Letter from the Pastor

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise replied, ‘No! There will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you. Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.’

Matthew 25:1-13

As a church, we have entered the Advent season—a time of preparation for Christmas, the coming of the Christ child, but also a time of waiting. Waiting is not valued all that much in our culture. Over the years we’ve invented more and more ways to avoid waiting: fast food that is ready as soon as you get through the drive-thru line, pictures you can see and print instantly, computers and phones that are constantly connected to the internet. In so many different ways, we’ve invented things to reduce the time we need to wait for things to happen.

And then, frustratingly, there are things that we have to wait for. Perhaps you’ve waited for autumn to finally feel like it was here, or now you wait for the days to get longer and warmer again. We sit by the phone, waiting for news that a loved one has returned home safely. We wait for word about a job we wanted or a card in the mail. We sit in a doctor’s office, waiting for results from a test. Whether we are waiting for bad news or for good news, waiting is really hard sometimes.

And during this time of Advent, we are encouraged to wait for Christmas.

Some of the times that waiting can be so hard is when we do it alone. That was the problem the “bridesmaids” encountered in the story above—wise and foolish alike, even though they were standing together, they were waiting alone. Each was only concerned with themselves. They were nervous and fearful; selfishly concerned about their own oil.
I wonder what would have happened in the story if, instead of turning on one another, they had banded together. What if they had listened to each other’s concerns and had compassion for each other’s fears? And what if they had shared their lights; even after a few had been extinguished, huddling together around lamps held in common?

**As the nights get longer and many of us continue (for many reasons) to be anxious about the days ahead, let’s wait together.** Let’s share our lights in common, hear out each other’s concerns, and find help and support in our waiting.

As the Body of Christ, we wait with one another, wise and foolish alike. We sit together in times of grieving, in times of pain and of loss. We celebrate the good in the world and we work together against the evil. We encourage one another. We wait together. We put our faith in a God who loves us endlessly, who will carry us through no matter what it is we are waiting for, and whose promises are coming, even as we wait with anxious anticipation.

_O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer/Our spirits by Thine Advent here/Disperse the gloomy clouds of night/And death's dark shadows put to flight/Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel/Shall come to thee, O Israel._

God bless.

Pastor Scott

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**December 2021 Worship Schedule**

**December 5th: Second Sunday of Advent**
Ezekiel 37:1-14 *Valley of the Dry Bones*
Communion and Deacon's Fund Sunday
Peace Candle

**December 12th: Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday)**
Isaiah 55:1-13 *Word Accomplishes God's Purpose*
Joy Candle—Wear Pink!

**December 19th: Fourth Sunday of Advent**
John 1:1-18 *The Word Made Flesh*
Love Candle

**December 21st**
Longest Night Service 7:00

**December 24th: Christmas Eve**
Family Friendly Service 5:00
Traditional Service 10:00
Communion Served at Both Services

**December 26th: First Sunday After Christmas**
John 1:19-34 *A Voice in the Wilderness*
Pick-A-Christmas-Hymn Sunday

*The Church Office will be closed Dec. 27th and Jan. 3rd for the Holidays. Thank You.*

The Somers Congregational UCC Youtube channel is:
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKyuviPR4Q9DpQ_YhS3h_nA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKyuviPR4Q9DpQ_YhS3h_nA)
Red Cross Blood Drive

Wednesday, January 19th
1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Appointments are available on redcrossblood.org. Sign up and save lives!

The American Red Cross urges those who feel healthy to make it a fall full of life by donating blood now. Your blood donation helps ensure blood remains available for patients who rely on lifesaving transfusions. Thank you!

Champ’s Place

Champ’s has reinstated their Monday Evening open pantry hours. Volunteers will be at Champ’s from 6 – 7pm on Mondays to assist you.

This month Champ’s Food Pantry is looking for donations of crackers, corned beef hash, spam, jello, oatmeal, deodorant and sanitary products.

Thank you.

Planning for Long Term Care
(information about health insurance and financial help programs for seniors)

If you are looking ahead about caring for yourself and your loved ones in your older years and paying for that care, this program will be helpful. This program will be sponsored by the Caring Committee and the Fellowship Committee and presented by a representative of the Northeast Area Agency on Aging and by Allison Maynard and Christina Hurdle from Town of Somers Social Services.

Date: Thursday, January 13, 2022  Snow Date: January 20
Time: 12:00 noon  Please bring your own sandwich. Dessert and beverages will be provided
Place: Foundation Room

Some of the topics to be discussed are the difference between Medicare and Medicaid; the differences between Traditional Medicare and Medicare Advantage plans; what does Hospice care cover; what insurance coverage is there for long term custodial care; what legal documents should we have; what financial help programs are available through Town of Somers Social Services. There will be time for questions.

