

# News from the Hill . . .

Rev. Amanda Ostrove, Pastor

OCTOBER 2020

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## Reflections in the Midst of the Pandemic

*"We must remember we are stewards of what God has provided us not owners".*

Joyce Meyer, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Christian Author

October is traditionally the time of year where we begin to think about and hear about stewardship. This year will be no different, but as I think about stewardship in the light of Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of atonement that is observed by my husband's family, and in light of a pandemic and so much divisiveness in the world, I am brought to reflection. Stewardship shouldn't just be about dropping some money in the collection plate on Sundays, although that is most certainly apart of that. Stewardship isn't just about financial obligations to our community of faith. Stewardship should be a time of reflection, a time that calls us to think inwardly about the presence of God.

Traditionally, Yom Kippur happens about one week after Rosh Hoshana so that that week in between can be spent reflecting on the past year: decisions made, mistakes lived, and upon relationships. In some instances, reconciliation and apologies are made to start the new year off right. This practice of introspection is something that can often go missing in the busy Christian life. Yet it is an important practice in Christianity as well. Through introspection, through reflection, we not only recognize our mistakes but we also see the wonderful and beautiful grace of God in our world and in our lives. We see how he has been present all year guiding us and calling to us.

And he calls us to lives of stewardship, lives where we care for what God has provided us. We are called to be caretakers of his beautiful world, caretakers of his children, caretakers of the gifts we receive, and caretakers of our relationships. Yes we do some of this by supporting our church families. But we also do this by volunteering our time to help others. We do this by working on bettering ourselves and our interactions with others. We do this by committing to God, one another, and another year together in community, another year working together for the will of God in a world that yearns for God's love, reconciliation, and unity.

So, consider joining us for our 2021 Stewardship Sermon Series this October, where we will explore stewardship in all of its forms and what stewardship actually means in the life of a Christian. If you find yourself inspired to be more giving, more involved in the ministries and outreach opportunities of our church, remember to read further to find out not only what has been happening in the life of our church but to find out ways to help and to read about ways to reach to those in need even during this time of pandemic.



### **Hybrid Worship**

Sundays

10:00 AM

### **Online Bible Study**

Thursdays

7:00 PM



Council Chair—Phillip A. Doremus    Deacon Chair—Nathalie Taranto

Sexton—Sara Scoran    Secretary—Laura Tulley

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## Boards and Committee Reports

### Board of Deacons

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Hebrews 13:7

The month of October is National Clergy Appreciation Month, and annually, the second Sunday in October is Pastor Appreciation Day. This year it falls on Sunday, October 11th.

With preaching, mentoring, leading, serving, guiding and much, much more, pastors give a lot of time, energy, and heart to their churches. Perhaps we need to think about how meaningful it would be, to our Pastor, for we parishioners to offer some of that “24/7 giving” back to her on Pastor Appreciation Day as well as throughout the year.

How do we do that? A little bit of Googling offered a few thank you ideas. What do you appreciate most about your pastor? How is your pastor a blessing to you? Are there any specific events you want to include in your thank you to your pastor (i.e. a baptism, a wedding, memorial service, etc.)? Did your pastor give a particular sermon or message that really impacted you this year? Thank her in a note or in person. Or perhaps one of the following suggestions may better suit you .

**Come to Church worship:** Nothing is more depressing to a pastor than to see flagging attendance.

**Help Rev. Amanda find ways to Study and Pray:** The first thing to go as pastors grow in their career is study and prayer time. Assure her that her church family does not see this as **wasted time**.

**Ask Her about Things in Her Sermon:** As you leave the church and shake hands with Amanda, refer to something in the sermon and either ask about it or show appreciation for having learned something new.

**Be flexible in your thoughts & kind in words:** A Pastor is likely to refer your spiritual upkeep TO a higher authority when feelings are hurt.

**Avoid Church Politics on Sunday:** There are few greater gut sinking terrors for a pastor than TO get through a service, enjoying the high of sharing God’s Word, than to have a church member bring up church politics.

**Stay Up-to-Date & be Alert to COLIs (i.e. cost of living increases):** Not only for yourself but also for our Pastor – who, after all, has the same life expenses as we.

