

# The GOOD News

January

The Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Haddam

2009

## WHAT'S UP?

**January 4, 2009**  
**Epiphany**  
**Worship 10:00 am**  
Jeremiah 31:7-14;  
Psalm 147:12-20;  
Ephesians 1:3-14;  
John 1:10-18

**January 11**  
**Baptism of Christ**  
**Worship 10:00 am**  
**Caroline Murphy Preaching**  
Genesis 1:1-5;  
Psalm 29;  
Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11  
Special Meeting:  
after worship

**January 18**  
**2nd Sunday after Epiphany**  
**Worship 10:00 am**  
1 Samuel 3:1-10;  
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18;  
1 Corinthians 6:12-20;  
John 1:43-51

**January 25**  
**3rd Sunday after Epiphany**  
**Worship 10:00 am**  
Jonah 3:1-5, 10;  
Psalm 62:5-12;  
1 Corinthians 7:29-31;  
Mark 1:14-20  
Annual Meeting after Worship

**February 1**  
**4th Sunday after Epiphany**  
**Worship 10:00 am**  
Deuteronomy 18:15-20;  
Psalm 111;  
1 Corinthians 8:1-13;  
Mark 1:21-28

### LIVING THE QUESTIONS

The discussion series, Living the Questions, begins again on Jan. 13. If you would like to join this interesting group which is a cooperative ministry with Higganum Cong. church, please speak to Robin.

### IMPORTANT!!!

We are going "green" as of this January newsletter to save postage and the environment. If we have your email address, you will receive the February issue electronically. If we do not have your email address, please send it to our office at [FCC-HADDAM@ATT.NET](mailto:FCC-HADDAM@ATT.NET). If for some reason you wish to continue receiving a printed copy of this newsletter, please contact the church office and make a request. Keep in mind that we will no longer have a bulk mail permit and will need to mail newsletters first class.

### SPECIAL MEETING

January 11, there will be a special meeting of the congregation after worship to vote on Caroline Murphy as the candidate for our new settled pastor; Rev. Murphy will conduct worship that day. Please be sure to attend this very important meeting.

### ANNUAL MEETING

The 309<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the First Congregational Church of Haddam will take place on Sunday, January 25. Please be there for this significant meeting in the life of our congregation.

### ANNUAL REPORTS

The deadline for annual reports was Dec. 16. The Nominating report and Prudential budget will not be ready that early, but the hope is that other committees who have planned through the end of year will be able to present their reports by this date. According to the bylaws, the Annual Report (or as much as we have together) must be distributed by Jan. 11, two weeks before the annual meeting. If your report is still outstanding, please email it to the office asap.

## WHAT'S NEW?

### SPECIAL GUEST

One Sunday in January, Pam Gardner, a missionary from the Deep River Congregational Church, will be coming to worship to talk about her work in the Dominican Republic.

### FCCH Men's Club

After years of dormancy, the Men's Club is being started up again. Our first meeting will be held in Fellowship Hall on Wed., Jan. 14, at 7:00 pm. All male church members eighteen years of age or older are invited to attend. Questions or comments can be directed to Mark Soneson at [msoneson@sbcglobal.net](mailto:msoneson@sbcglobal.net) or 345-3383.



### Winter VBS!

Monday evenings  
March 9<sup>th</sup> - March 30<sup>th</sup>  
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.



We'll begin our adventure with a light dinner and then we're off traveling the world!

### Travel Dates and Places:



March 9<sup>th</sup> Mexico  
March 16<sup>th</sup> China  
March 23<sup>rd</sup> Poland  
March 30<sup>th</sup> Kenya

Save the dates and watch for more information coming soon!

## **REFLECTIONS FROM THE VALLEY SHORE**

I've accumulated five crèches over the years. In awe of them and their very important story, my girls wanted their own crèche, so two are theirs. The excitement begins the moment we unpack the box after Thanksgiving; then the girls can begin their telling of the nativity story as the characters emerge from wrappings of soft tissue paper.

In our home, the people and animals actually "journey" toward Bethlehem. First, we put the 5 stables in various locations around the house—each, of course, is Bethlehem; then, Baby Jesus is placed lovingly in a drawer until after church on Christmas Eve. After these preparations, the rest begin their journey towards Bethlehem, which is clearly more a state of mind than a real place at the Blundons'. I never know when Mary or Joseph might appear for supper, or maybe one of the shepherds or wise men might be waiting to "greet" me as I come out of the shower. The only person who stays put is Jesus. However, he is checked on at least once a day until his arrival on Christmas Eve.

