

NORTH BRANFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
MARCH PARISH VISITOR - 2021

The
Season
of
Lent



WILL
ALWAYS
BE
A

JOURNEY
OF
Faith



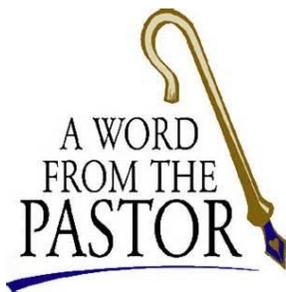


From YOUR - MODERATOR
JOANNE PALMIERI

The reconvening of our Annual Meeting for consideration of the budget took place on February 21, 2021. As moderator, I would like to thank everyone who attended! I was pleased that everyone spoke with kindness and consideration. There was much passion in the room, but everyone showed respect and restraint towards each other's opinions. As I said in both my opening and closing prayers:

Dear Lord, help up to be able to listen to each other without animosity being ever mindful that we are all God's children and are asked by you to love one another without hesitancy or trepidation. Finally, thank you Lord for all the gifts found in the members of this congregation, gifts of leadership, service, outreach, love and fellowship. Continue to help us to use these gifts wisely and with appreciation. Guide us through the year ahead with your calming and steadfast love.

God Bless,
Joanne Palmieri, Moderator



Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.'

Matthew 25: 20

In my role as economic development consultant for my hometown of Plymouth, I've had the somewhat unusual experience working with an archaeologist who was hired to investigate and remove Native American artifacts from a site slated for construction of a new distribution facility. His digging revealed many fascinating finds, and unearthed much history of a long-ago settlement and its relationship to other ancient communities in the Naugatuck and Farmington river valleys. While I had often regarded archaeology as less than exciting, my involvement in this project changed my mind, especially as I listened to the archaeologist enthusiastically describe his findings in similar detail to a child unwrapping a new toy at Christmas. And what if these "gifts" had been left buried, never to be seen and appreciated?

When better than Lent to do some digging of our own, and uncover those "hidden talents" of ours? In the story from the scripture I shared, two of the servants take their talents and put them to use, while the third servant buries and saves his talent. Perhaps we do the same – either choosing to bury our talents or, as one of our members recently observed, to save our talents rather than spend them for good and Godly purposes. Now, this could be as true of our spiritual gifts as our material gifts, including money. Do we save, or do we invest? Do we doubt and fear, or do we faithfully trust?

So here's my invitation and challenge to you: as you journey through Lent, make it a time not only to dig deeply to discover what needs changing in your life – unhealthy and harmful attitudes and behaviors – but also to find what gifts God has given you, and how best to use them, invest them, for your own good and the good of others. Ask God for help in making a new turn (and maybe a U-turn) in direction, such that you more fully discern God's purpose for your life and become more the person God desires, and do more with the gifts you've been given. Perhaps some quiet time for meditation and journaling would prove helpful, or daily reading of scriptures, or seeking the advice of a trusted friend or counsellor. Invite the Holy Spirit into the conversation, and see where it goes! Likewise, seek the Spirit's and others' advice on discovering and utilizing your spiritual gifts. Sometimes, God speaks directly to us, sometimes through others, so be open to new possibilities! Sometimes, too, others may see in us what we don't see in ourselves (both the good and not-so-good), so please be willing to be open and not defensive.

And to begin, here's a fun way to help unearth your spiritual gifts – a spiritual gifts inventory, which was given to me long ago, and which I'm now sharing and attaching as a Lenten gift and practice. Please respond to each statement based on what you enjoy doing, what makes your heart sing. Then, add up the results and perhaps confirm what you've already felt, or maybe make some new discoveries! Either way, the inventory will hopefully encourage you to invest what God has generously and uniquely offered you! I'd also be eager to hear what you found on your "dig"!

Last month, I offered you some fasting suggestions. This month, let's not only think about fasting, but about "feasting" – savoring and enjoying all that Godly giftedness, and inviting others to the feast as you share from your abundance! May it be so!

Peace,
Vance

See Pages 13-16 for the continuation of Vance's Spiritual gifts.



Lent is upon us. It is a reminder that to sacrifice for others keeps us closer to the loving embrace Jesus shows us.

