, always unconditional love. From generation to generation, God will continue to invite us to participate in transforming the world, piercing the shadows with our love and light, as we say yes to God, yes to faith, yes to our calling. It is in saying “yes”, that we are reminded of our interconnectedness, and claim our name, Beloved. It is in saying “yes”, that we faithfully and actively participate in what God is unfolding – in and through us.

When Mary was greeted by her cousin Elizabeth, she – Elizabeth – is filled with the Holy Spirit and speaks a blessing upon Mary. She sees God at work, and in her seeing, in her experiencing the Holy Spirit, she names it out loud. It is in this moment of naming and blessing, that Mary breaks forth in song. She sings of a God who shows up where you least expect God to be, a manger, the cross, in sheer vulnerability, and exposed suffering. It is a powerful song that gives voice to a God of justice and compassion. A God who hears the cry of the oppressed and dependent of all generations. Mary’s song, radiates from the deepest chambers of her soul, breaking forth in radiant notes of joy, that give way to a melody of God’s goodness, of tables being turned over, of the lowly being lifted up and the proud brought low. A passion-filled, power-filled, joy-filled, hope-filled song of blessing.

Advent is a time pregnant with hope. It is a time in which we are encouraged to slow down, to pay attention, to wait and prepare for Love to be birthed once again in our world, in the most surprising and unlikely of places, to the most surprising and unlikely of people. And yet, from generation to generation, isn’t this what God has done, has shown us? When we least expect it, God shows up and surprises us reminding us that we do not journey alone. And in that reminder, is our call to action to live out this promise as we continue to pass it on from generation to generation. We belong together. How will you continue to live into and out of this promise? What are you being called to generate and bring forth as you participate in the birth of Love, here on earth, each and every day? How will you leave room for God to show up and surprise you this season?

In the Spirit of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, Pastor Abby

Bridgewater Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Abby Gackenhimer, Minister
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Advent and Christmas Activities and Services

As you prepare your mind, body, and spirit this Advent and Christmas Season, I want to invite you to participate in the worship of the church:

On **Sunday, December 18 th** you are invited to join us for worship and then come over to the Friendship House for not only a time of fellowship, but an intergenerational, all-ages art project. We will be creating ornaments to take home and hang on our tree. You will be invited to insert into these ornaments a fear or a hope for the season. All supplies will be provided by your Deacons.

On **Wednesday, December 21 st** – the longest night of the year – ALL are invited to join in our Service of Light: Blue Christmas service at 6:30pm. This service will be in-person only. I will open the doors of the sanctuary for all who are looking for, or needing, a space to simply “be”. This service of light, provides a place for all, but especially for those who don’t feel so “merry and bright” during the holiday season. We will pray, we will read scripture, we will sing “O Come, O Come Emmanuel, and we will light candles. No matter where your “joy meter” is this holiday season, you are welcome to participate in this service.

On **Saturday, December 24 th** – Christmas Eve – you are invited to our Lessons and Carols service with Musical Prelude. The Musical Prelude will start at 6:30pm with our Lessons and Carols service starting right after. Once again, we will sing Silent Night in the round outside our sanctuary doors, so please remember to dress warm!

On **Sunday, December 25 th** – Christmas Day – you are invited to our Poetry and Carols service @10am as we celebrate the birth of Jesus! Come as you are in-person or on-line!

Sunday, January 8 th – Epiphany Sunday – STAR word Sunday! Do you have a story to share about how your star sparkled for you this year? Are you ready for a new star? Join us for worship this Sunday as we give testimony to the way that our star word spoke to us, challenged us, reminded us... and begin the new year with a new Star word!

Ministry in the Community

Many of you all have wondered what my ministry entails – daily/monthly, especially out in the community. In practice, my week is filled with Pastoral Care visits and calls, folks who drop into the office for a chat or care, responding to emails and phone calls, creating and posting to our social media sites and updating the website multiple times a week, overseeing the day to day “business” of the church, attending meetings with area clergy and leaders, bible study, and of course a good chunk of my time is filled with planning services, putting the bulletin together – liturgy, hymns...etc - and exegetical work (research for sermon and Spirit discernment) and then writing my sermon. Anyways, I have been asked to highlight some of the ways that I have been able to participate in the wider community. Please note that this list is not an extensive list of every gathering I have attended, but an overview of some of the ways I have interacted with and/or had a visible presence in our wider community. Please be reminded that if you would like me to attend an event, please invite me and/or make me aware of the event. If I am available, I am always happy to be present. I do take Mondays and Fridays off for rest and renewal.

Monthly Litchfield South Association Clergy Lunch – conversation and collaboration happens here!

Litchfield South Association Annual Meeting in October – Carl and Josephine Dill joined me for this meeting.

