



Niantic Community Church

# Tidings

April 2025

Monthly news for members & friends  
of Niantic Community Church

## GREETINGS FROM NCC

We are an Open, Affirming, Reconciling  
Congregation of the United Church of Christ  
and the United Methodist Church.

Whoever you are, and wherever you are on  
your life's journey - you are welcome here!



Early in the morning, Mary rose and went to the grave. I don't know what she was expecting to find there except a big rock and a few guards, but she went anyway. That is what the beloved disciple shares in his gospel. Mary got up while it was still dark.

Maybe Mary was unconsciously searching for God despite the seeming reality that God was dead. Maybe she knew that beyond all reason that there was something calling her to that dark, barren place. Maybe the God that dwelled within, drew her to a dark place that would offer a hope despite her knowledge of a cold tomb and a corpse.

For us too. Maybe we know that deep inside, where no-one else can see, there is a light that keeps bringing us back to a place where others seem cold and dead. That is where the hope of truth, unity and love will surprise us. I think that is what Easter is all about. In the midst of rational despair, we are called to find light and truth. We are called beyond reasonable understanding to run into coldness to find warmth and hope.

I must admit that the story's irony annoys me. After all of the unconscious hope and inner call, after the confusion, the voice, the realization and the wonder and all, God doesn't bestow any physical touch. No hug. No kiss. No pat on the back. "Do not touch me," God states. God stays somewhat intangible and distant. Isn't that just like our God, always leaving us wanting more?

So, I promise that when my final early morning comes and I am approaching the resurrected Christ, I will not fall down and adore but sweep Him into my arms for a long embrace. It is overdue.

Happy Easter.

Vive Jesu, Martell

## *Holy Week & Easter Services*

April 13 at 9AM - **Palm Sunday**

April 17 at 7PM - *Maundy Thursday Service*

April 18 at 7PM - *Good Friday Service*

April 20 - **Easter Sunday**

6:00 AM - *Sunrise Service, McCook Park*

9:00 AM - **Easter Worship Service**



### **PRAYER CHAIN – REALM CONNECT**

We are excited to share that the NCC prayer chain will be re-energized through the use of REALM! Using realm, we will be able to share current prayer concerns more seamlessly and folks can opt-in to receive email notifications each time a prayer is added to the prayer chain.



In order to participate in the prayer chain, members must actively using Realm Connect. If you are interested in being added to the prayer chain, please either log into Realm Connect and submit a request to join the prayer chain or contact Pastor Kaleigh and she will add you directly. As of right now, requests for the prayer chain can still be submitted through the form in the Wednesday Note.

If you need assistance with Realm Connect, be sure you reach out to one of our Realm Shepherds. Thank you and let's be a community that prays together and for one another.

*-Pastor Kaleigh*

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## From the Historian:

### Question:

As most of you know the early meeting houses had no heat nor light. There were a number of reasons for this, fire being the foremost. Also it would take a long time to heat a large empty building and many of the beams would be frozen and as they thawed it would "rain" on the congregation. During the very cold days the members of our church met elsewhere. The question is do you know where they might have met?

- Find the answers later in this Tidings....

## Safe Futures Purse Project

NCC donated over 30 purses from the Jack Frost Bazaar to The Purse Project. Pocketbooks are filled with personal supplies for women of domestic abuse who leave their home in an emergency situation with no belongings. Many of the purses were delivered to Safe Futures. With gratitude to Jeannette, Edie, and all who donated.

-Sue Gagliardi



We are collecting paper goods for Safe Futures for victims of domestic violence in the month of April: toilet paper, tissues and paper towels. Drop off at the Bin outside the Narthex. Thank you.

***“Working from Within” is a series in Tidings to highlight faithful church members who provide sustained contributions to the missions of the Church without fanfare.***



This month, the column is featuring Peter Crizer. You may have seen him around the Tech area on Sunday mornings.

Peter's father was career Army, and he was born in Frankfurt, Germany. Peter says he spent three years in the Air Force, "trying to fill my Dad's very big shoes."

He has lived in Waterford from a young age and attended Oswegatchie Elementary School. He then moved around for a number of years, returning to the area, first buying a condo and then a house with wife, Lynne Floyd! ("BEST THING EVER"), a direct quote. He began attending NCC around 2008, after marrying Lynne.

When I asked him what brought him to NCC, his response was "a car", an example of the Crizer humor! Career-wise, Peter spent 25+ years in Graphic Arts and Marketing (owning and managing), 12+ years as a 'dual rate' dealer (someone who handles both dealing table games and acting as a floor supervisor), at the Mohegan Sun Casino, where he met Lynne. He then worked for about 5 years in retail, managing the Spirit of Halloween shops. He is currently working as a CAD (computer-aided design) for a boat builder in Groton.

