THE TIE that binds
November/December 2026

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This month's poem is taken from a special book in my collection. It's titled "Mental Meanderings", Poems written by Lewis M. Fithian. The "About the Poet" section in his book, written by Don Treworgy, tells us this…"Lew has met all of life's challenges with the strength, courage and optimism he has gained in the fellowship of the Poquonnock Bridge Baptist Church, which he joined in 1918. He is a Life Deacon of that church." Catherine Hiller's written history of Poquonnock Bridge Baptist Church states Mr. Fithian entered into a lifetime appointment as Deacon in 1941. Can you imagine taking a role within the church and committing to it for life? In 1950 he was made an Honorary Life Deacon.

CHRISTMAS

By Lewis M. Fithian

Beyond the tree, with baubles bright
Beyond the mirth and laughter;
There shines the Star of Truth and Light
To guide each step thereafter.

The gift we give is but a token
It reflects the Greater Love;
A symbol of our faith unbroken
In the Star that shines above.

Pastor's Page

This life is made up of so many beginnings
and so many endings…
blessed are we standing in the hallway
between closed doors and ones still to come,
between the old and the new,
between the worn-in and the doesn't-quite-fit-yet,
between who we were and who we might become…
blessed are we who take a minute
to look over our shoulder
at all we learned from what was,
the people we became,
the people who loved us into becoming.
Blessed are we who trust this timing,
and who open our hearts anew
to change, to new friends, to hope.

(Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie, "The Lives We Actually Have")

Our life together as church family is made up of beginnings: moving back to our newly restored space, entering into a season of Thanksgiving, looking ahead to the new year of Advent.
Our life together as faith community is also made up of endings:
bringing a close to our wilderness journey, saying goodbye to loved ones among us, leaving behind saints no longer with us.
What a blessing to take a minute and look over our shoulder…
seeing the result of our labors and the effect of our gifts,
watching changes around us turn into consolations within us,
learning to trust our living and finding peace in our dying.
With hope in who we have become along the way,
we praise God for those who open new doors of love and light.

NOVEMBER MINISTERS

Greeters for the Month: Pete & Sandy Wong

Lay Leaders:

01 - Carol Gatlin
08 - Pete Wong
15 - Cathy Greenfield
22 - Dianne Augeri
29 - Mei Ling Liu

Ushers: Joe Greene, Steve Hughes, Kathy Piscitello, Sandy Vocolina,

Communion:

Preparers: Carol & Jim Vocolina
Servers: Andrea Buell, Candy Zeppieri
Assist the Pastor: Becky Freeman

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

04 -Andrea Dellarco
05 - Alex Lew
05 - Barry Morton
07 - Peg Straub
08 – John Bennett
08 – Nicole Freeman
08 – Britni Tourjee
09 - Carolyn Land
10 - Eva Tourjee
11 - Vance Lamb
14 - Dave Rowley
16 - Chloe Hespeler
16 – Jim Vocolina
18 - Belle Jordan
19 - Silas Keeton
21 - Steve Hughes
23 – Holly Boyle
24 - Megan Taylor
25 - Marilyn Baird
30 - Cathy Lewis Myers
30 – Peter (PJ) Dellarco

DECEMBER MINISTERS

Greeters for the Month: TBD

Lay Leaders:

06 - Joe Greene
13 - Carol Gatlin
20 - Alex Lew
27 - Dianne Augeri

Ushers: Joe Greene, Steve Hughes, Kathy Piscitello, Sandy Vocolina

Communion:

Preparers: Holly Boyle, Becky Freeman
Servers: Dave Effman, Candy Zeppieri
Assist the Pastor: Dave Rowley

