

“God
Is Still
Speaking”



New England Congregational Church
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A Caring Church for Thinking People

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OUR STAFF

Senior Minister: Brandon Perrine
Office Administrator: Shelley Lund
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

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Aurora, Illinois

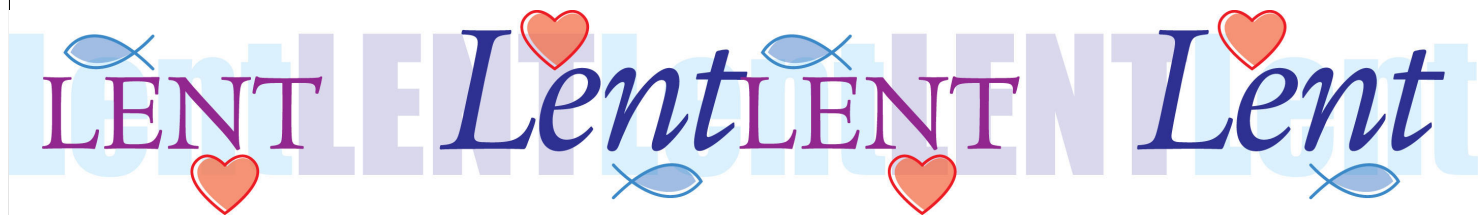


TIDINGS

Volume 94, Number 2

February 1, 2023

MUSINGS



Dear Friends,

Looking at the February Calendar, this will be a month of extremes. We'll gather with extreme joy and celebration on Fat Sunday, February 19, and the sweet and soul-filled sounds of jazz with the Papadolias Trio and entirely too much chocolate at Chocolate Fest afterwards. Then, on Ash Wednesday, February 22, the mood becomes more introspective as we put on ashes and meditate our place in the circle of life and the beginning of the Lenten season.

That's really how life is, though. We are on a roller coaster of highs and lows, ups and downs, and extremes and it can vary from week to week, day to day, hour to hour, even minute to minute. We never really know, at the new day's beginning, just where it will lead or where we'll end up. But, it's these extremes that remind us that we're truly alive – remind us what being alive actually is. And, that's a good thing.

Whether it's liturgical seasons with their celebrations and rituals, or winter in the Midwest with its unpredictable temperature swings and volatile weather, or the personal seasons of our lives with their ups and downs, I'm comforted knowing that through it all, I have a community to experience it with. Somehow, that knowledge seems to take the edge off the extremes. The community that we create together helps us put it all into perspective; helps us as we individually celebrate highs and trudge through lows; provides rituals and rubrics for marking and even hallowing those highs and lows; and helps us remember that life also happens in the places in between.

I'm grateful for this community. You are people I can laugh with and celebrate with and eat too much chocolate with. And you are also people I meditate with and think with and put on ashes with. Real community, authentic community, is on the journey, on the roller coaster, together. And that helps.

Whether you're personally at one of those high points or at one of those low points or somewhere in between, remember that you have a community here at New England Church that will be there with you and for you. I hope that thought comforts and centers you, as it does me.

With gratitude for this community,

Brandon Perrine
Senior Minister



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.

February 21, 2023: "The Library Book" by Susan Orlean. In 1986, the Los Angeles Public Library was on fire. The fire was disastrous. It burned for more than seven hours and had consumed four hundred thousand books and damaged seven hundred thousand more. Investigators descended on the scene, but more than thirty years later, the mystery remains: Did someone purposefully set fire to the library—and if so, who? 336 pages. Published 2018.

Friday Night At The Movies

February 10: A Most Beautiful Thing (2020)

Friday Night at the Movies in February is a joint presentation with NECC's Students of the Beloved Community committee. A Soul Food Tasting will start at 6:30 pm, followed by the movie at 7:00 pm, both in Friendship Hall. "A Most Beautiful Thing" follows the first U.S. African American public high school rowing team. The young men come from the west side of Chicago, and many were in rival gangs. Ellen Bonewitz will introduce the movie and lead a short discussion afterward. The tasting and the film presentation are free of charge and no sign up is necessary.



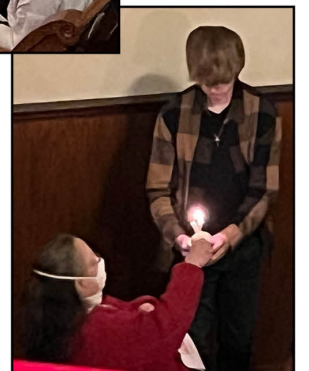
'Fat Sunday' Celebration

Please join us on February 19, the last Sunday before Lent, for our 'Fat Sunday' Celebration! Fat Sunday will be a morning full of joyous music and delicious treats. Please join us for the Chocolate Festival in Friendship Hall after the 10:00 am worship service for a delicious, decadent, and yummy good time! Partake in scrumptious cookies, brownies, cakes, and liquid chocolate fountains. We need your help to make this event happen - please sign up in the Marketplace or online to bake and share some chocolatey sweets. Dessert donations can be dropped off on the carts the morning of Sunday, February 19 as you enter church.

