

New England
Congregational Church
UCC
Aurora, Illinois



TIDINGS

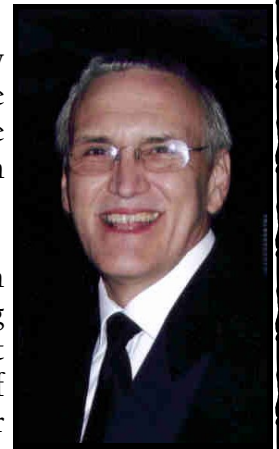
Volume 89, Number 12

December 1, 2017

Peace On Earth • Peace On Earth • Peace On Earth

This time of the year, when we are busier than we had hoped, it is easy to decry the materialism and crass commercialism of the holiday. While it is regrettable that the marketing of Christmas as a blatant attempt to improve the bottom line of retailers is spiraling out of control, it can also be argued that modern Christmas celebrations are a realization of God's incarnation in the world.

The story of Christmas is the story of God coming to us in a form that we can recognize. God as Spirit is difficult to get our mind around; God as human being is something we can relate to. The central message of the Christian faith is that God came in the form of a person to show us what the world could look like if God were at the center. Justice and peace, inclusion and hope would reign over tyranny, prejudice, hatred and oppression. To that end, Jesus showed us a better way of living. As God in human flesh, Jesus proclaimed and demonstrated that all human beings are God in human flesh; that each person—regardless of creed, nationality, race, gender or religion—should be treated with respect and dignity. Actions of kindness, therefore, are physical expressions of what it means to be God in human flesh. Christmas is the quintessential occasion for kindness, meant to be carried out in material expressions of love and joy.



Christmas is a sort of laboratory where we practice the art of celebrating the tangible, material world God made in order to do it all year long. God didn't come to us in some ethereal spirit or a rigid religious doctrine but in flesh and blood, in the material. The Word of God that became flesh and dwelt among us, sharing material things with people: food, wine, a healing touch, a good party. Each of the stories Jesus told about God's kingdom were stories of people giving and receiving material things to heal broken and hurting human beings. In God's created order, the material is the vehicle for the spiritual.

Christmas is the time Christians celebrate this materialism in the best sense of that word. We express it by giving parties, by sharing gifts, by fostering the wide-eyed wonder of children for Santa Claus, by baking and eating, by giving things (not ideas or philosophies or religious tenets) that will make someone else's life sparkle with hope. It is a time to foster relationships, to renew acquaintances, to decorate trees, to wrap presents. It is a time to enjoy the material aspects of life as expressions of the God of eternity coming to humanity in things we can see, touch and smell.

This is not an excuse for unbounded extravagance; all things should be done in moderation. It is an opportunity to reframe the holiday activities as a celebration of the material world as God intended, as Jesus showed us. This is the time to appreciate that the things of this world are a means by which God becomes flesh and dwells among us. Blessings for a meaningful Christmas in all the ways it may come to you.

Gary

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Volunteer to work at the Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry—NECC sends volunteers to work in the warehouse and/or to restock shelves every 2nd and 3rd Monday of the month from 3:00-4:00pm. The location is 110 Jericho Road, Aurora. Thank you!

The church office will be closed December 25, 26 & January 1, 2 for the Christmas and New Year's holidays. There will be limited office hours from 9:00 am-noon on December 27, 28 & 29.



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Women's Circle of Friends



"Christmas Carols" will be the theme of our Women's Circle Of Friends meeting in Friendship Hall on Saturday, December 9 at 9:30am. Following our shared breakfast, Marilyn Parolini will be leading us in singing our favorite carols. All women of the church are invited to join us as we enjoy food, fellowship and participation in Marilyn's delightful Christmas program. Please sign up in the church office.

CHRISTMAS ANGELS

Just a reminder that we are currently working on the Christmas Angel program. If you have not already done so, please consider selecting and signing up to purchase a Christmas surprise for an 'angel' in the marketplace this Sunday. The 'angels' are students from the Dieterich and Greenman schools. We ask that you return your wrapped gifts by Sunday, December 10, so that we can make the deliveries during the week of December 11. Thanks for your support.



