From the Vision Team

Just as generations past have interpreted the winds of change and guided this congregation into the vibrant community of faith it is today, we acknowledge the changing landscape and the role of the church in our ever-evolving world. It is a testament to the strength of this congregation that we recognize the need to discern God’s calling for our future.

Throughout the vision process, we strive to illuminate God’s central purpose for our church, and to that end, may we gently remind our hearts to stay open to the possibilities. We ask for your blessing and prayers for the members of the vision committee as they delve deep into their hearts in search of God’s guiding pulse - Pastor Stephanie, Ron Johnson, Kris Lambert, Kate Lamoureux, Kathy Leindecker, and Sandy Lembree.

The vision team’s coaching with mentor Paul Nickerson has us off to an inspiring start, and throughout the end of this month and into March, we will be meeting with church committees to discuss and collaborate. Congregational vision events are scheduled for the following Sundays: April 19th, June 7th, and August 9th, with a final presentation on September 27th. Each member of the congregation is encouraged to attend these events. Your participation is vital to the success of this undertaking, and we ask that you continue to keep the church in your prayers as we move through this process.

Let us honor our past to inspire our future and walk this journey together.

- Kate Lamoureux, Vision Team Member
The Holy Blog of Blessing
A weekly source of inspiration from NCC program staff and guest bloggers. Click here to connect https://www.nianticcommunitychurch.org/blog/. Here’s a peak at the latest blog:

**The Cold Meetinghouse in Colonial New England**
by David Oat | Feb 24, 2020 |

It’s February… the days are getting longer, but spring seems a long way off. As a New Englander, I’d say this has been a fairly mild winter, but nights can still be dark and cold. A silence has fallen...

Don’t forget...new blog every Monday.

Thank you to NCC for sponsoring the American Red Cross blood drive on Friday 2/21. We collected 31 units (3 over our goal), which will help save up to 93 lives.

Our next blood drive is scheduled for April 17.

Jennifer Gartsu
Account Manager | Recruitment and Outreach
Connecticut Blood Services

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**“Sound Thoughts”**

I hope this column will inform our congregation of the myriad of activities undertaken by Technical Ministers at NCC, and to solicit questions and suggestions about our activities. First of all, our charge, as stated in the NCC constitution is:

This Committee will:

(a) Provide a wide range of technical support to Niantic Community Church, including its other committees, boards, programs and activities. This support shall include the operations, maintenance and upgrade for the following areas:

1. Sound reinforcement systems
2. Video projection systems
3. Video recording
4. Video playback systems
5. Computers and networks

(b) Work directly with the Pastor and other staff to ensure that needs are anticipated and qualified personnel are available to provide support; and

(c) Maintain up-to-date inventories and status for all hardware and software involved in these tasks.

(d) Ensure that all of the church’s computers and software are compatible;

(e) Develop and maintain standards for appropriate use of church computers and internet usage in conjunction with the Safe Church committee; and

(f) Develop and maintain church membership databases in conjunction with the Church Secretary Office Manager and Church Clerk.

At this time, paragraphs (a), (b) and (d) are all ongoing and in continual upgrade. Paragraph (c) was initiated several years ago, but is currently “back-burnered”. Paragraph (f) has been transitioned to the Communications Committee. Paragraph (e) is still in the future.

I will be exploring more on all of these items in future columns.

Submitted by Dick Robinson
soundthoughts@sbcglobal.net
860-437-7061
NOTICES

Assistive listening devices available during worship

In addition to the earbuds, we have two other ways to use this hearing assistance. One is a lightweight headset and the second option is for those who have hearing aids equipped with a Tele-Coil feature. By using a small antenna connected to the receiver, you can keep your hearing aid(s) in, and still take advantage of the sound coming from the microphones.

Please feel free to ask me at any time about this system, and share feedback about your hearing experience in church.

