

Tidings

Monthly news for members & friends from Niantic Community Church

July/August 2009

FROM THE PASTOR AND TEACHER AND
DIR. OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND YOUTH MINISTRIES

Dear Friends,

On June 14th, the congregation voted to transform the Sunday schedule to allow for a Christian Education Hour for all ages, between the two morning worship services. With this bold move, Niantic Community Church is more deeply embracing the first part of our vision statement: *Learning God's Ways*. We will provide more learning opportunities for people of all ages. We will also provide a more holistic worship life for children as they grow into adolescence and adulthood.

Starting September 13th, the first morning worship will start at 9am and in much the same way that it currently does. About 15 minutes into the service, Pastor John will offer "A Thought for Young Minds," after which younger children (PreK through 4th grade) may attend an activity designed for their age. One notable change to this arrangement is that we are encouraging children 5th grade and above to participate in the remainder of the worship service, including scripture readings, sermon, hymns, offering, and anthem. There will undoubtedly be an adjustment period as we make this transition but through faithful support and encouragement, this will likely be a change that will bring growth and deeper engagement with God's Word for the whole congregation, not merely the children. We will see older children learning the richness of worship, the most central part of our life as God's people. Having our youth in worship will also be a beautiful reminder of God's limitless love for the whole world, regardless of age, experience, ability, or understanding. We see their participation in worship each week as an authentic way to live out our desire to truly welcome all people to NCC — whoever they are, and wherever they are on life's journey.

The younger children leaving worship will attend a multi-age, scripture-based activity through the duration of the worship service. Different from Sunday School classes, these activity times will include more movement, play, and music. The activity time will take place during both worship services so families may choose to worship either at 9am or 11:15am.

The classroom time between worship services (starting at 10:15am and ending at 11am) will look much like it does now for Sunday school aged children. Adult opportunities for learning between services will be diverse and change throughout the year. Some classes will explore a topic over several weeks; some will be one-time offerings. We'll design all of the adult classes so that you can come to one or several, and still find a rich encounter with God's Word. Pastor John will teach some of these, we will draw teachers from our congregation, and occasionally we'll invite guests.

There will also be a separate space, provided by Jess Bunger, for high school aged youth to meet and discuss scripture and relate it to their everyday lives — although if they choose, they may participate in any adult class they wish. The high school youth will still continue to serve at the shelter once a month and possibly have other opportunities to meet on Sunday afternoons (this ministry is still in development).

Those adults who do not wish to participate in Christian Education, will be able to enjoy our "Between Hour Café," including any parents waiting for their children to finish their Christian Education time. (We do want to emphasize, however, our request that one parent be present in the church building during the education hour, either in their own class or at the "café.")

In some ways, despite the number of words to describe this change, it is small. Participating in both

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worship and Christian Education would likely add about 30 minutes to the Sunday morning experience. We'll continue to provide snacks and refreshments as well as active times for the younger children to use up some of their endless energy throughout the morning.

But looked at another way, the change is big: we are carefully and intentionally creating more opportunities to let God's Word into our lives. This is the Word that gives life, that calls us to fullness of living, that envisions a world of harmony and integrity and justice. This is the Word that brings hope in hard times, increase of joy in good times, and a sense of our place in God's world. We see the schedule change as giving an opportunity to grow, stretch, and be transformed by God's Word in ways that build a more faithful community and deepen our relationships with God and one another.

We both pray that you will grab this new opportunity, prayerfully and enthusiastically. We also hope you'll help out! More volunteers will be needed to fulfill the needs of our teaching ministries (though none will require a weekly commitment). By providing rotating teams of volunteers everyone will be able to worship, learn, teach, and serve.

We are both available to talk over your thoughts about getting involved in our Sunday morning ministries. One of our church members noted that there naturally will be some speed bumps along the way. But the community of NCC is journeying with and in God's Word — and there's no bump that will slow down God! Hop on, for the ride of your life!

God's richest blessings to you,

John and Jess

Worship in July & August

Sunday Mornings ...

June 7th: Trinity Sunday

Texts: Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29; Romans 8:12-17;
John 3:1-17

Pastor John A. Nelson: "Brought Into the Presence"

July 5th: Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10; Psalm 48; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10; Mark 6:1-13

Guest preacher: the Rev. Eric Swanfeldt

July 12th: Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19; Psalm 24; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29

Pastor John A. Nelson: "Letters from Prison"

July 19th: Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: 2 Samuel 7:1-14a; Psalm 89:20-37; Ephesians 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

Pastor John A. Nelson: "God's Time and Our Time"

July 26th: Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: 2 Samuel 11:1-15; Psalm 14; Ephesians 3:14-21; John 6:1-21

Pastor John A. Nelson: "Food for the Journey"

August 2nd: Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: 2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a; Psalm 51:1-12; Ephesians 4:1-16; John 6:24-35

