

THE CIRCLE CHURCH NEWS
December 2014

North Madison Congregational Church
1271 Durham Road
Madison, CT 06443

From Pastor Jim . . .

I recently joined a fun a cappella singing group called the Yuletide Carolers. During the "Yuletide" season group members go out in quartets to bring beautiful (hopefully) close harmony song to all sorts of venues: private parties, shopping malls, retirement homes and the like. Our repertoire includes favorites such as "Frosty the Snowman," "Sleigh Ride," "Jingle Bells," and "White Christmas," all of which celebrate having fun with friends and relatives and, of course, receiving presents.

What is missing from many (not all) of these Christmas time favorites is that which lies at the very heart of the Christian message of Christmas: generosity – God's generosity in the sending of God's son, Jesus, into our human world; God shared Jesus with humanity so that we could experience God's forgiveness, compassion, companionship, and deep love. Generosity is the heart of what the Gospels tell us about Christmas.

So it has been very appropriate that we have been celebrating a "Season of Generosity" here at NMCC these past weeks and months. The Generosity Team's "Pay-It-Forward" initiative has really caught on with the congregation! I enjoyed watching the smiles on your faces as you listened to the several "Pay-It-Forward" testimonies in worship during those four Sundays in October and November. And the testimonies about experiencing God's transformative love through NMCC that we heard at the Generosity Potluck on November 14 were amazing! Clearly you were moved. As I surely was.

What if you and I did our own "Pay-It-Forward" moment during this Christmas season? Imagine: As we go about our gift buying for friends and loved ones, being alert to whom we might share that joy and astonishment when we pay forward something of value to that person who does not expect it? That would surely put a smile on God's face too.

May our God's joy and generosity be with you and your "Pay-It-Forward" recipient this Christmas season,

Pastor Jim

Included in this Newsletter:

Advent Schedule - Christmas Poinsettias Christian Education

Children's Church - Heifer Living Market - Christmas Pageant- JYG -SYG

Missions

Christmas Eve at Columbus House - Giving Tree

Fund Raisers

Christmas Craft Fair - Tag Sale

Get Involved / Stay Connected

Harvest Dinner Wrap-Up Meeting -

Help Needed for Holiday Craft Fair!! Cookie Bakers, Cookie Booth and Karen's Café-
Craft Fair Set Up/Clean Up - Fire in the Kitchen Concert - CNS Pancake Breakfast -

Congregational Meeting - Getting Focused with Purpose Initiative -

Fellowship Christmas Party - Christmas Caroling -

"Yoga at the Circle" -Clean Up Thank You -

New Art Show - Online Giving Now Available -

- Help Us Get the Word Out on Facebook - Photos Wanted -

Sanctuary Cleaning Volunteers Needed - Coffee Hour and Flower Sponsors Needed

In the News and Noteworthy

Amanda, Chris and Arabella Grace Bernier - Chester Truax at NMCC

- Advent Schedule -



Advent Worship/Sermon Series: "Learning to Walk in the Dark"

The Worship Team is pleased to announce our Advent Sermon/worship series entitled "Learning to Walk in the Dark." The series will explore the themes of light and dark and the dualistic way we normally think of them: light standing for good things and darkness for bad or threatening things. Unfortunately, this dualism masks the many gifts that darkness offers. In the Bible and in life, many good things are "born" in darkness and we can allow them to bless and guide us if we can relinquish the reflex always to be in control - if we give ourselves permission to experience those things that go "bump in the night" without flipping on the light switch too quickly. This theme echoes the recent thought-provoking Adult Education offering by Tom and Whitaker.

It will begin Sunday, November 30, and continue on December 7 and 21. (December 14 feature our children's Christmas Pageant.)

In addition to the lighting of the Advent candles during Sunday worship and exploring how we can embrace this message, we invite you to join us for any of these special services

Children's Christmas Pageant - December 14 at 10:00 am: The Children's Christmas Pageant is incorporated into the Sunday morning service, re-enacting the story of Jesus' birth.

Longest Night Service - December 21 at 5:00 pm: The Longest Night Service is held at the time of the Winter Solstice (December 21st) and recognizes that, in what is generally considered a joyous time of the year, many people experience sadness, melancholy and depression. It may be due to the cold and loneliness of winter, the memories of a lost loved one, the reflection on life's challenges or the concern over a friend or family member. This service provides a safe place to express and attend to that sadness through meditation, readings, music in a quiet candle lit atmosphere at the front of the sanctuary. The service ends with the offering for anyone to come to light a candle and express out loud or in silence the dedication.

