



THE GOOD NEWS

from the Belfry

a Monthly Newsletter of the

First Congregational Church of Haddam and
the Higganum Congregational Church

United Church of Christ



JANUARY

in the 2018th Year of our Lord

A Fresh Start



Higganum Congregational Church
First Congregational Church of Haddam
Returned mail to
23 Parsonage Rd.
Higganum, CT 06441

Address Service Requested

Church websites: higganumchurch.org and haddamchurch.org

JANUARY WORSHIP SERVICE – Sundays at 9:30 a.m. at First Congregational Church Haddam
Christian Education and Child Care provided during Sunday Worship Service

Church~

Welcome 2018!! Happy New Year! I am praying we get off to a good start as we enter our second year of ministry together as pastor and 2 congregations sharing ministry together. I wanted to let you know some of my thoughts about our moving forward in 2018.

We hope to initiate more get togethers where we can all get to know each other better. We need people to attend for these to be successful, so we hope everyone will do their part. The joint Board of Deacons and I brainstormed to come up with a few ideas. We intend to offer some "Cottage Meetings" in the coming year. These will be small groups of 8-10 people, hosted at someone's home and will possibly include a meal. When someone asks you to come to a "Cottage Meeting" please make every effort to attend.

Details to be coming soon.



Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 2:46-47

After the "Cottage Meetings" we are hoping to schedule home visits with everyone who would like one, over the course of several months. I will be gathering some information via a few questions as well as just getting to know members better.

I also welcome invitations to local activities. Invite me to a local performance or sporting activity or to take a walk or grab a cup of coffee. I will come when I am free... which is more often than you think. I'd love to come to hear your child play their instrument or sing or play their sport locally. Let me know when and I will do my best to fit you into my schedule.

What about you? Do you have any ideas that will give us the opportunity to get to know each other better— whether for me as the pastor or for you as congregations doing ministry together?

The joint Board of Deacons will also be creating a program which assigns each Deacon several members. Your Deacon will be intentional in connecting with you. Over the course of 2018 we will pray together for each member at our meetings. The hope is to provide a stronger spiritual network of care among the congregations.

These are just a few of the goals we have for 2018. I welcome your positive input and ideas. What do you feel God calling us to as congregations in 2018?

Abundant Blessings,

Tomi

On **Sunday January 7th** the children of both congregations will be putting on the play "God's Angels" by *Peggy Woon*, under the direction of Dawn Alger.

This Epiphany pageant will involve everyone! I hope you will come and join us.

Submitted by Amy Harlow

Christian Education/Faith Formation Director



Holiday Worship Schedule

Concludes with Epiphany

Christmas Carol Histories & Singing

Sunday 12/31 9:30 a.m. at HCC

Sunday Service with Children's Epiphany Pageant

Sunday 1/7/18 9:30 a.m. at FCCH

**Sunday Service in January will be held at
First Congregational Church Haddam
at 9:30 a.m.**

BEAT THE WINTER BLAHS! POTLUCK

FCCH is planning a pot luck supper and game night on **Saturday, January 13th**. Plan to bring a dish to share and a favorite game to play. This is a fellowship event for all ages. There will be a sign-up sheet available in January.

7TH ANNUAL YULETIDE QUILT SHOW ... A SUCCESS!

The FCCH Quilt Show on December 2, 2017 was a great success. The day was sunny, the sanctuary looked beautiful with all the quilted items on display, and the activities in the Fellowship Hall were enjoyed by the visitors. The young people who served the lunch received many compliments from our guests. We thank them all for their good work.

The show raised \$1,532 which will be used for mission activities in our community and in our world.

Thank you to everyone from both congregations who helped to make this event a success.

*Submitted by Virginia Evensen
FCCH Christian Service Committee*

SUNDAY HOSPITALITY SCHEDULE:

The Committees responsible for hosting the fellowship hour after Sunday worship service for the upcoming few months is as follows:

January (at FCCH) **Music and Diaconate**

February (at HCC) **Music and Fundraising**

March (at FCCH) **Christian Service and Prudential**



To be sure there will be coffee and treats after each service, members of the assigned committees are asked to update the sign-up sheet in the normal places at each Church.