~fran v. giambalvo





LENTEN CALENDAR

**NORTH BRANFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
1680 FOXON ROAD NORTH BRANFORD, CT
203-488-8456 - nobfdcong@sbcglobal.net**

FEBRUARY

February 24 – Taize Service at 7:00 pm via zoom

MARCH

March 10 – Taize Service at 7:00 pm via Zoom

March 24 – Taize Service at 7:00 pm via Zoom

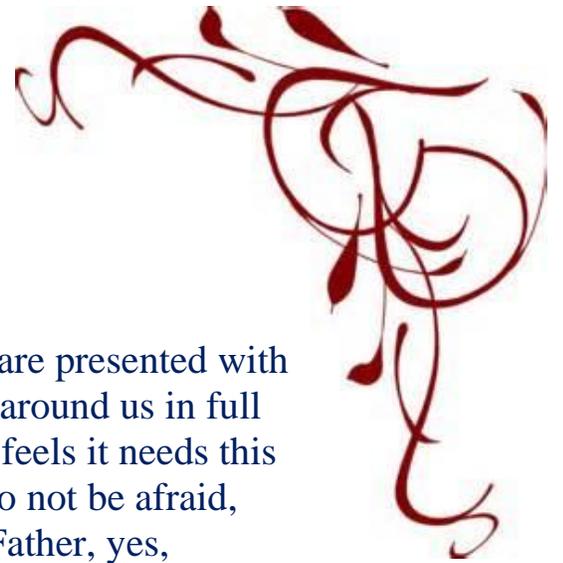
March 28 – Palm Sunday at 10:00 am will be an outside service

APRIL

April 1 – Maundy Thursday at 7:00 pm in church service

April 3 – Please bring cut flowers for our outdoor decorating of the Flower Cross from 9:00 am until noon.

April 4 – 10:00 am Easter Sunday Service



A Breath of Spring

As a long, cold Winter starts to fade, we are presented with hints of spring just waiting to burst open around us in full color. It's amazing how the whole world feels it needs this new life, and this time to move forward to not be afraid, finally realizing that with our Heavenly Father, yes, "all things are possible."

Since the snow has finally melted away and the green grass has started to peek through the soil, this reminder that life can, and will, be renewed no matter what hardships it has seen, is so important. So, let us start this new growth of Spring by putting a dance to our steps and a song to our voices. For, if we venture into each new day with love and determination, we can make the colors of Spring seem brighter by presenting ourselves as a gift to our Father for all the goodness and love He continually bestows upon us.

So, why look back at what "was" when we can look forward to what is "now" with new hopes, new dreams, and new beginnings with each new day.

~fran v. giambalvo



Lent offers a beautiful opportunity to discover the “*mystery of Christ*” within us.

~ Henri Nouwen

Church News



CLOTHING SHED IS NOW OPEN

The clothing donation shed located in our parking lot, which was temporarily closed due to global effects of the pandemic, has now been reopened to the public. If you're not familiar with the clothing donation shed, it's designed to give our members and neighbors a uniquely clean, convenient, and well-cared-for option to donate their used clothing. St. Pauly Textile Inc., the company that has provided the shed, partners with businesses and various organizations to distribute donated items both here in the U.S. and worldwide, where they're ultimately re-worn by people who need them. NBCC receives funding for donated clothing, allowing us ways to maintain and expand our ministries.

TOPS

TOPS exercise program meets every Wednesday at 6:30 PM in Fellowship Hall.

TO CONTACT THE PASTOR

Please know that you can contact Vance by calling him for an urgent need, pastoral conversation, or if you have information that would be helpful for him to know about our church family and the wider community. Leave a confidential message for Vance on his office phone (203-488-8456, ext.1), or you may call/text his cell phone (860-480-3307).

GET TO KNOW OUR CHURCH

Live Streaming Worship On-Line! Are you are unable to attend Sunday Worship but would still like to feel the closeness of your church family? Just click on the following link below to watch our Worship Live on Sunday Morning at 10:00 AM. With this link you can also watch a recap of any past Sunday worships you might have missed. **Remember, your church family is never far away!**

Click on this link - www.Facebook.com/CTNBCC



Birthdays of the Month



MARCH

7: *Patricia Reid*

8: *Janyce Cattaruzza*

9: *Nathalie Munroe*

13: *Julia Palmieri*

21: *Marcia Duenkel*

29: *Cameron Jackowski*



Forgotten anyone on our birthday list
please call the church office and let
Fran know! 203.488.8456

