



Niantic Community Church

Tidings

May 2024

Monthly news for members & friends
from Niantic Community Church

GREETINGS FROM NCC!

We are an Open, Affirming, Reconciling Congregation
of the United Church of Christ and
the United Methodist Church.

No matter who you are, and where you are on your life's
journey, you are welcome here!



A Message from Rev. Erica Avena



In April, I had the joy of meeting with folk interested in learning more about what it means to be a member of the Niantic Community Church. One of the things we talked about was how a church community literally holds space for people to gather. And that it intentionally sets aside safe, sacred space. One of the participants asked me “how do you ensure that it is safe space?” I told her the truth which is that we make it safe for one another. It is up to us.

Does that inspire confidence? Do you trust your neighbors to keep you safe? It is either deep wisdom, or naive. Maybe both. Part of having faith in God, is being part of community, and having confidence in one another, in the gathered community. And when we fail each other is when we really learn this.

Last month my husband and I traveled with a group to see the Philadelphia Flower Show and some of the landmarks in that amazing city where our daughter is in college. One of the benefits I appreciate about traveling with a group is that I get to reflect on what we see with others. By the end of our tour, we had made many friends, and we even began having those conversations we would have otherwise avoided. I do not think I was the one who introduced the topic, but feelings about the upcoming Presidential elections came spilling out. Anxiety, mostly.

(continued)

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Rev. Erica Avena Message (cont.)

The person I keep thinking about in that conversation was a woman from the Midwest who was with us taking a break from fulltime caregiving for a relative. She said repeatedly, she didn't think she could cope with another election between Biden and Trump. What I heard in her words was that she did not feel safe in her community or with her family in the election season. It is ironic that President Biden and former President Trump will undoubtedly be protected by layers of security, yet the souls of many will be laid bare this election year, and no one will make it their business to protect them.

I believe that our faith community has an important counter-cultural role to play this year.

1. we can pray for one another, and we can double down on praying for those with whom we disagree. We believe that Jesus brings us together -- this is a great time to start living into that.

2. Creating safe, sacred space is a gift we give each other. This is not a place where our identities are protected, but where our gifts are given and shared for the sake of the world.

3. Our identity as people of faith transcends political divisions. While a life of faith may lead us to value some political goals over others, politics follows our faith; politics does not lead faith.

The holy spirit is giving us an opportunity this year. On the one hand, this year may hold some challenging moments. On the other hand, it will be easy to make a difference. Bless someone who isn't expecting it! It's the best kind of surprise.

With appreciation for your partnership in this ministry,

Rev Erica





I'm so grateful for the opportunity to have been a delegate to the historic 2020/2024 United Methodist General Conference. Enjoy these fun photos while I'm still processing some of the bigger and more emotional moments that I'll share more about soon. -Pastor Kaleigh

“Best of all, God is with us” - John Wesley

We conclude with grace: passing a process to reinstate clergy who were suspended or removed for being LGBTQ or officiating at same gender weddings.



“Working from within” is a series in Tidings to highlight faithful church members who provide sustained contributions to the missions of the Church without fanfare.

Donna Hathaway



If you haven't already, meet Donna Hathaway. You may have seen her around church with her husband, Ron. The family, including two sons, moved to Connecticut from Massachusetts about fifty years ago, settling in Colchester and then Montville. They have been members of Niantic Community Church for fifteen years. At that time, Donna joined the Parish Nurse Ministry, and in addition to being a registered nurse, she is also an American Red Cross nurse.

As a Red Cross Nurse, Donna has traveled to over fifty locations in response to floods, fires and other major disasters across the country. Her role as manager and nurse is to alleviate suffering, both physical and mental health-related, for people affected by the disaster. She continues to volunteer for the American Red Cross, Medical Reserve, and she can be found the 4th Saturday of the month at the Community Meal Center in New London as a dedicated volunteer, and co-coordinator of the Ann Davis Meal Ministry.

She also notes that she is a grandmother of four, with one on the way! Donna embodies the true meaning of Faith in Action, using her skills to help many in need. She and Ron are a welcome part of our NCC family.

