

DECEMBER 2019



THE BEACON



First Church Congregational United Church of Christ

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“GETTING PARSONAL”

Rev. William D. Ingraham



Change is a constant in life. Yet, I was surprised by my resistance to it all. Later on, when I stopped to consider the strength of my reaction, I marveled that such strong feelings arose from what, in the broader scheme of things, is a really fairly insignificant. But still, I was annoyed. Greatly. And I didn't suffer in silence, either!

What was it that evoked these strong feelings, and even thoughts of taking my business elsewhere? It's almost embarrassing to admit. The owners of my gym were remodeling of the gym where I work out and have my membership!

Now, change is a constant in gyms, most often the result of a fellow member neglecting to put something back where it belongs. Equipment gets shifted, rooms get rearranged, things get broken, repaired, replaced. No big deal. From time to time you go on a bit of a hunting expedition and find (or don't find!) what it is that you're looking for, usually somewhere very much out of place.

But my gym was having an all-out renovation. One section of the building got sold off to a neighboring business, and a chain link fence was being installed *inside*, to cordon off a large area for classes. My beloved spin bikes were cut down to one third in number and relegated to a spot I didn't like. And it was a long process. Just about everything got moved multiple times throughout the renovation. Changes happened daily. Lots of disruption. Lots of noise. And lots of annoyance, especially by me.

Now that the remodeling is *complete*, I can report that I do rather like the changes. Of course, I do! Granted, I don't like where they have the spinning bikes now, and I can't find everything I want just yet. But I'm adjusting. And truly, now that it's all complete, everything makes sense, especially for the health and growth of their business.

Change comes whether we seek it or not, and not always to our liking. The process of change itself can be annoying, if not excruciating. But when we're lucky, we move through the process and find what's good about the new, even coming to appreciate the blessings of how things have changed.

At Advent, the four Sundays preceding Christmas, we prepare for Christ's coming. We make room in our hearts to welcome the birth of Jesus. We ready ourselves to receive Emmanuel, God with us, in the little child of Bethlehem's manger. And like the coming of any child into any family or community, anywhere, the birth of Jesus into our lives brings inevitable changes. Even after years and years of celebrating Christmas, the welcoming of the Christ child brings something new. It shakes things up. It causes a moving around of the furniture of our lives. It changes our perspective, perhaps heightening our awareness of responsibility to do God's work in the world. It impacts what we do, how we live, what we share, what we keep, where we go, where we don't go. The coming of the Christ child changes our lives, forever.

Change is a constant in life. This is true of our faith lives, too, and the life of our church. The four weeks of Advent give us pause to consider what Christ's coming to us *this year* will require of us, and how things might change as a result — for us, for our church, and for the world around us.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel!"

See you in church!

~Bill





Rejoice and Come Home...

Advent & Christmas 2019
First Church Congregational
Methuen, MA

Sunday, December 1st:

10:00 AM – Worship – *1st Sunday of Advent* ~ Communion Sunday

Sunday, December 8th:

10:00 AM – Worship – *2nd Sunday of Advent* ~ Children Singing

Sunday, December 15th:

10:00 AM – Worship – *3rd Sunday of Advent* ~ First Church Bells

5:00 PM – Advent Potluck Dinner ~ PF Play ~ Santa

Sunday, December 22nd:

10:00 AM – Worship – *4th Sunday of Advent* ~ Children/Music Sunday

Tuesday, December 24th:

7:00 PM – **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**

Wednesday, December 25th:

Merry Christmas to All!



2019 CHRISTMAS GIVING

If you wish to make a Christmas donation or poinsettia order, please use this form and return it to the church office **by Sunday, December 8th**. Please note: All donations & orders received before this deadline will be listed in the “*Christmas Giving Booklet*”. *Thank You.*



Poinsettia Plant Order

★ 7" pot, **single** plant at **\$15.00**; how many? _____; total \$_____*

★ 7" pot, **double** plant at **\$20.00**; how many? _____; total \$_____*

Please print when completing

In Loving Memory of _____

In Celebration/Honor of _____
(circle choice)

Given by _____

*After the Christmas Eve service (please check one):

_____ I will take my plant. _____ Deliver to a home-bound member or friend of the church



Donation

BUILDING MAINTENANCE _____ OPERATING EXPENSE _____

ORGAN RESTORATION _____ OUTREACH _____

REACH TEAM _____ OTHER _____

Please print when completing

Given in Loving Memory of _____

In Celebration/Honor of _____
(circle choice)

Given by



Please make checks payable to: ***First Church Congregational***

Thank you!



