SOUNDINGS

The Unitarian Church in Westport 10 Lyons Plains Road Westport, Connecticut 06880 203 227-7205 uuchurch@uuwestport.org www.uuwestport.org



THE NEXT SOUNDINGS DEADLINE IS FRIDAY, DEC. 26

A Member of the Unitarian Universalist Association

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDA	Y THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Nov. 30 D)ec. 1	2	3	4	5	6
Youth Group Youth Group Wreath Sale - Courtyard Worship Services:	ize Clarity ask Force, ellowship Rm. 6:30 pm earch Committee .W 7:30 pm &AF 7:45 pm	RE Elementary Circle, Chapel, 7 pm	Domestic Violence Task Force, E.W., 12:00 pm Chant & Meditation, M.H 7:00 pm	Youth Choir - 5 pm Teen Choir - 6 pm Bell Choir - 6:45 pm SPC - 8 pm	Shawl Ministry, Meeting Hse., 12:30 pm	CoA Service Practice Sanct., - 1:00 pm Holiday Potluck, 5:30 pm Caroling Sing-Along, Sanct 6:30 pm
7 _{CoA} Services, 9 & 11 am Jewelry Sale, E.W. Search Com. Presention, after both services, Sanct. Immigration Social Action, Chapel 12:30 pm CoA Celebration, M.H. & Youth Rm 12:30 pm Gr. 8 Parents, M.H. 3rd fl.	Gun Violence Prevention, Chapel - 7:30 pm	Library, 7:15 pm	10 Chant & Meditation, M.H., - 7:00 pm NLDC, Library, - 7:15 pm	CT Against Cup	12 Pageant Rehearsal, Sanctuary, 4:30 pm	13 Choir Dress Rehearsal, 10:00 am Pastoral Care Associates Meeting Hse 1:00 pm Doreen Kelly Memorial Service, 1:30 pm
1 4 Worship Service - 9 am Holiday Concert - 11 am <i>Share the Plate Sunday</i> Gr. 8 Parents, Ch 12:30 pm Rainbow Task Force, E.W 12:30 pm CoA/Youth Group Holiday Party, M.H. & Y.R 12:30 pm	n O&AF - - 7:45 pm	16	17 Chant & Meditation, E.W., 7:00 pm Food Coalition, East Wing, 7:30 pm	18 Teen Choir - 6 pm Bell Choir - 6:45 pm Choir Rehearsal, (Christmas Eve) - 8 pm	19 Shawl Ministry, Meeting Hse., 12:30 pm Pageant Rehearsal, Sanctuary, 4:30 pm	20 Small Group Facilitators, M.H., 10:00 am Solstice Service, Sanct 7:00 pm
21 Worship Services: 9 & 11 am Grade 8 Parents Mtg, Chapel 12:30 pm Voices Cafe Committee, Library 12:30 pm	22 Search Committee, E.W 7:30 pm	23 Choir Rehearsal, (Christmas Eve), 7:30 pm	24 Pageant Rehearsal 2:00 p Pageant Servic - 4:00 pm Candlelight Servi - 9:00 pm Candlelight Servi - 11:00 pm	e HOLIDAY Office Closed	26 HOLIDAY Office Closed SOUNDINGS Deadline12 noon UU Movie Discussion, M.H. 7:30 pm	27
28 Worship Services: 9 & 11 am Grade 8 Parents Meeting, Chapel 12:30 pm	29 Stewardship, Fellowship Rm., 7:15 pm Search Committee, E.W 7:30 pm	30	31 SOUNDINGS Mailing, 1:00 pm Chant & Meditation, E.W., 7:00 pr	n Jan. 1 HOLIDAY Office Closed	2 Shawl Ministry, Meeting Hse., 12:30 pm	3 Sight-singing, Sanctuary, 9:30 am

SERMONS for DECEMBER

DECEMBER 7 ... 9 & 11 AM Coming of Age Service

This service was planned and will be presented by our 9th grade group. They have been thinking and writing their credo statements (what they believe at this point in their lives) and about "being older, but not old" Some will play instruments, sing, and they have a word for you to listen for during the service... It is a good reminder that ours is faith were we periodically check in with who we are and what we believe. It's inspiring to be reminded during this Rite of Passage service.

