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## MUSINGS

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! 2021 was definitely one for the books. After 35 years of ministry with this wonderful congregation, you celebrated the retirement of a beloved Senior Minister, Gary McCann. Amidst an ongoing pandemic, you sought, interviewed, and hired a new Senior Minister from Wisconsin. You welcomed me with a delightful car parade and many delicious meals and stimulating conversations over coffee or drinks, and warmly you received me into your congregation and your lives. We saw worship attendance grow from 20 to 50 to 75 and then to an unrestricted number. We've experimented with outdoor worship and with new ways of doing old things—like prepackaged Communion! And we've grown together as we continue finding new and creative ways of being together for worship, fellowship, and service. Through it all, you've been patient, gracious, and willing. For all that it was, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for 2021. But, I'm excited about 2022!

In just a few days, our relationship as minister and congregation will be formalized as we enter into covenantal relationship with one another and with the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ when I'm installed here on January 9. Our newly created Committee for Social and Racial justice is preparing to launch an exciting and inspiring program later this month. And we're planning for an evening Lenten study series, beginning in March. Our programs with children, youth, and families are gathering momentum; our choir and bell ensembles are back in full swing; and our service and outreach continue to impact our community in positive ways.

There's little doubt that there will be challenges in the year ahead, but these past few months among you have shown me that we can handle challenges. We can put our heads together and our hearts together and find ways forward. We can put our hands together and our resources together and make good happen. We can and we will meet any challenges we face head-on. And we will move forward.

This church is a bright spot in a world dimmed by pandemic, social and racial division, economic uncertainty, and political dissonance. This church is a bright spot and we are going into this new year ready to shine as brightly as we've ever shined. God knows, our community and our world need to see our light.

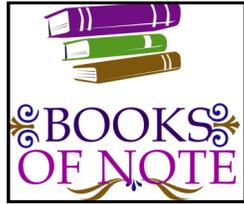
With gratitude for where we've already been together, and for where we're going,

Brandon Perrine  
Senior Minister

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## BOOKS OF NOTE



Our book discussion group will meet via Zoom on January 18, 2022 at 7:00 pm. New participants are always welcome. Contact Sue Reimer and she will be happy to send you the Zoom link !

"Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents" will be the book selection. Isabel Wilkerson gives us a masterful portrait of an unseen phenomenon in America as she explores how America today and throughout it's history has been shaped by a hidden caste system, a rigid hierarchy of human rankings. Beautifully written, original, and revealing, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* is an eye-opening story of people and history, and a reexamination of what lies under the surface of ordinary lives and of American life today.

## 'Fat Sunday' Celebration

Please join us on February 27, the last Sunday before Lent, for our 'Fat Sunday' Celebration! Fat Sunday will be a morning full of joyous music and delicious treats. This year our Chocolate Festival will look a little different; but it will still be absolutely delicious! We will gather in the Narthex, on Sunday February 27, after the 10:00 am service to feast our eyes upon a variety of delicious confections and take home a goodie bag of assorted chocolate treats and sweet delights.

## Women's Fellowship



On January 8, 2022 at 9:30 am, Women's Circle of Friends will start out the new year by gathering together for a shared breakfast. After breakfast we will play Bunco (a game that is easily learned if you don't already know how to play). We will have fun playing and talking with each other. All women of the church are invited. Please sign up online at the NECC Sign Up Station.

See you there!

## Annual Meeting



Please mark your calendar and be sure to attend our NECC Annual Meeting. The date is Sunday, January 30 following the second service. Coffee & pastries 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.

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## Installation Service

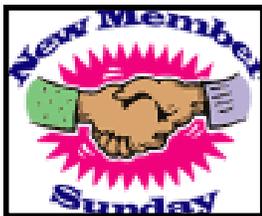
The Transition Team is pleased to invite all members and friends of New England Congregational Church to attend the Installation Service of our new Senior Minister, Rev. Dr. Brandon Perrine on Sunday, January 9, 2022 during the 10:00 am service.



The Rev. Dr. Terrill Murff, Acting Associate Conference Minister of the Fox Valley Association of the Illinois Conference UCC, will be our guest preacher for the service. We will be hosting a Coffee Reception following the service to congratulate and “officially” welcome Brandon as our new Senior Minister.

