



The Signpost

January 2022
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The vision of the Bolton Congregational Church UCC is to be true to the model and example set by the early Church of the Apostles, in our own time.

The Bolton Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ
228 Bolton Center St., Bolton, CT 06043
860-649-7077 ~ www.boltonucc.org

Reflections from the Interim Minister for the Moment

A group of five church members and I have been meeting weekly in November and December to read a book called *Unbinding the Gospel* by Martha Grace Reese. It is helping us deepen our prayer life. It is also helping us deepen our relationship with God. It is invigorating and exciting.

Reese writes some interesting things about thriving, growing churches:

"First-time visitors need an invitation to get in the door."

It can be intimidating and scary for a person who has never been to church, or not in a long time, to walk through the doors. If you get through the doors, everybody seems to know where to go, what to do, what a hymnal is, what the tune is, when to stand, sit. And then there's that time when everyone gets up and shakes hands with one another. They all seem to know one another. And where's the toilet? Should my busy little kids be here?

If they see someone they know, they have someone to guide them and answer their questions.

"Visitors come back because of the warmth of members, the pastor and what they are learning."

"At the point of joining, however, ... even the human relationships drop to the bottom of the list. New members are particularly thinking about questions about the meaning of their lives, like 'What is missing in my life?'"

People without a church background are looking for a relationship with God; people who had a church background want a closer relationship with God.

And the transition times of their lives are when they are most open to seeking God and a faith community.

For "Most unchurched Americans ... ruined lives, uncertainty, exhaustion, addictions, a treadmill existence or concern for their children seem to be more important entry points for the Gospel today."

As we move into a new year, a year of transition and moving into what God has in mind for BCC, keep these things in mind.

Reflections from the Interim Minister for the Moment *(continued)*

I've heard some talk about growing the church. Consider that if your primary goal is more people and larger numbers, it probably won't happen.

Rather than focusing on growth in numbers, focus on deepening your relationship with God, growth in faith and "unbinding the Gospel" (setting it free). Then the Gospel and God can do the work of reaching those people in the Bolton area community who are looking for a connection, a deeper faith, and a way to cope with the stresses of their lives. Those folk will see a living faith in you and in BCC. They will see what they are looking for and want to be part of it.

Focus on the Gospel, on faith, on God rather than on the numbers. Let that be the center of your life. God will do the rest - through you. Let God decide how many people should be here. You just focus on your work - being faithful to God whatever the circumstances.

That is our mission.

And if you would like to learn more about *Unbinding the Gospel*, or would like to be part of an *Unbinding* group, if you would like to deepen your relationship with God and become a better pray-er, let me know. Better yet, ask around. See how long it takes you to find one of the five "unbinders". Ask, "Are you one? Are you and *Unbinder*?"

When you find one, they can tell you themselves.

And if we find enough who want to join them, we'll have more another *Unbinding the Gospel* session soon.

Faithfully,
Pastor Bruce

Finance Committee Update

December Financial Snapshot

On my drive to church on Sunday, December 26th, I turned my radio on expecting to enjoy more of the Christmas songs I love. Truth be told, I have had my radio set to the "Official Christmas Music Station" since Thanksgiving (actually, I found that I had a couple of presets set to stations which both claimed to be the "Official Christmas Station" if you can imagine that). Much to my disappointment, the car filled with the sounds of cool Sunday morning coffee jazz, smooth but not satisfying. I then hit my backup "Official Christmas Station" preset, but alas, only soft rock. All traces of Christmas music were gone.

A melancholy wave swept over me as questions flashed through my mind: "Is Christmas really over, it was here less than 24 hours ago. Did the excitement, the joy of sharing and goodwill all vanish at the stroke of midnight?" I thought "But some of us still have celebrations to share with family and friends, how could it be over?" Does Christmas get put away with the decorations when the Christmas trees come down? My inner voice answered me in reply, or was that God whispering in my ear, "No, not if you don't let the message of Christmas slip away."

Finance Committee Update (continued)

Jesus came to teach God's Word: God Loves us all; love your neighbor as yourself; the Kingdom of Heaven is reached by your faith and not solely by your deeds; follow the **Spirit** of God's commandments. I think that is Jesus's Christmas message to us for today. Those teachings are what we should to follow every day and all of the excitement, joy and goodwill of Christmas will be alive throughout the new year.

Now, for the December financial numbers:

- As of the end of the year, contributions were about \$950 ahead of our budgeted annual contributions and the total income was approx. \$2,700 ahead of the budgeted annual income of \$162,170; this would not have been possible without everyone's generous donations and prayerful support;
- Expenses, as of the end of the year, were \$15,730 less than the budgeted expense of \$173,099;
- With the combination of higher than budgeted income and lower incurred expenses, our 2021 budget will end the year with a moderate excess of income instead of the \$10,929 deficit projected at last year's Annual Meeting; *God is good, All the time*;
- Looking forward to next year, we have received 36 responses for a total of \$110,121 towards our 2022 Intentional Giving;
- This is a great start to 2022, so even if you have not filled out a response card in the past, please consider sending one in to help us develop an accurate 2022 budget.

