



THE BELL TREE
AN MCCC PUBLICATION

A Newsletter for
DECEMBER 2023

The Mount Carmel Congregational Church
(A United Church of Christ)
3285 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06518



From the Pastor's Desk...



Dear Church Family,

As we stand on the cusp of Advent, I want to talk about what the season means.

The Latin roots of the word literally translate as “come towards,” or draw near, as in God drawing near to us in the person of Jesus—the Christ Child. The repetition of the liturgical year is both a challenge and a blessing. A challenge because repetition can be habit—something we do just because we do it—and blessing because repetition can be deep with meaning when it is a ritual—something repeated on purpose, and with purpose. Another way to say that is we don’t do things over and over again because it is convenient or it’s what we are used to; we repeat things because we trust that they matter. We are doing something new even as we are carrying on our traditions.

One of the things you will see repeated in our Advent services is an adaptation of a quote from the twelfth century mystic Meister Eckhart:

What good is it to us that Mary gave birth to the son of God two thousand years ago, and we do not also give birth to the Son of God in our time and in our culture? We are all meant to be mothers of God. God is always needing to be born.

Yes, God is always needing to be born.

Some of the meaningful repetition of December will be our annual business meeting on December 3rd to approve our budget for next year—and it will be a time of celebration and gratitude. On December 10th, we will share a Christmas Brunch together. We have planned meaningful worship services to draw us deeper into the season. One thing that is new is we will have a Service of Remembrance on Saturday, December 9th at 2 pm, in collaboration with Beecher and Bennett Funeral Home. Since the fourth Sunday of Advent falls on Christmas Eve, our morning service will mark the end of Advent and our 4 pm service will be one of Lessons and Carols.

We have good and meaningful days to come.

I look forward to sharing them with you.

Peace,
Milton



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday Wishes Go to the Following:

| | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Jane Stolzenberg | December 5 th | Helen Spencer | December 12 th |
| Al Stolzenberg | December 6 th | Bill Copeland | December 16 th |
| Beverly Jurkiewicz | December 6 th | Carillon Copeland | December 16 th |
| Reverend Milton | December 12 th | Leon Fiftal | December 28 th |
| Nancy Olson | December 12 th | | |

If you would like to add your name to our birthday list, please contact our office.

DECEMBER WORSHIP SCHEDULE



Please join every Sunday at 10am in the Church for service, followed by coffee hour in the Parlor! Note: These are lectionary passages for your own devotional purposes. Weekly scripture readings are subject to change.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p><u>December 3rd, 2023: 1st Sunday of Advent</u> Holy Communion; Annual Budget Meeting Scripture: Isaiah 64: 1-9 Psalm 80: 1-7, 17-19 1 Corinthians 1: 3-9 Mark 13: 24-37</p> | <p><u>December 10th, 2023: 2nd Sunday of Advent</u> Potluck Luncheon Scripture: Isaiah 40: 1-11 Psalm 85: 1-2, 8-13 2 Peter 3: 8-15a Mark 1: 1-8</p> |
| <p><u>December 17th, 2023: 3rd Sunday of Advent</u> Scripture: Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11 Psalm 126 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24 John 1: 6-8, 19-28</p> | <p><u>December 24th, 2023: 4th Sunday of Advent</u> Normal Morning Service Starts at 10am Scripture: 2 Samuel 7: 1-11 Luke 1: 46b-55 Romans 16: 25-27 Luke 1: 26-38</p> |
| <p><u>December 24th, 2023: Lessons and Carols</u> Christmas Eve Service Starts at 4pm Scripture: Isaiah 9: 6-7 Luke 1: 26-38 Matthew 1: 18-25 Luke 1: 39-58 Luke 2: 1-7 Luke 2: 8-20</p> | <p><u>December 31st, 2023: New Year's Eve</u> <i>First Sunday After Christmas</i> Scripture: Isaiah 61:10-62:3 Psalm 148 Galatians 4: 4-7 Luke 2: 22-40</p> |

MCCC ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING

The Annual Budget Meeting of the Mount Carmel Congregational Church will be held in the sanctuary immediately following the church service on Sunday, December 3rd, 2023. Please note that a quorum is needed in order to pass the Budget.

Respectfully submitted,
 Beverly Jurkiewicz
 Church Clerk

Memorial Poinsettias

The Altar Guild will be taking orders for Memorial Poinsettias at Coffee Hours on Sunday, December 3rd. Order forms can also be found in this month's edition of the Bell Tree newsletter and in the Parish House near the entrance. For more information, please contact Karen Amato.

-Karen Amato

Christmas Brunch

Please join us after service on Sunday, December 10th for our Christmas Brunch! We are looking for brunch items such as breakfast casseroles; bagels and cream cheese; and quiches. If you would like to sign up to bring in a dish, or if you would simply like to let us know you plan on attending, please contact the office or Debbie Wooley by Sunday, December 3rd.