Dick Robinson
Volunteer
Technical Minister
860-437-7061
soundthoughts@sbcglobal.net

Labyrinth Ministry

For those folks who may not be able or inclined to walk a multipurpose room size or McCook's Park size labyrinth, Parish Life Ministries acquired two beautifully handcrafted wooden finger labyrinths. They reside in the Parish Life Office with their 24-foot diameter canvas Mama.

Labyrinths are a metaphor for the spiritual journey, a tool for prayer and a wonderful walking meditation. Stop by the Parish Life Office any time to "walk" our new labyrinths. During the week there is often space available to be still and enjoy this special spiritual experience in silence.

BOOK CLUB

The Women's Fellowship Book Club has selected "We Were the Lucky Ones" by Georgia Hunter as their next book.

An extraordinary, propulsive novel, We Were the Lucky Ones demonstrates how in the face of the twentieth century’s darkest moment, the human spirit can endure and even thrive.

Please join in a fun discussion on April 19th at 7 pm in the Fellowship room. Any questions, contact Carol Donovan at carod3000@aol.com.

Musician Jonathan Dean let Cole play the piano and he was fascinated by the "ticker" (metronome). Cole shared that he likes to play violin, drums, and ukulele, in addition to the piano.:) He attends the Niantic Community Church Children's Center and took a field trip to the sanctuary.

Save the date and get out your walking shoes! The 13th Annual Walk to End Homelessness is Sunday, April 19. Festivities kick off at noon at Parade Plaza in downtown New London. The Walk itself begins at 1pm. The Walk provides important support for programs that give people the tools they need to get back on their feet quickly. Online registration is up and running! Buy your tickets now at www.nlhhc.org/walk.
Did you know... that you can sign up to sponsor altar flowers on our flower chart, just outside the church office? Dedicate flowers in memory of a loved one or in honor of a celebratory event. Birthdays, graduation, anniversaries... So many reasons to celebrate! Flowers cost $35 each week and there are several weeks still open this year. Stop by and write your name on any open week. Church secretary Judy Snitkin will call you prior to your week, to find out how you would like your dedication worded. And you can take them home following worship OR, leave them at church to be delivered to one of our church friends/members in need of a pick me up. It's up to you. Altar flowers are a ministry of our Worship Team Committee.

"The earth laughs in flowers." — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Addiction is:  
By Mary Brodhead

A jealous lover  
Robs relationships  
Controls body and soul  
Overcomes love of oneself and love of others  
Is a powerful hunger that never satisfies  
It spreads isolation and loneliness to the addicted  
To all those they love  
It limits communication at all levels  
Addiction is the devil in the purest form  
It takes away all freedom  
It is the enemy so often written about in the Psalms  
Addiction is a human weakness since the beginning of time  
It manipulates and fools those who are addicted and those they love  
It promises peace and joy, but it brings destruction  
It is an empty and unfaithful friend who deceives  
Addiction is loneliness  
Addiction is silence

My life has been surrounded by addiction. It isolates me. I am unable to share my life with those I care about the most because of their addiction. Those who have addicted loved ones are helpless. Their relationships with addicted loved ones are out of their control. Yet we protect and keep the SECRET even from the loved one who is addicted. There is abuse to everyone. A drunk or high person cannot be communicated with.

They have no memory, and they have deep-seated denial. Their world is not real...they build walls of righteousness around themselves. At the same time, they hate themselves. They know they can’t allow themselves to see clearly. They are afraid, they hurt others, they rob others, not just of material things, but more importantly of relationship.

Having a family member addicted is devastating. Love and spirit are snatched away because the addicted one’s first love has become their drug. Their behavior becomes so foreign, that they become something and someone else. Lost is the loving mother or son or daughter or grandson. It changes everyone. Their loved ones become mother, caretaker, protector and they live a life in crisis, they can do little about. Huge amounts of energy are expended trying to make things right. Their needs are neglected, their expectations dulled, their fear grows, they are helpless and most of all they are very lonely for those they love. They watch the devastation happen as the lives of those controlled by this evil crumble to pieces. All they can do is wait...wait for the addicted one to see the evil in the addiction. But nothing fools a person more than the substance they abuse.