Dear Rev. Amanda: While it may not always be obvious, your congregants do sincerely and warmly appreciate you and your “hands on” leadership as you guide us, enhancing our faith, year after year, and particularly during these altered worship challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you, indeed, seems inadequate but it’s truly and sincerely given!



## Boards and Committee Reports



### TAC Turnaround Committee

We are collecting recipes for our church family and friends cookbook. We are collecting fall recipes that we can share. You may send in handwritten recipes to the church office, or, even better, email them to [suzanneel612@gmail.com](mailto:suzanneel612@gmail.com). What a fun way to pass the time of quarantine! We do plan to send some recipes into the Courier to remind the community that we are here and functioning amid the crisis. This will be a fun and great fundraiser for the church. This will be a fun and great fundraiser for the church.

We are also looking for ways to open ourselves to some of the new residents here in Easton in a way that will be safe for everyone. We will be sending out letters of welcome and invite them join us for one of three zoom sessions where they can come ask questions and get to know the congregation and Rev. Amanda. If you would be willing to join us for some of these zoom sessions please email Rev. Amanda at [pastor.cchurcheaston@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.cchurcheaston@gmail.com) so she can work with your schedules.

Next TAC Meeting: October 18, 2020 following worship online. All are invited to join for our TAC meetings at 11:45 with the link below.

TAC Meeting Zoom Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85470790594?pwd=ZmhvRzMxQUVtelhKbWpXM3JYSHFVdz09>

Passcode: 932688

TAC Meeting Zoom Phone Number:

1-929-205-6099 followed by Meeting ID: 854 7079 0594 Passcode: 932688

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## Facilities

After receiving pricing from other vendors, Pat was able to negotiate our annual contract pricing with Santa Fuel, resulting in an annual savings of \$750.00

Thank you to Tom Linley for handling the squirrel situation in the preschool. NAPS is very appreciative!



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## Stewardship

It is that time to start thinking about Stewardship. The Office staff is working with the Church treasurer and leadership to put together our budget and needs for 2021's Stewardship campaign. Don't forget to join us for weekly worship to learn all about stewardship in life this October.



## Boards and Committee Reports



### Christian Education

#### Children's Worship and Christian Education

This year Children's worship and Christian education will be offered online.

Weekly online activities will be emailed out to families by the church office. Connie Wing our Sunday school teacher has put a lot of thought into these activities and offers links to watch as well. Parents are urged to do these activities with their children either on Sundays or another day during the week to continue their religious education during this time of social distancing. We will email out the lessons to you on Fridays. And we hope by 2021 we will be able to start in person again.

#### Bible Study

Because of the use of Zoom, we were able to have people join us for Bible Study who have long ago moved away or whose churches do not offer Bible Study. This fall we began our study of 2 Corinthians on September 17<sup>th</sup> at 7PM. It is an 8-week long zoom class. We are playing with the day and time this fall to see if this opens the study up to a larger group. If you would like to attend or have friends and family who would like to attend the link will be found on the church website at [www.eastonchurch.org](http://www.eastonchurch.org) and all materials will be posted on the Christian Education page of the website. We hope you will consider joining us for one or all of our evening sessions this fall.

Our Bible Study Zoom link will remain the same from week to week as a recurring meeting. Here is the information for you. Please remember you may still access this information on our website as well.

#### Bible Study Zoom Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86929899126>

#### Bible Study Zoom Phone Number:

1-929-205-6099 followed by Meeting ID: 869 2989 9126



## Boards and Committee Reports

### UCC and CT UCC

#### Updates from the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport



*Leveraging hope, changing lives.*

On Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:30PM, I attended at gathering for the council of churches where we were updated on their continued and modified work in the name of Christ during this time of pandemic. I found the conversations exhilarating and fascinating. If you would like a full discussion of the conversations you may speak with Rev. Amanda. But here are the highlights that I feel might be of interest to our community since we are always looking for new ways to living into Christ's call to care for his sheep. They expressed a need for toiletries to give to those who are working to help those reentering society following incarceration. So if there are any toiletries that can be donated please contact the church office. Janus house, that cares for children in need of safe homes, is having difficulty finding host homes for the children. Janus house has also collected resources to provide the children with laptops and software so they might be able to maintain their education during this time of pandemic. Now they are accepting donations to help support internet hotspots so these children can connect in with their online learning. So if you are interested in support this or any of their programs follow the links below or feel free to ask Rev. Amanda about these programs. They are also running an Anti-Racism study that is online and open to all who want to attend. Follow the link below to join in on those conversations and studies.

