



**THE BELL TREE**  
AN MCCC PUBLICATION

*A Newsletter for the Month of*  
**FEBRUARY 2023**

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

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### *From the Pastor's Desk...*

Dear Church Family,

I am grateful to be starting this new season of shared ministry with you. I want to begin with thanks for the many ways you have made me feel welcome here, not the least of which is my newly painted office. Please stop by and see it during coffee hour if you did not get to do so last week. It is beautiful.

We are less than a month from the beginning of Lent, the church season that leads us to commemorate Jesus' death and celebrate his resurrection. Ash Wednesday is February 22. The popular conception of Lent is that we all have to give up something we love, as though deprivation is the central theme, but that misses the true value of the season.

The idea of giving things up comes from the ancient practice of fasting as a spiritual discipline, but it was more than just doing without food. Those who were fasting would pray during the time they normally ate; the point was one of focus and intentionality. And I am not sure the imagined that their practice would lead to our giving up Peanut M&Ms for a few weeks.

You may already have ways of being during Lent that feed and focus you and, if so, I hope you will share them. During our Lenten worship services, we will be trying some different things to give us a freshened sense of intentionality and, we hope, a fresh encounter with God's Spirit. We will send more information as the season nears.

One item to mark on your calendar now: Our Maundy Thursday service will be on April 6 at 5:30 pm. We are moving the service to an earlier time where those who don't want to drive at night can attend. It is one of my favorite services of the year. I hope you will plan to be there.

As I settle in and get a better sense of my schedule, I look forward to opportunities to get to know you personally. I have a church email account now. You can reach me at [pastor@muccucc.org](mailto:pastor@muccucc.org) for whatever reason.

I am looking forward to our days together.

Peace,  
Milton

## FEBRUARY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

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

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|--|---|
| <p><b><u>February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023</u></b><br/> <b>Holy Communion</b><br/> <i>Fifth Sunday After Epiphany</i><br/> <b>Scripture:</b> Isaiah 58: 1-9a (9b-12)<br/>                 Psalm 112: 1-9 (10)<br/>                 1 Corinthians 2: 1-12 (13-16)<br/>                 Matthew 5: 13-20</p> | <p><b><u>February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023</u></b><br/> <i>Sixth Sunday After Epiphany</i><br/> <b>Scripture:</b> Deuteronomy 30: 15-20<br/>                 Psalm 119: 1-8<br/>                 1 Corinthians 3: 1-9<br/>                 Matthew 5: 21-37</p>  |
| <p><b><u>February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023</u></b><br/> <b><i>Transfiguration Sunday</i></b><br/> <b>Scripture:</b> Exodus 24: 12-18<br/>                 Psalm 2 OR Psalm 9<br/>                 2 Peter 1: 16-21<br/>                 Matthew 17: 1-9</p>   | <p><b><u>February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023</u></b><br/> <b>Ash Wednesday</b><br/>                 Stay tuned for more information regarding Ash Wednesday services and Drive-Thru Ashes.</p>   |
| <p><b><u>February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023</u></b><br/> <i>First Sunday of Lent</i><br/> <b>Scripture:</b> Genesis 2: 15-17, 3: 1-7<br/>                 Psalm 32<br/>                 Romans 5: 12-19<br/>                 Matthew 4: 1-11</p>   | <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS</u></b><br/> <i>Happy Birthday Wishes Go to the Following:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mark Leach                  February 10<sup>th</sup></p> <p>If you would like to add your name to our birthday list, please contact our office.</p> |

### Welcome to Our New Bridge Minister

The Mount Carmel Congregational Church welcomes Rev. Milton Brasher Cunningham as our Bridge Minister. We are thrilled to have him as our pastor and look forward to have him worship with us!

Blessings,  
The Board of Deacons

### **Coffee Hour Meetings with Reverend Susan Owen**

Please join us during Coffee Hour on February 5<sup>th</sup> and February 12<sup>th</sup> for a series of meetings hosted by Reverend Susan Owen! Our topic for these meetings will be “The Ancient Church and Us: Exploring Connections With Other Local Congregations”.

-Reverend Susan Owen

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## A Message from the Search Committee

The Fall was disappointingly quiet for your Search Committee – we met to plan and discuss, but there are dozens of openings throughout the region and we didn't receive any UCC ministerial profile applications. The good news is the Spring is the primary time the Conference sees applications being submitted and we are actively preparing! We just met with Conference staff to get fresh input and we have briefly taken down our church profile to update and revamp it to repost again as a 'new' opening in February! Please continue to pray for our congregation and for the Search Committee you appointed! We are working hard while trusting in God's direction and perfect timing!

Sincerely,  
Your Search Committee

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## A Message from the Stewardship Committee

The Stewardship Campaign began with Stewardship Sunday on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The Stewardship Committee would like to thank everyone who has made a pledge commitment. Your current and past generosity and support of our congregation is greatly appreciated.

As of Sunday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the church received pledges totaling \$67,368 which includes a stock pledge and reflects 38 households contributing. We are off to a good start. This year's budget is \$83,000. If you have not made a pledge commitment it is our hope that you will consider doing so in order for our church to continue to meet our financial obligations.

If you are unable to pledge on a weekly or monthly basis, we ask that you consider a special one-time gift of any amount. We also thank those members and friends who continue to worship with us and give on a regular basis. Thank you for giving generously and joyfully. Our congregation is blessed.