Peter has been involved in many church activities, including working with Lynne on Bell Choir issues, being co-chair of the recent Settled Pastor Search Committee, participation on the Tech Team, the Property, Security and Accessibility Team, and supporting Youth activities, coordinated by Marsha Swan.

He enjoys woodworking, walking the dogs, and getting back into running. Thank you, Peter, for bringing your skills, open heart, and faith to Niantic Community Church family!

*Submitted by Nancy Hunt*



## Faith In Action Special Offering #2 - Hunger and Homelessness

What started many years ago and continues as the Anne Davis Meal Ministries, Niantic Community Church has faithfully and passionately supported local organizations that provide food for the hungry and housing for those in need of shelter. NCC has been supporting the New London Community Meal Center (DINE) and the New London Homeless Hospitality Center by serving hot meals once a month.

As we focus this month on Hunger and Homelessness ministries, we would like to recognize the individuals who contribute their time, talents, and resources to prepare the food that is served at DINE and HHC each month. Shopping, preparing, cooking, and delivering hot, nutritious food on the last Saturday or Sunday, feeding up to 150 people each month. The following are the dedicated cooks that work quietly behind the scenes and we greatly appreciate their dedication, commitment, and efforts each month.



DINE Cooks are Liz Buhler, Karen Cushing and Sandy Spencer

HHC Cooks are Gail SanJuan and Cheri Myers, Kris Lambert, and Kate Caristo Scalora with East Lyme Boy Scout Troop 247 and Girl Scout Troop 6341.

DINE helpers and supporters: The following list of names are many of the regular monthly volunteers who help to set up, serve, and clean up at each meal site.

Ron and Donna Hathaway	Bob and Ellen Abutin	Sandy Tarallo	Terri McTique
Pat Doran	Neil Passman	Keith Neilson	Nancy Hunt
Celia Brown	Angela Meijer	Susan Gagliardi	Ellen Ashburn
Julie Leis	Edna Gilstad	Stephanie Chan	
Theresa Cleary	Marsha Swan and Club 37		

If you'd like to learn more about how you can become a part of this outreach mission and help carry on the Anne Davis Meal Ministry, please contact Susan Gagliardi, Donna Hathaway, Sandy Tarallo, or Kathy Leindecker.

## Faith in Action

### Faith Forum Guest Anna Perch

On April 13, Annah Perch, from the HHC will speak to us during the Faith Forum hour following worship at 10:30 in the Fellowship room. Come learn more about the program we support every month, what the future holds for these programs and the growing need for the community to get involved in assisting those who face food insecurity.

### Collecting Items for Apartments

We are collecting used items to help set up apartments for homeless individuals. Gently used towels of any size, including dish towels and washcloths. Pots and frying pans, small size only. A bin will be at the entrance to the church for the month of April labeled New London Hospitality Center.

### Coffee Hour Info Table

Find us in the dining hall during coffee hour on April 13, 20, and 27. You can also sign up or pledge for the **Walk to End Homelessness** which will be held in New London on Sunday, April 27. Festivities begin at Noon, Walk steps off at 1:00 p.m.



### COFFEE CORNER

Now that the winter is officially over, we can reflect on how hard the winter was for the Homeless. This past winter was extremely cold and the Hospitality Center in New London had been hosting 80-100 homeless people during the day as a warming center. NCC stepped up to fill the increased need. Just one week's delivery from NCC included 20lbs of coffee, 500 tea bags, snacks and 100 chapsticks! It was warmly received by the center. Collection continues for coffee and tea, sugar, juices and snacks, also travel size personal care items.

### SAFE FUTURES

The donation center on Jay St has reopened, accepting gently used spring and summer clothing, two bags per donation. It has been renamed the Hope Shoppe, open Tuesday and Thursday 10-2p. The collection for the April from NCC will be the much needed paper products- kleenex, toilet paper, paper towels, etc. SAVE THE DATE: Light the Way Breakfast June 6<sup>th</sup>.

***Faith Formation for Children & Youth***

***Egg Hunt, April 6, 2025***



*The rain held off on the morning of our annual Egg Hunt. Many of our families and children participated in the fun!*

Marsha Swan, Coordinator for Children + Youth Faith Formation

[Marsha@nianticcommunitychurch.org](mailto:Marsha@nianticcommunitychurch.org)

### ***Faith Formation for Children & Youth***

Some NCC members who bought homemade cupcakes from the Youth Mission Trip Fun-Raiser in March, then donated them to be served to the clients at DINE. Over 120 cupcakes were provided along with the sign sharing who made them.

