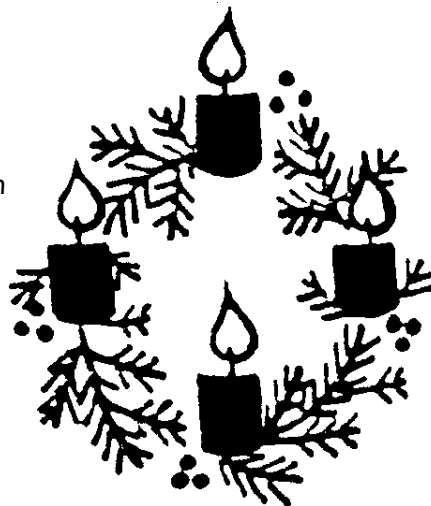


NIANTIC COMMUNITY CHURCH

An Open, Affirming, Reconciling congregation of the
United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church

A Heritage of Faith since 1719 • Each Member a Minister

“Whoever you are;
wherever you are on life’s journey:
you are welcome here.”



December 18, 2011 • 9:00 & 11:15AM

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

There is a light. No matter how dark it might become, there is a radiance that will not be denied, that cannot be ignored.

Prepare yourself for the coming of this luminous Presence. Get ready for the end of gloom.

*Brian Foreman, from "Following the Star" Advent devotional
www.d365.org/followingthestar/*

WE GATHER AS THE CHURCH

HYMN SING

PRELUDE

“Fum, Fum, Fum” and “Gentle Mary Laid Her Child”

Youth Bells

arr. Thompson

SHARING OF PARISH ACTIVITIES

Those in each pew closest to the center aisle will please begin passing the Friendship Pads so that everyone has an opportunity to indicate their presence here today and make a note of any messages. Prayer requests will be collected during the second hymn.

A SIGN OF OUR UNITY AND RECONCILIATION

Please greet those around you, wishing them “peace” or “the peace of Christ.”

INTROIT

“Do You Hear What I Hear?”

Men’s Choir

by N Regney & G Shaynes

arr. Harry Simeone

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD AND CHRIST'S LIGHT IN OUR WORSHIP

THE ADVENT WREATH

Candle lighters: Let us continue to follow the footsteps of our ancestors as we journey to Bethlehem.

Congregation: We continue our journey, grateful for those who have gone this way before us.

Today we remember those who discovered love on their journey.

We remember the great vision of the prophet Isaiah, who foresaw a world where ancient enemies softened their hearts in new bonds of caring.

We remember the devotion shared between Mary and Joseph.

We remember that God's care for us was so great, that even into a world of turmoil and sin, the Most High sent us pure love in the most humble Christ child.

As we journey through Advent, to Bethlehem,

let us carry love in our hearts, so that we may adore Him again.

[Light the fourth Advent candle, the candle of love.]

All: (sung) O come, Thou Prince of Justice, set us free

Let mortal souls thy holiness now see

Your gracious rule establish on earth

'Til love for all has come to birth.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

CALL TO WORSHIP

✦ HYMN #202

“People, Look East”

BESANÇON

CALL TO RECONCILIATION

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

How can this be, Holy One of Advent?

We would put the powerful on pedestals,

but you send the lowly to remind us

of our call to be servants.

We would make certain our pantries are stocked for the holidays,

but you send our neighbors to our door,

collecting for those who hunger and thirst for hope.

We would listen to seasonal sounds of Christmas specials,

but you send the angels to carol to us

of the promises made to all.

**Forgive us, Beloved One.
As we watch for your coming,
may we see the need around us;
as we prepare to celebrate your birth,
may we live with open hearts;
as we long for healing and hope,
may we discover it in the Babe of Bethlehem,
Jesus the Christ, sent to love us into life.**

Silence is kept

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One: The good news is not just announced: it is a gift, given for all people. For the proud, as well as the humble; for the rich, and for the impoverished; for those who have found faith, and those who long for it.

Many: Our hearts rejoice in the One who comes to us, bringing hope, joy, peace, and love into our lives. Thanks be to God! Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER (*trespasses*)

WE PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL IN WORD

A THOUGHT FOR YOUNG MINDS

✘ HYMN #198

“My Soul Gives Glory to My God”

MORNING SONG

Prayer requests will be collected; Children (PreK–5th grade) attending Church School during the 9AM service may leave as we sing the hymn.