COOKIE WALK WRAP UP

Thank you so very much to ALL for your part in making the HCC 11th annual Cookie Walk event a success both financially and in Community Goodwill!

- 63 boxes sold
- 5 boxes delivered to members from both congregations
- 3 boxes for our backpack families
- 25+ quarts of soup sold
- 10 5-lb plates of cookies delivered (the pre-order)
- \$1,730 net income
- Positive feedback from the Community (Priceless!)

Special thanks to:

- Partner Edie (Thursday, Friday, Saturday all day)
- Judy for her help with those 10 plates of cookies
- All who worked the event on Saturday, baked cookies, made soup, delivered cookies, bought cookies, spread the word, set-up (Brian, Jack & Bruce) and cleaned up!

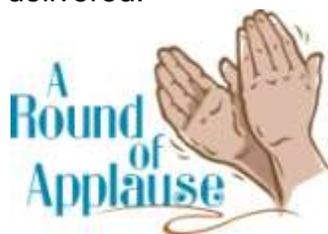
So many wonderful people bless our Church families -we have such bounty for which we are profoundly thankful.



A SEASON OF GIVING

HOLIDAY GIVING 2017

Thanks to many wonderful people the little tree filled with gift tags was a "sell out". Again, we answered the Christmas wishes of children in our community. HKYFS provided Christmas Wish Lists to HCC Outreach Committee with gender, age and size from five local families. Requests ranged from a play kitchen, gift cards to shop with friends to a Dallas Cowboy comforter. In a two week time span, the shopping was completed, donations sorted and delivered.



to members and friends from FCCH and HCC for the huge outpouring of generosity.

REVERSE ADVENT MINISTRY

At the HCC Harvest Fair in November, "Reverse Advent" bags were made available to take home and to add an item daily. The filled bags were returned in mid December. The contents were sorted and then distributed. The recipient local organizations this year were:

- the **Albert J Solnit Children's Center**, formerly Riverview Hospital. Youth between ages 13-17 receive brief treatment, residential care and educational instruction. Base on our past work for this organization we received a Wish List of items that we were able to help provide.
- **St Vincent de Paul** in Middletown. We filled some of their needs, particularly hats, thermal gloves and socks, along with personal hygiene items.
- A few items from the Advent bags were suitable for young children such as toys, dolls and little socks. These donations, along with the hats and mittens from the tree were sent to **Hallie House**, a treatment center for mothers and their children.

Thank you all for reaching out to help others in need during this season of giving.

EQUAL EXCHANGE – YES OR NO?

For many years the HCC Outreach Committee has been purchasing coffee, tea and a little chocolate from Equal Exchange, a fair trade organization, for our members and visitors to our Church. We serve the coffee during hospitality time following church and at other functions. The present selection available for purchase is not selling as quickly as in the past. Recently, our most popular request is the 2 lb bag of French roast beans. Available products can be found on line at Equal Exchange, please visit <http://equalexchange.coop/>.

Should we continue to offer the items for purchase and if so what would you like?

*Submitted by Carol Matregrano
HCC Outreach Committee*



*Crèche Hand Carved by
Neil Blodgett Sr., long-time member of HCC
Please thank Neil when you see him*



Our prayers and heartfelt sympathies go out to the family and friends of Amanda (Dolly) Badrick, former member of Higganum Congregational Church and First Congregational Church of Haddam. Dolly passed away on Sunday, November 26th.

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR CTUCC YOUTH

Do you know someone who is
Thinking About Working for God?
 (TAWFG)

We are now receiving applications from middle, high school, and college age youth for PAID apprenticeships for Spring 2018.

New this year: 2 levels of Apprenticeships

Explorer: For youth in grades 7-12 who want to do a 20 hour leadership project in their home church.

Seeker: For Youth in grades 10-12 and college students who want to do a 40 hour apprenticeship in a neighboring congregation.