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

04 - Sandy Wong

06 - Phyllis Gregory

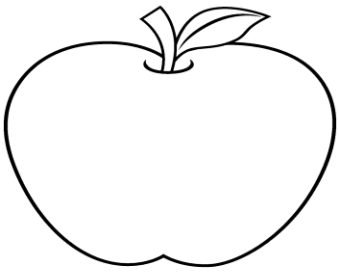
11 - Allison Gregory

16 - John Rodearmel

25 - Catherine Hiller

****Awesome Annual Apple Fest ****

Our Annual Apple Fest on Oct 24 was a soft re-opening event after the restoration was completed. In advance, five Wednesday mornings and a final Friday found hearty crews peeling and slicing pecks and pecks of apples and another pastry and spices crew in the kitchen combining donated ingredients to create pastry, rolling and pinching to make pies. We made 148 pies: both large and small pastry top and crumb top and even small sugar-free. We baked some to be ready for Saturday. That is a big record and achievement! Thanks for donating ingredients, money to buy supplies, placing advance orders, asking your friends and family for orders, receiving and bringing in bins of donated apples, and picking up your frozen pies in a timely manner. Give a big shout-out thank you hug to Patti Tootell for leading and directing this fellowship of production, contribution and reputation year over year! We added to these pies a plethora of baked apple goodies, some pumpkin items made by many congregation bakers and a variety of crafts made by the Church Mice, including for kitchen, babies, self, love and comfort. It was a big commitment and lots of work by many! A big THANK YOU to contributions of time and necessities. We made approx $4500 that will be added to the General Fund. Watch for this event next year for your participation…unique fellowship..bonus on-the-job training to add to your resumé!



Church Mice Crafters' Return and Expansion to Yetter Road Tree Farm

The Church Mice Crafters have been invited to display hand-crafted items for sale at the Yetter Road Tree Farm pop-up Christmas season wreath, decor and gift shop. We are busy making and curating items for potentially new customers. Watch for our items as of Nov 21. See Sandy Vocolina for questions and congrats!

Coming soon: Church Mice Crafters' will soon return to the craft room, aka Pastor Claudine's Sunny Temporary 3-season Office (room next to the Lounge), in time for your fall and Christmas shopping for a little color for the house, pampering and practical for self, bibs for babies and adults, loving warmth for all, totes/bags/carriers/purses, etc. Profits from these sales enable the Ladies Aid/Church Mice Crafters to buy a kitchen refrigerator, a pie chest freezer, pie tins and bakery boxes, to list just a few of their contributions.

THE FOOD PANTRY

Second Sunday Donations
November 8 & December 13

In addition to items for holiday meals, please also consider giving for the unhoused in our community and those whose family may include a beloved pet they struggle to feed. There are so many ways to share with those who are struggling, and it's greatly appreciated!

Dates to Remember…

Nov. 2nd - Service of Worship and Communion at Atria Crossroads

Nov. 8th - Pledge Cards Given Out and Second Sunday Food Collection, Potential Adopt a Family Announcement

Nov. 14th - Memorial Service for Cecilia Lew at 11:00 a.m.

Nov. 15th - Prayer Shawl Blessing and Stewardship Commitment

Nov. 20th - Pastoral Relations Committee meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Nov. 22nd - Thanksgiving Sunday and Decorating Sanctuary for Advent, Adopt a Family gifts due in church

Nov. 29th - First Sunday of Advent, Rev. Jill Harvey Guest Preacher

Dec. 5th - Holiday Bazaar 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Dec. 6th - Second Sunday of Advent and Communion, Second Sunday Food Collection

Dec. 12th - Memorial Service for Valerie Rehberg, 11 a.m.

Dec. 20th - RMMO Announcement/Collection

Dec. 24th – Christmas Eve Service at 6:00 p.m.

To Poquonnock Bridge Baptist Church,

In Loving Memory of Gerald and Joan Watkins

We are making this donation in grateful appreciation of the church and church family for being such a meaningful part of their lives and for the comfort, faith, fellowship and kindness you shared with them, and us, along the way.

Thank you for being a part of their journey and for the lasting difference you made in their lives. May this serve as a small expression of our gratitude and a beautiful way to honor their memory.

With heartfelt appreciation and remembrance,
The Watkins Family

Holiday Bazaar

December 5, 2026
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.



Christmas cookies, baked goods, Christmas ornaments and décor (new and vintage), Grandma's Attic, Basket Raffles and Raffles to win a beautiful 5 x 6 quilt as well as a lovely watercolor painting, Jewelry and handcrafted gift items for holiday gifting.