**In place of *Gifts to the Manger*,
we are collecting Toys and Games
to benefit**

**The Foster Kids
of the Merrimack Valley, Inc.**

Gifts are for children aged birth –18 year old

Gifts should be wrapped, labeled for boy/girl, age range

AND identify what's in the gift

so the gifts can be easily matched to children.

(Store gift cards may be given to ages 13-18)

**The last day for donations is
Sunday, December 15th**



All donations will be distributed to foster children currently under the care of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) in the Merrimack Valley, including Lawrence, Methuen, Andover, North Andover and the greater Haverhill region.

A collection box is located at the Crossroads.

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The Annual Mitten Tree

The Annual Mitten Tree has long been a popular part of our Christmas celebration at First Church and is a joint effort between The Outreach Ministry Team and The Chapel School.

A Christmas tree is placed in the crossroads outside of the Church Office on which First Church and The Chapel School families are invited to decorate with gifts of mittens, hats and scarves.



These gifts are donated to the Methuen Public Schools' Family Resource Center at 10 Ditson Place, Methuen which is the same location as where our Tuesday Evening Methuen Neighbors in Need Food Pantry is located. In this way, those who need these items most will not only receive a weekly bag of food to help feed their families, but also warm hats, mittens and scarves will be available to keep their children warm.

We look forward to a tree covered with colorful and warm decorations with our thanks for each of you.

Breakfast with Bill



"Breakfast with Bill" (dutch treat!), is an informal time for friendship and conversation on any topic. We will next gather on **Wednesday, December 11th** at **8:00 AM**, at Sammy J's, 144 Main Street in Salem, NH.



The "Breakfast" group from November.

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Burger with Bill

Note: There will be **NO** *Burger with Bill* in December.



Need prayer?

If you, or someone you know, is need of prayer or a visit, please contact Rev. Ingraham at pastor.bill.ingraham@gmail.com or 978-687-1240.

To have someone included on the bulletin prayer list, please let Roberta in the Church Office know at firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com or 978-687-1240. No request is too big or too small! Thank you.



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IN CASE OF SNOW...



As we enter the snow season, please be advised that on weekdays, if school is cancelled, the church office will not be open. If a blizzard is predicted for a given Sunday, please call the church for any changes to the time of worship or consult our church web page, www.firstchurchmethuen.com and Facebook page.

Any changes to worship will be noted as well on Channel **WBZ-TV (Channel 4)**, **WBZ NewsRadio 1030**, **WCVB (Channel 5)**, www.TheBostonChannel.com, **WHDH (Channel 7)** or **The CW (Channel 56)** for cancellation notifications.



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Planning a Meeting?



Please help keep the church calendar current. Be sure to let Roberta know of any and all items (meetings, dinners, etc.) that will need to go on the Church calendar. This is the only way the calendar can be kept current and up-to-date. Roberta can be reached at 978-687-1240 or firstchurch.roberta@gmail.com.

Thank you for your continued cooperation.

Stories of the Cross

A Source of Reassurance

Being a parent is a hard job. This statement is as undeniable as saying “water is wet.” With the constant squabbling, chores, errands, and demands, it is no wonder why today’s moms and dads are so stressed. However, most of us don’t realize *where* this stress can culminate – the family car.

Often times, this is when family members are actually together most. At home, kids scatter to their bedrooms, family rooms, or backyard to do their homework or play. Parents also retreat to the kitchen to make dinner or the desk to pay bills. It is in the car that we get the most “face time” with our children. For one mom, that can also be where the most stress can occur.

Dropping the kids off at various schools... Running to the grocery to get tonight’s dinner... Back and forth to the doctors and then to the pharmacy to get someone’s prescription... Fighting traffic to get the dog to the groomers in time... Transporting the team to practice... Breaking up arguments between kids... For this mom, these are daily occurrences. The one thing that helps her sanity, besides the cup of coffee, is her cross. She keeps it right on the dash to reassure her that God is looking out for her whole family. In a traffic jam, she holds it for peace. When the to-do list feels insurmountable, she can see the cross and know it will all work out. The feel of the warm wood reminds her that her faith is as strong as the bond she has with her kids, and her effort will be rewarded. One day at a time and one prayer at a time will get her through.

...and maybe another cup of coffee!



These stories of the cross are documented from true experiences related to a mission of First Church Congregational. We invite you to make your own experience through the simple act of sharing part of our faith through the cross. If you find a moment where they have made an impact on yourself or others, we invite you to share it with us anonymously. Please contact Josh Ferry for more information.

Prayer Shawl Ministry



The Prayer Shawl Ministry meets year-round and always welcomes anyone who wishes to be part of this ministry. Knitting or crocheting experience is not a prerequisite to becoming a member. Come for the fellowship and someone will be glad to help you if needed.

