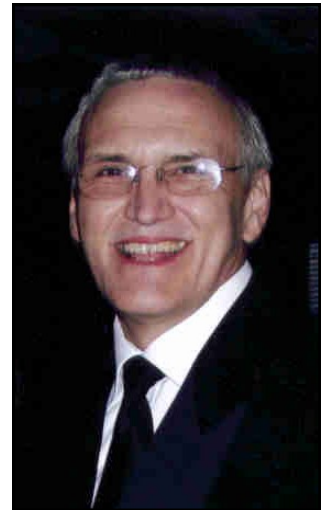




MUSINGS

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.*



Howard Thurman's poem is as vital and important now as when it was written decades ago. Thurman co-founded with Alfred Fisk the first major interracial, interdenominational church in the United States. His poem speaks eloquently to the work that the celebration of Christmas demands of us.

As we begin a new year, we realize the need is even greater than it was a few years ago. In many ways we have regressed, nationally, in our efforts to end racism, discrimination, violence, and poverty. The new tax system favors the rich and penalizes the poor. The church is ever more needed today, not only for responding to those most in need but in maintaining a positive morale among those who are affected negatively by the dominant culture that favors those who have lots and penalizes those who have little.

The biblical injunction is to feed those who are hungry, clothe those who are naked, shelter those who are homeless, care for those whom society relegates to the sidelines. Caring for the least of those in a society is to actually do it to the very Christ Child we celebrate at Christmas.

As you put away your crèche, take down the decorations, store your tree back in the attic or put it outside for recycling, let us commit to make Christmas last throughout the year as we stock shelves at the Food Pantry twice a month, provide meals at Feed My Starving Children, contribute cash each month on Communion Sunday to the Food Pantry, support Mutual Ground, Breaking Free, Senior Services, The Association for Individual Development, and the many other organizations that serve our community.

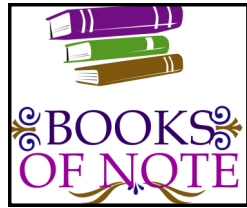
And then there are those organizations in Aurora that provide great theater and musical opportunities that promote peace and goodwill while they make music in the heart.

Let us go into the new year mindful of the importance of human love to foster joy, birthing God wherever we are with whatever means we have. God bless us, everyone.

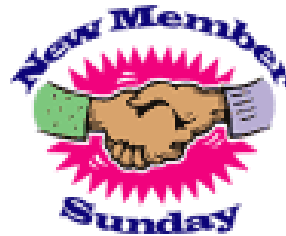
Gary



BOOKS OF NOTE



In the late 1950s, in the small town of West Annett, Maine, a minister struggles to regain his calling, his family, and his happiness in the wake of profound loss. At the same time, the community he has served so charismatically must come to terms with its own strengths and failings—faith and hypocrisy, loyalty and abandonment—when a dark secret is revealed. This description is about the novel *Abide with Me* by Elizabeth Strout. Come join in the discussion at Books of Note on January 16 at 7:00 pm in the parlor. We hope to see you there!



At our annual meeting, we will introduce all those who have joined the church this past year. If you are interested in joining with our ministry, please contact Gary.

A NOTE FROM THE SENIOR MINISTER



I would like to ask the congregation to defer any business you may have with staff until the weekdays. When you ask us questions on Sunday, particularly when we're preparing for worship or seeking to greet visitors, it's difficult to respond to your requests for a time to meet or to take care of details of a meeting, etc. Unless there's something that pertains to the worship service or an urgent request, please contact us during the week via phone or email. Thank you.

Annual Meeting

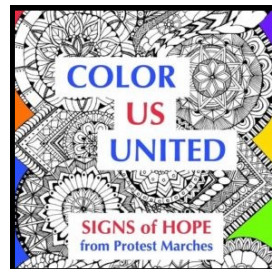


Please mark your calendar and be sure to attend our NECC Annual Meeting. The date is Sunday, January 28, 2018 following the second service. A catered lunch will be served in Friendship Hall followed by our meeting.

This event offers New England family members a chance to assess the activities of the past year and understand plans for the coming year.

New Book Available

A new book entitled “Color Us United; Signs of Hope from the Protest Marches” is available in the church office. This book, written by M. Anne Miller (sister-in-law of our own Beth Ann Miller) is an adult coloring book inspired by the messages and signs that Anne saw at the women’s march last year. This is a wonderful collection of the words seen at the marches in a book for you to color. \$15