The question is not 'Are you a Minister?'
The question is 'WHAT is your ministry?'

Beverly Daniel Tatum, PhD.
 President emerita of Spellman College.



2016 Participants

2018 Eastern regional youth event (ERYE)

CALIFORNIA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

worship / play / pray / learn / serve / sing / dream

"My theme song is God's love and justice"
Psalm 101:1 The Message



Thinking about going to ERYE? Fill out a "pre-

registration" survey so we can share information about transportation and scholarships.

Check out the [ERYE website \(https://www.eryeucc.org/\)](https://www.eryeucc.org/) for updates and information about registration.



If you like to shop (like who doesn't!) and you want to help shop for the Sunday School Mission Project please call or email Amy Harlow or Theresa Malone. Thanks!



HAPPY NEW YEAR "2018"

Ring in the New Year with high expectations! Be positive that the New Year will bring new light to old situations and a better understanding of any pitfalls in our lives with others.

Here's hoping the Holiday Season was good to all and left a warm feeling in your heart that was and can be shared with everyone in our world!

The Trustees and the Merry Men of HCC were busy in December cutting and putting up the Christmas tree in Fellowship Hall, helping with the beautiful Sanctuary decorations, putting up signs and helping to set up for the Cookie Walk. The crew also prepared for winter's blast by removing screens and securing storm windows on the church, getting sidewalk salt and putting shovels at all doors.

As always be wary of icy conditions in the parking lot and sidewalk. Please let one of the Trustees know of any concerns that may arise.

Please be aware any cancellations of Church due to weather conditions will be announced the night before and /or that morning of, on WFSB Channel 3 if deemed necessary.

Stay Warm, Be well, Hold Happiness in Your Heart!

Best Wishes, The Trustees

*Submitted by Brian Thayer
Chair, HCC Board of Trustees*

P.S. Snow shovelers are always welcome when a snow storm hits!!



3 GREAT LOVES INITIATIVE

The United Church of Christ has a vision of a just world for all. In this world all are welcomed, everyone is loved and justice is inherent. The 3 Great Loves is the denomination's opportunity to express how our Love of Neighbor, Love of Children, and Love of Creation work together to address the inequities in our current world.

The initiative began at Synod 2017 and will end at Synod 2019. Through the lens of the 3 Great Loves, the United Church of Christ in its many settings of ministry will discern and lift up how we act upon these 3 Great Loves during this time period. As we do so, we will tell the story of how we are impacting and transforming the world, as covenantal partners united in common purpose and mission.



During these upcoming two years, there will be moments of special invitation to participate in this denomination-wide undertaking. One by one we will focus on each of the 3 Great Loves in service to our communities. Beginning in January Rev. Tomi will lead us in service to explore the 3 Great Loves Initiative. There are ways we are already addressing the needs of our Neighbors and Children. In the future let us look for new ways to Love our Creation (near and far), Children and Neighbors.



RECIPE FOR A HAPPY HOUSEHOLD

4 qt. faith	4 c. love	2 spoons of kindness
2c. loyalty	2 spoons tenderness	a pinch of understanding
3 c. forgiveness	5 spoons of hope	
1 c. friendship	1 barrel of laughter	

Take love and loyalty and mix them thoroughly with faith. Blend it with tenderness, kindness, and understanding. Add friendship, forgiveness and hope. Sprinkle abundantly with laughter. Bake it with sunshine and serve it with generous helpings of laughter daily

Submitted by Virginia Evensen

2017 STEWARDSHIP CELEBRATION

Pledge Update

Our thanks and gratitude to those who have generously committed a pledge for 2018. For those who have yet to pledge, please do so as soon as possible to enable the finance committees of both churches to do their jobs in preparing for the upcoming year. Although both churches do have certain shared expenses, HCC and FCCH operate as individual institutions; therefore many of their expenses are unique unto themselves. Your pledges and contributions enable each to maintain their facilities and further their work and mission. The up-to-date pledge totals for both congregations is shown below:

FCCH has 28 pledges totaling \$44,515

HCC has 30 pledges totaling \$66,670

Reporting of pledge status in this manner is not meant to create competition, but to keep you informed on where we stand in order to meet our respective financial obligations.