...and they will know we are Christians by our love.

FILM SERIES

December 8: The Way (2010)

A father heads overseas to recover the body of his estranged son who died while traveling the "El camino de Santiago" and decides to take the pilgrimage himself. Written, directed and starring Emilio Estevez along with his father, Martin Sheen. Presenter: Sue Scheuerman



JOYS & CONCERNS



Baptisms:

Olivia Jean Palermo, daughter of Anthony & Samantha Palermo.

Hospitalized:

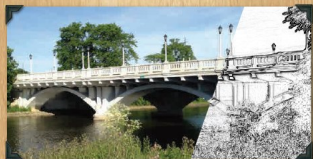
John & Joann Patton, Tanya Myers

Deaths:

We offer our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Cliff Lund and Jill Habermeyer.

A BRIDGE TO THE PRESENT

The Past is Prologue to the Present



Our Stewardship Endeavor for 2018
Building the Bridge as We Walk on It

Your Stewardship Board is trying to complete the campaign to raise money for next year's ministry, and we ask that those of you who haven't sent in your pledge to please do so as soon as possible. The Finance Board is eagerly awaiting the preparation of the budget for next year but can't create a budget until we know how much money is being pledged. Thank you.

SALVATION ARMY BELL RINGING

NECC Men's Fellowship will ring bells for the Salvation Army once again (an eighteen year tradition!) this Christmas season.

Please save the date of Tuesday, December 5, from 5:00-7:00 pm. This year's sign up also includes one hour time slots. Sign up in the church office. Bells, buckets, and aprons will be at the collection locations. Jerry Roesner will give you your assigned location on Sunday, December 3.

If you are unable to be at the church that Sunday, please call Jerry (630.892.1904) to obtain your location assignment.



new england preschool

Sci Tech visited New England Preschool last month. Our preschoolers and their parents were able to try hands-on activities exploring the different States of Matter. They learned that science is cool!



"Gloria" by Antonio Vivaldi will be presented at the 10:00 am worship service on December 10 by our Chancel Choir, accompanied by a small orchestra. We hope you'll join us for this exciting music.

Calling All Girl Scouts!

We are having a display on Girl Scouting in the cabinet during February and March. If you would like your name to be included in the display as a current or former Girl Scout, please contact Sue Reimer at gshistorys-reimer@yahoo.com. Sue is the Historian for the local GS council.





Betty Brownson
700 W. Fabyan Pkwy
Apt. 3418
Batavia, IL. 60510

Marian Newell
500 Wyndemere Circle
A154
Wheaton, IL. 60187

Dagmara Nyman
700 W. Fabyan Pkwy
2414 TC
Batavia, IL. 60510

Matt & Deb Pendell
1300 Park Manor
Aurora, IL. 60506

Helen Rangel
1955 Randi Dr., Apt. 112
Aurora, IL. 60504

Annual reports from
board chairs are due in
the church
office by
Friday, December 15.
Please e-mail your
report to
Shelley
@newenglandchurch.
org.

Thank you!



CHRISTMAS EVE SUNDAY SERVICES



Regular morning services at 8:30 am & 10:00 am

5:00 pm Family Service

11:00 pm Service of Readings and Carols

Candle Lighting Ceremony at both evening services.

'Conversations with Gary'



Join us at Ballydoyle Irish Pub in downtown Aurora for
conversations on the subjects you wish to discuss.
Everyone buys their own food and drink.

LUNCHTIME at 11:30 am:

Monday, December 4

Tuesday, December 12

These will be the only dates for the month of December.

The 2018 Winter Dinners will start again in January. They're lots of fun
and a great way to get to know other NECC folks.

If you didn't get to sign up after church in November, or if you want more
information, call or email Barbara King by
December 15: 630-879-2263 or bhk430@att.net.

Mitten Tree Donations

In the spirit of giving, we will have a Mitten Tree again this
year. We invite families to donate new, unused mitten and
gloves to be given to local children and adults who are in need
this winter. There is a tree located outside the church office to
hang your donations on throughout the month of
December. This is a great way for our families to give back to the
community this holiday season. Thank you for your support.
Together, we can make a difference.