This is how my girls see it: for one thing, everyone doesn't just show up at the same time. For example, the shepherds have to be out in the fields at some point, and the wise men have to find their way to Bethlehem. Any number of wise men, say 2, 4 or 6 even, may meet along the way to share ideas and just hang out together. Sometimes, the wise men even ask directions to get to the right place.

During advent at home, I've learned to watch my step because I never know when I might come face to face, or foot to foot, with a wise man. Having Mary and Joseph share our evening meal reminds me of a card I saw some years back with a picture of three wise men on camels and the simple sentence: "Wise men still seek Him" (I might add wise women do too!)

My daughters have invited me to look a little deeper this Advent season. As the characters of this ancient story "travel" to Bethlehem in my house, I have to watch where I step and move. As a result, I have developed a heightened consciousness about the story of Jesus' birth. I watch for a wise man or shepherd in my pathway. God sends us little messengers in children and in adults who invite us into a new way of serving... a new ministry in Jesus' name. Let us move forward as a strong and brave community of faith to the next chapter in the life of this congregation.

We are on an exciting and challenging journey given the events of this past year. Let us approach Christmas the way my girls do, with wonder at the possibilities in the ancient story. Let us seek the wisdom of Jesus the Christ in this New Year. Let the

greatest love open us to building new and exciting connections with one other. Let us build and share each other's gifts and talents for a ministry which transcends our human imperfections.

Just as I've glued on Mary's head and repaired one of the wise man's gifts for my children, we can heal and help our world both near and far. We as followers of Jesus must bring the good news of hope and love to God's children. May Jesus come out of the hidden places in our hearts and shine forth as a beacon of light--the message of love, compassion and peace for our world.

Many people around us, and around the world, are longing for simple acts of kindness and hope. I invite you to share your spirit and your gifts as lovingly as you have with me.

The First Congregational Church of Haddam is being called to step more deeply and faithfully into the love of God and to share this great gift of love. Let us share compassion and love by inviting those who are lonely and isolated to be part of the family of Jesus Christ right here in Haddam. We are all called to be ministers of the compassion, love, peace and justice of our Almighty God with all God's children.

### **Wise Men Still Seek Him**

From out the east the wise men came  
In hurried westward flight;  
Across the desert sands they rode,  
Led by the star's pure light.  
They carried with them precious gifts,  
Fit for a newborn King:  
The star proclaimed His Royal birth,  
A truly wondrous thing.  
They sought Him in a palace grand  
The star stood still instead  
Above a lowly bed of straw  
Within a cattle shed.  
But oh, they knew He was their King  
In awesome wonder there;  
They laid their treasures at His feet  
And humbly knelt in prayer.  
On this night of our Savior's birth,  
Unknown the path ahead,  
Wise men with their bright, guiding star  
Still seek the manger bed.

Kay Hoffman

Blessings,

### **MEET THE CANDIDATE!**

Later this month on Candidate Sunday, January 11th, we will welcome Rev. Caroline Murphy. We will have the opportunity to welcome her informally on Saturday, Jan. 10<sup>th</sup> at a reception to be held in the Fellowship Hall. I thought I would pass along to you a few comments made by members of her former church as a way to further introduce her to you. I would like to quote several.

“ I admit it is with some reluctance that I provide Caroline with the glowing recommendation she so richly deserves, because I fear that by doing so I may encourage other churches to call her away from us all too quickly.”

“ She is extremely personable and is someone to whom one can go to in comfort for strong spiritual guidance. She demonstrates great empathy in difficult situations and is most supportive and caring.... I highly recommend her for consideration by any congregation which is searching for a motivated and well-qualified pastor to bring new life to their church.”

“She can change lives, make a difference, and provide spiritual gifts that will last a lifetime.”

“Her dedication and availability to help the church continue to grow and find a positive movement has been tireless on her part.”

“Reverend Murphy was simply a joy to work with. Her dedication to Christian ministry, and to the care of those she serves and works with, provides a model for which I will always be thankful.”

“She brings a calm but vibrant presence to worship leadership, drawing the congregation together in a way that is warm and inviting. Her sermons exhibit theological depth leavened with personal warmth.”

All of the qualities described here are qualities which were part of our “wish list” generated by our interviews, surveys and group meetings last year. I hope you share my anticipation and excitement in having Rev. Murphy become part of our church family.