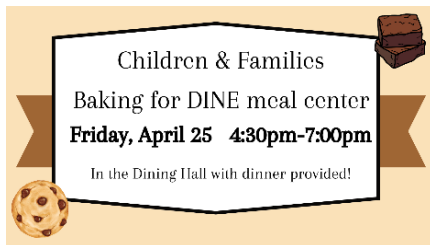
The comment I received, "Wow these look like a professional bakery and not the local grocery store's cupcakes". Thank you to our amazing bakers for helping to serve this ministry of the church led by Donna Hathaway. She took the time to take this picture to share the joy with you.

*With Gratitude, Marsha*



NCC volunteers Sandy Tarallo and Ellen Ashburn

**Club 37 April** collection for DINE (New London Community Meal Center) needs: Peanut Butter, Fluff, Individual bags of Chips, Fruit juice (quart or gallon) and individually wrapped Easter candy/treats.



**Friday, April 25** - Children + Families will be baking for the DINE meal center, 4:30pm in our Dining Hall. Dinner will be provided.

### **Youth Mission Trip Meeting**

On Sunday, April 27 from 5:00-7:00pm, we will welcome Pastor Diane for an in-person discussion in the Fellowship Room. She will share a presentation about Appalachia in preparation for the Youth Mission Trip in July to East Bank, West Virginia.



### **Save the Date!**

All children and youth are welcome to participate in this service.

To Parents of High School Seniors, please contact Marsha Swan. We will celebrate our graduating seniors on June 1<sup>st</sup> worship, Children's Sunday.

## **Church Financial Sustainability**

By Frank Chan

A stable church funding structure is akin to a three-legged stool, the legs are Annual Pledge Drive, Outright Gifts, and Planned Gifts.

1. Our annual pledge drive supports the church's annual operating budget. Thanks to our faithful members our 2025 results set a new high, we received 127 pledges totaling \$451,780 as of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2025, an increase of \$29,177 over last year<sup>1</sup>. The annual revenue of the church is the sum of members' pledges, cash reserves, and other income sources such as fund raising events, interest & dividend, loose offerings, facility rent, and use fees.
2. Outright gifts are current gifts for a specific program, function, material purchase, or general church purposes. Some recent examples of outright gifts are:
  - a. New A/C air handler for the pastor's and church offices (\$10,000)
  - b. New commercial refrigerator (\$4,000)
  - c. Youth Fellowship, it has a balance of \$12,831 with additional funds donated annually.
  - d. Free will donations to support the annual youth mission trip.
  - e. Memorial fund donations to honor friends and loved ones, and specific gifts to grant scholarships for higher education. It has a balance of \$53,153 as of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024.
  - f. MLK Jr. Scholarship Fund, church members have donated more than \$12,500 each year in 2023, 2024, and 2025. Several anonymous donors led with matching fund every year.
  - g. Numerous gifts from members and friends who purchase goods and services for the church and/or its missions but decline to request reimbursement.
3. A planned gift is a deferred gift from a donor's estate, realized after a donor's death. Unrestricted planned gifts are encouraged, allowing such gifts be used wherever the church's need is greatest. A gift may also go into a restricted fund account if the donor wishes to fund a specific purpose. Planned gifts may reside in different accounts based on donors' gift language:
  - a. Endowment Fund - the Church may only use investment income, while preserving the principal, to support general church purposes stated in the fund's charter. The fund's balance on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024 is \$475,891.
  - b. Named Funds for general purposes, specific programs or purposes such as:
    - i. Named Fund – Beckwith Fund, a component of the Endowment Fund
    - ii. Named Fund – Knapperberger Fund, a component of the Endowment Fund
    - iii. Named Program Fund – Beckwith Bequest for Christian Education
    - iv. Named Program Fund – Beckwith Bequest for Old Stone Burial Ground
    - v. Other Possible Specific Purpose Funds – (1) Building/Infrastructure modernization, (2) Leadership gift, and (3) Real property acquisition.

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Previous Stewardship Campaign Results - 2024: 124 pledges, \$422,603; 2023: 119 pledges, \$422,303; 2022: 118 pledges, \$403,952

Please contact Frank Chan at [fchan@nianticcommunitychurch.org](mailto:fchan@nianticcommunitychurch.org) for more information about the church's financial resources and ways you may support the Church today and in perpetuity.

**A note from the Legacy Ministry regarding the Memorial Fund.**

The Memorial Fund will once again offer grants for those seeking higher education. Applicants must be NCC members or their children. Watch the Wednesday email during the months of May and June for a link to the details and application form. The deadline to return applications is June 30. Those who qualify for the grant will receive a check in August. Stay tuned!

**Quarterly Congregational Meeting – Sunday, May 4**

**Notice of Call**

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to the Constitution of the Niantic Community Church, that the congregation will hold a meeting on Sunday, May 4, 2025 after the worship service.

We will review proposed changes to the charter of the endowment fund, receive a summary of the report from the Search committee and quarterly financial status. Documents supporting the above are available on the church's website.