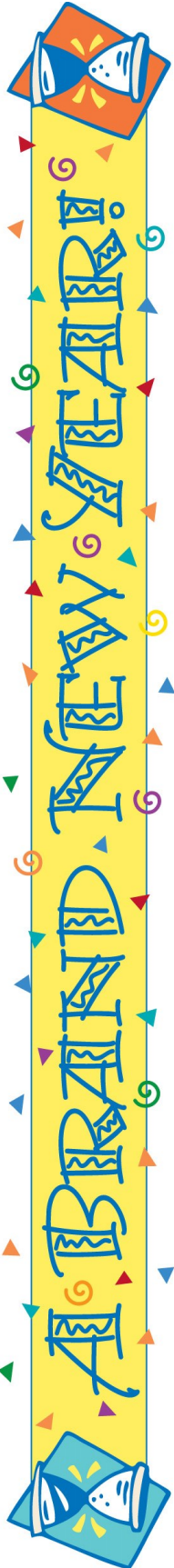
Women’s Fellowship



Our annual Bunco /breakfast is scheduled for Saturday, January 13, at 9:30 am in Friendship Hall. Women’s Circle of Friends invites all women to join us on the 2nd Saturday of each month for a shared breakfast followed by a program. This month we will have fun playing Bunco, which is a simple dice game that can be learned very quickly! Be sure to

sign up on the NECC website or on the computer in the church office. We will be trying the new sign up procedure as we begin the new year! Please join us for great food and fun!





SALVATION ARMY BELL RINGER RESULTS



2017 was another good year for the New England Men's Group Salvation Army Bell Ringers. We had 30 ringers from 5 to 7 pm on December 5 at 27 different locations. This is the 19th year we have participated in the Army's Red Kettle drive. Our New England ringers contributed significantly to the \$1997.48 collected at our assigned

locations that day.

Many THANKS to all our bell-ringers, as well as to Jim & Jan Mammaing, who opened their home and prepared a delicious BBQ dinner. The Salvation Army is enormously grateful for our part in this annual fundraiser which we intend to continue in 2018.

Are you or anyone you know in our congregation turning 100+ this year?
 If so, please call the church office to let us know!
 Thank you!



Christmas Angel Project Update



A BIG THANK YOU to all who selected an angel and purchased gifts for those special children at the Greenman and Dieterich Schools. We provided gifts for 82 students between the ages of 5 and 11. These children had a happier Christmas because of your efforts. THANKS AGAIN. *...and they will know we are Christians by our love.*

Church School Winter Jump



All church school children and youth (PreK-12th), and their families are invited to our second annual winter jump! Aren't we all looking for activities to do with our children during the cold winter days? Especially, something that will get our children running and exercising and not cost a fortune.

On Monday, January 15, Martin Luther King Day, when our children are home from school, all church school families are invited to Sky Zone Trampoline Park- 87 Executive Drive, Aurora, IL. During this time, the children can run, jump, and bounce from 10:00 am-12:00 pm for only \$10.00 per child/adult. The cost will also include the special socks that are required for jumping.

Reminder:

The newsletter deadline for submitted articles is the 15th of every month. The deadline for the weekly Sunday bulletin is the Monday preceding the affected Sunday. Please have your announcements worded the way that you want them to be and e-mail to shelley@newenglandchurch.org. Thank you!



'Conversations with Gary'

'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: Wednesday, January 17 and Thursday, January 25.** These will be the only dates in January.



FILM SERIES-

January 12:
Julia (1977)
 At the behest of an old and dear friend, playwright Lillian Hellman undertakes a dangerous mission to smuggle funds into Nazi Germany. Starring Jane Fonda and Oscar winners Vanessa Redgrave and Jason Robards. Presenter: Maureen McKane

January, 2018
Vol. 1

Tiny Tidings

CHURCH SCHOOL CALENDAR

JANUARY 7	Introduction to Bells (Cathy)
JANUARY 14	Jesus the Story Teller Bells-3rd & 4th
JANUARY 21	Jesus the Story Teller cont. Bells-3rd & 4th
JANUARY 28	NECC History & Annual Meeting 3rd & 4th - Play Bells in Church PreK-2nd- Sing with Mrs. James



BIG THANKS

Many of you may recall the beautiful Christmas tree in the sanctuary this year and all of the ornaments that hung so delicately on the sturdy branches. It truly was a beautiful tree and a

BIG THANK YOU GOES TO LESLEY MYERS

for assisting in the creation of these artistic ornaments during our annual ornament workshop. Not only were the ornaments fun for the children to make, but they were stunning hanging on the Christmas tree. Thank you again!

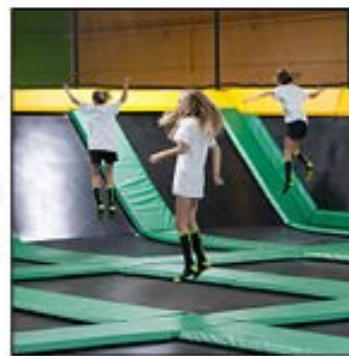
RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR

The first Church School Lesson to kick off 2018 will be led by our very own Cathy Jepson, our Hand Bell Director on Sunday, January 7th. During this lesson, Cathy will lead the PreK-4th grade children through a fun introduction on how to hold the bells and the sounds that each make. It is hoped that this early exposure in Church School will encourage interest in our youngest members and possibly promote participation in the years to come. Our church has an amazing Children's Hand Bell group that meets at 9:00 AM prior to church each Sunday. During this time, the children learn how to read music, play the bells, and ultimately, have fun connecting with other church friends. If your child is interested in joining the hand bell group, please see Cathy Jepson for details.