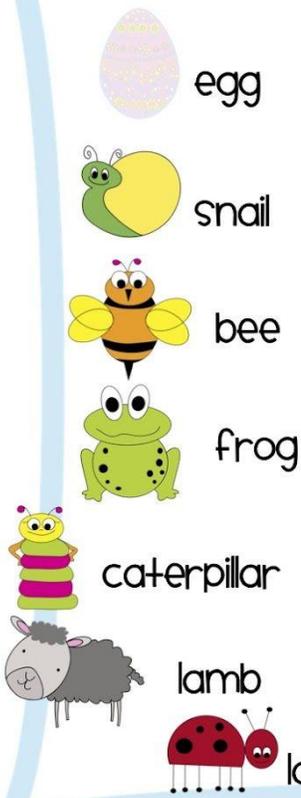
CHILDREN'S PUZZLE PAGE

CAKE
EGG
SAUSAGE
POTATO
BREAKFAST
PORRIDGE
SANDWICH
APPLE

H	R	E	T	S	A	E	G	P	
H	C	I	W	D	N	A	S	O	
V	S	A	U	S	A	G	E	R	
E	G	G	H	E	P	Q	K	R	
U	G	S	K	B	H	R	O	I	
O	I	A	P	H	G	B	A	D	
T	C	P	O	T	A	T	O	G	
E	L	P	P	A	N	T	Y	E	
B	R	E	A	K	F	A	S	T	

↑ ↓ ← → ↘ ↗ ↙

Spring



C	A	T	E	R	P	I	L	L	A	R	E
R	F	B	T	Y	V	I	L	Q	B	S	B
U	R	Y	W	S	D	F	V	N	U	N	C
F	O	E	A	V	M	L	Y	L	C	A	B
R	G	U	B	E	G	G	O	A	W	I	K
N	H	T	R	C	R	F	Y	D	B	L	I
O	W	L	G	H	V	T	A	Y	I	B	Q
M	N	P	O	T	G	L	E	B	S	Q	C
H	N	J	I	O	P	A	Q	U	V	G	H
F	C	N	L	F	I	M	B	G	F	Y	U
B	E	E	C	Y	Z	B	T	H	W	P	B
Y	B	U	T	T	E	R	F	L	Y	S	M



MARCH 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 7:00 pm Worship Meeting	2	3 6:00 pm TOPS	4	5	6
7 Third Sunday of Lent 10:00 am Communion Sunday	8 OFFICE CLOSED	9 OFFICE CLOSED 6:30 pm Leadership Meeting	10 7:00 pm Taize Service on Zoom 6:00 pm TOPS	11	12	13
14 Fourth Sunday of Lent 10:00 am Worship	15 OFFICE CLOSED	16 OFFICE CLOSED	17 6:00 pm TOPS	18	19	20
21 Fift Sunday of Lent 10:00 am Worship	22 OFFICE CLOSED	23 OFFICE CLOSED	24 7:00 pm Taize Service on Zoom 6:00 pm TOPS	25	26	27
28 Palm Sunday 10:00 am Worship	22 OFFICE CLOSED	23 OFFICE CLOSED	31 6:00 pm TOPS			

Everyday...

~ pray for someone who is alone ~

Continuation of Vance's Pastor's March Letter

Spiritual Gifts Inventory

The Bible tells us that every believer is given a spiritual gift for the purpose of building up God's Church (1 Corinthians 12:7). This is exciting news! God has given each of us a special gift. As disciples our responsibility is to discern, experiment with, and use our spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are special abilities, talents, or yearnings that God gives to every disciple for the purpose of building up the Church. This spiritual gifts inventory will help you begin to discover what your spiritual gifts might be. Use the information this inventory yields to discern more clearly God's will for your ministry in life. This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. Each statement has three possible responses. As you read each statement, reflect for a moment as to how it describes you, and then write Y, S, or N beside the item to indicate one of these three responses. Yes—I have positive feelings/much enjoyment Sometimes—I have neutral feelings/modest enjoyment No—I have negative feelings/no enjoyment, or DOES NOT APPLY

EXAMPLE: When I do things behind the scenes and others are helped, I am joyful. If this describes you well, write Y in the blank. If this is only partly true about you, write S in the blank. If this does not describe you at all, write N in the blank.

