



First Church of Christ, Congregational United Church of Christ



December 2017 Newsletter



Pastor's Message

Back this summer, when we did our "Christmas in July" service, I talked about the story in Matthew, where Joseph, Mary and Jesus fled to Egypt soon after Jesus' birth. I talked about how this story is Matthew's way of portraying Jesus as the new Moses. I pointed out all the parallels between Jesus' birth and Moses' birth. Afterwards, people came to me, saying, "I never realized this – nobody has ever talked about these things."

It then became perfectly clear to me: I've never preached or talked about these things during Christmas. I've done wonderful advent and Christmas series on angels, carols, saints, stars and many other great Christmas themes, but forgot about the obvious: talking about the actual story and why it was included in the Gospels. So this year, I am making up for twenty years of neglect!

Although they only take up 4 out of 89 chapters in the gospels, the Christmas story, as recorded by Matthew and especially Luke are the most beloved and most talked about stories in the whole Bible. Besides the crucifixion, it has provided more inspiration for artists, composers and poets than any other part of the Bible. It is the basis

continued on page 2



Christian Nurture

It is hard to believe Advent is here! This is a wonderful and busy time of the year. The secular world seems to spin so fast during "the Holidays" and yet Advent is a time to slow down. It is a time to look around and see the state of our world as we wait for God's realm to be more fully realized here on earth. The contrast between the church's holiday rhythm and the wider world's frenzy can make it hard to fully engage with Advent. This year I encourage you to let go of some of the frenzy and to embrace a few meaningful activities. While it is an intentional time of year with a focus on waiting, it is a full time of year. There are lots of opportunities to experience Advent with the church. I hope you are able to find a few activities that are just right for your family.

~ Kate Byers

thank
you!

Many thanks to all who have pledged to support the ministries of First Church for the upcoming year! Your generosity will make a huge difference in the lives of so many people in our church, community and world. As we look ahead to even greater ministry and outreach in 2018, all those who give can have the satisfaction of knowing that their gifts are being used to transform the lives of hundreds, even thousands. Thanks to you all for making First Church such a rich, vibrant community of faith! God bless you all!

~ First Church Generosity Team

Sunday Worship 10:00 am

Church Office Phone: 781-275-7951

Church Office Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00 am-3:00 pm

Church Office Email: fchurchb2@verizon.net

Website: www.firstchurchbedford.org

Senior Pastor: *The Reverend John Castricum*
cell phone: 857-939-0711

Director of Christian Nurture: *Kate Byers*

Music Director: *Susan Capestro*

Church Administrator: *Suzie Barry*

continued from front page:

for the most popular of Christian hymnody: the Christmas Carol.

Yet in reality, it was not an important story for the early Christian Church. In some ways, the stories of Jesus came into being in reverse. For the first Christians, the story of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection were the fundamental stories to be told. Everything else seemed to pale in comparison. That is why the Gospel of Mark – the earliest gospel – spends half of the story focusing on the passion and death of Jesus. In some ways, the first eight chapters of Mark merely set the stage for the passion. Notoriously, there is absolutely no mention about Jesus' birth in Mark. He just does not seem to be concerned with it.

So why were the birth narratives composed and included in Matthew and Luke? As gospels that were written later than Mark, and seemed to be answering important questions that were arising in the Christian Church. Curiosity certainly played a role. As time moved on, church members wanted to know more about the person that was the focus of their faith. Where did he come from? Who was his family? Where was he born? Another reason for inclusion was to clear up some problems people had with Jesus. For instance, many Jews questioned, since the Messiah was supposed to be born in Bethlehem, in the province of Judea, how come he actually came from Nazareth in the province of Galilee?

Yet an even more important reason to include these stories was to address a pressing issue for early Christians: exactly who was Jesus? It was clear from the passion, death and resurrection stories that he was the "Son of God," but what does that mean? It was also clear that people believed Jesus was the "Messiah" – but how could this be true? Most people believed that the Messiah, the Promised One would be the son of David who would take the throne of his ancestor and restore the glory of Israel. But Jesus did the opposite. He humbled himself and was killed like a common thief. Then there was the claim that Jesus was divine: that he was part of God, the Trinity, that had existed in heaven for all eternity. Yet Jesus was also a human being. How can you put these two things together in one person?

As much as the Christmas season is cause for celebration, for music and joy, for fellowship and generosity, it is also a season for dwelling on some of the deepest and most profound aspects of the Christian faith. It is a time of thinking about a man who was born a peasant, the son of a carpenter, but grew up to dramatically change the course of history. A man who inspired a faith that is still making a difference in people's lives after 2,000 years.

