



**THE BELL TREE**  
AN MCCC PUBLICATION

*A Newsletter for*  
**MARCH 2025**

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



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



Greetings!

As both March and Lent begin in the coming days, one with the promise of Spring and the other with a call to focus and intention, we are moving into a season of growth and development. By the end of the month, we will see the first vestiges of life and renewal as the first blooms push up from the soil. What growth will we foster in ourselves, both collectively and individually?

Theologian Walter Brueggemann (a fellow UCC member) writes, “I imagine Lent for you and for me as a great departure from the greedy, anxious anti-neighborliness of our economy, a great departure from our exclusionary politics that fears the other, a great departure from self-indulgent consumerism that devours creation. And then an arrival in a new neighborhood, because it is a gift to be simple, it is a gift to be free; it is a gift to come down where we ought to be.”

We will begin the season of Lent by hosting an ecumenical Ash Wednesday service in our sanctuary at 7 pm on Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>. It will include clergy and congregants from six Hamden churches: Hamden Plains United Methodist, Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran, Grace and St. John’s Episcopal, Dunbar UCC, Spring Glen UCC, and us. The music will be led by a clergy band made up of all of the ministers. If you cannot attend, it will be streamed.

We will also have a Lenten Bible Study on four consecutive Saturdays—March 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 29<sup>th</sup>—from 10:30 am till noon. We will meet in the parlor for a time of scripture study and discussion. Though the weeks will be connected, each will also stand on its own, so if you can’t make all of them, please come when you can.

On Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, we will share a potluck soup lunch together after church (and after we have “sprung forward” into Daylight Saving Time) as another way to strengthen the bonds between us and focus our sense of connectedness in Christ.

I hope this season is rich and meaningful for all of us.

Peace,  
Milton

# MARCH 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><b><u>March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025: Transfiguration</u></b>  <b>Communion</b>  <b>Scripture:</b> Exodus 34: 29-35                  Psalm 99                  2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2                  Luke 9: 28-36 (37-43a)</p>	<p><b><u>March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025: Ash Wednesday</u></b>  <b>Ashes-To-Go:</b> Christ the Good Shepherd                  600 Shepherd Avenue, Hamden CT  <b>Times:</b> 7:30-9:00am; 12:00pm-1:00pm  <b>Worship Service:</b> Mount Carmel Congregational  <b>Time:</b> 7:00pm</p>
<p><b><u>March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025</u></b>  <i>First Sunday of Lent</i>  <b>Scripture:</b> Deuteronomy 26: 1-11                  Psalm 91: 1-2, 9-16                  Romans 10: 8b-13                  Luke 4: 1-13</p>	<p><b><u>March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025</u></b>  <i>Second Sunday of Lent</i>  <b>Scripture:</b> Genesis 15: 1-12, 17-18                  Psalm 63: 1-8                  1 Corinthians 10: 1-13                  Luke 13: 31-35</p>
<p><b><u>March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025</u></b>  <i>Third Sunday of Lent</i>  <b>Scripture:</b> Isaiah 55: 1-9                  Psalm 63: 1-8                  1 Corinthians 10: 1-13                  Luke 13: 1-9</p>	<p><b><u>March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025</u></b>  <i>Fourth Sunday of Lent</i>  <b>Scripture:</b> Joshua 5: 9-12                  Psalm 32                  2 Corinthians 5: 16-21                  Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32</p>



## MARCH BIRTHDAYS

*Happy Birthday Wishes Go to the Following:*

Amos Hewitt

March 3<sup>rd</sup>

Lynda Pedersen

March 31<sup>st</sup>

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## Ash Wednesday

For Ash Wednesday this year (which falls on March 5<sup>th</sup>), our Church will be participating in two very special programs right here in Hamden. First, Reverend Milton will be participating in the Ashes-To-Go program at Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, located at 600 Shepherd Avenue. Ashes will be given from the comfort of your vehicle from 7:30-9:00am, and from 11:30am-1:30pm.

Second, we will be hosting an Ecumenical Worship Service right here at Mount Carmel Congregational Church. The service will begin at 7:00pm and will feature music from the Hamden Clergy Band! We hope to see you there!

