

# The Covenant Contact

January 2025

## *In the Bleak Midwinter*

In my mind, Christina Rossetti is one of the greatest poets of the 19th century, having written more than 50 poems by the time she was 16. Her sense of longing and sadness is ever evident in the song *In the Bleak Midwinter*. I own several versions of the song, with my favorites being the Choir of Christ's College and The Brilliance's version from the Advent, Volume 2, album.

*In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,  
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.*

*Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;  
Heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign.*

*In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed  
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.*

*What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;  
Yet what I can I give him: give my heart.*

The beauty of this poem for me is how it perfectly juxtaposes both sadness and hope. Every day, we are wrecked by the ravages of the Fall, and yet, every day, we live in the reality that Jesus came, lived, and died for us.

He came, lived, and died for the rescue and redemption of this world.

Our hope lies in the truth expressed in verse two, that heaven cannot hold our God. . . that he will come to reign. The ravages of the Fall have made us poor, living in the bleak midwinter.

It's January, one of the coldest months in most places in the United States. But it's a high of 87 in the southernmost counties, reminding us of the incredible way God built our world, and how a bleak midwinter is not always, and not forever.

Colossians 1:16 tells us, *“For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.”*



In our own Connecticut midwinter, we may feel poor. We may feel cold and even bleak.

But then we remember that he is coming.

This is not a call to “grin and bear it” nor is it a command to “just choose joy” (how toxic is that?). This is not a call to “forget it and move on.” It's a call to live in and through the bleak midwinter, which we can only do because of the hope promised to us in Scripture: that Jesus has supreme authority over this earth, and the story isn't finished yet.

What does this living in hope through the midwinter look like? I think Rossetti herself answers it in her song: We can give him our hearts. *In Christ, Pastor Stephanie*

## *The Search for Significance*

- **New Zoom Study starts Wednesday, January 15 at 7:00 pm.** What constitutes a meaningful life? We seek fulfillment in success, prosperity, recognition, relationships, and even self-sufficiency, but we always seem to come up short. Curious as to what the Bible might say about this? Dive into the book of Ecclesiastes with us on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm, via Zoom, so you can stay in the comfort of your warm home! Let Pastor Stephanie know if you would like the Zoom link emailed to you for convenience.

## Women Ministries



Women Ministries events are for all women of the church and their friends.

- **Kitchen Detail:** Wednesday, December 8, 9:00 am
- **Book Club** The book for January 8 is *The Small and the Mighty* by Sharon McMahon. We will meet at 6:00 pm at Jean Morton's.



## Christmas Greetings

(See bulletin board outside the Church Office)

- From Alice Nelson:  
*The poinsettia is very beautiful. I'm sure it will be brightening my home long after the holidays have passed. I appreciate your caring thoughts this time of year.*
- From Karen Michaels, Art Piel's daughter:  
*Thank you for thinking – and praying – for my dad. Merry Christmas!*
- From Jack and Linda Lundbom:  
*This year has gone well for our family. [Jack] continue[s] on dialysis and on most days feel[s] quite good. . . . Linda is doing well, spending much time as [Jack's] caregiver and looking to do more drawing in the coming year. . . . David received a substantial promotion at Cisco, and Jeanie continues ESL teaching at Portland Adult School, working with asylum seekers from Central Africa. (The full letter is on the bulletin board.)*
- From Ruth Johnson:  
*Thank you for your generous gift at Christmas. As you know, I love being your "churchmouse" and your support and appreciation mean a lot.*

## Summary: Quarterly Meeting of December 15

Banners are being hung around the church to remind us of our mission and vision statements.

Coffee Hour assignments were discussed. The congregation agreed that it isn't necessary to provide snacks each time. Purchased snacks (provided by the church or donated) can be stored and made available and the boards can invite persons not on their boards to help serve during their assigned months.

Restructuring the Sunday school program so that students' parents are encouraged to become more involved in the church is being investigated.

General Fund offerings through 48 weeks were over budget for the period. General fund offerings had been below budget, but a large late-year donation brought them above budget. The donation was not from a source that can be counted on for planning the 2025 budget.

All bills are up to date, with several bills still to come in December. We will need another fuel oil delivery as well. Restricted amounts left over for pew Bibles and the screens project will be moved to the General Fund. Restricted amounts for the Servant Keeper database and office supplies will be moved to the General Fund. A congregation member offered to cover a restricted fund negative balance for CE-UNITE.