So come to church, let us listen to these stories. Let us learn and talk. Let us dwell on these deep mysteries. In the process, we will find ourselves growing in faith in ways that might surprise us.

~ Pastor John

Don't Forget to Turn in Your Pledge

Many thanks to everyone who has turned in their pledge card for the 2018 giving year. If you haven't turned one in yet, there is still plenty of time. Feel free to mail them to the church, drop them in an offering plate or hand them into the church office. Blank cards are available in the church office, in the narthex or in the Vestry. Thanks to all for generously supporting our church!

Sermon Talk Back Sessions

Pastor John will be continuing Sermon Talk Back sessions in December. We will be meeting in the Church Parlor on **December 10th**, about 15 minutes or so after coffee hour begins. This will be a great opportunity to ask a question, make a comment or dig deeper into what was preached on Sunday morning. All are invited, and no knowledge of the Bible or faith is required. Join us for another opportunity to "Grow in Faith."

Coffee and Conversation at Bruegger's

Pastor John will be continuing his "Coffee and Conversation" in December. He will be at Bruegger's Bagels on Great Road on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. (an hour earlier from last year). He will be available to talk about anything you want: faith, the Patriots, weather or anything else on your mind.

Bible and Bagels at a New Time

Pastor John continues his "Bible and Bagels" bible study on **Thursdays mornings**, but at a new time – an hour later: **from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.** at Bruegger's Bagels in Bedford. As always, this is a drop-in bible study: show up anytime you're free to go over a Bible passage with John. No prior knowledge of the Bible is necessary. This is an introductory session aimed at those who don't know much about the Bible, but are curious to learn more. Join us and get your day started right, with breakfast and a good dose of inspiration. And bring a friend, too!



Advent and Christmas Events at First Church



First Church is pleased to offer its members, friends and neighbors the following events to help you get into the “spirit of the season.” Come to any and all these offerings, and make sure to invite a friend or neighbor!

- ◆ **“Birth of the Messiah”:** Each of the four gospels have a unique way of telling (or not telling) the story of Jesus’ birth. What they tell has a lot to say about their understanding of who Jesus is and what their faith is all about. Throughout the Advent Season, Pastor John will be preaching on how the four gospels tell (or don’t tell) the story of Jesus’ birth.
- ◆ **Advent Workshop - Sunday, December 3rd at 11:15 am:** Join the Nurture Board for an Advent Craft Workshop! All ages welcome. We will decorate holiday cookies, create tulle angels, make punched "tin" lanterns, and craft "green ornaments" out of recycled materials. No skills necessary, we will show you what to do.
- ◆ **Wonderful Wednesday - Wednesday, December 6th at 6:00 pm:** The holidays can be a busy time. Come enjoy a relaxing evening with food, fun and faith. We will gather at 6pm for dinner. Following dinner we will explore the Nativity as we craft with graham crackers, frosting, and candy. What will your “ginger bread nativity” look like? We have been thinking about how the 4 different Gospel writers told the story of Jesus Birth, now it is time to tell our own stories. How will you tell the sweet sweet story?
- ◆ **Bell Sunday - December 10th at 10:00 am:** Continuing a tradition started four years ago at First Church, we encourage everyone in the congregation to bring a bell – any bell – to our regular morning service of worship. During the refrains in the carols and on other occasions, we will lift up our joy to the Lord with a huge choir of bells ringing! The morning will also highlight several pieces of music featuring our wonderful Jubilee Bell Ringers. Come join us for a joyful service!
- ◆ **Nativity Sunday - Sunday, December 17th at 10 am:** Don’t miss this FCCC exclusive intergenerational telling of the Christmas story! Luke, author of the internationally acclaimed Gospel, will reveal what inspired him to write this best-selling work. Also featuring Baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Gabriel and other Angels, Shepherds, Sheep, and Pastor John! *Participants of all ages welcome; if you would like a part, please speak with Kate Byers (kathryn.byers@gmail.com or [617-800-7151](tel:617-800-7151)).*
- ◆ **Caroling - Sunday December 17th in the afternoon:** Do you like to sing? If so, join us on the afternoon of Sunday December 17th to go caroling at Carleton Willard. All ages and abilities are welcome to spread some holiday cheer.
- ◆ **Christmas Eve Morning - December 24th at 11:00 am:** As Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year, we will be having an informal service in the Koebele Music Chapel, with familiar music and a brief Christmas reflection.
- ◆ **Christmas Eve Family Service - December 24th at 4:00 pm:** Please join us for a service for children of all ages, featuring lessons, carols, and our traditional “instant pageant.”
- ◆ **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service - December 24th at 9:00 pm:** Please join us for a service of lessons, carols, a special Christmas message and candle lighting.

