FROM THE PASTOR AND TEACHER

Dear Friends,

In recent months I have referred to the “Occupy” movement in a couple of sermons, with appreciation for what I hear as its core message. I have also appreciated a number of conversations with members and friends of our church, who have some serious and strong concerns about that movement and its message. Thank goodness for thoughtful debate in our church! — essential for the growth of mind and heart. In that spirit I share a recent statement by an interfaith group of religious leaders, who met at Judson Memorial Church in New York City to articulate their understanding of what is at stake, and why faithful people have an interest:

As people from various faith and spiritual communities, we find in the [Occupy] Movement a Waking Force that has dispelled despair, depression, and denial about the gross injustices of society and the suffering of our people. We stand together for engaged, transforming action that says:

- Yes to open democracy, fair justice systems, and public conversations that respect every person’s voice in determining the quality and future of our lives. POLIS

- Yes to just economic policies that create greater equality and that enable all to share responsibility for a common public good. FINANCE

- Yes to a generous society that provides high quality education, affordable housing, adequate income, meaningful work, and universal access to health care. SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Yes to strong environmental policies that guard the well-being of the planet we all share. ECOLOGY

- Yes to peace among nations based on human rights, compassion for all who suffer, religious liberty, mutual respect, and civil liberties. PEACE

- Yes to immigration policies based on hospitality and generosity and respect for the vast diversity of human beings by race, sexuality, class, nationality, ethnicity, physical ability, occupation, gender, and age. LOVE

- Yes to the transforming, creative works of human imagination and freedom that enliven our lives together and bring us life-giving joy and laughter. BEAUTY/ART

We are part of this still very new movement because these values have been betrayed by an economic and political elite who have proven indifferent to the common good and their moral obligations to the public welfare. Their betrayal cannot go unchallenged. We will continue to apply our Waking Forces to grow this movement and it’s effectiveness.

The well-being of the world’s people and the delicate balance of earthly life hang in the balance.

I look forward to continuing conversations about how God is calling us to be deeply, faithfully engaged with the life of our community, nation, and world.

God’s richest blessings to you,

Pastor John A. Nelson
Worship in late January & February

Sunday Worship at 9:00 & 11:15am

Jan 29th: Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany
Texts: Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 111; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28
Pastor John A. Nelson, preaching:
“Moving In and Casting Out”

Feb 5th: Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany
Pastor John A. Nelson, preaching:
“Generalization”

Feb 12th: Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany
Lectionary texts: 2 Kings 5:1-14; Psalm 30; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Mark 1:40-45
Texts for this Sunday’s worship: Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 8; Psalm 142:7
Pastor John A. Nelson, preaching:
“Creative Evolution”

Feb 19th: The Transfiguration
Texts: 2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9
Pastor John A. Nelson, preaching:
“Peak Experiences”

Feb 26th: First Sunday in Lent
Texts: Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15
Pastor John A. Nelson, preaching:
“The Course of Love”

Church School for Adults

Sessions will take place between the 9 & 11:15 services, in the Fellowship Room. Come to one, some, or all: you are always welcome! Church School for adults helps us to better know our scripture, our tradition, our fellow congregants, and ourselves.
Childcare available if requested! — please speak to Russ or Pastor John

Get Ready for Worship!

Follow the “Preparing for Sunday” link on our website (NianticCommunityChurch.org). You will find the scripture readings for the current week, a brief description to set them in context, a reflection on the passages, and a prayer starter.

It’s a great way to spend time with God’s Word — and since those passages are (often) the basis for services on Sunday morning, you’ll be adding a new layer of richness and meaning to the experience of worship.

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God.
1 John 4:7
From the Community Minister

Patty Chaffee

By the time you read this, we will all have survived another holiday season. Mine was filled with an unexpected surprise, when shortly before Thanksgiving I learned that my baby brother was diagnosed with stomach cancer. Inoperable. Incurable. Words I found unacceptable. As someone who doesn’t often share my personal life too readily, I found myself putting this news out for all to hear, hoping that prayer would be all that I know it can be. I am so grateful for the prayers that continue to cover the globe.

At some point he pointed out that he, “needed a miracle.” Indeed many have already taken place. He was kind of estranged from our family over silly happenings that people can hardly remember. In one holy instant, none of it mattered and peace reigned supreme. He was able to forgive. Others were able to forgive. And somehow amidst words like inoperable and incurable, a family can come together. Talk about miracles.

A career centered existence, filled with tsunami sized stress somehow doesn’t seem so important when time is at a premium. All of a sudden there is clarity about what’s important, like love, forgiveness of self and others, kindness and caring, peace and purpose become the essence of life. Just like Jesus taught us.

As I write this just before Christmas, we received news that my brother’s response to his first chemo treatment has been “outstanding” and things are going well. Miracles?……well, bring ’em on. We have room for lots more.

“All the people tried to touch him, for the power was going out from him and healing them all.”

