

# SHORT BEACH UNION CHURCH

Christmas Newsletter 2015



**"The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."**

**- Leviticus 19:34**

For some years now, we've been hearing about a "war against Christmas," a war, we're told, fought on town greens, in public schools, and in retail establishments- most recently at Starbucks, where symbols of the holiday have been cynically and ruthlessly excised from the red coffee cups.

For my part, I've never been very alarmed about the decline of an American civil religion that gave lip service to Christianity and all too often ignored or dishonored the faith and convictions of non-Christians.

But this year, we are witnessing a very real war against Christmas.

If the "Christmas spirit" denotes anything besides a vague, fuzzy warmth fueled by consumption of every kind, it means an attitude that prompts acts of generosity and kindness to the stranger, acts that range from holding a door or yielding a place in line to making a sacrificial gift of time and resources to someone in need.

The Christmas spirit honors a Messiah who faced religious persecution in an occupied land, whose family became refugees, and who nonetheless charged his followers to "love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you."

Nothing could be more antithetical to the Christmas spirit than refusing hospitality and succor to people who are fleeing war, famine, and terror, yet that is what we see around us as we enter this Advent season.

In the aftermath of the Paris attacks, many of us have been seized by fear, and too many of our leaders and would-be leaders have been eager to pander to that fear by forsaking the victims of what may become the greatest forced human migration in recorded history.

The apostle Paul wrote that "perfect love drives out fear." As Jesus' disciples, as heirs to God's promises, as keepers of God's commandments, we have been blessed by that love, and we are charged to share it with our neighbors in a way that keeps fear from driving out love. Without dishonoring or minimizing our neighbors' concerns, we can let our words and actions bear witness to a love that, while it does not guarantee our safety, does drive out our fears.

That is how we can win the war against Christmas.

Wishing you and yours love and courage in this blessed season,

Pastor Skip

# Thanksgiving Turkey Collection Success

Thanks to the generous support of the Short Beach community, we had another successful turkey collection for the Branford Food Pantry! We collected 22 turkeys and several bags of "fixings." This increased our collection 50% over last year. In addition, a generous friend of the church has donated \$500 to purchase food for the Branford Food Pantry for Christmas.

A huge thank you goes out to all of those who helped promote the drive! We'd like to thank Kate, Nate and Nellie Benson for the lovely posters they created to promote the collection. Many, many thanks to Dave Burdett and Ann Ryder for all the help collecting and delivering the food!



# Branford Counseling Center Adopt a Family

As in prior years, we have adopted a family from the Branford Counseling Center for Christmas. If anybody is interested in donating to this cause, please contact Laura Melillo at (203) 469-0266. All gifts will be delivered on Wednesday, December 16<sup>th</sup>. Per a change of BCC Policy, presents may no longer be wrapped. As a result, there will not be a day of gift wrapping.

## Meet our newest members



Vicky Shaw



Doug Bono

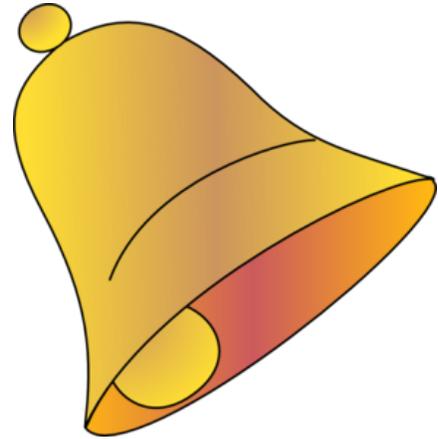


Hannah Luden

# Brunch to Celebrate SBUC Bell

The Short Beach Union Church Bell is now ringing after four years of silence! We will thank the Serenbetz family of Clark Avenue for their generous donation to repair the bell and cover possible future repairs. The donation is in memory of Warren Serenbetz, who loved hearing the church bell every Sunday morning.

Neighbors who also enjoy the church bell ringing are welcome to attend as guests. The brunch will begin at 11:30AM, following the 10AM service.



## Carol Sing

The Annual Short Beach Union Church Carol Sing will be held on Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup> at 4PM. Such favorites as Silent Night, Jingle Bells, Up on a Housetop and more will be played! Refreshments will follow the festivities.



# Calendar of Events

12/06/15 – Annual Carol Sing

12/24/15 – Christmas Eve Service

01/10/16 – Brunch to Celebrate Short Beach Union Church Bell

01/30/16 – Annual Soup and Chili Dinner

05/07/16 – 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Pasta Dinner

06/11/16 – Gourmet Hamburger Picnic at Beckett Park

09/17/16 – Tag Sale at Short Beach Union Church

11/20/16 – Thanksgiving Turkey Collection

12/03/16 – Holiday Lasagna Dinner

Church services are held at 10AM every Sunday, following the 9:45AM bell ringing. All are welcome. We hope to see you there!

Church space is available for rent. If interested, please contact Doug Bono at (203) 747-5753 for further information.

## Christmas Donations

Enclosed is an envelope for our Christmas collection.  
Please make checks payable to:

**Short Beach Union Church**  
P.O. Box 2144  
Branford, CT 06405