Christmas Memorial Poinsettias 2017



Our joy in the Christmas season is reflected in the holiday December decorations in our church. Poinsettias will not only brighten our Sanctuary on Christmas Sunday and Christmas Eve, but will also spread the blessings of the season throughout our church family to those who cannot attend Christmas services.

Those wishing to purchase one or more poinsettias may do so by clipping this form and returning it to the church by **December 8th with your check for \$12.00 each, made out to: First Church of Christ**, with “Poinsettia” marked in the lower left corner.

Name(s) of donor(s): _____

Donated in Memory of: _____

Please check one:

I/We will leave plant(s) to be distributed to a shut-in.

I/We will take plant(s) after 9:00 pm Christmas Eve service.

Faith at Home

During November, we spent time thinking about change and about the things we hope will drop away. By now you should have a lovely bare tree hanging on your fridge. These empty trees look a lot like the world around us. They don't seem full of life or promise and yet we know bear trees are alive and that new leaves will come. During the dark cold months of the year spring can seem far away. This is true during the dark cold times of our lives as well. Yet our faith tells us that no matter how dark the world gets hope is always present. During Advent we wait, we hope, we long for peace, we practice love, and we celebrate moments of joy all in preparation for the coming of Christ and the rebirth of light into our world. Jesus birth brought light, peace, hope, joy and love into our world and our lives. Christ presence with us brings new life and new possibilities into the world. The candles and small lights we use to decorate during Advent and Christmas are symbols of the much bigger light we await and celebrate. Every small flicker of light helps us to remember Jesus love and the light getting ready to burst into our world. Let's bring some of that light to our trees. Every Sunday during Advent and at each Advent activity, you can pick up lights. Every time you come to church, take a few lights and write one way you experience peace, hope, joy, and love on each light. Hang your lights on your tree. As the season progress your tree will become full. (We have more trees, let Kate know if you need a tree)

Church School for 2017-2018

Nursery: Children zero through five years old are welcome to the nursery at the beginning of worship. They are also welcome to start worship with their family and go to the nursery following Children's time or to remain in worship for the entire service. Parents, you know your kids best. Please do whatever work best for your family and let us know how we can support you in caring for your children.

Elementary School: In December, the Elementary School will study Advent and the story of Jesus birth as told in the Gospel of Luke. There will be Sunday school on December 3rd and 10th. There will be no Sunday School on December 17th, 24th, and 31st. On December 17th children will be in worship for Nativity Sunday.

Youth Forum

During December youth will gather on **December 3rd and December 10th** to talk about the 4 different birth narratives, to do some Nativity Sunday prep, and to engage in some Advent spiritual practices. These gatherings will take place in the youth room and will strive to balance talking with activity.

Youth for 2017-2018

Shopping and Swapping: On **Saturday December 2 from 3:00 to 6:00 pm** youth will gather to go shopping for a child in need, swap gifts with each other, and enjoy a meal together.

Draft Youth Group Calendar (Changes are in **Bold**)

- **December 2nd** – Shopping and Swapping holiday service meets holiday fun
- January 19th – Movie Night or Lock-in
- February 4th – Snow fun (tubing or skating)
- March 10th – Helping with the Mission Fest
- March ? – Youth Service Weekend
- April 1 – Egg Hunt
- May 5th – Helping with the Rummage Sale
- May 19th – Fun event chosen by youth
- June 9th – Marching in Boston Pride

Memorial Gifts

General Memorial Fund:

In Memory Abby Slayter
~ Doris Webber



General Memorial Fund:

In Memory of Mike Gural
~ Eileen Hansen

Save the Date... ..City Mission Society MLK Day of Learning

The City Mission Society, known over many years for its annual Day of Service, is now offering an opportunity to for us to grow in faith through an annual Day of Learning.

Date: Saturday, January 13, 2018

Location: United Parish in Brookline ([210 Harvard Street](#))

Time: We will gather to carpool at 8:30 am at First Church, and return around 4:00 pm.

Fifty years ago, Dr. King announced the Poor People's Campaign. Although launched in 1968, this movement continues to be relevant today. Join City Mission for our annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Learning, where we will continue this important work. The US Census reflects the huge disparities in Boston, where the poverty rate for white residents is just under 7%, and for Black residents is 21.5%.

The event will include guest speakers and facilitated small group discussion to help us learn from, and build community, with each other.

Registration is Open for the All Church Retreat!

Join us at beautiful St. Thecla's Retreat House, just down the road in Billerica! We'll be reflecting together on how to create a welcoming space where we can all share our stories and grow in faith, exploring our differences as a source of enrichment. We'll enjoy indoor and outdoor fun as the weather permits.