-Church Staff

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## Souper Sunday Potluck Luncheon

All are invited to attend our 'Souper Sunday' Potluck Luncheon, which will be held on Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup> immediately following our regular worship service. As usual, bread and crackers will be provided, and cookies and brownies would be greatly appreciated for dessert. If you are able, we also encourage everyone to donate a can of soup to help support the Hamden Food Bank! As we did with our last luncheon, we will serve from the kitchen and eat in the parlor. If you plan on attending and/or bringing soup, please contact Debbie Wooley. Thank you!

-Church Staff

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## Stewardship

*Current Pledge Total:* As of February 25<sup>th</sup>, we have reached almost \$75,265 in pledges, representing 45 pledge units! Please feel free to continue to mail in your pledge cards or drop them off in the offering plate on Sunday. To those of you who have already pledged, we would like to thank you for your generous contributions to the Church and our ongoing mission.

“What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.” – Jane Goodall

-Debbie Wooley

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## Outreach

*Salvation Army Angel Tree.* We received a wonderful thank you letter from the Salvation Army for our support of the Angel Tree Program. It is included in this newsletter.

*One Great Hour of Sharing.* The OGHS collection will be Sunday, March 30<sup>th</sup>. One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is a vital special mission offering of the United Church of Christ. It connects you to disaster relief, refugee assistance, and development efforts around the globe. When disasters strike, or when individuals are displaced due to violence or poverty, OGHS ensures immediate response and ongoing recovery.

Through your support, OGHS funds comprehensive development programs in areas such as healthcare, education, agriculture, food security, microfinancing, and women's empowerment. By partnering with Global Ministries and international response networks, OGHS maximizes its impact. Your contributions help meet urgent needs while addressing the root causes of vulnerability, ensuring long-term, sustainable solutions for affected communities.

-Debbie Wooley

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### March Bible Study

Please join us in the Parlor for a special Lenten Bible Study on four consecutive Saturdays in March—March 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 29<sup>th</sup>—from 10:30 am till noon. We hope to see you there!

-Rev. Milton

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### Faith Formation

ARK Banks. Keep your Ark Banks floating! Please don't forget to keep bringing in your ark banks, as we are continuing to collect money for the Pastor's Discretionary fund. We have already used this account on several occasions to help people in need in and around our community. If you have not picked up a bank yet, empty banks can be found in the narthex or in the entrance to the parish hall. Just pick one out, fill it up, and bring it to the Church (and don't forget to pick out a new one)! Filled banks can be placed in the offering plate or dropped off in the office. Thank you for your continued support.

Spring Decoration Materials. We have lots of plastic eggs and spring decorations available if you are interested. All items are on the table down in the computer room. A small donation, if possible, would be appreciated. Please reach out if you are interested.

-Debbie Wooley

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## **FINANCIAL REPORT: DECEMBER 2024**

Following is the financial report for December 2024. If you have any questions, Ellen can be reached at [treasurer@mccucc.com](mailto:treasurer@mccucc.com). A report for January and February 2025 will be made available in the next edition of the Bell Tree.

<b>Income:</b>	Pledges and Offerings:	\$7,958.00
	Other Income:	\$3,752.00
	Total Income:	\$11,710.00
<b>Expenses:</b>	Total Expenses:	\$16,647.00
<b>Net Income (LOSS):</b>		\$4,937.00

## **GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Ushers.** We are always looking for more Ushers – no experience necessary! If you would like to sign up to Usher on a Sunday, you may do so by using the signup sheet located on the bulletin board in the entrance of the Parish House. If you have any questions, please contact Dave or Bev Jurkiewicz for more information.

**Bell Tree.** 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 Tuesday of the month and we may include your article in our next publication!

**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, feel free to contact our minister, Reverend Milton, by email at [Pastor@mccucc.com](mailto:Pastor@mccucc.com), or by contacting the Office by email at [office@mccucc.com](mailto:office@mccucc.com) or phone at (203) 248-7408.

**Coffee Hour.** Coffee Hour volunteers are always needed. If you would like to volunteer to run Coffee Hour for a Sunday, you may do so by using the signup sheet located on the bulletin board in the entrance of the Parish House. If you have any questions, please contact the Office by email at [office@mccucc.com](mailto:office@mccucc.com) or phone at (203) 248-7408.

