

The Spire

Congregational Church of Somersville
United Church of Christ

January 2015



Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Supper

The annual meeting of the Congregational Church of Somersville will be held Saturday, January 31. A pot luck supper will begin at 6 PM followed by the meeting at 7. ALL members and friends of the church are invited to attend. Reports from officers and Boards will be reviewed; officers and new board members will be elected; and we'll hear and consider other business that may come up. Remember, we are all ministers of this church and all opinions and voices matter; however, only church members are allowed to vote. Be sure to bring a dish to share and place setting(s).

Transportation can be arranged for those unable to get to the church on their own; please call the church office to make a request (860-749-7741).

Officers and Board chairmen are to submit written reports to Ruth by Sunday, January 18.

Also, as we have done for several years, a roll call will be taken at the start of the meeting: members should be prepared to respond with a verse of scripture. Anyone unable to attend the meeting is encouraged to return a verse of scripture to be read in his/her absence.

.....
I/we are unable to attend the meeting on the 31st. Please read this/these verse(s) in my/our absence.

Member(s) _____

Return to: Ruth Bruch, Cong'l Church of Somersville, PO Box I, Somersville, CT 06072

From the Pastor

Dear Friends in Christ,

One of the key Christmas stories that is quite often overlooked by churches is known as the slaughter of the innocents. Coming from Matthew's gospel, the Bible story tells of King Herod slaying all children in and around Bethlehem two years of age or younger. Herod did so in an effort to eliminate Jesus, whom the magi revealed was born "King of the Jews" and thus constituted a potential rival to Herod's own position. The Sunday of the Holy Innocents reminds us that terrible things, even evil things, continue to happen in spite of God's inbreaking into our world in Jesus Christ.



As the gospels unfold, we learn that Jesus came to share in human suffering, even becoming a victim of terrible, evil deeds himself. The Holy Family may have narrowly escaped with the infant Jesus during Herod's murderous rampage shortly after Jesus' birth, but the adult Jesus showed that he experienced suffering and death just as any of us do. It is three days later, on Easter, that God decisively reveals that our experience of evil, suffering and death will never be allowed the last word. But as regards the fact that Matthew sets the story of the slaughter of the innocents amidst his narrative of Jesus' birth, I think Matthew is emphasizing that Jesus Emmanuel (meaning "God With Us") -- the One who is our Christmas gift from God -- is with us in life and death, in joy and in horror. And that is truly good news, for what God chooses to take on at Christmas -- the joy and horror, and new life and cruel death and everything else that is part of human existence -- God chooses to redeem on Easter.

Not all of us have storybook Christmases; some of us have "Blue Christmases," as they are sometimes called. But the Holy Family, fleeing for its life to Egypt and living as refugees in a foreign land, didn't exactly have a storybook Christmas either. I hope that all who experience Blue Christmases may take comfort as this Christmastide draws to a close that "God With Us" is especially "God With Them," and that God has prepared blessings beyond all that we might ask or imagine for each of them.

May you have a happy and healthy 2015. And may you especially know that in Jesus Emmanuel, God is with you every day and in every way.

Yours in Christ,

Graham Van Keuren

Thanks to ..

- .. all who filled service opportunities during December.
- .. those who donated to the 2nd Mile Missions collection to benefit the Christmas Fund.
- .. those who assist at Food-share distribution.
- .. all who helped decorate the sanctuary for the Christmas season.
- .. those who have been contributing non-perishable foods that go to local food pantries.



Thanks from ..

Don & Johanna Karbonic .. "Thanks for your cards, thoughts and prayers with the loss of Jane Karbonic, mother and mother-in-law. She was a wonderful person who lived 94 1/2 years."

Barbara Abbe "Many thanks for all your prayers, cards and get well thoughts after my surgery and especially during Paul's lengthy hospitalization. After cardiac surgery, he is home and doing much better. On Friday evening we were blessed to be serenaded by the choir and others singing Christmas carols. Thank you."