The retreat begins on **Friday, February 9th with dinner at 6:00 pm and program at 7:00 pm, and we'll wrap up by 2:00 pm on Sunday.** Join us for the entire weekend or come when you are able.

Please see the enclosed registration form for more details or register at <https://goo.gl/3hrfU5>.

Advent Devotionals

Once again, the Deacons are pleased to offer Advent Devotionals to the congregation to help us prepare for Christmas. These devotionals are written by the U.C.C.'s "Stillspeaking Writer's Group" who offer daily devotionals via email. This year's theme is "Watch," encouraging us to pay attention to our spiritual lives in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. ***Feel free to pick up a devotional for your family in the Narthex, at the Vestry entrance to the Sanctuary or in the church office.***

December Deacons Collection

on Sunday, December 3, 2017 is for

UCC-The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

Gifts to the Christmas Fund help provide pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retirees, emergency assistance to the families of clergy and lay employees and Christmas Gift Checks to hundreds of pastors who have retired after many years of serving small, rural, or churches that could not afford to pay a pension. Your gifts to the Christmas Fund are needed more than ever to help the growing number of ministerial retirees whose low income and lack of eligibility for Social Security make it difficult to meet increasing living costs. This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care.



Music Notes

- ◆ The Children’s Choir is singing in the worship service on Sunday, December 3. Their mini-rehearsal that day is at 9:30 am. There may also be another opportunity for them to sing on December 17.
- ◆ On December 3rd, the Adult Choir will be first to present a beautiful, soothing and familiar chant-like anthem that will ring a bell for many of us. If you’re not acquainted with its melody, no worries; the Jubilee Ringers are playing a gorgeous arrangement of it on Bell Sunday, December 10th. This handbell anthem incorporates patterns of bells in subtly changing sequences, much like the way English bell-ringers ring changes. “Change ringing” originates from early 17th century tower bell ringers. The resultant sound is less of a melody, and more of a simple, yet intriguing, sequence of pitches. A particular pattern may be repeated for a while, and then a small change is made. Only one bell might be switched with another. However, there are many ways to do “change ringing,” and there’s a good Wikipedia article on it, with a video.
- ◆ For the Christmas Eve 9 pm service, two anthems are planned for choir with handbells. There’s an opportunity for a soloist, and we may have a Brass Ensemble in the wings. There’s also been some talk of having a small instrumental surprise. Stay tuned for music groups’ call times.

December Music Rehearsals:

Sunday, December 3 - Adult Choir 9 am
 Sunday, December 3 - Children’s Choir singing in church, mini-rehearsal 9:30am
 Monday, December 4 - Jubilee Ringers 7 pm
 Thursday, December 7 - Adult Choir, No Rehearsal (Wonderful Wednesday Week)
 Sunday, December 10 - Jubilee Ringers mini-rehearsal 8:45 am (Adult Choir is off)
 Monday, December 11 - Jubilee Ringers (Christmas ringers) 7 pm
 Thursday, December 14 - Adult Choir, 7:30 pm
 Sunday, December 17 - Adult Choir 9 am
 Monday, December 18 - Jubilee Ringers (Christmas ringers) 7 pm
 Thursday, December 21 - Adult Choir, 7:30 pm
 Sunday, December 24 - Christmas Eve call times TBA
 Monday, December 25 - Jubilee Ringers, no rehearsal (Christmas Day)
 Thursday, December 28 - Adult Choir, No Rehearsal
 Sunday, December 31 - Adult Choir 9 am

~ Susan Capestro, Director of Music



Flowers for Sunday Worship

Enjoy the beauty of your and others' donations each week as a beautiful part of our worship together. Flowers may be donated in memory of a loved one or just because the Spirit moves you! We will order flowers for you unless you prefer to do it yourself. The cost varies depending on choices but runs \$30-50. There is a signup sheet in the Vestry on the bulletin board, or you may contact Betsy Cogliano at 781-275-9462 or at laxmom5@aol.com or signup online at: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20foe49aaab22a6f49-flowers>

Coffee Hour



Is making coffee a Ministry? Absolutely! Coffee hour after church is as important as anything else we do as a church. Where else do you get to check in with your church friends, deepen your relationships and create a stronger sense of “joyful fellowship?” Please sign up to help on the bulletin board in the Vestry or online at this link: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20foe49aaab22a6f49-coffee>