Gathered with area church leaders in October at the New Milford Congregational Church to discuss ways of collaborating – Chris Smith and Kathy Crosskey joined me for this meeting. More meetings planned.

Veterans Day Service – offered the prayers and sang in the choir

Visible (despite COVID) for the Tractor Parade

Christmas Tree Lighting and Santa and Cookies – talked with a number of folks who had gathered for this event.

Gave a message at the New Milford Rotary Thanksgiving lunch – invited by Josephine Dill

Gave closing prayer and participated in a reading for the Trans Night of Remembrance Service at New Milford Congregational Church with other area ministers and guest speakers/performers.

Burnham School – Was present at the Harvest Day Festival representing the church; received food they collected for the Food Shelf. Chris Smith joined me for this event. Also present for their ice cream social and their Saturday Fall fun day – these two events I attended as a parent, a separate role altogether, but still had multiple conversations about the church.

Library and School events throughout the year – especially ones Keadyn can attend where I can connect with our younger generations.

IRIS Refugee Resettlement Program – BCC is partnered with Brookfield Congregational Church – I attend meetings, provide items for the refugee family...etc.

I attend Senior Center events when I am invited and/or it is open to the wider public.

I go into the Bistro a couple of times a week and often connect with folks there, even if it is only a quick “how are you.”

OUR NEW FAMILY HAS ARRIVED!!!

The day finally came when the Brookfield Congregational Church and the Bridgewater Congregational Churches welcomed our Refugee Family into the little red cottage on Junction Road in Brookfield.

Yuri (dad), Vira (mom), and their two sons Maxym and Denys arrived on October 21st full of smiles and hope for the future! Thanks to so many in our congregations, the cottage looked fabulous! There were Ukrainian flags, pumpkins decorated with blue and yellow ribbons, twirling sunflowers and a festive WELCOME doormat. The cottage was lovingly decorated with donations from both churches and area residents. The refrigerator was fully stocked, the cupboards were overflowing and a home cooked dinner was delivered to celebrate their first night in the cottage.

Back in Ukraine, Vira was a teacher and Yuri was a computer programmer. The word quickly spread that Maxym was a star basketball player in his hometown, and the Brookfield basketball coach was thrilled to welcome him on the team. Denys has a mentor at Huckleberry Hill Elementary and loves taking the bus to school. Vira and Maxym speak fluent English and are only working on mastering our English idioms and slang. Yuri and Denys have basic English skills and are being tutored by a committee of dedicated teachers.

The various support committees have been busy acclimating the family to life in America. The family has attended the Newtown Halloween Parade, walked the Greenway, shopped at Stew Leonard's, and visited the New Milford Observatory (Denys loves astronomy). They have also obtained library cards and were accepted into the programs offered by Brookfield Social Services.

Currently, Volunteers are needed for help with transportation and medical issues— appointments, guiding them through the process. The most recent need was to research and help them to decide which Internet/ Cable plan is best for their budget.

Thank you to everyone who helped to welcome the family to our area.





**Baptism of
Kainan Symphony Burns
June 26, 2022
Parents: Maryia Anson &
Marquise Burns**



*Pastor Abby's Installation Service
June 12, 2022*



DID YOU KNOW?

Answers can be found on the last page of the newsletter.

1. This individual has a Masters in Organizational Psychology from Columbia University.
2. This person was a scientific researcher who studied the effects of tar and nicotine on lab mice.
3. Prior to undertaking grad work, this person sold tickets in New York and Boston for United Airlines.
4. This person sang and danced as “Mother” in Nunsense.
5. This person was God talking to Eve in Women of the Bible.
6. While at camp in Gstaad, Switzerland, this person revived a fellow hiker with a snowball to the face.

The Food Pantry

The Pantry is available to any Bridgewater resident with participation held in the strictest confidence. There are no formal records of participants kept or reported. It's free and available Tuesday through Thursday 10:30-2 pm or by appointment by calling (860) 354-8283. Whether a one-time visit or more regular, the Pantry is your free resource to help stretch your budget.

The Pantry has evolved into this smooth-running collaboration out of Peter Kivela's Eagle Scout project tackling the renovation and relocation to where it is today. It was great foresight and a lot of work! The project was finished in January 2015 and the firm roots of this program were set.

Today, the BCC is proud to partner with Town Hall and the Burnham Library as donation sites and the Burnham School which holds food drives. We appreciate our town Tax Collector, Cathy Vikstrom, not only putting out the call for needed items on the Town's website and in email blasts but also for including a food drive during her Drive Thru tax collections. Many thanks to our volunteers for gathering and shelving donated goods and to our Secretary, Ashli, for facilitating a smooth and confidential process for all participants.

