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

JUNE 2022

Pastor's Ponderings

Pastor Kent Jackson • umcbpastor@gmail.com • 203-488-0549 (phone) • 845-522-1233 (cell/text)

HELP WANTED!

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

1 Peter 4:10 NIV

What is your gift? What do you do well? What gives you energy?

Each of us has a spiritual gift, and as Faithful Stewards of all that God has given us, we each have the opportunity to use that gift (or those gifts) to serve others.

In your devotional time, please take a moment to read Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 to learn more about the gifts of the Spirit.

Next, read the rest of this newsletter *devotionally*, asking the Lord to reveal ministries and activities where you can volunteer to use your gifts by serving others through the ministries of UMC, Branford.

Additionally, here are a few areas of service being reinstated—we would welcome your participation!

- Lay readers on Sunday Morning to help lead worship (see Pastor Kent)
- Someone to change the sign board message each week (see Pastor Kent)
- Vocalists to offer Special Music (see Sharon Lehr)
- Volunteers to staff our booth at Branford Fest on June 18 (sign up in Connector Hall)

May you experience God's blessing as you share the love of Jesus by using your gifts in ministry.

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Our secretary, Sharon Grasso, is available in the church office on Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 8:00am to 12:00pm. You can reach her at 203-488-0549.

Pastor Kent is typically in the office Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 9:00am to 2:00 pm. He is also available on Saturdays and Sundays, but does not keep regular office hours those days.

Please call first if you plan to stop in to see Sharon or Pastor Kent, as their schedules sometimes change unexpectedly.

Pastor Kent can be reached anytime by email, phone, or text—see his contact info above. Preferable contact hours are between 7:00am-9:00pm.

Please be aware that Pastor Kent takes a Sabbath Day on Mondays, and his day off is Friday. For Pastoral Emergencies, you may contact Pastor Kent anytime. He will continue to be available for occasional Monday evening meetings and Friday evening Community Dinners.

Pastor Kent also coaches Middle School Cross Country and High School Track and Field in Branford. His usual coaching schedule is 3 to 4:30pm in the Fall and 2:30 to 4:30pm in the Winter/Spring. Coaching is an extension of Pastor Kent's ministry, as he has the opportunity to connect with about 100 Branford families and their children.

If you have any questions about the Pastor's schedule, please feel free to be in touch with Pastor Kent directly or with David Wells, Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, at gdavid3@yahoo.com.

ROMANS 12:12 MINISTRY

Our current Prayer Initiative at UMC, Branford continues! Romans 12:12 reminds us to "be constant in prayer." With that in mind, the members and friends of UMC, Branford are encouraged to participate in the following ways:

- Sign up for the Prayer Connection using the online form at the bottom of the front page of

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our church website: umcbranford.org. When a notice of a prayer concern is received, an email message is sent to all participants. Those without computers should contact Pastor Kent, who will arrange for them to receive a phone call with the pertinent information.

- A weekly Prayer Calendar with local, regional, and global prayer concerns will be distributed at Sunday worship service, included in the weekly email, and posted on our website. You can also request to receive it by email or USPS.
- A monthly Prayer Meeting is being held on the 12th day of the month at 12 noon (Romans 12:12). Zoom Meeting ID: 891 5606 4509 or call 929-205-6099, then enter meeting ID.

I look forward to many times of fervent prayer as we gather together as the Body of Christ.

MONDAY MORNING QUARTERBACKING IS BECOMING...TUESDAY TALK-BACK!

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.

The group meets via Conference Call at 10:10am on Tuesdays. Please dial in at 425-436-6385 using access code 841200#. If this time is not convenient, or if you would like to participate in an in-person group, please contact Pastor Kent.

Trustees Fundraiser: PICK A PROJECT

Would you like to help fund a Trustee maintenance project? Every year or two, our UMCB Trustees Committeee members walk through the building and around the property to assess repairs and any other needed work.

For 2022, the Trustees have identified new projects and are in the process of scheduling and getting cost estimates.