Family Christmas Service - December 24 at 4:30 pm: This family-friendly service has a focus on Gospel readings about Jesus' birth, and many traditional Christmas Carols.

Candlelight Communion Service - December 24 at 10:00 pm: This evening service includes readings, Christmas hymns, a sermon message, and communion and concludes with the lighting of candles.



Christmas Poinsettias: If you wish to order a poinsettia to be placed in the sanctuary during the Christmas holidays, please complete this form and place it in the offering plate, or send it to the church office (1271 Durham Road, Madison, CT 06443) by **Sunday, December 21, at the latest.** Following the late Christmas Eve Service, you may take your poinsettia home, or take it to a member who is homebound. **Please make your check payable to NMCC and write "poinsettia" in the memo portion of your check.**

SIZE	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Medium red	\$12.50	_____	_____
Large red (3 stems)	\$21.00	_____	_____

Given in:

_____ celebration of _____

_____ honor of _____

_____ memory of _____

Given by: _____
(as you want it to appear in bulletin)

Phone _____

Thank you so much for helping us to make a joyful prayer with our flowers. - The Flower Committee

- Children and Youth Ministries -



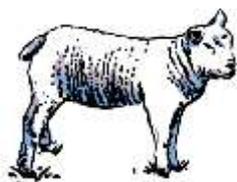
Children's Church: Thank you to the following volunteers who dedicated themselves to serving our Children's Church during our Fall Session (September - December)

PreK - 1st Vera Levis & Kristin Polisky (Sub: Jill Abouljian)
Hayley Murphy & Erica Mallon
2nd - 4th Jeff Ignatuk & Sharon Mallon (Guest: Chris Bailey)
Elizabeth McCann
5th - 8th Missy Belcourt & Ryan Murphy

And special thanks to Skylar Clark who played with the younger children during choir rehearsal Sunday mornings, and during Children's Church. Also, thank you to Charlene Connolly, Milan Sachs, and Olivia Chasse who served as additional support to the Children's Church.

Thank you to Heather Ignatuk and all the nursery volunteers to being ready and willing to assist in the nursery as needed.

If you are interested in serving our children's church in the New Year, please contact Morgan. Volunteers are already stepping forward, and we want to place adults in the best-fit classroom.



Heifer Living Gift Market: Please join the Children's Church on Sunday, December 7th in Fellowship Hall following worship. The children will be sharing what they've learned about Heifer International, and the animals they provide to help people live sustainable lives by raising livestock of their own. During the market, you will have the opportunity to "purchase" an animal as a gift to someone. Each donor will receive a Heifer Card which they can give to a loved one to show that a donation was made in their honor. The children will also be sharing animal-shaped cookies that they baked.

We hope that all children who participated in Children's Church this fall will be able to join us for the last Children's Church of the season and the Living Gift Market after church in Fellowship Hall.



Christmas Pageant: Please join us for a youth-led worship on December 14th. The children will retell the story of the First Christmas through narration, dialogue, and song. Bodie, the miniature donkey, will join us again - be sure to check out the cross that lies across his back. Did you know all donkeys carry the sign of Christ on their back?

We'll be using a new script to tell that old, old story, and will be adding a few new songs to our favorites. Our high-schoolers, middle-schoolers, and younger children are all excited to participate in this year's pageant. We hope to see you there!

There will be a rehearsal for the children on Saturday, December 13th from 3:00 - 5:00pm. Participants are asked to arrive at NMCC at 9:15am on Sunday, December 14th. Please contact Morgan if your child would like to participate. We have limited speaking roles - but unlimited roles for angels, shepherds, and animals. We even have a place for children to participate who choose not to dress-up or rehearse with the other children. ALL ARE WELCOME!



Junior Youth Group: The JYG had a wonderful meeting on November 9th getting to know one another through teambuilding activities and games.

Please look for members of the JYG assisting during the NMCC Christmas Craft Fair on Saturday, December 6th. They will be helping at the Cookie Table (where they'll be selling some of their very own cookies), the Raffle Table, and in the Café. Our JYG members have been very generous of their time helping at other Fall NMCC Fundraisers including the Tag Sale and Harvest Dinner.