As we wait in anticipation for all that the new year will bring: new members, new baptisms, and hopefully news on the selection of our next pastor, Jesus's message to us for 2022, as a congregation remains: listen for God's Word, find ways to honor His teaching and for each of us to keep the Christmas spirit alive all the year long. Happy New Year!

"but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." isaiah 40:31

Yours in Christian Love,
Jim Bahre

P.S. - Of course, in googling bible quotes for the New Year, this one also came up:

Q: *What did Adam say to Eve on December 31?*

A: *It's New Year's, Eve.*



HAPPY NEW YEAR

Church School News

Happy New Year!! I hope you all were able to enjoy Christmas and New Year's with loved ones. If you were unable to join us on December 19th for our in person Christmas Pageant you missed a great show. Our kids blessed us with music and the telling of the story of the birth of Jesus. As usual they did an amazing job and brought some laughter and joy into a scary time. Thank you to all the kids for putting on such a great show. Thank you to Amy Bahre for always being there to help and encourage. We would not have been able to do the pageant without her.

The confirmation students will continue with their mission to help Boomer's Best Buddies Animal Rescue. Keep your eyes on the Church Chirps for information on how you can help.

I am always in the need of volunteers to help with different aspects of our Christian Education Program. If you are interested in helping me at all please let me know.

Stay healthy and safe and let's make 2022 a great year.

From the Missions Committee

During November and December our church participated in the MACC Joy of Community Sharing Program by adopting four area families for the holidays. This endeavor has been successfully accomplished through generous donations from members of our congregation and the joyful efforts of Mission Board Members. Using funds from donations we purchased food and other items for the families' Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. Each family also received store gift cards prior to Christmas to purchase a present for each family member. A shopping list was devised with input from each family regarding food preferences in addition to customary holiday dinner items. A Mission Board Member shopped for each family and delivered the bags of groceries to the family on the Sunday before Thanksgiving and Christmas. It was an uplifting experience. The total of the monetary contributions donated by members of the congregation exceeded the cost of the groceries and gift cards for the four adopted families. Consequently, a check for the surplus funds has been sent to MACC Charities to help other families. We are proud of the generosity demonstrated by our congregation.

The project for the mission board for the months of January and February is the "goodie" bags for the homeless. Each bag will have a bottle of water, socks, hat, gloves, snacks, small package of Kleenex, hand warmers, wipes, and chapstick.

Donations of these items are greatly appreciated! There will be a donation box outside of Chandler hall across from the memory garden.

Crafters' Corner & Church Store

It is a New Year and we are ready to start the year off right at the Church Store...

ALL OF OUR CHRISTMAS ITEMS WILL BE 50% OFF THROUGH JANUARY 18th.

Once again, we call your attention to one of our best money savers. OUR GREETING CARDS. We have many different types of cards and for just about any occasion that are so reasonably priced compared to other stores. We think that if you have the time or take the time to browse our cards that you will agree. You could save a great deal of money on your greeting card purchases while supporting the church missions. *One Hundred percent (100%) of all sales at the Store are donated to the church.*

We want to thank everyone who supported our Church Store fundraiser not only in 2021 but throughout the many years that this fundraiser (from the 90's) has been in existence. **This is your Store** and could only exist with the help of all of our members, their families and the communities support.

We have a great Tuesday group that meets every week from 10:30 - 3:30 made up of volunteers who craft, volunteer at the Store, socialize and greet everyone who comes to shop, donate, or just come to sit and chat over a snack and cup of tea or coffee. **We all thank the volunteers** who have spent their Tuesdays at the church hall for many years supporting this program. Please feel free to stop by. We look forward to seeing you.

If you and your children have or would like to support our churches ongoing program FROM THE HEART, **please remember that the Store has a collection box for them as you enter the Education Building.** The items collected in this box go to Laura Ann for her various projects on a weekly basis. **From the Heart** is a wonderful program for the whole family to get involved with. It supports families in need, Foster Care families, CT. Department of Children and Family programs, Seniors in nursing facilities, soldiers overseas, children in Haiti and so much more. If you are interested in finding out more about what this program is all about and where you might fit in as far as what is being collected or what volunteer opportunities there might be that would interest you, please visit Laura Ann's web site: www.fromtheheartct.com or email her ftheart@comcast.net with your questions or to request a copy of her monthly newsletter. We plan to have an area at the Store with a few copies of her newsletter as well as the Signpost for your convenience.

Lynn

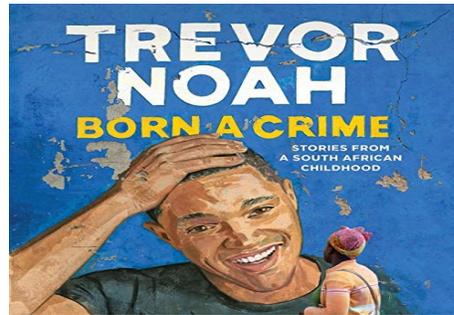
Prayer Shawl Update

Our Prayer Shawl Knitters continue to produce beautiful shawls year round. We have several ready in a variety of colors. We have not resumed our regular meetings yet, but we are available to help with any knitting issues. I am at the Church Store on Tuesday, if you need help or have knitting questions.

