



United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

December 2018



Message from the Pastor

Dear friends –

May this eternal truth be always on our hearts
That the God who breathed this world into being
Placed stars into the heavens
And designed a butterfly's wing
Is the God who entrusted his son
to the care of ordinary people
became vulnerable that we might know
how strong is the wonder of Love
A mystery so deep it is impossible to grasp
A mystery so beautiful it is impossible to ignore

— Copyright © John Birch, posted on *Faith and Worship - Prayers and Resources*

Our stewardship theme this past year has been “...for such a time as this”, and it was for such a time as this that God came into our world as Light and Love and Life. In the midst of all that troubles us, and surely there is much in these times that trouble us, we rejoice in the gift of Emmanuel – *God With Us* – and in the Good News that God's Word of justice and peace and grace has come to us.

I pray that in this holy season of waiting, of making ready and preparing our hearts and world for the coming of the Christ Child, we experience the hope, peace, joy and love we long for ~ ~ and that we radiate these same holy gifts into the world that has such great need of these gifts.

While there is so much that can cause us to fear, we proclaim our **hope** in God's promise to be always with us, a promise fulfilled in Jesus the Christ.

In a time filled with so much violence and fear and hate, we stand for **peace** and justice, praying that we might be instruments of Christ's peace – knowing what a radical thing peace can be.

What a huge gift it is to feel **joy**! We look around our congregation on Sunday morning, at the wonderful chaos and spirit that is us ~ and we rejoice in the Light of Christ that shines so brightly in and among us...

...and **love**....on the 4th Sunday of Advent, we light a candle for Love, giving thanks for God's love made manifest in a newborn child, for God's love poured out – freely and more generously than we can imagine – upon us and all Creation.

Advent blessings,

Nancy



CHRISTMAS EVE

We will gather for a traditional candlelight service of Lessons and Carols on **Christmas Eve at 5:30** in the Sanctuary (*Sarah Wyman Whitman Gallery*). Please join us for this lovely evening service as we welcome the newborn Christ Child into our world!



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Thank you to all who donated poinsettias this holiday season! If you would like to bring your poinsettia home, please take it after the Christmas Eve service or after worship on **January 1st**. Poinsettias not taken will be given to our less mobile members.

Poinsettia Plants have been given to the Glory of God and in Memory /Honor of by the Following:

IN MEMORY OF:

My mother, Dorothy Drum
In memory of beloved Marilyn
Ted Castner
Enberg & Day Family Loved Ones
Norma Dzaugis
Vincent A. Droser Jr.
Vincent A. Droser III
Hazel A. Wallace
Loved Ones
Guy Metcalf & Marcus McCorison
G Everett Holmes
Our Loved Ones
Dan Lewis
Family
Warren Page with love
Our Parents
Ann & Nicholas Iannone, Marguerite
& Walter Rokosky & Florinda Villarreal
Robert Switzer
Dottie & Bob Jones

BY:

Jeri D. Babinsky
Emerson Brooks
Emily Castner
Ann B. Day & Donna E. Enberg
Carolyn Droser & Andy Dzaugis
DA Droser

DA Droser
Nancy Elder-Wilfrid
Dorista & John Goldsberry
Norma Holmes
Pat & Peter Keck
Ann Lewis
Linda & Bob Michel
Judy Page
Joanna & Chip Pickering
Ann Rokosky

Gretchen & Dave Switzer
Gretchen & Dave Switzer

IN HONOR OF:

Our five grandchildren

BY:

Elisabeth & Darrell Hyder



CHRISTMAS PAGEANT: DECEMBER 23RD!!

You, **yes, you** can be part of this year's Christmas pageant!! No fancy roles to learn or scripts to memorize, no sweating over finding just the right costume that is a perfect fit ~ our very own **Pick-up Pageant** has parts for everyone with **absolutely nothing you have to do ahead of time!!**

If you would like to be part of our **pick-up pageant**, plan to arrive at church **early ~ no later than 10:00 (YES! 10:00!!!!)** so you can draw a top secret envelop from the hat (or bowl!) to learn who you will be in the pageant! The envelop will have all you need to know for your part, and we will have eager and talented "dressers" in the Meeting Room to help you find your costume.