The Diaconate is considering whether or not to continue holding Christmas Eve worship next year. A Christmas movie night is scheduled, as well as a worship service and reception honoring Ann and Ted Ryan, who are moving to Ohio at the end of December. If a congregation member notes that someone who usually attends is absent, they should notify someone on the Diaconate so

the Diaconate can reach out to the absent person.

The Trustees plan to address steeple repairs in 2025.

The Sunday school will give a Christmas concert during worship on December 15. The fall family dance was well attended. Sunday school attendance is growing.

Training on how to talk to people about God will continue. Fourteen Christmas Child boxes were sent to Samaritan's Purse this year. The church is asked to provide Christmas gifts for two local families in need. We will provide the Thomaston 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary committee with a short article and photos for the anniversary's commemorative book. The Playground Project has shipped 21 donated playgrounds to Guatemala, and more donations are expected.

WM is delivering 21 ditty bags to the Seafarers' Mission.

The church's database program has been migrated to the Servant Keeper cloud. A group of people are learning how to operate the new screen system during worship. Difficulty seeing the screens from the wings will be addressed in 2025. The wings were wired for this with the original installation, so it will not be difficult or expensive to install additional screens.

A bylaws change was proposed and approved to be presented for final approval at the Annual meeting to reduce the number of official church business meetings. The goal is to prevent too many meetings from interfering with actual ministry activities. The changes eliminate the December Quarterly meeting before the January Annual meeting and moves the election of officers to the Annual meeting. Terms will begin on February 1 instead of January 1.

*John Bedosky, Chair*

## ***Annual Meeting Reports Due***

Our annual meeting will be January 19, 2025.

**Annual Reports:** Reports to be included in the Annual Report that are already typed are due in the Church Office by January 4. If your report will need to be typed, please submit it no later than noon on Monday, December 30. Reports are needed from:

Pastor (including entries into the church record and membership summary)	<del>CE Board Chair</del> (received)
<i>Financial Secretary</i>	Sunday School Supt.
Treasurer/Budget	Sunday School Treasurer
<del><i>Nominating Committee</i></del>	CHYG Youth Group
<del>(<i>slate of officers</i>)</del> (received)	UNITE Fund
<del>M &amp; E Board Chair</del>	Trailblazers/Pathfinders Group
(received)	<i>Women Ministries Chair</i>
M & E Treasurer	<i>WM Treasurer</i>
<i>Diaconate Chair</i>	Investment Funds
<i>Diaconate Treasurer</i>	<i>Memorial Fund</i>
<del>Trustees Chair</del> (received)	<del>Men's Ministry Fund</del> (received)

All boards and committees are reminded to meet before the January Annual Meeting to elect officers. Diaconate, Trustees, Christian Education, and Missions & Evangelism Boards must also appoint a representative to the Nominating Committee. *(If you were Chair of any Board or Committee in 2024, please convene an organizational meeting, before the Annual Meeting, of that group even if you will not be serving with that group in 2025.)*

**Auditor Bill Dayton** must audit all financial records before the Annual Meeting on January 19. *(Leave clearly marked records at Red's Hardware for Bill or give them to Ken Hopkins to deliver to Bill.)* These include the **Church operating and savings/restricted accounts, Investment Funds, Women Ministries Fund, Missions & Evangelism Fund, Diaconate Fund, Memorial Fund, Sunday School Fund, Men's Ministry Fund, and the UNITE Fund.**

## **Youth Groups**

Trailblazers/Pathfinders is for students in Grades K-6. Leaders are Brenda Tousignant, Lori Vigeant, and Haley Morton. They meet once a month



1/11 11:30 am Regular Meeting (Potter's House)

D/C (Discipleship/Confirmation) is for students in grades 7-8, a two-year journey, exploring who God is and what God means in our life. All junior high students are welcome to attend. Pastor Stephanie is the leader. They meet on Sundays at the 9:00 am Sunday School time.



CHYG (Covenant High Youth Group) is for all students in grades 7-12. The leaders are Beth Campbell and Sue Sundell.



1/3-1/5/2025 – **Winterfest (Grades 9-12)** @ Pilgrim Pines.

1/31-02/2/2025 – **Winterblast (Grades 6-8)** @ Pilgrim Pines. Cost \$150. Register online by 1/29/2025.