Handbells

CHURCH SCHOOL WINTER JUMP REMINDER

All church school children, youth, and families are invited to our second annual winter jump! Aren't we all looking for activities to do with our children during the cold winter days? Especially, something that will get our children running and exercising and not cost a fortune. On Monday, January 15th, Martin Luther King Day, when our children are home from school, all Church School children, youth, & families are invited to Sky Zone Trampoline Park-87 Executive Drive, Aurora, IL. During this time, the children can run, jump, and bounce from 10:00 AM-12:00 PM for only \$10.00 per child and this price includes the special socks that are needed to jump. If you are interested in attending, please make sure to sign up on the form in the church school hallway or contact Audra Darché.



LIBRARY TIME



Are you looking for something to do with the kids over the holidays? Our Children's Library has several Christmas themed resources for you and your child to check out over the holiday break. Whether you are looking for an easy picture board book for your younger child, or a more detailed picture book to help you or your child dive a little deeper into the meaning of Christmas, we have some great options for you and your family. Make sure to stop by the Children's Library and check out our selection of books and DVD's to use over the holiday break. As a reminder, if you currently have any NECC books/DVD's at home, please return them so others may enjoy them too.



ORNAMENT WORKSHOP - All the ornaments that were made, were hung on the sanctuary tree during the Hanging of the Greens service on Dec. 3rd.



During our Ornament Workshop, Cathy Jepson joined the children and lead them all in a holiday sing along once all of the ornaments were made.

Enjoying the Cookie Walk after the Hanging of the Greens Service.



YOUTH TIDINGS

JANUARY, 2018

86TH EDITION

5TH & 6TH GRADE

The 5th and 6th graders participated in the Hanging of the Greens service and they did a fabulous job hanging the garland. In addition, the children sang a



special song during the Christmas Eve service. All their hard work and rehearsing with AnDrea James was demonstrated during their beautiful performance with the younger students. The end of the year was celebrated with a fun holiday movie party.

special song during the Christmas Eve service. All their hard work and rehearsing with AnDrea James was demonstrated during their beautiful

H.S. REMINDER

As a reminder, our new high school program will take effect on Sunday, January 7th from 11:05-11:55 AM at Chestnut House. Please remember to complete the registration form for your participating youth. This form will be used to help our new high school leader get to know your student, but also allows her to know who to contact if there is an emergency or if there are any allergies that need attention. If you need to obtain a registration form for your high school student, please contact Lesley Myers or Audra Darché to obtain an additional copy.



CONFIRMATION CHURCH VISIT

Seven of our confirmation students visited St. Mark's Lutheran Church back on Sunday November 26th as a part of our efforts to learn about and honor other faith traditions. Our students were warmly welcomed and enjoyed experiencing Lutheran liturgy and worship traditions. Special thanks to Mark Zelman for helping with transportation.



H.S. SERVICE PROJECT

The high school youth did an amazing job running the Cookie Walk this year. Not only did several members from the high school group give up a couple hours on their Saturday morning to set up and greet those who dropped off cookies in advance, but the youth went over the top working the Cookie Walk on December 3rd. We had high school youth members running the cash boxes, coffee and juice table, passing out cookie boxes, filling and condensing the cookies, and even cleaning up at the end of the event.

THE HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH CLEARLY EARNED THE MONEY THAT WAS MADE AT THE COOKIE WALK THIS YEAR!!

UP & COMING FOR CONFIRMATION

As we look to the New Year, confirmation students will be focusing on the teachings of Jesus through his parables and the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus knew how to engage his audience with story, and we hope that our interactive confirmation format



will help engage our students as well.

THANK YOU!

Thank you to all who supported the Cookie Walk this year. The Cookie Walk was a huge success and brought in a total \$905.00. As a reminder, all of the funds earned from the Cookie Walk have been entered into the senior high youth activities fund and will help off-set the cost of the activities and projects in the coming year.



OUR
**Cookie
Walk**



ELVES



**“God
Is Still
Speaking”**



**New England Congregational
Church-UCC**
406 W. Galena Blvd. Aurora, IL. 60506
Phone: 630.897.8721
Fax: 630.897.8744
Email: office@newenglandchurch.org
A Caring Church for Thinking People

**Visit us on the web
at
www.newenglandchurch.org**

Joys & Concerns

Hospitalized:
John Ditzler

Deaths:
We offer our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of
Greg Fauth.



Our Staff & Church Officers

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