(Nursery / Pre-K class only in the the lower level Pine room today)

NOTE: Coming of Age Family Luncheon in the Meeting House Main Floor following the second service and Family Gratitude Ceremony there after the luncheon. **Music:** Solos by members of the CoA group

vent is the time of expectant waiting. What are we waiting for?

Reflection For All Ages: Mary Collins

Worship Associate: Ellie Grosso

Music: Soloists singing music for the Advent season

11 AM Annual Holiday Concert Service

The Special Projects Choir sings a concert called "An American Christmas" featuring music from the last two centuries written by American composers for choir, organ, piano, guitar and soloists.

DECEMBER 20 ... 7:00 PM Winter Solstice, Yule: An Evening with the Ancients

Join us in a service of reflection and celebration as together we bring back the light and look forward to spring. Rev. Marti Bishop and William McEvoy will lead us through the meaning of this longest night of the year for our ancestors thousands of years ago. We will explore how the ancient rituals and stories still influence us today. Childcare will be provided.

DECEMBER 21... 9 & 11 AM "The Many Lights of December" Rev. Roberta Finkelstein

On the shortest day of the year, practitioners of earth based spirituality welcome the return of the sun. On Bodhi Day Buddhists celebrate the birthday of the Buddha. At Hanukkah Jews retell the story of the victory of the Maccabees. These are just a few of the holidays that bring light to our lives in December. This service will bring us the stories and the spiritualities of these 'other than Christmas' December holidays.

Worship Associate: Martha Constable

Music: The O&AF will offer musical selections centering on the theme of "light".

DECEMBER 24 ... 4:00 PM Pageant Service]]

The annual Children's Pageant will be presented by the youth of our congregation. Everyone will be invited to sing "Silent Night" at the end. Doors open at 3:30 for the 4:00 Pageant.

9:00 PM Candlelight Service

At the 9 am service we celebrate Christmas Eve with a traditional Lessons and Carols service of choral music, readings, carols, a Christmas prayer from Rev. Debra Haffner and a Reflection from Rev. Roberta on the meaning and mystery of incarna

11:00 PM Candlelight Service

The 11 pm service will be a more reflective and meditative way to welcome Christmas and reflect on the meaning and mystery of incarnation.

DECEMBER 28 ... 9 & 11 AM "Coffin and Cradle" Rev. Roberta Finkelstein

Rev Roberta invites you to a spiritual and participatory ritual for welcoming the New Year. Bring objects to place in the coffin (symbolizing that which you hope to let go of) and cradle (symbolizing that which you hope to give birth to). There will be no Reflection For All Ages but children are welcome. The Coffin and Cradle ritual takes the place of the sermon so

older children especially might enjoy participating with their parents.

Music: Instrumental selections for the holiday season.

In The Interim

"A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices." When we are at our best we are hopeful creatures. But it is easy to lose hope, to get stuck in a difficult and painful present, to feel frustration and fear in the face of the unknown. That is why religions have liturgical calendars – for each faith a reliable series of events that remind people of the stories that call us to our better selves. In the Christian liturgical calendar, the month of December is Advent – a time of expectant waiting for the arrival of the thrill of hope at the heart of the Christmas story.

UU minister Carl Seaburg reminds us that Christmas is simply the latest incarnation of an old and enduring universal religious celebration. "Christmas," he says, "is older than any one religious tradition. Every cult has adapted itself to the great mid-winter celebration. Way before there were Christians there was 'Christmas' by another name. Each temporary faith grafts its customs and meanings onto the celebration that is there and will outlast them."

Advent, the time of spiritual preparation, is also an expression of universal human need. John Taylor, says, "We human creatures, in spite of all that has happened to us and been done by us, are still hopeful. Something new, something vital, something promising, is always coming, and we are always expecting. Advent is a time of anticipation and as long as we expect, as long as we hope, someone will light a candle against the prevailing darkness – and neither the winds of hate nor the gales of evil will extinguish it."