- Answer 1. I am able to organize ideas, things, time, and people for more effective results.
2. I receive much joy from working with my hands on various arts and crafts.
3. I find that my skills in building or repairing objects benefit others.
4. I like sharing with other people how God has changed my life.
5. I am able to share words of encouragement with those who are struggling in life.
6. There have been times when I have felt sure I knew God's specific will for the future, even when others have not been so sure.
7. I am so confident that God will meet my needs that I give to him sacrificially and consistently.
8. I find joy in being a help to someone who can utilize my help and concern.
9. My home is always open to people passing through who need a place to stay.
10. When I am asked to pray for others, I feel that my prayers will have tangible results.
- II. Oftentimes, I am able to perceive what is in the heart or mind of another person without his or her telling me.
12. I am able to motivate people to get things done.
13. I enjoy doing things to comfort people during sickness or times of problems and/or anxiety.
14. When I am singing, I feel a great sense of joy. 1
5. I would enjoy being involved in an instrumental music presentation.
16. I appreciate being called on to do things for other people.
17. I have enjoyed relating to a certain group of people over a long period of time, sharing personally in their successes and failures.
18. I feel that I can communicate biblical truths to others so that they are helped.
19. When important decisions need to be made, I sense a confidence in God's guidance.
20. When I use my ability to write, I know others will learn and grow from it. 2
1. I am able to plan and administer programs that will be of benefit to others.
22. I enjoy the times that I am able to create beautiful items with my hands.
23. I enjoy the work necessary for gardening, landscaping, and other projects.
24. I feel comfortable telling others how God has changed my life.
- New Ideas in Church Vitality tttt I Leadership Net Results/February 1997 3
25. I am able to talk with and build up those who are having difficulties in life, whether they are in despair, sorrow, or not sure of themselves.
26. When in a group, I am the one others often look to for vision and direction.
27. I am ready to forego certain privileges in order to give money to God's work.
28. When I serve the Lord, I really don't care who gets the credit.
29. I enjoy inviting visitors-and guests (strangers) home to dinner after Sunday morning worship.

30. I take prayer requests very seriously and pray until the answer comes.
31. I have the ability to discover new truths for myself through reading or observing the situation firsthand.
32. I am able to lead small and/or large groups of people into making decisions. _
33. I enjoy helping and working with those people who are ignored by others.
34. In the area of vocal music, I enjoy performing alone and/or in a group of singers.
35. I am able to play a musical instrument effectively. –
36. When other people ask me to lend a helping hand, I feel special.
37. I feel comfortable in leading a small group in Bible study.
38. I find it rewarding to teach people more about the Lord.
39. When a person has a problem, as a Christian I can frequently see what is best to do.
40. I find pleasure in composing and writing paragraphs and stories for the growth of others. _
41. I can easily delegate important responsibilities to other people.
42. I find joy in having a beautiful lawn, flowers, and shrubs that are properly placed and maintained.
43. The repair and maintenance of things comes easily to me.
44. It is easy for me to talk to other people about life and/or spiritual matters.
45. I am able to speak words of encouragement to those who are troubled, discouraged, or not sure of themselves.
46. I am able to trust in the reliability of God when all else looks dim.
47. I am content to maintain a lower standard of living in order to benefit God's work financially.
48. When I do things behind the scenes and others are helped, I am joyful.
49. I am able to provide food and/or lodging graciously and willingly to people who are in need.
50. I find myself praying when I could be doing other things.
51. Through study or experience, I have been able to discern the wisest course of action to take in major decisions.
52. When a group I am in is lacking organization. I tend to step in to fill the gap.
53. Sometimes when I help people out, I know they may not even say "thank you," but I still enjoy helping them.
54. I enjoy singing familiar gospel songs with a group of fellow Christians.
55. I know that my ability to perform instrumental music has been a blessing to others.
56. I respond cheerfully when asked to do a job, even if it seems menial.
57. I enjoy leading small groups of people, especially when I am able to show genuine care and concern for them.
58. I enjoy helping others learn things about Scripture that aid in building them up.
59. I can intuitively arrive at solutions to fairly complicated problems.
60. I am able to put my thoughts and ideas into positive, written form.
61. I am able to set goals and objectives, and then make plans to reach them.
62. I find joy in painting pictures or in making handcrafted objects.
63. I find joy in lawn care and other outside maintenance.
64. When I share my faith with others, I see positive results in their lives.
65. I often share words of comfort, cheer, or encouragement with others.
66. I really believe that God will not let me down, even though everything around me seems to be falling apart.
67. I really enjoy giving my time and treasures to God's work.
68. I am able to assist key leaders to relieve them of detail work, so they can get back to their main jobs.
69. When people visit me at home. I am confident they feel good about being_ there.
70. I regard prayer as one of my favorite spiritual exercises 71. I am able to pick up on important biblical truths that benefit me and others.
72. People look to me as a leader when things need to be done.
73. I enjoy working with those less fortunate than I.
74. I am able to lead others in . singing.
75. I enjoy using my instrumental music talents for the appreciation of my friends and to the glory of God.
76. I enjoy being a follower more than a leader.

