



Peace On Earth • Peace On Earth • Peace On Earth

MUSINGS

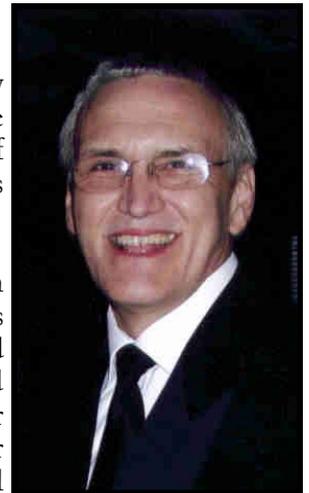
This time of the year, when we are busier than we had hoped, it is easy to decry the materialism and crass commercialism of the holiday. While it is regrettable that the marketing of Christmas as a blatant attempt to improve the bottom line of retailers is spiraling out of control, it can also be argued 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 so we can 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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DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CALLING 211?



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!

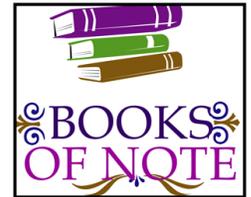


2-1-1 is for times of non-emergency crisis as well as for everyday needs. The 2-1-1 call specialists are available to help individuals locate health and human service assistance, on everything from mortgage assistance, EITC tax help and food and shelter, to job counseling services and health resources. 2-1-1 is an easy to remember telephone number that connects people with important community services, such as:

- Basic Human Needs:** such as food, shelter, rent and utility assistance
- Physical and Mental Health Resources:** such as health insurance programs, Medicaid and Medicare, medical information lines, crisis intervention services
- Employment Supports:** such as job training, transportation assistance, education programs
- Support for Older Americans and Persons with Disabilities:** such as adult day care, respite care, home health care, independent living programs
- Support for Children, Youth and Families:** such as after school programs, family resource centers, mentoring, tutoring, protective services

BOOKS OF NOTE

Books of Note is Reading *The Only Woman in The Room* by Marie Benedict. This book has been described as, "A powerful novel based on the incredible true story of the glamour icon and scientist whose groundbreaking invention revolutionized modern communication." We will meet to discuss this book on Tuesday, December 17 at 7:00 pm in the parlor. We look forward to seeing you there, whether you have had a chance to read the book or not. New members are always welcome to join our discussion.



The church office will be closed December 24, 25, 30, 31 & January 1 for the Christmas and New Year's holidays. There will be limited office hours from 9:00 am-noon on December 26 & 27.

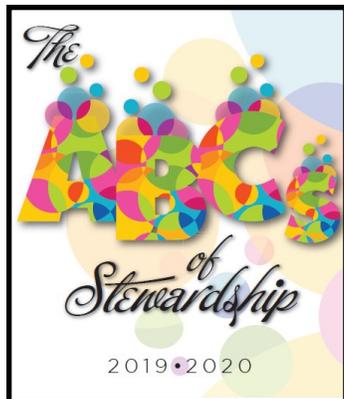


WOMEN'S CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

Women's Circle of Friends



The Christmas program for the Women's Circle of Friends on Saturday, December 14 will be a virtual carol sing. Marilyn Parolini will take us on imaginary visits to some church members and to the Salvation Army bell ringers (they might collect more money if it is supported by music), with appropriate instruments to accompany us. Beth Ann Miller and Marilyn will play a piano duet medley of Christmas carols to introduce the program. We will begin the morning at 9:30 am with a shared breakfast followed by the program. All women are invited to join us and are encouraged to bring a friend. Please sign up on the NECC web site or in the church office. Enhance your Christmas experiences by attending Women's Circle of Friends in December.



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 this Christmas season on Tuesday, December 10 from 5:00-7:00pm. Please sign up in the church office, or online at the church website. The sign up sheet includes one or two hour time slots. Bells, buckets, and aprons will be at the collection locations. Location assignments will be made in the church parlor on Sunday, December 8 after both services. If you are unable to be there on Sunday, please call Jerry (630.892.1904) to obtain your location assignment. A delicious dinner will be served at Jim & Jan Mamminga's home, 1636 W. Downer, Aurora, after the bell ringing. Join the men of the church in this season of giving.