For more information on Janus House, please see the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport:

<https://www.ccggb.org/>

#### Anti-Racism Study and Discussions

<https://ccgb.salsalabs.org/barmonthlyseries/index.html?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=d5b649e6-fa94-427a-8048-4885a287037c>



### Instructions for Zoom:

Zoom worship will continue even when we start in person worship in the hall. You will still be able to join from online if you are not quite ready to join us in person yet.

To join us on Zoom please follow the Sunday link. This link will remain the same each week. Please note you will need to use the passcode which is in place to ensure security during worship. The meeting ID will no longer be changing.

Zoom Worship Link for Sunday Mornings:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88440646436?pwd=REEdGVlVhFNTFwMkZSMHlpU29LZz09>

Passcode: 469663

Meeting ID#: 884 4064 6436



Zoom Worship Phone Number for Sunday Mornings: 1-929-205-6099

Dial in using this phone number followed by the Meeting ID from above and the passcode.

Come and Join us for worship on Sunday mornings online at 10:00AM. Come just as you are giving new meaning to the hymn "Just as I am, without one plea". Come with your tea, with your coffee, in pajamas and comfortable clothes and still worship God and seek support and a word of hope.

*Please note that in the event that there is a glitch with the internet on Sunday morning, you are always welcome to join in-person worship or tune in on Monday morning from the link to the YouTube page. It will be recording and uploading worship online.*



This cross is a symbol of humility and suffering. It first came into use during the Middle Ages. According to tradition, St. Andrew was crucified while preaching in Greece. He felt unworthy to be crucified in the same way as Jesus, so he begged that his cross be made differently. St. Andrew's cross is the national cross of Scotland. It's also called Cross Saltire.



### **A singular focus**

When we try to focus on too many things at once, sometimes we end up doing nothing well. During a visit to their house (see Luke 10:38-42), Jesus tells Martha that only one thing is needed and that Mary has chosen rightly. Surely Jesus doesn't mean that quiet devotion is needed while serving others is not. But when we let ourselves get "worried and distracted by many things," we may lose sight of the one crucial thing: love.



### **Learning from autumn leaves**

Every fall, I marvel at the beautiful leaves, studying the intricate shapes and God's creative, colorful displays. Despite its deterioration, the foliage reveals splendor — mere months after bursting out in spring and providing summer shade.

I often think I'm like an autumn leaf. Through many seasons, God has transformed me from a self-absorbed person to one who trusts his steadfast promises. Winter is approaching for me too. Yet the Holy Spirit keeps molding me to reflect God's goodness and beauty. During the autumn of my life, I pray that God helps me embrace changing seasons while reflecting his love and light to all.

—MaryAnn Sundby



### **Special Dates**

Pastor Appreciation Month



World Communion Sunday October 4



Reformation Sunday October 25



Reformation Day October 31



## Phases of Reopening

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Zoom Worship in Church Hall	Zoom Worship in the Hall People Present	Worship in Sanctuary with Zoom Option	Return to Normal Worship
Carole and Amanda Present	Carole and Amanda Present	Carole and Amanda Present	Return to Normal functioning of church
No Parishioners yet	Open to those who want to join 18 or fewer	Roped off pews	
No Coffee Hour	Temperature taking at the door	RSVP	
Send out survey	Flow of traffic to be directed using signs	Temperature taking at the door	
Figure out what we need for next phase	No hymn singing/just soloist	Flow of traffic	
Office reopens with Appointments	No collectors/ushers	Sanitizing following worship	
	Chairs will be disinfected by Sara Scoran	Offering masks at the door/all people wearing masks	
	RSVP before hand	No Communion/ individually wrapped to be taken in cars	
	All people need to wear masks	No Coffee Hour	
	Prepackaged communion	Zoom option either during church or following church – No music	
	No Coffee Hour	No hymn singing/soloist	
	No passing of the peace/ hugs/hand shaking	No passing of the peace/ hugs/hand shaking	
	Office Open- Call first, masks, appointments	Office Open- Call first, masks, appointments	



## What Does Worship Look Like?

Worship in the era of Covid-19 will look very different. These are the recommendations made by the CDC, the State of CT, and the United Church of Christ.