-MCCC Staff

Outreach

Thanksgiving Baskets. Our food drive was very successful again this year. We were able to fill 30 bags of food and we delivered 12 to the VNA and 18 to the Keefe Center. Thanks to all who contributed with food and monetary donations, and to the drivers and people who helped load the cars. Your contributions are appreciated.

Christmas Giving Tree. We will be donating wrapped gifts to the VNA again this year. The gift tags are on the small Christmas tree on the round table in the Parish Hall. The tags are numbered and labeled. Please let Debbie know what tag(s) you are taking. Bring in your unwrapped gift and tag by Dec 10th. You may leave them in the nursery. Outreach helpers will wrap them and deliver them on Monday, December 18th.

Christmas Fund. Our next church-wide mission project is The Christmas Fund. The monies collected here help "provide pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retired church workers, emergency assistance to clergy families in need, and Christmas checks to hundreds of annuitants, as administered by the Pension Boards." Please make your check out to Mt Carmel and put "Christmas Fund" in the memo. Cash or check Donations are due by Sunday, December 24th. Thank you.

-Debbie Wooley

Stewardship

Current Pledge Total: As of November 15th, we have reached almost \$65,000 in pledges! Please continue to mail in your pledge cards or drop them off in the offering plate on Sunday.

"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" - Acts 20: 35.

-Debbie Wooley

Faith Formation

Church School. We are off to a good start this year. We have been able to meet twice each month and hope to continue doing that.

-Debbie Wooley

GENERAL ANNOUCEMENTS

Bell Tree Submissions. Do you have an event to announce? A story to share? We would love to hear it! Send us an email at office@mccucc.com by the second to last Tuesday of the month and we may include your article in our next publication.

Ushers. We are always looking for more Ushers – no experience necessary! Please see Dave or Bev Jurkiewicz, or Debbie Wooley, for more information!

Joys and Concerns. If you wish to have a joy or concern announced during worship, please forward to them to Aren at office@mccucc.com or call the church office at (203) 248-7408.

Pastoral Support. If you require pastoral support or guidance, feel free to contact our minister, Reverend Milton, by email at Pastor@mccucc.com, or by calling our office on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

Committee Openings. Looking to get involved? There are several Committee Openings for Deacons (1 opening), Faith Formation (3 openings), and Music (3 openings)! If you would like to try out a committee (attend a meeting with no obligations), please contact the office and Aren will put you in touch with the committee chair!

Coffee Hour. Coffee Hour volunteers are needed. If you would like to sign up for a Sunday, please contact the office directly or use the signup sheet now located at the entrance of the Parish House.

Altar Flowers. Altar flowers are needed. If you would like to sign up for a Sunday, please contact the office directly or use the signup sheet now located at the entrance of the Parish House.

Food Bank. Donations for the Food Bank are always needed if you are able to contribute. Non-perishable items such as canned beef stew, hearty soups, canned fish, peanut butter, mac and cheese packages, and oatmeal would be greatly appreciated.

Prayer Shawls. As a reminder, Prayer Shawls are always available to those who need them. If you or anyone you know needs one, please contact the office and we will arrange a shawl for you.



Brrrrr...Warm Up with Our

Christmas *Brunch*

Sunday, December 10th
Directly Following 10am Service

**Please join us for a very special Potluck Brunch
to Celebrate the Christmas Season!**



**If you would like to sign up to bring a dish
or if you just plan on attending,**

Please contact:

Debbie Wooley (ce@mccucc.com)

Or

Aren Alberico (office@mccucc.com)

We look forward to seeing you there!



The Altar Guild

Orders for **Memorial Poinsettia Plants, 2023**

When: Coffee Hours, Sunday, November 26th and December 3rd.

or call Karen Amato (651-9769) by Wednesday, December 6th.

Choice of: Red, White, or Marbled

Cost: \$8.00 each

Plants may be taken after worship on **Christmas Eve, Sunday, Dec. 24th.**

Please fill out the form below and return to Karen Amato or the church office.

POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

Ordered By _____ Phone _____

In Memory of: _____

Or, (other dedication) _____

Total number _____ Red _____ White _____ Marbled _____

Total Cost _____

Check one: Will take after worship _____ Will Leave at Church _____



VNA CHRISTMAS GIFT DRIVE

We are once again collecting gifts for the VNA. If you would like to participate, simply follow these
4 Easy Steps:

- 1) Sign up using the Sign-Up Sheet located in the Church Hall.
- 2) Take the tag marked with your number off the tree.
- 3) Purchase the gift listed on the tag.
- 4) Drop off your unwrapped gift in the box on the stage by Sunday, December 10th!

...and Outreach Helpers will take care of the rest!

If you have any questions, please contact Debbie Wooley at ce@mccucc.com.