The JYG will be celebrating Christmas together at The Hearth on Sunday, December 14th while bringing cheer to the Keepsake residents. Together, the JYG members and the residents will decorate sugar cookies. The celebration will begin at 2:00pm, and conclude by 4:00pm.

Senior Youth Group: Home sickness, a common disease that affects many college freshmen as they learn the value of a home cooked meal and the miraculous appearance of clean clothes. The continual dosing of cafeteria food is one method to de-sensitize a college freshman from the afflictions of home-sickness, however the SYG thought of a better way- *Cookies for College*. The SYG gathered together on **Sunday Nov 16, 2014** to bake cookies for former SYG members that are the "new" college freshman. Chocolate Chip, Oatmeal Raisin, chocolate- molasses cookies (gluten free) as well as rice krispy treats (gluten free) were prepared by 18 SYG members under the guidance of Sharon Mallon, Karen Garceau and Kimberly Breyan. The SYG needed to taste test each cookie that was baked, then the cookies were packed up and shipped to six college freshmen just in time for their approaching finals. The NMCC Christmas Fair also benefited as the extra cookies have been donated to the Cookie sale.

The Senior Youth Group is a part of the NMCC family and is open to all high school students that are willing to have some fun, volunteer helping others and open to spiritual based belief discussions. SYG meets twice a month at the church and during the summer goes on a week-long Mission trip. If you are interested in being a part of the SYG or have any questions please contact: Jeff Chin (jrchin5@comcast.net, cell:203.901.3498) or visit the SYG webpage at <http://northmadisoncc.org/youth/senior-high-youth-group/>.

- Missions -



Columbus House

Christmas Eve Morning at Columbus House: A favorite NMCC tradition each year is to bring Christmas cheer to residents of the Columbus House in New Haven. We serve an expanded breakfast shortly after 7:00 AM, the choir and other NMCC singers join in Christmas hymns, carols and a special choir anthem or two and we distribute presents purchased and wrapped by NMCC families. We'll have the gift boxes ready on December 7th. Please join in this year!!! We need:

- Wrapped hats, gloves/mittens, scarves and socks, noting on the package whether they are for men, women or children and the size. Not only do the recipients welcome the warm clothing for themselves, but also are able to give extras as gifts to family members.
- Gift cards in \$5 and \$10 denominations from Subway, Dunkin Donuts or McDonalds for a cold winter's day warm up.
- Singers!

- Sign up to bring food – on the bulletin board or items such as fruit or muffins.

If you have any questions, contact Scott Conover at scottconover@sbcglobal.net, Roberta Hanlon at robertahanlon@msn.com, or Peter Meier at peterm190@yahoo.com.



The Giving Tree is filled with tags to support the Family that we have adopted as a congregation through New Reach (formerly New Haven Home Recovery). Please take a tag, purchase the requested item, and return it to the Giving Tree baskets on or before Sunday, December 7th.

The Giving Tree also has tag requests for gift cards to be fulfilled. Cards will be given to families in both our immediate shoreline community and New Haven so that they can purchase holidays items to make a Thanksgiving and/or Christmas dinner possible for their families.

The Missions Committee thanks you as our circle of generosity widens and reaches out into the world. If you have any questions, please contact Dawn Korik at 203-214-4565.

- Fund Raisers -



20th Annual NMCC Holiday Craft Fair: Saturday, December 6th from 9am-2pm: 40 Quality Artisans; Bistro; Over 4000 Homemade Cookies; Gifts. Hope to see you at the fair!



Final Tag Sale items for sale December 21st: Need Christmas decorations? Stocking Stuffers? Jewelry? Vintage gifts? Please join us during Fellowship Hour December 21st to make to make your purchases.

We will also have for sale NMCC T-shirts - sizes S to XXL so now's the time to outfit everyone in your family.

Questions? Contact Holly Francis 203-623-1058 or Roberta Hanlon 203-500-8311.

- Get Involved / Stay Connected -



There are so many ways to get involved in making NMCC a vibrant community not only through the work of the Missions Committee but helping out, sharing your skills, learning new ones enjoying the fellowship that naturally follows through working on projects together. Visit our "[Get Involved](#)" web page for ongoing news at northmadisoncc.org.