Shawls are available for love and comfort during any event of your life.

Warm regard,
Dot Lessard

CHANDLER BOOK TALK SUNDAY SOCIAL



In light of the uptick in COVID cases and in the interest of keeping friends safe, we have decided to POSTPONE our Sunday, January 16, 2022 book talk until spring. This gives you three more months to read our selected book:

Trevor Noah; Born A Crime by Trevor Noah

A wonderful review of this book is on our CBN table...authored by Lori Vadnais. We do not have multiple copies for lending but thanks to KAY PETERSON, we do have one more donated copy.

Thanks so much Kay! It will be on the library table, ready for sign-out by the end of next week. Bentley Memorial Library in Bolton can also obtain copies for borrowing. Call them to request a copy: 860-646-7349.

Looking forward to gathering again soon.

The Library Ladies
Linda Brown and Denise McLennon



Thank you

Dearest Family of Bolton Congregational Church,

Thank you for your generous gift of \$45.00 to MACC Charities for Food.

Your gift provides a needed lifeline to hurting people; and it is the gift of encouragement to staff and volunteers that see their hurt on a daily basis. No one could do this work alone; financially or emotionally. Thanksgiving and Christmastime give a little extra love and joy to families each year, and I cannot thank you enough for the joy you let us share with them.

May blessings flow back to you at Christmastime,
Beth Stafford
Executive Director/CEO
MACC Charities

From the Heart

Happy New Year! Hope you had a nice holiday! Thank you for helping to make the holidays better for so many people! We were able to combine your food donations with gifts, gift cards, hat, mittens, socks, blankets, towels and many other wonderful donations! Your generosity brought tears, smiles, hugs and an overwhelming appreciation to those on the receiving end. Wonderful!

As we begin the New Year, we hope you will help kick off 2002 with specific donations we know make a difference. Below are some of the items we are in great need of right now and the programs they will be used for:

Adopted Family Program

Paper Towels
Toilet Paper
Laundry Detergent
Healthy Snacks (trail mix, cereal bars, power bars etc.)
Grocery Store Gift Cards

Senior Gift Bag Program

Hand/Body Lotion
Chap-stick
Brand new stuffed animals (any size)
Tissues (any size)
Large Print Word Finds/ Pens

Creative Card Program

Large Envelopes (5 ½" X 7" or larger)
Handmade pictures or cards depicting winter scenes (great way for children to brighten someone's day)

These are just a few of the ways you can help kick off the New Year and bring support to someone who needs it! There are many ways that anyone at any age (child to adult) can help to make a difference! Please check out the website at www.fromtheheartct.com for more ideas!

Happy New Year! Thank you for being a light all year long so that others may see it and find hope and renewed strength in their days!

Laura Ann
"From the Heart"
PO Box 804 / Manchester, CT 06045

Notice of the 2022 Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Bolton Congregational Church, UCC, will be held on Sunday, January 30, 2022 at 11 am. The intention is to hold an in-person meeting, and all members are encouraged to attend. Proper Covid precautions will be observed (masks, open windows, etc.). There may be a POSSIBLE option for remote attendance by video or phone, and those who plan ONLY to participate remotely should contact the church office prior to the meeting to notify us of their intention and provide an email address for forwarding a video/phone link invitation. We still need a quorum, so it is important for as many people who are able to attend.

The purpose of the meeting will be the following:

- To review and approve the reports of the various boards, committees, and staff;
- To review and approve the reports of the Church Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretaries;
- To elect the officers and board members for 2022;
- To approve the proposed budget for 2022;
- To conduct any other business which will properly come before the congregation.

In the event of cancellation due to extreme bad weather, the Annual Meeting will be held the following Sunday, February 6, 2022 at 11 am , using the same format.

Every effort will be made to make the annual report available the Friday before the Annual Meeting. I would ask that anyone responsible for preparing a portion of the Annual Report do so and submit it to the Church Office no later than Friday, January 7, 2022, so that the report can be compiled and distributed in a timely manner.

Bill Dakin

Moderator



The Bolton Congregational Church UCC
228 Bolton Center Road
Bolton, CT 06043-7636

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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The Signpost is a publication of the Bolton Congregational Church UCC, Bolton, CT.

The Rev. Bruce MacLeod, Intentional Interim Pastor; MaryLou Prescher, Organist and Choir Director; Jessica Romeo, Director of Children & Youth Programming; Amanda Andersen, Church Office Administrator; Bob Bagley, Custodial Services; Lisa Catanese, Webmaster; The Rev. Dr. Chris Davies, Minister in Mission; The Rev. Charles H. Ericson, Pastor Emeritus

The Church Office Hours are currently by appointment only. Amanda can be reached via the office email at boltonucc@gmail.com or by leaving a voice mail at (860) 649-7077 (Email is best, although voicemails are checked regularly.) Pastor Bruce is available via phone (508) 769-1809 or email at interim_pastor.bcc@yahoo.com, or 24/7 in case of pastoral emergency.