News from the Outreach Board

House of Hope: House of Hope is dedicated to homeless families in Massachusetts, helping them gain stable housing. House of Hope is represented by two distinct sister nonprofit organizations, House of Hope Shelter and House of Hope Housing, that share a commitment to transitioning homeless families into a stable community life by providing tandem services that (1) respect and nurture families so they can begin to heal from the trauma of homelessness, and (2) support parents by guiding them through opportunities to build economic sufficiency and embrace a stable home life. One of the programs they offer is the Hope Chest - a nonprofit children's resale store that sells gently used children's clothing. In addition to providing a supportive work environment for homeless mothers who work there as interns, the Hope Chest also serves the objective of supporting families struggling with the high cost of children's clothing by providing these items at affordable prices to former House of Hope families, the local neighborhood and the community at large. The Hope Chest also serves as a vehicle of care for those in the community who wish to donate still wearable clothing to those in need. All funds raised at The Hope Chest go right back into the program. Please keep this in mind as your children or grandchildren outgrow clothing before they wear them out! Gently used items for kids up to about age 12 are welcome. They can be placed in the House of Hope bins at the church. Our regular volunteers will deliver them when they go to help with dinner each month.

Cradles to Crayons: Thank you to everyone who contributed toward the Cradles to Crayons donation drive in November and all those who volunteered at the Nashoba Brook School community event. This community drive was a precursor to an afternoon volunteer trip to the Giving Factory, Cradles to Crayon's warehouse located in Brighton, scheduled for Saturday March 17th, 2018 from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm. For more information, contact Cheryl Pespisa, cheryl.pespisa@gmail.com.

City Mission Gift Collection: We will collect donations for City Mission during the first two Sundays in December. **Please bring new, unwrapped gifts to Church on December 3 and 10.** On **Sunday, December 10th** we will deliver the donations to the City Mission collection drive in Winchester. City Mission also provides items for homeless and low income Boston residents and works with community partners to distribute. A treasured tradition here at First Church, this offering of gifts makes a real difference for many people of all ages in the city. Questions? Contact Mary Criscione by email at: maryc@progress.com

Requested Items:

- ◆ **Winter coats, sweaters and sweatshirts**
- ◆ **Hats, mittens, gloves and scarves**
- ◆ **Socks and underwear**
- ◆ **Blankets and backpacks**
- ◆ **Toys, books, and games for all ages**
- ◆ **Gift cards from: Target, Walgreens, Marshalls, CVS, Kohl's or other merchants**

First Church Christmas Card Tree: Instead of mailing Christmas Cards to fellow congregation members, please join our card tree tradition! Write out your messages to friends or the world – and hang on the card tree in the “welcome center” between the Sanctuary and Vestry. Save on postage, and put those dollars and cents to work by donating to the Church, City Mission, or another charity of your choice.

Christmas Eve Donations to St. Francis House: On Christmas Eve, First Church has a tradition of collecting cash donations for St. Francis House. St. Francis House is a daytime shelter and resource center for poor and homeless men and women in Boston, serving nearly 600 people per day. Services include meals, clothing, medical care, counseling, and housing supports. St. Francis House also provides vocational rehabilitation courses to 100 men and women a year, and manages 56 units of permanent supportive housing. In the past year, private contributions funded 300,000 meals and 10,000 changes of clothes, as well as 50% of their rehabilitative services. St. Francis House asks: “Please join us in helping our brothers and sisters leave homelessness behind.”

Invitation from 8:15 Group

We have finished reading and discussing *Between the Dark and the Daylight* by Joan Chittister. It was a short book, easy to read, and led to a lot of good discussion and sharing. If you haven't read it, we recommend it.

Now we are beginning to read *Learning to Walk in the Dark* by Barbara Brown Taylor. One review says it provides "a way to find spirituality in those times when we don't have all the answers." In *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, Taylor asks us to put aside our fears and anxieties and to explore all that God has to teach us "in the dark." Through darkness we find courage, we understand the world in new ways, and we feel God's presence around us, guiding us through things seen and unseen. Often, it is while we are in the dark that we grow the most.

Our group continues to meet on Sunday mornings at 8:15 in the Vestry for bagels, fruit, juice, and coffee and we would be delighted to have you join us.

NEW: If 8:15 a.m. is too early for you, and you are interested in just joining us for the book discussion, please join us at 8:50 a.m. It is approximately that time that our discussion begins and it continues until 9:30 a.m.

If you have any questions, please contact Pat Konkle at kpkonk@verizon.net or call her at 781-275-7332.

Thank You From the Craft Fair Co-Chairs!

What a beautiful fall weekend we had for our craft fair on Friday, November 3rd and Saturday, November 4th! Our church was bursting with activity both Friday night and Saturday. On Friday, diners enjoyed a delicious soup, salad, macaroni and cheese supper. On Saturday, they raved about the delicious brunch. Our cooking teams were fantastic!