Visitation Ministry

Give the gift of caring by being a part of our Visitation Ministry Team.  
Training provided.  
Make visits on your schedule.  
Make someone’s day.  
To learn more contact Patty Chaffee, Community Minister at (860)739-6208  
Patty@NianticCommunityChurch.org

Photo by Jeanne BaRoss
WCSA gathered for their monthly meeting last month and created "Goodie Bags" to be handed out when our Outreach ministry served at the Community Meal Center in New London. These ladies are amazing. The bags contained all sorts of useful things like cough drops, kleenex, chapstick, peanut butter crackers, and of course, candy.

Matters That Matter

Hmmm... 
Yes, but....
Another way of looking at this is....
What if....
In my experience....
I used to think...., but now....

You might hear any of these comments on any given Sunday during the Faith Forum. These are the sounds of faith evolving. And where else do you have these kinds of conversations? Where else do you feel comfortable discussing your doubts, questions, and beliefs concerning matters of the spirit? Matters that lead to new and abundant life? Matters that matter.

Faith Forum is the second half of the complete Sunday morning worship experience. It's the part where you get to offer your own views on matters of faith and the life experiences that have brought you to this point on your life’s journey. And you’re challenged by the thoughts and stories of your fellow pilgrims on their separate but not-so-different journeys.

A church is a community of seekers. We desire and welcome your participation.

Faith Forum. A place to explore and nurture your faith. Sunday mornings at 10:45 in the Fellowship Room.

- Paul Helvig

Spiritual Direction...

is the experience of sacred and deep listening that helps individuals grow in their spiritual life, through silence, discernment, awareness, and inquiry. It is confidential and available at NCC at no cost. Contact Community Minister, Patty Chaffee at 860-739-6208 to schedule an appointment.
Reflections From Julia...

What is “Messy Church” and why is it called that?

Last year, a team of six of us went to an all-day workshop on the international movement called “Messy Church,” led by Roberta J. Egli, head of Messy Church USA. We came away feeling inspired, realizing that it’s very ‘doable’ here at NCC and might help us reach out to the community outside our doors. We have been inching toward it with some of our recent intergenerational events, such as our Advent and Shrove Sunday celebrations. Messy Church is primarily an outreach program – once a month hosting a time of informal worship, activity stations and a shared meal – all around a spiritual theme, such as ‘Salt and Light.’

If you saw our activity tables at the end of Shrove Sunday, you might think you know why it’s called ‘Messy’ Church! But there’s actually another great reason. Roberta says, “We all live messy lives with messy relationships, and in Messy Church we come in with all our messiness and find a place of belonging through the unconditional love of God. Through creating together, celebrating together, and eating together, we build a community centered around the teachings of Jesus Christ.” Church is not for people who have it all together. It’s not about how good we are, it’s about how good God is. God’s grace is in the midst of our messiness. That’s such an important message to share with our neighbors of all ages. If you’d like to be part of a Messy Church planning team, please let me know. Let’s get that message out there.

Shrove Sunday Jazz Band, led by Richard Schenk.
On March 1, our PreK through 4th graders will have the opportunity to come back in to share communion by intinction with the rest of the congregation. That is always a highlight for the children and their teachers! Some of our middle school youth will be serving, alongside Pastor Stephanie. Classes will focus on Lenten lessons, with middle and high school youth leading them through an interactive Walk Through Holy week experience on March 22. March 29 is Youth Sunday, led by our high school youth. Older children have the option of staying in the worship service or going to class. Middle school students will stay in the service.

Sundays, March 1, 8, 15 and 22 -- regular meetings after church in the multipurpose room.

Sunday, March 22 - we are invited to help run the Walk Through Holy Week during Sunday School with the Senior Youth Group.