**Altar Flowers.** If you would like to sign up to provide Altar Flowers for a Sunday, you may do so by using the signup sheet located on the bulletin board in the entrance of the Parish House. Note that you must purchase or provide flowers; flowers are not provided by the Church. If you have any questions or wish to add a specific message for the bulletin, please contact the Office by email at [office@mccucc.com](mailto:office@mccucc.com) or phone at (203) 248-7408.

**Rentals.** If you or anyone you know would be interested in renting out our parish hall to host a small private event, please feel free to visit our website for scheduling, rates, and conditions. Our Hall Rental schedule is filling up, so contact the office to book your event today!

**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.

**2025 Directory.** If you would like a digital copy of our Directory, please fill out the following Google Form (<https://mccucc.tiny.us/directory>) and we will send you a copy as soon as possible. If you would like a physical copy, please contact the office and we will set a copy aside for you.



**Saturdays Mornings in March**

March 8<sup>th</sup>

March 15<sup>th</sup>

March 22<sup>nd</sup>

March 29<sup>th</sup>

**Time**

10:30am-12:00pm

**Place**

Parish Hall Parlor

We look forward to seeing you there!

*Mount Carmel's*



# Souper Bowl SUNDAY

**SUNDAY, MARCH 9<sup>TH</sup>**

Directly Following 10am Service

Please join us for a very special Potluck Soup Luncheon  
to Celebrate the Lenten Season!



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

**PLEASE CONTACT:**

Debbie Wooley ([ce@mccucc.com](mailto:ce@mccucc.com))

Or

Aren Alberico ([office@mccucc.com](mailto:office@mccucc.com))

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE!**

## Don't Let Your Perspective Hold You Back In Life



By Catherine Galasso Vigorito,  
Contributing Writer  
Feb 7, 2025

Years ago, Chanie Gorkin, then a 17-year-old girl from New York, wrote a poem titled: "Worst Day Ever." It was for an assignment at school.

"It took me a few hours to write," Gorkin said. "I was scribbling, erasing, writing, trying to figure out how to make it work both ways."

The poem reads:

*Today was the absolute worst day ever  
And don't try to convince me that  
There's something good in every day  
Because, when you take a closer look,  
This world is a pretty evil place.  
Even if  
Some goodness does shine through once  
in a while  
Satisfaction and happiness don't last.  
And it's not true that  
It's all in the mind and heart  
Because  
True happiness can be attained  
Only if one's surroundings are good  
It's not true that good exists  
I'm sure you can agree that  
The reality  
Creates  
My attitude  
It's all beyond my control  
And you'll never in a million years hear  
me say  
Today was a very good day*

Now, read the poem from the bottom to the top.

From top to bottom it reads negatively. But when you read the poem in reverse, the message drastically changes. "I don't think there is such a thing as the worst day ever," Gorkin said in an interview. "I wanted to show how your day is really based on how you look at things."

The poem went viral. And, thereafter, Gorkin commented, "I'm very happy that so many people got this message, and if it made people think a little more and inspire people to change their perspective, then I'm very happy."

Could it be that your perspective is holding you back from living the life of your dreams?

It's been said that about 90 percent of things in our lives are right, and maybe 10 percent are wrong. So today, begin to change your perspective. Try this exercise: Daily, think of the 90 percent of things in your life that are right and thank God for them. Jot those blessings down on paper to serve as a reminder of the gifts that are bestowed upon you. What this assignment will do is start to change our perspective on our day — and our life. And it will allow us to concentrate on our many daily miracles and extraordinary wonders. For such thoughts can produce joy, peace, and strength.

Minor adjustments in our thinking can make major improvements, for the right attitude of heart can alter everything. Unconstructive thoughts and words can limit your future. Therefore, don't let your thinking and your words stop you from God's best.

When he was working on inventing the light bulb, Thomas Edison famously said, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." Instead of building stories in his mind of his failures until they spun out of control and he was so discouraged that he quit, Edison looked at his situation from a different frame of reference. He believed that he never once failed in his attempts but found thousands of ways that his invention didn't work. Eventually, that mind-set and his perseverance led Edison to success. So, change your perspective and view your situation differently.

Consider this approach: Instead of thinking about your problems in black and white categories, evaluate them in shades of gray. There are many perspectives, opinions, and beliefs. Begin to open your mind to new ways of viewing circumstances in life.