Harvest Dinner Wrap-Up Meeting: Please join us on December 3 at 7:15pm in Fellowship Hall for a Harvest Dinner Wrap-Up Meeting. Come with your ideas, comments and suggestions about this year's dinner and what we can do to improve next year. Please contact Eileen McCann with any questions, or if you're unable to attend but would like to add your input at econdon949@aol.com or 203-318-0068.



Holiday Craft Fair Help Needed!!!

Cookie Bakers: Our Holiday Fair is on December 6th and we are known for our Christmas cookies!! We always sell out early so we need many bakers to reach our goal of 4,000 cookies!! If you are making 4 dozen....you might as well make 8!! Please sign up on the bulletin board or send a note to the office at office@northmadisoncc.org with how many dozen you will bake, what type and how to contact you (email and phone). Youth group helpers welcomed! Any

questions call or email Dawn Korik at 203-214-4565, dawnkorik@sbcglobal.net. Thank you in advance!!!!

Help at the Cookie Booth – Cookies are a big draw for our Christmas Craft Fair – sign up for a shift from 9:00am to 2:00 pm in Fellowship Hall or call or email Dawn Korik at 203-214-4565, dawnkorik@sbcglobal.net.

Karen's Café – popular with shoppers and vendors, Karen's café offers homemade soups/chili, turkey pot pies and cider. How can you help? We need a few more soups and help in the kitchen. Sign up in Fellowship Hall or contact Melissa Blunden. pmblundon@aol.com or 203-996-0671.

Set Up/Clean Up: We need some strong volunteers to help set up tables and move furniture on Friday, December 5th from around 3-5pm and cleanup after the fair at 2pm on December 6th. If you're able to help out, please contact the office at office@northmadisoncc.org or 203-421-3241 or sign up on the sign up sheet in fellowship hall. Please contact Christine Hopkins at christeyo@aol.com or 203-421-3358 if you have any questions.



Fire in the Kitchen Concert - Fire in the Kitchen Concert - December 6 at 7:00 pm - The Barefoot Movement

Christmas Show: The Barefoot Movement is the (I know, this sounds like hyperbole) one of the hottest young Americana/bluegrass bands emerging. I know this because of all the raving emails I got once the show was announced. I was being told "These guys were the

best band at festival "X" this summer! How did you get them!?" And it wasn't one email. It was a lot. Once again, it's one of our young bands that plays unbelievably well, but that's so secondary to their whole ability to just make great music. This is their Christmas show, so get ready to sing and have a great time! Adults \$20, kids high school and under, \$5.00



Circle Nursery School - Pancake Breakfast, December 13, 8am- 11am:

Circle Nursery School is hosting their annual Pancake Breakfast with Santa on Saturday December 13 from 8am - 11am in Fellowship Hall. Pancakes, sausage, OJ and coffee will be served. Bring your camera and go downstairs after breakfast and take your child's picture with Santa. This event is open to the entire community! Price: \$6 adult, \$3 child.



Congregational Meeting: There will be a meeting for Members of North Madison Congregational Church on Sunday, December 14, following coffee hour. The purpose of the meeting is to vote to approve the church's 2015 budget.



"GETTING FOCUSED WITH PURPOSE INITIATIVE"

"We are a community seeking to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God."

Our existing Mission Statement gives us "umbrella" guidance on our daily walks, but it provides little guidance on the when, where, and how to carry out our Mission.

At the August 13th Executive Committee meeting in September, we agreed to endorse a new community-wide initiative, called Getting Focused with Purpose as our top priority for the coming year. That initiative would help us define the when, where and how by developing a clear purpose statement. The goal is to have the statement come to a voted on by members at the May 2015 annual meeting.

On October 11, 2014, the Executive Committee held a Retreat in which we agreed to develop a way to take the next step on our spiritual journey. The EC designed a process to help us determine how we see ourselves serving God in our local community within the context of our skills and our passions. In other words, taking what we share at NMCC, meeting a deep need in our community and using that purpose in guiding who we are as a congregation and how we engage with the outside community.

The first step for the congregation was an informative communication meeting following worship on November 23, 2014. Pastor Jim led a discussion of the initiative we call **GETTING FOCUSED WITH PURPOSE**. He stressed that while the EC is leading the initiative, everyone in the congregation is invited to take part so that the outcome reflects who we are as a congregation and how we want to use our passions and skills to serve our local community.