As a congregation you have been living through a challenging time of transition that came during a challenging time in the larger culture: an economic crisis that has dragged on far too long, unprecedented political polarization, environmental depredation, fear of handing off to our children a world of intractable and insoluble problems. Yet in spite of all that you continue to be, together, The Unitarian Church in Westport. You continue to worship, to make music, to share your faith with your children. You show up, you pledge and volunteer, you remain faithful stewards of this beloved community. You advocate for sustainability, justice, and peace. So I declare you to be Advent people, no matter your personal theological identity. Listen carefully for the thrill of hope this month, whether in a Christmas carol, a menorah lighting prayer, or a Solstice song.

On a more practical note, I will be taking a month of unpaid leave later this winter. I volunteered to do this; by taking a month off without pay, I am helping to reduce costs and allow the rest of the staff to be stabilized. And I am giving myself something that interim ministers never get: a stretch of time off that, while not as long as a sabbatical, is longer than any other stretch. (Interim ministers often use our 'vacation' time to move.) So you get a little bit of budget relief and I get extra rest and rejuvenation time.

Since this time off is completely unpaid, I will be completely off. I will not be on call for emergencies, I will not respond to email or take phone calls. Plans are under way for coverage of all essential aspects of the ministry. The Worship and Pastoral Care Associates will play a significant role in covering in my absence, as will other staff members. There will be more information about these plans as we get closer to my February 15th departure. I will return in mid-March.

In the meantime, enjoy this month of December, a month of many religious celebrations. Whatever in the great December cacophony kindles your flame of hope, pay it heed, and pass it on.

In faith, Rev. Roberta

REFLECTIONS on Pastoral Care

Jim Francek Chaplain at Bridgeport Hospital and a member of our Pastoral Care Association

On the Nature of Suffering

Whether as a violent storm or creeping brokenness YOU know no boundaries of age, rank or station in life.

Spun by your own energy fostered by life's choices or fate or burden laid down on the innocent – YOU wander through our existence touching all in their time.

To ask why? is not the question... but an endless – aimless path going nowhere!

You come as teacher unfolding layers of understanding, creating consciousness connection and an invitation to be present.

The cries of sorrow and fear rise from our core. the anguish of being alone without mirror or music; moving from moment to moment both fearing and welcoming the end

An end not yet noted in time and place yet still coming! Fast or slow... it is still coming! How shall I honor this visitor? How shall I embrace your jagged edges? Too close and I bleed. Too far – and I miss the edge of growth... Today's learning.

My expectations... absolute terrorists! Whether spoken or hidden in my head... yet smothering my heart... Resentments in the making!

To be in conversation! Conversation with my brokenness! Conversation with my fears! Conversation with the roots of my joy! Conversations are the way through!

Conversations... Connecting with others. Allowing them to hold me In acceptance...

To reach the shores of JOY Whole And not alone!

If you are going through a challenging time or know somebody in the congregation who needs support from our Pastoral Care Associates call the office (203-227-7205) or send an email to PCA@uuwestport.org.

Coming of Age Food Drive

9th Grade CoA youth planned a Food Drive at the Stop & Shop, Wilton and stood outside for 3 hours on Nov. 15, 2014. The following week, the Bittenbenders were stunned by how much food this group brought for the CT Food Bank. They said it was the largest amount of food they had ever seen in a week since they have been delivering from our congregation!



ELEMENTARY Circle Meets – Tues., Dec. 2nd – Religious Education Ministry review!

What is important that our children learn? Are you curious what do Unitarian Universalists teach their children? How is our program going for our elementary aged children?

Pre-K through 5th grade Parents & Teachers & those interested - are encouraged to come or send feedback prior to this meeting to: Elementary Circle Chair: Dan Marcus westontwins@gmail.com

Some of the items that will be discussed are:

- January Social Action project (will have to be changed from our original plan)
- Evaluate Pre-K-5th grade group programming
- The feedback & transition of teaching teams

These guests of mine make my house grand."