Sunday, March 29 - Youth Sunday worship led by our high school youth. We are invited to worship, but won’t have a meeting that day.

First & Second grade teacher, Ms. Julie, gave her students a special lighted labyrinth experience during a recent lesson.
Senior Youth Group

For all High School Youth
New Time: Sundays, 12:30 - 2 p.m.

 feu Sunday, March 1, 8, 15, 22 - this month we’ll be getting ready for Youth Sunday and for the Walk Through Holy Week. It’s important that everyone comes - we need to hear your ideas and work together.

 feu Sunday, March 22, Walk Through Holy Week - we will lead this experience for Sunday School children during their class time, along with middle school students.

 feu Sunday, March 29, YOUTH SUNDAY!!! We will lead worship for the entire congregation. Richard Schenk (music minister) will be leading a youth ensemble. Contact Richard if you’d like to be part of it.

 feu Sunday, March 29, Noon - 4:30 p.m. - Interfaith Exploration at Hartford Seminary. We’ll grab something to eat, then carpool to Hartford.

Thank you to all who supported our Senior Youth Group mission trip to WV by helping bake, fill and frost cupcakes. Special thanks to Kim Saucier, who spearheaded this delicious fundraiser, and to all who purchased cupcakes! The fundraiser brought in over $1,875 to help offset the cost of the mission trip.

Wednesday, March 4 and 25
6:30 - 7:30 PM

We’ll be working on some creative ideas for Youth Sunday, as well as diving into some of the questions raised this year.
Wednesday, March 11, 6:00 - 8:00 PM. Cooper’s family is providing our dinner and our topic will be about denominations and ways you can join this church: UCC, UMC, NCC.

Friday, March 20, 6:00 p.m. - Saturday, March 21, at noon. Confirmation Lock-In Retreat!!! Maddy’s family will provide our dinner and Lizzie’s family will provide our breakfast. Bring a refillable water bottle, pj’s, bedding, toiletries, and comfortable clothes to wear. We will learn about communion and what it means to be a disciple as we dive deeper in our faith as individuals and as a group.

Sunday, March 29, Noon - 4:30 p.m. Interfaith Exploration in Hartford. Confrinmands and high school teens will be participating along with a handful of our mentors. After Youth Sunday worship we’ll have something to eat and will head up to Hartford.

Last month, our Confrinmands and Mentors got together to explore the topic of ANGER. Part of the evening was spent in a sit-down balloon volleyball match between the youth and adults.

The UMC camp Wanakee is accepting registrations for summer camp now. There is a camp brochure on the window outside Julia’s office. Or you can go to www.wanakee.org to sign up!

NCC Vacation Bible School 2020!!

July 6 - July 10
9 a.m. - Noon

VBS this year is right after the 4th of July weekend! We’re hoping that works well for families and volunteers. Campers are children age four through 7th grade. Volunteers are 8th graders and above. This year the Niantic Community Church Children’s Center’s Summer Camp is offering a reduced rate for families that need full day care. Your children can attend VBS for free, then be escorted down to the summer camp for the afternoon. Speak with Julia or with Sarah Schutz if this interests you.

Christian summer camp for children and youth, run by the United Church of Christ. This year’s brochures are in Julia’s CEYM office and online at: www.silverlakect.org/summercamp

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Centering Prayer

Continues
With Pastor
Stephanie Haskins

God speaks in the silence of the heart.

Centering Prayer is a receptive, silent prayer practice of the Christian tradition. Its purpose is to deepen our relationship with God through the practice of letting go of thoughts and perceptions. It often leads to a deep resting in God’s presence.

Join Pastor Stephanie in the Fellowship Room for an extended opportunity to experience this gentle, spiritual practice. All are welcome—no previous experience with contemplative prayer or meditation required. Call the church office with questions or to register, (860)739-6208.

To learn more about Centering Prayer, go to: www.contemplativeoutreach.org.