OUR QUARTERLY QUESTION !?!

In each Newsletter we will include a QUARTERLY QUESTION. It is our hope that our readers will answer the question if they have an idea or an opinion to share.

Please send your comments to: office.bwucc@gmail.com

What can the Bridgewater Congregational Church do to be more relevant and visible to the community?

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Our beloved Stu was born Stuart Rapp in Berlin, Connecticut, where his father was Pastor of the Congregational Church. The family moved when his father became Pastor in Syracuse, New York and later in Flushing Queens, New York. Following in his father's footsteps, Stu attended Yale Divinity School and was ordained on June 28, 1958, in the New York City Congregational Church Association, Manhattan. Upon ordination, young Stu was elected to be an associate minister at the Briarcliff Congregational Church of New York. In 1960, he was called to be the pastor where he served for the next eleven years. During Stu's tenure, sons Daniel Rapp and Richard Rapp as well as a daughter Ann Rapp were born.

Sensing the need for change, Stu became a counselor for the Briarcliff Manor Junior - Senior Public High School. He also worked part time for Airway Taxi located at the Railway Depot in White Plains, New York. While there he came into contact with Boehringer Ingelheim of Richfield, Connecticut and began his career in Human Resources. Stu also had the good fortune of reconnecting with his high school sweetheart Marjorie Burriack. Upon their marriage in 1994, two step-daughters, Gillian Burriack and Stephanie Burriack joined the family.

Stu came to Bridgewater Congregational Church while Pastor Samuel Young was serving here. Stu was an ideal member with his background as an ordained minister and has served in many leadership positions during his years with us. He has enjoyed forty years of participation in choirs and choral groups. After Margorie's passing he recently found it necessary to relocate from Southbury to White Oaks Senior Living in Manchester, Connecticut. His son Daniel preceded Marjorie in death. Stu wants us to know as a believer in Jesus Christ crucified and risen, he has persevered through life's challenges and has not become discouraged. He is grateful and feels fortunate to be in a welcoming environment close to his son Richard and family.





*Blessing of the Animals
October 9th, 2022*





Christmas Shop and Tree Sales

Once again this year we celebrate the Holidays with our Christmas Shop and Tree sales. Many thanks the volunteers who make this all happen and the residents that support us! The shop is open Saturdays 10-4 and 11-4 on Sundays.



John Kivela	PASTORAL SUPPORT COMMITTEE Jamie Pfeiffer	Candy Smith
Heather Detrick Kris Kivela Chris Smith	BOARD OF DEACONS Sharon Harvey Jean Jusko <i>Alan Smith</i>	Jane Bernstein Jeanne Papparazzo Cheryl Nelson
Jan Gregory Dan Storrs Alan Michener	BOARD OF TRUSTEES Dick Jones <i>John Kivela</i> Jamie Pfeiffer	Jim Crosskey Dennis MacDonald Jan Lewyn
Kathy Crosskey <i>Fran Kelly</i>	BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION Heather Detrick Sarah Jane Chelminski	David Bengston
<i>Helen Jackson</i>	BOARD OF MEMORIALS Fran Kelly	Jane Storrs
Kathy Conroy Fran Kelly Corrine Cox	BOARD OF MISSION AND OUTREACH Kathy Crosskey <i>Candee Kilian</i> Alan Smith Candy Smith	Lisa Klein Tamsin Looker Lee Kinslter Joanna Stuart
<i>Stu Rapp</i>	BOARD OF MUSIC Sharon Harvey	Chris Smith
<i>Jean Jusko</i> Carol Hacker	FELLOWSHIP/SANCTUARY COMMITTEE Cheryl Nelson Lisa Klein	Marcine Crowhurst Candee Killian
<i>Frank Kelly</i>	PERSONNEL COMMITTEE Stu Rapp	Ted Anson
Nancy Hawley	STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE Wendie Grabel Frank Kelly	Larry Neary
<i>Ted Anson</i>	NOMINATING COMMITTEE Alan Smith	Jim Crosskey
MODERATOR: Frank Kelly	TREASURER: Jim Crosskey	HISTORIAN: Heather Detrick
FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Josephine Dill		CLERK: Marcine Crowhurst
LITCHFIELD SOUTH ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE DELEGATE		
Josephine Dill, Carl Dill		Frank Kelly, Fran Kelly
SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS: Amy Cox, Fran Kelly		
CHOIR DIRECTOR Maggi Heilweil	PIANIST Chris Smith	ORGANIST Larry Deming

1. Maggi Heilweil
2. Jan Lewin
3. Tamsin Looker
4. Sharon Harvey
5. Bill Harvey
6. Valeska Cheliminski