EVERY CHILD CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

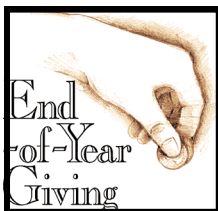


The Every Child Christmas Pageant will again be part of our 5:00 pm Family Christmas Eve Service. Children may come to church dressed as elaborately or simply as they wish to portray one of the characters in the nativity story: shepherd, wise men, angel, Mary, Joseph or an animal at the manger. They will be invited to the front as the story unfolds. Any babies that wish to join us as the Christ Child may bring their parents up to the front. In this Christmas story there can be as many Marys and Josephs and

shepherds as we have children, and in this story, baby Jesus can be a boy or a girl.

HANGING OF THE GREENS

The 32th annual Hanging of the Greens worship service is Sunday, December 3 at 10:00 am. This unique service appeals to eye, ear, heart, and soul as the congregation gathers to decorate the sanctuary as we sing carols and hear music by our chancel choir and bell choirs. This year's theme is "The Magic and Mystery of Christmas." We hope you'll join us, whether you wish to participate or just observe.



All donations must be either postmarked or received in the church office by December 31 in order to be credited as a 2017 donation. Please make every effort to complete your pledge before the year ends. Thank you.

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

The money raised through the Christmas Fund Offering provides the primary revenue stream for the Ministerial Assistance programs of the UCC. These programs of Annuity Supplementation, Health Benefits Supplementation, Emergency Grants and Christmas Gifts for low-income retirees are available to both the active and retired clergy and lay employees. *We will collect this special offering on Sunday, December 10.*



Cookie Walk

The Cookie Walk cookie sale will take place in Friendship Hall on Sunday, December 3 immediately following the Hanging of the Greens worship service.

Buy your homemade Christmas cookies for your holiday parties, gift boxes, or just to have around the house while you wrap presents.



Do you have our Pictorial Church Directory App yet? If not, here is the web address to let you know how to download to your devices.

<https://www.instantchurchdirectory.com/app/>

December, 2017
Vol. 11

Tiny Tidings

CHURCH SCHOOL CALENDAR

DECEMBER 3RD	Hanging of the Greens Service (No Church School All Children Stay in Church)
DECEMBER 10TH	Advent
DECEMBER 17TH	Pre K-4th Holiday Sing Along- Christmas Carols
DECEMBER 24TH	Christmas Eve Lesson
DECEMBER 31ST	Holiday Movie



HANGING OF THE GREENS

On Sunday, December 3th, all Church School Children will stay in church and participate in our annual Hanging of the Greens service. Any child who created an ornament during our ornament workshop on Nov. 26th, will be invited to hang one or two of their ornaments on the Sanctuary tree during this festive service. If your child was unable to attend the ornament workshop, additional ornaments will be provided so all children can participate in decorating the tree.



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE



On Christmas Eve, December 24th at 5:00 PM, all families are invited to attend our "Every Child Christmas Pageant" family service. During this service, every child from infant through high school is invited to choose a Christmas themed costume (Mary, Joseph, Wise Men, or even an Angel) to help tell the story of Christmas. This service is welcoming for everyone while still carrying the traditional theme of a Christmas Eve service. Invite your friends, family, and neighbors for this special night!

FA LA LA LA LA

During the 5:00 PM Christmas Eve service this year, the church school children will be performing with our Children's Music Director: Andrea James for the third time this year. The children have been rehearsing a special song during their church school music time and it will surely be a beautiful performance you won't want to miss. If your child is interested in participating, please make sure your child is here at church on Christmas Eve by 4:30 PM for one last rehearsal.



SPECIAL THANKS

THANKS

to all the church school children and families for baking and helping serve during coffee fellowship on Nov. 12th. It was great to see our young children participate in this act of service while making connections on the importance of helping and serving others.