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 1:26-45

Reader: Let us prepare ourselves for the Word of God as it comes to us in the reading of Holy Scripture.

People: Our hearts and minds are open.

SERMON

“Quiet Revolutions”

John A. Nelson

WE RESPOND IN PRAYER AND FAITH

CALL TO PRAYER

One: God be with you.

Many: And also with you.

May the peace of Christ dwell in your hearts.

Christ is our peace, our light, and our hope.

Let us pray.

PRAYERS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

SILENT PRAYER

PASTORAL PRAYER

OFFERTORY

One: In worship we remember the love that is God's gift to us, and we respond with gifts of our own. We cannot hope to pay for what we have received: it is beyond price. But here and now we rededicate ourselves to serve the God who forms us with love – and who sends us to re-form our world with that same love. Our generous tithes and contributions are a part of that great love-offering.

Let us gather our gifts with grateful praise, and offer them to God's purposes.

RECEIVING TITHES AND OFFERINGS

THE MUSICAL OFFERING

(9:00AM)	"Softly Tread" (Adult Choir)	<i>Croft</i>
(11:15AM)	"Cradle Song (Christmas Oratorio)"	<i>Bach</i>

✘ ADVENT DOXOLOGY

VENI EMMANUEL

**To you, O Christ, all glo - ry be,
Whose advent sets your peo - ple free;
Creator's child, whom we a - dore,
Our source of love, fore - vermore.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.**

✘ UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God's steadfast love is established forever – like the moon, a silent witness in the skies. God's faithfulness is as firm as the heavens – like stars that never grow dim. May God bless this offering, that Christ's light will shine for all whom it touches. Amen.

✘ HYMN #200

"Tell Out, My Soul"

WOODLANDS

✘ BENEDICTION AND THREE-FOLD AMEN

(Hymnal, 898)

POSTLUDE

"Angels From the Realms of Glory"

Linker

**Please remain seated in silence during the Postlude
before going out to serve as Christ's representatives in the world.**



WELCOME TO NIAN TIC COMMUNITY CHURCH!

A Heritage of Faith since 1719, and an Open, Affirming, Reconciling congregation, Niantic Community Church is a federated congregation of the United Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ. It is also a welcoming home to people from a great variety of church backgrounds and life experiences. Your presence here today is a gift to us! We hope you will feel God's Spirit here today through our worship and fellowship.

If you are a visitor, we invite you to sign our guest register by the rear entrance to the sanctuary. "Welcome" information packets, children's bulletins, and toys are also available. Our services are recorded each week. You may listen to sermons online: from the home page of our website, click on the "Sermon Archive" link. CD recordings are also available by calling the church office (739-6208).

**Please set cell phones and pagers to silent mode
(unless you're expecting a call from Jesus)**

**Assistive Listening Devices, Large Print Bibles, Bulletins, and
Hymnals are available. Please ask an usher for assistance!**

Today's Worship Leaders

9:00AM

Ushers: Judy Layden, Angie Hayes,
Lew Meier, Bob Nielson
Worship Leader: John Mahon

11:15AM

Ushers: Anne Davis, Dan Scace
Worship Leader: Jeannette Woodworth

Preacher: Pastor John A. Nelson

Parish Host: Margaret Holmberg

Flowers have been placed in the sanctuary to the Glory of God
and in Celebration of our children and grandchildren,
by Rich & Sue Basham,
and
in Loving Memory of Ray Herzberg,
by his family.

✠ All who are able may stand at these times

Prayer of Confession adapted and reprinted from Lectionary Liturgies by the Rev. Thom Schumann © 2011
(lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com). Prayer of Dedication adapted from "From Darkness to Light," Service Prayers for the
Fourth Sunday of Advent, by the Rev. Penny L. Lowes. Used with permission.