We invite you to join us on **Wednesdays from 1:30 - 3:30 PM.** We meet in the parlor.

Note: Prayer Shawl will not meet on Wednesday, December 25th or January 1st.

Please contact or Anne Benedix at 978-682-3496 (annerayben@comcast.net) or Carol Gray at 603-898-0934 (cagg14@comcast.net) for more information.



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Original Artwork by Emily Jurovich

Walking Group for Fitness and Fellowship

Tuesdays in December

The Walking Group will continue to walk on Tuesday mornings at the **Raymond J. Martin Riverside Park** on Riverside Drive in Methuen during December. We will meet at the park at **10:00 AM** on 12/3, 12/10, 12/17, 12/24 and 12/31, weather permitting. The park is located on Riverside Drive at the end of Burnham Rd. The riverside location provides opportunities for viewing wildlife. The group recently spotted a family of 5 swans along the riverbank! The walking loop is a flat, hot-topped surface, which we are hoping will be cleared of snow this winter. Please join us when you can! All are welcome!



Weekend Walking Opportunity

On **Sunday, December 7th**, following Coffee Hour, there will be another opportunity for exercise and fellowship as we walk through downtown Methuen and the surrounding area. Everyone is welcome!

Call Cindy Bateson if you have any questions about the above, or if you need a ride on Tuesdays, at 978-681-8722.

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Hiking!

Please join us for our next hike on **December 14th**, at 10:00 AM, as we set out on the trails of **Ward Reservation** in Andover. Ward Reservation offers several easy, well-marked trails but there is plenty of opportunity to challenge yourself if you wish. If you join us, I suggest you wear layers, hiking boots or good, supportive sneakers; bring a small pack with a snack and water.



Ward Reservation on Prospect Road in Andover.

If coming from route 114, take a right onto route 125. Prospect road is on the left at a blinking light. As you turn onto Prospect Road from route 125, it will appear to be a residential neighborhood until you reach the Trustees parking lot on the right. There is a \$5 parking fee when the machine works apparently (on the honor system) unless you are a Trustees member.

From the Stewardship Ministry Team

On November 10, the Stewardship Ministry Team delivered the Sermon, *Making Lives Better: Stories of Gratitude*. We were able to compile a few different stories from people whose lives have been changed as a direct result of the many different ministries here at First Church. Not only do all of YOUR time, talents and treasures help you to be connected to one another within this Church, but they also have a huge impact on people you don't even know and in ways you can't even imagine.

After the Service that Sunday, many people were quite "moved" and reached out to us to ask if we could print those stories in the Beacon; so here they are, as well as my introduction and conclusion. If you want to watch the Sermon, I believe you can see it on the FCC Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/firstchurchmethuen/>).

Also, if you haven't completed your pledge card, it's not too late. Please just drop it in the mail or bring it to Church on Sunday. We are so grateful for your ministry and efforts on behalf of First Church and because of your generous support, we are blessed beyond words to be able to provide and continue so many different missions and programs that touch lives in truly meaningful ways.

The Stewardship Ministry Team:

Kim Valcourt-Team Leader, Pastor Bill Ingraham, Ken Peck, Marilyn Peck, Robyn Sliney & Glenn Sprague

Introduction

For over 200 years, members and friends of First Church, Methuen have taken the responsibilities of Stewardship very seriously. Generation after generation have considered how their time, talents and treasures can help sustain this beautiful church, and how their support can help assist in caring for our cherished members and friends as well as communities near and far. We are a church that has been able to match financial resources to challenges that come before us, as well as balancing those resources with what is most near and dear to many of us, community outreach. Our theme this year has been "Making Lives Better" and today we would like to share a few of the stories we have become aware of that show how being good stewards of the gifts God has given us, has helped to make a difference in other people's lives.

From Maria

"Without having the evening food pantry, I would be struggling to have enough food to eat during the week. Every month the income from my job determines the amount of money I have to spend and at the end of each month I have to make choices between paying utility bills, buying prescription drugs for my diabetes and buying food for my 4 children. I also have family members that live in the area who work during the days like I do and your 5pm pantry is the only food pantry that is open late so that those of us who work have the ability to get help with getting some food assistance. We also like coming to the evening food pantry because everyone helping at the pantry is so friendly and that helps take the sting away from having to go to a food pantry."

From H and M

"I can't tell you how much receiving both the prayer shawl and the various cards from the church and church members has meant to me. Just looking and touching them helps me feel loved and connected to the church that I spent so much time in. The prayer shawl is always either on my bed or on the chair next to it. It is a comfort for me in that I know just by looking at it and touching it I can feel the love of everyone. Because of that love, I feel and know that I am not forgotten."