Submitted by Bruce Kocsis

HCC Board of Finance and Stewardship Committee



BOOKMARK THIS!

HCC recently launched a NEW WEBSITE! The new site is more mobile friendly, and has improved features and options. The new web address is: higganumchurch.org.

About the same time, the web address or URL for FCCH's website changed to haddamchurch.org

Please be sure to update your bookmarks today!

Check it out—visit



higganumchurch.org and haddamchurch.org today!

Submitted by Nancy Soneson and Greg Shields

Website Administrators



Commentary: Working for Justice is Intergenerational

December 14, 2017 Written by **Ivy Beckwith**

WITNESS for JUSTICE

A few years ago I sat around a table with my colleagues at the national offices of the United Church of Christ. As we were waiting to address the topic for the meeting, one of my colleagues mentioned that he had been on the phone that morning with one of our churches whose rainbow banner had been vandalized. The church was seeking advice on how to deal with this. Several people spoke up – asking questions and offering help.

I asked if, in the course of the conversation, the person calling from the church had asked how to talk with their children and youth about this act of violence. They had not. I believed then, and I believe now, that not addressing what happened to the banner with the church's children and youth was a lost opportunity for faith formation and helping them understand God's dream of a just world for all.

After all, they know that it happened. Just because we don't directly tell our children and youth about something that happens in our churches doesn't mean they don't know about it – because they do. By specifically addressing this with them the church had the opportunity to talk about why displaying the banner is important for the church's justice witness and to talk about the appropriate response to the people who committed the vandalism. This discussion could help the children and youth connect this stand for justice with the life of a person who follows Jesus and understand that God loves everyone even those who deface property that does not belong to them.

When we leave children and youth out of our discussions about and concrete actions for justice in our world we deprive them of an important piece of their faith formation as they never learn to connect what they learn at church with the shalom of the reign of God. Kathleen and James McGinnis, in their book *Parenting for Peace and Justice*, offer some tips for involving children in social justice activities.

1. Invite children to join you in social action that is within their capabilities.
2. Give them age appropriate experiences with victims of injustice.
3. Integrate fun whenever possible and remember involvement means "with" not "for."

Family Protest, a new video from the Riverside Church of New York City, provides some concrete ideas for your church and your families.

And, I would add a fourth tip – always make the connection between working for justice and being a follower of Jesus. We fight injustice and work for a just world for all because this is what people who love God and follow Jesus do. So the church with the defaced banner might have said “We hang this banner because we believe that God loves everyone and no one should be mistreated because of who they love. This is what people who follow Jesus do.” Making that connection will help your church and your families grow children and young people who both love their neighbors and love Jesus.

Ivy Beckwith is Faith Formation Team Leader for the United Church of Christ.

CALL FOR ANNUAL MEETING

Higganum Congregational Church
2018 Annual Meeting
January 28, 2018

The purpose of the meeting is to:

1. Receive and review 2017 annual reports from Officers, Committees and Boards
2. Approve Officers, Boards and Committee 2018 assignments
3. Review and approve 2018 annual budget

All reports are due to Terry Smith, Clerk, (ctsmith59@aol.com) on or before January 14, 2018. Please format using MS Word or Excel.

*Submitted by,
Terry Smith, Clerk*

Programming Note:

Services will be at the FCCH in January, including January 28, but we will convene at the HCC at 11 am for the Annual Meeting.

FCCH Annual Meeting

The 2018 Annual Meeting of First Congregational Church of Haddam will be held on **Sunday January 21st**.

COUNCIL MEETINGS

FCCH

The next meeting of the FCCH Church Council will be **Tuesday, January 9** beginning at 7 p.m.

HCC

The next meeting of the HCC Church Council will be **Tuesday, January 19** beginning at 7 p.m.

