

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



Visit us on the web
at
www.newenglandchurch.org

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A Caring Church for Thinking People



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Chancel Choir Director: Mark Plummer
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, Charlotte Adams
Custodian: John Hett
Building Maintenance: Todd Jones

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Treasurer: Andy Sprau
Clerk: Ida Dunham

New England
Congregational Church
UCC
Aurora, Illinois



TIDINGS

Volume 92, Number 4

December 1, 2021

MUSINGS

Dear Friends,

It's hard to believe that Advent is now upon us! The season gets its name from the old Latin word *adventus*, which means "arrival." In ancient Rome, the *adventus* was a ceremony or celebration welcoming the emperor. For Christians, Advent is about welcoming Jesus. For four weeks, expectation builds as we prepare our churches, homes, and hearts to receive Christmas hope, peace, joy, and love anew. Advent is also a time for waiting—children especially struggle with this part!

Here at New England Church, the beginning of Advent was signaled by the lighting of the first candle and the return of the Chancel Choir in worship. On December 5, we will embody the Advent theme of preparation as we gather together to deck the halls of our building during the annual Hanging of the Greens service—a high point in the church year for many (if not most) of the folks here. In the scripture reading for December 5, the gospel writer references Isaiah, saying:

“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make God's paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

With poinsettias and ribbons, garlands and greens, tree and creche, that's exactly what we'll be doing here: preparing to celebrate the arrival, the *adventus*, of Christmas' promise. I should note that our preparation will look a bit different this year with some pandemic precautions still in place. None the less, prepare we shall!

The truth is, most of us feel that we have much more to prepare than just our church building. There's shopping and wrapping to do, lights and decorations to put up at home, cooking and baking, school concerts to attend, family gatherings to plan, and so, so much more. It can all feel a bit overwhelming! So, I close with this thought: the *adventus*, the arrival, will happen whether or not we check off all the boxes on our holiday to-do lists. And it will be festive, and it will be special, and it will be good. The coming of Christmas hope, peace, love, and joy to earth isn't actually contingent on our preparation at all. As I look at my own to-do list, that's really good news!

Blessings and peace as we enter the season of preparation and waiting.

Brandon Perrine
Senior Minister

THANK YOU!

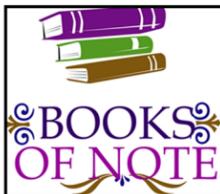
Thank you for the special Women's Circle of Friends Tea. From the teapots and assortment of teas, the wonderful food, the table decorations, the musical number and all of the NECC women, it was a delightful time. I truly appreciate the recognition and am looking forward to the beautiful pin created by Mary Halfvarson Covelli.

Judy McCann




The church office will be closed December 24-January 3 for the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

BOOKS OF NOTE



Books of Note - Our book discussion group will meet via Zoom on December 14, at 7:00 pm. New participants are always welcome. Contact Sue Reimer, she will be happy to send you the Zoom link! "To Heaven and Back: A Doctor's Extraordinary Account of Her Death, Heaven, Angels, and Life Again: A True Story" is the book selection. Dr. Mary Neal (featured in the Netflix original series *Surviving Death*) tells the incredible story of the kayak accident that took her to heaven—where she experienced God's peace, joy, and angels—and back to life again. Mary's life has been forever changed by her newfound understanding of her purpose on earth, her awareness of God, her closer relationship with Jesus, and her personal spiritual journey suddenly enhanced by a first-hand experience in heaven. *To Heaven and Back* will reacquaint you with the hope, wonder, and promise of heaven, while enriching your own faith and walk with God.

WOMEN'S CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

Women's Circle of Friends will join together for a shared Christmas breakfast in Friendship Hall on December 18 (Please note the date change) at 9:30 am. After breakfast Marilyn Parolini and Beth Ann Miller will lead us in a Christmas Program called The Eyes Have It (Seeing and Singing in a challenging Christmas time). All Women of the church are invited to attend. Come join us for yummy food, good fellowship and a wonderful Christmas program.




Sunday, January 9 at 10:00 am - Will be the Installation Service for our Senior Minister Rev. Dr. Brandon S. Perrine. More details to come at a later date.



YOUTH TIDINGS

DECEMBER, 2021



5TH & 6TH GRADE

Thank you to everyone that donated to the ADOPT service project and those who made our Halloween Fun event in Friendship Hall a success. Both of these events really emphasized the importance of supporting others in our community and our church.

During class time, November was a month of reflection and thinking about everything the 5th and 6th graders are thankful for. They discussed the differences between needs vs. wants and it made them realize we often take things for granted. With Christmas right around the corner, the students also created ornaments for the Hanging of the Greens.

In December, the 5th & 6th grade class will focus on understanding the meanings behind Advent and Christmas.