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

Ministers: All Participants in the Life of the Congregation

Worship & Music

Organist and Music Director: Paul Althouse
Director of Handbell Choirs: Lynne Floyd
Directors of Children's and Gospel Choirs:
Lee Wilkerson & Nikki Rollins
Sound Engineers: Dick Robinson & Ron Deziel

Education & Youth

Christian Education & Youth Minister:
Russell Kirby
Children's Center Director: Kathy Tiller

Caring & Community

Community Minister: Patty Chaffee
Parish Nurse: Marie LaTourette

Holding the Parts Together!

Church Secretary: Judy Snitkin
Church Officers: John Whritner, *president*;
Cindy King, *vice-president*; Avery Morgan,
clerk; Linda Leavens, *treasurer*, Liz Kuchta,
historian
Financial Secretary: Judy Layden
Bookkeeper: Sandra Kuchta
Librarian, Newsletter Editor: Jennifer Datum

Pastor and Teacher: The Rev. Dr. John A. Nelson

OCCASIONS FOR SERVICE, WITNESS, AND PRAYER

In Our Prayers:

We gladly list joys and concerns, and typically print them for four weeks after they are offered in worship. (Prayer requests may be renewed at any time.)

Traveling mercies, especially through
the holidays

New concerns

Angelo Milardo, in hospice care • Jeff, on life support after accident • Walter, brother of Terri McTigue, in intensive care • Debbie Krasne, cancer treatment • Laurie, recovering from cancer surgery • Bret, cancer recurrence • Linda Helvig, recovering from surgery • Andy, recovering from stroke • Ellen, recovering from surgery • Maria DeMarco, cancer • comfort and peace for Aunt Eunice.

Continuing concerns:

Families and individuals struggling economically • Homeless children • Women who are victims of domestic violence

Santo DeSario, Sr., hospitalized • Gerry Samida • Guidance in caring for loved ones • Matthew, facing surgery for brain cyst • Molly Alexander, heart surgery • Kate, balancing two jobs • Harmony between parents and teens • Healing from ear infection and virus • Blessings for Denise and Tony, performing this weekend to generate support for a cure for Angelman Syndrome • Strength for taking big leaps of faith • For renewal of faith • Safety for the U.S. students who remain in Cairo • A peaceful way forward for Egypt • For spouses and partners who have experienced rejection • Bruce and family, ready for return from Arizona.

Those suffering from depression and anxiety

The homeless and the hungry: God, help us to remember that homelessness and hunger anywhere is our burden, as well.



In treatment for cancer:

Doris Curtis • Katie, metastatic breast cancer • Janice Dahlman • Carrie Winter Stadnick, adenocarcinoma • Shirley and Warren • Katie, diagnosed with adenocarcinoma • Brian Chaffee, stomach cancer • Tina Daniels, breast cancer • Ed Painter • Clara Ball – and their families, friends, and caregivers.

Friends and family now serving our country in the armed forces: Scott Basham; Greg Balsmeier; Robin Bourne (in Afghanistan); Josh Earnhart; Matt Fergione; Tony Fergione; Paul Harper; Matt Liebal; J.P. Neilson; Thomas Miller; Brian Perchal; Zachary Peters; Peter Rondeau; Rich Smith (in Afghanistan); Caitlin Strauhal; Stephen Weiss.

All those serving or living in war or conflict zones around the world, particularly in Iraq, Afghanistan, Colombia, Gaza, Georgia, India, Pakistan, and the Sudan.

**Family & Friends
who have passed away:**

Janice Sheahan •
Dan Dailey • Gail Cancelleri

Louise Chase • Marian Shellman
Michael Polesky • Uncle Bill •
Mark Hileman • Ginger Ely
Celia Winterholder • Mary Cassidy
Brian Dagle

Servicemen and service women who have lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan

We thank God for their lives, and offer prayers of comfort and support for family and friends who mourn their passing.

**Thanksgiving for
Ministers of our Church:**

Property & Maintenance Committee: Al Larson; Liza Dalrymple; Sy Kessler; Bob Wassung; Roe Granger

Praise and Celebration:

For a family member finding a job • Kelly and Joshua McNatt, safely moved to the Kenai peninsula • Matt Liebal's safe return from Iraq • Baby Lillian Rose is now cancer free! • Niece Laura, blessed by prayer • Friends, families, and NCC! • Miraculous recovery of Regina Benvenuti • Mark and Holly, soon to be first-time parents • Thanksgiving that granddaughter escaped injury in car accident • Birth of Graham Brown • For all those bold enough to follow God humbly toward their goals and dreams!

