

THE NEW COVENANT



News from The United Presbyterian Church of Whitinsville

Thank You UPCoW for Providing Christmas Gifts for Community

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Office Hours: As Announced in the Weekly Scoop

January
2023

If you would like to see the newsletter in color, please view it on the website.

~ January 2 – February 5 ~

Ministries	Jan 1	Jan 8	Jan 15	Jan 22	Jan 29	Feb 5
Worship Leader	R. Thomas	J. Finnegan	M. Alling	S. Santoro	R. Thomas	L. Walsh
Greeter	J. Baker	L. Walsh	B. Giemza	C. Lee	D. Baker	B. Giemza
Sound Board	G. Giemza	G. Giemza	M. Thomas	G. Giemza	G. Giemza	G. Giemza
PowerPoint	K. Mercer	M. Thomas	S. LaMar	R. Thomas	M. Thomas	K. Mercer
Media	K. Remillard	M. Mercer	K. Remillard	K. Mercer	K. Remillard	K. Remillard
Camera	J. Baker	J. Baker	J. Baker	J. Baker	J. Baker	J. Baker
Coffee Hour	K. Mercer	J&D Baker	G. McCrea	T. Morin	L. Walsh	K. Mercer
Junior Church	M. Mercer	M. Mercer	S. Santoro	L. Walsh	K. Mercer	C. Pilibosian
Counters	K. Miedema	K. Mercer	C. Pilibosian	S. Santoro	K. Bilodeau	D. Baker
	M. Thomas	G. Giemza	M. Alling	L. Walsh	G. Giemza	C. Pilibosian
Communion	L. Walsh					S. Santoro
	J. Baker					M. Thomas
	C. Pilibosian					B. Giemza
	G. McCrea					M. Alling

Sunday Morning Worship Schedule

Adult Education (ZOOM only)

9:00AM - 10:00 AM

Morning Worship Service

10:30AM - 11:30AM

Coffee Fellowship

11:30 AM

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” Matthew 18:20



Looking ahead, which is what we all seem to do during the first month of a new year, can take many forms including dreaming, planning, evaluating, assessing, and researching. It does seem, though, that on New Year's Day and the first couple of weeks following, looking forward takes the form of self-assessment with an eye toward self-improvement. We look at how much weight we think we need to lose; how our diet needs to become healthier; how the To Do List needs to be pared down to afford a little more leisure; how priorities might need to change; and the extent to which we need to rein in spending.

Since this column is not an ad for a physical fitness program, a flyer on how to build a better financial future, or a guide for better mental health, it doesn't have any advice or suggestions to offer on any of the above "looking ahead" ideas. Since it *is* a column in a church newsletter, it spotlights a part of life that often doesn't seem to get much attention in the "looking ahead" exercises. As you look ahead toward 2023, how do you assess your current Christian discipleship and what is needed to make it stronger, healthier, and more meaningful?

The Puritans who lived in Northampton around the middle 18th century routinely assessed their discipleship, and not just once a year. For them, faith was at the center of life and as such was the first priority in life. They had private worship and public worship. The former was *engaged on a daily basis* (even though they had no electricity, washing machines, dish washers, calculators, tractors, cell phones or ipads!). Each day they engaged in at *least* one of the following private worship activities, and *more* than one on most days:

Personal prayer time

Reading Scripture

Writing in a daily journal about their faith and faith experiences

Talking with a friend about a particular Scripture passage or a faith experience

There was also daily family worship. Faith was a topic of conversation at meal time. Family time for Bible reading and prayer was practiced routinely. Families went to public worship gatherings together.

Public worship was an event for the entire community, and *everyone participated*. Everyone accepted that they were part of the community of believers and worshiping together was a top priority. Singing "psalms and spiritual hymns" together was one way they supported each other. It was the strength of their mutual *and shared* faith that saw them through many difficult times. Praying together united them as the Spirit of Christ drew them together. Whether one can say that we have progressed really far from where the Puritans in Northampton were in 1735 is debatable. Rev. Jonathan Edwards recorded extensive evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence within each believer in his community and how each believer's life was changed for the better because of that work. Faith was not just a matter of what people said or believed in their heads; they actually *experienced* the presence of Christ and the inner working of the Holy Spirit. They *experienced* miracles within their own community.

As you think about self-improvement goals for 2023, where do you put the goal of increasing, deepening, and living your faith? Is faith so unimportant that it isn't included in the life assessment process? Can you honestly say that you have reached the pinnacle of faith development and now need only to sit back and cruise through the rest of life from a faith perspective? Do you know all there is to know, and have you experienced all there is to experience about faith?

