THE PRESTON PILGRIM
The newsletter of
The Preston City Congregational Church
Gathered 1698

DECEMBER - JANUARY
2014 - 2015

CHURCH ADDRESS
321 Route 164
Preston, CT 06365-8108

TELEPHONE
(860) 887-4647, (860) 896-7200

FAX
(860) 887-4647

WORSHIP
9:00 & 10:30 A.M.

SUNDAY SCHOOL
8:45 a.m.

EMAIL: PCCC@SNET.NET
WEBSITE: prestoncitycongregational.org
Visit us on FACEBOOK

News and information for the January newsletter is due in the church office by
December 21. You may leave information in the holder located on the wall in the kitchen.

From Pastor

You're too busy!
I attend church when I am on vacation. In November, it was a Presbyterian church - the 9
A.M. service, where I was one of about 30 worshippers.

The people were friendly and welcoming of me. In a small congregation, the visitor stands out in
the crowd.

I sat in the center section of the Sanctuary, listening to the Pastor's announcements before
the service began. Then, the "Praise Band" consisting of seniors took their places and began
to play the first chorus - guitar, drums, bass, keyboard, and conga drums. Two younger adult
women led the singing. The band and singers were very good, a real "plus" to the service.

As the service got underway, I stood to sing and participate in worship. I could not help but
notice a middle-aged woman sitting near me remaining in her seat. She was seated NOT
because of frailty or a disability; she was seated

because she was more interested in reading
emails and texting people. I thought, "That's
different. The service has started, and she's on
the phone! Come on, put it away, FOCUS!" God
deserves our undivided attention. Nothing less!

We live in a time when so many things are vying
for our attention. They pull us in different
directions, sometimes away from the things that
should matter most to us, like God and family.
They become less important, and things become
even more important.

It's Christmas time, and once again things will try
to lure us away from the true meaning of the day.
Beware! We human beings are easily distracted -
especially when it comes to our time with God.
The world calls us to choose what is big, shiny,
expensive, and new. God calls us to look at
something small, simple, free, and for all people -
the Child, the Christ and Savior! He will outlast
all our finite things - he always has.

Friends, things will come and go in life, but
Christ comes and stays! If you don't have time for
Him this Christmas, you're too busy!

Wishing you a meaning-filled Christmas.

Rev. Stan
DURING NOVEMBER

We expressed our sympathy to the family of: Alton "Al" MacLachlan who passed away on November 7. He joined the church in 1996. Al is now free from intense pain that kept him homebound. Our prayers are with his wife, Doris.

Robert Muttart who passed away November 24. Bob was a wonderful man, a quiet man, a man who loved his church. He was a member for 62 years! He enjoyed life; being with good friends and family. He will be missed by many!

+++ We welcomed into the membership of the church, on Thanksgiving Sunday: Beverly & Shaun Barske, Gail Brown, Gabriel & Samantha Gresko, Sean O'Brien, Jane & David Phillips, Jessica & Timothy Pappas, Andrea Rancourt & Traci Webster and Joseph Savino. Get to know these wonderful people -- the newest members of the Preston City family! We're glad you're here!

+++ A HUGE thank you to Hopkins family for setting up the Nativity scene on the church lawn in time for the start of Advent!

+++ BAZAAR NEWS

Those who coordinated this year's bazaar wish to thank everyone who contributed to its success. Thank you for hand crafted items donated, and for the many baked goods as well. We appreciate what you did!

There may still be nuts available for purchase; although the selection is very limited. You can make a purchase on Sunday morning during the coffee hour -- while supplies last!

+++ STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

Our pledge drive for the 2015 church budget ($233,923) is proceeding very well -- thanks to YOU! To date (12/4), the amount pledged is $108,876. If you have not yet offered your pledge to support your church in the year ahead, consider doing so before year's end. Pledge forms are available on the Information Center table, or you can call the office, and we will mail one to you. We thank you in advance for your generosity and support of the church.

+++ HELP...

Volunteers are needed to serve as door monitors on Sunday mornings during both services of worship. The duties of the monitor are posted on the hallway bulletin board (mid-level). Please contact coordinator Lowell Calkins (860.887.5939) if you have any questions.

+++ ADULT BIBLE STUDY

Join us Monday mornings, from 10 to 11 A.M. in Halls' Hall (coffee hour room). Starting January 5, 2015, we will be reading and discussing Max Lucado's best-selling book, "Fearless." If you'd like to purchase a copy of the book, you may do so by contacting the church office. We have a few extra copies available. You can also pick up a copy in local bookstores, or from Amazon.com.

+++ LET'S HAVE SOME FUN!

GAME NIGHT, Saturday night, January 17, from 6 - 9 P.M. in Fellowship Hall. This is a night out for adults -- an opportunity to meet other people, play some games, sing Karaoke, and enjoy a fun evening. Everyone is asked to bring a snack to share. Soda and coffee will be available. Bring your favorite game, or play one of the many we have at the church. Please sign the sheet on the bulletin board if you plan to attend.