Luke 6:18
Open, Affirming, Reconciling - Then and Now

What has occurred since NCC became an OAR Congregation?

A great deal of activity has occurred at Niantic Community Church since the vote was taken and more people than can be mentioned have been involved in all of these events. This might not be a comprehensive list but I'll make an attempt. I think it's important to remember all that's been accomplished. The vote was an amazing decision, but it's just as important to note how we have demonstrated our inclusiveness to all.

- "Safe Church" policies and practices were implemented
- The flying of flags by the church entrance to send messages to the community about what we believe in and support
- Offering opportunity to view movie "Marriage Makes a Word of Difference" followed by discussion
- Bringing Shower of Stoles Project to NCC
- Participating in True Colors sponsorship of the movie "Milk" followed by discussion
- Sharing of Personal Stories in Tidings
- The purchase of OAR related books for the NCC library, as well as monthly book reviews in Tidings
- OAR sponsors delegates from NCC to attend the True Colors conference every year
- Participation at the poles to show our support of Gay Marriage
- Participation in the Faith Action Committee sponsored by Love Makes a Family
- Bringing a presentation from True Colors to our church to demonstrate the effects of being of keeping one's sexual identity a secret
- An inclusive Communion Service
- Continued support and guidance to other churches in the community in their journey to become Open, Affirming, Reconciling Congregations

In addition and very importantly, the OAR Committee was a huge advocate in the starting of the Accessibility Committee which was responsible for installing the Lift in the rear of the sanctuary, increased handicapped parking spaces, the entrance to the portico was made safer at paving time and of course the paving of the parking lot itself.

Many, many congregation members have been vital to OAR over the years and I can't say enough to thank all of you. You and all of the above events are the reason that my family sought out and joined NCC and we feel very blessed to call Niantic Community Church our home.

A wonderful event has been planned by OAR committee members to celebrate NCC commitment to OAR - Then and Now. Please join us on January 29, 2012 to celebrate "God's Yes!"

Blessings,
Jackie Kalajainen
OAR Chair
Parish Life Ministries Committee
Ned Ruete

The Fall Evening of Praise was held as planned on November 19 in the multipurpose room, with a theme of country and bluegrass gospel. It was basically a gospel jam session, with everyone singing along, interspersed with stories and jokes. After a break for a delicious supper of pulled pork sandwiches, we reconvened into our prayer circle, which we end with singing “Will The Circle be Unbroken.”

In December we showed the movie, “What Would Jesus Buy.” The reverend Billy was a hoot. The people held up as counterexamples also provided an important part of the experience. In discussion afterwards, we talked about one concrete thing we could do to make the world more sustainable and recapture Christmas as something more than Commerce Day. There are plans afoot to do more movie nights like this one.

The labyrinth has arrived! See the Labyrinth column in this Tidings for more information. If you would like to be a part of our Labyrinth ministry, contact Patty Chaffee through the Church Office.

The Winter Evening of Praise is planned for Friday, February 10. Time is TBD. The music will be Contemporary Christian, like we used to hear at Seashore. We will be holding the event in the dining hall. Several musicians and musical groups are being invited to explore the genre; as usual, if you’re not asked, VOLUNTEER!! We’re also seeking writers, poets, storytellers, painters, and photographers to share their work and help us create an ambience. Contact Pastor John, Jay or Mary Mirecki, Ocean Pellett, or Ned Ruete. Food for this evening is not finalized: we could use your help with the menu, the preparation or the serving.

Our Home Communion ministry has lost some important ministers. There will be training sessions offered, and new kits will be ordered. Contact Sonya if you want to part of the team which spreads out all over the community to bring the sacrament to those who can’t make it to church. It is marvelous to go and hear the stories, share in the body and blood, and pray together with the wise elders.

News From Habitat for Humanity of Southeastern Connecticut

February 3, 2012-Home Ownership Application Information Session-First Hispanic Church New London 7-8:30 PM

February 4, 2012- Home Ownership Application Information Session-New London Public Library 10:30-12 noon

April 14, 2012 -Bid to Build –raffle items needed including services, gift certificates, hand crafted items, etc

Volunteers Needed
Restore Cashier, Restore Truck Driver, Build Site Recruiter and committee members for the Resource Development Committee and Events Committee Call 860-442-7890 for more information

Wish List
Truck, at home carpet cleaning machine, white copy paper, AA battery charger, large projection screen with stand, Office supplies

History Quiz & Trivia

I will start the year out with an easy quiz. You may have read in the paper lately, or seen on TV, that Norwich has been searching and re-searching all of its bells. From churches to schools to the Town Hall they are getting them ready to ring out on January 1st 2013. On January 1st 1863 all the bells in Norwich rang for an hour in honor of President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. There was also a 100-gun salute.

The question to you is: in all of our church buildings since 1719 how many of them had bells.
Please join us

March 23 - 25
Camp Aldersgate, RI

for the
16th NCC Women's Retreat

The Rev. Cynthia Good returns as our leader

$100 for the weekend
$50 for Saturday only.