John Edmondson, Chair, Search Committee

### **CARING CARDS MINISTRY**

Thanks to the good hearts and minds of Sue Purdy and Pastor Robin, a new ministry has been formed. Named “The Caring Card Ministry” the purpose is to remember folks who need a special hug, who are ill, or who are facing a challenging situation, happy or sad, like the birth of a new baby. Sue will be sending out the cards and Robin will keep her apprised of pastoral needs. The ministry needs your help, though, too. Please consider donating cards, stamps, a child’s drawing, or simply a cash gift to support this good will

effort. Speak to Robin or Sue Purdy if you have questions.

### **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**



**The following children and youth will be celebrating a birthday this month:**

Anna Mercier	January 2
Alyson Campbell	January 6
Melissa Thompson	January 12
Andrew Nichols	January 20
Alexander Thompson	January 21
Mitchell Stack	January 24
Nora Homicki	January 28
Colton Soneson	January 30

### **CHURCH FAMILY NEWS**

Please remember in your prayers **April**; Jan Berry’s daughter **Rhonda Gardner**; **Gene Porter**; **Ursula Hunter**; **Michelle**; **Nate Wilkos**; **Roger Butler**; **Jo Baldwin**; **Jackie Anderson**; **Tudy Elliff**, Anne Nicholas’s mom; **Al Sweet**; **Robyn Sparks**; **Cherylann Hunt’s Uncle Charlie**; **Andrew Purdy** and **Rev. Davida Crabtree** and **Rev. M. J. Hinchliff** who are both undergoing breast cancer treatment; and for all those **members of our church who have recently had surgery.**



Please let us know if someone in your family or within our congregation has something special to celebrate so we may include it in our “Family News” section.

When you are hospitalized, you or your family members should notify the church as soon as possible. Upon admission to the hospital, you will be asked if you desire to have your religious affiliation as part of your medical record, and for permission to make your name available to clergy. Please state both your denomination and church name.

### **MUSIC NOTES**

Many, many thanks to all our musicians this past month, and year – most especially to the members of the Sanctuary Choir: Katharine Alley, Liz and John Anderson, Jan Berry, Ginny Evensen, Diane Klare, June Lamoureux, Bobi Link, Norm Manning, Will

Manning, Jeanne Messick, and Leslie Paulonis. As ever, your talents, voices and dedication have been indispensable throughout this past year. Welcome also to our newest member, Suzanne Wintsch. Thank you, also, to our many and varied musicians who have graced our worship services – Grace and Hope Blundon, Katherine Dole, Emma and Gunnar Soneson, Sue Freimuth, Maryann McCary, and everyone else whose names I've missed. Blessings to our wondrous, truly inspired and dedicated staff – Stef Brandon, Bernice Montgomery, Nancy Soneson, and Robin Blundon; and to all of you, our FCCH family, particularly those who are facing personal and family challenges, health and otherwise. May we all find rest and strength in our Lord, and find inspiration in the new life brought by a little baby in a far away manger. Peace to all of you for the holidays and a blessed new year.

Eric Lundin, Organist/Choir Director

## **EMERGENCY CANCELLATION NOTICE**

With winter upon us, it's wise to review the church's policy on church activity cancellations. If the weather is bad, you can check for cancellation notices of FCC-Haddam events by watching WFSB TV (CBS, channel 3) in Hartford or by tuning in WTIC (1080 AM) on your radio.



*OH! THE WEATHER OUTSIDE IS FRIGHTFUL*

## **ENERGY ASSISTANCE**

### **TWO SOURCES FOR HEATING ASSISTANCE:**

The Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) benefits thousands of homeowners and renters throughout the state. With heating oil prices expected to top \$5 a gallon, the state is planning to distribute a record \$84 million this winter to more than 90,000 Connecticut households of low-income families, the elderly and the disabled. CEAP has already begun taking applications and delivering fuel. It can take as long as 45 days to process an application, so if you need help and believe you may qualify, apply soon. In the Middletown area, phone the Community Renewal Team, Inc. at 347-4465, ext. 223 or 224.

Haddam Emergency Fuel Bank The Haddam Emergency Fuel Bank is available to Haddam residents who are in a crisis and are in need of

emergency help with the cost of heating their home. The source of heat may be oil, electric, coal wood, gas or pellets. This year the allotment is \$350 and is sent directly to the fuel vendor. Fuel Bank funds may be accessed only once per year per household. If you want more information, please call the Haddam Public Health office at 345-4621. If you would like to contribute to the fuel bank you can send a check made out to Haddam Emergency Fuel Bank, C/O Liberty Bank, Bridge Street, Haddam, 06438.