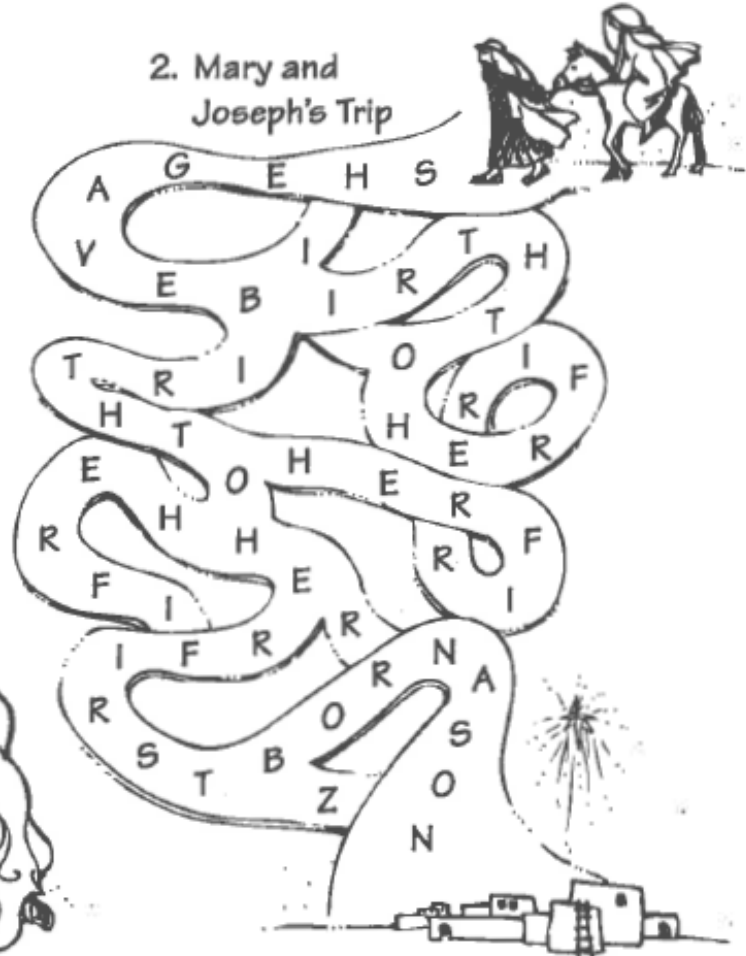
Two Long Trips

A special angel traveled to earth to take God's message to Mary. Later, Mary and Joseph traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for a census. To learn more about these two trips, work your way through each maze. Fill in the blanks under the mazes with the letters from the correct paths.

1. The Angel's Trip



2. Mary and Joseph's Trip



1. What did the angel tell Mary? " _____

_____." (Luke 1:35)

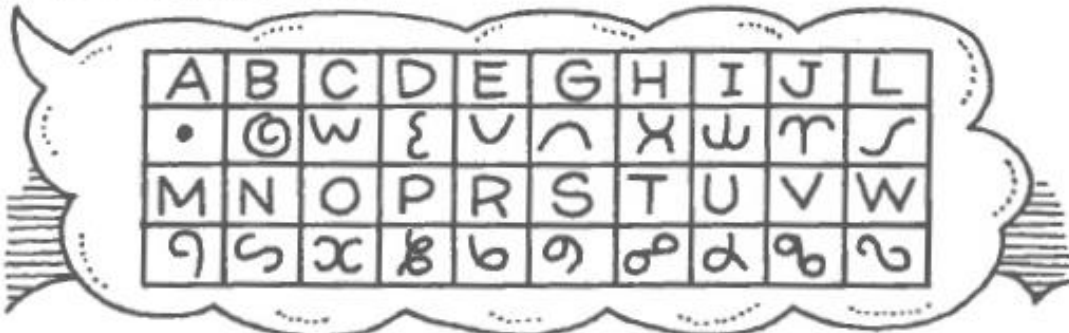
2. What happened to Mary in Bethlehem? ... _____

_____ ... (Luke 2:7)

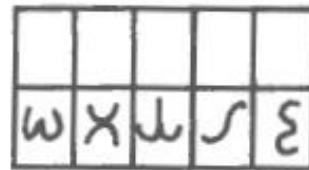
The angel told Joseph to name the baby Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. Jesus died for the sins of all people. Have you asked Him to forgive your sins?

THE NEWS

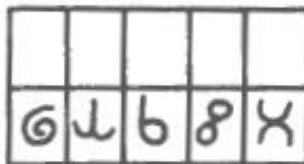
Read Luke 1:26-28, 30-33, 38-42, 46, 47. Use the code to fill in the missing words.



THE ANGEL, GABRIEL, SAID TO MARY,
"YOU WILL BE WITH



AND GIVE



TO A

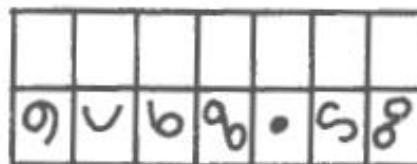
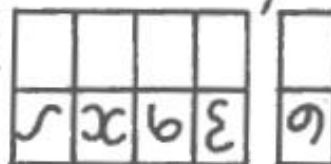


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" MARY ANSWERED,

"I AM THE



" MAY IT BE, ... AS YOU
HAVE





Mount Carmel Congregational Church
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lyndapedersen@att.net

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