Submitted by Nancy Hunt



History Quiz and Trivia

A Heritage of Faith since 1719. We are an Open, Affirming, Reconciling congregation of the United Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. At the Annual Meeting in 1954 it was decided to purchase land on Pennsylvania Ave for the site of a new Church. Do you have any idea how much was paid for the 3 acres that the Church is now on?
A) \$6,000 B) \$18,000 C) \$36,000
2. There had been 3 other sites in town that had been considered. Any idea where these might have been? They are all within ½ mile of the Lincoln St Church.
3. Tidewater Oil had agreed to lease the land that the Methodist Church was on if we removed the building. How much did it cost us to remove the Church?
A) \$650 B) \$2,500 C) \$5,000

Answers are posted further on in this issue of Tidings.

Our Open, Affirming, Reconciling (OAR) ministry welcomed David Brule and Dr. John Pfeiffer from the Nehantic Tribal Council during April. They gave an informative presentation on the history of the Nehantic Native Nation and its current activities.



NCC Land Acknowledgement Statement

[Niantic Community Church](#)

May Tidings 2024

With Easter on Sunday March 31st, the joy of the resurrection was evident in the many gatherings in April at Niantic Community Church! Congregational Potluck, Rummage Sale, a Baptism, welcomed a new Member, guest musicians in worship, and more.



Faith Formation for Children & Youth

Our children made "resurrection rolls." during Sunday School. (top left)

Acolyte Tre with his mom lighting altar candles. (top right)

Children's moment sharing about Acts 4:32-37. (bottom right)

Kids sang a "1 John 4:7-8 Camp Song" during the children's message. (bottom left)



CLUB 26 BEACH BUCKET COLLECTION
Sunscreen, flip flops, sand-molding toys,
drink boxes, bubbles, beach balls,
and individual snacks.

To support *Waterford Youth & Family Services*. Drop off donations now through June 2nd. Bins are by the Youth Faith Formation office. Thank you for your support!



Volunteer Opportunity
Christian Education Ministry

Christian Education Ministry is looking for a Chair or Co-Chair person(s). For more info, contact Marsha Swan or Jeannette Woodworth. This is a planning position (we meet monthly on the 2nd Tuesday at 7pm) and does not require teaching Sunday School.



GRANTS AVAILABLE

The Memorial Fund will once again offer grants for those seeking higher education.

- Applicants must be NCC members or their children.
- Watch the Wednesday email during the months of May and June for a link to the details and application form.



- The deadline to receive applications is June 30.
- Those who qualify for the grant will receive a check in August.

The Memorial Fund is now accepting grant applications for those seeking higher education – this includes college, technical schools, and other post high school education. Applicants must be NCC members or their children.

The firm deadline to receive applications is June 30.

The amount of the grant will be determined by the number of qualified applicants and the pre-determined money available. Those who qualify for the grant will receive a check in August.

If you wish to apply, please read carefully the information and complete the application linked HERE: [Adult/Youth Faith Formation — Niantic Community Church](#)

Please note that we are asking that parents of applicants also sign. Applications may be dropped off or mailed to the church (170 Pennsylvania Ave, Niantic, CT 06357), with attn: Memorial Fund on the envelope, or emailed to: newsteph1217@gmail.com
Questions can be directed to the same email address.

To Niantic Community Church: Thank you for sponsoring the American Red Cross blood drive in April.

You **collected 29 units which will help save up to 87 lives**. Your next blood drive is scheduled for June 7 from 12p-5p. We will be giving away free t-shirts!

Warm Regards, Jennifer Gartsu

American Red Cross Blood Services

Red Cross Blood Drive



Friday

June 7, Noon - 5pm

in the Dining Hall

Let's help save lives!