Guest preacher: the Rev. Ed Painter

August 9th: Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: 2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33; Psalm 130; Ephesians 4:25-5:2; John 6:35, 41-51

Guest preacher: Ms. Christa Swenson

August 16th: 11th Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: 1 Kings 2:10-13; 3:3-14; Psalm 111; Ephesians 5:15-20; John 6:51-58

Pastor John A. Nelson, preaching: "The Spirit of Wisdom"

August 23rd: 12th Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: 1 Kings 8:(1, 6, 10-11), 22-30, 41-43; Psalm 84; Ephesians 6:10-20; John 6:56-69

Pastor John A. Nelson: "Dress for Success"

August 30th: 13th Sunday after Pentecost

Texts: Song of Solomon 2:8-13; Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9; James 1:17-27; Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Pastor John A. Nelson: "Making the Connection"

... and Thursday evenings

Contemporary Worship
Thursdays at 7:00pm
All ages welcome!

Committee News

Prudential Board

Paul Helvig

If you attended the congregational meeting on June 14, you know that the format for Sunday mornings will be different this fall. The support for the proposed change was strong. But there were also valid concerns expressed that were heard by the Prudential Board and our pastor: concerns about parking, about young people who might have difficulty staying engaged throughout the worship service, about the extended time in church for those attending both worship and Christian education classes, about the effect of the new schedule on "coffee hour" and the fellowship traditionally enjoyed during that time. These issues will challenge the creativity of the church leadership as well as that of many church members. Please know that, as we prepare to implement the new schedule in September, those who are in church leadership positions welcome your observations and suggestions. We know that for some, the changes will present significant challenges. Growth inevitable requires change. The children shared their (and the Bible's) understanding of growth when they led the June 14 worship service. In the "meditation for mature minds," we saw how the young John and Jess, reached out to the selfish, unhappy, and illiterate strawberry farmer with gifts of literacy and the Word. Their compassion transformed the spirit of the farmer and brought him into community and new life. As we grow into a new model of worship and Christian education, let's be mindful of the challenges we each face and let's support one another in Christian love. Isn't that what we as Christians are called to be and do? And isn't that what brought many of us to NCC in the first place? May our faith continue to live and to grow in our actions.

Christian Education Committee

Joyce Wood



The Christian Education committee would like to thank all of the volunteers who helped during the year with our children. If you taught Sunday School, chaperoned a mission trip (and worked, we know), organized VBS, confirmation mentors, etc., we send gratitude for your service. We also would like to acknowledge the wonderful Children's Sunday last week and the spirit of worship the children brought into the service. What a blessing the members of our congregation are. A HUGE thank you to Jess for her continued faith and service.

Parish Life Committee

Patty Chaffee

Mark your calendars for the 2nd Annual NCC Chili Cook-Off on Saturday, October 24. More details to follow but fun, food and fabulous prizes are a certainty. We are currently looking for donations from local businesses to make donations for those awesome gift baskets awarded to winners. Gift certificates to restaurants, services, shops, etc are all welcome. Proceeds from this event will once again be earmarked for the Accessibility Fund. If you are interested in helping out at the Cook-Off and being involved in any way, please let us know. You don't need to be on the Parish Life Committee to be a part of parish life. Join the fun!

Our Operation Love Ministry has been both blessed and challenged lately. The blessing is that Cindy King and Doris Beebe have continued to share in coordinating this important ministry while we search for a coordinator. Made up of two parts, funeral receptions and meals for those who have had emergency situations arise, Operation Love is in jeopardy of being discontinued. While these gracious women have agreed to see it through the summer, when Parish Life Ministry meets in September, the fate of Operation Love will be on the agenda. Although the talents of many members and friends, is evident when a funeral reception or family emergency arises, we do need someone or a team of folks to share in coordination of this ministry on an ongoing basis. If interested in getting involved or hearing more about the role of Operation Love Coordinator, please call the Parish Life Ministry office or speak with Cindy or Doris.



History Quiz & Trivia

Many of us remember as children here in Niantic looking forward to Vacation Bible School. It was a time of fun with friends and a time of learning new Bible stories.

The question is: When did Vacation Bible School begin at our churches?

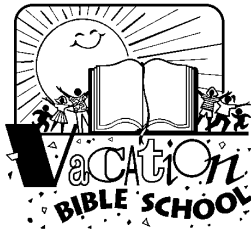
News for Youth from Jess Bunger, DRE-YM

Alumni Wanakee Weekend!

Mark your calendars and save the date, the first ever Alumni Wanakee Weekend will take place on Columbus Day weekend October 9th-12th. Adults and children of all ages who have attended the Middle School Fellowship weekend to Wanakee are welcome to attend. Those adults who have not been able to attend in the past are also welcome to join the group for the weekend. The cost of the weekend will be approximately \$50 per person including food and lodging. The work crew will spend time helping Farmer Jen with the fall harvest and preparing the farm for the winter. More information will be forth coming from Jess Bunger.