Shoppers found fresh, homemade breads, cookies, cakes, and bars at the baked goods table, and found bargains and gifts at the handicrafters' table that was filled with beautiful handmade items. Phyllis Cooke, Ruth Beauchesne, Nancy French, Emily O'Hara, Lorraine Bonner, and Joan Larsen knitted sweaters and mittens, sewed vests, potholders, and ornaments to get ready for the sale.

Everyone was enchanted as they walked through the Yuletide Treasures Room, dazzled by the lighted wreaths, trees, centerpieces, and one-of-a-kind creations, and other crafters were delighted to find crafting supplies for sale. Since this was the grand finale for Yuletide Treasures, it was a bit nostalgic but filled with good memories. Claire Maxon started Yuletide Treasures 24 years ago and she has been the key person displaying the items for us. Judy Watkins for years has helped us unload boxes, and decorate trees, and price items. The current crafters (Connie Matheson, Cheryl Pespisa, and Susan Wingfield) of Yuletide items have put their glue guns away and are hoping that some day others will be inspired to create items for an event like this again. We missed our garland maker, and lighted bottle maker, Kathy Harris, who moved to Florida, but she was in our thoughts the entire week. She left some garlands and a few bottles for us to sell.

We had a great weekend enjoying visiting and connecting with new and old friends from the community and from our church family. We created memories as we worked together with our church family, taking time to visit and connect with each other.

Thank you to Lu and Woody Woodford for setting up our cash boxes and keeping track of our earnings. Thank you to everyone who helped with the fair including the set-up, take-down, crafting, baking, working in the kitchen, helping with children's crafts, cashiering, bagging, and to all those who shopped! Your gifts of time, talent, and dedication mean so much!

Those seven hours we were open to the public generated funding to support our local budget and our mission work in WV. Our total as of noon Sunday was \$4,291.15. Money is still coming in from IOU's and from sales after church. And a few expenses still need to be deducted.

~ Allyson Printz and Susan Wingfield



New Urns

Early in November, our new stone urns arrived for the front of the church! We filled them with greens, pumpkins and gourds until Thanksgiving. We will fill them with greens for Christmas, and flowers from spring through fall. Thank you John Castricum, Terry Gerrish, Carol Jamison, Nancy McKinney, Allyson Printz, Judy Watkins, and Susan Wingfield for their time, thoughts, and questions, as we reviewed our options and finalized our choice.

October Cabinet Notes



7 cabinet members in attendance. Cabinet minutes for September 2017 were accepted with minor edits. Cabinet will meet on Tuesdays with start time of 7:05 pm. Upcoming meeting dates: November 14, 2017 & December 12, 2017.

Pastor's Report: Finished sermon series on what the Bible says about contemporary issues; new series starting in November. Giving campaign headed by Peter Gerrish in full swing; will culminate in November. WV Mission Trip Sunday October 15th is lay-led. October 22nd sermon topic picked by goods and service auction winner: *Why have an offering?* October 29th Celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Moving Sundays in Advent up one week earlier so that First Sunday of Advent is the first Sunday after Thanksgiving (like it usually is). Christmas Eve Morning worship will take place in the Koebele Music Chapel at 11 am. Bible Studies going well.

Christian Nurture: Elementary School: good turnout of children and teachers; curriculum tied to John's sermon series. Middle School Youth – slower start; after week #1 and #2, many have elected to remain in worship; will encourage youth to remain in worship on 10/15/17 for WV trip service. Confirmation Class has 8 participants: 6 boys and 2 girls. Crop Walk October 22nd will be dedicated to the memory of Mike Gural to acknowledge his dedication to the event and service to FCCC. Community Service Day September 30th went well and was meaningful for participants. Chair of Christian Nurture Board is Sarah Castricum.

Treasurer: Running a \$30,000 operating deficit. Received gift from Kim Lohan's estate (\$20,000) toward youth group and outreach projects.

Outreach Board: Reviewed minutes of September 19th Outreach Board meeting. Board is actively distributing funds. West Virginia Mission Festival is planned for March 10, 2018.

Nurture Board: Family Retreat planned for February 9-11, 2018 in Billerica. Hoping that the option of making it possible to attend as day trippers will allow more people to attend.

Stewardship Board: New carpet in Vestry installed.

Board of Deacons: Ordered Advent devotional booklet due to positive feedback with Lenten booklet. Considering a script for morning announcements that includes who gave the altar flowers and who is hosting coffee hour. Considering inviting non Deacons to usher and serve communion. Discussion on how best to contact sick members and shut-ins; not enough Deacons to do this ministry well.