Liturgical Dance is for girls in grades 1-8. The leader is Jessica Bedosky. Practice times vary and are in the Sanctuary.



## **Banquet of Blessing**

- **Need:** canned chicken, canned fruit, tomato soup, paper towels, toilet paper.
- **No perishable foods. Check expiration dates.** We don't give away out of date food.
- **No canned vegetarian vegetable soup right now.**

## **Prayer Chain**

Contact Prayer Coordinator Mary Butkevich (860-514-4343 or marybutkevich@gmail.com) for prayer concerns and rejoicings.

## **Meal Coordinator**

Providing a meal to someone during a difficult time is one way to show how much we care. If you know someone who might benefit, contact Sandy Dunn (860-483-2015 or daytondunn@mac.com).

## **Crafty Fridays**

In the Potter's House, 6:00-8:00 pm. If you have a craft to do, bring it. If you don't have a craft but would like to visit and chat, that's okay! Contact: Ruth Johnson (860-605-8040).

## **Giving Made Easy**

- Give online in just two minutes. You can opt for one time, weekly or monthly donations. Just open the camera app on your phone and scan the QR Code. You will then be taken right to the Giving Page on our website.

Covenant Church of Thomaston

[Giving Page QR Code](#)



# January 2025

(Rev 12/30/2024)

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Romans 12:4-5

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>* <b>Sundays:</b> 9:00 Sunday School; 10:00 am Worship; 11:15 Fellowship  <b>Sunday worship services</b> are recorded and posted on the church website (<a href="http://covchurchthomaston.org">covchurchthomaston.org</a>). Worship bulletins, which include the weekly announcements, also are posted on the church website.</p>			<p><b>1</b>   <i>Pastor Stephanie - Vacation</i>                       6:30 NA (Fellowship)</p>	<p><b>2</b>   <i>Pastor Stephanie - Vacation</i>                       7:30 NA Subcommittee (Gathering)</p>	<p><b>3</b>   <i>Pastor Stephanie - Vacation</i>                       CHYG Winterfest, Pilgrim Pines                      6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's House)</p>	<p><b>4</b>                       Winterfest</p>
<p><b>5*</b>                       CHYG returns from Winterfest</p>	<p><b>6</b> 10:45 39ers Study (Fellowship)                      3:30 Private (Fellowship Room)</p>	<p><b>7</b>                       4:00 Prayer (Church Office)</p>	<p><b>8</b> 9:00 Kitchen Detail                       6:00 WM Book Club (Jean Morton's)                      6:30 NA (Fellowship)</p>	<p><b>9</b>                       (Electronic piano repair)</p>	<p><b>10</b>                       6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's House)</p>	<p><b>11</b></p>
<p><b>12*</b> WINTERFEST  <b>RETREAT SHARING</b>                      11:30 Diaconate (Conference Room)                      11:30 Trailblazers/Pathfinders (Potter's House)</p>	<p><b>13</b> 10:45 39ers Study (Fellowship)</p>	<p><b>14</b>                       4:00 Prayer (Church Office)</p>	<p><b>15</b>                       6:30 NA (Fellowship)                      7:00 Zoom Study</p>	<p><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>17</b>                       6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's House)                      6:30 Tres Dias Secuela (Fellowship)</p>	<p><b>18</b></p>
<p><b>19*</b>                      11:30 Annual Meeting (Sanctuary)</p>	<p><b>20</b> MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY                       6:30 Tres Dias Secretariat (Fellowship)</p>	<p><b>21</b> 9:30 Women's Study (Conference)                       4:00 Prayer (Church Office)</p>	<p><b>22</b>                       6:30 NA (Gathering)                      7:00 Zoom Study</p>	<p><b>23</b></p>	<p><b>24</b>                       6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's House)</p>	<p><b>25</b>                      9:30 "Chosen" Group (Esme's &amp; Ruby's)</p>
<p><b>26*</b></p>	<p><b>27</b> 10:45 39ers Study (Fellowship)</p>	<p><b>28</b> 9:30 Women's Study (Conference)                       4:00 Prayer (Church Office)</p>	<p><b>29</b>                       7:00 Zoom Study</p>	<p><b>30</b></p>	<p><b>31</b>                      Jr. Hi Winterblast (12/31-2/2)                      Pilgrim Pines                      6:00 Crafty Fridays (Potter's House)</p>	<p>Jr. Hi Winterblast (12/31-2/2)                      Pilgrim Pines</p>