Council meetings are open to all Church members, however only members of the Council shall have a vote as provided in our Bylaws.



A Prescription for The Tired Church

Date: 08 Oct 2015



Congregations are tired.

Some very sincere, very likeable congregations are showing signs of serious fatigue.

Not all congregations are tired. You know who you are. You look tired. You sound tired. When asked, you admit you are tired.

You do perk up a little when you dream of the unchurched people out there who would love your church. You are working to seek them, but they haven't found you yet.

Why do you want those new people in your church? "Because we are tired. We need help with the work of the church.

You may dream of deploying your energetic new members to the tired places: the low-attendance Christian Education Committee; the unstaffed nursery; the church treasurer vacancy; or the Building and Grounds Committee, whose aged members are no longer able to do all of the maintenance and repair.

If anyone ever joined a church to be on a board or committee, they likely joined up with church before the 1970s.

In 1974, President Nixon's resignation battered the national psyche with its shocking betrayal of our trust in institutions like the presidency that formerly inspired trust. About that time, people began to stop joining church simply because it was "the right thing to do."

Church as "duty" – civic, personal, spiritual – lost its appeal. Those who do join church to "go to church" as a reliable institution to do "church work" are getting very tired.

You are tired of working *on* the business of church.

Continues on next page

You may think – or you’ve been told – that being asked to add your name to a church organization chart is a good sign, an affirmation of belonging, a promotion.

“You would be perfect for this job,” you may have been told, without ever hearing your new job description. The less fortunate hear this plea: “We need someone to fill that slot. You are our last hope.” (Yes, you did say that.)

You tired church saints have worked on church business so long that your “church work” has become the work of the church. To say that the work of the Budget Committee and the Altar Guild is the business of the church is like saying that keeping the bathrooms clean and the creamer jugs full is the business of Starbucks.

[You are tired of working on the business of church.](#)

Yes, maintenance and support work needs to be done in any business. Still, in order to serve the coffee hot and quickly to the masses, most Starbucks employees will be selling and serving coffee, most of the time. They will be working *in the business*, not *on the business*.

What if you tired church workers spent more time working together *in the business* that God in Jesus Christ gave us to do?

Call it a mission. Call it a purpose. Call it a call. The point is to get together and be clear about the business outcome.

The church birthed from the resurrection power of Jesus is in the business of transformation.

The “product?” Changed lives – changed relationships – changed world.

Here’s an interesting thing I’ve noticed about church committees: You really do want to be communities.

In church meetings, sisters and brothers in Christ seem to naturally drift “off topic” and wander toward sharing one another’s lives in a way that is life-changing. A business interruption can transform the ordinary into a holy moment that is day-brightening and spirit-enlightening and relationship birthing. And then someone stops it by saying, “We need to get back to business or we’ll never get out of here.”

No wonder you – we – get so tired working in church. The hardest workers dig ever deeper in their dedication to church community and church institution. The stalwarts (thank God for you!) are only too happy to work ever harder on the business. With fewer and fewer people to support outdated buildings and cumbersome organizational structures, no wonder everyone is so tired.

You weary beloved church members have this in common with the new members you are hoping to meet: You all came through the doors of the church seeking changed lives.

[Because your next new member isn’t looking for your church so they can relieve what ails us.](#)

You believe that life in Christ has saving power, and you are ready to partner with others in that “changed lives” business.

A modest proposal to relieve church burnout:

More time working in the business God gave the church and less time working on church business.

Congregations, with God’s help, can set that intention and make those changes for your future congregation.

Because your next new member isn’t looking for your church so they can relieve what ails us.



Rev. Sharon M. Temple is a UCC pastor, parent of three adult children, and grandparent to two grandchildren. She has served congregations in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Louisiana as a settled pastor and as an interim specialist. Her essay ‘The Good Samaritan Test’ appears in ‘There’s a Woman in the Pulpit: Christian Women Share Their Hard Days, Holy Moments & the Healing Power of Humor.’ She blogs at revmama.com.