Other Business: Bedford Day - September 23, 2017: Went well (free shade, water, and seating); no need to change anything next year (except perhaps get a new tent). Pie-baking: October 3, 2017 (soup dinner provided) went well. 60 pies. Turkey Dinner: November 14, 2017 proceeds to local budget. Craft Fair: Yuletide Treasures and Handicrafts: November 3 and 4, 2017 proceeds to local and mission trip (50/50).

Meeting adjourned 8:31 pm.

~ Allyson Printz, Scribe/Clerk Pro Tem

Daily Lectionary Scripture References
December 2017 (Year B)

Fri., Dec. 1
 Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
 Zechariah 14:1-9
 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18

Sat., Dec. 2
 Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
 Micah 2:1-13
 Matthew 24:15-31

Sun., Dec. 3
First Sunday of Advent
 Isaiah 64:1-9
 Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
 1 Corinthians 1:3-9
 Mark 13:24-37

Mon., Dec. 4
 Psalm 79
 Micah 4:1-5
 Revelation 15:1-8

Tues., Dec. 5
 Psalm 79
 Micah 4:6-13
 Revelation 18:1-10

Wed., Dec. 6
 Psalm 79
 Micah 5:1-5a
 Luke 21:34-38

Thurs., Dec. 7
 Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
 Hosea 6:1-6
 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

Fri., Dec. 8
 Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
 Jeremiah 1:4-10
 Acts 11:19-26

Sat., Dec. 9
 Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
 Ezekiel 36:24-28
 Mark 11:27-33

Sun., Dec. 10
Second Sunday of Advent
 Isaiah 40:1-11
 Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
 2 Peter 3:8-15a
 Mark 1:1-8

Mon., Dec. 11
 Psalm 27
 Isaiah 26:7-15
 Acts 2:37-42

Tues., Dec. 12
 Psalm 27
 Isaiah 4:2-6
 Acts 11:1-18

Wed., Dec. 13
 Psalm 27
 Malachi 2:10—3:1
 Luke 1:5-17

Thurs., Dec. 14
 Psalm 126
 Habakkuk 2:1-5
 Philippians 3:7-11

Fri., Dec. 15
 Psalm 126
 Habakkuk 3:2-6
 Philippians 3:12-16

Sat., Dec. 16
 Psalm 126
 Habakkuk 3:13-19
 Matthew 21:28-32

Sun., Dec. 17
Third Sunday of Advent
 Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
 Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55
 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
 John 1:6-8, 19-28

Mon., Dec. 18
 Psalm 125
 1 Kings 18:1-18
 Ephesians 6:10-17

Tues., Dec. 19
 Psalm 125
 2 Kings 2:9-22
 Acts 3:17—4:4

Wed., Dec. 20
 Psalm 125
 Malachi 3:16—4:6
 Mark 9:9-13

Thurs., Dec. 21
 Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
 2 Samuel 6:1-11
 Hebrews 1:1-4

Fri., Dec. 22
 Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
 2 Samuel 6:12-19
 Hebrews 1:5-14

Sat., Dec. 23
 Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
 Judges 13:2-24
 John 7:40-52

Sun., Dec. 24
Fourth Sunday of Advent
 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
 Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
 Romans 16:25-27
 Luke 1:26-38
Christmas Eve
 Isa 62:6-12; Ps 97
 Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:1-17(8-20)

Mon., Dec. 25
Christmas Day
 Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96
 Titus 2:11-14
 Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]

Tues., Dec. 26
 Psalm 148
 Jeremiah 26:1-9, 12-15
 Acts 6:8-15; 7:51-60

Wed., Dec. 27
 Psalm 148
 Exodus 33:18-23
 1 John 1:1-9

Thurs., Dec. 28
 Psalm 148
 Jeremiah 31:15-17
 Matthew 2:13-18

Fri., Dec. 29
 Psalm 148
 Isaiah 49:5-15
 Matthew 12:46-50

Sat., Dec. 30
 Psalm 148
 Proverbs 9:1-12
 2 Peter 3:8-13

Sun., Dec. 31
First Sunday after Christmas
 Isaiah 61:10—62:3
 Psalm 148
 Galatians 4:4-7
 Luke 2:22-40



Revised Common Lectionary Daily Readings, copyright © 2005 Consultation on Common Texts. [commontexts.org](http://www.commontexts.org). Used by permission. This resource may be reproduced by congregations for their own worship and educational activities. Provided by the Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ – made possible by Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support and Fellowship Dues.

