

Chepachet Union Church

Our Church Life



Volume 60 Issue 1

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Happy New Year!

Greetings to our Chepachet Union Church family and friends!

With a grateful heart, I write this, my 1st Newsletter article as the Senior Pastor of Chepachet Union Church! On behalf of my wife Liz and myself, I want to express our gratitude and thanks to God for giving us this opportunity to serve Him, by serving you and the greater community of Chepachet, RI! Who could of known that 2 ½ years ago, when I started the work here as the Interim Pastor, that that call would transition into a long-term pastorate here!

I was asked to give a biographical sketch so that our church family could get to know me and my family a little better. I think that's a great idea!

I was born and raised in the Midwest, the youngest of 8 children of Bertil and Lois Eklund. My dad was a Pastor in both Lutheran and Evangelical Covenant churches from Minnesota, Texas, Kansas, Wisconsin and South Dakota. I graduated with a Liberal Arts Degree from Bemidji College in MN. I believed God called me into ministry, so I attended both Bethel Seminary in St. Paul, MN and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Hamilton, MA, receiving a Master's Degree in Theology.

I met Liz at a Christian camp in upstate New York, in the summer of 1972. Liz was the program Director and I was one of the youth counselors. We married in December, 1974.

Our first pastorate was in Pownal, ME, where we stayed for 5 years until we received a call to a church in Kingston, MA. We stayed there for almost 17 years. It was here in Kingston, that I began to work in Haiti, and joined the board of a mission called "Partners with Haiti" out of Barrington, RI. In 2001, we left Kingston to serve a church in Pomfret, CT, where we stayed for almost 7 years, until 2009.

We left the pastorate, in the spring of 2009, believing God was calling us to work in full-time in mission work. We purchased a house in Pomfret, where we currently live, and we both did substitute teaching, and I also did some pulpit supply work, as well as carpentry, and cabinet-making.

In 2010, I started a 501 © 3, non-profit organization, HELP Mission, in response to the devastating earthquake in Haiti that year. I felt

Thank you

Thank you to the family of Helen Wilsey. Recently, Helen's family donated a beautiful crèche to the church. The figures are all hand painted ceramic pieces. There are 17 pieces, including wise men, shepherds, camels, a cow, donkey and sheep. This manger scene is currently on display in the church office.



called to do both relief and development work in Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere. Alan Gustafson went on one of my early work teams to Haiti and told me of a need for pulpit supply here at Chepachet Union Church! And as they say, "the rest is history!"

Liz, the love and joy of my life, was a "stay at home mom" and has been doing substitute teaching since 19__.

All our children have visited Chepachet Union a number of times over the past 2 plus years. Jessica, her husband Ben, along with their 5 children, whom they home school; Allie, Selah, Brooke, Toby and Micah. Ben has preached here, as most of you know. Bethany, lives with us in Pomfret, and works in the Brooklyn school system. Kirk, and his wife Emelie live in Grand Rapids, MI and Charis, her husband Jordan live in Grand Rapids, as well, and have 2 girls, Lois and Eliza. Makenzie, our youngest, will graduate from Cairn University in Langhorne, PA with a degree in music.

My commitment to Jesus Christ, as my personal Lord and Savior, is as strong today as it was the day God called my name!

Liz and I look forward, with great anticipation, to what God has in store for our church! We sense a fresh, new wind blowing through this place. This wind, to continue the metaphor, will require a willingness to change. We'll talk more about "change" in upcoming sermons and articles. Suffice it to say, the more we embrace change for the sake of the Gospel, the more God will use us and bless us, all for His glory.

In His grip,
Pastor John and Liz

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*Our Vision: Chepachet Union Church
brings glory to God in worship as we
welcome, witness, and nurture each other.
We share the joy of God's love as one
family in Christ.*

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The Giving Box

I will be starting a new ministry in 2018 called “The Giving Box.” Each month we will designate a local charity or organization as the recipient of donations or items that are pertinent to their cause.

In January, we will be requesting donations for Pastor John’s HELP Mission. We are asking for notebooks, pencils, sharpeners and erasers. He and his work team will bring these items along on their February trip. The bin will be located in the hallway across from the Nursery (the same area as the OCC Item of the Month bin was) A different charity will be announced each month.

If you have any suggestion of charities, please reach out to me.

Nicole Hartley

Rho Delta News



Rho Delta held their meeting on Dec 12th. There were 11 ladies present. Devotions were ready by Maureen Brown, called “Devotions for Christmas”. We received a Thank you from Fern Rylah, Marge Sherman and Ronald McDonald House.

The evening was hosted by Maureen Brown in the All Purpose Room. It was our Christmas Yankee Swap. We had cider and sparkling water with munchies on the table during the meeting. And Carrot Cake cupcakes and Fruit Pie for dessert.

We play a Christmas game, Maureen Read questions, for example “Who has their shopping done” and you got points for each question. Stephanie & Lisa were tied and each won a pretty poinsettia. After the game, we had our Yankee Swap.

We will miss Maureen Brown. She said she will visit and we wished her good blessings on her new home. Thank you for a great evening.

Our next meeting will be January 9, 2018.

Installation Service and Dinner

We will be having an Installation Service & Meal on January 28 for Pastor John Eklund.

We will share more details as they come in.



MISSION TRIPS

HELP Mission Int'l

Pastor John is heading out to Batso, Haiti for the 12th Work Team.

The goal this trip is to build 50 benches for the new class rooms. Work is also planned on the Medical Clinic site.

PROJECT : HOPE

Our Project Hope work team will be heading to Vidor, Texas on Sat, Jan 6.

They will spend a week in Texas, assisting in the continuing cleanup following the Hurricanes of 2017.