At the May 4, 2025 congregational meeting, we will discuss and vote on a proposed amendment to the Endowment Fund charter. The charter was written to describe acceptable donations, uses, and amounts to be made available for use and other details pertaining to the fund. Please read the document so you can be prepared for the discussion and vote. The document with the proposed changes can be found on the church website. If you would like a hard copy, please let me know. We will also receive a summary of the Search committee's report and the quarterly financial report.  
-Carol Donovan ([carol@nianticcommunitychurch.org](mailto:carol@nianticcommunitychurch.org))

Visit our website for information on our church governance.

Including materials for upcoming Congregational Meeting.

Visit [Governing Board Documents 2025 — Niantic Community Church](#)

Meet with the President and VP during their office hours

On the first and third Tuesdays, 1-3pm

# Rummage Sale

**Saturday  
May 3rd  
9am-Noon**

**Niantic Community Church  
170 Pennsylvania Ave, Niantic**

**Shop our collection of gently  
used clothing and housewares!**



Parish Life will hold their Spring Rummage Sale on Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> from 9am-Noon.

Donations of gently used clothing and household items will be accepted after worship on Sunday, April 27.

From the Historian:

Answer:

We are fortunate that we have a copy of a diary that Sylvanus Griswold, grandson of our first minister, kept. It covers from 1799-1813. In it he mentions attending Sunday meetings in the "Boston Quarter" schoolhouse. Schools in those days had either fireplaces or stoves and were smaller and easier to heat. He even tells how many "soals" were in attendance and that ranged from 40 to 111.

Trivia: *Our lights and heat are now automated and programmed and can all be operated remotely.*

Save the Date!

## EmBellish Handbell Spring Concert



**Saturday, May 3 at 7:00 pm  
in the Sanctuary**

 Free-will offering to benefit EmBellish Handbell Choir

 Niantic Community Church

## Faith and Fellowship

### Anything Goes

April 21 at 10:30 a.m.  
3rd Monday each month  
in Fellowship room

*simplicity over clutter*

### Prayer Shawl Ministry

Tuesday April 22, 1:00 p.m.  
in the  
Fellowship  
Room.

All are welcome!



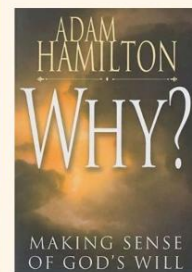
### Centering Prayer Group

**Tuesdays 4:30– 5:50pm**

Online and in the  
Fellowship Room.  
All are welcome.



"Let yourself be silently drawn  
by the stronger pull of what you  
really love."-- Rumi



### Bible Study

Wednesdays at 10am  
Fellowship Room or Zoom

**New study begins April 23**

*Why? Making Sense  
of God's Will*

### Photography Class

**4th Monday of each month  
7pm Fellowship room**

Taught by Craig Woody - the class  
will cover how to compose photos  
for best results while on vacation  
or travelling.



### BOOK CLUB

**Sunday, May 18 at 7pm**

We will discuss  
**"The Women"** by Kristin Hannah,  
in the Fellowship room.  
Hope to see you there.



Office  
closed  
Monday  
April 21

CLOSED

**NCC Pastors and Staff**

Senior Pastor – Rev. Dr. M G Martell Spagnolo	<a href="mailto:martell@nianticcommunitychurch.org">martell@nianticcommunitychurch.org</a>
Associate Pastor – Rev. Kaleigh Rasmussen	<a href="mailto:kaleigh@nianticcommunitychurch.org">kaleigh@nianticcommunitychurch.org</a>
Music Director – Lynne Floyd	<a href="mailto:lynne@nianticcommunitychurch.org">lynne@nianticcommunitychurch.org</a>
Men's Choir + Bell Choir Director – Nan Rigdon	<a href="mailto:nan@nianticcommunitychurch.org">nan@nianticcommunitychurch.org</a>
Children's + Gospel Choirs - Leola Wilkerson + Nichelle Rollins	<a href="mailto:info@nianticcommunitychurch.org">info@nianticcommunitychurch.org</a>
Children + Youth Faith Formation – Marsha Swan	<a href="mailto:marsha@nianticcommunitychurch.org">marsha@nianticcommunitychurch.org</a>
Communications/Office Manager – Theresa Cleary	<a href="mailto:theresa@nianticcommunitychurch.org">theresa@nianticcommunitychurch.org</a>
Financial Secretary – Ted Montgomery	<a href="mailto:ted@nianticcommunitychurch.org">ted@nianticcommunitychurch.org</a>
Bookkeeper – Robin Goldschlager	<a href="mailto:robin@nianticcommunitychurch.org">robin@nianticcommunitychurch.org</a>



**Niantic Community Church**

A federated congregation of the United Methodist Church  
and the United Church of Christ.

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