VOLUNTEER TEACHER OPENINGS FOR 2018

There are volunteer teacher openings for the second half of the church school year. As a reminder, volunteers can now go to our church website main page and scroll down to the bottom of the page and find the "sign up station" button and click to find the dates and times that still need to be filled for our church school program. The paper copy will continue to hang in the church school hallway for those who like this method, but believe that this user friendly tool is ideal for our busy families.





Thank you to everyone who contributed shoes for the Giving Bus.



Learning to play ukuleles during music class



Serving Coffee Fellowship to the congregation



Working on the 10 Commandment Train

YOUTH TIDINGS

NOVEMBER, 2017

85TH EDITION

CANNED GOODS



During the month of November, the 5th & 6th grade children participated in another Helping Hands service project. During this season of giving, the 5th & 6th grade children and their families collected canned good items for the food pantry. Thank you to all who helped make a difference for those in need.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- DEC. 3RD** Hanging of the Greens
(All Children/Youth Stay in Church)
Cookie Walk
- DEC. 10** Confirmation Christmas Party
11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
- DEC. 24** Family Christmas Eve Service - 5 PM
*5th & 6th Grade Sing

H.S. SERVICE PROJECT

High School youth, please mark your calendars for the upcoming Cookie Walk on Sunday, Dec. 3rd. As a reminder, the Cookie Walk will take place in Friendship Hall immediately after the 10:00 AM service. High School students participating should be ready to help set up for the cookie walk on Dec. 2nd and/or help work this event on Dec. 3rd. All of the funds earned will go towards the senior high youth activities fund that will help off-set the cost of the activities and projects the youth participate in the coming year. If you or your high school student have any last minute questions, please contact Paige Lundquist or Audra Darche.

Cookie Walk

5TH & 6TH GRADE SING ON CHRISTMAS EVE

The 5th & 6th grade children, along with the church school children will be performing their most recent song during the 5:00 PM Family Christmas Eve Service. If your 5th or 6th grade child would like to participate, please make sure to arrive at church on Christmas Eve at 4:30 PM for a quick rehearsal.

Christmas Party

CONFIRMATION CLASS: Are you ready for some holiday magic? All confirmation students are invited to the Chestnut House Christmas Party on Sunday, December 10th. The party will take place from 11:00-1:00 PM and will include food, fun & fellowship. Keep an eye out for additional details for this holiday event.



Please join me in welcoming our new high school youth teacher: Lesley Myers. The new high school program will begin on Sunday, Jan. 7th and the high school youth will meet every Sunday from 11:05-11:50 AM at Chestnut House.

For the first several weeks in January, the high school youth will participate in a variety of activities to help Lesley and the youth get to know one another. Also, during the weekly meeting time (11:05-11:50), the youth group will assist in planning some fun events that they would like to do for the remaining part of the year. Ultimately, we want the high school students to have a sense of connectedness and enjoy hanging out with friends from church. I'm very excited to have Lesley on board in leading our children, and if you see her at church prior to January, please extend your hand and join me in welcoming her.

The first Helping Hand project for the 5th/6th graders was decorating Chestnut House for the Halloween Fun House used for our 1st-4th grade children. The 5th & 6th graders had lunch and then spent 1 1/2 hours decorating and learning games.



The 5th & 6th Graders had fun hosting the Halloween Fun House.



*“God
Is Still
Speaking”*

New England Congregational
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A Caring Church for Thinking People

Visit us on the web
at
www.newenglandchurch.org

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



Senior Minister: Gary L. McCann
Assistant Minister: Joe Dunham
Office Administrator: Shelley Lund
Preschool Director: Jacquie May
Director of Children's Ministry: Audra Darché
Chancel Choir Director: Jon Warfel
Children's Choir Director: AnDréa James
Organists/Pianists: Marilyn Parolini, Arlene Thurow
Handbell Director: Cathy Canfield-Jepson
Wedding Coordinator: Nancy Richmond
Nursery Care: Jenni Moses, Susan Kleinwachter
Custodian: John Hett
Building Maintenance: Todd Jones

Moderator: Cheryl Vonhoff
Moderator-elect: Scott Voris
Treasurer: Andy Sprau
Clerk: Judy Lopez