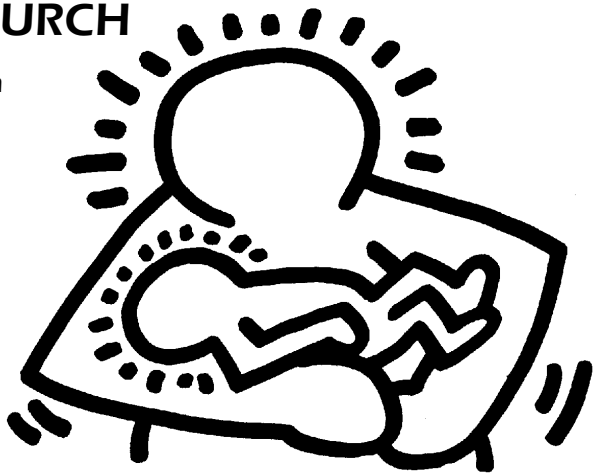


NIANTIC COMMUNITY CHURCH

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 25, 2011 • 10:00AM

Christmas Day

GATHERING MUSIC

“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”

Linker

WORDS OF WELCOME

May the love that breathes life into all humanity and all of creation,
All: Be born in us today!

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 Carol.

A SIGN OF OUR UNITY AND RECONCILIATION

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

✦ CAROL #224

“Good Christian Friends, Rejoice”

IN DULCI JUBILO

CALL TO WORSHIP

God of creation, shaper of seas and stars
of planets and of people:
All: God is here with us.

God, born in Bethlehem
gurgling, crying, laid in a manger:

God is here with us.

God, breath of the universe
flickering, dancing in the candle flame:

God is here with us.

God, Emmanuel, among us, within us:

**We bring ourselves and our dreams
for we want to be here with you.**

A REFLECTION

✦ CAROL #246

“Joy to the World”

ANTIOCH

LIGHTING OF THE CHRISTMAS CANDLE

Over the past four Sundays we have lit our Advent candles.
We light them again and remember
the ways that peace, hope, joy and love
are always brought to birth in, through, and among, all creation.

The Advent candles are lit

Last night we lit our Christmas Eve candles.
It was a time for memories and remembering...
To wonder and to give thanks.
And of quiet awakening to beauty
that still lives on through the strife
of personal griefs and a war-torn world.
Now we come to light our Christmas candle.
It is a friendly candle.
It brings light and love as we celebrate
in the warmth of our time together, gathered by God’s Spirit.
It is a candle of understanding which drives away fear.
It is a candle of truth.
It will lead one in unknown paths
to learn more about the mysteries of life.

**All: Once upon a time a little baby was born
who taught us to love and understand one another.
And they called his name, Jesus.**

The Christmas candle is lit

CENTERING SILENCE

Let there be a quiet time among us.

(Silence)

Come apart from the busyness of family and work,
and dwell in the present-ness of God
who is our source of being.

(Silence)

May the silence which we now share
quieten us,
touch our need,
refresh our courage,
enlarge our wonder.

(Silence)

✘ CAROL (*insert*)

“Star-Child, earth-Child”

Prayer requests will be collected.

SCRIPTURE READING: John 1:1-14

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.

CHRISTMAS STORY

“The Precious Herbs of Christmas”

John A. Nelson

✘ CAROL #229

“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”

W ZLOBIE LEZY

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

PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD’S PRAYER (*trespasses*)

OFFERTORY

Leader: All the creatures of the world seem know a simple truth: in giving, we receive; when we empty ourselves, God makes us whole. Let’s prepare ourselves to receive richly, by giving generously.

Let us gather our gifts with grateful praise, and offer them to the Christ Child.

RECEIVING TITHES AND OFFERINGS

THE MUSICAL OFFERING

“This Child”
Sue Wilber

M.A. Moore

✘ CHRISTMAS BLESSING

GREENSLEEVES

**So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,
Come peasant, king to own Him;
The King of kings salvation brings,
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise a song on high,
The virgin sings her lullaby.
Joy, joy for Christ is born,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.**

✘ CAROL #240

“Hark! the Herald Angels Sing”

MENDELSSOHN

✘ WORDS OF MISSION

Mysterious God,
confounding our expectations
meeting us where we least expect to find you...

Stay with us now.

Child of the manger,
healing our pain, sharing our weakness...

Stay with us now.

Source of life,
birth of God within our own experience...

Stay with us now.

Stay with us in our frailty
stay with us on our journey...

**Walk beside us, live within us,
lead us to glory, lead us home. (Iona Community)**

✠ BLESSING WORDS

And may the God of Christmas fill your hearts
with all joy and peace in believing!

Amen!