Contact Carol Donovan to sign up (carod3000@aol.com or 860-857-7945)

From the Parish Nurse
Marie LaTourette

Therapeutic properties of Antioxidants
- Activates circulation, prevents the formation of blood clots
- Antibacterial, antiseptic, antiviral, anti fungal
- Diuretic, anti-edematous, anti-inflammatory
- Prevents the oxidation of LDL's
- Helps reduce risks of blindness (macular degeneration)

The Niantic Health Food Store is an excellent place for advice.

Try 100 Calorie Cutbacks to lose weight:
- Switch from regular bacon to turkey bacon, it tastes great.
- Use a sliver of avocado on your sandwich instead of mayo
- Leave cheese off your burger

"Let us waste no further time looking for the secret of success or the key to happiness. Already the door is open and whosoever will may enter". The Science of Mind p 47

A New Years Resolution for all of us
Be faithful to spending ten or fifteen minutes once or twice a day, just sitting quietly, sinking into silence, will change your life forever. This focused concentration will spill over into all areas of your life and move you to a place of peace, creativity and inner healing.

Happy Valentines Day,
Marie
A group of people who are interested in our labyrinth ministry gathered early in December to discuss how our ministry might take shape now that we have our own portable labyrinth. Lots of ideas were shared, one of which is contributing an article about the labyrinth to each issue of Tidings. My hope is that it will be written by different members of the group, and will be a venue to share personal experiences, history, practice and events that have to do with walking this sacred path.

To begin, they wanted to create the model for our ministry prior to having a blessing and open walk early in the Lenten season. Russ’ mom, Lilo Kirby was a wealth of information during her recent visit, and shared how an active labyrinth ministry is done in her Oklahoma church. She gave us many great ideas. Once the structure of our labyrinth ministry is together, we will be sure to share it with you. For now, here is Guidelines for Walking the Labyrinth from www.Veriditas.org, a website that is chock full of information about labyrinths.

“The labyrinth is not a maze. There are no tricks to it and no dead ends. It has a single circuitous path that winds its way into the center. The person walking it uses the same path to return from the center and the entrance then becomes the exit. The path is in full view, which allows a person to be quiet and focus internally. Generally there are three stages to the walk: releasing on the way in, receiving in the center and returning when you follow the return path back out of the labyrinth. Symbolically, and sometimes actually, you are taking back out into the world that which you have received.

There is no right way or wrong way to walk a labyrinth. Use the labyrinth in any way that meets what you need while being respectful of others walking. You may go directly to center to sit quietly -- whatever meets your needs.

To prepare, you may want to sit quietly to reflect before walking the labyrinth. Some people come with questions, others just to slow down and take time out from a busy life. Some come to find strength to take the next step. Many come during times of grief and loss.

Children enjoy the labyrinth and we ask that parents supervise their young children so all may enjoy the meditative aspects of the walk.

There are many ways to describe a labyrinth. It is a path of prayer, a walking meditation, a crucible of change, a watering hole for the spirit and a mirror of the soul.”

Click on the following link to read an article about how the labyrinth is used with those suffering with Alzheimer’s Disease. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m3830/is_10_50/ai_79355490
History Quiz Answer

The Old Stone Church received its bell from England in 1833 and it is still located on the old church site off of Society Rd. The bell from the Methodist Church on Main St. was taken to the Congregational Church on Lincoln St. when the Methodist Church was taken down after the merger. That bell was melted down in 1956 and made into dinner bells which were given to each person who pledged to the new building drive. The Congregational Church never had a bell.

The little fridge poem

Please label all that enters
A date and owners name
Will keep it clean and happy
Cleaning the fridge is not a game

Oh there’s people who will do it
They don't really seem to mind
Unless the food is walking out
Long past it's posted prime

If contents are not labeled
And we ever are in doubt
There won’t be hesitation
When we go to throw it out

So please be sure to label
Your juice, your lunch, your cream
So we can keep our little fridge
Spotless, healthy, safe and clean

Amen

The kitchen off the Fellowship Room is in need of constant attention because it is used a lot, especially the little fridge. Some masking tape and a pen will be left on the counter along with this poem to remind folks to label their items so that we know when to clean them out. Thanks for your assistance.

Future of Summer Suppers...

At the November 21, 2011 meeting of the Prudential Board, the following motion was approved: "The Prudential Board will call a congregational meeting in February 2012 to reconsider summer suppers or replace them with different types of community outreach, proposals for which will have been collected by current Vice-President Cindy King."
Tidings late January/February 2012

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Pastor & Teacher:
John A. Nelson

Community Minister:
Patty Chaffee

Christian Education and Youth Minister:
Russ Kirby

Church Secretary:
Judy Snitkin

Parish Nurse:
Marie LaTourette

Music Director:
Paul Althouse

Children’s Center Director:
Kathy Tiller

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