- 77. I have brought back to faith friends or relatives who have strayed away.
- 78. I enjoy teaching children or adults about God's love.
- 79. If one of my friends is faced with a problem, I am able to sort out what God's will is for him or her.
- 80. I enjoy writing words that will be of benefit to those who read them.

Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts

This inventory has given you a tentative evaluation of your gifts. This is a guideline for you to follow when you experiment with the gifts and determine what specific gifts the Lord has blessed you with.

Values of Answers	Total Gift	
1__ 21__ 41__ 61		Administration
2__ 22__ 42__ 62		Craftsmanship (Arts/Crafts)
3__ 23__ 43__ 63		Craftsmanship (Manual)
4__ 24__ 44__ 64		Evangelism
5__ 25__ 45__ 65		Exhortation
6__ 26__ 46__ 66		Faith
7__ 27__ 47__ 67		Giving
8__ 28__ 48__ 68		Helps
9__ 29__ 49__ 69		Hospitality
10__ 30__ 50__ - 70		Prayer
11__ 31__ 51__ 71		Knowledge
12__ 32__ 52__ 72		Leadership
13__ 33__ 53__ 73		Mercy
14__ 34__ 54__ 74		Music (Vocal)
15__ 35__ 55__ 75		Music (Instrumental)
16__ 36__ -56__ 76		Serving
17__ 37__ 57-- 77		Shepherding
18__ 38__ 58__ 78		Teaching
19__ 39__ 59__ 79		Wisdom
20__ 40__ 60__ 80		Writing

Discovering Your Spiritual Gift Cluster The six highest scores reflect your unique set of gifts.

Gift Cluster	Point Totals	
1_____	_____	
2_____	_____	
3_____	_____	
4_____	_____	
5_____	_____	
6_____	_____	

name_____

phone number_____

date_____

Administration: The gift of administration will benefit you in understanding and setting goals for various groups and organizations. It will give you direction in making plans to achieve those goals. You will be able to plan programming,