+++ FLOWER COMMITTEE NEWS

Thanks for the beautifully decorated Sanctuary this Advent season, and for the outdoor wreathes and planters. Everything looks so nice!

+++ December “CHRISTMAS” Events

14th. The adult choir presents a Christmas cantata; The Gift of the Father's Love” at both services! Don’t miss it! Later in the afternoon, at 4 P.M., the children of the Sunday School will present their annual Christmas pageant. This is always a holiday treat! Pizza for everyone follows!! Plan to attend.

21st. CHRISTMAS SUNDAY. The Sunday School will not be in session. Families are encouraged to worship together. The Sanctuary will be decorated with beautiful memorial poinsettias. The choir will sing at both services, and the handbell choir will perform! It’s going to be a wonderful and inspirational morning, and yes... there will be a children’s sermon for ALL!

24th. CHRISTMAS EVE. Join us a 4 P.M. for a service designed for children and their families. Sandy Dudek will lead this service.

A candlelight service is planned for 11 P.M. that evening. Come and join with others from the community as we sing the carols and await His birth. It’s always a very special night!

REMEMBER... On December 25th, there will be one service of worship; 9 A.M. The Sunday School will NOT in session. Be with us for a special service of worship!

+++ LOOKING AHEAD...

Here are some January dates to mark on your calendar:
1/5, Bible Study, 10 A.M. Fearless, by Max Lucado
1/13, Senior Lunch. Did you sign up?
1/17, Game Night, 6-9 P.M.
1/18, Annual Reports are due today.
1/31, "Soup-Chili" Supper (snow date: 2/1)
THE CHURCH MEMORIAL FUND
For many years, the church has had a memorial fund – a monetary fund established in memory of a loved upon their death. The primary purpose of the memorial fund is to keep the church financially healthy, and to aid her in her many endeavors.

According to our current bylaws, upon the death of a loved one, the family may establish a memorial fund account for one year. After one year, if the family has not approached the church expressing a desire to use their loved one’s memorial fund for a specific purpose (approved by the Diaconate), the account will be placed in the church’s general memorial fund.

What better way to remember and honor the passing of a loved one than having contributions offered to the church following their death? So much good has been accomplished through the years because of the memorial fund.

If you have any questions about the memorial fund, please contact the church office.

YOUR COOPERATION IS NEEDED
Please remember if you are planning to use one of the church halls for an event on Sunday that both halls and the kitchen are in use until 1 P.M. Please DO NOT arrive early planning to set up for your event while church-related events are still in progress. Your understanding is appreciated.

CAN YOU HELP?
From time-to-time, people/families in our congregation are in need of a home cooked meal. Maybe it’s following a hospital stay, or when a baby is born, or upon the passing of a loved one, etc. Many people have generously volunteered to take on this act of compassion in years past, and now we are in need of more volunteers when the need arises. If you would be willing to be a part of this important ministry, please call meal coordinator Lois Woodmansee at 860.889.2128.

TRIPS AND TRAVELS
Is there an interest in traveling to New Orleans in October 2015? How about a trip through the Canadian Rockies & Glacier National Park? This church trip is scheduled for August 14 – 20, 2015. Highlights include: Calgary, Waterton Lakes National Park, Glacier National Park, “Going to the Sun Road”, Banff, Columbia Icefield. The cost is $3,199 (Double), $3,949 (Single), $3,169 (Triple) which includes: Round trip air from Logan International Airport, air taxes and fees/surcharges, and hotel transfers. Not included in the price is the cancellation waiver and insurance of $205 per person. This trip is open to the community.

FRIENDS & FAMILY CAFÉ
Tuesday mornings, 9 - 11:30
In Fellowship Hall
Stop by and enjoy a cup of coffee, some sweets, and conversation.
It’s FREE and open to the community.

“STAR OF WONDER” will be presented as this year’s Sunday School pageant on Sunday, December 14th at 4:00 p.m. It is being directed by Naomi Bushnell; Melissa Blondet and Katy Hopkins are directing the 3 & 4 years old and kindergarteners. This note has been received from Naomi:

The Sunday School children are performing a Christmas pageant on Sunday, December 14th at 4 p.m. The performance is 30 minutes. They have been working very hard since October. Of course, their families will be present as audience. However, can you please attend and witness their special message? This would be so much more rewarding for each of them. It’s free. It’s “our children.” It’s a children’s musical of hope. Their “sermon” should be heard by all of us! Please fit them in your life that day.

Pizza and beverages will be served following the pageant sponsored by The Board of Religious Education and served by some of our teens. Pageant families are asked to bring cookie plates.

THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS MISSION PROJECT for November 16th was to serve a lite breakfast to the veterans who reside in the American Legion Veteran’s Home in Jewett City. Following this, they built a bench for the veterans to sit on outside their Home. I saw a picture of it and noticed PCCC Sunday School was carved on the bench! It was an awesome experience I’ve heard with a great turn out of kids. Thank you so much to our High School teachers, Lisa & Scott Van Alst and Liz Del Core and Steve Strader who helped them with this carpentry project. They ended up staying until 3:00 p.m. along with some of our teens to complete the project. Thank you to Board of Religious Education member, Shari Purcell, and to the BRE for funding the cost of the bench.