-The Stewardship Committee  
Sara Kroon, Sandee Martin, Carmen McKee

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## Outreach

Ark Banks. Our latest donation total is \$176.49. This money goes into the Pastor's Discretionary Fund to be used as needed. As you will recall, we paid for 2 night's hotel stay for a homeless person recently so please keep bringing in your arks. There is now a bucket of empty arks inside the parish hall door. So, if you don't come to church, you may take one there. Please return the filled ark to Aren in the office or leave in the offering plate on Sunday when you come to church. Thank you.

Special Mission Offering. The next special offering will be the One Great Hour of Sharing. There will more information coming later in the month. Sunday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 is the suggested date to collect the offering. OGHS support allows the UCC to respond to a variety of global and local concerns.

-Debbie Wooley

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## 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](mailto:office@mccucc.com) by the second to last Sunday of the month and we may include your article in our next publication. We are especially in need of monthly reflections and devotionals in this time between pastors.

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## Needed: Coffee Hour Volunteers!

Are you thinking you'd like to help out with coffee hour but are not sure what to do? Would you rather not make the coffee or have to get there early to set up? Well, there is something you can do! You can always drop off a coffee cake or some other treat, homemade or store bought, it doesn't matter. There are a few of us, Bev, Debbie, Sandee, & Anna, who are usually around to do the setting up. They would really appreciate it if others would bring in food so they don't have to do everything all the time. Please let someone know you'd like to do that. You can bring something in on Sunday or come by and put it in the freezer to be used when needed. If you would like to learn how to set up coffee hour, please see one of us and we will assist you. Thank you.

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## **FINANCIAL REPORT: NOVEMBER 2022**

Following is the financial report for November 2022. If you have any questions, Ellen can be reached at [treasurer@mccucc.com](mailto:treasurer@mccucc.com).

|                    |                        |             |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Income:</b>     | Pledges and Offerings: | \$5,347.00  |
|                    | Other Income:          | \$11,585.00 |
|                    | Total Income:          | \$16,932.00 |
| <b>Expenses:</b>   | Total Expenses:        | \$5,043.00  |
| <b>Net Income:</b> |                        | \$11,889.00 |

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## **FINANCIAL REPORT: DECEMBER 2022**

Following is the financial report for December 2022. If you have any questions, Ellen can be reached at [treasurer@mccucc.com](mailto:treasurer@mccucc.com).

|                    |                        |             |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Income:</b>     | Pledges and Offerings: | \$11,921.75 |
|                    | Other Income:          | \$1,760.00  |
|                    | Total Income:          | \$13,681.75 |
| <b>Expenses:</b>   | Total Expenses:        | \$11,354.71 |
| <b>Net Income:</b> |                        | \$2,327.04  |

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## **Annual Meeting**

The 258<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Mount Carmel Congregational Church will be held on Sunday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, following our regularly scheduled worship service. If you are the head of a committee, we ask that you send a typed copy of your report to Aren, preferably by email, by Thursday, March 30<sup>th</sup> to be included in the 2022 Annual Report. Please also include a list of your current members and officers for record-keeping purposes, as well as a list of any positions that need to be filled so that we can include them in the nominations for the year.

Sincerely,  
Beverly Jurkiewicz  
Church Clerk

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## **GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**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](mailto:office@mccucc.com) or call the church office at (203) 248-7408.

**Pastoral Support.** If you require pastoral support or guidance, please contact the office and our office administrator will put you in contact with someone who can help.

**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.

**Rentals.** If you or anyone you know would be interested in renting out our parish hall to host a meeting, service, or a small private event, please feel free to visit our website for scheduling, rates, and conditions.

**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.

# TEACHER'S PET!



Psalm 32:8

Become the teacher's pet by breaking the code. Use the key above the blackboard to go to the top of the class!

Code: GVLOINSEYTAWPJXBUZDRFKCMQH  
Real: ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ



# A Journey to Meet Satan



After Jesus was baptized, He went to the desert to be tempted by Satan. Jesus refused to be tempted by anything Satan offered Him. This proves to us that He never sins. He showed us the best way to defeat Satan when Satan tempts us. Look up the verses below. Draw a line from each temptation to the verse that relates to it.

## Satan's Temptations

1. "... tell these stones to become bread." (Jesus had not eaten for 40 days.)
2. "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, and angels will lift you up." (Satan took Jesus to the highest point of the temple for this temptation. Jesus had come to die for our sins, not to do this.)
3. "Bow down and worship me, and I will give you all of this." (Satan took Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. If Jesus had worshipped Satan, He never would have died for our sins.)

## Verses Jesus Used

Deuteronomy 6:13-14

Deuteronomy 8:3

Deuteronomy 6:16

What should you say every time Satan tempts you? To find out, choose the correct answer for each and follow the directions.

1. Tell a lie to get out of trouble.
  - a. Lie—Draw lines from 1 to 3 to 4 to 2.
  - b. Don't lie—Draw lines from 2 to 1, 4 to 3, and 1 to 4.
2. Steal a dollar to buy candy.
  - a. Don't steal—Draw lines from 7 to 5 to 6 to 8 to 7.
  - b. Steal—Draw lines from 5 to 8 to 7 to 6 to 5.



|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3 | 5 | 7 |
| • | • | • | • |
| 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 |
| • | • | • | • |

What should you say to all temptations? \_\_\_\_\_



**Mount Carmel Congregational Church**  
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