~ December 2017 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 Pastor John Day Off 6a AA (UFH) 6p AA (UFH)	2 6a AA (UFH)
3 2nd Sunday of Advent COMMUNION 6a AA (UFH) 8:15a 8:15 Discussion Group (V) 9:30a Children's Choir (MR) 10a Worship (S) 6:30p Prayer Group (P)	4 6a AA (UFH) 7p Jubilee Bells (Music Room)	5 6a AA (UFH) 7:30a Violence Prevention Committee (V) 9a Coffee & Conversation (Bruegger's) 6:45p AA (Room 5)	6 6a AA (UFH) 7a Men's Group (Vestry) 6p Wonderful Wednesday (UFH/KV)	7 6a AA (UFH) 8a Bible & Bagels (Bruegger's) 9a Coffee & Conversation (Bruegger's) 7:30p AA (UFH)	8 Pastor John Day Off 6a AA (UFH) 6p AA (UFH)	9 6a AA (UFH)
10 3rd Sunday of Advent BELL SUNDAY 6a AA (UFH) 8:15a 8:15 Discussion Group (V) 10a Worship (S) 11:30a Sermon Talk Back (P) 6:30p Confirmation (V) 6:30p Prayer Group (P)	11 January 2018 Newsletter Deadline 6a AA (UFH) 10a La Leche League (V) 7p Jubilee Bells (MR)	12 6a AA (UFH) 7:30a Women's Fellowship Breakfast (Riverview-Billerica) 9a Coffee & Conversation (Bruegger's) 6:45p AA (Room 5) 7p Cabinet (V) 7p Masons (LFH)	13 6a AA (UFH) 7a Men's Group (V)	14 Dumpster Day 6a AA (UFH) 8a Bible & Bagels (Bruegger's) 9a Coffee & Conversation (Bruegger's) 7p Nurture Board (V) 7:30p AA (UFH)	15 Pastor John Day Off 6a AA (UFH) 6p AA (UFH)	16 6a AA (UFH) 2p Al Hurd Memorial Service (S) 3p Al Hurd Collation (UFH/K)
17 4th Sunday of Advent 6a AA (UFH) 8:15a 8:15 Discussion Group (V) 10a Worship (S) 6:30p Prayer Group (P)	18 6a AA (UFH) 7p Jubilee Bells (MR)	19 6a AA (UFH) 9a Coffee & Conversation (Bruegger's) 6:45p AA (Room 5)	20 6a AA (UFH) 7a Men's Group (V) 10a Newsletter Folding (MR)	21 6a AA (UFH) 8a Bible & Bagels (Bruegger's) 9a Coffee & Conversation (Bruegger's) 7:30p AA (UFH)	22 Pastor John Day Off 6a AA (UFH) 6p AA (UFH)	23 6a AA (UFH)
24 CHRISTMAS EVE 6a AA (UFH) 11a Worship (MR) 4p Family Service (S) 9p Candlelight Service (S)	25 Christmas Office Closed 6a AA (UFH)	26 6a AA (UFH) 6:45p AA (Room 5) 7:30p NAMI (Room 4)	27 6a AA (UFH) 7a Men's Group (V)	28 6a AA (UFH) 7:30p AA (UFH)	29 Pastor John Day Off 6a AA (UFH) 6p AA (UFH)	30 6a AA (UFH)
31 6a AA (UFH) 8:15a 8:15 Discussion Group (V) 10a Worship (S)						



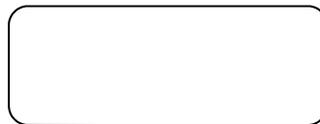
~ December Worship ~



December 3, 2017	10:00 am	Communion 2nd Sunday of Advent	<i>"Birth of the Messiah: John"</i> John 1: 1-18
December 10, 2017	10:00 am	3rd Sunday of Advent Bell Sunday	<i>"Birth of the Messiah: Matthew"</i> Matthew 1 & 2 (selections)
December 17, 2017	10:00 am	4th Sunday of Advent Nativity Sunday	<i>"Birth of the Messiah: Luke"</i> Luke 1 & 2 (selections)
December 24, 2017	11:00 am	Christmas Eve Morning Koebele Music Chapel	<i>"Birth of the Messiah: The Church"</i> Luke 2: 1-7
December 24, 2017	4:00 pm 9:00 pm	Family Service Candlelight Service	Kate Byers, Director Christian Nurture Rev. John Castricum, Sr. Pastor
December 31, 2017	10:00 am		<i>"Like an Evening Gone"</i> Psalm 90

Thank you for your help in publishing our newsletter on time. Our next Newsletter deadline is **December 11, 2017**. Our next mailing is **December 27, 2017**. Please send you email articles to: fchurchb2@verizon.net. Thank you.

Please let us know if you change your address. If you do not want to receive newsletters, check this box and mail this page to us at the above address or email the office at fchurchb2@verizon.net.



Non Profit
U.S. Postage
Paid
Bedford, MA
Permit #18

The First Church of Christ, Congregational
25 The Great Road
Bedford, MA 01730-2192
"Address Service Requested"