ALL CONGREGATION HOLIDAY POTLUCK & CAROLING -

SAT. DEC. 6th -

5:30 pm sharp for food,6:30 pm Singing,(optional: dreidel games, ornament making tables make this an all ages event)

http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c094aa9a928a2fd0-uuwestport

Inuit Prayer from In Every Tiny Grain of Sand: A Child's Book of Prayers & Praise by Reeve Lindbergh The lands around my dwelling are more beautiful from the day when it is given to me to see *Faces I have never seen before. All is more beautiful. All is more beautiful, and life is thankfulness.*

Sun. Nov. 30 -

Thanksgiving Weekend - no Groups except: Pre-K Child care: Make Chalice Cookies – PINE room

Youth Group meeting & Wreath Sales.

Tues. Dec. 2 -

Rel. Ed. ELEMENTARY Circle Meeting -

Sat. Dec. 6 -

9th gr CoA service Rehearsal – 1 to 3 pm All Congregation Holiday Potluck 5:30-6:30 pm & Caroling 6:30-7:30pm –

Sun. Dec. 7 -

K-12th start and STAY in Sanctuary-Coming of Age Service,

Multigenerational No other classes at 11:00 am except:

Pre-K Child care – How Many Days till Christmas?

8th grade OWL class meets 12:15-2:15 pm today after attending service 8th gr Parents class 12:30 -1 pm –ROOM CHANGE -Mtg House 3rd flr small room Youth Group – Come to service - then Wreath Sales in the courtyard after services CoA Luncheon & Family Gratitude Cerem ony follow11am service –Mtg House

Sun. Dec. 14 -

K-7 start in Sanctuary at 9 am Nursery/ Pre-K - Hanukkah

K -3rd gr- Four Gospel views of Jesus -

At 11 only:

K -3rd.- 11 am only –START IN PINE RM. 4-5th - Reflection – Yoga or Holiday Traditions 6-7th – Earth Based Religions Intro (Native Amer. & Goddess) guest

8th - Our Whole Lives (OWL) meets

9th -12th Youth – Welcome new Members + last week of Wreath Sales

Sat. Dec. 20 – 6-7th – 7pm Solstice Service Sun. Dec.21 -

K-7 start in Sanctuary Nursery/ Pre-K – Mary Had a Baby K -5 gr.- Caring Congregation Project & No Ruz Guest

At 11 only: 6-7th –Wiccan Guest & Earth Based Religions 8th - (OWL) + Parents group 12:30pm 9- 12th Youth Group – Yankee Swap

Sun. Dec. 28 - no RE Classes except Pre-K Child care –Winter Candles – Kwanzaa

HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP...

by Cal Wacker, Youth Program Director

I want to talk about something very important to me that's coming up soon. On Sunday December 7th, the members of our 9th grade Coming of Age class will be having their coming of age service. I cannot tell you how important it is that you, yes you reading these words right now, be there at the 9am or 11am service for this.

Now you may be thinking:

"This isn't my child who is going through this right now."

"My children have already gone through our RE program."

"I don't have children, is there a place for me at this service?"

"There's not going to be a sermon, what can I get out of this?" And you know, those are all valid questions. It can be hard to

see why something like Coming of Age is important to our congregation and our denomination in general. Rites of Passage like this may feel like what other faiths do, and may be one of the reasons you chose to part ways with the faith you grew up with. This is also an incredibly important moment in the lives of our congregations children. They will be offering their statement of what they believe. They'll be ending formal RE curriculum teaching; Youth Group makes our own curriculum. They will be eligible to sign the membership book!

So don't think of this as an RE service then. (which I have sadly noticed seems to be one of our less attended services) Think of this as asking if there are any first time visitors to our services. Think of this as membership dedication or child naming. Think of this like our Homecoming.

And please, I hope I get to see you there.

Quick spate of announcements:

• Youth Group wreath sale will run on Sundays Nov. 30th, Dec 7th, and Dec. 14th. after each service. Wreaths come in two sizes beginning at \$20.00. Come and get 'em!

• On December 21st (solstice!) it will be the Youth Group Yankee Swap. Bring a gift of \$10.00 or less and let the fun commence.

• As a final note, I'll be away from y'all starting December 23rd 2014, and won't be back until January 31st 2015. I'll be in Chicago for my first semester of classes. If you need me, send an email to **cal@uuwestport.org** or contact Mary Collins.