Christian Education

Bible Study

The Wednesday morning studies will resume on January 7 at 9:30 AM. All are welcome to attend and take part.

Opportunities in January

	Greeters	Ushers	Reader	Fellowship Hosts
1/04		Patrick F. Donna P.	Mavis C.	Bobby B.
1/11		Patrick F. Donna P.	Laura E.	Chuck & Laura E.
1/18		Patrick F. Donna P.	Carol W.	Marilyn H.
1/25		Patrick F. Donna P.	Yvonne W.	

Financial Statements (submitted by Dave Pinney)

This month I will prepare and distribute financial giving statements to members and friends acknowledging receipt of their total giving amount received in 2014. If you don't get a statement or have a discrepancy, please speak with me.

Report of the Treasurer (submitted by Syd Cohen)

	November 2014	Monthly Budget	YTD	Annual Budget
Pledges	\$5,750.00	\$ 7,292.00	\$78,165.00	\$87,500.00
Income	\$15,731.00	\$10,438.00	\$120,528.00	\$127,920.00
Expenses	\$8,404.00	\$11,393.00	\$127,013.00	\$136,717.00

Our monthly pledges were lower than budgeted and we are 9335.00 away from our goal. Our total income was higher than average due to the 7000.00 endowment input. The expenses were in line for the month and we show a gain of 7328.00 overall for November.

Collections for November

Fundraiser supper- Net – 2442.00- YTD net- 20455.50

Flow through Missions Collections

St. Pauly- 72.67 – YTD 869.24

Heifer International- 21.98 –YTD 319.11

Unicef- 270.71- YTD 292.71

Zimbabwe- (grinding mill) – 427.00

Flow through Disbursals for November

Cat Survey- 415.00

Missions Outreach

2nd Mile Missions (submitted by Lois Sharpless)

The 2nd Mile Mission offering this month is The Fisher House Foundation. Fisher House Foundation builds and maintains long term residential facilities near military hospitals nationwide. The families of seriously injured soldiers need a place to stay during the long rehabilitation process.

This vital need is not covered by any other resource. Currently there are 54 Fisher Houses nationwide. Since 1990 they have provided services to over 142,000 military families who have stayed more than 3.6 million days supporting their soldier during rehabilitation.

Fisher Houses have saved these families more than \$167 million in lodging and transportation costs. The facilities are supported by contributions and openings are granted in reverse order of rank, so that the lower enlisted soldiers have first chance at housing.

This is one way we can support our young men and their families during what must be a difficult and emotional time.

Thank you

The Missions Outreach Board would like to extend a big THANK YOU to everyone that purchased a gift for a needy child. We were able to give 20 gifts each to 2 families due to your generosity.

Kiva Update (submitted by Linda Longueuil)

In December, we made our 42nd loan which went to Israel from Guatemala. Israel grows bananas and sells them at markets in and around his community. He will use his loan to maintain his banana crops. Please read his story in the KIVA notebook or on the bulletin board.

Food-share

Members of our church help distribute food every other Wednesday from 1-1:30 in the parking lot of the Somers Congregational Church. If you are willing to assist, speak with Marge Morgan. January dates are the 14th and 28th.

Ladies Aide Society (submitted by Ardie Carey)

Our Ladies Aide Society group met on December 9th at noon in our Social Room for a wonderful potluck lunch, cookie exchange, and carol singing. The food was delicious and we had a great turnout! Our thanks to Walt Twarosch and his lovely wife, Yoke, who joined us for the lunch and then Walt played Christmas carols on the piano while everyone joined in to sing! It was a fun time and put everyone in the Christmas spirit!

Ladies Aide will once again buy two Christmas meals for two area families! Thank you to Linda Longueuil who will pick up and deliver them to the Senior Center.