BIRTH NARRATIVES LECTURE



Gary will be leading a lecture/discussion on the Birth Narratives in Matthew and Luke on December 15 and 22, from 11:15 am- 12:15 pm in the third floor chapel. Get a cup of coffee and join us. Everyone is welcome.



**Film Series-
December 13:
The Blue Butterfly
(2004)**

The Blue Morpho is one of the rarest butterflies in the world, and it might contain the cure which could help a boy beat his brain tumor. So he persuades an insect expert to take him into the Costa Rican jungle.

Presenter: Sue Lindahl

Just a reminder to everyone that selected and angel for our Holiday Angel Tree project; please bring the wrapped gifts to the Marketplace no later than Sunday, December 8. Thank you for your generosity and kindness; your gifts will make many children happy during this holiday season. ...and they will know we are Christians by our love...





Remember that there is overflow parking to the west of our church parking lot, behind the law offices of Don Dickinson. A sign on the front lawn on Galena Blvd directs you to the lot. Those who are able to walk the distance, please park here and leave the church parking lot available for those who can't navigate the longer distance. Thank you.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES



5:00 pm Family Service
11:00 pm Service of Readings and Carols
Candle Lighting Ceremony at both evening services.

'Conversations with Gary'



Join Gary 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 2
Tuesday, December 10
Wednesday, December 18
Thursday, December 26

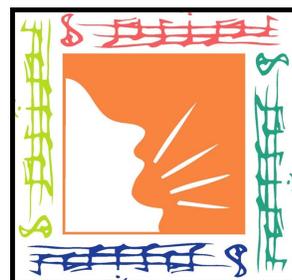
Annual reports from board chairs are due in the church office by Monday, December 16. Please e-mail your report to Shelley@newenglandchurch.org. Thank you!



Music News

We regret to announce the resignation of Jon Warfel, our Minister of Music and Chancel Choir Director. We thank Jon for his 3+ years of making music at New England Church.

We welcome Dr. Mark Plummer to our staff as our Chancel Choir Director. Mark is Professor of Music at Aurora University, and will begin his ministry with the church on January 15. Welcome, Mark!



Ina Heup will serve as Interim Chancel Choir Director through January 12. Thanks, Ina, for your leadership through the Advent and Christmas season.

EVERY CHILD CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

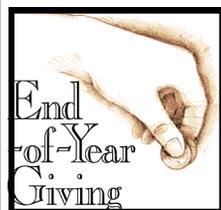


The *Every Child Christmas Pageant* will again be part of our 5:00 pm Family Christmas Eve Service. Children may come to church dressed as elaborately or simply as they wish to portray one of the characters in the nativity story: shepherd, wise men, angel, Mary, Joseph or an animal at the manger. They 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 Hanging of the Greens service is on Sunday, December 8 at 10:00 am. This year's theme is "A Mindful Christmas." Come early for a parking place and a seat, as this service is usually crowded. And if you can participate by placing one of the decorations, please stop in the narthex before entering the sanctuary.



All donations must be either postmarked or received in the church office by December 31 in order to be credited as a 2019 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 15.*



Cookie Walk

The Cookie Walk cookie sale will take place in Friendship Hall on Sunday, December 8 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, 2019
Vol. 11

Tiny Tidings

REGISTRATION 2019-2020

DECEMBER 1	Jesus is Born
DECEMBER 8	Hanging of the Greens/ Cookie Walk-No Church School
DECEMBER 15	Jesus is Born continued
DECEMBER 22	Musical Sunday (Last practice before Christmas Eve)
December 24	Christmas Eve (Prek-6th Sing during the 5:00 PM service)
DECEMBER 29	Holiday Movie (Theatre)

SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you to all the church school children and families for baking and serving during coffee fellowship on Nov. 10th. 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. Plus, a big thanks goes to Tanya Myers for taking the lead on Coffee Fellowship that day.

THANK
YOU

A PACKING WE WILL GO



On Friday, January 3rd, all church school children, youth, and families are invited for a "Feed My Starving Children" packing day from 2:30-4:30 PM. All children will be out of school for the holiday break and this would be a great way to serve others in this "season of giving". If interested, please sign up on the Feed My Starving Children site by clicking "volunteer" and then entering our code: OE5X88 or email Audra Darche at audra@newenglandchurch.org to secure your spot.