As you consider these and other questions that come to mind as you reflect on your faith, its importance and how you live your faith on a daily basis, you might consider the following reading list. Caveat: Reading is not the *only* faith activity to consider. Remember, Jesus came to earth in order to interact and live with people. You are one of the people Jesus wants to live and interact with in 2023.

I pray you God's blessings on the 2023 leg of your faith journey!

Pastor Susan

READING LIST

Lynne M. Baab, *A Renewed Spirituality*

Frederick Buechner, *The Sacred Journey*

Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections*

James Fowler, *Manifesting the Life of Jesus*

James Fowler, *It's All About Jesus*

Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*

Andrew Murray, *With Christ In the School Of Prayer*

Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal*

Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual Direction*

John I. Snyder, *Your 100 Day Prayer*

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*

Words of Inspiration For January 2023

As the holidays turn into memories, the churches of God continue to spread their message of love and peace throughout the world. Here in the United Presbyterian Church, a new year presents more opportunities to create more new and exciting plans and ideas to keep the church active.

One of the biggest benefits that the church cherishes is the old organ that went through a major cleaning job which kept it quiet for quite a long while. But thanks to the insurance company we can now enjoy the music that our wonderful musician can really bring out! Music is such a great stimulus to help heal a broken soul. With the varieties of music available (both vocally and instrumental) we have also been able to hear other talented musicians from within and outside of our church family. No one should ever leave a Sunday service from here on a down note after listening to the musical talents that we have been blessed with.

The greatest thing about a new year is the hopes and dreams that we create in developing a church to be proud of. Already we have celebrated the addition of a new family, and the long-awaited necessary repairs to our elevator, which is a major necessary item for our elderly and handicapped members. Another important part of the United Presbyterian church is the work that is passed out by the people.

Between the elders, deacons, trustees, and the perseverance of the individuals who work with the Peace of Bread, our church is truly blessed with the time and talent from these individuals.

This reminds us of the important part of a church:

A church is not a church without its people... AMEN

From the Deacons



CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

Tanya and Ken playing
Trivia recently.



Bev Keeler
enjoying
lunch at
Friendly's.

DEACON MEETING HIGHLIGHTS NOVEMBER 2022

The Deacons met for their monthly meeting on November 28th. It was a rather “plain” meeting. Marilyn updated us on the Thanksgiving baskets for NAC. Four baskets were given out and seemed to be appreciated very much by those who received them. Marilyn will get a notice to Mark for the November newsletter to thank the congregation for the generous gifts and donations. Without your help, the Deacons couldn’t do their job. Your support is greatly appreciated.

We felt that there wasn't a need for the Mitten and Hat tree this year as DCF did not return our inquiries about helping them out. Therefore, since we just asked for Thanksgiving help and will soon be asking for Christmas help from the congregation, we felt we should hold off at this time. Should we become aware as winter goes on that there is such a need, we will put the tree up and let you know and ask for help at that time...we all know it’s a long winter!

The NAC requests that anyone who sponsors a family at Thanksgiving, support the same children in those families with gifts at Christmas. Carol will make tags for boys/girls marking toys or clothing requests and ages. The tags will be hung on the church tree and picked during the anthem on Sunday 12/4 with a return date of 12/11.

The Deacons will light the candle of JOY on the Advent wreath on Sunday 12/11.

Each Deacon will bring something for our shut-ins Christmas baskets. Baskets will be put together on Wednesday, Dec. 14th and delivered soon after.

We are happy to report that all of our home bound members are doing well at this time. Several having overcome a battle with COVID.

We do wish fellow Deacon, Jean Finegan, well as she surgery on her hand on Dec.15th. Your prayers that it goes well and she has a good recovery would be appreciated...cards too!!

Prayer concerns and Joys were gone over.

Brand closed the meeting in prayer.

In his Service,

Deb Baker

PRAYER ACCORDING TO WALTER HILTON

Who was Walter Hilton?

Walter Hilton was an English Austin Friar who was born no later than 1343 and died in 1396. He was educated at Cambridge University first as a civil lawyer and later as a canon (church) lawyer. Hilton felt called to join a religious order the Austin Friars—a Roman Catholic order that historically traced their origins and were influenced by an early Church Father, Augustine of Hippo. Instead of reporting to an abbot (head of a monastery) these groups reported and were directly responsible to the local bishop. Austin Friars stressed the importance of the communal and contemplative lifestyle and were influenced by people such as Bernard of Clairvaux. (Incidentally, John Calvin, founder of the Reformed branch of Protestantism was also influenced by Bernard and educated as a lawyer.) The Austin friars also developed an interest in canon (church) law and several of their houses contained collections on canon law. Hilton may have also played a role in combating the heretical group, the Lollards, founded by John Wycliffe. Among their beliefs was a need for a Bible written in the vernacular (common language, in this case, English instead of the official Latin Bible recognized by the RC church commonly known as the *Vulgate*.

