



United Congregational Church



VOICES Newsletter

December 2019

Message from the Pastor



O come, O Come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel...

Friends,

When I was little, I went through a stage when I would jump out of bed each morning, and belt out the words to "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" before I did anything else! I'm not sure how – or why – my family put up with my early morning singing of Advent hymns....especially in April...perhaps they figured it wasn't the **worst** way I could begin the day!

It wasn't until many years later that I began to see this Advent hymn for the prayer it is.....and realize how deeply this prayer resonates for us today....

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel...

Isn't our prayer for God to come into our lives, into our world, and free us from all that holds us captive? From all that oppresses us? Think for a moment of what holds you back from the life you long to live.....anger, perhaps? Or fear? What about injustice or prejudice....overwhelming grief or responsibilities, financial or physical vulnerabilities....assumptions people make about you ~ or that you have about yourself and your abilities?

How much we can feel "captive" ~ and how much we long to be freed!

The last verse of this hymn seems especially timely this year:

*O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease; fill the whole world with heaven's peace.*

And isn't this our prayer as well: that our world - so torn apart by long held hatreds and fears and prejudices – become one in heart and mind, and for God's longed for and promised peace to fill our world?

Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

As we sing our prayer this Advent ~ our prayer to be freed from all that keeps us from love

and life, our prayer for peace in our hearts and world ~ sing, too, the words of God's promise to come to us: restoring and renewing all Creation!

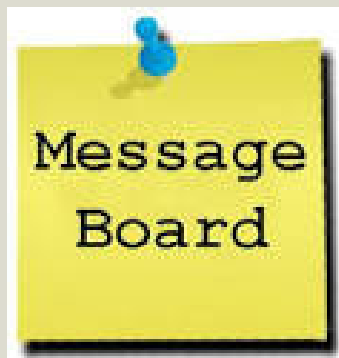
Advent is a season of hope ~ and a season reminding us of God's faithfulness to God's promises, and of God's great love. *Come, O Come, Emmanuel!*

Blessings,
Nancy

THANKSGIVING BLESSINGS!



...how well we ate at our traditional Thanksgiving feast on November 24th! Turkey, stuffing, gravy, mashed potatoes...casseroles of squash, pumpkin, corn, beans, cabbage and more...pies, pies, pies, pies and even more desserts! Many, many thanks to our master chefs of the Community and Fellowship Ministry for organizing, cooking and cleaning! Many, many thanks to all who helped arrange Merriman Chapel into a gracious dining room...and arrange it back to our Chapel! Many, many thanks to all who cooked and helped in countless ways so that we could share a meal together! Truly ~ we are blessed!



FOOD DRIVE THANKS

United Congregational Church members were invited to contribute to the Carty Food Cupboard on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Located just a couple of blocks from our church, Carty is one of the largest food pantries in Worcester, serving hundreds of families every month.

Our congregation has been a major supporter of this ministry helping those in need in our community, and church members responded with their usual generosity to this appeal. 400 pounds of non-perishable food items were donated to Carty, along with \$100 of grocery cards!

Carty is extremely grateful for these donations, which will allow it to remain open in early December despite being almost emptied of supplies during Thanksgiving. These contributions, and the regular volunteering done by United members at the Carty Cupboard, truly show our congregation's generosity and concern for others. Thank you, and blessings for your abundant giving!

SWEET SUCCESS!

Recently two members of United, **Sally Whitman and Meri Kruse**, conducted a candy sale. Each Sunday in November, they sold their delicious homemade treats (in a variety of flavors) from a table in Merriman Chapel. The profits were donated to the Interfaith Hospitality Network, a local residence offering shelter and services to homeless families.

Sally and Meri's efforts, along with a matching donation from our church's Missions & Outreach Ministry, ended up raising nearly \$600 for I.H.N., which was donated in memory of Meri's late mother, Jane Pero Kruse. Let's all thank Sally and Meri for their hard work, which not only helped a great community ministry, but also gave us some great treats to enjoy this past month!

~Tim Camp



**IN MEMORIAM:
JO-AN BOTT**

We give thanks for the life of Jo-an Bott, faithful and grace-full servant of God and of God's people. Jo-an died unexpectedly on November 16; her memorial service was held at United on December 14th. Jo-an was ordained in the Presbyterian Church to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament on March 27, 1960; she committed her life to working for peace, justice, and the inclusive love and welcome Jesus lived, and asked of all who follow him. Jo-an was a Light of God to all who knew her, and we are blessed to have had her in our lives.



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 PAGEANT ~ DECEMBER 22ND

We will bring to life the familiar and beloved story of the birth of Christ on December 22nd during our morning worship ~ join us for worship and be part of the Christmas story.

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 December 29th. Poinsettias not taken will be given to our less mobile members.



2019

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
Marilyn & Brooks Family
Helen Greeno & Eddie Snow
Ted Castner & Jo-an Bott
My father, Walter Cushman
Maude Watterson
Enberg & Day Loved Ones/United Friends
Vincent A. Droser Jr. & Vincent A. Droser III
Hazel A. Wallace
G Everett Holmes
Longvall Family
Our Loved Ones
Dan R. Lewis
Carol L. Cole
Our Parents
My Parents
Our Grandparents
Karolyne & Ralph White*

BY:

*Jeri D. Babinsky
Emerson Brooks
Judy Casalnuova
Emily Castner
Susan Cushman
Erica Eckensberger
Ann B. Day & Donna E. Enberg
DA Droser
DA Droser
Norma Holmes
Sandra Johnson
Pat & Peter Keck
Ann Lewis
Linda & Bob Michel
Joanna & Chip Pickering
Sue Stevens
Ann Rokosky & Alisa Villarreal
Audrey & Sonya White*

IN HONOR OF:

*Karen & Greg Wilfrid
Robert & MayLou Liljegren
Our five grandchildren
Our Children
Ruth Stroshane*

BY:

*Nancy Elder-Wilfrid
Joy Hennig & Gloria Beaudry
Elisabeth & Darrell Hyder
Linda & Bob Michel
Mae & Rich Stroshane*

United Calendar & Prayer Intentions



CALENDAR:

December 18 Board of Ministry meeting

December 24 Christmas Eve Service

NOTE: NO Carty Food Cupboard for December

DECEMBER PRAYER INTENTIONS:

We are a community of faith: praying for and with each other! Each week in our Sunday bulletin, we list several members of United for whom we pray during the coming week. We are including that list in Voices so that those who are unable to come to church will know who is being prayed for, and can join their prayers with ours.

For Sunday, Dec 1st: Emily Castner, Diana Coffin, Jannatha Coffin, & Nate Malia.

For Sunday, Dec 8th: Mary Collins, Michelle Collins, Ricardo Coloma, Michael Comer.

For Sunday, Dec 15th: Dee & Dave Cote, Debra Cottis, Ann Day & Donna Enberg, Carolyn Dik.

For Sunday, Dec 22nd: Karen Dorsheimer-Chaplin, Carolyn Droser & Andy Dzaugis, Mary, Matt, & Peter Dzaugis, D.A. Droser.

For Sunday, Dec 29th: Mary Flynn, James & Olive Eakin, Nancy Elder-Wilfrid, Kristen & Megan Farrar.

We pray for them to feel the blessing of our prayer as deeply as they feel the loving presence of God.

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/>)