



MUSINGS



Dear Friends,

We've made it through the long and shadowy days of Advent, are more than halfway through the joy and revelry of the 12-day season of Christmas, and now we stand on the precipice of a new season in the life of the church: Epiphany. The season of Epiphany begins on January 6 with the celebration of *Dia' de Reyes*, Theophany, *Timkat*, *Pasko ng Matatanda*, *Denha*, or Three Kings Day, commemorating the arrival of the wise ones to the child Jesus and their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The season of Epiphany lasts until Ash Wednesday, February 14, 2024.

As the name implies, Epiphany is all about revelation. It begins with Jesus' revelation to the magi and throughout the season Jesus' character and purpose are revealed in new ways. It all culminates with the Transfiguration, when Jesus is transformed on the mountaintop and a voice from a cloud says, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Epiphany is known as the season of light, mirroring the lengthening of days that occurs in nature following the Winter Solstice. The light of a bright star guides the magi to Jesus and the lectionary readings bring Jesus into greater and greater focus as the season unfolds, shedding light on who he was and what he was about in the world.

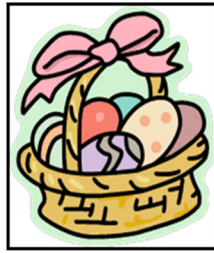
Epiphany is great time for us, as individuals and as a church, to be asking the same things: Who are we and what are we to be about in the world? The light of that Bethlehem star still shines, illuminating greater truths about us and about New England Church. Who are we and what are we going to be about in 2024? Epiphany is the perfect time to follow the star and see where it leads.

Blessings this New Year and in this season of revelation,

Brandon

Brandon Perrine
Senior Minister

EASTER BASKET PROJECT



The Board of Community Outreach will be putting Easter Baskets together again this year for the Aurora Area Interfaith Food Bank. Like last year we will be needing small toys and candy. More information will be provided in the near future. Thank you for all your support.

Project Share

Project Share is a 3-way handshake. Our Social Justice Committee and the Boards of Community Outreach and Education are working together to make it happen. Education has materials it doesn't need. Community Outreach has relationships with organizations that need them. The Beloved Community is focusing on how to broaden our reach to underserved parts of Aurora.

When New England Preschool closed, it left behind toys, games, and teaching materials. Project Share is a plan to distribute these through a free store that will be available to community organizations. First a mountain of materials needs to be organized.

On January 21 after church volunteers will sort everything. Sign up and bring your children and their grandparents. Expect to spend about 2 hours, eat pizza and have fun. You will make it possible then to set up the store. To volunteer, email Desiree Guzman at desiree@newenglandchurch.org.



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 at 1110 Jericho Rd. Aurora

Annual Meeting Luncheon Fundraiser



All are welcome and encouraged to attend the 2024 Annual Meeting and Luncheon, held on Sunday, January 28 in Friendship Hall after the 10:00 am worship service.

This year our Board of Community Outreach will be helping to prepare and serve a delicious hot lunch for our annual meeting as a fundraiser for their work in the community and special project in partnership with CASA Kane County, an organization that was near and dear to John McKee.

This new format will save the church hundreds of dollars in catering bills AND raise funds to purchase much-needed backpacks for local children in foster care, many of whom have no more than a garbage bag to transport their few belongings from placement to placement.

This year we will prepare delicious hot soup along with a generous toppings bar, tasty sides, and desserts. As always, our annual meeting lunch is free for everyone, but we invite anyone who is willing and able to consider supporting our Board of Community Outreach by making a donation that day.

Chamber Music on the Fox

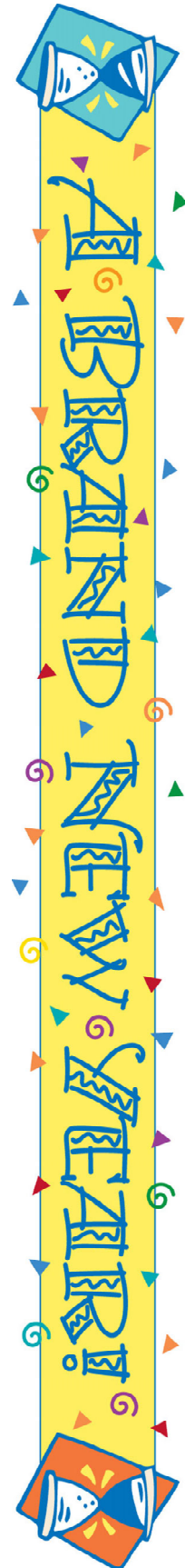
Chamber Music on the Fox presents:

Court, Convent & Stage: Redefining the Early Modern Woman
Featuring Black Tulip

Sunday, January 7, 2024 at 2:30 pm

New England Congregational Church

\$25/\$15 Students



**Friday Night at the Movies-
January 12 at
7:00 pm:
Searching for Bobby
Fischer (1993)**

As a likable young chess prodigy begins to nurture his talent, he gets caught between his parents, coaches and the realities of competition and life.