From C

"I had just moved into my mom's home from outside the area. I had no job, very little money, no husband, no food, and a brand new baby daughter. I never imagined that I would have to receive charity to put food on my table. Just the thought of having to do that I found very embarrassing and humiliating. My mother was taking care of my grandmother, who has some very serious medical issues. I knew that neither my mom or my Grandmother had the money to support me and my daughter so I visited a number of agencies to see what kind of assistance I could get. At one of the agencies they suggested that I consider going to a local Food Pantry for additional food. The woman said that there was a Neighbors-In-Need pantry on Tenney Street and it's one of the few local pantries that has frozen meat, fish or poultry each week. I packed up my pride and arrived at that pantry shortly before closing only to find that they were out of almost everything, in fact they only had a single package of pasta and a few onions. I was almost in tears. That is when one of the volunteers, Ken, told me he ran a different Methuen Neighbors-In-Need food pantry. He would open it for me and provide me with a bag of food. He put me at complete ease. I have been going there ever since. When I was finally able to leave my daughter in day care, I got a job that expected me to occasionally work overtime. My problem was if I worked overtime I wouldn't be able to make it to the food pantry. My overtime earnings would mostly be spent on replacing the food I would have gotten from the Food Pantry. I explained this to Ken and he said not to worry, he would deliver a bag of food to my mother's house on Tuesday evening after the pantry was closed. I did not want him to go out of his way like that, but he explained that he was delivering a bag of food to another family already, and it was no problem for him to deliver one to me. My experience at the Neighbors In Need Food Pantry on Ditson Place has been wonderful! They make everyone feel comfortable and treat everyone warmly and with a smile".

From S

"I have brought my oldest son to the Back to School event at First Church for several years and I want to tell you how important it has been for us. I'm a single mother who has to work just to put a roof over our heads and food on our table. This leaves me with very little money to pay for everything else like all of my bills, clothing, medicines, and a few toys for both of my sons. This year my youngest son joined his brother at the event. As we were walking out of the church my youngest son looked up at me and said with a huge smile on his face, "Mommy I get to have my own new clothes and not something that someone else had worn before me!" I've had to buy a lot of used clothing from the rummage stores or received hand me downs from friends, relatives, or from my church. That day though, just seeing the smile on my son's face, made it all worth-while and made my month."

From T

"I listened to the stories that different people were telling on the Sunday that we were talking about mental health issues. This day changed me because I know other people and have friends that might be suffering and need help and now, I have ways and ideas of how I can help them. I also have a better understanding that they are not alone. There are so many more people who may be struggling with their mental health than I ever thought about before. I know that there are places and people who can help them handle what they are feeling. I understand now why Stride into The Light is so important. It's not just about running a race; it's about helping people who need some help."

Anonymous

Recently, First Church in partnership with the Methuen Arlington Neighborhood held their first monthly birthday party for the youth who attend their after school program. During the party one of the First Church members noticed that one of the boys whose birthday they were celebrating was not eating his birthday cake. When asked if something was wrong, he replied that he had never had a

birthday cake, and he was saving it to take home to share with his family. Needless to say, he was provided with a lot of extra cake to take home.

In Closing

As you can see, your pledges from this past year have helped to Make Lives Better through the faith and community work both within the walls of our church and beyond its doors. These acts: some large, and some small, have impacts far beyond what most of us realize. Recognizing our gifts of time, talent and financial resources, that God has given each of us, is good stewardship; but living out our faith and sharing all of these gifts can change lives forever. As you contemplate your financial pledge for this coming year, we hope that you realize all of what your financial gifts can provide, and know that they are an important factor in sustaining our actions so that we can continue to carry out the faithful work of what God intends us to do.

Making Lives Better



Seeking God



Caring for Each Other



Improving Our Community

Sanctuary Roof Update

With December right around the corner, our Trustees have been busy preparing for winter - tuning up the furnaces, blowing out the sprinklers, and cleaning up our grounds; trying to stay one step ahead of Old Man Winter.



Our Trustees have also been busy overseeing our roofing contractor. As you may recall from my last update, the sanctuary roof has failed, and our engineer has recommended that we replace the roof before winter. Over the last month, we have secured the necessary permits and approvals from the town and the historical commission and have started work on the roof. Today, a mason with a long-history of working with churches is re-pointing and re-flashing the roof. We expect that it will take him several weeks to finish the repairs (weather permitting) and then the full roofing crew will start their work in removing the old shingles, repairing the sub-roof, laying down ice and shield, and installing the new shingles. The new shingles are rated for 130 mph winds, have a 50 year warranty and have a slate-like appearance. We hope to have the roof 100% complete by mid-December.