- Unison and Responsive readings and prayers would be done by the pastor with the congregation encouraged to read along silently
- Hymns will be sung by a soloist (likely Rev. Amanda) from the pulpit
- Offering will not be taken in the traditional way but offering plates will be located at the doors for people to drop their donations on the way in or out
- Bulletins will be located in the pews or on the chairs in the fellowship hall
- People will be asked to leave slowly allowing each family to leave one at a time
- Communion will be observed but individually wrapped communion will be picked up on the way out to be taken in each person's car
- Everyone will be required to wear masks at all times
- Coffee hour will be virtual and at a later time in the day on Zoom
- Temperatures will be taken at the door – temperatures of 100 degrees or more will be asked to seek medical attention and we will offer up prayers for you
- Prayer requests must be sent into the church office in advance of worship. There will be no sharing from the floor.
- Announcements must be made by email to the church in advance of worship. There will be no sharing from the floor.

The CDC believes that in person worship will be risky because of the prolonged period of time so many people are in one room together and the size of the room and distancing doesn't make a huge difference. If you have compromised health please stay home and join us online.

## What Do I Need to Do to Join In Person Worship

- Come wearing a mask
  - Be willing to have temperature taken at the door
- Hand sanitizer will be offered at the door for use upon entering and leaving
  - Let us know in advance if you plan to join us and with how many people
    - If you are able volunteer to help with needed volunteer positions

## Volunteers Needed

- Taking temperatures at the door (thermometer will be provided with gloves)

## Zoom Social Hours

In response to an expressed need for community and socialization, TAC has decided to establish zoom social hours during the week. If you are interested please email the church office so we can start determining the best days and times.



## Ways to Stay Connected to the Community

Just because for many of us social distancing is continuing this doesn't mean that we can't stay connected. This would be a great opportunity to pick up your directory and to call people and develop relationships just through a conversation. If you would like a directory, please contact the church office.



## Sermon Series

This October, as we begin to think about stewardship 2021, I will be preaching on What Stewardship Really is? And what the Bible offers as advice for giving on ones' self.

Holy Spirit, you are always doing "a new thing" (Isaiah 43:19). Help me welcome your new ways of love, justice and creativity in the church, the world and my life.



"Nothing [is] more truly artistic than to love people."  
—Vincent Van Gogh



We continue in Phase 2 which is worship in the fellowship hall as it is the safest and easiest place to set up and sanitize during covid-19. This means we do have a limit to how many people can be in worship. So, please remember to RSVP to let us know if you plan to attend worship on a Sunday and with how many people. Please RSVP even if you think you might attend.



Some things to remember when attending worship in person is that masks need to be worn covering mouth and nose. The restrictions to in person worship are for everyone's safety. The uptick in cases in Danbury has been linked to social gatherings, sports gatherings, and worship. So the safer we are the better.

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## Updates from the Southern New England Conference of the UCC

On Saturday, September 28, 2020 Rev. Amanda attended the annual meeting of our newly formed UCC local conference. The worship was inspiring and the music was moving. We heard the official good-byes from the 3 conference ministers of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut and voted in our first Executive Conference minister, Rev. Darrell Goodwin to start officially in January of 2021. Other board members were voted in as well. There were reports from the treasure and those currently holding positions. Interestingly enough, we will no longer be giving dues to the denomination but will rather be giving proportionally. This means that we will not see an increase in our dues unless we have an increase in our funds. Rev. Amanda also joined in some breakout sessions all about worshipping with new technologies and worship during the pandemic. If you are interested in learning more about the annual meeting please contact Rev. Amanda.