Presenter:
Chuck Adams



**POP UP CHOIR RETURNS on JANUARY 21,
and THANKS!**

Preparing the Music for Advent and Christmas is one of the most exciting parts of being a church musician. The anticipation of the celebration Christ's birth comes alive in the concomitant preparations of music, both old and new. One of the most enriching experiences I have known is that of finding and learning new music. When this experience is coupled with preparations for this season, I find that I learn something that moves my faith and understanding more deeply. For example, one new piece uncovered in my explorations of literature, "Falade Ben Baixo" ("We'll Speak Very Softly" in Catalan), is on its surface a lullaby to the Christ child, but the narrative actually is a call for humility in light of this miraculous moment. Sometimes, I get caught up in the joy of the celebration, and this sweet carol reminded me of my proper place within the spirit of awe. As a musician, I learn best through experiencing how texts are set to music, as they involve many aspects of the manner through which I relate to this world.

One opportunity for you to experience this very same thing is coming back on Sunday, January 21: the return of the NECC Pop-Up Choir! You do not need to think of yourself as a great musician or singer to join.

Simply come to the chancel at 9:15am on Sunday, January 21, and join your friends to quickly learn an easy anthem. Singers of all ages are welcome to join in this informal ensemble, and you may come as you are, dressed as you normally do, and ready to sing even if your voice sometimes is one of those that feels that it will not wish to cooperate.

Please join us and make beautiful music in a relaxed, not stressful atmosphere. We hope to see you there!

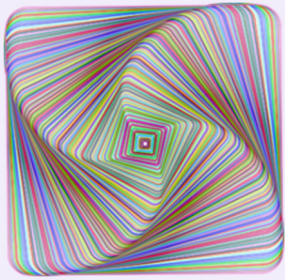
Paul Laprade
Music Director

Women's Fellowship

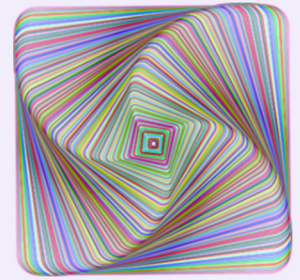
Start the New Year off right by joining the Women's Circle of Friends for breakfast on Saturday, January 13 at 9:30 am. Bring a dish to share and a friend or two.

Following our meal, stay and play Bunco! It's a simple game - if you can throw dice, you already know how to play! Stay for lots of fun and lots of prizes. Please sign up on the NECC website, or in the office. See you all in January!





VOLUNTEER VORTEX



Sponsored by the Board of Community Outreach

We, at NECC who desire to make the world a better place, continue to post volunteer opportunities in this section of the Tidings every month. This month, **Christine's Dream Equestrian Center**, is featured which provides therapeutic riding opportunities for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. You can become an **Equine Program Volunteer**:

We are looking for volunteers to be Side-Walkers and Horse Leaders during weekly therapeutic riding lessons located at Rich Harvest Farms in Sugar Grove. We are a PATH Intl. (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International) Premier Accredited Center serving young adults on the Autism Spectrum.

Therapeutic riding helps individuals with physical, emotional, behavioral and cognitive challenges by utilizing the movement of the horse to benefit the rider. Additionally, Equine Assisted Activities provide opportunities for experiential education, vocational skills development, and recreational skill development.



Benefits of Equine Assisted Activities & Therapies include, but are not limited to:

- Physical: Improved motor skills, increased strength, balance and range of motion
- Cognitive: Improved motor planning, attention span, following directions
- Social/Emotional: Promotes independence, self-confidence, self-control

We are currently looking for volunteers Monday - Thursday mornings, and Friday times TBD

Requirements:

Must be 16 years or older.

Previous experience working with horses is NOT required. Equine Program Volunteers receive training to provide assistance to the horses, PATH Instructor and riders during therapeutic riding instruction.

Available to attend a 1-hour Orientation/Training prior to start of the volunteer service.

**For more information or to sign up to volunteer, please contact
Sara Ratiu at 630-864-3803 or sratiu@mygiantsteps.org**

Visit www.MyGiantSteps.org/Explore/Equine

Tiny Tidings

JANUARY, 2024

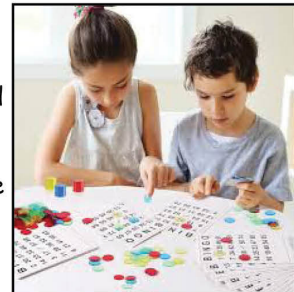


CHURCH SCHOOL CALENDAR

- JAN. 7TH Intergenerational Service
Three Kings/Epiphany Sunday
- JAN. 14TH All-Grades Bingo Bash
- JAN. 21ST Lesson - Moses
Let My People Go!
- JAN. 28TH Lesson - The Confusing Coat
Learning from Mistakes

ALL-GRADES BINGO BASH!