We have also been busy raising funds for the roof. As of today, we have raised \$32,000 from 14 donors. We still need another \$33,000 to fully fund the project. If you are able to help, please speak to me or Pastor Bill. With over 200 active members, I remain hopeful that we can fully fund the repairs without depleting funds from our endowment. If you can spare \$500, \$1,000 or more, we will be able to complete the repairs without impairing our finances.

As 1 Corinthians 12:14 reminds us, we can accomplish anything when we work together – *“For the body is not one member, but many.”*

Faithfully,

Steve Boyko
Church Board Chair

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It's time to stop worrying about money! The nine-lesson *Financial Peace University* (FPU) course is the proven plan to help you keep a budget, beat debt, and build wealth! Dave Ramsey and his team of financial experts teaches every lesson with biblical wisdom, and you'll get support and encouragement along the way. FPU includes your workbook and a free year of Financial Peace Membership, an online tool kit to support your journey.

Contact Scott Sanborn at 978-382-0292 for more info. You can also sign up online at www.fpu.com/1102378. Classes start on January 16th at 6:30 PM and will run weekly until March 12th.



The Chapel School

- ❖ Thanksgiving Dinners - We served our Annual Turkey Dinner to all the Chapel children on Monday, November 25th & Tuesday, November 26th in the Parish Hall. The menu included mashed potatoes, corn, cranberry sauce & turkey of course. Many parents helped with setup, prep and cleanup. Pat Romano was executive chef for our humble meal. Thanks so much!!
- ❖ Festival of Trees is open to the public. Chapel's tree The Magic of Books is on display for the next two weeks. November 22nd to December 7th at the Valley Office Park, 13 Branch St. Methuen. Our tree placed second for *Best Tree Done by Children*. Hope you can attend the Festival and view our tree along with the First Church tree which placed first for *Best Under Tree Display*. I think this was a first that both First Church and Chapel both won.
- ❖ The Mitten Tree will once again be displayed in the lobby for everyone to decorate with hats, mittens and scarves for children. In keeping with the spirit of giving many Chapel families contribute items for the tree and teach their own children to help others who may not have warm clothes in the cold weather. This joint Church and School collection helps so many children. Thanks so much for all your help. Every little bit helps. All the donations will be sent to the Methuen Public Schools Resource Center and the Food Pantry for distribution.
- ❖ Enrollment has already begun for the 2020-2021 school. Parents have been calling to visit the school. Positive referral has still been our best marketing and networking tool. The families are enjoying the tours and learning all about Chapel.
- ❖ Reindeer Food will be going home this month with all the children in anticipation of Santa's Visit on December 24th. There will be plenty of glitter oatmeal to feed the reindeer and guide Santa to everyone's houses.
- ❖ Merry Christmas to everyone both Church and Chapel families and all the best for the New Year 2020!!!

Cindy Mazella
Director



Come check out our **Award Winning** trees from
First Church Congregational and The Chapel School,
among the other beautiful trees at the Methuen Festival of Trees

First Church Congregational Tree
"O Holy Night"
First Place for Under Tree Display



The Chapel School Tree
"The Magic of Books"
Second Place for Best Tree Done by Children



*The Festival of Trees runs through December 7th
at 13 Branch Street in Methuen.*

Happy Anniversary First Church Congregational!



On Sunday, November 3rd, First Church Congregational celebrated the 290th Anniversary of the founding of the church. The Historical Committee put together a program which began with a visit to the Meetinghouse Hill Cemetery, and a brief "walking tour" of the most significant historic items in the church.

Introductory Words prior to the FCC tour of the Old Burial Ground on Sunday, November 3rd, by Leslie Shea, Historical Committee Chair...

Methuen was set off from Haverhill in December 1725, as soon as it was incorporated. The founding fathers' first course of business was to hire various ministers to live among them, and then to make plans for building a meeting house. Once the meeting house was finished on August 28, 1728, they were anxious to have a settled minister. Mr. Christopher Sargent seemed to be the people's choice, having supplied the pulpit for some months. They formally "called" him on March 12, 1729. Mr Sargent was a young man of 25 years and had graduated from Harvard College. A day was set aside to have "solemn fasting and prayer" to the forming of the church and ordaining of their pastor. The day set was October 29, 1729. Mr. Sargent was ordained November 5, 1729. He served the church for 54 years, and under his care it prospered. However, old age and infirmities made it necessary for him to retire. The church released him from active duties in the year 1783.



A "walking tour" continued at FCC, after the worship service, at the organ pipes in the back of the Sanctuary. Members of the Historical Committee were stationed at each "stop" on the tour to explain the history and significance of the most historic items possessed by the church, such as the organ, the LaFarge Window and more.