Our next meeting will be on January 13, 2015 at 1:00 PM in the church social hall where the election of new officers for Ladies Aide will take place. Our Pastor, Graham Van Kueren will preside over the installation of these new officers during this time also. Please join us for another year of fun, special events, and doing good for our church

Fundraising Suppers (submitted by Ruth Bruch)

A tentative schedule for fundraising suppers for 2015 has been set; eleven dates have been set this year to help meet our monthly general operating expenses.

Jan. 10	Baked Ham	Feb. 14	Baked Stuffed Shrimp
Mar. 14	Corned Beef	Apr. 11	Roast Beef
May 9	Chicken "Surprise"	June 13	Ham & Strawberries
July 11	Chicken BBQ	Sept. 12	Roast Pork
Oct. 17	Pot Roast	Nov. 14	Turkey
Dec. 5	Baked Ham		

We (the supper committee) ask that you all try to support the suppers in any way that you can—you don't need to contribute each month, but any and all donations and help is appreciated. There is a great deal of prep work and time that goes in to the planning, shopping, preparing, serving and cleaning up for these dinners, so don't feel afraid to offer your time and talents. We even offer on the job training for new faces!! Remember, the majority of the income from these suppers comes from "outside our church membership", so the greater community is helping to meet our budget.

Some ways you can still help for the ham dinner on January 10 include contributing bags of frozen mixed vegetables or monetary donations to purchase them (I can pick up by the case), monetary donations to purchase 100 pounds of sweet potatoes. Carlese Wood has generously offered to prepare all the dessert with one of her recipes but would like assistance putting it all together on the morning of Friday, Jan. 9.

We will also offer a bake sale during the supper on January 10—so please whip up one or two of your favorite sweet treats and bring a plate or two of cookies, bars, breads, cakes, pies, candy, etc.

Historian's Corner (submitted by Johanna Karbonic)

First Capital Campaign for the Congregational Church of Somersville 1871

On January 4, 1871, the Congregational Church of Somersville was organized. It wasn't an event that happened over night. James M. Billings in his will stated he would donate \$10,000 if \$5,000 could be donated into the treasury to form a congregational church in Somersville. In other words, James Billings agreed to pay \$2.00 for every \$1.00 raised, up to \$10,000, with the following stipulations:

First: The creed of the church had to be Congregational, approved by an Ecclesiastical Council according to Congregational usage.

Second: It had to be part of the constitution that the Pastor and Deacons shall be chosen by three fourths of the communicant members, who are in good and regular standing in said Church, at a meeting duly and legally advertised to be provided, and the church property shall be vested in said communicant member.

Third: The principle of the money subscribed should be used for the following purposes: the purchase of land and building of a church, or buying a church and land, or for extending the church, or enlarging the belfry, and for the purchase and hanging of a bell, and for the purchase of a suitable musical instrument. Any money left after providing for these expenses shall be put as interest on good security; and the interest can be used for the support of preaching and other incidental expenses of said church. The church had to be located within one-third of a mile of the bridge across the Scantic River, in said village of Somersville. Such building shall be kept insured in some responsible insurance companies for at least three-quarters of the value.

In 1871, \$10,000 was considered a large sum of money for most people. James Billings was a native of Somersville, but moved to New York City and made his fortune. James Billing's estate at the time of his death was valued at more than \$300,000.

The future members of the Congregational Church of Somersville actually raised \$5,625 with a total of 57 donations, but the will stated that only up to \$10,000 would be paid. People pledged and paid from \$5.00 to \$1,000 to meet the \$10,000 challenge. Many of the people that pledged did not become members.

Isn't it amazing that 144 years later we are still here as members or friends of the Congregational Church of Somersville. This is probably why I took on this project. The oldest papers that I could find of the church, was what I call, the "Declaration of Commitment to the Congregational Church of Somersville". I had a copy framed with a typed interpretation. Because it is very hard to read old English spelling, it took many hours to decipher the reading and the list of names and also to make sure the name was the real name of someone who lived in the area. With the help of Yvonne Besse, genealogical expert, from the Somers Library, Jeanne DeBell from the Somers Historical Museum and Rev. Graham Van Keuren, I was able to read, interpret, and get the most accurate spelling for most of the names and readings. There may still be errors. This is a project that has been going on for years, because of the interpretation and because something always pushed this project to a low priority. Now it is framed, ready to be hung, and to be looked at with astonishment that we are still here as an active Congregational church. I guess God approves.