**Special Offering #3:
Immigrant Rights and Refugee
Resettlement**



On 4/2/24, I and some others at Niantic Community Church were sent an article from the Philadelphia Inquirer by another member of the church. It began like this:

“From the day in the mid-2000s when a then-20-year-old Maynor Yassir Suazo Sandoval crossed the border into America, he never stopped working. The youngest of eight children, Suazo was fleeing numbing poverty and a dead-end career path in Azacualpa, a small rural village in the western mountains of Honduras.

“The undocumented Suazo wound up in Greater Baltimore, a magnet for Central American refugees with its relatively cheap housing for the bustling Eastern Seaboard, a friendly climate toward migrants, and lots of opportunity. With American dreams of entrepreneurship, he took menial jobs like clearing brush, then launched a package delivery service, and when COVID-19 ended that, started working overnight construction for a Baltimore contractor, Brawner Brothers.

“Suazo and seven men with stories very much like his — migrants from the neighboring countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico — were filling potholes on the Baltimore’s major bridge on a raw March night.”

We know the rest of the story of the horrible collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge. What we focus on with this Special Offering in May and June are the immigrants and refugees in the community of Niantic Community Church. What would Jesus be encouraging us to do in order to make sure that our Immigrant and Refugee neighbors are treated with love, or as Rev. Cathy Zall put it “a respect for the spirit”?

At different times through the coming weeks, this Special Offering will be focusing on the ministries of **Church World Service, United Action of Connecticut (UACT)**, and the **Immigration Advocacy Support Center (IASC)** of New London. Our first Sunday of the Special Offering will be on Mother’s Day with Blanket Sunday to benefit Church World Service. Next we will be focusing on IASC, and later, UACT.

This article from the Philadelphia Inquirer ends with the following paragraph:

“Those six workers who perished were not “poisoning the blood of our country,” they were replenishing it. This is a moment of clarity when we need to reject the national disease of xenophobia and restore our faith in the United States as a beacon for the best people like Suazo. They may have been born all over the continent, but when these men plunged into our waters on Tuesday, they died as Americans.”

Faith in Action – Safe Futures

In 2024, NCC will be renewing their relationship with Safe Futures of New London. Safe Futures is a network of support for victims of domestic abuse. Last year they served 10,000 victims in Southeastern Connecticut. As the new liaison between NCC and SF, I would like to raise awareness of domestic abuse and to collect items for their donation center. Safe Futures will request a new



item monthly according to need. A collection container will be clearly labeled next to the coffee collection. The collection for May will be hand and body lotions. Thank you in advance for your support.



The collection of coffee from NCC is going strong! After service on April 14, the New London Homeless Hospitality Center set up a table with information. I learned that NCC is their ONLY source of regular coffee donations. If they run out of coffee, they do not have funds to buy coffee and

they do not serve. So far this year, NCC has donated 134 lb of coffee, shared between NLHHC and DINE. Sugar and sweeteners also accepted. As usual, NCC is amazing! Susan Gagliardi

Save the Dates!

Confirmation Sunday – 6/2

Farewell Potluck for Jeff Birch – 6/8

Children’s Sunday – 6/16

Summer Suppers!! -Tuesdays 7/9, 7/23, 8/6

Narthex ceiling/floor

On Thursday, April 4th, with the help of my good friend Bob Cikatz we installed the gate. The gate latches with a magnet so in order to open the gate all you have to do is push on it. This makes opening it from a ladder very easy to do. It is not spring loaded so you do have to manually close it. I was able to find the leftover paint from the floor so the inside of the gate is the same color as the floor and inside of the walls.

This leaves the following items to finish in order to complete the project.

- 1) Install the outside panel on the gate
- 2) Build/install a new projector stand
- 3) Install the handrail in front of the projector
- 4) Contact the building inspector to get a final approval and closeout of the building permit.
- 5) Create/install the top panel trim
- 6) Install the gate threshold
- 7) Create/install the gate trim
- 8) Install the end trim for the bottom of the panels in the sanctuary
- 9) Create/install the post tops.

See below for some pictures I took today after the railing installation. I hope to have all of this completed by the end of May.