CE Re-Visioning Retreat on November 16th

This summer, First Church was awarded a \$500 Brave New Initiatives mini-grant from the BTS Center in Portland, Maine, for the purpose of revisioning and revitalizing our Christian Education program.

On Saturday, November 16th, nine people gathered at West Parish Church in Andover for a 5 hour retreat. The morning was spent experiencing four different curriculum modalities, led by Rev. Jenn Macy, Associate Pastor at First Congregational in Somerville. Rev. Macy has long been a consultant for churches of the Massachusetts Conference UCC (now the Southern New England Conference).

Following Pastor Jenn's work, Rev Ingraham led a process to discern what we want to do from now through the spring. A curriculum was selected to use beginning in December, and we agreed to create one unit on the rotation model from scratch, to be presented for three or four weeks after Easter.

The next Christian Education revisioning meeting will be held **on Sunday, January 26th at 11:30 AM** in the pastor's study.



From the Outreach Committee...

Thanksgiving Dinners

With a goal of 160 Thanksgiving dinners to be donated this year, First Church has once again demonstrated its longstanding and unwavering commitment to serving the greater community. Our members, friends, their family & friends, and parents from The Chapel School answered the call and enthusiastically donated 185 Thanksgiving dinners. Some members and Chapel parents used social media and their sphere of influence to successfully ask for grocery and cash donations. We received \$1,880.00 in cash donations to help with the purchase of 160 turkeys and 8" apple pies.

Over 3 dozen volunteers from First Church, Girl Scouts, Baptist Church, Forest Street Church, local teachers, over 30 high school students, and other individuals who have volunteered at the Food Pantry during the year, will work together on Tuesday, November 26, to distribute these Thanksgiving dinners, along with additional food from Neighbors In Need to over 320 families in the community who receive weekly food distribution through the Tuesday Evening Methuen NIN Food Pantry (which is led by Ken and Marilyn Peck) and the Wednesday Morning Methuen Arlington Neighborhood NIN Food Pantry

On Saturday and Sunday, November 23 and 24, members unloaded, organized and boxed up all the donated food. We thank them for their time as well as all the other people who donated Thanksgiving Dinners and cash for the turkeys and pies.

Thanks to the generosity and dedication of our amazing church, hundreds of families in our community will be able to share a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner together.

The Outreach Ministry Team

Cindy Bateson, Ray Benedix, Lori Bennett, Carolyn Casey, Cynthia Causbie, Barbara Donaghue, Pastor Bill Ingraham, Deb MaueSprague, Stacey Murray, Sherry Patrakis, Ken Peck, Becky Smith and Marilyn Peck, Team Leader



Putting together the Thanksgiving Dinners was a group effort!



A MISSION TRIP TO HONDURAS

by Carole Silva

On November 2, I left from Boston to spend a week in Honduras, traveling with me was my daughter, Janet, and my sister-in-law, Mary.

Before going any further, a bit of background information. Mary is involved with St. Basil's Church in Ohio and the church has a long standing connection with Honduras. The church sends about 4 groups a year to Honduras with different themes. Some are medical, some are focused on water treatment plants, some are building churches. The group Janet and I joined was focused on repairs of an orphanage and nursing home.

Honduras is a very mountainous country with the capital being Tegucigalpa. The airport is less than half the size of Manchester's airport and much more dangerous to land at, because of the short runway. That is not the only risk. The capital has one of the highest murder rates in the world due to gang violence.

We stayed 3 hours away from the capital in a gated compound in dormitory style rooms. We took cold showers after a day of hot, humid work and slept under ceiling fans with open windows. Late at night we would hear an occasional iguana on the tin roof looking for his evening meal.

We made breakfast and lunch for ourselves. Breakfast often was scrambled eggs, toast and rich, strong Honduran coffee. Lunch was always peanut butter and jelly, chips and bottled water. We carried our lunch with us, not knowing exactly where we would be each day.

Dinner was cooked for us and ready when we arrived back at the Hogar (Spanish for home). The meal was typically meat and some type of carbohydrate, often rice. We were rarely served vegetables, but I had been warned to stay away from anything that was not boiled, (well cooked) or that I could peel myself (think bananas), water and food contamination is a real issue. We did eat beans and rice (which together makes a whole protein)

In the mornings we would often travel to either the orphanage or nursing home to work. Again, this needs a bit of background information. This was also a compound (gated) that consisted of the orphanage, nursing home, convent, church, small school and a bakery run by the nuns. The nuns sold what they made in the bakery to help support the orphanage and nursing home. I believe there were no more than about 8 nuns total, but they had minimal paid help from the community.