Help staff a table, bake a batch or two of your family's favorite Christmas cookie, bread or pie, take a poster to share, shop the sale or help clean up after the sale. We need your help, and we guarantee you'll have a great time working with your church family. 😊

Pastor Claudine shared the touching letter below during a recent worship service…

September 17, 2026

Rev. Claudine Crooks and our PBBC family,

The struggles of life come quickly in this day and age and impact every one of us. We do what we can to lift one another, especially within our own churches, but we sometimes struggle to find ways to come together in larger ways – and in the midst of common struggles, no less.

As you have worked these past months to raise funds to repair your facilities, surely there have been times when you felt less than optimistic. Perhaps you have even wondered why God allows catastrophe to strike churches doing their best to help people find their way through the struggles of life.

Within this shared milieu, it is imperative that we find common ground and shared purpose and lift one another whenever and wherever we can.

In this spirit, your co-laborers and family at Union Baptist Church offer a gift of $15,000 to support your renovations following the burst pipe earlier this year. It won't cover the full cost of repairs, but our hope is that is serves as a reminder that the body of Christ is still alive and at work.

My understanding is that Richard Tourjee, Sr., will pick the check up in person from our office for added security.

May God continue to guide you as you right the ship and gather strength for the work ahead. We look forward to many more years of cooperative ministry together.

Sincerely,
Lonnie A. Brown
On behalf of Union Baptist Church

Joe Greene wrote and shared the below presentation at the October 24 meeting of fellow ABCCONN church members at the Winthrop Baptist Church in Deep River. Enjoy! Great job, Joe!

Firstly, I wish to thank Winthrop Baptist Church and their membership for sponsoring this gathering. The History of Baptists in Southeastern CT is critical to a comprehension of Faith development in CT over the centuries, which understanding serves to embellish our Faith today.

My perspective is attentive to the history of Poquonnock Bridge Baptist Church, lying in the town of Groton. Known popularly by its acronym PBBC, the church follows a long line of Baptists in the village formerly known as Poquonnock, a fertile plain of farming, with abundant water, framed between steep hillsides. Settled in the 1650's, the village name was changed in the late 19th century to Poquonnock Bridge, distinguishing it from the Poquonnock of Windsor, CT. The site of the very first Baptist Church in CT lies in Poquonnock Bridge, whose descendants came to provide for the inception of Poquonnock Bridge Baptist Church.

The Baptist community of Poquonnock was disrupted in the 1840's by the relocation of their primary meeting houses to sites further away. Groton, and Connecticut's, First Baptist church, also known as Old Mystic Baptist Church, serving more northerly members of the Poquonnock community, moved to the head of the Mystic River. The 2nd Baptist Church, aka Fort Hill Baptist Church, serving much of Groton as a whole, moved to what today is downtown Mystic. These two churches were relocated due to the explosive maritime growth along the Mystic River and surge in population there. In line with that growth, to accommodate multiple shipbuilders, and associated trades, Groton was blessed with three more churches: the Third Baptist Church of Mystic, Noank Baptist Church, and to the west, near the Thames River, Groton Heights Baptist Church, making the town home of 5 Baptist churches. None, however, after relocation, were in the plains of Poquonnock.

Lacking a primary meeting house, Baptists of Poquonnock gathered at the village schoolhouse for worship, where the Baptist Sabbath School had been started in 1830. Harassed by a group known as the Infidels, the worshippers decided to erect their own meetinghouse. It is not known exactly when the small meetinghouse, with belfry, was constructed, but it is known it was collocated where our church is today. Services continued for years, unofficially sanctioned. In 1856 members of regional Baptist churches convened at the Poquonnock meeting house to officially create Poquonnock Baptist Church, so being the most significant day of our church history. Poquonnock Baptist Church then became the sixth Baptist church in the town of Groton. Six Charter Members of the new Poquonnock church, on the day of its creation, were members of Noank Baptist church. On behalf of our membership over the past 170 years, I thank Noank Baptist for their enduring support.