## **EMERGENCY FOOD BANK**

The Haddam Food Bank is available to any residents of Haddam who find themselves in an emergency situation without food for short periods of time, perhaps due to unemployment, unpaid medical bills or other financial difficulty. Each person will be given nine items of food per day for a period of three days. These items are chosen by the Public Health Coordinator and not by the individual. Consideration is given to the ages of the recipients and any food allergies. Food may be issued no more than three times to any individual without the approval of a member of the executive board. Any person or family who is in need of long term assistance will be referred to the CT Dept. of Social Services for food stamps, or to the Women-Infant and Children's Program or to other types of help. If you need this service, call 345-4621.

## **MILESTONES**

### **BAPTISMS**

On Sunday, November 30 Isabelle Lisette Wintsch was baptized at worship. Isabelle, daughter of Jonathan and Suzanne Wintsch, was born in Middletown, Connecticut on October 9, 2008 at 4:43 am. Franklin and Kristine Pierce are Isabelle's godparents.

### **GONE TO ETERNAL LIFE**

**Colin Cary**, husband of **Erin Clifford Cary**, went to eternal life November 27, 2008. Please keep the Cliffords and Carys in your prayers.

## **COMMITTEES**

### **Search Committee**

As I'm sure you know, the Pastoral Search Committee has recommended that the congregation call Rev. Caroline Murphy as our next settled pastor. A letter has been sent to members and friends giving details of her background and qualifications as well as setting dates in January for the next steps in the selection process. There will be a reception in the Fellowship Hall beginning at 4:00 PM on Saturday,

January 10, which will give every one the opportunity to meet Caroline in an informal setting. The next day, Candidate Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, Rev. Murphy will lead us in worship. A congregational meeting to vote on the motion of the committee to call her to be our settled pastor will follow the service.

The committee is very grateful to all who have contributed to the selection process. The work of the Transition Task Force greatly aided our work on developing the church profile. The information gathered by small group meetings, surveys and telephone questionnaires was invaluable in this process. Rev. Mike Penn-Strah noted that the smoothness of the selection process was almost a direct positive correlation to the effort put into the creation of the profile.

We are at the final step of the nine steps of the Search and Call process outlined in our committee message to you this past April. Throughout this process, we have been thankful for the trust and support you have shown us as a committee.

We are thankful for the excellent interim leadership of Rev. Robin Blundon and are thankful for the support and prayers she has offered as well. Selecting Rev. Blundon as interim was the first task undertaken by our committee in early February. We knew we had the right person to lead us during the interim period when she commented at her interview, "The hardest part of interim ministry is saying goodbye." How true her words are and will be.

Please feel free to contact committee members if you have comments or questions. Committee Members: John Anderson, Michael Battistoni, Cherylann Hunt, Diane Klare, Gene Porter, Brian Purdy, Walter Zilahy

John Edmondson, Chair.

## Christian Service

The church received a letter from Habitat for Humanity thanking us for our \$1185 contribution which was made possible by your generous participation in Oktoberfest. That certainly was a fun event and we can feel good about helping such a worthy cause as Habitat.

Thanks to all in the congregation who helped us with the many projects we undertook this past year. The TAG/BAKE sale, Oktoberfest, the Crop Walk; with your generosity, we were able to give much to agencies like the Haddam Fuel Bank, St. Vincent DePaul Place, the Eddy Shelter, and Habitat for Humanity, to name a few.

## Church Council

At the November Church Council meeting, a motion was passed to switch the primary distribution mode of

our monthly newsletter from U.S. mail to electronic mail to save postage and help the environment. U.S. mail copies will be available upon request for those not wishing to switch. A motion was passed to recommend a By-Law change to the Governing Body at the 2009 Annual Meeting. Responsibility for recommending pastoral compensation and benefit changes and for evaluating the pastor's ministry will be switched from the Pastoral Relations Committee to a panel consisting of the Moderator and the chairs of the Diaconate and Pastoral Relations Committee. This change is intended to promote a more open support relationship between the pastor and the Pastoral Relations Committee and remove possible conflict that could result from the committee's salary administration and evaluation roles.

Walt Zilahy, Moderator

## Stewardship

"The world of the generous gets larger and larger."

Thank you to those of you who have made commitments since our last newsletter.

Currently our total dollars committed for 2009 is \$96,747.00. Though this is a fine number there remains a deficit of \$17,617 to meet the projected income from commitments. The projected income (\$114,364) is the same as last year's (2008) projection.

There was no planned increase for this year, despite rising costs, due to the awareness of hard times for all.