The orphanage held approximately 30 children, ranging in age from 2 to 16. Some of the children actually had parents, but the parents could no longer afford to care for them. I'm told that occasionally parents would come to visit, but that would often mean a 2 or 3 hour walk one way. The children often spent their entire lives there. Some even managed to go to "university" and have a professional life.

Every child went to school in the compound and was taught some English, of course some were better than others with speaking English. The children seemed clean, well fed and clothed, considering this was a third world country. Repairs consisted of replacing light bulbs in bedrooms (in one room, 3 out of 4 lights had burned out, the boys actually cheered and clapped to have a fully lighted room again). Putting screens on windows to keep out mosquitoes and fixing some broken windows.

The nursing home held about 17. While I never found out the story of some of these residents, it was plain to see why some were there. Disabilities, such as a stroke or amputation for an elderly relative would make it very difficult to care for such a person in a poor home. Again, all the residents seemed clean, well fed and clothed. Our work there was mostly painting rooms. One of our group members had brought beads and so one afternoon we made necklaces for all the residents and staff. They seemed genuinely pleased.

One afternoon five of us took the afternoon "off" and went out into the country to deliver some medication to outlying clinics. These clinics were reached by dirt roads in a 4 wheel drive truck. I was fully expecting that these "clinics" to be an open air affair with barely a tarp overhead and possibly a cow looking over my shoulder. I was pleasantly surprised. They were modern and tiled with 2 or 3 exam rooms. What they truly didn't have was medication. We delivered over the counter things like Tylenol, aspirin, Motrin, vitamins, hydrogen peroxide. The stuff you would find at any local drug store. You would have thought we had given them gold; the staff was so grateful. They were especially thankful for children's medication.

The week went by so fast that it seemed we had barely arrived, and it was time to go home. It is difficult to say who made the most lasting impression. That our group made on the people we came in contact with, or that the Honduran people made on our group. There is no doubt in my mind that the week left a lifetime impression on both Janet and myself. I have been invited to participate in the medical group on their next mission trip. It is something that I am going to try my best to make happen.



What's the REACH Ministry?



Do you know of someone facing surgery, recovering from surgery or living with a long-term illness? Do you know someone who has recently lost their job or could use financial support? Do you know someone who suffers from depression or is often down in the dumps around the holidays?

Maybe this person is you?

If so, we can help. Our new **REACH** Ministry wants to make sure that members of our community have a place to turn for support in their time of need. The term **REACH** stands for -- **R**eliable, **E**ngaging, **A**ble, **C**aring and **H**earfelt support.

Contact Judi Boyko or Pat King for more information.

* * * * *

Need Financial Help?

If you, or another member of First Church you know, is need of some temporary financial assistance, please contact Rev. Ingraham at pastor.bill.ingraham@gmail.com or 978-687-1240.

Due to the generosity of Thomas Longworth, through his estate plan, there are some funds available for short term financial assistance of our members.

* * * * *

Would you like to make an electronic donation to the church?



Use your smart phone or tablet by scanning this QR code!

Or visit our website at www.firstchurchmethuen.com and click the "Ways to Donate" page.

Thank you for your support.

SUNDAY COFFEE HOUR



**WE NEED
YOUR HELP!**

**OUR COFFEE HOUR FUND
IS GETTING LOW**

IT COSTS ABOUT \$15-20/WEEK FOR COFFEE HOUR.

- MUFFINS
- FRUIT
- YOGURT
- BREADS

**WANT TO BAKE OR DONATE AN ITEM INSTEAD?
CONTACT REBECCA WRIGHT TO COORDINATE.**

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN
HOSTING OR DONATING -
SIGN UP IN THE CROSSROADS
OR CONTACT REBECCA WRIGHT
978-376-5923
REBWRIGHT@COMCAST.NET

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE:

PARISH HALL
IS NOW
NUT FREE



Daily Lectionary Scripture References December 2019 (Year A)

Sun., Dec. 1

First Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 2:1-5
Psalm 122
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:36-44

Mon., Dec. 2

Psalm 124
Genesis 8:1-19
Romans 6:1-11

Tues., Dec. 3

Psalm 124
Genesis 9:1-17
Hebrews 11:32-40

Wed., Dec. 4

Psalm 124
Isaiah 54:1-10
Matthew 24:23-35

Thurs., Dec. 5

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Isaiah 4:2-6
Acts 1:12-17, 21-26

Fri., Dec. 6

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Isaiah 30:19-26
Acts 13:16-25

Sat., Dec. 7

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Isaiah 40:1-11
John 1:19-28

Sun., Dec. 8

Second Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Romans 15:4-13
Matthew 3:1-12