Their December mission projects have been mailing cookies to the college kids who previously were in the Sunday School and they are now putting together a Christmas basket for a 24 year old woman who struggles every day to obtain many things we take for granted. We hope to fill her basket with items to feed not only her body, but her soul as well! We welcome your contributions. There is a red bucket in the Sunday School Hall where they can be placed next Sunday, December 14th or dropped off at the church office during the week.

THANK YOU to those who provided turkeys and cash donations for the Sunday School Thanksgiving baskets. Your generosity touched many families.
FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

A Christian symbol
for hope...see the
CROSS!

HOPE...I often spend a long time thinking about what my newsletter message will be and I had decided upon HOPE. I had planned to get up at 5 a.m. and type it right out. After all, I had been thinking about it for a week. In the middle of the night we got a call that one of our children had a fireplace/chimney fire that left quite a bit of area destroyed or damaged. When morning came, and we could be part of the “morning after” discussion and activities, it made me realize the resiliency of the human spirit to surmount the situations put before us. Plans immediately were being made for cleanup and repairs. It reminded me of when the third church building burned in 1886, plans were made immediately to rebuild. The picture hangs outside my office of parishioners with umbrellas as the beginning timbers were constructed.

THIS PAST Sunday, the candle lit was the candle of HOPE as we began Advent...a time of preparation for Christ’s coming. In my preparation for last Sunday with the children in Sunday School, I read: “Advent hope is not based on our immediate experience of life (which can sometimes be more cause for despair than for hope), but on our trust in God. Jim Wallis, editor of Sojourners, writes: “HOPE means more than just hanging on. It is the conscious decision to see the world in a different way than most others see it. To hope is to look through the eyes of faith to a future not determined by the oppressive circumstances of the present. To hope is to know that the present reality will not have the last word. It is to know that God rules.” I liked this explanation.

A SYNONYM of hope is TRUST. What kind of situations, anxieties do you find yourself in today? Do you continue on with trust that your circumstances will be temporary. In the midst of your difficulties, do you remember that the Lord has plans for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future (from Jeremiah 29:11). Let’s keep this in our thoughts as we close out 2014 and look forward to 2015.

IT IS SO important to teach our children to trust God in all circumstances. Too many of them run head long into problems when a relationship ends, when they have friends in accidents, when a divorce occurs in their family, to name a few pitfalls for our youth. It’s important that they come to know Christ as their Lord and Savior. Encourage them to come to Sunday School, to church, to “Bring It”, to youth group...there are many sources of inspiration available to them.

AS THE DAYS COUNT down to Christmas, let us enthusiastically look forward to all the ways we might help plant hope in each other’s hearts. It is vital to our well-being.

TO ALL OF YOU, a blessed and holy Christmas. May you not only enjoy being with your family and friends, but find quiet moments to say, “thank you God for all you are to me...you are my hope and my future...come what may.”

May the SONshine through me,

Lindy Dudek

DECEMBER BIBLE VERSES

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.” (Psalm 23:1) (N3-Grade 2)

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28 (Grades 3-12)

JANUARY BIBLE VERSES

“...Do to others what you would have them do to you.” (Matthew 7:12) Golden Rule

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.” Luke 6:37

PLEASE ENCOURAGE students to learn these verses; they will serve them well the rest of their lives. To qualify for an award at the end of the year, verses must be correctly recited by the end of each month to Mrs. Dudek or their teacher. PLEASE NOTE: students who have recited the Bible verses will be posted on the Sunday School bulletin board in the SS Hall.
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December 2014

**SUNDAYS**

- 9:30 AM: Worship Service
- 10:45 AM: Bible Study

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

- Contact: info@vantagechurch.com
- Website: www.vantagechurch.com
- Address: 123 Main St, Anytown USA

**CONNECTIONS: Important Dates**

- June 2014: Church Picnic
- August 2014: Vacation Bible School
WE WANT SNOW

THE JUNIOR PILGRIM FELLOWSHIP (6th, 7th, and 8th graders) enjoyed an authentic Thanksgiving dinner together. Starting today, Monday, November 22, 4:30 p.m., they will be going caroling door to door to gather money for the church. They have a great time going together. For information, call the Flanigans (860-903-3644) or Mrs. McCallion (860-903-3777). Watch the church bulletin for upcoming activities.

THE SENIOR PILGRIM FELLOWSHIP (grade 9-12) enjoyed a Thanksgiving dinner together. They plan to go caroling today with the church. Following the caroling event, they will be going caroling in the winter months and will have 1 dance a month. For information, call the Flanigans (860-903-3644) or Mrs. McCallion (860-903-3777). Watch the church bulletin for upcoming activities.

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