In order to help with planning, we ask that you preregister by calling the church office.
Somers Congregational Church  860 763 4021

Looking forward to seeing you.
The Women's Fellowship would like to thank everyone who donated a food item or helped with the reception following Dick Larson's Celebration of Life service on Oct. 31. We would not be able to host these receptions without the generous contributions and assistance of members and friends of the church.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

Room rentals here at the Church have been growing rapidly! We are receiving lots of community exposure as well as a steady income stream. The money we are bringing in rivals some of our larger fundraisers of years past. Our Saturdays are just about booked through the remainder of 2021. We also have a number of Sunday events scheduled and I am currently taking room rental deposits into 2022. (On a side note, please get your requests in for rooms as soon as you can).

HELP IS NOW NEEDED. I am looking to get a group of volunteers together so that the work can be shared, as we all know many hands make light work. Currently there are just 2 people covering every event that has been booked, being on point almost every weekend since March. As you can imagine this will not be sustainable much longer without help. YOUR HELP.

What does that look like? The hope is to get enough volunteers to have a rotating schedule. Help is needed to open and close the building and working with the renters the day of the event. That does not mean you need to stay all day and night during an event. You would just need to be available to open up the doors for them, make sure they get out of the building on time and possibly collect the balance of their payment. If you don’t feel comfortable doing this alone, by all means team up with a friend or family member. I would like to get enough volunteers to assign an entire weekend or a Saturday or Sunday each month for someone to cover. A checklist is being put together and training will be available so that you can feel comfortable with the process.

Here’s your chance to get involved; help us to continue to put our name out in the community and bring in much needed extra income for the church. You can call me at 860-324-4431 if you are interested or if you have questions that I can answer. Thank you. -Laura Driscoll

As of November 30th we have received 60 pledge cards back from our membership. Thank you prompt pledgers! Tyler and I are really hoping to increase the number of pledges from last year which was 85. I know we can do it. The second letter went out. If you have not made the decision to pledge, please do so this week as we will start making phone calls soon. Your pledge is your commitment to the Somers Congregational Church that we will continue to be a strong presence in the center of the town of Somers. Thank you, Kim Kelley
Rooted in Love

by Rev. Michael Neuroth

I’ve attended Hope UCC in Alexandria, VA for ten years. Our vision is to “Welcome, Nurture, Transform,” seeking to embody Christ’s love for one another and the wider community. Hope is a vibrant and warm congregation full of great people and important ministry. But that’s not really why I give my time and money to Hope UCC. It is because Hope is the only congregation that my boys, ages 10 and 13, have ever known. It roots them in love. It roots them in love expressed in the public as justice. As we pass the peace around the sanctuary each week, they see every kind of person wishing them love and peace, sometimes even a too-tight hug. My boys have been taught the stories of our faith. They have learned about racism and white supremacy, how to stand up for justice and equality. My boys received cards and flowers when they lost their grandfather and kind words of encouragement in ZOOM chats over the past year. My boys wait with anticipation each year for the summer Camp Hope theme to be announced. They know which adults they can turn to for advice and which ones tell the best sarcastic jokes. And it isn’t just my kids that are being rooted in love at Hope UCC; it’s me too.

I give to Hope and the wider mission of the UCC, believing that the roots of love we tend will one day spread seeds of justice and joy in the world. For me, that’s a great investment in my boys, our family, and a shared future for all.

CONSIDER YOUR PLEDGE AS A PERCENT OF YOUR MONTHLY INCOME.

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On average, Americans give 2% of their income to charity. Giving even 1% more of annual income to charity would be transformative for our congregation and other organizations doing good in our community.
MISSIONS’ CORNER

It is hard to believe that 2021 year is going by so quickly. Thanksgiving has now passed; we hope you all had a happy holiday. We certainly have so much to be thankful for. Missions continues to give and do good things. Our monthly missions’ news:

- Thank you notes recently received from previously organizations donated to include American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Rays of Hope:

  Dear Somers Church,

  Thank you for your contribution to the AFSP. We are honored to partner with you in fulfilling our mission of saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide. Your investment allows us to continue to create a culture that is smart about mental health and build initiatives to further understand and prevent suicide. More than 48,000 die by suicide in the U.S. each year. Through our research, education, advocacy and support loss programs, AFSP has become the leading national organization dedicated to preventing loss of life by suicide. Our vision is to build a world without suicide. That vision is not possible without your continued involvement.

  As well as....

  A lovely handwritten note received from the Arrha Credit Union on behalf of their fundraiser for Rays of Hope for breast cancer reads:

  Hello everyone, We wanted to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your extremely generous donation towards our fundraiser for Rays of Hope. Your kindness means more than you know.

- Our November allocations included donations to the Chrysalis Center, the Enfield Warming Center and in honor of Veteran’s Day this year, two new organizations – Tougher than a Tank (a mission that our church member, Noah Cass, is passionately involved in to raise awareness of coverage gaps in veteran’s health services while targeting fundraising for Marine Scout Sniper, Sergeant Eddie Ryan) and Homes for the Brave (a nonprofit with a mission of providing housing and services to individuals experiencing homelessness, especially veterans. A donation also went to Youth Challenge in memory of our beloved, Richard “Dick” Larson.