The blessing of the manger, God's creation all around.

The blessing of the shepherds, God's people with feet on the ground.

The blessing of the angels, good news for all, and peace for the world...

Be with you all now and forever.

Amen.

✠ SUNG BENEDICTION

GLORIA

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

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 NIANTIC 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

Ushers: Germaine Ruderman, Carol Donovan

Worship Leader: Nancy Hunt

Preacher: Pastor John A. Nelson

Parish Host: Lisa Gilmore

Flowers have been placed in the sanctuary to the Glory of God
and in celebration of our 18th anniversary by
Dick & Sue Robinson.

✠ All who are able may stand at these times

Today's liturgy freely adapted from the Rev. Rex A.E. Hunt (rexaehuntprogressive.com).

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

Ministers: All Participants in the Life of the Congregation

Worship & Music

Organist & Music Director: Dr. 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

Healing for family members who are hospitalized • Ophelia White, in hospice care, and her family • Aunt Arlene, double pneumonia • Steve, diagnosed with lung problem • Cousin Jim, extensive back surgery • Santo DeSario, Sr., recovering from heart surgery.

Continuing concerns:

Families and individuals struggling economically • Homeless children • Women who are victims of domestic violence
Angelo Milardo, in hospice care • Jeff, on life support after accident • Walter, brother of

Terri McTigue, in intensive care • Linda Helvig, recovering from surgery • Andy, recovering from stroke • Ellen, recovering from surgery • Comfort and peace for Aunt Eunice • 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 • 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.

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:

Debbie Krasne, cancer treatment • Laurie, recovering from cancer surgery • Bret, cancer recurrence • Maria DeMarco, cancer • Doris Curtis • Katie, metastatic breast cancer • Janice Dahlman • Carrie Winter Stadnick, 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 Strauhall; 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:**

Challen Young
Homer Higdon • Janice Sheahan

Dan Dailey • Gail Cancelleri
Louise Chase • Marian Shellman
Michael Polesky • Uncle Bill

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.

Praise and Celebration:

For the church's Outreach Committee, and for generosity in giving coats, toys, and money for needy neighbors through the Christmas season

- 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 • 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).

WHEN YOU MAKE YOUR ESTATE PLANNING DOCUMENTS, consider naming the Church as your final beneficiary.

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.

NO CHURCHY SCHOOL this morning, and no Youth Fellowship today. Enjoy and treasure this time with family, and remember the reason for the season!

NEXT SUNDAY MORNING, January 1, 2012. One Worship Service at 10AM; John A. Nelson, preaching. Scripture readings: Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12.

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.

REMINDER: Signing up for weekly Wednesday email and our monthly newsletter, Tidings, electronically is easy. Just go to nianticcommunitychurch.org and follow the prompts.

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

THANKS GO OUT to Denise Walstra, who did a great job putting together last Saturday's "Cookies and Kids Project!" Thanks, also, to Kathy Leindecker for coming and helping with the baking. We made so many cookies that we lost count, and gave them to Niantic Fire Stations 1 and 2, Flanders Fire Station, the East Lyme Police station, the Library staff and East Lyme Town Hall. We caroled at most of those places, and I'm told we brightened up a lot of civil servants' weekends! Great job, everyone!

WINTER RETREAT DAY planned for Saturday, January 14th 10am-2:30pm. Cross the threshold of a new year with a day of retreat using inspiration from Christine Valters Paintner's reflective art journal, Crossing the Threshold...New Year, New Beginnings. The day will offer opportunities to explore St. Benedict's message through metaphor, silent reflection, discussion, journaling, music, and a labyrinth walk. Homemade soup and bread will be served for lunch. Limited to 10 participants. Register by calling the church office (860)739-6208.

THIS WEEK AT NIANTIC 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 25 CHRISTMAS DAY
10:00AM Worship Service (No Church School
or Infant Care)

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26
Church Offices & Children's Center closed

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27
7:15AM Breakfast Bible Study (Niantic Diner)
NO Children's, Gospel Choir; Bell
Choir Rehearsals
NO Prayer Shawl Knitting Group

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28
7:30PM NA (Dining Hall)

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29
NO Adult Choir Rehearsal
6:00PM Shoreline Food Pantry (Dining Hall)
8:00PM AA (Dining Hall)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30
7:30PM AA (Dining Hall)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31
10:00-11:00AM AA (Multipurpose &
Fellowship Rooms)
7:30PM AA (Dining Hall)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1
10:00AM Worship Service (No Church School
or Infant Care)

MONDAY, JANUARY 2
Church Offices & Children's Center closed

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS BULLETIN!

Niantic Community Church

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

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

www.NianticCommunityChurch.org

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