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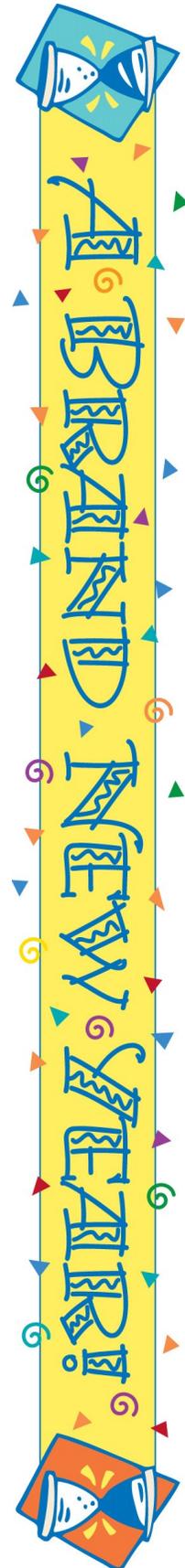
## Welcome Sunday



New England Church is an amazing community of inquisitive children, active teens, and engaged adults who draw energy from coming together for worship, friendship, learning and service. Interested in becoming a member? We will welcome new members during worship on January 16. Please contact Kimberly Adams,

Community Life Director ([kimberly@newenglandchurch.org](mailto:kimberly@newenglandchurch.org)), or Brandon Perrine, Senior Minister ([brandon@newenglandchurch.org](mailto:brandon@newenglandchurch.org)), if you would like to join the congregation or receive more information.

We hope you'll consider joining our growing church family!



## MEN'S GROUP BELL RINGING



2021 was another good year for the New England Men's Group Salvation Army Bell Ringers. We had 23 ringers from 5 to 7 pm on December 9 at 19 different locations. This is the 23rd year we have participated in the Army's Red Kettle drive. Our New England ringers had \$1,716 contributed at our assigned locations during our shift and donated at our after ringing dinner.

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 2022.

### Film Series- January 14: 7:00 pm

Good Night and Good Luck (2005)

When Senator Joseph McCarthy begins his campaign to root out communists in America, CBS News impresario Edward R. Murrow dedicates himself to exposing the atrocities being committed by McCarthy's Senate "investigation."  
Presenter: John Ruby



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



Thank you to all who participated in the Angel Tree Program last month. We had a very enthusiastic response; the angels were selected very quickly. We provided gifts and surprises for 68 students from the Greenman and Hall Schools. Your efforts made this holiday special for a child that may be less fortunate than most. Special thanks to Rita Soltis, Lynn Gourley,

Beth Koepke, Marsha Carter and Valerie Flechtner.

.....and they'll know we are Christians our love.

New England Church has a long tradition of breaking down the walls that separate communities into Us and Them. From early work on the Underground Railroad, to more recent ways of welcoming the LGBTQ community, we stand proud in seeking to embrace the common humanity of all. During those same years the systematic separation and inequity between White America and Black/Brown America has continued unabated, even in our Aurora. For this reason, a committed group of NECC members proposed the formation of a committee to lead the congregation in addressing this problem. The Cabinet has now officially established **Students of the Beloved Community: The Committee on Social and Racial Justice**.

As a committee, we believe the first course of action is to educate ourselves as a congregation to the many facets of the problem: how it formed; what sustained it; why it continues, even after the successes of the Civil Rights Movement. In the coming months we will share with you opportunities to join us in learning more. A cursory look at news and media stories in the past year has made all of us more curious about racial injustice. What exactly is the experience of those in the Black and Brown communities? Did history, as we learned it, miss something important? Where does our congregation fit into all this?

In January, Brandon will invite us all to bring our hearts and intellects to this new journey. We will launch a set of specific offerings for the congregation in honor of Black History Month. It is the goal of The Beloved Community: The Social and Racial Justice Committee to offer more opportunities in the year that follows. Your input will guide us as we develop these. You are welcome to find your own path along the way. Each of us has a unique story in relation to social justice. The challenge for all of us is to join our Otherness to the stories of others, until we become part of one beloved community.

Our name, The Beloved Community, is a global vision of mutuality and justice. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr,

*“Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.”*  
<https://thekingcenter.org/>

**Mission statement for Students of the Beloved Community: The Social and Racial Justice Committee:**

To continue and expand the work of our church's abolitionist founders by fighting systemic injustice; breaking down walls of separation, advantage or exclusion based on race; and embracing the common humanity of all.

**Committee Members:**

Laura Pittman, Co-Chair	Kimberly Adams
Rick Guzman, Co-Chair	Marie Wendt
Desiree Guzman	Mavis Bates
Ellen Bonewitz	Valerie Flechtner
Janet Birchenough-Koehn	Maureen McKane
Jon Koepke	Brandon Perrine, ex-officio



A hearty thank you to Jan Mamminga for volunteering to be the “poinsettia mom” during the Christmas season, keeping the plants watered during the week so they look great on Sunday.

We appreciate your good work.