Hilton was a member of a group of writers in the 14th century grouped together as the “English mystics” by scholars from the early 20th century. Others in this group include, Rolle, Margery Kempe, Julian of Norwich, and the unknown author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. A more recent scholar, Nicolas Watson, gave them the name “vernacular theologians” who were the first theologians who attempted to write theology in English rather than Latin.

What did Hilton write?

Hilton wrote in both Latin and English (Middle English). His Latin works include *On the Image of Sin* and *On the Usefulness and Prerogatives of Religion*. His works in English include the small tract, *Mixed Life*, and the two-volume work *The Scale of Perfection*. The first volume was written to a “spiritual sister” (chapter 1) and the second volume written to a more general audience—not to a specific person.

Chapter 24 How prayer is useful for getting virtues and purity of heart.

Prayer purifies the heart by destroying sin. One does not need to tell God what you want since God already knows what you want. What prayer does offer is the opportunity to receive the grace of God which cannot be felt until one is purified by “devoted” prayer.

How does one pray? Hilton says: “When you have woken up from your sleep and are ready to pray, you will feel yourself carnal and heavy, slipping down all the time into vain thoughts, either of dreams, or of fancies, or of irrational concerns of the world or your flesh. Then you need to quicken your heart with prayer, and stir it as much as you can to some devotion.” (*Scale-Book 1*, 97)

Chapter 25 How people should pray, and on what the point of the thought shall be set in prayer.

Don’t aim for the material things, your desire should be set upward on God. You cannot see God’s physical body or even in your imagination see him. However, one can feel his grace. In your prayer-time you think only of God, not of earthly concerns.

Chapter 26 The fire of love

“Now as to the other question as to what prayer would be best to use, I shall speak as it seems to me. You are to understand that there are three kinds of prayer.” (*Scale-Book 1*, 98)

Chapter 27 That certain spoken prayer ordained by God and by holy church is best for the people bound and ordained to it, and for those who newly given themselves to devotion.

The first kind of prayer is spoken prayer, created by God such as the Lord's Prayer or other worship services of the Roman Catholic Church such as the prayers of the Divine Hours including Vespers and Matins. Also included in spoken prayers to Jesus, the Virgin Mary and the saints.. This type of prayer is practiced by those in religious orders. One's attitude while praying these vocal prayers should be done steadfastly and devoutly This type of prayer is important for a person just starting their spiritual journey-so a person has a staff to lean on.

Chapter 28 How perilous it is at the start of their turning to God when they leave too soon the common prayer laid down by the holy church, and give themselves entirely to meditation.

Some people leave vocal prayer to quickly and try to go on their own too quickly. "They are not wise, for often in the quiet of their meditation they imagine and think of spiritual things according to their own wit and follow their bodily feeling before receiving grace for it. Therefore through their indiscretion they often overstrain their wits and break the powers of their body, and so fall into fantasies and singular inventions, or into manifest errors, and by such vanities hinder the grace which God gives them. (*Scale-Book I*, 100)

Chapter 29 The second kind of prayer, which is not fixed in speech but follows the stirrings of those who are in a state of devotion.

The second type of prayer is also spoken but without any pre-set words. "He uses the words that best match his inward stirring for the time and that have come to his mind following the different concerns he feels in his heart, rehearsing either his sins and his wickedness, or the malice and tricks of the Enemy, or else the goodness and mercy of God." (*Scale-Book I*, 100)

Chapter 32 The third kind of prayer, in the heart alone and without speaking.

"The third kind of prayer is only in the heart, without speaking, without speaking, and with great rest of body and soul. Anyone who is to pray well in this way needs to have a pure heart, for it belongs to those men and women who by long labor of body and soul...come into rest of spirit, so that their affection is turned into spiritual savor, so that they can pray in their heart continually, glorifying and praising God, without great hindrance from temptations or vanities, as I have said before in the second part of contemplation." (*Scale-Book I*, 102)

SOURCES CONSULTED

Hilton, Walter. *The Scale of Perfection: translated from the Middle English, with an introduction and notes by John P.H. Clark and Rosemary Darward.* New York: Paulist Press, 1991.

Watson, Nicholas. "The Middle English Mystics" IN *The Cambridge History of English Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 539-565.