IF YOU HAVE A PRAYER REQUEST OR WOULD LIKE A PASTORAL VISIT, be sure to let us know by calling the church office (860-739-6208) or emailing Pastor John at jnelson@nianticcommunitychurch.org. Sometimes we don't find out about an injury or illness or other need until long after – so please call!

WE ALSO HAVE AN ON-GOING PRAYER CHAIN. To add a prayer request to the Prayer Chain please send an email to prayers@nianticcommunitychurch.org, or call the church office (860-739-6208).

HAVE YOU WRITTEN AND SIGNED A WILL OR LIVING TRUST? The state will do it for you, if you don't, these state intestacy laws do not include any gifts to the Church.

CALLING ALL SEAMSTRESSES, tailors and others with needle and thread (and glue and such) experience! Our Christmas Eve Family Service is just around the corner, and our costumes for the kids need some repair. If you can lend some time to spiffing up and repairing our costumes in the coming days, please let us know. Contact Russ or Judy at the church!

DINNER GROUP SIGN-UPS continue this Sunday at coffee hour. Please consider joining this fun-filled group of people as they begin a new year of fine dining and great fellowship. Contact either Cheri Meier (cherimeier@hotmail.com) or Edna Gilstad (egilstad@aol.com) if you have further questions.

PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN: NEED A CHANCE TO GO SHOPPING WITHOUT THE KIDS? This Sunday, December 18th is the day to do it! The Senior Youth will be offering childcare for church goers after lunch, from 1-4 PM, and some of our best babysitters and parents will be on the job. You may check your lunch-fed kids, age 3 and up, in and out any time during that 3-hour period, and a small snack will be provided, along with games and fun. We are asking for your generous donations, whatever you are able to afford; the suggested donation is \$5/hour. Please RSVP if at all possible to Mary Mirecki (860-691-0631). Donations will go toward the Senior Youth Mission Trip to Chicago next June.

YOUTH FELLOWSHIP this Sunday is to join in the church-wide Carol Sing at 6:30PM. Bring your best Christmas cheer and help ring in the holiday in song!

WCSA MEETING: TUESDAY, DEC 20, 12:30PM, (Fellowship Room). Please bring a "hearty hors d'oeuvre" to share, and a wrapped grab-bag gift, no more than \$10.00, for a Yankee swap. Everyone is welcome. For questions, please call Karen Peacock 739-9996 or Carol June 739-8851.

LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT GIFT FOR THE PERSON WHO HAS EVERYTHING; THE UNEXPECTED GUEST; OR THAT FORGOTTEN RELATIVE? LOOK NO FURTHER! Shop locally, in your church office. One Table, Many Meals is the NCC cookbook chock full of 624 tasty, tried and true recipes for those who like to cook and those who like to eat. \$10.

NEXT SUNDAY MORNING, December 25th. One Worship Service at 10AM; John A. Nelson, preaching. Scripture readings: Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40.

THANK YOU to those of you who took advantage of youth gift-wrapping at the Alternative Market! We made \$87.00 the first week and \$5.00 the second week; that's \$92 which goes to the youth who worked to help pay for their mission trip to Chicago in June. Also thanks to Evan King, who had his own photography booth at the market and

is sharing some of his profits with those going on the mission trip; great work – artistic and salespersonship!

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP BOOK GROUP selection is "The Pastor Has Gorgeous Legs" by Lynne C Holden. Rev Holden's first church was the Pendleton Hill Baptist Church in North Stonington. She now lives in Harmony, Rhode Island. We will meet on January 8th at 7 pm in the Fellowship Room.