DIRT CUPS

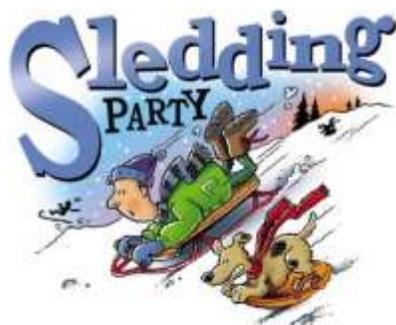
Make this easy snack for your family or your friends at Sunday school. As you eat it, celebrate the miracles God brings in the spring.

What you need:

- 2 cups milk
- 1 (4-serving size) box of chocolate instant pudding
- 1 (8 oz.) tub of frozen whipped topping, thawed
- 1 (16 oz.) package Oreo cookies, crushed
- 8 (9 oz.) plastic cups
- gummy worms and frogs
- plastic flowers (optional)

What you do:

1. Mix milk and pudding in a large bowl. Beat with a whisk until well blended. Let stand 5 minutes.
2. Add whipped topping and half of the crushed Oreos.
3. Place 1 tablespoon crushed Oreos in each cup. Fill cups $\frac{3}{4}$ full with pudding.
4. Top with remaining crushed Oreos.
5. Chill at least 1 hour or until ready to serve.
6. Decorate with gummy worms and/or frogs.
7. Place the stem end of the plastic flower into the center of the pudding dessert.



Just for **KIDS**

IN WITH THE NEW

It's "time" for New Year's resolutions! We should always want to improve ourselves for God, looking to Jesus as our example. God will work with us and through us when we come to him in prayer.

Using the clock's hour hand, copy each word to help you complete 2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV.

" _____ , _____ is _____ , is a _____
 _____ ; the _____ has _____ , the _____ has _____ !"

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17, NIV

Answer: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"



MEMBERS' CORNER

The following 'shout outs' have been submitted for your reading pleasure.

A Big Thank You to Pete and Mary Aduskevich for donating the Christmas Tree this year and as they have in the past for all of us to enjoy.

Brian Thayer

Hats off to Brian Thayer and Rebecca Williams for creating a warm and welcoming sanctuary for the Advent and Christmas services at HCC.

Sue Kocsis

Do you have a special message to share with your Church family? If so, send it in for the Members' Corner!

JANUARY CELEBRATIONS

Happy Birthday to our January Babies!
Congratulations and Many More to:

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2 | Clare Hoover and
Carol Ricker | |
| 3 | Susan Oehl | |
| 4 | Lori Chadwick | |
| 5 | Stella Bragoni | |
| 6 | Melissa Monroe | |
| 10 | Kristen Gras | |
| 11 | Suzanne Murphy | Jim Tucker |
| 13 | Walter Bragoni | |
| 18 | Aubrey Chadwick ('10) | |
| 19 | Hannah Williams | |
| 20 | Doug Harry | |
| 25 | Rogene Gillmor | |
| 28 | Cody Johanson | Carter Michael Hansen ('12) |
| 31 | Patrick Reardon | |



From the Desk of the Editor

Ah January....the start of a New Year is as good time as any for a **Fresh Start**. For me it is a good time to look over my long "to do" list and if there are things on it that I keep putting on the back burner then perhaps it's time to take it off the list altogether. After all if we've made it this long without it than perhaps it is not really necessary after all. Looking at it another way, a Fresh Start is a good time to reevaluate one's priorities and decide which is most important and which are nice, but given the limited time can be left off the To Do list in 2018. And so in writing this column it is becoming apparent that for me, my Fresh Start will be to simplify my life and limit my To Do list to only that which really must be done and in doing so leaving time to simply relax and enjoy each day and those around me.

*What will you do to make a **Fresh Start** this New Year? Whatever it is, may God's blessing be upon you and may you achieve success.*



Happy Anniversary to:
 Washington and Karen Malave -
 January 28



Our Staff

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Please send your announcements to be included in the next edition of the newsletter to
HCCBelfryEditor@gmail.com
 by the 20th of the month.