Daytime Session
Tuesdays, 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

Evening Session
Wednesdays, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Fun with Drums

All Ages / All Abilities / All Welcome

April 3, June 12, October 2, November 6
6:30-7:30 p.m. in the Multipurpose Room

We provide the drums and percussion instruments
Facilitated by music therapist, Kate Brodaski-Lamoureux
Sponsored by MWA & Gospel Choir Committees

Anything Goes... minimize, simplify, organize

How it works...
- Bring unwanted items (all you can carry) that you want to present to the group & give away.
- Bring a non-perishable food donation for the NCC Emergency Food Pantry.
- Bring a brown bag lunch to enjoy during a discussion on the spirituality of simplicity and how to simplify and organize life using current articles/blog posts/videos
- Each participant offers their items in turn.
- Claim all you want for yourself or someone else…OR don’t take anything.
- Unclaimed items are donated to charity immediately following our gathering.
- Letting go of what we no longer want/need, makes room for what IS important

10 a.m. – 1 p.m. / 3rd Monday of each month (usually)

Upcoming Schedule:
March 16th
(Contact Community Minister, Patty Chaffee with questions)
Fellowship Room, Niantic Community Church

Simplicity

4th Friday each month
7:00-8:00 p.m.

Contemplative Adult Drum Circle

- A free, nurturing faith opportunity, facilitated by Kate Lamoureux
- Bring a drum if you have one
- All adults are welcome
- No experience or drum needed

Sessions Held:
Every 4th Friday
Niantic Community Church
(860)739-6208

Join us & bring a friend !!!
**History Answer**

The people living on the west side of the Niantic River were actually living in Waterford. The church had control of running the schools. The school committee decided where the schools would be, find teachers and collected taxes to pay for the school and teacher.

**Trivia:** East Lyme did not become a Town until 1839. The division line at first between New London and Lyme and in 1803 Waterford and Lyme went from Wigwam Rock in the Bay, up what is now Flanders Road and then Chesterfield Rd until it meets with the corner of what is now Waterford and Montville. This meant the people living to the east of this line did not live in the 2nd Society bounds, but did attend church and school in the 2nd Society. The boundary line moved when we became a Town.

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**Prayer Shawl Ministry—2020**

Save the Date and join us on the 4th Tuesday of each month for the Niantic Community Church

- March 24
- April 28
- May 26
- June 23
- July 28
- August 25
- September 22
- October 27
- November 24

Don’t know how to knit? We’ll teach you!
Don’t have any yarn? We’ll provide it!
Need a pattern? We have em!
Prefer to crochet? That’s okay!
Bring a friend to the Fellowship Room at NCC

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**Knowing Your Camera**

The Camera as a spiritual tool

Join us for a monthly journey through aperture, shutter speed, portrait/still life, facilitated by professional photographer Craig Woody. A free nurturing faith program where all are welcome. Bring your camera... Any camera is acceptable in this class as the rules of good composition apply equally to all cameras. This is not about buying an expensive camera it is about getting the most from what you have.

This series will be about camera controls and how to use them.

If you attended before there’s lots more to learn.

Register in the Church office (860)739-6208

Winter/Spring - 2020

Thursdays 7-9 p.m.
(4 Sessions)
March 26
April 23

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**Contemplative Photography**

Discovering God from behind the lens

An interactive program that requires use of a camera, and time outside of the group session. Each session will include prayer, reflection and discussion as well as sharing photos taken over previous weeks. All levels of ability are welcome to explore this creative path to discovering God at eye level.

Contemplative Photography will invite you into a deeper relationship with God through your camera lens. No experience or fancy camera needed. Offered on four Thursday evenings, once a month... A challenge is given each month and photographers return to share both their journey as well as their photos. Contemplative Photography is presented by Community Minister, Patty Chaffee.

Call or email Patty to get your photography challenge prior to the first session, or just come to check it out.

(860)739-6208
Patty@NianticcommunityChurch.org

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**Register in the Church office (860)739-6208**