Our Stewardship campaign is winding down, yet of the potential 80 plus commitments we have only received 51. We have been made aware that within these numbers there are approximately 30 units that committed last year that have not committed for 2009. We know that times are tough for everyone, but we ask that you evaluate what God and Church has meant for you and reach within your means to help the church financially.

If there are issues that keep you from participating in your faith or prevent you from making a commitment, we would certainly like to hear from you. Should you feel the need or have issues of a confidential nature, our interim minister, Robin Blundon, would be happy to visit with you. It is important, as a church community, to know where and how all of our members and friends are.

Our church is alive with the spirit of generosity. Along with our regular campaigns to assist with Habitat for Humanity, St Vincent DePaul, Crop Walk, Heifer project and others, our church has established a

special fund to help those more immediate to us in need. Life is a sometimes uncertain and difficult road

yet through generosity we demonstrate our love for God and grow to be the persons God meant us to be.

Scott B. Thompson, Stewardship Chair

## **Diaconate**

**Thank You** On behalf of the Diaconate, I would like to thank everyone who helped make dinner for the Saint Vincent De Paul Place a success! On November 23<sup>rd</sup> several members of our congregation helped prepare and serve over 90 dinners. You also helped raise over \$700.00 that will either be used as a donation, or be used in future meals! The spirit of Thanksgiving was spread to many people that needed it. Thank You!

**Large Print Bulletins** Did you forget your glasses? Large print bulletins as well as large print bibles are available. Ask a deacon for a copy if you are interested.

**Become involved in Sunday Service** Would you like to become more involved in Sunday service? Help in any way you are comfortable. Lead the congregation in the unison prayer, read a scripture or anything in between. Please contact Kristin Battistoni ([Kristin.battistoni@att.net](mailto:Kristin.battistoni@att.net)) or Pastor Blundon) if you are interested.

**Caring Connection News** Many members and friends of our Congregation are coping with recent loss or illness; we ask that you keep them in your prayers. Please contact Amy Purdy at 345-2146 if you are willing to make a meal, and/or if you are willing to deliver a meal on behalf of the Caring Connection. In some cases, there may be dietary restrictions for some in need of meals, so please contact Amy or Kristin Battistoni 345-3783 if you have any questions. Meals may be left in the Trinity House freezer, but should be labeled with a description, cooking instruction and the date prepared. Please let Amy or Kristin know if you have left a meal. Many thanks for all your help!

**Visitation** If you would like to receive a visit from the pastor or know of someone who is in need, please contact the church office or sign up in the church vestibule. If you are signing up a friend, please make sure they are aware they will be receiving a visit before you sign them up.

Kristin Battistoni, Chair

## **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

### **Christmas Pageant**

On Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, the Sunday school children presented the Christmas musical, *A Lamb's Tale* during the morning worship. Thank you to all the children and youth that participated in this wonderful gift you give each year to the congregation.

After the pageant, families enjoyed a joyous Christmas party in Fellowship Hall. There were lots of crafts and delicious food for all.

The CE committee would like to thank everyone who helped at rehearsals, the morning of the pageant, and with the Christmas party that followed. A special thank you to Liz Anderson for directing the pageant and Rebecca Degnan for directing the Youth Choir.

### **Rotation Model Sunday School**

On January 11<sup>th</sup>, the children will start the Sunday School rotation, *The Good Samaritan*. During this rotation series, the children will participate in the following workshops: Art, Cooking, Drama & Video, and Bible Skills & Games. **Teachers are still needed for this rotation, so please see the sign up sheet located in Fellowship Hall if you are able to volunteer.**

**Teacher's Meeting** There will be a meeting for all teachers and assistants for the rotation, *The Good Samaritan*, on Sunday, January 4<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 a.m. in the Trinity House.

### **Senior High Youth Group Mission Trip**

**Katie Faust** and **Emma Soneson**, along with 6 other members of **SHYG**, went on a **Youth Service Opportunities Project (YSOP) mission trip to NYC** during the first weekend in December. YSOP, founded in 1983, is a non-profit organization committed to help young people become part of the solution to societal problems by showing them how even their smallest actions can make a difference in the lives of others.

### **Hat and Mitten Tree**

This year's hat and mitten collection was once again a big success. Thank you to all who donated items.

### **Middle School Youth Group**

Jan. 4<sup>th</sup> – Meeting at Killingworth Cong.ion, 4 – 5:30  
January 18<sup>th</sup> – Bowling, Old Saybrook Lanes.

Please return permission forms by January 11<sup>th</sup>.

### **SHYG**

January 11<sup>th</sup> – Meeting at Haddam Youth Center  
January 25<sup>th</sup> – Meeting at Haddam Youth Center