Bravo and Thank You

to Allison Waggener, who on Nov. 16th, accompanied by Ed Thompson and Ruth Ahlers, presented a recital, **Flight:**

Songs to Uplift.

Our sanctuary was filled with Allisons beautiful voice, singing an eclectic mix of 20th and 21st century American composers, including Stephen Sondheim, Craig Carnelia, Marisa Michelson, and Duke Ellington. This event was a fundraiser with proceeds going to the church operating fund.

Auction News: The Sky's the Limit!

Our nightclub style auction gala, Skyline Lounge, on Saturday, October 25th was lots of fun and a great financial success. Many thanks to our generous

sponsors: · Howard Aibel · Diageo | Jack Raineault · Charene Beauty Services · Sharon & Michael Bittenbender · Maria Mendoza Smith & David Smith Thank you to everyone who worked very hard to make it a wonderful event. The results are (ta -da):

\$45,000 in net income for the operating fund!
 215 people attending
 50 talented volunteers

Congratulations and thanks to all!

My Assignment at MLC is the Most Rewarding by Far

by Joan Hartnett



Mercy Learning Center (MLC) is a unique, all-purpose, facility in Bridgeport catering to the needs of women who could be described as getting the short end of the stick in life. At Mercy they can learn English if needed, acquire a GED certificate, apply for funding for further education or training, receive emotional support from therapists, and perhaps most importantly, day care for their preschool children while they attend programs at the center.

I am now a volunteer therapist for clients of Mercy Learning Center. I have experienced the volunteer world from both sides, as a volunteer director and as a volunteer, and I have to say that my assignment at MLC is the most rewarding by far. I come home from there enlivened and enriched with the sense that perhaps I have provided some needed help to very worthy women. Not only through the counseling process itself, but through experiencing the lives of these women which causes some deep reflecting on the inequalities of life and how lucky I've been to be on the upside of fate.



The obstacles these women face are truly awesome. Most of those I've seen came to this country totally unprepared for life in the States. They speak no English, have very little basic education, very limited work skills, and backgrounds that often include physical and sexual abuse, much less what would be called "normal nurture". And yet, their optimism, hopefulness, and willingness to "keep on keeping on" are remarkable. Rarely do they have supportive extended families. They take full responsibility for the family life. The husbands or partners seem to expect this. Usually, they manage without cars. Often the school age children have to be taken to different bus stops before they come to their program at MLC. The same situation applies at the end of the day. Always there are financial problems. Often there are marital problems and, of course, the cultural differences.

But these women are able to take it all in stride. A devotion to their children and their healthy development is the paramount motivation of their lives. How wonderful this is especially in reference to their own personal experiences.

NEEDED: Nutritionists, Cooks, Educators, Lovers of Food and Kids!!

The Food Access Coalition, which includes our congregation and 7 others in our area, is organizing a team to plan a "Teaching Kitchen" program for urban and suburban young people to teach nutrition, cooking skills, and create healthy meals for those who need them. Interested? Read on:

Autistic tween Jonathan Marin, of New Jersey, uses his passion for cooking to give him confidence to overcome bullying and to educate people about autism. Eleven-year-old McKenna Greenleaf Faulk of Los Angeles, has figured out a way to provide rescued, refrigerated food to the homeless in her town. Here in

Connecticut learning to cook saved eighteen year old Alex Woodworth of Meriden from juvenile detention and a fast track to prison.

These are a few of hundreds of stories nationwide about kids who are using their passion for food and cooking to change their lives and the lives of others.



The Food Access Coalition believes getting kids in the

kitchen will create awareness of nutrition and healthy eating while building a host of other skills and valu able personal assets. Our goal is to...

- Set up teaching kitchens, using best practice ex amples of organizations like My City Kitchen, which teaches inner-city kids the value of healthy living through proper nutrition.
- See http://www.mycitykitchen.org/
- Develop a program that will not only teach nutrition, but will help at-risk youth grow personally by providing an enriching, empowering and safe environment.
- Develop a curriculum that
- could be easily replicated in other communities.
- Feed hungry families.

What we need right now is a committee of folks with diverse knowledge and networks in food education (nutrition and cooking); youth development, and curriculum development.