# Tiny Tidings

JANUARY, 2022



## CHURCH SCHOOL CALENDAR

JANUARY 2	No Church School- All in Church
JANUARY 9	Introduction to Bells
JANUARY 16	Jesus-Miracles
JANUARY 23	Jesus-Miracles
JANUARY 30	Prayer & Annual Meeting

## BIG THANKS

A big thank you goes out to all of my parent volunteers and high school helpers for all of their help during our ornament workshop. This event could not have taken place without all of your support. In addition, the sanctuary Christmas tree was absolutely stunning with all of the various handmade creations that delicately hung on the branches. Not only were the ornaments fun for the children to make, but they were equally impressive hanging on the Christmas tree.



# THANK YOU!

## 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.



## RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR

The first Church School Lesson to kick off 2022 will be led by our very own Cathy Jepson, our Hand Bell Director on Sunday, January 9th. 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.

## CHURCH SCHOOL PARENTS/VOLUNTEERS

The Church School program is in need of volunteers to help teach for 2022. Please stop by the Church School hallway to select a couple of Sundays that are convenient for your schedule. The lessons are completely prepared for you with detailed instructions to ensure your success while you teach.



## 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](mailto:audra@newenglandchurch.org) to secure your spot.





Church School children served Coffee Fellowship to the congregation.



Making ornaments for the sanctuary tree



# YOUTH TIDINGS



JANUARY, 2022

# happy new year

## HIGH SCHOOL

Happy New Years to all my high school families! Can you believe it? We are about half way through our 2021-22 program.

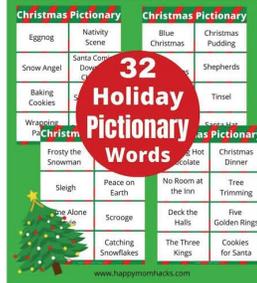
*Thank you* to all of you that helped out with the Cookie Walk last month, we had quite the turnout and the event was a huge success. As a reminder, all of the proceeds from the Cookie Walk are entered into the youth fund to assist with future activities and events.

### QUICK REMINDERS FOR HIGH SCHOOL

- JANUARY 2 No class-Holiday Break
- JANUARY 16 High School & Confirmation Hang Out
- JANUARY 30 No class-Annual Meeting

## 5TH & 6TH GRADE

### FREE PRINTABLE Christmas Pictionary Game



Happy New Year! It was so great to be able to be back in church for the Hanging of the Greens! The 5th and 6th graders did a fabulous job hanging the garland and their ornaments looked amazing on the sanctuary tree. During December, the students explored lessons on Advent and Christmas. A Christmas Pictionary game allowed the students to demonstrate their artistic abilities.

COMING UP IN JANUARY, the students will be exploring the history of our church.

## CONFIRMATION CORNER

It's 2022 and we're ready for something new! Our 8th grade mentor program is back with a brand-new design. This year our mentors will meet with students during two Sunday class sessions and a mini-retreat in April. Our education team has been getting creative to keep our programs meaningful, safe, and accessible during the pandemic. We're all hopeful and looking forward to a gradually improving new year.

### CONFIRMATION CALENDAR:

- SUN. JAN 2ND Students in Church
- SUN. JAN 9TH Class @ 10:00 in Youth Room. Topic: Prophetic Stories
- SUN. JAN 16TH Students in Church. Youth Hang-out to follow. BINGO Extravaganza
- SUN. JAN. 23RD Class@ 10:00 in Youth Room. Topic: Church Stories (Reformation/Martin Luther & Martin Luther King)
- SUN. JAN. 30TH Students in Church

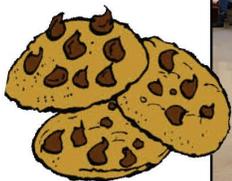


### A PACKING WE WILL GO

Our next packaging session at Feed My Starving Children will take place on Wednesday, January 5th from 2:00-3:45 PM. All children, youth, and families are invited to participate. If interested, please sign up on the Feed My Starving Children site by clicking "volunteer" and then entering our code: 6W36K8 or email Audra Darce at [audra@newenglandchurch.org](mailto:audra@newenglandchurch.org) to secure your spot. Friends are always welcome!



# Cookie Walk



**“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](mailto:office@newenglandchurch.org)  
*A Caring Church for Thinking People*

**Visit us on the web  
at  
[www.newenglandchurch.org](http://www.newenglandchurch.org)**

## **Our Staff & Church Officers**

**Senior Minister:** Brandon Perrine  
**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  
**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  
\*\*\*\*\*  
**Moderator:** Bill Donnell  
**Moderator-elect:** Bart Grometer  
**Treasurer:** Andy Sprau  
**Clerk:** Ida Dunham