Mon., Dec. 9

Psalm 21
Isaiah 24:1-16a
1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Tues., Dec. 10

Psalm 21
Isaiah 41:14-20
Romans 15:14-21

Wed., Dec. 11

Psalm 21
Genesis 15:1-18
Matthew 12:33-37

Thurs., Dec. 12

Psalm 146:5-10
Ruth 1:6-18
2 Peter 3:1-10

Fri., Dec. 13

Psalm 146:5-10
Ruth 4:13-17
2 Peter 3:11-18

Sat., Dec. 14

Psalm 146:5-10
1 Samuel 2:1-8
Luke 3:1-18

Sun., Dec. 15

Third Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 35:1-10
Psalm 146:5-10 or Luke 1:46b-55
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

Mon., Dec. 16

Psalm 42
Isaiah 29:17-24
Acts 5:12-16

Tues., Dec. 17

Psalm 42
Ezekiel 47:1-12
Jude 17-25

Wed., Dec. 18

Psalm 42
Zechariah 8:1-17
Matthew 8:14-17, 28-34

Thurs., Dec. 19

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
2 Samuel 7:1-17
Galatians 3:23-29

Fri., Dec. 20

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
2 Samuel 7:18-22
Galatians 4:1-7

Sat., Dec. 21

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
2 Samuel 7:23-29
John 3:31-36

Sun., Dec. 22

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-25

Mon., Dec. 23

Luke 1:46b-55
2 Samuel 7:18, 23-29
Galatians 3:6-14

Tues., Dec. 24

Christmas Eve
Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]

Wed., Dec. 25

Christmas Day
Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98
Hebrews 1:1-4 [5-12]
John 1:1-14

Thurs., Dec. 26

Psalm 148
Wisdom 4:7-15
Acts 7:59-8:8

Fri., Dec. 27

Psalm 148
Proverbs 8:22-31
1 John 5:1-12

Sat., Dec. 28

Psalm 148
Isaiah 49:13-23
Matthew 18:1-14

Sun., Dec. 29

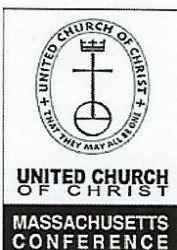
First Sunday after Christmas
Isaiah 63:7-9
Psalm 148
Hebrews 2:10-18
Matthew 2:13-23

Mon., Dec. 30

Psalm 20
Isaiah 26:1-9
2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Mon., Dec. 31

New Year's Eve
Ecclesiastes 3:1-13
Psalm 8
Revelation 21:1-6a
Matthew 25:31-46



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DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

01 Mary Simonian
02 Nathaniel Hodgkins
03 Emily Carter
05 Michelle Wright
06 Neil Bateson, Susan Kerr
12 James Clark, Jr., Bob Newton
18 Susan Riedel
19 Andrew Pavlenkov
23 Maureen Wright
26 Allan Barlow



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

04 Deborah MaueSprague
06 Cathy Gable
07 Janet Towler

* * * * *



JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

1/6 Robert & Susan Newton

Married 41 years



December 2019



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Worship & Sunday School: Sundays at 10:00 AM	 Chancel Choir Rehearsals <i>Every Sunday unless notified:</i> 8:30 AM					1 9:30 AM Drop-in Yoga
1 1st Advent Sunday Communion	2 1:00 PM Historical 4:00 PM Chapel Staff 6:30 PM Finance	3	4 1:30 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry 6:30 PM Church Board	5 6:30 PM FC Bells	6	7 9:30 AM Drop-in Yoga
8 2nd Advent Sunday <i>Children Singing</i>	9	10	11 8:00 AM Breakfast with Bill 1:30 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry 7:00 PM Diaconate	12 6:30 PM FC Bells	13	14 9:30 AM Drop-in Yoga
15 3rd Advent Sunday <i>First Church Bells</i> 5:00 PM Potluck Dinner & PF Play	16 1:00 PM Cook for Bread & Roses	17	18 January 2020 BEACON deadline 1:30 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry 6:30 PM MDCC	19 6:30 PM FC Bells	20	21 9:30 AM Drop-in Yoga
22 4th Advent Sunday Children/Music Sunday MDCC - Cookie Swap/ Christmas Card Exchange	23 Church/School Closed 6:30 PM Trustees	24 <i>Christmas Eve</i> School Closed 7:00 PM Candlelight Service	25 <i>Merry Christmas</i> Church/School Closed 	26 School Closed 6:30 PM FC Bells	27 Church/School Closed	28 9:30 AM Drop-in Yoga
29 NO Sunday School	30 Church/School Closed	31 School Closed				

Dates and times are subject to change

First Church Congregational

United Church of Christ

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Address Service Requested