Still Interested? Contract Ram Ganeshram to arrange a time for a phone conversation -

- raminganeshram@gmail.com. Ramin is an awardwinning food journalist and professional chef whose most recent book, FutureChefs (Rosdale, Oct., 2014) was born out of her ongoing work with young people and cooking/nutrition. She is a member of The Unitarian Church of Westport.

<u>NEW</u> Immigration Social Action Committee

Our newest Social Action Committee, Immigration, had its first meeting on Sunday, November 2. Twenty-nine people showed up and shared stories about why this is an important issue to work on. Stories of family, stories of friends, personal stories, tragic stories, and stories of hope. Some of these were shared at our Thanksgiving Service last Sunday.

We're now going out into the community and meeting with local organizations to find potential partners. The committee is co-chaired by Marjolijn de Jager and Barbara Steeg. Marjolijn met with the Stamford based immigrant support organization Neighbors Link (website: click here) and they are in immediate need of some help. So we're jumping in. Will you join us?

BACKGROUND

Last year, Connecticut became the 11th state to allow undocumented immigrants to apply for driver's licenses. The idea was to make it easier to register their cars, obtain insurance, and open bank accounts.

Not a single Republican in the Connecticut General Assembly voted in favor of the legislation.

The "Drive-Only" licenses will be granted to undocumented immigrants who pass a state felony background check, a 25-page written test, translated in several languages, and a road test.

Department of Motor Vehicles officials say as many as 200,000 immigrants can be expected to apply for a license. The agency will begin accepting online applications Dec. 1 to schedule written and driving tests.

WHAT WE'RE DOING

Starting on 1 December and continuing for two weeks, Neighbors Link Stamford (NLS) will be registering about 500 students/clients who are applying for drivers' licenses.

This is to be done on-line and many of the applicants either have no access to a computer and/or are not skilled in working on-line.

• NLS is looking for volunteers to help out with this registration process: mornings, afternoons and evenings at the NLS office, whatever time you are able/willing to give!

Knowledge of Spanish is not required but would be helpful.

• If you can volunteer any time during the first two weeks of December, please contact the director of NLS directly(see below)

•Please identify yourself as a member of the Immigration Committee of the UU in Westport

If you're interested in volunteering and/or learning more about the Immigration Committee please contact David Vita at 203.227.7205 x14, david@uuwestport.org, or Sunday after services. We meet the first Sunday of the month and our next meeting will be Sunday, December 7.

Toys and Gifts

Drive for Family ReEntry Fresh Start Program

Long-time TUCW members Mel and Doris Brenner connected us with Family ReEntry and for the past 26 consecutive years our congregation has collected toys, games, clothing and/or cash for the children of prisoners.

Please help us continue. Take a "star" or "heart" from the Family ReEntry Holiday Tree by the Social Justice table and bring your unwrapped toy(s) to the church from now until December 21st.

No time to shop? Gifts of cash will be used to purchase gifts, especially for older children and teens. Checks should be made out to The Unitarian Church in Westport memo line Family ReEntry.

The Fresh Start Program at Family ReEntry in Bridgeport is a ground-breaking demonstration project that helps soon-to-be released prisoners before leaving prison, during transition, and after "coming home."

- The program places on:emphasis
- post-employment;
- · strengthening families; and
- giving back to the community.

Learn more, get involved: **PLEASE CLICK HERE.**

Contact Sharon or Mike Bittenbender or Lynda Bluestein to learn more about TUCW's support for Family ReEntry.



Beardsley School Committee in Action

The World Vision mobile resource van visited the Beardsley Elementary School to deliver approximately \$7,000 worth of school supplies for Pre-K to Grade 6.

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.

Special thanks go to Beardsley School Committee member, Lynne Brooks for her diligence in bringing about this delivery of much needed school supplies.





Dear Fellow Members,

Winter is nigh. The leaves are off the trees (though sadly still all over my lawn) there is a chill in the air. It hasn't snowed here yet – our sympathies to those in Buffalo. It is time for fireplaces, hot cider, holiday decorations and Policy Governance.

Yes Policy Governance.