- Instead of being overwhelmed and allowing doubts or disappointments to cast a shadow over your future, change your perspective. Dare to go forth in faith and utter, "For God has not given me the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7)

- As opposed to allowing yourself to believe that it's too late to accomplish your heartfelt dreams, change your perspective. Don't give up. Declare, "I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)

- In place of being bitter over missed opportunities, change your perspective. Open your mind to new prospects and state, "God will restore the years that the locust has eaten." (Joel 2:25)

What you are going through is not permanent. My mother always said, "This too shall pass." Perhaps, you may wonder how you're going to get out of the difficulty you face now. Yet, God has the right people lined up to help you. And He knows how to put you at the right place at the right time. Unexpectedly, God is going to bring something great your way. Keep thinking on the best possible outcome. For there is no limit to what God can do for you.

Start now. Change every negative thought or statement to a positive point of view. Focus on God and thank Him continually for the blessings in your life.

Recently, while shopping at an arts and craft store, I saw a wooden wall art with these words written on it: "A.S.A.P ... always say a prayer." Hence, pray. Get your zest back and begin to live again, be filled with hope, peace and joy. Expect your miracle to come to pass. See the possibilities in this new, precious day. Reach out, help and appreciate those around you. Give out love and compassion. Live in your own truth. And pursue the things you enjoy.

Look ahead to new blessings, new people and new opportunities that will soon come into your future. Change your perspective, and your situation will change. Remember, God loves and cares about you. And so do I.

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Email Catherine Galasso-Vigorito at [cgv@anewyouworldwide.com](mailto:cgv@anewyouworldwide.com). To order a copy of her book "The Open Window, 8 Weeks to Creating an Extraordinary Life" visit [www.anewyouworldwide.com](http://www.anewyouworldwide.com) or bookstores nationwide.





The Mount Carmel Volunteer Fire Co.  
2993 Whitney Avenue  
Mount Carmel, CT 06518

January 30, 2025

Reverend Milton Brasher-Cunningham  
Mt. Carmel Congregational Church  
3284 Whitney Avenue  
Hamden, CT 06518

Dear Rev. Brasher-Cunningham,

Gilbert J. Spencer served as a member of the Hamden Fire Department for 35 years and was also a treasured member of this association from October 23, 1951, until his passing earlier this month. Gil served as a member of a Hamden volunteer fire company longer than anyone else in the history of Hamden's fire service.

Gil was a very special member of this fire company, as was his dad, Raymond K. Spencer, before him. He helped us through many a crisis in the past. His final gift to the company was guiding us through the recent donation of our firehouse to the Town of Hamden. He also was the originator of a planned scholarship program aimed at helping young Hamden candidates for careers in the fire service. Gil was truly one of a kind.

The members of this fire company all know and sincerely appreciate how devoted Gilbert was to his church. Enclosed is a check for our \$250.00 donation to the Mt. Carmel Congregational Church in memory of our brother, Gilbert, who will be missed by us all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Guarino". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Mark Guarino  
President

Enclosure

Lyndon Buckingham  
**GENERAL**

Major Richard Lopez  
**DIVISIONAL COMMANDER**

Commissioner Ralph Bukiewicz  
**TERRITORIAL COMMANDER**

Majors Charles & Kathy Adams  
**CORPS COMMANDING OFFICERS**



## **THE SALVATION ARMY**

Founded in 1865 by William and Catherine Booth

450 George Street

New Haven, CT 06511

Office: (203) 624-9891 Fax: (203) 777-2307

24 January 2025

Mt. Carmel Congregation Church  
Attn: Debbie Wooley  
3284 Whitney Ave  
Hamden, CT 06518

Dear Mt. Carmel Congregation Church,

On behalf of The Salvation Army, I want to extend our heartfelt gratitude for your generous support of our Angel Tree Program this holiday season. Thanks to your kindness and partnership, we were able to bring joy and hope to 594 children who might have otherwise gone without gifts this Christmas.

Your contributions made it possible for each of these children to experience the joy of the holiday season. The smiles on the faces of the children and the gratitude from their families are a testament to the impact you've made.