CATS (submitted by Ed Sharpless)

The Survey Analysis Committee is requesting suggestions from the church members and friends for outside singing and performance groups that may be of interest to the congregation. Please send information to the church office with contact information for the group. Thanks!

This n That

- * All committee chairmen whose terms are expiring are asked to turn in his/her key to the church so it can be reassigned.
- * Fellowship hosts are needed for 2015. Sign up in the social room.
- * Want to volunteer to be a greeter, usher, reader or acolyte? Be sure to sign up in the social room or speak with Elaine Hancock.

Religion Survey Babble Confuses 103% of Readers. Here's Why.

by Cathy Lynn Grossman November 24, 2014 Religion News Service

WASHINGTON

The 'Splainer (as in "You've got some 'splaining to do") is an occasional feature in which RNS staff give you everything you need to know about current events to hold your own at a cocktail party.

Reading religion surveys can seem like confronting the Tower of Babel: stacked questions, confusing terms, unscientific methodology. It gets even crazier when results are contradictory. How does that happen?

Let us 'splain.

Some surveys lean like the Tower of Pisa

The Pledge of Allegiance is a perfect example.

There's almost always a flap over how many Americans do — or don't — want the words "under God" kicked out of the Pledge of Allegiance. Indeed, on Nov. 19 a court in Monmouth, N.J., heard the case of the American Humanist Association battling the Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District to have schools edit out mention of God.

The humanists claim 34 percent of Americans agree with their view. But, wait. What about a survey conducted earlier this year by LifeWay Research, a Christian research agency? It found that only 8 percent would cut God from the Pledge.

Why four times the difference? Look to the poll language.

LifeWay asked: "Should the words 'under God' be removed from or remain in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America?" That's a straight-up question with no preface.

The humanists' survey, however, began with a bit of pointed Pledge history — before getting to the (loaded) question:

"For its first 62 years, the Pledge of Allegiance did not include the phrase 'under God.' During the Cold War, in 1954, the phrase 'one nation, indivisible ...' was changed to read 'one nation, under God, indivisible ...'. Some people feel this phrase in our national pledge should focus on unity rather than religion.

"Do you believe the Pledge of Allegiance should:

- Return to the unchanged version: 'one nation, indivisible ...'
- Continue with the changed version: 'one nation, under God, indivisible ...'"

This is not kosher poll methodology, say experts.

"Always ask yourself why this group sponsored this survey," advised David Kinnaman, president of the Christian research company Barna Group. "Read the questions and see if the responses are prompted. What is the information asking me to fear or to love? Are they trying to elicit one of those emotions from me?"

Watch the labels

Researchers on religion and politics are fascinated with the evangelical vote. Is it growing? Shrinking? Trending X or Y direction?

But "evangelical" is one of the slipperiest words out there. Since every survey group sets its own definition, results can confuse more than they enlighten.

This has long been true. In 1998, Gallup asked people if they were “evangelical or born again” and came up with 47 percent, says survey research veteran Conrad Hackett, a demographer at the Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project.

But University of Notre Dame sociologist Christian Smith came up with 7 percent that same year. Smith counted as evangelical those who said they were “active in a congregation, and they had to be Protestant, and they had to say their faith is important to them,” said Hackett.

Pinning down religious identity in an era when 20 percent are “nones” — people who say they have no particular faith brand — is like trying to climb a greased pole. Neither can you assume that a label reflects reality, or that identity, belief and actions align. Oy!

