The Cross & Flame
The United Methodist Church, Branford • 811 East Main Street, Branford, CT 06405
(203) 488-0549 • umcbranford1966@gmail.com • www.umcbranford.org • Facebook: umcbranford

March 2020

Pastor’s Ponderings

Make Plain the Vision
For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.

- Habakkuk 2:3

A vision statement provides a “picture of a preferred future” for an organization. While UMC, Branford has a vision statement which was crafted years ago, it is not currently functioning as a guide for the mission and ministry work of our congregation.

The anticipated changes coming to The United Methodist Church in the near future have prompted me to invite our church to a time of discernment as we consider the vision the Lord has for us as a faith witness in Branford and the surrounding communities.

Please join me for 3 Wednesday evenings beginning March 18 as we engage the process of “picturing that preferred future” for our church. Through a combination of conversation, prayer and reflection we will build the foundation for a new vision to emerge. We will spend time remembering the past, celebrating the present and leaning into the future.

We will gather each Wednesday at 6 pm for 30-45 minutes. I look forward to seeing you then.

Small Groups Continue

Our Tuesday & Thursday Study Groups continue to meet at 7 PM & 10 AM (respectively). Our curriculum is The Prodigal Prophet by Timothy Keller. Those who want to participate in the study are encouraged to pick up a copy of the book in Connector Hall. A donation of $15 is requested.

The story of Jonah is familiar to nearly all Christians, but it is also one of the most misunderstood. In The Prodigal Prophet, Bible scholar and teacher Timothy Keller takes readers beyond the Sunday school basics to uncover the connections between this rebellious prophet, Jesus, and the prodigal son. Why would Jesus compare himself to Jonah? And what does it mean for His followers today? Providing insight into Jonah’s unusual conclusion, Keller shares the Gospel message at the heart of this parable.

Leadership Training
Calling all Committee Chairs & Church Officers!!

Please join Pastor Kent for a time of Leadership Training on Saturday, March 28 from 10 am to 1 pm (we will likely finish earlier). We will discuss topics such as meeting structure, agendas, and minutes, as well as expectations and responsibilities of leaders. I also want to answer any questions you may have as leaders in our church.

Monday Morning Quarterbacking

Here’s an opportunity to dig deeper into the Sunday Sermon! Pastor Kent shares additional insight into the scriptures and the participants are encouraged to ask questions and share reflections on the material which was preached. Please consider attending on a weekly basis or occasionally as the Spirit moves. This group will continue to meet on Mondays at 10 AM in the Church Office.

Communion In The Community

Pastor Kent leads regular Worship Services with Holy Communion at Artis Senior Living and Guilford House. You are invited to join him any Sunday at 11:30am at Artis or on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month at 1:30pm at the Guilford House.

Pastor Kent

“Where the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit converge to change hearts and lives.”
March Events

Wed, 3/4 6pm: Nominating Committee
Wed, 3/4 7pm: Trustees
Fri, 3/6, 12pm: World Day of Prayer (see article on page 3)
Wed, 3/11 5:30pm: Learn & Play Board
Wed, 3/18 6pm: Visioning
Wed, 3/18 6:15pm: Prayer Meeting
Wed, 3/18 7pm: Faithful Stewards
Sat, 3/21 8am: Men’s Breakfast
Wed, 3/25 6pm: Visioning
Wed, 3/25 7pm: Finance Committee
Fri, 3/27 6pm: Community Dinner
Sat, 3/28 10am: Leadership Training

WEEKLY CALENDAR

SUNDAYS:
9:30am Worship Service/Sunday School
11:30am Worship/Communion at Artis
MONDAYS:
10am Monday Morning Quarterbacking
4:30pm Sewing for God
TUESDAYS:
7-8:30pm Pastor’s Bible Study Group
7:30pm AA meeting
WEDNESDAYS:
10am Learn & Play Chapel
10:30am Prayer Shawl Ministry
11am Faith Talk at Artis
THURSDAYS:
10am Pastor’s Bible Study Group
1:30pm Worship/Communion at Guilford House (1st & 3rd Thurs. of the month)
7:30pm Al-Anon meeting
SATURDAYS:
7pm AA meeting

March Birthdays

1 Ruth Moon
2 Hannah Jackson, Kaylee Roberts, Jean Sunny
8 Helen Wems
9 Judy Loukides
13 Sean Deveau, Joan Gerlach
14 Erin Marszalek
21 June Ann Greeley
25 Madison Ballard
26 Bob Nerkowski
28 Kylie James
30 Ginny Busca