During a church anniversary celebration, a pastor overheard a group discussing various congregational leaders over the years. Her ears perked up when an older member said, "Whenever someone asks which of our pastors I liked best, my answer is always, 'The one we have at any given time is my favorite.'"

What a relief for the pastor to hear — and what a great lesson for Pastor Appreciation Month. God sends each shepherd to us with a specific set of spiritual gifts and then works through those gifts

## Board of Christian Outreach



Outreach is working with Wilfredo at St.Luke/St.Paul's to find ways to offer food to those who are in need during this time of pandemic. We will also be continuing our support of Covenant to Care with Jorge by asking for volunteers to provide Thanksgiving baskets for families in need. We are also continuing to support the senior center and Alison Witherbee with our food collection. Anything that Alison can not take is given to Jorge Ball, our adopted social worker, to offer to the families we support through out the year. So we thank everyone for their continued support of our food collection.

The bin on the church office steps as well as the baskets inside the doors may be used for either the



### Merton House

We continue to collect sample or travel sized toiletries for Merton House. Please drop them off anytime and place in the basket at the entrance to the church hall.

*Your donations are greatly appreciated.*



No matter your occupation, each day brings opportunities to honor God by helping other people.

This applies to everyone from a prince to a laborer, as Martin Luther said:

"The prince should think: Christ has served me and made everything to follow him; therefore, I should also serve my neighbor, protect him and everything that belongs to him. That is why God has given me this office, and I have it that I might serve him. ...

"The same is true for shoemaker, tailor, scribe or reader. If he is a Christian tailor, he will say: I make these clothes because God has bidden me do so, so that I can earn a living, so that I can help and serve my neighbor. When a Christian does not serve the other, God is not present; that is not Christian living."



Confirming Deacon for October 2020

*Jon Stock*

Confirming Deacon for November 2020

*Nathalie Taranto*

### **Sunday Morning Worship Flowers**

If you would like to order or provide flowers for Sunday morning in-person worship, we are now accepting sign-ups. We will send out an email weekly starting in September to see if anyone is interested.

### **Church Family and Friends Cookbook Fundraiser**

Please share you summertime favorite recipes and those of your friends for our church cookbook.

This is a wonderful way to stay connected during this time of isolation.

Send all recipes to Suzanne Lovejoy at [suzanneel612@gmail.com](mailto:suzanneel612@gmail.com) or if they are handwritten recipes without access to a computer you may mail them to the church office.









Don't assume that God will always work in your life the way he always has. A sunset is proof that God colors outside the lines. He has no status quo. Even the laws of nature are his to interrupt. As many times as you've prayed before, today may be the day when God sends the answer so swiftly — so divinely — that you're windburned.

—Beth Moore

# October 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 12PM Zoom Outreach 7PM Zoom Bible Study	2 World Smile Day 	3
4 10:00 AM Hybrid Worship with Communion 12:00 Deacon's Meeting 	5	6	7	8 7PM Zoom Bible Study	9	10
11 10:00 AM Hybrid Worship	12 	13	14	15 7PM Zoom Bible Study	16	17
18 10:00 AM Hybrid Worship 12:00 TAC Meeting	19	20	21	22 7PM Zoom Bible Study	23	24
25 10:00 AM Hybrid Worship 	26	27	28 6:30PM Zoom FEA Meeting	29	30	31  

# November 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p> <p>10:00 AM Hybrid Worship with Communion</p> <p>12:00 Deacon's Meeting</p>  	2	<p>3</p> 	4	<p>5</p> <p>7PM Zoom Bible Study</p>	6	7
<p>8</p> <p>10:00 AM Hybrid Worship</p>	9	10	<p>11</p> 	<p>12</p> <p>7PM Zoom Bible Study</p>	13	14
<p>15</p> <p>10:00 AM Hybrid Worship</p> <p>12:00 TAC Meeting</p>	16	17	18	19	20	21
<p>22</p> <p>10:00 AM Hybrid Worship</p>	23	24	25	<p>26</p> 	27	28
<p>29</p> <p>10:00 AM Hybrid Worship</p> 	30	31				





NEWS FROM THE HILL . . .  
THE CONGREGATIONAL  
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