Speaking of “Oy” ... Pew Research dealt with the complex question of “who is a Jew” by allowing people to define themselves by religion, culture and family ancestry. However, there’s no parallel spot for cultural Christians who have little or no commitment to Christian theology or religious practice.

No survey has a “Christian Lite” category. Maybe they should. When Kinnaman at Barna Group looked at the mix of belief and behavior and church involvement, his organization’s survey found that 38 percent of self-labeled Christians were essentially like nones in their political and cultural outlook.

People fib

Raise your hand if the weight listed on your driver’s license is correct — or ever was. Well, we fib on surveys, too.

When Philip Brenner, a University of Michigan research fellow with the Institute for Social Research, examined hundreds of surveys and time diaries, he found Americans over-report their church attendance by 10 percent to 18 percent.

Why? We give answers that fit our self-image, Brenner said. We reframe the question to be: “Are you the sort of person who attends religious services?” Sure we are.

Methodological madness

We’re all bombarded with online opportunities to answer surveys. Fun — and totally unscientific. Put no credence in the results because they’re in no way representative of anyone except people who are online (no surveying the Amish) and who may have a point of view to promote.

4chan, the anonymous online forum that delights in provoking mischief, recently upended Time magazine’s fourth annual “word banishment” online poll by encouraging people to hate on the word “feminist.”

The magazine editor later apologized for including the word “feminist” — but not for employing a survey method that’s a gateway to troll heaven.

The old-fashioned randomly dialed phone survey is biting the dust. Why? For one, consider whether you even use your smartphone for phone calls anymore. And if you’re under 30, start by Googling “landline.”

So major research firms are moving to elaborately devised panels of people drawn randomly to represent American diversity who are willing to reply online or by mail to surveys. Pew Research devised an American Trends Panel, carefully assessed so everyone isn’t the same age or inclination.

There’s a hitch, however. You can’t track change over time in surveys if the researchers changed methodology, too.

Pew Research recently released a panel-based survey on online and offline religion that found 46 percent of U.S. adults say they saw someone sharing “something about their faith” on the Internet in the last week.

Is that a greater number than five years ago? We can't tell. Earlier surveys about religion and online behavior were phone surveys.

About Our Members and Friends

In Sympathy

Our condolences are with Don and Johanna Karbonic in the passing of his mother, Jane, on Dec. 8. Memorial donations may be made to the Congregational Church of Somersville, CT.

Marilyn Roberts husband, Wendell, died recently and his funeral was held at the Talcottville Congregational Church on Jan. 3.

Ann Crease lost her mom, Theresa Domingues on December 28—just a few days shy of her 101st birthday. Memorial donations may be made to the Congregational Church of Somersville, CT

Our thoughts and prayers are with you all.

Membership Withdrawal

Barbara Bagniet has moved to Bristol and has withdrawn her membership from our church.

January Birthdays

Happy birthday wishes this month go to Mae Chillson, Miriam Cohen, Erin Tishon, Manny Davis, Chloe Crease, Deb Robidoux, Carol Webb, Karen Peck and Judy Peck.

Top of the Slopes

By R. Michael Palan



05545

In the big picture, find these objects.



sock



butter knife



crescent moon



carrot



pear



slice of pizza



banana



needle



fishhook



pencil



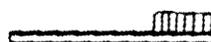
crown



open book



tack



toothbrush

January 2015

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 (web-site) http://new.livestream.com/SomersvilleUCC						
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Epiphany Pageant	Evergreen worship 11 Missions 1 Deacons 7 AA 7	Bible Study 9:30	AA 7 New Year's Day	Supper prep 9	Fundraising supper and Bake Sale 5 & 6:15	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Communion	Ladies Aide 1 Finance 7 AA 7	Bible Study 9:30 Food-share 1	AA 7			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Cabinet meeting Annual reports due	AA 7	Bible Study 9:30	AA 7			
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Spire deadline	Blair Manor worship 10:30 AA 7	Bible Study 9:30 Food-share 1	AA 7	Pot luck supper 6 Annual meeting 7		