  Plans are in the works for a mobile mission event in January. This will be a warm clothing drive of new and gently used outerwear, i.e., coats, hats, gloves, scarves, etc. Organization and date to be determined. We will keep you posted!

As always in closing, we are always looking for new organizations to give to. Please reach out if you have one in mind that is special to you or speaks to you in some way.

We are happy to consider anything that is presented to us. Lisa, Abbie, Lois, Jill, Ellen, Bev – Your Missions Committee
Thank you to everyone who participated and helped make our first Halloween Trunk-OR-Treat such a success! There were 18 creatively decorated trunks and the Somers Fire Department brought a fire truck for all to see. Despite the rain, we had many children show up for handfuls of candy, trinkets and of course – tattoos! We hope to repeat this event next year!

- Your Fellowship Committee

“Rejoice in the Lord your God, for He has given you the autumn rains because He is faithful.” - Joel 2:23

CE News

*The youth are involved in a variety of activities. We thank Mikayla and Kaija for reading during Pastor Scott’s Installation.

*We are looking for youth Acolytes to light and extinguish the altar candles. Thank you Timmy for helping.

*A few youth families made pumpkin crumble for the Loaves and Fishes dessert to go with the meal the Hjelm family helped the Weigels serve. Our next meal is January 23rd.

*The Christmas Pageant is December 19th at 4:30pm. All are welcome to attend.

*Matt is looking for youth with musical talent to perform Christmas Eve. Anyone interested contact the church office, Kim Kelley or Matt Bickett

*Heifer International, as you remember, was our VBS mission and in one week our kids brought in $522. Christian Ed challenged the congregation to match this donation and we still have a long way to go. Please pick up an envelope by the chart in the hallway to help us purchase the five animals as part of our CE mission outreach.

Our committee thanks you.

Cari, Debbi, Kathy, Kim, Sarah and Tara
December 2021 Council Corner

Your Church Council spent a good part of the meeting this month celebrating with Pastor Scott that he is now our fully installed Pastor and Teacher!! The reception following the installation felt like normal times again as we shared coffee, tea, cider, and goodies, and were able to visit with one another and share our stories. The guests from the Tolland Association and the Southern New England Conference experienced our hospitality and that felt good. On that note, it was announced that Coffee Hour in the Foundation Room will be resuming on November 28th. Please sign up on the clipboard on the granite counter if you would like to host a coffee hour.

Under Pastor Scott’s guidance, Bible Study has been looking at Marcus Borg’s Book, Reading the Bible Again for the First Time. Book Club is wrapping up The Book of Joy by the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu, and Council is sharing the book, Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory. Sharing these texts, sharing our stories and applying what we are learning to our own church expands our both our Biblical base and our opportunity to apply what we are learning. Consider joining after the New Year as new books and studies will begin. Wednesday mornings and evenings provide opportunities to dig deeper into who we are as Christians in today’s world. The more the merrier!!

Pastor Scott completed his online Executive Certificate in Religious Fundraising coursework and is eager to apply his new information in our church. The Council spent some time this month trying to discern why our pledges do not match our membership numbers and how we might still meet our budgetary needs for 2022.

Gene Allard gave a presentation from the Finance Committee and each Council Member was asked to share their thoughts. In conclusion, the Council is asking all committees to go back to their budget requests and reduce/eliminate new spending requests and send those changes to the Finance Committee. Additionally, to thoughtfully and prayerfully consider how each might contribute to the financial security of our church. This is a long term problem that needs both short term and long term solutions going forward.

The Season of Advent is upon us so we will celebrate our traditions like “The Hanging of the Greens November 21st, The Community Thanksgiving Service on November 23rd at All Saints Church, the Children’s Pageant on December 19th, The Longest Night Service on December 21st, two Christmas Eve Services at 5:00 and at 10:00, and a Hymn Sing along on December 26th

And finally, remember to turn in your committee reports for the Annual Report by 12/27/21 so Heather can compile our Annual Report for our Annual Meeting on January 23, 2022.

December Calender

December 4 – Women’s Fellowship Holiday Bazaar
December 12 – Family Holiday Movie Matinee (2:00-4:00 PM)
December 19 – Children’s Christmas Pageant
December 21 – Longest Night Service 7:00 PM
December 22 – Annual Committee Reports Due
December 25 – Christmas Eve Services (5:00 and 7:00 PM)

JANUARY 23 – ANNUAL MEETING

Choir Rehearsals – 8:45 and 11:00 Sunday Mornings
Our Church Administrative Assistant, Heather Hight, edits and publishes the Church Newsletter, Highlights.

Please be aware of deadlines and send your articles to

Highlights@thesomerschurch.org