

The Spire

Congregational Church of Somersville
United Church of Christ

December, 2010



Advent Activities

There are a number of activities and events during this season and we hope you will opt to participate in, or be a witness to, many of them. Other opportunities can be found within the pages of this Spire.

Hanging the Greens

Hanging of the greens will be done following coffee fellowship on the 2nd Sunday of Advent this year (December 5th). This is a fun time for all; join us if you can.



Christmas Pageant

The annual Christmas Pageant will be held December 12th at 6:30 PM. Dress rehearsal will begin at 4 PM on the 12th, followed by pizza. The Sundays leading up to the pageant will be for rehearsals in the social room. We are also looking for people to help with setting up scenery on the 12th after morning worship. Anyone interested can contact Lisa Carriere or Marj Butler. (In the event of inclement weather on the 12th, the pageant will be held on the 19th)



Christmas Pageant

Caroling

Help us brighten spirits and celebrate the Christmas holiday! Join with us as we sing Christmas carols to some church members and friends around town. We'll gather at the church at 6 PM on Friday, December 17 and leave for our caroling circuit. We'll end the night with some sweet and savory food and fellowship at the home of Ed & Lois Sharpless. All are welcome to participate .. and bring a flashlight.



Join Us for Caroling

Christmas Eve Service

Come one, come all to our Christmas Eve service on Friday, December 24th at 7 PM.



From the Pastor

Dear Friends in Christ,

"It's the most wonderful time of the year," or so goes the old Andy Williams Christmas song. And December is a wonderful time, as we busily prepare for the Christmas holiday until, near the end of the month, we rejoice over and celebrate the birth of our Savior with our church family and perhaps our biological or adopted families, too.

We all know that it is easy to get overwhelmed at this time of year with all the various goings-on. Just check out the full edition of this *Spire* for a sampling of the many goings-on in our small church alone! Then add on your family obligations, parties at work and other organizations, trips to see friends and in-laws, presents to purchase and wrap, decorations to haul out of the attic and set up, cards to write and mail, and on and on. We could also sing, "It's the most frenzied time of the year..." That song would ring true, too.



It takes special devotion to keep Jesus in our minds and hearts as the reason for the season throughout the hectic month of December. It is my hope that our Sunday and Wednesday Advent services will help you to do so.

Daily scripture reading and reflection, such as that offered by our Upper Room booklets available for free in Wood Chapel, can help, too. Making time for one's spiritual disciplines is as important now as ever.

Throughout this wonderful, frenzied month, may God help you keep the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the magi, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ child in your hearts.

A merry, wonderful Christmas to you and yours!

Sincerely,

Graham Van Keuren



Thanks to ..

- .. all who volunteered to take on “service opportunities” during November.
- .. those who gave to the 2nd Mile Missions collections to help provide Blanks +.
- .. everyone who helped with the Fall Property Clean-up chores.



Thanks from ..

The Ladies Aide Society .. “A great big thank you to all the men and women who have worked at the Blacksmith Shoppe during the spring and fall season.

It was a very successful year. Many hands make light work and we appreciate every pair. The grounds always looked neat and the flowers were beautiful. God’s blessings to you all.”

Christian Education (submitted by Graham Van Keuren)

Wednesday Bible Study

Wednesday morning Bible study meets weekly in the social room from 9:30-11:15 AM. All are invited.

Advent Services Planned

Join us for our annual Wednesday evening Advent services on December 1, 8, 15, and 22 at 7 PM. These contemplative services set a wonderful tone of preparation for the coming of Christ. Please note that choir practice and board/committee meetings will begin at 7:30 on those Wednesdays.



Please participate in these services and help prepare one another for the coming of Christ.

Potluck Dinner and Movie

Join us on December 18th for this month's dinner and movie, a modern remake of Charles Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol*. Netflix describes this 2009 version in this way: "Jim Carrey morphs his voice into that of miserable miser Ebenezer Scrooge in this computer-animated adaptation of Charles Dickens's iconic holiday tale about the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come. When confronted with Tiny Tim's suffering -- as well as his own mortality -- Scrooge learns the power of opening his heart. Robert Zemeckis directs a star-studded cast featuring Colin Firth, Robin Wright Penn, Bob Hoskins and Gary Oldman."

It's a wonderful story appropriate for adults and kids alike. We'll gather at 6 p.m. for a potluck dinner followed by the movie at 7 p.m. The food, fellowship, and film is always fabulous, so find a friend or family member and join us for some fun!