- Resealing the Church parking lot and restriping parking spaces (estimate: $4,400)
- Resealing the Parsonage driveway (estimate: $400)
- Cleaning the carpets in the Sanctuary, Connector Hall, and Herr Hall (estimate: pending)
- Tree removal: several trees around the Church and back yard of the Parsonage (estimate: $3,000)

If you would like to help fund one of these projects, please send a check to the church or make a donation online. In the memo line, please write PICK A PROJECT and include the name of the project. All donations qualify as tax-deductible contributions.

SMALL STUDY GROUPS

Do you ever wonder, "Why doesn't God answer my prayers?" Do you wish you could see the evidence that prayer changes lives? Are you tired of playing it safe with your faith? In Dangerous Prayers, New York Times bestselling author Craig Groeschel helps you unlock your greatest potential and tackle your greatest fears by praying stronger, more passionate prayers that lead you into a deeper faith.

Prayer moves the heart of God—but some prayers move Him more than others. He wants more for us than a tepid faith and half-hearted routines at the dinner table. He's called you to a life of courage, not comfort.

This book will show you how to pray the prayers that search your soul, break your habits, and send you to pursue the calling God has for you. But be warned: if you're fine with settling for what's easy, or you're OK with staying on the sidelines, this book isn't for you. You'll be challenged. You'll be tested. You'll be moved to take a long, hard look at your heart.

But you'll be inspired, too.

You'll be inspired to pray boldly. To pray powerfully. To pray with fire. You'll see how you can trade ineffective prayers and lukewarm faith for raw, daring prayers that will push you to new levels of passion and fulfillment. You'll discover the secret to overcoming fears of loss, rejection, failure, and the unknown and welcome the blessings God has for you on the other side.

You'll gain the courage it takes to pray dangerous prayers.

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Please note: The Thursday morning group continues to meet at 10:10am via conference call. Please call 425-436-6385 and use access code 841200#.

However, the Evening group will have a varied schedule, listed below. Please email Pastor Kent for the Zoom link or telephone number.

I would love to add new people to either group or start another group. ***Please let me know if another day/time would be preferable for you.***

Reading Schedule:
Session 1: Intro. & Part 1 pg. 23-38
Mon. May 2 (7pm), Thu. May 5 (10:10 AM)
Session 2: Part 1 pg. 39-59
Tue. May 10 (7pm), Thu. May 12 (10:10 AM)
Session 3: Part 2 pg. 62-86
Mon. May 16 (7pm), Thu. May 19 (10:10 AM)
Session 4: Part 2 pg. 87-103
Thu. May 26 (7pm), Thu. May 26 (10:10 AM)
Session 5: Part 3 pg. 106-132
Tue. May 31 (7pm), Thu. June 2 (10:10 AM)
Session 6: Part 3 pg. 133-161
Tue. June 7 (7pm), Thu. June 9 (10:10 AM)

DIGITAL MINISTRY TEAM

In order to be proactive with our efforts to reach beyond the walls of our church building with the message of the Gospel, I am looking for volunteers to be a part of our new *Digital Ministry* initiative.

Our livestreamed Sunday Service is just the first step. Please let me know if you would like to help plan for the future by enhancing our physical church ministry via social media and other digital platforms.

MINISTRIES OF PRAYER AND CARE

As we continue to navigate through the changes in ministry in light of the pandemic, I am constantly looking for new ways that we can *be the church*. It is essential during this time that we engage in new ways of keeping in touch with one another.

If you would be willing to make phone calls as part of the **Ministries of Prayer and Care**, please contact me by phone or email. Each volunteer will be assigned 3-4 families to keep in touch with on a monthly basis. Volunteers will also share with Pastor Kent any joys or concerns they become aware of.

You are always welcome to contact Pastor Kent directly if you have any needs or information you would like to share.

MINISTRY DURING THE PANDEMIC

PASTORAL CARE: Pastor Kent is available to meet with you for any of your Pastoral Care needs—in person, by Zoom, or by phone.

MEETINGS: Committee meetings are being held using a HYBRID format—in-person and via Zoom. Committee members will automatically be sent an invitation to their meetings. If you would like to receive an invitation to join a meeting, please contact Pastor Kent ahead of time so you can receive the log-in information.