CAMP E.D.G.E. Vacation Bible School

Come on out to NCC between July 13th and the 17th to **Experience and Discover God Everywhere!** Children of at least kindergarten age are invited to sign up for Vacation Bible School with Deb Fountain or Carole Glenn. Adults are encouraged to get involved in the planning and preparations for this awesome week of ministry with children through Deb, Carole or Jess Bunger.



SUNDAY SCHOOL Registration!

Sunday School Registration will start in mid August. All children attending Sunday school or the Activity Time during both worship services will need to be registered with the Christian Education office. Hard copies of the registration form will be available in the narthex as well as in the Christian Education office. Online forms will be available for download again this year on the NCC Youth Ministry website. A link to the youth ministry website is located on the NCC main page. Questions regarding Sunday school registration should be directed to Jess Bunger, at jessbunger@nianticcommunitychurch.org or 739-6208.

Annual High School Summer Service Trip!



The week of July 19th through the 24th, eighteen energized high school aged youth and three fearless adults from NCC will travel to the southern edge of the Adirondack Mountains. During their time in up-state New York, this team will give their time and energy to the task of serving others by repairing homes, painting walls, cleaning up yards, and also providing a day camp for local children.

Just as the trip to Washington DC last summer proved to be a week of transformational growth, this trip will surely be filled with challenges and triumphs. It is my prayer that this week will be filled with the gentle nudging of the Spirit urging us on and pushing our limits. I pray that our hearts and minds would be open to learning new things about ourselves and this world in order that we might grow closer to our neighbors and to God.

The group will be eager to share stories with the congregation and the community at large once we return; please feel free to ask the students and volunteers about their adventure. My greatest hope is that the congregation would choose to be a part of our journey through holding us up in prayer. Here are in the names of the participants so you may include them in your prayers:

Liz Buhler, Rich Basham, Jess Bunger, Kiera McCarthy, Heather Muir, Winston Vargo, Ellie Bruckner, Marissa Mirecki, Kelly Keenan, Greg Castronova, Caila Martinson, Jordan Wells, Brianne Mirecki, Jeff Piascik, Tori Luce, Adam Bobrowski, Georganne Agles, Rebecca Keenan, Emily Farrugia, Michael Strollo, and Isabel Abare-Brown.

~ Drenched in Grace, Jess Bunger

Summer High School Fellowship

Youth are invited to continue to serve meals at the shelter all summer. We will serve July 5th at 6pm and August 2nd at 6pm so be sure to save the dates! Donations supporting this ministry are always appreciated; gift cards and donations of food are helpful way to support this ministry. Contact Jess Bunger or Laurie Castronova to see how you can help.

Community Minister - Patty Chaffee



Greetings from the office of Parish Life Ministry. I had a conversation with some lovely folks recently who made me realize that many members and friends of NCC don't really

know who I am or what I do. Last month I celebrated a year and a half of service in this ministry and I find there are many people I still haven't had the pleasure of meeting. So I thought I'd drop into Tidings each month to say hello, share a bit about the work I do and invite you to be a part of it.

My role as Community Minister can pretty much be broken down into three areas; offering committees and groups support in whatever way they need; communications and publicity for the church; and member care. Offering small group programs and arranging for guest presenters for workshops to nurture the body and spirit help us navigate our faith journeys. These are some of the ways I am involved with member care. There are also a plethora of details I tend to Monday through Friday that may involve anything from ordering the coffee you drink at coffee hour, to the card you receive in the mail, the flyers you see posted for an event or the Thursday afternoon group you attend. Those are a few of the things that keep me busy and visitors automatically become my priority.

No matter how busy I might be, my door is always open to you, so please don't hesitate to stop by just to say, "hello." You'll always find a listening ear, a whimsical spirit, and a fellow traveler on the faith journey. Please let me know if you are aware of someone who might like to be on our prayer chain, receive a card, a pastoral call, or has a special need.

"Maybe the most sacred things are the hardest to see, because they are so obvious."

-Sue Bender

Peace,

Patty Chaffee

Community Minister

Be a Little More Green

by Barbara Heaney, Green Church Task Force

On June 7th, some members of our congregation attended a min-workshop which talked about ways that churches can become more green. Some of the ideas shared were simple (recycling plastic, cans and paper), while other required a bit of initial expense (converting to compact fluorescent light-bulbs) while others would be considered an investment (solar panels, for example). One of the simple ideas was to share eco-tips with members of the congregation to help them think 'greener'. We will be running eco-tips in our church's newsletter and the Wednesday email and other avenues of communication with our church family. Here are a couple of tips that can get us started:

1. Wash in cold or warm: If all households in the US switch from hot-hot cycle to warm-cold cycle we could save the energy comparable to 100,00 barrels of oil a day. Only launder when you have a full load.
2. Rethink Bottled Water: Nearly 90% of plastic bottles are not recycled instead taking thousands of years to decompose. Buy a reusable container and fill it with tap water. EPA standards on tap water are more stringent than the FDA's standard for bottle water.
3. Brush Without Running: You'll conserve up to 5 gallons per day if you stop. Daily savings in the US alone could add up to 1.5 billion gallons more water than folks use in the Big Apple.
4. Don't Rinse: Shop rinsing dishes before using dishwasher and save up to 20 gallons of water each load. Plus you're saving time and energy used to heat the additional water.

