The Cross & Flame

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023

Pastor's Ponderings

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

JESUS IS THE LIGHT!

Reflections Upon Reading the Gospel of John 1:6-13

John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. *John 1:8*

John was a witness TO the Light and Jesus IS the Light.

As a witness, John would REFLECT the Light of Jesus so others would see Jesus.

I am also a messenger. While people may want me to BE the Light, I must never forget and always act in a way that is a reflection of Jesus as the Light.

The key to ministry (for both Clergy and Laity) is to help others see and follow Jesus as we have committed our lives to seeing and following Jesus.

Jesus IS the Light!!!

SEEKING COMMUNITY DINNER CHEF

Bob Nerkowski has been our "Chief Cook" since the beginning of this ministry, serving over 100 delicious Community Dinners! Thank you, Bob, for your dedication to this important ministry.

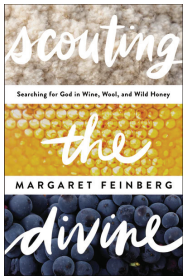
After many years of faithful service as our Chef, Bob is "retiring" from this ministry.

We would like to continue offering this monthly meal, but we need new "Cooks in the Kitchen"! Please let Pastor Kent know if you would like to prepare a meal for about 25-30 people. You may pick your own month (or months). The cost of groceries will be reimbursed to anyone who volunteers.

ASH WEDNESDAY

Lent begins on February 22. An opportunity for worship will be provided at 12 noon and at 7 pm. These services will be quiet, meditative experiences which will also include the imposition of ashes for those who choose to receive them. More details will be available in the weekly blast as the date gets closer.

SMALL GROUPS CONTINUE



Sometimes, life doesn't turn out the way you expect. You may find yourself discouraged, disappointed, even lonely. You wonder, *Where are you, God?*

Margaret Feinberg understands these doubts and questions. In Scouting the Divine, you're invited to discover answers to your deepest longings as you embark on a wild, woolly spiritual adventure.

continued

You'll nestle with sheep under the watchful eye of a good shepherd, explore the wonders of a beehive with a veteran beekeeper, study the rhythms of seeding and harvest with a Nebraska farmer, and pluck grapes in Napa Valley.

With moments of raw vulnerability and outrageous hilarity, you'll learn how God gets his hands dirty in this world to reveal his fiery love. Along the way, you'll discover a more meaningful, purposeful life--one in which God is nearer and more real than you ever thought possible.

Currently we have 2 Study Groups, which meet on Tuesday evenings and Thursday mornings. 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.*

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Church office hours are 9am to 1pm, Monday through Thursday. Please feel free to contact our church secretary, Rosemary, during these hours with any questions or administrative needs.

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

You may contact Pastor Kent by email, phone, or text—see his contact info on the front page of the newsletter. Preferable contact hours are between 7:00am to 9:00pm.

Pastor Kent also coaches middle school cross-country and high school track and field in Branford. His coaching schedule in the Winter/Spring is 2:30 to 4:30, Monday through Fridau. Coaching is an extension of Pastor Kent's ministry, as he is able to connect with about 100 Branford families and their children.

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

ROMANS 12:12 MINISTRY

Thursday, January 12 at 12:12pm
Sunday, February 12 at 12:12pm

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

A monthly Prayer Meeting is 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 and enter the meeting ID.

The opportunity for individual prayer is available after Sunday Morning worship, coordinated by Anne Jackson. After the Benediction, two Prayer Team members will be available at the front of the sanctuary. Those desiring prayer may come forward to share their requests and be prayed for. Those not coming forward are invited to maintain a spirit of worship through the end of the Postlude. We encourage anyone who wants to visit after worship to move their conversations to Connector Hall or Herr Hall so that we may maintain a prayerful attitude in the Sanctuary for those who remain.

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

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

I am sincerely grateful to the members and friends of UMC, Branford for your contributions toward the Staff Christmas Bonus. Thank you for your generosity and thoughtfulness! May the Spirit of Christmas bring you joy and peace throughout the new year.

Blessings,

Pastor Kent

January/February Events

Wed 1/11, 6:30pm: Learn & Play Advisory Council
Thur 1/12, 12:12pm: Romans 12:12 Prayer
Thur 1/12, 7pm: Staff Parish Relations Committee
Mon 1/16, 12pm: Ladies Luncheon
Sat 1/21, 8am: Men's Breakfast
Wed 1/25, 7pm: Finance Committee
Fri 1/27, 6pm: Community Dinner
Wed 2/1, 7pm: Church Council
Sun 2/12, 12:12pm: Romans 12:12 Prayer
Sun 2/12, 12:12pm: Souper Bowl of Caring
Mon 2/13, 7pm: Parish Council
Tues 2/14, 5pm: Branford Diaper Bank
Wed 2/15, 7pm: Faithful Stewards
Sat 2/18, 8am: Men's Breakfast
Mon 2/20, 12pm: Ladies Luncheon
Wed 2/22, 12pm & 7pm: Ash Wednesday Services
Wed 2/22, 7pm: Staff Parish Relations Committee
Fri 2/24, 6pm: Community Dinner

Committee meetings are held in a hybrid format, both in-person and via Zoom. Committee members will be sent an invitation to their meetings. If you would like to join a meeting, contact Pastor Kent to receive the log-in information.