What's in this for NMCC?

- Opportunity to live more fully our faith journey
- Focused congregational decision-making and budgeting
- Greater visibility in the shoreline communities

How can you get involved?

At the October 11 EC retreat, five separate but interactive “WORK STREAMS” (committees – task forces) were developed to guide and lead this process.

- Engaging the Congregation in the Process
- Communication to the Congregation
- Exploring and Defining the Needs of the Greater Community
- Project Management of the Initiative
- Measuring Success

Each of us is urged to sit quietly and consider the opportunity for growth and to join one of the five streams. Your feedback is always invited. The next scheduled gathering to continue the discussion will be after worship on December 14th.

Tom Lauher, Pastor Jim, and the Executive Committee



Fellowship Christmas Party: Kate and Dave Summerlin, will be hosting our Fellowship Christmas Party at their home (406 Long Hill Rd, Guilford, CT) on Sunday, December 14 from 4 to 7 pm. There will be a signup sheet in Fellowship Hall to bring either an appetizer or dessert.



NMCC Family Fellowship! Annual Christmas Caroling Party! Hosted by Bill and Ann Clemmons each year, this is a fun evening of Fellowship and an opportunity to bring cheer to local nursing homes residents and members who are homebound. The evening begins with pot luck soup and appetizers followed by carpooling and singing Christmas carols that bring smiles at every stop. The evening ends with dessert and warm beverages. We will meet at the Clemmons' house, 126

Deepwood Drive, at 5:00 PM on Friday, December 19. Please sign up first and then dress warmly and bring a snack or dessert to share, and a flashlight. This is an all-ages, family oriented event. Please contact Bill and Ann Clemmons, 421-3484 or william.clemmons@snet.net with questions.



“Yoga at the Circle”: Our next 7 week session of yoga began on Monday November 10th and will run through Monday December 22nd. All levels welcome. The session price will be \$42.00 with a drop in rate of \$9.00/evening. As the colder, sloppy weather approaches, please remember to take off your shoes as you enter to keep our practice space clean.



NMCC Fall Clean up - Thank you! To Tom L, Keith L, Carol L, Bryan B, Jim F, Peter R, Peter H, Paul S, Holly F, Linda Y, Larry K, Mark B, Dawn B, Bob P, Pastor Jim (hopefully I did not forget anyone) for participating in the Fall Cleanup.



New Art Show: A new art show is up in Fellowship Hall! Phyllis Carlisle is displaying her collection of art pieces done in colored pencil and watercolor. Her work displays incredible detail, with themes that range from humorous to thought-provoking.



Online Giving Now Available: NMCC is excited to announce that you can now manage your giving online! Giving online is easy and allows you to set up automatic recurring contributions and view your complete online giving history from anywhere you have access to the Internet. Contributions can be set up to debit automatically from your checking or savings account or your credit card. (Please keep in mind it is less expensive for us to process a donation from your bank account because of credit card fees.)

Our electronic giving program offers convenience for you and much-needed donation consistency for our congregation. Thank you in advance! Simply follow these easy steps:

1. Visit the church website at www.NorthMadisonCC.org
2. Click on the Online Giving tab at the top of our home page (2nd line)
3. Click on "click here to donate or pledge"
4. Click on the **Create Profile** button
5. Follow the onscreen instructions to create an online profile and to schedule your recurring contributions.

Scan to pay or give:



Please Help us Get the Word out on Facebook: If you have a Facebook page, and you see something on the church Facebook page you like, such as an event or a generosity story, it would really help if you could share it on your page. A lot of people already do this, but we want to remind everyone that it's a great way to add to our visibility and increase publicity. You can add our Facebook page to your friends list too! Thanks for helping get out the word on all the great things going on at our church!



Photos Wanted: Our Communications team is looking for your high quality photos of church members and friends at NMCC functions or events. We want to let others know about all the good things going on at NMCC! They will be used in our advertising and publications, like the website, Facebook, posters, newspaper ads, etc. Please deliver them to Carol Anne Bachhuber, either via flash drive or email, carolanne@mosaic247.net. Also feel free to contact her if you have any questions, via email or phone 203-747-4840. Thank you!