-Rich Thomson



GOVERNANCE NEWS

PRESIDENT/VICE PRESIDENT OFFICE HOURS

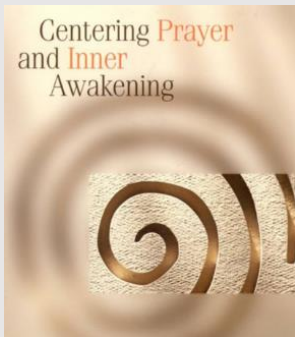
Carol Donovan (president) and Nancy Hunt (vice president) will be holding office hours on Tuesdays from 1 -3 pm starting April 9, in the Fellowship room.

Governing Board Focused Retreat – Saturday, May 18. Details to follow in the Wednesday Note.

The annual NCC Memorial Day American flag-raising is set for Saturday, May 25th at 11:00 a.m. in front of the Sanctuary doors. Please join us for a brief reading and prayer to honor our Veteran's, past and present. Hope to see you there.

Nancy Hunt, Vice President

Faith and Fellowship



*In silence we come to know and love
the Divine Mystery that is within us.*

The Centering Prayer group meets each Tuesday 4:30 – 5:50pm (Hybrid) in the Fellowship Room. All are welcome. Contact daveoat@gmail.com

A Sacred Place is offering a wonderful volunteer opportunity. We truly make a difference in the lives of the women at York and their children by providing a way through a **Storybook Project** and a **Caregiver and Me** gathering for parent and child to stay connected. Please help by volunteering your time so that this ministry continues to be a blessing and success! Contact: Juanita Durham, (860-460-1976) and Verna Swann, (860-287-2377).

The Chosen Series - This popular and compelling series follows Jesus as he gathers his disciples, heals the needy and sacrifices himself for the sake of humanity. Contact Keith Nielson for info at: 860-861-9890. It is held on the following Wednesdays: 5/1, 5/15 and 6/5, 5:30pm in the Fellowship room.

Tidings Schedule:
June Issue Articles due May 20
July/August Issue Articles due June 20



ANSWERS

If you guessed “A” to both questions you are correct. We paid Lillian Clark \$2,000 a year for 3 years for the Penn Ave. site. It actually only cost \$500 to take the Methodist Church down as we sold one of the furnaces for \$150. We sold the Methodist Chapel and land behind the Church for \$6,000.

The 3 other sites considered were 1) Penn Ave across the street from the present church where PennCove Rd. now is. 2) The Cutillo property on the corner of Penn Ave. and Hope St. 3) The Bond property on Main St., the site today of Casablanca Wicker, across from the Baptist Church. Can you imagine Sunday morning on Main St. if we would have chosen the Bond property...4 churches within a block!

NCC
BOOK CLUB

Sunday, June 2, 7pm at NCC
"Trust" by Hernan Diaz.
Hope to see you then!

SUMMER SUPPERS!
Tuesdays
3 dates in 2024
July 9 ~ July 23 ~ August 6
5:30pm - 7:00pm
\$15 per person \$10 kids under 10yrs

Natick Community Church

NCC Pastors and Staff

Interim Minister - Rev. Erica Avena erica.avena@nianticcommunitychurch.org

Associate Pastor, Congregational Care – Rev. Kaleigh Rasmussen
kaleigh@nianticcommunitychurch.org

Music Minister– Lynne Floyd lynne@nianticcommunitychurch.org

Men’s Choir & Bell Choir Director– Nan Rigdon nan@nianticcommunitychurch.org

Seminarian/Student Minister – Jeff Birch jeff.birch@lextheo.edu

Children & Youth Faith Formation Coordinator – Marsha Swan
marsha@nianticcommunitychurch.org

Communications/Office Manager – Theresa Cleary theresa@nianticcommunitychurch.org

Financial Secretary – Ted Montgomery ted@nianticcommunitychurch.org

Bookkeeper – Robin Goldschlager robin@nianticcommunitychurch.org



Niantic Community Church

A federated congregation of the United Methodist Church
and the United Church of Christ.

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www.NianticCommunityChurch.org
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wherever you are on your life’s journey—
you are welcome here.”

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