NIANTIC COMMUNITY CHURCH CHILDREN'S CENTER is now enrolling for fall classes. We register children ages 6 weeks to 5 years. We are a small non-profit, family oriented childcare that is NAEYC accredited. We accept Care4kids and offer scholarships. Please call Kathy at (860)739-0877 or email at director@nccchildrenscenter.com

RECYCLE your traditional incandescent light bulbs in the collection box in the church office. An artist associated with NCC is making art with your old bulbs! Thanks

ADVENT AT NIANTIC COMMUNITY CHURCH

Sunday, December 18th

1-4PM The Senior Youth Fellowship offers childcare this afternoon, with some of our best babysitters and parents on the job. You may check your lunch-fed kids (age 3 and up) in and out any time during that 3-hour period, and a small snack will be provided, along with games and fun. We are asking for your generous donations, whatever you are able to afford; the suggested donation is \$5/hour. RSVP if possible, to Mary Mirecki. Donations will go toward the Senior Youth Mission Trip to Chicago next June.

6:30PM **The Annual Carol Sing.** For seniors, singles, couples, families, youth, children – and everyone else!

Wednesday, December 21st

7PM **The "Service of Light"** Christmas is a time of joy and thanksgiving for many. Yet hard realities enter our lives, often making it difficult to share in the festivities of the season. With messages of

cheer all around, how do we live with grief, or depression, or fear?

But God has a word of comfort and vision for all of us whose hearts are aching. Held on the longest night of the year, the Service of Light (sometimes referred to as "Blue Christmas") is a quiet, hopeful time of worship, remembering the light that forever shines through the darkness.

Saturday, December 24th

5PM **Family Christmas Eve Service.** Come a few minutes early so children can see the "stable" full of animals, and choose a costume (angel, shepherd, wise seeker).

8PM **A Service of Lessons and Carols**

11PM **Candlelight Communion**

Sunday, December 25th

10AM **Christmas Day Worship** (one service only). *Come as you are – even pajamas and slippers!* – for a Christmas story and carols, to give thanks for the Christ child.

THIS WEEK AT NIAN TIC COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are a community of Christians:
learning God's ways;
sharing God's love;
extending God's peace and healing grace to all.

SUNDAY DECEMBER 18

- 9:00AM Worship Service
10:00-11:00AM "Between Hour Café"
(Dining Hall)
10:15AM **Adult Church School**—Countering
Pharaoh's Production-
Consumption Society Today
"Countering Caesar" (Fellowship
Room)
11:15AM Worship Service
1:00-4:00 PM Childcare Fundraiser for
Mission Trip (Multipurpose &
Fellowship Rooms)
Youth Fellowship-invited to Carol
Sing
6:30PM Carol Sing (Sanctuary)

MONDAY DECEMBER 19

- 7:00PM Men's Choir (Sanctuary)
7:00PM Prudential Board (Fellowship
Room)
7:00PM Toastmasters (Multipurpose Room)

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20

- 7:15AM Breakfast Bible Study (Niantic
Diner)
10:00AM Caregivers Support Group
(Fellowship Room)
12:30PM WCSA (Fellowship Room)
5:30 PM Children's Choir (Sanctuary)
6:00PM Youth Bells (Multipurpose Room)
6:15 PM Gospel Choir (Sanctuary)

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20 CONTINUED

- 7:00PM Communications Committee
(Parish Life Office)
7:00PM Boy Scouts (Dining Hall)
7:00PM Adult Bells (Multipurpose Room)

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21

- 9:30AM Disciple I (Fellowship Room)
7:00PM Service of Light (Sanctuary)
7:30PM NA (Dining Hall)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22

- 6:00PM Shoreline Food Pantry (Dining
Hall)
7:00PM Adult Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary)
8:00PM AA (Dining Hall)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23

- 2:30 PM Community Meal Prep (Kitchen)
7:30PM AA (Dining Hall)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24

- 9:00 AM Community Meal Prep (Kitchen)
10:00-11:00AM AA (Multipurpose &
Fellowship Rooms)
5:00 PM Family Service (Sanctuary)
7:30PM AA (Dining Hall)
8:00 PM Service of Lessons & Carols
(Sanctuary)
11:00 PM Candlelight Communion Service
(Sanctuary)

Niantic Community Church

170 Pennsylvania Avenue, Niantic, CT 06357 • Phone: 860-739-6208

Fax: 860-739-8308 • E-mail: NianticCommChurch@sbcglobal.net

NianticCommunityChurch.org

Church Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 8:30-5:00 p.m.; Friday 8:30-Noon