Source: <http://www.50waystohelp.com/>

Ruth Beckwith to celebrate her 103rd Birthday.



Ruth Beckwith

Ruth Beckwith believed to be the oldest and longest member of the Niantic Community Church will be 103 on July 12th. She joined the Niantic Methodist Church January 16, 1921. Ruth has been a resident of Bridebrook Health and Rehabilitation

Center for the last 18 months. She had been active in the WCSA for many years.

Summer Suppers

The '09 Summer Suppers have been scheduled for July 7, July 21, August 4 and August 18. It is with great appreciation we welcome back all that have shared their talents, gifts and time in hosting these dinners in the past and have agreed to continue. We also welcome any "first timers" who would like to participate in the preparation and/or operations of these four feasts. No experience is necessary. Please contact Kim Kalajainen at 860-227-3871 or kkalajainen@lmhosp.org if you would like to confirm or offer your assistance. As always, we welcome all of you to join us for the suppers. Seatings are at 5:30 and 6:30 with takeout available until 7PM. Adult servings are \$9 and children servings are \$4. We look forward to see everyone there!

History Quiz Answer

Answer: 81 years ago in 1928 three churches in Niantic, the Congregational, Methodist and Baptist, cooperated in the Summer Daily Vacation Bible School. The first year it was held at the Chapel of the Methodist Church and then rotated between the churches.

*NOTE: For those who would like the answer to the June Quiz about the Haystack Meeting, here it is: The name was the "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission" and it came out of a meeting in Farmington Connecticut. In 1812 the first overseas missionaries were sent to India. A short while later the "American Board of Homeland Missions" was formed. The Haystack Movement has changed the shape of lives and communities and has inspired generations to engage the needs and hopes of the world.

Trivia: In 1816 missionaries went to Ceylon and in 1830 China where work continued until 1950 when missionaries were driven out by the Communist Party. They worked with the American Indians in the west starting in 1817 and traveled to the Sandwich Islands in 1820.

From the Children's Center

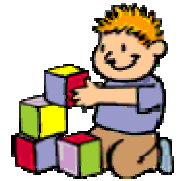
Kathy, the Center Director, has planned a busy summer time for children and staff.



The 8 week School Age Summer Program is almost full, with weekly beach trips, field trips, and more at the Center. Look for the Center's booth downtown at Celebrate East Lyme Day. On Aug. 14th there will be a Family Night Movie, open to all, and hopefully, outdoors. A major fundraiser, the Basket Auction will be held Aug. 4th to 14th. The Pre-Schoolers recently had a visit from Joanne Moore who brought in child sized wheelchairs and talked with the children about disabilities and acceptance of those who are different.

Several of the Staff have almost completed a 9 month course so they will earn a Child Development Associates.

Two Family Activities were "Tea with Mom" in May and "Pizza with Pop" in June. A Pre-School graduation was held in June for those ready for Kindergarten, and they are anxious to meet the Big World.



Decaf or Regular?

Even though the Summer is upon us, coffee hour remains in full swing. We can look forward to the following committees hosting coffee hour in the coming weeks:

June 21

Open & Affirming/Reconciling

June 28, July 5,12,19

Women's Fellowship Board/Safe Church

July 26, August 2,9,16

Memorial/Old Stone Church/Endowment

August 23,30, Sept. 6,13

Communication & Publicity/Christian Ed



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Summer Suppers



July 6

July 21

August 4

August 18

Summer Worship Schedule:

Sundays at 9:30 a.m

Contemporary Worship Thursdays at 5:00 p.m.

Pastor & Teacher: John A. Nelson

Community Minister Patty Chaffee

Dir. of Religious Education and Youth Ministries: Jess Bungler

Church Secretary: Judy Snitkin

Parish Nurse: Marie LaTourette

Children's Center Director: Kathleen Tiller

Tidings Volunteers: Rachel Ayer, Clara Ball, Jan Brentlinger,
Jennifer Datum, Jeanne McNeil, Eleanor Shoop, Jean Stamm, LouAnn Wilson

Deadline for the Sept. edition of Tidings is Aug. 15th. Please e-mail submissions to Tidings@TheDatums.com