WEEKLY CALENDAR

SUNDAYS
9:30am **Worship Service** (live & streamed)
MONDAYS
1PM **Sewing for God** (except 1/ & 2/)
TUESDAYS
10am **Tuesday Talk Back**
7pm **Advent Study Group**
7:30pm **AA meeting**
WEDNESDAYS
10:30am **Prayer Shawl Ministry**
THURSDAYS
7:30pm **Al-Anon meeting**
SATURDAYS
7pm **AA meeting**

January/February Birthdays

Jan 3 Bekah Gerlach
12 Michael Luzzi
16 Bill Beagle
20 Shina Kim
24 Paul Dineen
25 Shanta Kapadia
28 Shirley Gilkerson, Lydia Wezenski
31 Haley Mazzucco
Feb 1 Jennifer Sygiel
3 Sam Appleton
6 Len Dunican
8 Rick Gregoire
13 Sue Beatty, Dick Robinson
15 Joan Dunican
16 Lori Cartwright
17 Raymond Nickou
18 Charlotte Rispoli
19 Madelyn Caruso, Pam Johnson
20 Paige Machnicz
25 Heather Mazzucco

January/February Anniversaries

Jan 13 Guy & Mary Marszalek
24 Bob & Conny Umile
Feb 13 John & Carolyn Flynn
19 Ro & Dick Robinson
27 Charlie & Pat Steeves

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."

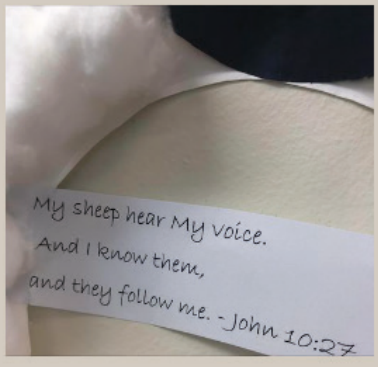
LEARN & PLAY

Christian Early Learning Center WWW.LEARNANDPLAYCHRISTIAN.ORG

Learn & Play Christian Early Learning Center
December 16, 2022 at 2:30 PM ·

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me" John 10:14

This week theme: Sheep!
We will tell the World about Jesus 🙏

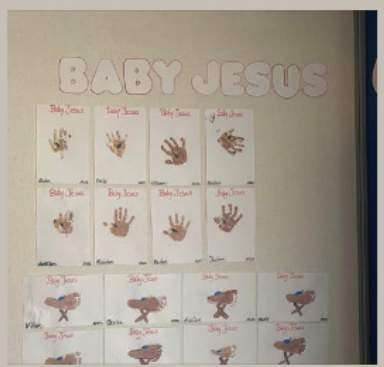


Learn & Play Christian Early Learning Center
December 20, 2022 at 1:42 PM ·

On the Behalf of Learn and Play Christian Early Learning Center, We would like to Wish all of our families and Supporters a blessed Christmas and a joyous New Years! We pray that next year will bring added grace, added strength and nothing but the best in Jesus Name. You will be victorious in every thing you do because the grace of God is at work in you! We Love you all, God bless 💞🎀

Learn & Play Christian Early Learning Center
December 9, 2022 ·

It's all about JESUS!! ❤️ We are grateful for all the Lord has done for us!



Learn & Play Christian Early Learning Center
December 15, 2022 at 4:49 PM ·

Thank you so much Master Donte! for this wonderful time! The children had so much fun! Thank you for all you have taught the children!We can't wait to have you again! Northeast Taekwondo CT

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 2023, 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)
- New Playscape for Learn & Play (estimate: $15,000)
- Replace office computer (estimate: $1,200)

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.

WEEKLY OFFERINGS

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.

BRANFORD DIAPER BANK
Feb. 14, 5-6:30pm

On the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 5:00-6:30PM, we need at least three volunteers to help at the Branford Diaper Bank, located at 30 Harrison Ave. Please contact me if you are willing to help.

The Diaper Bank is in need of larger size 4, 5, 6 and 7 diapers. Their biggest need: BABY WIPES!

Donations can be brought to church with you on Sunday or left outside in the green bin at any time.

We are looking for volunteers to help keep our beautiful church clean and presentable. There is a checklist of what areas need attending and all cleaning supplies are stocked and ready for use.