At The Salvation Army, we are deeply committed to serving our community, especially during times of need. Programs like the Angel Tree are only made possible through the incredible generosity of organizations like yours. Your support reminds us all of the power of coming together to help those in need.

Once again, thank you for your commitment to spreading kindness and joy. We look forward to partnering with you again in the future to continue making a difference in the lives of children and families in our community.

Wishing you a prosperous and joyful New Year.

Warm regards,

Major Kathy Adams  
New Haven Citadel Corps Officer

# A Talking Animal

Balak was the king of the Moabites. He was afraid of the Israelites, so he sent for a man who was supposed to have magical powers. God told this man not to go to Balak, but he went anyway. Then God did a miracle to show the man that what he was doing was wrong. Work each rebus puzzle to find the answer to each question and learn what happened in the story.

1. Who was the man King Balak sent for? (22:5)



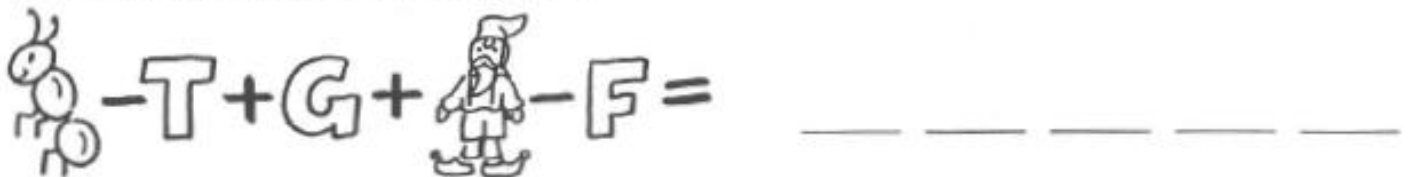
2. What did the princes offer Balaam to get him to go with them? (22:18)



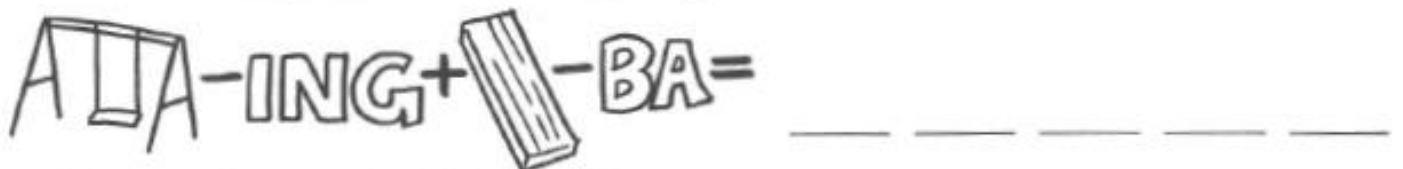
3. What animal did Balaam ride on? (The Bible calls this animal an ass.) (22:21)



4. Who blocked Balaam's way? (22:22)



5. What did the angel have in his hand? (22:23)



6. What did Balaam's animal do? (22:28)





## **Mount Carmel Congregational Church**

3284 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06518

Church Website: [www.mccucc.com](http://www.mccucc.com)

Phone: (203) 248-7408

Minister: Reverend Milton Brasher-Cunningham  
[pastor@mccucc.com](mailto:pastor@mccucc.com)

Office Admin: Mr. Aren Alberico  
[office@mccucc.com](mailto:office@mccucc.com)

Music Director: Mrs. Lynda Pedersen  
[lyndapedersen@att.net](mailto:lyndapedersen@att.net)

Faith Formation: Mrs. Debbie Wooley  
[ce@mccucc.com](mailto:ce@mccucc.com)

Treasurer: Mrs. Ellen Amato  
[treasurer@mccucc.com](mailto:treasurer@mccucc.com)

Facebook: @mountcarmelcongregationalchurch

Instagram: mountcarmelchurch1

### **Officers:**

President: Tom Duffy  
[thomasduffy67@gmail.com](mailto:thomasduffy67@gmail.com)

Clerk: Beverly Jurkiewicz  
[bevjjur@comcast.net](mailto:bevjjur@comcast.net)

Board of Deacons: Bev Jurkiewicz, Chair

Board of Trustees: Anna Anderson, Chair  
[aanderson545@gmail.com](mailto:aanderson545@gmail.com)