Opportunities in December

	<u>Greeters</u>	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Reader</u>	<u>Fellowship Hosts</u>
12/05	Scully family Patrick Forbes	Marge Morgan	Elaine Hancock	Marjorie Nadeau Sue Comparetto
12/12	Charlotte Andrews Everett Baker	Dan Dunn Art Lachance	Mae Chillson	Marilyn Hare Yvonne Wood
12/19	Donna Pendleton Linda McEwen	Patrick Forbes Joan Lange	Dan Scully	Tom & Elaine Hancock
12/26	Donna Pendleton Linda McEwen	Ulysses Orduz Bill Moran	Everett Baker	Tom & Elaine Hancock

From the Moderator (submitted by Ray Foster)

The December Cabinet meeting will be held following worship on the 19th. Any individual or Board wanting to be included on the agenda should speak with Graham or me by Thursday, December 9.

Report of the Treasurer (submitted by Sydney Cohen)

Learn from other’s mistakes rather than making them all yourself.

Stupid people always think they are right. Wise people listen to advice. – Proverbs 12:15

	Oct. 2010	YTD 2010	Budget 2010
Pledges	\$ 4,848.00	\$ 63,475.00	\$ 77,000.00
Income	\$13,827.56	\$120,739.70	\$118,210.00
Expenses	\$12,399.19	\$128,502.63	\$128,441.00

Collections for October

Fundraisers

October Supper = \$2,352.00



YTD net income for fundraisers = \$19,483.99

Missions

Solar Cooker Project = \$303.00

Heifer International = \$123.55 - Subtotal \$1,005.17 (Wow!)

Parking Lot Update

YTD Total disbursed = \$23,193.77 through November 15, 2010

We have November and December to collect the remaining \$13,525.00 needed to meet the 2010 pledge budget. Our income and expenses look like we are collecting well and spending too much, but remember those numbers reflect money donated for the parking lot as well as parking lot disbursals. The only expense for the parking lot in the near future will be on the repayment of the loan.

November and December will be very busy months financially as missions will disburse the remainder of its funds and money collected. We have had a phenomenal year, and have much to be grateful for.

Missions Outreach

2nd Mile Missions for Christmas Fund

(submitted by Allison Matczak)

For 108 years, the Christmas Fund Offering for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a means by which we, as members of the United Church of Christ and its predecessor bodies, live out the mandate to be Christ's Body in the world. The Christmas Fund, one of four Special Mission Offerings received annually in the United Church of Christ, is a ministry of compassion and care to those who serve our church.

Lower-income retirees continue to feel most keenly the financial stress brought about by the current economic climate. Because of that, we ask you to prayerfully consider your response to the 2010 Christmas Fund Offering and give to the best of your ability. Reflect upon the ways in which your life has been touched by a retired pastor, a former youth leader, a Christian Education director, a church secretary, a custodian, or a minister of music, and honor their ministries in a way that will help them and others like them in these challenging times.

Your gift to the Christmas Fund will not only assist pastors with a "Thank You" Gift Check at Christmas, but it also provides for the Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums and provision of Emergency Grants to active and retired clergy and lay employees.

The mission of the Christmas Fund is to provide assistance dollars in situations of critical need, while preserving the dignity of those who receive the aid. Please remember that your generous contributions can and do make a difference in the lives of many.



Cornerstone Soup Kitchen

(submitted by Barbara Baugniet)

There's one more opportunity this year to assist in preparing and/or serving a meal at Cornerstone Soup Kitchen in Rockville ~ Tuesday, December 21. Those interested in helping to prepare the meal can meet at the church at 2:30 and we'll carpool down; we'll return about 6:30. Folks interested or available to serve only should arrive at Cornerstone by 4:30. Please speak with me if you are interested in participating in this outreach this month.



Goody Bags to be Filled

Another project this month is to make up food bags of goodies for the children's parties at Cornerstone. A Christmas tree, filled with tags indicating various food items needed, is set up in Wood Chapel. Please take a tag and bring the item to the church by December 12. Our goal is to fill 190 bags.

Ladies Aide Society

Monthly Meeting is a Christmas Luncheon

(submitted by Barbara Baugniet)



Actually, all members and friends of the church, male and female, are invited to attend the December 14 Pot Luck Luncheon and carol sing-along. We'll begin at 12 noon in the social room. The officers of the Ladies Aide society are the hostesses for the afternoon. We're hoping Ellie Parker is feeling well enough to join us to lead us in a carol sing-along. Come join us for good food, fun, and fellowship.

Blacksmith Shoppe (submitted by Barbara Abbe)

The Blacksmith Shoppe had another successful year. The ladies Aide thanks everyone who had any part in this success. We appreciate your interest and help.

We made \$5,025.88 all of which will be used for church related projects. All of this money comes from the many donations of items and the baked goods. We get lots of donations from folks who see the advertisements in the newspapers. We also have a good following of shoppers. Come in some Saturday to see what the Ladies Aide are doing to keep this project going. Better yet, sign up to help some Saturday.