The **only** parts that won't be "picked up" are those of the **littlest angels and shepherds** – so: if you are the parent or guardian of one of our children, please ask them if they'd like to be an angel or shepherd – and plan to be an angel or shepherd yourself to accompany them! Angels are, of course, welcome to wear their Elsa, Little Mermaid or princess dresses (as are their parents, should they be so inspired.....)!

So take a break from all the last minute Christmas chaos, and plan to be part of the fun on December 24th, as welcome the baby Jesus and tell the story of his birth in our own, unique way!

HOPE FOR HOUSING



If you're looking for an ideal stocking stuffer, HFH cards may be the answer. By giving a gift of a HFH card, you will be benefiting not only the person receiving the card, but also CMHA's effort to prevent family homelessness. CMHA receives 3%-10% of the face value of the card to provide local families with assistance that includes help with rent in arrears or to prevent the shutoff of utilities.

HFH Cards can be purchased every Sunday from Helen Bross and used while shopping at:

- Big Y
- CVS
- Dunkin' Donuts
- Hannaford
- Panera
- Shaw's
- Stop & Shop

Here's just one example from Ann Gibbons-Smith of CMHA on how funds raised from HFH cards are making a difference in our community:

"Much good is being accomplished because of you.

Recently a couple from Leominster with 3 children, one is 8 and the other two are under the age of 4, came to CMHA looking for assistance. Parents had both been working full time with a monthly income of \$3,000 and making ends meet, never falling behind and living in the same apartment for 4 years. Like so many others they never thought they would be walking through our doors but Joseph lost his job and slowly things were getting very difficult to make ends meet. Their monthly rent was \$895.90 and on one income and dollars stretched they fell behind one month's rent. HFH prevention dollars were able to pay the one month's rental arrears of \$895.00 to get them back on track and stay in their home.

Thank you!!!!"

Also, thanks to Helen Bross for everything she does in support of HFH!



JANUARY 6TH: SALLY NORRIS GUEST PREACHER

On January 6th, we welcome the Rev. Sally Norris as our guest preacher. Sally is the (new) Minister and President of the Worcester Area Mission Society, and we are delighted to have her join us for worship. Please plan to stay after church that day for a luncheon planned by the Mission and Outreach Ministry, and a conversation with Sally about possibilities for joining with WAMS in a mission project.

SABBATICAL REMINDER

If you think back to last summer (a warm thought in these December days!), you may recall a VOICES announcement about Nancy Elder-Wilfrid's upcoming sabbatical in February 2019. That was many calendar pages away then; now it's almost here! So, we on the Pastoral Relations Committee wanted to remind everyone that Nancy will be away from January 28 to February 25, 2019.

As one United Church of Christ resource explains, "For pastors, the sabbatical is time to nourish their relationship with God, recommit to their call, and provide renewed vision and focus for ministry." The opportunity for this refreshment is usually provided after seven years of pastoral work; Nancy will have offered this to us for *eight* years as of January!

While Nancy is away, the Rev. Dirkje Legerstee will provide pastoral coverage for United. There will be more information about her in the January VOICES -- so stay tuned! We invite your prayers for Nancy, Dirkje and everyone at United as we all prepare for this month of spiritual growth. And, as always, if you have questions please be in touch with us or Moderator, Tim Camp.

Advent blessings,
Rebecca Williams and Ann B. Day



United Calendar



- Dec 19 Board of Ministry Meeting
- Dec 23 Christmas Pickup Pageant
- Dec 24 5:30 Christmas Eve Service ~ Gallery/Sanctuary
- Jan 6 Sally Norris preaching/MOM lunch program

Resources

- UCC Lectionary Information (<http://www.macucc.org/pages/detail/220>)
- United Congregational Church (<http://www.ucc-worcester.org>)
- UCC Mass Conference (<http://macucc.org/>)
- National UCC Web Page (<http://www.ucc.org/>)