March Anniversaries

26 John & Connie Nickou
29 John & Sue Beatty

SUNDAY SCHEDULE
Worship & Sunday School - 9:30am
(No Sunday School on 1st Sunday of the month)

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS
Tues thru Thurs 9:00am-2:00pm

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
The 20th of every month - please send articles to Lori Cartwright at loriahlcart@gmail.com

Missed a Sunday? Unable to attend worship?
You can catch the weekly sermon video at www.umcbranford.org

“Where the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit converge to change hearts and lives.”
Additional Principle Mortgage Opportunity

How can you change your $10 donation into $19.13? Give it to the church and indicate that you want the donation to be an extra principle payment against the mortgage.

Currently, our mortgage is about $418,000. The mortgage balloons in 2025. We anticipate that it will be refinanced. If it is refinanced at the current rate and terms, the mortgage will be paid off in 2035.

The additional ten dollars put towards the mortgage principle reduces interest by $9.13. So your $10 becomes $19.13!

Thank you to John Beatty for providing this information.

RMD: An Alternative Giving Method

Those of us age 70½ or older know that the RMD [Required Minimum Distribution] is the amount that must be withdrawn from any IRAs that we have.

The good news is that if you direct the IRA trustee to make the payment directly to UMC Branford, the distribution does not show up on your tax return—no federal tax, no state tax. The donation can be your normal pledge or an extra donation, if you are so inclined. It’s quick and easy, and you pay less taxes than if you received your RMD and then wrote a check to the church.

Thank you to John Beatty for providing this information which may be an opportunity for some members of our congregation.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER
Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk
March 6, 2020 12-2pm • St. Mary’s Church

World Day of Prayer is a movement and a process that requires a commitment in time, study, preparation, and personal stretching in order to bring into a local community, in an authentic way, the realities of women in distant places. It is a movement symbolized by an annual day of celebration on the first Friday of March which all people are welcome to participate in. Through World Day of Prayer, women around the world affirm their faith in Jesus Christ and are encouraged to strive for wisdom to guide the actions in our daily lives.

The host country for WDP 2020 is Zimbabwe. The WDP 2020 program is based on Jesus’ encounter with a person who, although positioned for healing, had not acted upon the opportunities given (John 5:2-9a). Jesus asked, “Do you want to be made well? Rise! Take your mat and walk”. You are faced with this life-changing question. What are you going to do? Use this opportunity to reflect with your WDP group, community and ecumenical partners. Prayer and action are what link us together around the globe.

This year our friends at St. Mary’s Church in Branford will be hosting the service. The service will include many women from Branford churches, including UMC Branford and other local town churches. The service is open to everyone, so please bring a friend or two. Refreshments and fellowship will immediately follow the service.

For more information, visit: www.wdp-usa.org

“Where the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit converge to change hearts and lives.”
We hope that you all enjoyed the cards that the Learn & Play children made for you for Valentine’s Day! Each class enjoyed making cards to help all of us remember that we are God’s children and we are loved by Him.

Our Pre-K class will enjoy a visit to our friends at Artis by the time The Cross & Flame goes to print. We will be doing a St. Patrick’s Day craft with the residents and singing a few of our favorite songs. Hopefully, the weather will continue to cooperate with us so we can walk across Route 1 for our visit.

Looking ahead to March: Learn & Play will participate with the church in the collection for the Diaper Drive to benefit the Branford Pantry.

We are getting ready to embark on the Easter Season at Learn & Play. During the month of March, our Bible themes will be Mary and Martha and the Anointing of Jesus, Jesus’ Entry to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Washing of the Disciples Feet, the Last Supper, and Jesus is Arrested. Our faith point is “Jesus is Lord”, and our Scripture verse is “We have seen the Lord.” (John 20:25). Our traditional themes will be Dr. Seuss, baby animals, feet and spring.

The preschool and Pre-K classes have been enjoying large muscle movement activities with Coach Shane during these winter months. Coach Shane comes to visit us every other week and provides lots of fun games to help us get moving. The perfect thing when we can’t always get outside!

Parent/Teacher conferences will take place the weeks of March 23 and 30. All parents that desire a conference will be able to sign up to speak with their child’s teacher about their development and progress on the CT Early Learning Development Standards.