We will open up again on May 7, 2011. The sign up sheet to help will be posted in the social room at church in April. Have a great winter and save items for the Shoppe over the winter. We especially need small furniture, puzzles, jewelry, and men's items. Thank you for any donations!

Prayer Shawl Ministry (submitted by Lois Sharpless)

The Prayer Shawl Group will gather to knit/crochet in the social room for about thirty minutes following worship on December 12. Please join us.

Fundraising Suppers (submitted by Ruth Bruch)

Recap of November Supper

Reservations for this annual supper filled to capacity in 14 hours. Thanks to all who contributed and assisted. The supper brought in \$2346.00 and our expenses were \$333.52.

December 4 Ham Supper

The December 4 Ham Supper will benefit a Missions Outreach project or two. With limited time remaining, the sign up sheet for your assistance/contributions is posted in the social room. Menu includes tossed salad, baked ham, sweet potatoes, French style beans, breads/rolls, beverage and cake. Normal charge is \$11 for adults and \$5 for children; however, a \$1 discount from the dinner price will be given to each person bringing in a non-perishable food item.



2011 Supper Dates

Per a request from the Board of Finance, twelve fundraising suppers will be held in 2011. Dates were approved at our November 21 Cabinet meeting. Dinners will be held:

January 8	February 12	March 12	April 9
May 14	June 18	July 16	August 13
September 10	October 8	November 12	December 3

Entrees have not yet been set.

This & That



- **Fellowship hosts** are needed. 2011 will soon be upon us and that presents a whole new calendar of Sundays open for hosting fellowship following worship. (a beverage - coffee, punch, lemonade, etc - and a light snack will suffice). Please sign up in the social room if you are willing to take on this opportunity. Anyone who stays for fellowship time is urged to take advantage of this opportunity.

Christmas cards

As you may recall, back in 2006 we began selling beautiful Christmas cards showing our church sanctuary at Christmastime. These cards are again available for purchase; there are 18 cards per box at \$10 per box. They are available during coffee fellowship on Sundays or in the church office weekday mornings.



CT Conference UCC

Tolland Association (submitted by Everett Baker)

The Tolland Association Fall Meeting was held on November 7 at the Mansfield Center Church. It was a combined meeting with the Windham Association. Reverend Ciba, a Regional Minister, presented "Revitalizing the Local Church" to members of the combined churches. Rev. Ciba presented an inspiring message concerned with revitalizing the local churches by developing communications and

marketing to share the Good News to those who haven't heard and to those who may want or need to know.

Rev. Ciba presented seven ideas as a guide for those who may want or need to know about the Good News and seven ideas to be used as a guide for those churches who wish their church could become "highly effective" in reaching people. These seven ideas are:

1. Appreciative Inquiry – "What's Great About Your Church?"
2. Strategic Planning – "Get Somewhere on Purpose"
3. Communications & Marketing - "Share Your Story"
4. Ad-Ministration – Get Organized – For God's Sake!
5. Transformational Missions – "What's God Up To?"
6. Transformational Community – Leave Changed
7. Transformational Worship – Got God?

Obama signs order to reform faith-based office

November 19, 2010 United Church of Christ News Service
by Adelle M. Banks

WASHINGTON, D.C.

President Obama signed an executive order Nov. 17 that reforms the White House's faith-based office in a bid to improve transparency and clarify rules for religious groups that receive federal grants.

The nine-page order reflects numerous recommendations made more than six months ago by a blue-ribbon advisory council charged with streamlining and reforming the office created under former President George W. Bush.

"The recommendations that they've put forth make really concrete and tangible improvements to the government's relationship with faith-based organizations," said Joshua DuBois, director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

The executive order, however, does not address controversial questions of whether grant recipients can hire and fire based on religion. Administration officials have said those questions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

DuBois and others said the new order gives better legal footing to public-private partnerships. "It ... clarifies that decisions about financial awards must be free from political interference or the appearance thereof," DuBois said.

In particular, the order reflects the council's special concern about the treatment of people who receive social services from a religious group receiving federal funding.

"The government has a responsibility to give a referral to a nonreligious program if the beneficiary objects to the religious program they're in," DuBois said in explaining the order.

Melissa Rogers, who chaired the advisory council, said the order both continues and changes the work begun under Bush. For example, grant recipients may continue offering services in buildings containing religious symbols, but will be required to provide beneficiaries with written information about their rights.

"In the case of social service beneficiaries, that's been a real worry for many of us, that they might not know what their rights are," Rogers said.

Responding to recommendations for greater transparency, the order calls for agencies to post rules affecting religious organizations online, as well as lists of federal grant recipients.

Rogers said such steps may dispel notions there is a "pot of gold" waiting solely for religious groups that apply for grants.

"By having all this easily accessible, it heightens the chances that we'll be able to demystify the process and watch the process," she said.