THANK YOU CORNER

THANK YOU

Session would like to congratulate Gaye Shannon on her retirement and thank her for being our volunteer Corporate Treasurer. She has tirelessly been available for all the yearly budget changes and additions. She has been the behind the scenes person who makes sure all the church bills are taken care of, handles our payroll, provides the auditors with the needed financial data and deals with all the different bank/financial accounts. Her latest job has been to train her replacement. Her dedication and commitment has allowed the church finances to run smoothly for many years. On behalf of the whole congregation Session gives Gaye a big thank you for a job well done.

Thank you to the congregation for providing for the community Christmas baskets. The Deacons

Ruth Hoekstra thanks the Deacons for providing the Christmas baskets for the shut-ins.

Thank you to the Deacons for the wonderful Christmas basket. I am still enjoying the Christmas tree decoration! Bev Keeler

A big thank you to Marilyn Alling and Gay McCrea for helping the Trustees with making phone calls and asking around town to find contractors for the replacing the church gutters. Lynne

Thank you, Mallorie Mercer, for helping out with Jr. Church while you were home for winter break. Pastor Susan

Thank you, Jimmy Tobin, for arranging your schedule with the TSA so that you could be with us for the Dec. 18 and Christmas Eve services to play your violin for us. Pastor Susan

A big thank you from Session to Jason Mercer for coordinating the recent work to get the gutters replaced. As many of you know, the old ones were detached from the roof *and* from the downspouts! Jason did a great job contracting with Central Roofing and then being on site to talk with the contractor and approve the job done. Session

January Birthday Corner

- Troy Giezma 1/8
- Anna Santoro 1/18
- Dave Miedema 1/20
- Linda Skillen 1/20
- Chris Shannon 1/21
- Todd Schelin 1/24
- Joanne Zeis 1/30



PRAYERS OF PRAISE AND CONCERN

Gay McCrea asks prayers for her daughter, Heidi as she prepares for surgery this month.

Ronda Thomas asks for continued prayers as she continues to recover from a recent fall.

Ronda also asks continued prayers for her brother, Greg, who is still hoping to regain more sight in his left eye.

Ruth Hoekstra asks prayers for her daughter Laurie as she continues her job search.

Patty Reynolds has a prayer of thanks and praise that her twin brother's spinal surgery went well and that he is now home and recovering well.

Jean Finnegan has a prayer of thanks that her hand surgery went well and asks for prayers now that the healing will be complete and restore the use of her fingers.

Bonnie Candolino has a prayer of thanks and praise that both her Mom and her sister are home from the hospital and recovering well.

Hanna has some prayer requests for our missionaries:

Prayers for locally authored worship songs for 2023 Festival;

Prayers for long range plans for the mission work;

Prayers for how to be "empty nesters" well.

Pray for the people of Ukraine

Mary Spalton has a prayer of thanks and praise that her sister Connie responded to treatment this week and that her blood pressure and calcium levels are normal once again.

Debbie and Jim Baker ask prayers for their daughter-in-law's cousin who suffered a stroke on Christmas Day. The stroke left her too weak to hold a glass or a bowl but she can feed herself. Apparently it has affected her left side and cognitive abilities. Later in the week drs. discovered a lesion on her heart.

Gay McCrea asks prayers for her daughter Heidi who tested positive for Covid on Wed. and is supposed to have surgery on Jan. 10.

JANUARY 2023 CHURCH CALENDAR

- Sun. 1** **9 AM Adult Sunday School (ZOOM)**
10:30 AM Worship Service
11:45 Coffee Fellowship
- Mon. 2** **7 PM Session Prayer Meeting**
- Wed. 4** **Peace of Bread**
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- Sun. 8** **9 AM Adult Sunday School (ZOOM)**
10:30 AM Worship Service
- Wed. 11** **Peace of Bread**
-
- Sun. 15** **9 AM Adult Sunday School (ZOOM)**
10:30 AM Worship Service
Noon-Gospel of John Bible Study
- Mon. 16** **7 PM Session Meeting**
- Wed. 18** **Peace of Bread**
- Fri. 20** **Newsletter Submission Deadline for February 2023 Issue**
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- Sun. 22** **9 AM Adult Sunday School (ZOOM)**
10:30 AM Worship Service
Noon-Gospel of John Bible Study
- Mon. 23** **7 PM Deacons Meeting**
- Wed. 25** **Peace of Bread**
- Sun 29** **9AM Adult Sunday School (ZOOM)**
10:30 AM Worship
Noon-Gospel of Bible Study