Just an hour a week would be a beautiful gift to our parish community. Many hands make light work, so the more people we can get to join this much needed ministry the easier it will be on all to keep God's House sparkling!

For more information or to sign up for this ministry, please contact Roger Gagné at (203) 314-7071 or rjgagne@gmail.com.

SECRET PAL 2023

Everyone should have received their Secret Pal sheets by now. If you haven't, please touch base with Laurie Gagne.

COMMUNITY DINNER

Fridays, Jan. 27 & Feb. 24, 6pm

Come inside and enjoy a home cooked meal! If you can't join us inside, takeout is also available.The food is good and the fellowship is better. Hope to see you there!

To my church family and friends,

There are not enough words to thank each and every one of our church family and friends for your kind words, cards, flowers, and Angel Meals that you have provided over the past couple of months. "Thank you" is not enough to capture the gratitude of my heart for your warm kindness towards me in this difficult time.

Everyone did a beautiful job on Tony's service and the reception. There were so many of you that paid your respects. I'm so grateful for the love shown to me and my family. He will be missed by so many, especially me.

Thank you again for your love and support.

Rosemary

Jesus Christ Superstar at the Shubert Theater

Hamden Plains UMC is planning a Parish-wide event to attend *Jesus Christ Superstar* at the Shubert in New Haven on Saturday, April 22, 2023 at 2PM.

If you are interesting in attending, please reach out to Laurie via gagnes@snet.net or in person at Sunday worship.

SEWING FOR GOD

Mondays 1-4pm (except 1/16 & 2/20)

Are you ready to sew??? We are on a special mission to make 100+ quilts by this fall. Can we do it? I know we can!!! This is in addition to the quilts for our friends at Artis and the Veterans in November.

Come join us as we sew and fellowship together. Don't know how? There are many ways you could help, such as pinning, ironing, and trimming.

If you know someone who would like the comfort of a warm quilt wrapped around them, please let Rosemary know and we will get one ready for you.

Our first Potluck Christmas luncheon and Cookie Swap was a big success and so much fun! We had lots and lots of food and incredible cookies that all looked awesome and tasted just as good! We had over 20 different kinds of cookies and everyone took home enough to make up trays or just eat them all themselves.

We held our Charge Conference right in the middle, which made Pastor Kent happy, as there usually aren't that many people in attendance. It was a win-win for everyone!

Looking forward to the next Potluck Luncheon!

Diane

THE CONNECTICUT HOSPICE

The Connecticut Hospice is accepting applications for new volunteers to help families n need of your care and support. If you are interested in providing companionship, light housekeeping or making meals please contact Joan Cullen, Director of Volunteers at (203) 315-7510.

HOLY COMMUNION

On the first Sunday of each month, we remember the Lord's Supper as a celebration of what Jesus has done and continues to do for each of us. May you feel the warmth and comfort of the Lord's love all the days of your life.

Consecrated communion elements are available for pickup if you can't join us in person. Please contact Pastor Kent.

The Prayer Shawl Ministry is once again meeting in person! Join them on Wednesdays from 10:30am to 12pm.

The group knits and crochets shawls, lap robes, and blankets, as well as items for the church fairs and festivals. The shawls are for those in need of support during illnesses, deaths, and other tragedies. They are also given to those who are celebrating joys. Anyone is welcome to take a shawl and card from the basket in Herr Hallway to pass on to someone who they feel would receive comfort from it.

Don't know how to knit or crochet? They'll even offer instructions if you need them. It's a nice group and a great chance to socialize. Come every week or as often as you can!

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS...

YOUR OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD SHOE BOX??

Have you been tracking your shoebox? If you've got the code from your shoebox label, you can go to www.samaritanspurse.org/label to find out what country it was sent to.

Let's find out all the places they've gone! Email your location to Lori C at loriahlcart@gmail.com and we'll put the list in the next Cross & Flame!

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

Souper Bowl of Caring is a nation-wide movement, inspiring people to give locally and make a collective impact on hunger.

tacklehunger.org

We will be hosting a soup luncheon after service on Sunday, February 12. We'd love for you to make your favorite soup and bring it in to share with your church family! There is a sign-up sheet on the wall in Connector Hall.

Along with the luncheon, we are asking everyone to bring in cans of soup and a dollar (or more!). Everything that is collected goes to support local women's shelters in the area. There will be a goal post for collecting the cans of soup and two soup pots for the dollars - one pot for each team playing in the Super Bowl. Choose your team and donate to a great cause!

To learn more, visit www.souperbowl.org

SAVE THE DATES

Monday, January 16 • 12:00pm -2:30pm
GW Carsons, Branford

Monday, February 20 • 12:00pm -2:30pm
LoMonaco's Italian Restaurant, Branford

Contact Rosemary for more info: 203-589-1620

KEEP SAVING YOUR SODA CAN TABS!

NEXT DELIVERY DATE: March 2023

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