What is Policy Governance? It is determining the basic rules for managing this organization. How things are done. It also helps create, in advance, the processes for decision making on issues that haven't been considered. Who makes certain decisions? Based on What criteria? How do decisions get implemented and conveyed to the rest of the Congregation. What is the relationship between the Board of Trustees, the Minister, the staff, the various committees do so much of the work of the church and the congregation as a whole.

In other words, Policy Governance proves that Organized Religion is not a contradiction in terms.

You may be asking another question, Why haven't we done this before? Policy Governance is a relatively new concept for religious organizations. It requires a different way of thinking and acting by everyone; Ministers, staff, leadership and membership alike.

Policy Governance requires a certain mindset, the ability that when an issue arises, from the most mundane to the most important, everyone goes to the policy manual and abides by it. When that policy is incomplete or out-dated, it means abiding by the policy for changing policies. The goal is not to stultify the organization, but to provide greater clarity to everyone as to what his or her rights and responsibilities are.

Most importantly, policy governance requires commitment and trust among all of us - Board members, Staff, Ministers and the Congregation. The Board is ready to make these commitments and move forward to better manage this great organization. We know you are also.

Matthew Peterson, Board of Trustee Member



From Your Year-Round Stewardship Committee

This year will be a very exciting year for TUCW and I am very pleased to have an active role in it.

I became involved with the YRSC last year around this time and was drafted into the Pledge Drive as a Visiting Steward. While like most people, I do not put asking people for money anywhere near the top of my list of favorite things to do I felt it was important to take up this challenge. I had attended the Stratford Church which was in existence since before local celebrity P.T. Barnum donated the land to build their first church in Bridgeport. And they failed financially a few years ago amidst upheaval over finding a new permanent minister, loss of congregants and lack of financial support.

The YRSC is just beginning to think about next year's pledge drive and has not yet selected a theme but I personally hope the theme will have something to do with taking responsibility. There is a great quote by Ambrose Bierce in The Devil's Dictionary, 1911 "Responsibility: A detachable burden easily shifted to the shoulders of God, Fate, Fortune, Luck or one's neighbor. In the days of astrology it was customary to unload it upon a star." Our future is our responsibility as is the future of our church.

Deborah Quinn, Chair, YRSC

You may not have been hearing quite as much from the Ministerial Search Committee lately. This is because we've been heads down, working on materials that will present our congregation to potential ministers. Each congregation looking for a new minister creates a profile or 'resume' of themselves, called a Congregational Record, which is loaded into a special database system at the Unitarian Universalist Association. This Congregational Record includes information gathered in the Congregational Survey, the Focus Group Meetings, and interviews with staff members. It describes the history and life of the church; it offers factual information about the congregation, e.g. membership, attendance, pledging, and budgets. More importantly, it is designed to offer candidates a picture of who we are: why is our church important to us? What is its role in our lives? What tasks confront us in the coming years? What problems have we faced and how have we handled them? And what qualities are we looking for in a new minister?

We've also been working with Rob Zuckerman, Jenny Klein and Charles Klein, who have spent countless hours designing and developing the Information Packet, which is a website that presents information about the Unitarian Church in Westport in a more visual, welcoming and attractive way. In addition to the "vital statistics" included in the Congregational Record, the Information Packet includes welcoming letters, pictures and videos of the church facilities and activities, reports on spending, and recent newsletters, orders of service and information about the region and towns we live in. It will also contain information about the staff, the proposed contract and such things as our policy for screening and doing background checks on candidates. The Information Packet is our opportunity to shine.

The Congregational Record will be made available to potential ministers on December 1st. On January 2nd, we'll find out which ministers are interested in learning more about TUCW and potentially becoming our next Senior Minister. At this point we will unveil our packet to all interested candidates and they will send their packets to us so that we can learn about them. Our information packet will also be made available to anyone in our congregation who would like to see it. For the next few months we will narrow down the ministerial candidates, then on April 2nd, we will make an offer to one final candidate. From April 25th through May 3rd this minister will visit the church for a Candidating Week which includes preaching at both services, two Sundays in a row, attending meetings with key committees and groups, participating in social gatherings and other events, and interacting with members in a variety of ways. The culmination of this occurs after the second Sunday service on May 3rd when our congregation will vote on a motion by the Ministerial Search Committee to extend a call. The vote will be taken by secret ballot, but the result will be announced for all to hear. If 90 – 95% of the congregation approves, we will have a new minister!