Obama's order implements most of the dozen reform recommendations crafted by the council's task force on internal reform, which included a former Bush administration staffer and church-state separationists.

With the new order in place, DuBois said "well over half" of the council's total 64 recommendations — on topics ranging from poverty to interfaith relations — will have been implemented.

Other council members, who represent both conservative and liberal religious organizations, said they were pleased with the order.

"President Obama has advanced America's social welfare sector and protected constitutional principles," said Nathan Diament, the top Washington lobbyist for Orthodox Jewish congregations.

Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, said the new rules will "set the faith-based initiative on far firmer constitutional ground, and give much broader protections to both religious institutions and the beneficiaries than they've had so far."

The order calls for a new interagency working group that will issue guidance to federal agencies within 120 days.

DuBois said new members of an advisory council, who will succeed the group that finished its work in March, will be announced "as soon as possible."

About our Members & Friends

Birthdays

Happy birthday greetings this month go to:
 Harold Eastwood, Alton Kenney, Janet Peck, Martha Baker, Lauren Heagie, Mickey Moselsky, Leigh Pinney, Holly Marek, Anna DeFusco, Matthew McQuade, Hailey Renshaw, Linda Graham, Ewan Clague, Ruth Graham



New Baby

Vivienne Helene Penhall, born at St. Francis on November 8th, 7 lbs. 2 oz. Mom and baby girl are happy, healthy and thankful for everyone's love and support. Proud parents are Chris and Erin Penhall. Vivienne joins older siblings Will and Rowan.

Congregational Church of Somersville

Vision Statement

We will be a faith-based church welcoming diversity, empowering the individual, growing in faith and doing God's work in the global community in unity and love.

Behavioral Covenant

- We will follow a process that includes unconditional listening and time to collect thought, enabling all individuals to comfortably express their opinions.
- Our actions and demeanor will support and empower all participants
- All opinions will be welcomed, reflectively considered and respected.
- Opinions will be expressed with humility, self-control, gentleness, and kindness.
- We will look for common ground as we search for consensus, and we will respect that consensus.
- We will affirm by our works and actions our common goal to serve God.

Poinsettias in the Sanctuary

Each year we offer you the opportunity to purchase poinsettias in honor of, or in memory of, loved ones that will be placed in the sanctuary for Christmas Sunday and Christmas Eve. Orders for plants should be placed through the Church office 860-749-7741, faxed to 860-749-5132, or emails to somcong@aol.com - or by returning this form to the office. The cost remains at \$5 per plant; orders are to be placed by Sunday, December 12.

Please indicate exactly how you would like the listing to appear in the bulletin.



I am ordering _____ poinsettia(s)

Given in loving memory of:

Given in honor of:

Given by: _____

the Rev. Graham Van Keuren, Pastor
 Catherine Carlise, Intern
 Ray Foster, Moderator

December 2010

Sydney Cohen, Treasurer
 Ruth Bruch, Church Administrator/Clerk
 Jason Stefanik, Organist/Choir Director

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Congregational Church of Somersville 22 Maple St., PO Box 1, Somersville, CT 06072 860-749-7741 860-749-5132 (fax) somcong@aol.com (email) www.somersvilleucc.org (website) Worship ~ 10 AM Office Hours: Tues. – Fri., 8:15-11:30 AM			1 Bible Study 9:30-11:15 Advent Service 7 PM Choir 7:30 PM	2	3	4 Holiday Ham Supper 5 & 6:15 PM Bring non-perishable food items for \$1 off (Benefits Missions)
5 Communion Hanging of the Greens Men's Group Week (helping others)	6	7 Worship at Evergreen 11 AM AA 6:15-8:30 Deacons 7 PM	8 Bible Study 9:30-11:15 Advent Service 7 PM Choir 7:30	9 Cabinet Agenda Requests Due	10	11
12 Poinsettia Orders Due Goody Bags Due Prayer Shawl Pageant Rehearsal 4 PM Children's Christmas Pageant 6:30 PM	13	14 Ladies Aide Pot Luck Christmas Party Luncheon 12 PM AA 6:15-8:30	15 Bible Study 9:30-11:15 Advent Service 7 PM Choir 7:30	16	17 Caroling 6 PM	18 Dinner & Movie 6 PM
19 Cabinet	20	21 1st Day of Winter Cornerstone 2:30/4:30- 6:30 AA 6:15-8:30	22 Bible Study 9:30-11:15 Advent Service 7 PM Choir 7:30	23	24 Christmas Eve Service 7 PM	25 Christmas Day
26	27 January Spire deadline	28 Worship at Blair Manor 10:30 AM AA 6:15-8:30	29 Choir 7 PM	30	31	

HIDDEN PICTURES: FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART

