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A Caring Church for Thinking People

“God
Is Still
Speaking”



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Director of Education Ministries: Desiree Guzman
6th-7th Grade Jr. Youth Group: Kathy Kokkinos
8th-12th Grade Youth Group: Lesley Myers
Chancel Choir Director: Paul Laprade
Organist: Marsha Foxgrover
Assistant Organist: Marilyn Parolini
Handbell Director: Cathy Canfield-Jepson
Director of Community Life: Kimberly Adams
Wedding Coordinator: Nancy Richmond
Nursery Director: Jenni Moses
Nursery Attendant: Charlotte Adams
Custodian: John Hett
Building Maintenance: Todd Jones

Moderator: Bart Grometer
Moderator-elect: Josh Ream
Treasurer: Andy Sprau
Clerk: Ida Dunham

New England
Congregational Church
UCC
Aurora, Illinois



TIDINGS

Volume 94, Number 1

January 1, 2023

MUSINGS

Dear Friends,

2022 was a good year. It had its moments, but it was good. Nearly a year ago, our relationship as minister and congregation was formalized with a service of installation on January 9th. It seems so long ago! I suppose that's because you so quickly helped make me feel like New England Church is my church home, you are my church family, and the Aurora community is my community. Thank you for that. Charles and I feel blessed to be among such loving, talented, generous, thoughtful people.

I'm excited for 2023. Our strategic visioning process—Visioning Our Future—continues to unfold and will soon guide the creation of an action plan. Our ministries of mission and justice continue to stretch us beyond ourselves. Our ministries of music—choral and instrumental—continue to elevate our spirits. And our ministries of community keep us close and help us welcome those who are newer to New England Church. With all that continues, grounds us and keeps us rooted, 2023 is sure to bring new things as well.

As we stand on the precipice this new year, these words from an unknown author speak to me.

I am the New Year. I am an unspoiled page in your book of time. I am your next chance at the art of living. I am your opportunity to practice what you have learned about life during the last twelve months. All that you sought and didn't find is hidden in me, waiting for you to search it but with more determination. All the good that you tried for and didn't achieve is mine to grant when you have fewer conflicting desires. All that you dreamed but didn't dare to do, all that you hoped but did not will, all the faith that you claimed but did not have—these slumber lightly, waiting to be awakened by the touch of a strong purpose.

What this new year holds for us, I do not know. One thing I do know, however, is that we will love and support one another, come what may.

With gratitude for each of you and hope for this new year,

Brandon

Brandon Perrine
Senior Minister



NECC POKER GAME NIGHT



Both Men and Women are welcome to participate Friday, January 27 from 7:00-10:00pm in the church Narthex.

Organized Tournament, \$20 buy-in - bring cash that evening.

BYOB and Potluck style snack foods.

Sign up in the Marketplace in January.

You can also sign up online at:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040F4AABAD2BA75-necc27>

Get your Poker Face ready - Don't miss this FUN evening.

Christmas Angel Project Update

A big hearty thank you to all who so enthusiastically selected an angel from the Holiday Angel Tree and purchased Christmas surprises for the students from the Greenman and Hall Schools; and also, to all that made a monetary contribution to help the cause. Your time and effort made 75 children, who are less fortunate than most, enjoy the wonder and glee of receiving surprises for the holidays.

A very special thank you to Rita Soltis, Lynn Gourley, Beth Koepke, Shelley Lund, and Todd Jones for their help and support with the project. Many hands made the project quite simple. Let's do it again next year!



Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry



The Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry will be closed and not receiving volunteers until after January 3, 2023. They look forward to seeing our volunteers on January 16, 2023.



Cookie Walk



YOUTH TIDINGS

JANUARY, 2023

SAVE THE DATE

On Sunday afternoon, February 26th, we are planning a Rock Climbing Trip for our youth group, plus our fifth graders who will be joining that group next school year. Please get this date on your calendar and watch your email for more details.

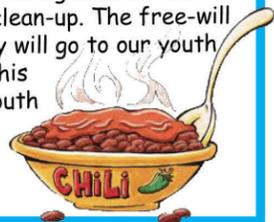


YOUTH CALENDAR

- JAN. 1ST No Youth Group - Intergenerational Worship
- JAN. 8TH Youth Group - New Year's BINGO BASH @ 10:00
- JAN. 15TH Youth Group @ 10:00
- JAN. 22ND Youth Group @ 10:00. Confirmation Gathering 5-7PM.
- JAN. 28TH Small group of youth help prepare Chili Lunch for Annual Meeting 10-12:30
- JAN. 29TH All available youth help serve annual meeting lunch - Youth Fundraiser

ANNUAL MEETING CHILI LUNCH/YOUTH FUNDRAISER:

This year our 6th-12th grade youth will be helping to prepare and serve lunch for our annual meeting as a fundraiser for future youth service trips. This new format will save the church hundreds of dollars in catering bills AND raise funds for our youth, so it's a WIN/WIN! Desiree Guzman will be recruiting 4-6 students to work with a team of adults (lead by Kimberly Adams) on Saturday January 28th to prepare meat and vegetarian chili, along with prepping toppings and sides. Though we only need a few cooks in the kitchen that day, we do need ALL HANDS ON DECK for Sunday January 29th during our annual meeting lunch. Students will help, set-up, serve, and clean-up. The free-will donations we collect that day will go to our youth fund. Please plan to attend this helpful fundraiser for our youth and this important meeting for the life of our whole church.



A great big THANK YOU

to all the youth, adult helpers, cookie bakers, and cookie buyers who helped make Cookie Walk 2022 a big success.

COOKIE WALK TOTALS:

We raised \$795 for our youth fund and provided a fun way to celebrate the season!

Annual Meeting



All are welcome and encouraged to attend the 2023 Annual Meeting and Luncheon held on Sunday, January 29 in Friendship Hall after the 10:00 am worship service.

This year our 6th-12th grade youth will be helping to prepare and serve a delicious hot lunch for our annual meeting as a fundraiser for a future youth volunteer service trip.

This new format will save the church hundreds of dollars in catering bills AND raise funds for our youth, so it's a WIN/WIN! Desiree Guzman has been recruiting our students to

work closely with a team of adults lead by Kimberly Adams, they will prepare delicious meat and vegetarian chili, along with a generous toppings bar, tasty sides, and desserts.

All available youth will help set-up, serve, and clean-up after the meal.

As always, our annual meeting lunch is free for everyone, but we invite anyone who is willing and able to consider supporting our youth by making a donation that day. Please plan to attend this helpful fundraiser for our youth and this very important meeting for the life of our whole church.

Books of Note

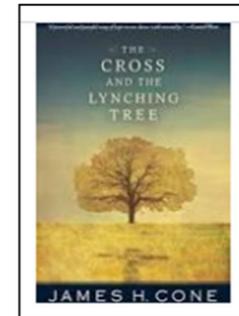
The Books of Note book discussion group is open to all. New members are welcome at any time.

Attend via Zoom on the third Tuesday of the month from 7:00- 8:00 pm. Read one book or all. It's up to you!

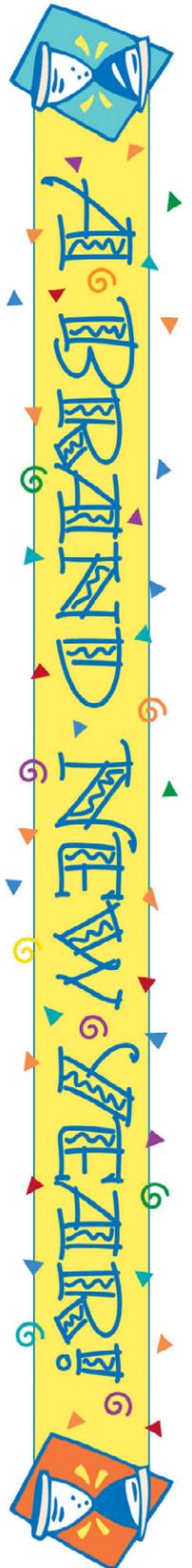
Books are suggested by participants and voted on twice a year.

Contact Sue Reimer to obtain a book and the Zoom link.

January 17, 2023: "The Cross and the Lynching Tree" by James H Cone



The cross and the lynching tree, the two most emotionally charged symbols in the African American community. In this book, we explore these symbols and their interconnection in the history and souls of black folk. While the lynching tree symbolized white power and black death, the cross symbolizes divine power and black life, God overcoming the power of sin and death. For African Americans, the image of Jesus, hung on a tree to die, powerfully grounded their faith that God was with them, even in the suffering of the lynching era. 224 pages. Published 2013.





By the time you will read this short submission to Tidings, it is likely that Christmas will be behind us in terms of the holiday parties, gift giving, liturgical celebrations, and more. As a choir director for a majority of my life, my experience of Christmas music is year-long. Like many, I earmark Christmas works I would have liked to program in the January that follows the celebrations, services, and concerts. Selecting final works for the Christmas concerts of university or community groups begins in the summer at the very latest, as music is ordered for late August/early September rehearsals. By the time 'holiday' music is played in the stores and on the airwaves, I have logged hundreds of hours in the preparation and rehearsal of these pieces.

I have been fascinated with the music of Christmas/Advent since a very young age, as my family attended the two-hour long Midnight Mass at my liberal Roman Catholic French Canadian church. A full hour of choral music would be presented at 11pm, usually concluding with "Cantique de Noel" or "Minuit Chrétiens," familiar to us as "O Holy Night." Although he died when I was only six months of age, my maternal grandfather was known as the church's tenor soloist for this piece, and the familial connection to that work was always acknowledged by other congregants for decades after his passing. Since my youth, I have collected recordings of more obscure Christmas music, and delight in hearing the ways in which traditions of various cultures are reflected in the words and styles of traditional Christmas carols and songs. It is a delight that, quite frankly, I partake in throughout the year. Traditions are honored and maintained as long as they serve their community. The most successful traditions, according to many studies, fall into two categories: traditions which are extensively codified as to become valued for their format, and those which change to reflect the transformations of the culture which they serve. I am excited to be learning the many traditions of NECC and seeing how these reflect our church. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of these fascinating treasures of NECC's culture. May you and yours have a meaningful New Year. In peace,
Paul Laprade

Friday Night at the Movies-
January 13 at 7:00 pm:
The Queen (2006)
Helen Mirren won an Oscar playing Queen Elizabeth, who must confront her own reluctance to mourn Princess Diana in the wake of her death.
Presenter:
Marsha Carter



Women's Fellowship

FUN! FOOD! PRIZES! Women's Circle of Friends will meet on Saturday, January 14 at 9:30 am in Friendship Hall to share breakfast and play Bunco. Can you roll dice? You are already an expert player! Bring a dish to share and all your friends! Please sign up on the church website or on the sheet in the office. Join us for fun and conversation.



Santa Storyteller

Tiny Tidings

JANUARY, 2023



CHURCH SCHOOL CALENDAR

- JAN. 1ST No Church School - Intergenerational Worship
- JAN. 8TH New Year's BINGO BASH (Pk-12th grade during Church School.)
- JAN. 15TH Lesson: One Love: The Story of Singer Marian Anderson (MLK weekend)
- JAN. 22ND Lesson: The Good Samaritan
- JAN. 29TH Lesson: Oneness Through Service - Lunch & Annual Meeting after the service. Childcare for nursery - 5th grade provided during the meeting.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE IN CHILDHOOD PROMOTES LIFELONG WELL-BEING:

According to a 2018 study from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, researchers found that people who attended religious services weekly in childhood and adolescence were approximately 18% more likely to report higher happiness as young adults (ages 23-30) than those who never attended services. They were also 29% more likely to volunteer in their communities and 33% less likely to use illicit drugs. "While decisions about religion are not shaped principally by health, for adolescents who already hold religious beliefs, encouraging service attendance and private practices may be meaningful avenues to protect against some of the dangers of adolescence, including depression, substance abuse, and risk taking. In addition, these practices may positively contribute to happiness, volunteering, a greater sense of mission and purpose, and to forgiveness," said study author, Tyler VanderWeele.

BINGO BASH JANUARY 8TH:

Church School resumes in 2023 with a New Year's BINGO BASH. Pk-5th graders will join our middle school and high school students in the youth room (after Time with the Children) for Bingo fun, complete with prizes and snacks. This is a great week to invite friends and a nice chance for younger kids to see the space where they will get to hang out when they graduate to youth group.



VOLUNTEER IN CHURCH SCHOOL:

We have a great team of four church school volunteers who give of their time to make sure we have two adults available every week to support, encourage, and nourish our church school children ages PK-5th grade. But these hard working volunteers are human and they all get sick, get busy, or just need a break sometimes. More hands makes the work lighter for everyone. If you are interested in joining our team or even just acting as a sub in a pinch, please contact Desiree Guzman desiree@newenglandchurch.org



Students of the Beloved Community

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is more than a Civil Rights icon. He is our model for tolerance, for how to walk in the skin of another person and see ourselves and breach differences in a divided world. On January 16, we commemorate him. How will you and your family recognize the day? Why not have a family movie night with popcorn and a show about a Black icon. Here are some in music, sports, literature and the law.

Stories about real heroes:

- Coach Carter
- King Richard
- Marshall

Thought-provoking classics:

- One Night in Miami
- Lilies of the Field
- A Raisin in the Sun

Documentaries from PBS:

- Marian Anderson: Once in a Hundred Years
- Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool
- Ken Burns: Jackie Robinson

You can stream these on several channels. All are on Amazon Prime.

From Marian Anderson, world famous contralto of the mid-20th century: "When I sing, I want them to see my soul. And that is colorless." She was African American. Now comes to Aurora a baritone in the same classical tradition, also Black. On January 19 at 7:30pm, Robert Sims will present *The Majesty of the Spiritual* in Crimi Auditorium at Aurora University, a free concert. Look for signups in the Marketplace or on the church website and join us.

Mark your calendar:

We will partner with Brian Kleemann's film series on February 10 and offer a soul food buffet to accompany the documentary, *A Most Beautiful Thing*, an inspiring story of an unlikely rowing team in Chicago. It will be presented by Ellen Bonewitz. Bring your children and friends.

Remember to read the Books of Note selection this month, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, by James H. Cone, and sign up with Sue Reimer to join the Zoom discussion January 17 at 7:00pm.



A hearty thank you to Jan & Jim Mamminga for volunteering to take care of the poinsettias during the Christmas season, keeping the plants watered during the week so they looked great on Sundays.