HIGH SCHOOL

High school youth, it will be all-hands-on-deck to help make the Cookie Walk a success! We are encouraging all high school youth for their assistance in setting up for this event on **Saturday, December 4th, from 9am-12noon.** If you cannot make it for the full time, any time that you can make would be greatly appreciated. All profits from this fundraiser will be provided to the high school youth fund to assist in various outings and future service opportunities in the year ahead.



SAVE THE DATE

On Sunday, December 19th, the High School Youth, along with our Confirmation group will be participating in a combined Christmas party. The festivities will begin immediately after church at 11:00 AM in the youth room. We hope you will be able to join us! Merry Christmas!



REMINDER TO ALL HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH

On Sunday, December 5th, the cookie walk will take place immediately following the church service. If the High School student/s could come up to Friendship Hall a few minutes before church ends that would be very helpful.

CONFIRMATION CORNER

We are full of gratitude for a great November in Confirmation! Students discussed covenant stories in the old and new testaments and the liberation story of Moses and the exodus. We also had our youth hang-out with the high school group and made plans for our "Cookie Walk" youth fundraiser coming soon.

Get ready for a delicious December!

Sat. Dec. 4th - 9am-Noon Cookie Walk Preparation in Friendship Hall.

Sun. Dec. 5th - Hanging of the Greens Family Service/Cookie Walk Youth Fundraiser to follow.

Sun. Dec. 12th - Class @10:00 in Youth Room. Topic: Nativity Stories. Attendance gift card drawing.

Sun. Dec. 19th - Confirmation/High School Christmas Party @ 11:00 in Youth Room.

Fri. Dec 24th - Christmas Eve Family Service @ 5:00 PM.



5th and 6th Graders decorate for Halloween Party.



5th & 6th Grade service project collecting items for the ADOPT shelter. All items were collected during the month of October and delivered to ADOPT in November.



Enjoying the Halloween Party.



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

Salvation Army Bell Ringing-NECC Men's Fellowship will ring bells for the Salvation Army this Christmas season on Thursday, December 9 from 5:00-7:00pm. Please sign up online at the church website. The sign up includes one or two hour time slots. Bells, buckets, and aprons will be at the ringing locations. Location assignments will be made by Sunday, December 5. A delicious dinner will be served at Jim & Jan Mamma's home, 1636 W. Downer in Aurora, after the bell ringing. If you are unable to ring, please join us for the dinner at Jim & Jan's. You will still need to sign up at the website for the dinner only.



COOKIE WALK



On Sunday, December 5, immediately following the Hanging of the Greens service, the High School and Confirmation classes will hold the annual cookie walk in Friendship Hall. Come on up to purchase a carefully curated box of delectable holiday treats that were pre-selected for you and your family to enjoy. A \$5 box holds up to two dozen treats while a \$10 box holds over three dozen treats! All proceeds to go towards the Youth Service Learning Trip.





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/>

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES



5:00 pm Family Service
 11:00 pm Service of Readings and Carols

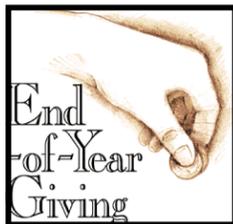
Film Series



7:00 pm on Friday, December 10:
 20 Feet From Stardom (2013)
 The impressive contributions of longtime backup singers like Darlene Love, Merry Clayton, Lisa Fischer and the Waters Family are celebrated in this documentary.
 Presenter: Brian Kleemann

Overflow Parking

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.



All donations must be either postmarked or received in the church office by December 31 in order to be credited as a 2021 donation. Please make every effort to complete your pledge before the year ends. Thank you.



ANNUAL REPORTS FROM BOARD CHAIRPERSONS

Annual reports from board chairs are due in the church office by Friday, December 17. Please e-mail your report to Shelley@newenglandchurch.org. Thank you!



Tiny Tidings

DECEMBER, 2021



CHURCH SCHOOL CALENDAR

DECEMBER 5	Hanging of the Greens/Cookie Walk
DECEMBER 12	Christmas Lesson and Attendance Drawing
DECEMBER 19	Christmas Lesson Part 2
DECEMBER 24	Christmas Eve Service
DECEMBER 26	No Church School

SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you to all the church school children and families for baking and packaging special treats for our one of a kind coffee fellowship on Nov. 21st. It was great to see our young children participate in this act of service while making connections with members of the congregation.



HANGING OF THE GREENS

On Sunday, December 5th, 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. 28th, 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 2021

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.



A PACKING WE WILL GO

On Wednesday, January 5th, all church school children, youth, and families are invited for a "Feed My Starving Children" packing day from 2:00-3:45 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: 6W36K8 or email Audra Darche at audra@newenglandchurch.org to secure your spot.

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

We welcome back this festive service Sunday, December 5 at 8:30 & 10:00 am.

Join us as we transform the Johnson Chapel and the Sanctuary with decorations for Christmas and celebrate the Second Sunday of Advent.

If you would like to participate by placing one of the decorations, please stop in the Narthex before entering Johnson Chapel or the Sanctuary.



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 12.*