On Sunday January 14, our KIDS' ZONE kids will begin in the sanctuary as usual, but after Children's Time they will take a field trip to the Youth Room and join our youth group students for a fun morning of BINGO with special prizes for our winners. (There will be many opportunities to win!) Younger kids who need a helping hand managing their BINGO cards will be assisted by our most helpful older students. This is a great opportunity for KIDS' ZONE kids to get a peek at the Youth Group that they will someday join, and a chance for our older students to get to know and encourage younger kids in our church family. Hope to see you there!



ANNUAL MEETING CHILDCARE PROVIDED:

Childcare will be provided for children infants - 5th grade during the annual meeting. Children will eat lunch with their parents in Friendship Hall and can then be dropped-off in the KIDS' ZONE ROOM. If you have any questions, please contact desiree@newenglandchurch.org



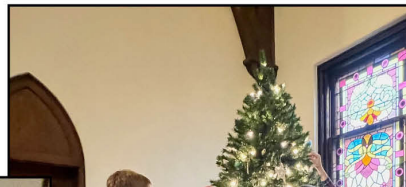
PROJECT SHARE:

On Sunday January 21, New England Church will be holding an Intergenerational Service Opportunity called, "Project Share." If you are reading this issue of the Tidings carefully, you will have seen a blurb about it already. Elementary school aged kids are welcome to join us for this project, but they must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. For more info contact desiree@newenglandchurch.org

The Youth Group enjoys playing games from around the world including Dreidels and Mancala



The children decorate the sanctuary tree during the Hanging of the Greens.



COOKIE WALK





JANUARY, 2024

ALL-GRADES BINGO BASH!

On Sunday January 14, our Youth will begin in the Youth Room for opening activities with only 6th-12th grade, but after Children's Time, our KIDS' ZONE kids will join them for a fun morning of BINGO with special prizes for our winners. (There will be many opportunities to win!) Younger kids who need a helping hand managing their BINGO cards will be assisted by our most helpful older students. This is a great opportunity for KIDS' ZONE kids to get a peek at the Youth Group that they will someday join, and a chance for our older students to get to know and encourage younger kids in our church family. Hope to see you there!

YOUTH CALENDAR

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| JAN. 7TH | Intergenerational Service - Three Kings/Epiphany
Sunday Confirmation Dinner Gathering 5-7PM |
| JAN. 14TH | All-Grades Bingo Bash |
| JAN. 21ST | Youth Group @ 10:00 - Followed by Project Share |
| JAN. 28TH | Youth Group @ 10:00 - Followed by Annual Meeting |

ANNUAL MEETING:

All Youth are encouraged to attend our Annual Meeting on January 28th to learn more about and participate in the life of New England Church. We will also be asking youth to assist with serving lunch again as we did last year. We need all hands on-deck! Please plan to attend if you are able.

PROJECT SHARE YOUTH INFO:

On Sunday January 21, New England Church will be holding an Intergenerational Service Opportunity called, "Project Share" after the 10:00 service. If you are reading this issue of the Tidings carefully, you will have seen a blurb about it already. Youth are encouraged to participate with or without their parents. The project will go from 11:00 - 2:00 with a Pizza lunch. Students are encouraged to stay as long as they are able to help, and we will be happy to sign-off on volunteer service hours for any student who needs them. Contact desiree@newenglandchurch.org with any questions.

WELCOME YOUTH LEADER, KATIE JEPSON!

We are so excited to announce that New England's own, Katie Jepson has stepped up to take on the role of Sunday morning Youth Group Leader! Katie already knows many of our students from her work with the Joy Ringer's Bell Choir, and her energy, positivity, and background in education makes her the perfect fit to guide our youth group on Sunday mornings! Desiree Guzman will still be coordinating adult volunteers to work alongside Katie, so if you are interested in helping out in the youth room please contact desiree@newenglandchurch.org



*“God
Is Still
Speaking”*

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Church-UCC
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A Caring Church for Thinking People

Visit us on the web
at
www.newenglandchurch.org

Our Staff & Church Officers

*Senior Minister: Brandon Perrine
Church Administrator: Shelley Lund
Director of Children's Ministries: Desiree Guzman
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 Attendants: Charlotte Adams,
Thaise Rodriguez, Josely Hernandez
Custodian: John Hett
Facilities Engineer: Todd Jones*

*Moderator: Josh Ream
Moderator-elect: Heather Azem
Treasurer: Andy Sprau
Clerk: Ida Dunham*