Sanctuary Cleaning - Volunteers Needed: Volunteers are needed to clean the Sanctuary (and the rest of the upper level) once a week. Invite a friend or enjoy the solitude of our church by yourself. It takes approximately two and a half hours to vacuum the carpets, mop the floors, clean the bathrooms and empty the trash. Cleaning of the upper level can be completed anytime during that week based upon your schedule (and church functions). No prior experience needed as we can train you.

There is a sign-up sheet on the church bulletin board for your convenience. If you would like more information talk to Jeff Chin or Tom Lauher.



Sunday Coffee Hour/Flower Sponsors Needed: If you would like to donate flowers for a Sunday, or “sponsor” coffee hour by providing snacks (like bagels, muffins, fruit, cheese & crackers, etc.) or with a monetary gift, please sign up on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall or contact the church office at office@northmadisoncc.org.

- In the News & Noteworthy -



NMCC and Members in the News: We often spot an article in the local paper, *Patch* or in other news outlets, and have been posting them on our bulletin and our Facebook page. We'd like to expand the coverage and add a feature about this type of news in the monthly newsletter. Please send or drop off the news articles you find to the office at office@northmadisoncc.org and we'll be sure to include them!

Amanda Chris and Arabella Grace Bernier were featured in several Shoreline Newspapers including the Shoreline Times, introducing the birth of Arabella Grace Bernier on Election Day, November 4. Congratulations! <http://www.nhregister.com/general-news/20141107/madison-firefighter-with-als-gives-birth-to-arabella-grace>

There was a write up in the *New Haven Register* about **Chester Truax Jr.**, with several quotes from Rev. Jim Latimer. Chester's memorial service was held at NMCC on November 19. <http://www.nhregister.com/opinion/20141120/randall-beach-a-gardener-and-a-prisoner-of-war-were-so-much-more>.

- NMCC Milestones -

New Members

October 26 Jill Aboulian, Melissa Clark

Office, Board and Committee Contacts:

Rev. Jim Latimer, Pastor	203-421-3241	Office Managers, Cathy Meier & Jackie Fix	203-421-3241
Director of Christian Ed, Morgan Aery	203-421-3241	Minister of Music, Linda Juliani	860-399-0210
Senior Youth Group Leader, Jeff Chin	203-421-3498	Choir Director, Bill Clemmons	203-421-3484
Circle Nursery School Co-Directors: Donna Perry, Kathy Niejadlik	203-421-0997		

OFFICERS

Executive Committee Chair, Tom Lauher	203-245-1203
Executive Committee Vice Chair, John Nassif	203-421-5374
Members of the Board of Deacons*:	See Below
Clerk, Keith Luckenbach	203-421-5054
Assistant Clerk, Eric Piekarz	203-421-8569
Treasurer, John Gallops	860-460-8573
Assistant Treasurer, Calvin Price	203-245-8566
Financial Secretary - Disbursements, Cathy Meier	203-421-8377
Financial Secy. of Receipts, Susan O'Connor	203-457-1559
Asst. Financial Secretary - Receipts, Mike Effency	203-457-6901

* Roberta Hanlon 203-421-4891; Karen Chapman 203-421-4834; Peter Haff 203-203-421-0295; Bruce Whittaker 860-669-5208; Jim Connolly 203-421-1184; Kate Davis 203-421-5848; Dawn Barber 203-457-1868; Sandy Dickson 203-421-1178; Beth Berestecky 203-421-3210

BOARDS/COMMITTEES

Board of Christian Ed Chair, Rene Chin	203-421-3498
Board of Deacons Chair, Roberta Hanlon	203-421-4891
Board of Finance Chair, John Nassif	203-421-5374
Communications Chair, Roberta Hanlon	203-421-4891
Deacon's Service Chair, Melissa Blundon	203-996-0671
Fellowship Chair, Orlene Gallops	860-339-5844
Human Resources Chair, Holly Francis	203-245-7331
Missions Chair, Dawn Korik	203-298-8574
Music Chair, Eileen McCann	203-318-0068
Nominating Committee Chair, Peter Haff	203-421-0295
Pastoral Relations, Chair, Peter Meier	203-421-8377
Property & Planning Chair, Jeff Chin	203-421-3498
Quiet Ministry Chair, Linda Young	203-457-0723
Stewardship Chair, Jim Farrales	203-421-9323