work with facts and/or figures, and see that goals and ideas are accomplished. Scriptural References: 1 Corinthians 12:28 (NIV). Romans 12:8, Acts 6:1-7. **Craftsmanship—Arts/Crafts:** This gift or glorified talent will give you the ability to use your hands, thoughts, and mind to further God's Kingdom through artistic, creative means. You may also serve as a trainer for others to develop their abilities in this area. Scriptural References: Exodus 31:3-11, Ezekiel 27:4-9. **Craftsmanship—Manual:** This gift or glorified talent will give you the ability to use your hands and ideas in the areas of maintenance and upkeep of God's physical blessings. Scriptural References: 2 Chronicles 34:9-13, 1 Chronicles 4:14, Ezekiel 27:4-9. **Evangelism:** The gift of evangelism will give you the power to share the Good News of the love of Jesus with the lost, in such a way that those with whom you share will come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Scriptural References: Ephesians 4:11, Acts 5:42, Acts 8:5-8, Acts 13:42-43, Acts 11:20-22. **Exhortation:** The gift of exhortation will allow you to speak words of comfort, encouragement, admonition, or counsel to members of the Body in such a way that they will be strengthened and built up. Scriptural References: Romans 12:8, Acts 14:21-22, Hebrews 10:25. **Faith:** The gift of faith will allow you to see with confidence what God's will is for your life and, more importantly, for the Body of Christ of which you are a member. You will have no fear of moving ahead, even though everything around you seems to be holding you back. Scriptural References: 1 Corinthians 12:9. Romans 4:20-21; Acts 27:21-25. **Giving:** The gift of giving will allow you to give liberally of your treasures and time. As you give, you will experience much joy and satisfaction. Scriptural References: Romans 12:8, Mark 12:41-44, Malachi 3:10. 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. **Summary of Spiritual Gifts** **Helps:** The gift of helps will give you the opportunity to help other members of the Body grow in their service. You will feel needed as you relieve others of tasks that are burdening them. Scriptural References: 1 Corinthians 12:28, Romans 16:1-2, Mark 2:3-4. **Hospitality:** The gift of hospitality will give you the opportunity to be open and caring to those in need. You will enjoy having people in your home and will feel good as you provide food and lodging. Scriptural References: 1 Peter 4:9-10, Acts 16:15, 3 John 1:5-8. **Prayer:** This gift or unique role will allow you to pray for other members of the Body in such a way that your prayers will be of benefit to them. You will enjoy praying regularly and, perhaps, for extended periods of time. You will be able to see frequent and specific answers to prayer that many of your fellow Christians who do not have this gift cannot see. Scriptural References: James 5:14-16, Colossians 4:12, Acts 6:4, Acts 12:5, Ephesians 6:18. **Knowledge:** The gift of knowledge will give you the ability to use information and ideas you have learned and thought out for the well-being of the Body. Your sharing of your gift of knowledge will allow the church to become healthy and grow. Scriptural References: Matthew 16:17, 1 Corinthians 12:8, 1 Corinthians 13:2. **Leadership:** The gift of leadership will allow you to be a goal-setter and leader of God's people. They will look to you for guidance and direction. Your leadership will bring glory to God and growth to his church. Scriptural References: Hebrews 13:17, Acts 7:10. **Mercy:** The gift of mercy allows you to reach out to people who are in need. Your words of care and concern and your actions will aid in building up those who may have physical, mental, or emotional problems. The things you will do will allow those you serve to see the love of Christ in you and through you. Scriptural References: Romans 12:8. Acts 9:36, Luke 10:33-35. **Music—Vocal:** This gift or glorified talent will allow you to use your voice to sing praises to the Lord in such a manner that those around you will feel strengthened and built up. Scriptural References: Colossians 3:16. 2 Chronicles 5:12-13, Nehemiah 12:42. James 5:13. **Music—Instrumental:** This gift or glorified talent will allow you to play an instrument in such a manner that it will bring praise to God and build up those around you. Scriptural References: / Chronicles 16:42. Psalm 150:4-5; Isaiah 38:20. **Serving:** The gift of serving will allow you to see things that need to be done. Often these are tasks overlooked by others, especially those in leadership positions. Assuming the role of the servant will bring you much joy and will build up the Body of Christ. Scriptural References: Romans 12:7 (NIV), 2 Timothy 1:16-18, Romans 14:18-19. **Shepherding:** The gift of shepherding (pastoring) will give you the ability to reach out and care in a spiritual manner for an individual or for a group. You will serve as one who is a counselor, an encourager, a shepherd. You will see that God's Word is fed to those in your care and you will also feel a responsibility for the general well-being of the individual or group. Scriptural References: Ephesians 4:11, Thessalonians 5:12, Acts 20:28. **Teaching:** The gift of teaching will give you the ability to share knowledge with members of the Body (children and/or adults) that will serve in building them up in Christ. Your teaching will aid the growth and health of the Body. Scriptural References: 1 Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:7, Ephesians 4:11, Acts 20:20-21. **Wisdom:** The gift of wisdom will allow you to have a special understanding of situations that arise in people's lives. You will be able to offer counsel and advice. As you do this, the Body of Christ will become more healthy and grow. Scriptural References: / Corinthians 12:8, Acts 6:3-10, 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. **Writing:** This gift or glorified talent will allow you to put your thoughts and ideas into words that will be meaningful and relevant to those who read them. As they are read, people will find guidance, knowledge, courage, or edification. Scriptural References: Psalm 45:1, Philippians 3:1, Jude 3.

The North Branford Congregational Church, UCC

1680 Foxon Road, PO Box 410, North Branford, CT 06471

The ministers of this parish are all of its members.

Assisting them in their ministries are:

Church AdministratorFran Giambalvo

LEADERSHIP BOARD:

PastorVance Taylor
Moderator Joanne Palmieri
Business ManagerJonathan Bodwell
TreasurerJennifer Ramsay
Recording Secretary Laurie Vincent
Worship..... Gerry Borgerson & Arnie Palmieri co-chairs

OFFICERS:

Financial SecretaryNancy Bodwell
Asst. Financial Secretary.....Ginny Montelius
Clerk.....Marcia Duenkel

Church office hours are Wednesday—Friday, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm
(or with the Pastor at your convenience), 203.488.8456

Parish Visitor articles must be into the office by the 15th of the month
Please leave in the secretary’s box in the office, or
e-mail to nobfdcong@sbcglobal.net,