Looking ahead to April: We will continue with our Easter lessons, which will culminate on April 7 with an Easter Experience for the children. We will start the day with donkey rides to experience how Jesus rode into town, while others will be waving palm branches shouting "Hosanna!" We will then move into an area where we can wash feet as Jesus did (we will use sensory tables and baby dolls, however) and then experience the Last Supper with matzo that we will make ourselves the previous day. After that we will move to “the garden” for a time of prayer and reflection followed by an age appropriate crucifixion station where children can take turns hammering nails into wood. We will then move into the tomb and shroud ourselves with toilet tissue. Our final stop will be in the chapel with Pastor Kent, who will explain how Jesus dies but the Good News is that He rose again. We will follow up this experience the following day in chapel with the Resurrection Eggs. Hopefully this will help the children get a “hands on” understanding of the meaning of Easter.

Robin Costa
New Address!

Adam Jackson
Centennial Hall
Western Connecticut State University
181 White Street
Danbury, CT 06810

Sewing for God
Mondays 4:30 to 7:00 pm

I can’t believe we layered 13 quilts in one afternoon!! Thank you to Gail, Cindy, and June for their help! Gail and I have been quilting away to get these 13 quilts ready to deliver to Artis on Friday, March 6 - we’ll be dropping them off at approximately 2:30 pm, if you want to join us.

Our current plans are to continue to make more tops/quilts to build up our shelves for future requests from Artis (or anyone who may want one).

If you can assist in any way with pinning or pressing, feel free to join us (weather permitting). All supplies are provided, or you can bring your own.

As always, if you have any questions, please contact Rosemary at (203) 589-1620 (leave a message).

LOOKING FOR YOUR SODA CAN TABS!
Next Fill-Up Date: April 2019

Please continue to help support our friends at Ronald McDonald House. It’s an easy way to support the Ronald McDonald House New Haven so they can continue to provide their services at no charge.

It’s easy! All you need to do is remove the tab from each can before you recycle it. It’s fun! You can involve community groups and your family in supporting the cause without a lot of effort. Approximately 1,200 tabs make up a pound. Put a small jar on your counter and you will be surprised how fast it will fill up.

A huge thank-you to everyone who contributed to this years Soup Bowl Luncheon!. Hungry parishioners were treated to 13 varieties of soups and assorted breads. Funds raised from the luncheon will result in $150 being donated to each of the two Women’s Shelters we support.

Foreshadowing the results of the game later that day, the Chiefs beat the 49ers in our Soup Pot Prediction Collection. These funds plus the 112 cans of soup we collected will be contributed to the Food Pantry!

March Mission: Diaper Collection!

We are collecting diapers (any size) during the month of March. All donations will be given to the Branford Diaper Bank, who will distribute them to families in need. Those who want to make a donation toward the purchase of diapers are welcome to do so - we have others who are willing to shop!
Pastor’s Office Hours and Availability

Pastor Kent will be in the office or around the church building on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 8am to 1pm (with the exception of being at Artis from 11-11:30 am on Wednesdays).

He welcomes anyone who wants to stop in and visit during those times.

If you would like to be in touch or schedule an appointment outside of those hours, Pastor Kent can be reached on his cell phone or by email: (845) 522-1233 UMCBPastor@gmail.com

To all the Secret Pals

Sending you smiles and sunshine to brighten your day and to let you know you’re thought of in a very special way.

I would like to thank my Secret Pal for the lovely book & card - Rosemary

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The 13th ANNUAL SHORELINE TRAIN SHOW
Saturday, April 4, 2020
9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Vendors & Operating Layouts
Wheelchair Accessible
Food Service on Premises
Door prizes Every Hour

Donation: Adults $6
Seniors (60 & up) $4
Children up to age 12 FREE!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: Please contact Larry Appleton at (203) 457-1471 or lappleton795@comcast.net if you can help.

Holiday Festival 2020

Bet you thought I would go away until summer, at least! No such luck.

Although we have not set a definite date, I expect it will be scheduled for early November. In the meantime, you can start working on items for the festival. I waited too long last year and then didn't have time to get things done. This year, I already have two hats knit - with more in the works. Hopefully you'll come up with some ideas to start creating sales items now. Time passes quickly!

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Ginger
ACROSS
3. Saul of Tarsus
6. The ten ___________.
9. The wisest king
10. He was thrown into the lions den
12. The Mother of Jesus
13. Mount where Jesus was crucified
16. King that dreamed of a big statue
17. Who defeated Goliath?
18. Lived 969 years

DOWN
1. Esau sold his birthright to
2. Name of the first woman
4. One of the four books of the Bible that begins w the letter "H"
5. River where Jesus was baptized
7. He built an ark
8. Occupation of Abel
11. It was swallowed by a big fish
14. Island where John was imprisoned
15. Third son of Adam and Eve