FINANCES: Your weekly offerings may be placed in the Offering Box at the entrance to the sanctuary or mailed to the church office if you are not attending in-person worship. Please consider giving online by clicking the "Give Now" button on the church website at www.UMCBranford.org

COMMUNICATION The church office is open from 8am-12pm Monday, Thursday, and Friday. You are welcome to visit the church office with any church business you need to conduct.

Blessings,

Pastor Kent

BLESSING OF THE BIKES

Point your wheels towards UMC, Branford on Sunday, June 5 at 2pm for a blessing, music, and refreshments. Motorcycles, mopeds, scooters, and bicycles are welcome! As we get outside for the spring and summer, ride with God as your co-pilot!

June Events

Thurs 6/2, 6pm: Abundant Health Planning
Thurs 6/2, 7pm: Sunshine Festival Planning
Sun 6/5, 2pm: Blessing of the Bikes
Wed 6/8, 6pm: Finance Committee
Wed 6/8, 7pm: Church Council
Sun 6/12, 12:12pm: Romans 12:12 Prayer
Wed 6/15, 7pm: Faithful Stewards
Fri 6/17, 5pm: Learn & Play Graduation
Sat 6/18, 8am: Men's Breakfast
Sat 6/18: Branford Festival
Mon 6/20, 12pm: Women's Luncheon
Wed 6/22, 7pm: Staff Parish Relations Committee
Thurs 6/23, 7pm: Parish Council
Fri 6/24, 6pm: Community Dinner

WEEKLY CALENDAR

SUNDAYS
9:30am **Worship Service** (live & streamed)

MONDAYS
4:30 **Sewing for God** (except 6/20)

TUESDAYS
10am **Tuesday Talk Back**
7pm **Pastor's Bible Study Group**
7:30pm **AA meeting**

WEDNESDAYS
10:30am **Prayer Shawl Ministry**

THURSDAYS
10am **Pastor's Bible Study Group**
7:30pm **Al-Anon meeting**

SATURDAYS
7pm **AA meeting**

June Birthdays

1 Steven Anderson
6 Chris Furtak
10 Lisa Schickler
13 Eleanor Schickler, Anthony Torello
13 Melanie Viets
16 Benjamin Mazzucco, David Wells
16 Pastor Kent Jackson
17 JOHN WESLEY (b. 1703)
19 Brian Wolek
20 Paul Wezenski
21 George Klein
28 Robert McMahon
29 Jesse Rader
30 Grace Carr, Joey Steeves

June Anniversaries

4 Jean & Guy Sunny
13 Anne & Kent Jackson
14 Linda & Bill Beagle
19 Beverly & Scott Carr
20 Larry & Sam Appleton

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

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

Missed a Sunday? Unable to attend worship?
Watch past services at www.umcbranford.org

KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH WHAT'S HAPPENING AT UMCB:

www.facebook.com/umcbranford
https://twitter.com/UMCBranford

Also check out:

www.facebook.com/unitedmethodistchurch
www.facebook.com/umcgeneralconference
www.facebook.com/NYACUMC

"Where the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit converge to change hearts and lives."

Learn & Play

Christian Early Learning Center WWW.LEARNANDPLAYCHRISTIAN.ORG

Follow Learn & Play on Facebook - it's a great way to see what our young students are up to!
Find them on Facebook (or just search their name):
https://www.facebook.com/Learn-Play-Christian-Early-Learning-Center-864205240297632

Learn & Play Christian Early Learning Center
May 5 at 10:15 AM

Our "All Around the World" unit is back - each classroom will focus on a different country each day!

When teachers are able to help their students understand different cultures, it encourages children to feel good about who they are, where they fit in the world and appreciate diversity in others!

It helps to build strong, inclusive communities where everyone enjoys a sense of being valued and belonging, which supports positive mental health.

Learn & Play Christian Early Learning Center
May 11 at 11:45 AM

Spread your wings, little butterfly 🦋

After 6 weeks, we are finally able to release our butterflies into nature!

Learn & Play Christian Early Learning Center is 😸 feeling hungry.
May 20 at 12:37 PM

Who knew Fun Fridays could be so yummy?!

