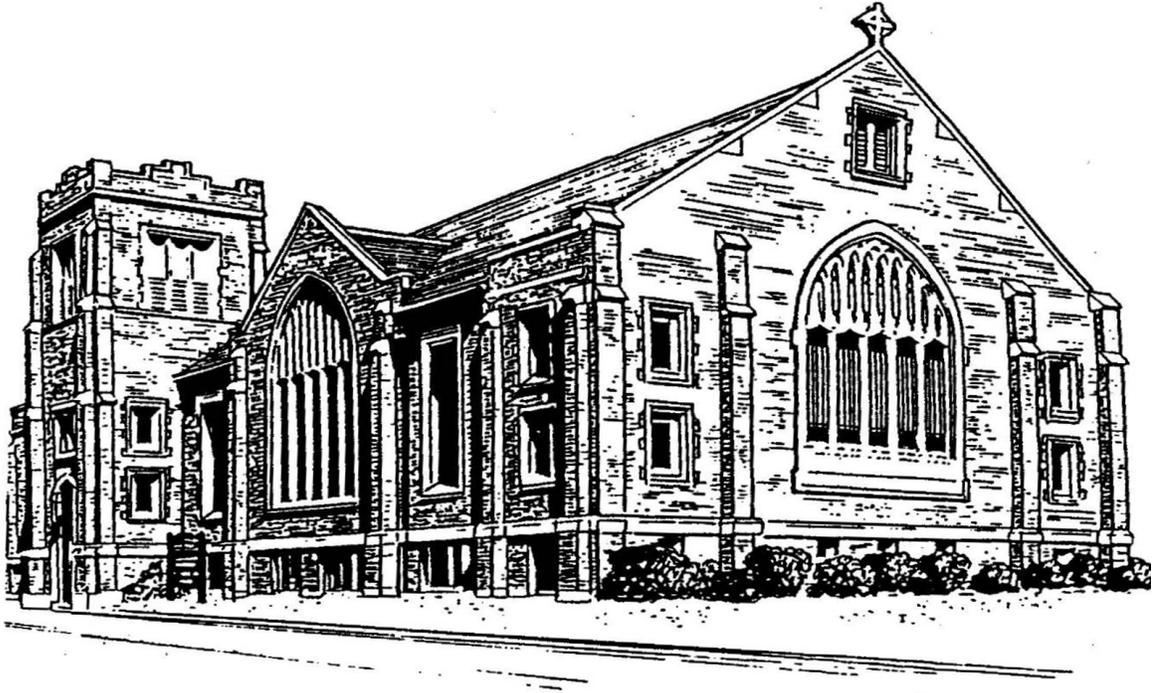


# HAMDEN PLAINS UMC



Dear Hamden Plains Church community,

The “*Faith Matters*” column that I announced would be published in the January 9th edition of the *New Haven Register* appeared in the on-line version on January 8th. I did not receive the January 8th issue of the printed paper so do not know if it is there or not. The column follows.

***Pastor Brian***

***“Faith Matters” column***

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***December 31, 2020***

It's the time of year for reflecting.

Some reflecting is focused inward. Much wisdom in such reflection is universal. Flight attendants know it well: *"Put your oxygen mask on before helping fellow passengers."* Dispensers of help know it too: *"You can't pour out what's not in your cup."* Problem avoidance only leads to bigger problems to solve, so musings on our propensity to avoid problems is a worthy investment of time and energy.

And then there are those pesky New Year's resolutions. Some of us lament or avoid them because of the high failure rate. If you made some this year, they may already be on the trash heap of good intentions. Yet Hall of Fame hockey player Wayne Gretsky reminds us: *"100% of the shots you don't take don't go in."*

It's the time of year for reflecting.

Not all reflecting is inward. Two great faiths, Judaism and Christianity, have just completed seasons of light. Lay and clergy remind us that we are to reflect the Light. The often-quoted *"It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness"* actually comes from a 1907 sermon entitled "The Invincible Strategy" by the Rev. William L. Watkinson. Rev. Watkinson wrote:

*"But denunciatory rhetoric is so much easier and cheaper than good works, and proves a popular temptation. **Yet is it far better to light the candle than to curse the darkness.**"*

Familiar slogans typify this outward-focused reflection. *"Brighten the corner where you are."* *"Nobody can do everything but everybody can do something."* Loren Eiseley's familiar story, "The Star Thrower," reminds us that although the task may seem insurmountable, every positive thing we do makes a difference for the one for whom we do it. The Star Thrower's critic said that rescuing one starfish among tens of thousands stranded on the beach couldn't possibly make a difference. Picking up a single beached starfish and throwing

back into the ocean, the Star Thrower replied, *“It made a difference for **that** one.”*

It also makes a difference for the one doing it. One antidote to “COVID fatigue” – our weariness from limited social interactions and our wariness and worry about the illness – is to consider what we can do for others. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, called it “practical Christianity.” Other traditions embody similar efforts to reflect the Light by focusing on the needs of others.

No doubt the reader has more than ample venues by which to make a difference. On the off chance that a specific invitation may be intriguing, let me invite you to support our church’s Diaper Drive. Our goal is to fill at least one SUV with disposable diapers during the month of January and deliver them to The Diaper Bank of Connecticut on State Street in North Haven. Why?

As many know, economically challenged young families cannot use food stamps to purchase diapers. Pressed with limited resources, parents will sometimes wait to change a diaper until it holds a bowel movement. Yet a diaper full of urine creates diaper rash, crying babies and children, and a greater risk of abuse. If you’d like to support our drive, you can bring diapers to 15 Church Street, Hamden, Tuesday – Thursday, 9 – Noon; or call us at 203.248.4654 and we will arrange to pick them up; or mail a contribution to the above address, payable to “HPUMC” with the memo “diapers.” As a charitable contribution these gifts are tax-deductible and all will be acknowledged.

So take time to reflect: on what you need to grow toward a better faith and life; and on what you might do to reflect *“the Light [that] shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”* (St. John 1:5)

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