HANGING OF THE GREENS

On Sunday, December 8th, 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. 24th, 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.!



VOLUNTEER TEACHER OPENINGS FOR 2020

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 the link on NECC's website is also an option for our busy families.



ENJOYING
HALLOWEEN
AT
CHESTNUT
HOUSE



SERVING
COFFEE
FELLOWSHIP



YOUTH TIDINGS

DECEMBER, 2019

107TH EDITION

5TH & 6TH GRADE

During the month of November, the 5th & 6th grade students took time to reflect and think about everything they are thankful for. They discussed the differences between needs vs. wants and through these discussions, they realized all that we take for granted. If you have a moment during this season of giving, I encourage you to ask your child their thoughts on this topic.

HANGING OF THE GREENS

December 8th- 5th & 6th graders will hang the ornaments and garland during the Hanging of the Greens. Please make sure your student is here that day to help make this event run smoothly.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

The 5th and 6th graders continue to work on their musical abilities in preparation for the Christmas Eve performance with our PreK-4th grade children. It will be a delightful performance that will make your hearts full during this holiday season. Please keep an eye out for details about upcoming practices for the December 24th performance.



HIGH SCHOOL

Hard to believe we are almost to Christmas! This month we have the annual cookie walk event for the whole church that is sponsored by the high school youth group. Our goal is to get all the high school kids to assist on Dec. 8th after the Hanging of the Green's service. Proceeds from this event go to our group so that we can help offset costs of our fun events and activities. Please contact Lesley Myers at 773-255-1010 or Lesley.myers@mchsi.com if you are able to come help out!!

Cookie Walk

CONFIRMATION OVERNIGHT

We had ten students participate in our Confirmation Overnight & Service Project in November. Students worked together to do a deep cleaning of toys and classroom furniture for the World Relief Early Childhood Program that meets at New England. We also learned more about the refugee and immigrant experience and what the Bible has to say about welcoming the stranger. Our students had a meaningful experience that was also full of food, fun, and friendship. They even managed to get a little bit of sleep. **SPECIAL THANKS** to everyone who participated, especially to Audra Darché and Jenny Svendsen who chaperoned with our Confirmation Coordinator, Desiree Guzman.



HOLIDAY REMINDERS

- SUNDAY DEC. 8TH** Confirmation Students place aisle candleholders for Hanging of the Greens
- SUNDAY DEC. 22ND** Confirmation Christmas Party. 10:00 at Chestnut House.
- CHRISTMAS EVE** – Confirmation Students Serve as Ushers/Candle lighters at the 5:00 Service



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

THANK YOU

to all the high school students that showed up to help clean toys & organize supplies at World Relief on November 2nd.

DEEP CLEANING OF TOYS AND FURNITURE IN THE
WORLD RELIEF PRESCHOOL AREA



CONFIRMATION LOCK-IN



HALLOWEEN FUN AT CHESTNUT HOUSE



JOYS & CONCERNS

Hospitalized:
Ron Nickerson, Rick Starke, Sandra Berg.

Deaths:
We offer our deepest sympathy to the family and friends
of John Wilson and Paul McKee.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



Senior Minister: Gary L. McCann

Assistant to the Minister: Martin Forward

Office Administrator: Shelley Lund

Director of Education Ministries: Audra Darché

5th & 6th Grade Education: Kathy Kokkinos

7th & 8th Grade Education: Desiree Guzman

9th–12th Grade Education: Lesley Myers

Interim Chancel Choir Director: Ina Heup

Organist: Marsha Foxgrover

Assistant Organist: Marilyn Parolini

Handbell Director: Cathy Canfield-Jepson

Director of Community Life: Kimberly Adams

Wedding Coordinator: Nancy Richmond

Nursery Care: Jenni Moses, Hannah Watkins

Custodian: John Hett

Building Maintenance: Todd Jones

Moderator: Judy Lopez

Treasurer: Andy Sprau

Clerk: Sally Floyd

Visit us on the web
at
www.newenglandchurch.org

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A Caring Church for Thinking People

*“God
Is Still
Speaking”*