The congregation grew, and so the need for a larger building. Women solicited funds from train passengers between New Haven and Providence to raise money for the construction of a new building. Dedicated in 1871, the edifice continues to house our sanctuary and vestry. This construction too should be noted as an especially significant event in our church's history. And may it be noted that the women of Poquonnock Bridge Baptist Church, since the start, have contributed enormously, in time, energy, spirit and leadership, for the sustainment and well-being of the church. The Ladies Benevolent Society was established early on, in 1868, later becoming the Ladies Aid Society. The money for the parsonage, built in 1917, was hugely generated by the women of the church going door to door in the village asking for funds. In 1953 the Ladies Aid Society and Women's Friendship Circle mostly paid for a new kitchen. In 1957 Agnes Burrows was recognized for teaching Sunday School for 67 consecutive years, starting at age 16, the same person, who with her sister Mrs. Henry Chesbro, donated land to the church for parking. Historically, summer

Strawberry festivals, fall oyster suppers, winter chicken pie suppers, Sunday school picnics with the entire village invited, young lady classes, donations for memorial stained-glass windows, establishment of a regional Women's Missionary Society, name but a few of the activities and groups formerly spearheaded by the women of the church. Today that heritage includes the Church Mice Crafters, offering goods at Ledyard's Farmers Market, The Prayer Shawl Ministry, Tag sales, Christmas bazaars, the annual Women's Retreat, behind the scenes management of daily tasks – and this very day – our annual Apple Festival– all following underlying precepts of Women's involvement in the spread of Baptist faith in CT, when in 1704, 6 men and 6 women petitioned the state for allowance of the first Baptist church in Connecticut, which meetinghouse was built in Poquonnock Bridge. To emphasize – the petition to the General Court, convening in New Haven, for a Baptist church in Groton, in contradiction to the colony's law only permitting Congregational churches, was made by an equal number of men and women. Over the entire history of PBBC both men and women have contributed mightily to the sustainment and nurturing, in the name of God, to the souls of their community. I would posit the involvement of all our membership to the wellbeing of PBBC over the decades, taken as a whole, constitutes one of the most significant elements of our church history.

On a particular note, one of the most significant events pertaining to the development of our church was when the National Housing Authority decided in the Spring of 1942 that 300 acres of choice, flat, farmland, in the middle of the village of Poquonnock, was to be appropriated for the construction of one thousand, one hundred new housing units. An estimated 3,000 new residents would be added to the village, for those making submarines at the Victory Yard in Groton, and their families. Ours was the only church in the village. After the war the new residents stayed on: two Sunday morning services were offered, all the while Sunday School enrollment increased by leaps and bounds. A new education wing was added to the church, of three floors, greatly assisted by the work of Deacon Arthur Miner. This would be another benchmark of great significance in our church history.

In 1955, the year of the dedication of the new education building, Sunday School enrollment was noted to be 350.

In time, new community churches were added to Poquonnock Bridge. Nationally, commitment to religious institutions lessened. Church membership at PBBC gradually waned. By the late 1990's the congregation was at an impasse as to how to best face declining membership. Interim Reverend James R. Pearce came to the church and, so to speak, tuned things around. My role as designated church historian only started this year. I rely mightily on the wisdom and knowledge of longstanding members of the church, particularly esteemed Emeritus Church Historian Catherine Hiller, my immediate predecessor, whose 90-year church membership at PBBC is the invaluable source of my witnessed church history. Catherine wished me to highlight Reverend James Pearce's fellowship as one of the most important factors in our church history, bringing optimal solutions to PBBC at a critical juncture. The consequence of his stewardship was the arrival of Pastor Claudine Crooks in 2002, whose leadership, faith, love and attentiveness to all things of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, to benefit the congregation, and community, provided the answer to my question to fellow congregants: what do you consider the most important event in the history of our church? All I polled, including those many years my senior, life members of the church, singled out the arrival of Claudine Crooks to our pastorate as the most important event in our church history. We are blessed. Might I add that Claudine very much wanted to be here today, but prior commitments precluded that possibility.

Thank you for sharing your church histories and fellowship. God's Peace.