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



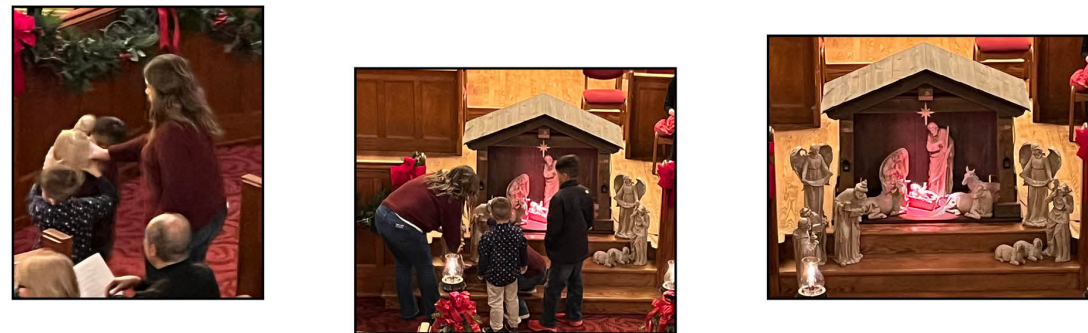
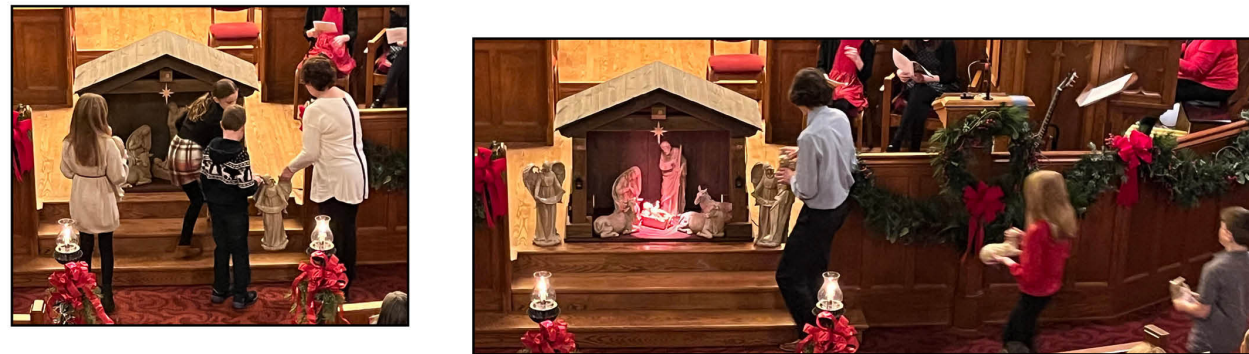
CANDLELIGHTING BEFORE SINGING SILENT NIGHT



EPIPHANY BLESSING OF DOORS 20+C+B+M+23



5:00 CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE - CREATING THE MANGER SCENE

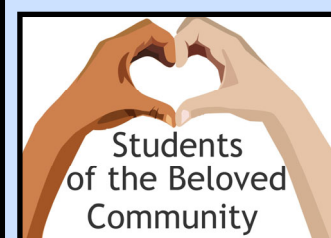


BRINGING GIFTS TO THE MANGER



AURORA AREA INTERFAITH FOOD PANTRY

Help support the Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry! Volunteers are needed to re-stock the shelves. NECC Volunteer Days are: The 1st and 3rd Monday of each month. From 3:00-4:00pm. No Sign-up required- Please arrive on-time at 1110 Jericho Rd. Aurora.



Members of the congregation and the committee attended multiple events in January. There was the City's Martin Luther King celebration, the AU concert with Robert Sims, and Books of Note's discussion of the challenging book, *The Cross and The Lynching Tree*.

Now February moves us on into 2023 as we plan a number of exciting offerings. The Beloved Community Committee will feed you on February 13, with a Soul Food Tasting to accompany Movie Night, when Ellen Bonewitz presents the inspiring movie, *A Most Beautiful Thing*. If you've never tried Catfish Nuggets, here is your chance.

We are also pursuing interesting ideas for future programs suggested by some in the congregation. Think about what you would like to see us bring you. We are glad to look into new ideas, especially if they include events or programs for families with children. Bring your idea to anyone on the committee.

Save the date: On March 12, after the 10:00 am service, there will be a Ted Talk and tabletop discussion. You have let us know you want more chances to talk about these topics. The presenter is well-informed and humorous Baratunde Thurston on *How to Deconstruct Racism One Headline at a Time*.

WOMEN'S CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

Come join us for a Valentine breakfast and fellowship at Jan Mammaing's house (1636 W. Downer Pl, Aurora) on February 11 at 9:30 am. Bring a dish to pass and a Valentine story. As we eat we will share funny, sweet, romantic or sad Valentine memories from the past. Please sign up online on the church's Sign Up Station or on the sheet in the office. All women of the church are welcome.



Join us this Ash Wednesday, February 22, at 7:00 pm in the Sanctuary for our Service of Ashes.

This special service marks the beginning of the Lenten Season and will feature rich and meaningful liturgy, meditative music, a brief meditation, and the imposition of ashes.

Lasting under 30 minutes, this is an appropriate service for people of all ages. We hope you'll join us.