Members of the Search Committee:

Jim Cooper, Charles Harrington, Linda Hudson, Kristen Leddy, Carrie McEvoy, John Mason, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Anita Pfluger and Kathy Roberts



Bad Weather Closure and Delay Announcements

In the event of severe weather, the following are ways that you can get information on whether the church will close and cancel all activities:

- Check your email we will send out a group email with a cancellation notice
- Check our www.uuwestport.org
 website
- Check the UU Westport Facebook
 page
- Watch Channel 8 or Channel 12 (Cablevision) on your television.

Please do not call the office. We are not able to update the phone messages nor can we make automated calls to individuals.

Above all else, do not venture out if you do not feel it is safe to do so. Your safety is our primary concern. Do you yearn to connect with your inner sound man or (yes!) sound woman? Do you share our desire to help make our Sunday morning

services SOUND as good as they really ARE? We are looking for a small but mighty group of individuals with a little audio mixing knowledge/experience and a willingness to lend an occasional helping hand and ear: to join our Sunday morning tech team in a rotation that will supervise the live sound at our services. If interested or to learn more, please contact Andy Gundell: gundelmuse@aol.com

> Come One, Come More, JEWELRY SALE Sunday, December 7th after each service in the East Wing Bargains and Beauties!



Flowers for November

November 2 In celebration of poetry, music and people... may we be constantly reconnected.

> November 9 In memory of K. B. Khanna

November 16 For Mary Elizabeth Peterson with thanks from The Unitarian Church in Westport!

> **November 23** *Given anonymously*



AUSICAL NOTES by Ed Thompson

Up-coming Events of Interest



CAROL SING-ALONG AND POTLUCK

On Saturday December 6th, our annual **pot-luck dinner at 5:30 and the annual Carol-sing from 6:30 to 7:30.**

This is an intergenerational event. Great food, fellowship and fun.

CHILDREN'S PAGEANT

For those participating in the Christmas Pageant, there will be two (mandatory) rehearsals:

Friday, December 12 (4:30 to 6:00) and Friday, December 19 (4:30 to 6:00). On December 24th there is a 2:00 final run-through and the Pageant at 4:00 (doors open at 3:30).

This is another intergenerational event for the holiday season. Children will be invited to come to the front and sit on the floor for the Pageant. If your child/children wish to participate, it is necessary to fill out the form

MUSICAL EVENTS

On Sunday, Dec. 14, at 11:00, the Special Projects Choir will sing the annual Concert/service. This year's event is titled "An American Christmas", and it will feature choral music from the last 200 years. Special guest singers will offer solos.

On Christmas eve the 9:00 pm candlelight service will feature the Christmas Eve choir, bells, organ, piano and soloists.

This is always a magical time for singers and congregation alike. **On Christmas eve at 11:00 pm candlelight service** will feature guest soprano Culver Casson offering seasonal songs that are always an inspiration.

CHRISTMAS EVE CHOIR

For those wishing to sing with the Christmas Eve choir, there will be two rehearsals:

December 18 at 8:00pm and December 23 at 7:30. Please be in touch with Ed Thompson if you have questions or concerns.

SIGHT-SINGING CLASSES

Ed Thompson will again offer his sight-singing classes for those wishing to develop their skill with reading music. These classes are free, but one needs to sign up by contacting Ed at ed@uuwestport.org or 227-7205 ext.18. The dates:

January 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, February 7 and 14; each class goes from 9:30 to 11:00. Again, please register beforehand!

CABARET

The Cabaret is scheduled for February 14! Not surprisingly, it will be a Valentine's Day Cabaret. For all those wishing to participate and who need accompaniment please be in touch with Ed Thompson by January 15th. **Ed@uuwestport.org** or 227-7205 ext.18.

SOUNDINGS

Newsletter of the Unitarian Church in Westport

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The next SOUNDINGS deadline is Friday, Dec. 26, at noon. Please e-mail your copy to: **soundings@uuwestport.org**