Our classrooms celebrated National Pizza Party Day with a special pizza lunch!

Learn & Play Christian Early Learning Center
May 27 at 10:36 AM

Today ends our "All Around the World" journey - our friends traveled to 20 different places around the globe throughout the month of May.

We are grateful for all that we've learned & for our creative teachers who have helped open our eyes to new cultures!

WELCOME OUR NEW STAFF MEMBER!

Please join us in extending a warm welcome to our newest staff member, Jay Oliverio!

Jay is a bookkeeper with 15+ years of experience in Quickbooks. He's a graduate of Southern Connecticut State University, where he played baseball. He lives in North Branford with his family.

Jay will handle our Quickbooks reports and reconcilliation, assist with budgeting, and support Learn & Play with their finances.

BRANFORD FESTIVAL RETURNS!

After a 2-year hiatus, the 38th Annual Branford Festival returns to our town green on June 17, 18, and 19.

UMC, Branford plans to have a booth at the craft/ business fair on June 18.

Volunteers are needed! Please look for signup sheets in Connector Hall or call or e-mail the church office for details!

CONGRATS TO OUR GRADS!

Congratulations to our college graduates!

Daniel Gagné graduated from Southern Connecticut State University with a Bachelors degree in Accounting & Business.

Megan Wells graduated from the University of Arizona with a BA in Psychology and a minor in Criminal Justice. She will be continuing her education at Northern Michigan University, where she will be studying for her Master in Psychology and be a graduate teaching assistant.

Next month we will be highlighting our high school graduates. Please forward information to Lori C. at loriahlcart@gmail.com.

SEWING FOR GOD

YES, WE ARE SEWING!
June: every Monday except 6/20
July: 7/11 & 7/25
4:30pm to 6:30pm (-ish)

It's been a long 6 months since we last met and I know that we are more than ready to get started on sewing tops for our friends at Artis and starting on projects including the Fall Festival, Life Haven, and our Veterans in November.

With that in mind, we will start meeting in Herr Hall with limited supplies (hence my traveling box) and start working on tops until the conference room is again available.

DONATION OF FABRICS (100% cotton) ARE STILL WELCOME!

Looking forward to seeing you and sewing away!

Rosemary

KEEP SAVING YOUR SODA CAN TABS!

Next delivery date: August 1
Please continue to collect your tabs and place them in the green bin outside of church. The funds raised support the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Connecticut and Western Massachusetts. Every tab makes a difference, just like you do!

Rosemary & Tony

WOMEN'S LUNCHEON

Monday, June 20 • 12:00-2:30pm

Sam's Dockside Seafood & Grill
145 Block Island Road, Branford
Please RSVP by Sunday 6/19

Questions? Call Rosemary 203-589-1620

SAVE THESE DATES FOR SUMMER:

Monday, July 18
Eli's on the Hill, Branford

Monday, August 15
Lenny & Joe's Fish Tale, Westbrook

Friday, June 24, 6pm

The Community Dinner will be held as a drive-thru event while Herr Hall is under reconstruction. Pick up dinner-to-go in the church parking lot.

OCTOBER FESTIVAL
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2022

We will be having several fun workshops during the upcoming summer and early fall months. It's never too early to start making things for the Festival!

FIRST WORKSHOP:
Saturday July 9, 2022 • 12 noon to 3:00 pm (longer if needed)

"Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." John 4:35

Let us go to the fields and build a scarecrow together! This is a contest for the Festival, so you bring your own old clothing, headgear, and embellishments—the frame will be provided. We're guaranteed to have a lot of laughs! Invite your kids and grandkids to come and help you, or they can make one for themselves! By yourself? Don't worry! Ask a church member to partner with you and make one together!

Light refreshments will be provided. Please contact Diane Nerkowski at (203) 248-9066 to say you are coming and how many frames you need!

HERE'S SOME IDEAS FOR OTHER CRAFTS YOU CAN PREPARE:

PET TREATS & TOYS
Always a popular item!

TAG SALE
Set up your own table!

BAKED GOODS
Pies • Cakes • Cookies