

Main Street Musing

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

January 2018

Dear Fellow Sojourners,

The story of Mary and Joseph suddenly being catapulted into the role of parents to Jesus is a stunning one. We hear a lot about Mary's humility and acceptance, and the qualities of unfathomable and undeniable faith, compassion and love that have caused her to be beloved; a role model for unquestioning Christian faith.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was going about her life as a young person living in ancient biblical times. She was betrothed to Joseph, a humble carpenter. Her life, as well as humankind's, was instantaneously, irrefutably changed, as we all know, by a visit from the Angel Gabriel. Luke 1:26-38 tells us that Gabriel visited her and announced she was with child, despite her virginity. Mary was to bear the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the King of Kings! Thus, the 'Annunciation.'

Imagine being Mary! Imagine having your whole life suddenly disrupted by this seemingly impossible and, socially unacceptable, situation. Imagine being told she had been specially chosen by God for this purpose. Imagine being young and unmarried, in a patriarchal society where marriage was one's ticket to security; a woman without a husband had no power, and no way to survive. Childbirth out of wedlock would most surely mean severe rejection by her family and friends, and fiancée. She might even be stoned to death or be forced to live her life as a prostitute or beggar to survive.

The Scripture tells us Mary was 'perplexed.' We also know Mary questioned the plausibility of conception, considering she was a virgin, but she did not question anything else. Her perfect humility is exemplary: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1:26-56) as she prays "The Magnificat," her praise to God.

We also might wonder about Joseph's situation and the challenges before him, betrothed to a woman who said she was pregnant with the Son of God...who would be born the Messiah! One can only imagine Joseph's reaction to these improbable circumstances! What did he think and feel? How could Mary be pregnant if she was a virgin? Was she losing her mind? Was he angry, disbelieving, hurt, simply shocked or all of the above?

What we do know is that both Mary and Joseph rose to the occasion, despite any doubts or fears they may have had. He assumed his role as husband and protector of Mary and father of her baby; she as compassionate new mother of God's son, Jesus. They completed, in holy partnership, the mission with which they had been charged by God.

Friends, we are all in partnership together in this life, this church community and this world. Let us welcome the Christ Child *in holy partnership*, as did Mary and Joseph. Despite our doubts, fears and wonderings about strangers and each other, let us go forward into the New Year in love, with hope and *in holy partnership*, facing the joys and trials of life, each and every one of us practicing the acceptance and humility of Mary and Joseph: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Let us listen for that word with all our heart, soul and might. I look forward to the future, exploring all the journeys we face together, hearing your questions, your desires, your doubts, fears, joys, sorrows and just plain wondering together at the miracle of our very being, walking this earth together.

May the spirit of the newborn Christ be with you all, always,

Nina



WARNING

Official notice is hereby given that the 320th Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, in South Windsor, Connecticut, will be held in the Lower Hall on Sunday, January 28th, 2018 after the Morning Service. For the purpose of:

1. Accepting the Board and Committee Reports for 2017.
2. Electing church officers/board/committees and personnel for 2018.
3. Enacting any other business that may legally come before this meeting.

Jean, Clerk

Jean, Moderator

A luncheon will be enjoyed after the Service.

Annual Reports Due

All boards and committees are asked to have their annual reports to the church office by **January 7th**. Copies of the annual reports will be available on Sunday, January 21st. The Annual Meeting is scheduled **January 28th** following worship service.

*End of the Year Contributions:*

Please consider remembering First Congregational Church of South Windsor as part of your end of year giving. Your contributions provide vital resources throughout the year! Your Annual Giving statements will be mailed during the latter part of January. In order for your contributions for 2017 to be included on your 2017 tax return, contributions must be postmarked no later than December 31, 2017. If possible, having them received by the church on December 29th, would be very helpful.

*Church Committee*

Jean

Church Clerk

Highlights from December 14, 2017

- Pastor Nina opened the meeting with a short story. As she read, we were charged to listen for the words "right" and "left". As we heard "right" and "left", an ornament was passed accordingly among the group. It was a fun exercise, and if nothing else, honed our listening skills.
- Investments - the account increased approximately \$71,000 in November. A disbursement of \$6,000 was issued. The end value for November is \$1,864,534.74. One of the mutual funds was sold in anticipation of funds needed to cover December expenses, giving us \$25,000 to work with. Next meeting of the Church Committee is February 13, 2018. All are invited to attend, whether or not you serve on a committee or board.
- **Please note** - the Annual Meeting date is January 28, 2018 following the morning service. Pizza and salad will be provided. All are invited to attend, whether or not you serve on a committee or board.

Living the Giving!

Stewardship 2018

Campaign update: Thank you for your generosity! We wrapped up our *Living the Giving* campaign this year with a visit from Rochelle Ripley from Hawkwing on Sunday, November 26. While it is incredibly disheartening to hear about the Lakota Indian tribes' suffering, it is also heartwarming to see what Rochelle and all the people who support the Hawkwing program do to help out in so many ways. Pledge cards were collected from our congregation that Sunday. To date, 38 pledges have been received totaling \$42,906. I want to thank each of you who have pledged this year. For those that may have forgotten or otherwise not made a pledge yet, we are in the process of sending out a follow-up letter.

As we mentioned in the last Stewardship moment, even though our campaign is technically now over, the opportunity for giving is never over, as the care of the least of these is never over.

Next year we would like to form a Stewardship group that would meet periodically throughout the year for the 2018 campaign. If anyone would like to be part of this planning, please let Nina or Terry know.

Holiday Fair Update



It was a very successful fair with final details being gathered to finalize gross and net tally. A sincere thank you to all who produced, worked and supported the fair! Several debriefing meetings will be held in early January to discuss highlights, evaluate changes we made and to begin planning for next year.

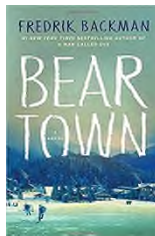
Christmas Tableau

Thanks to everyone who participated in the wonderful Christmas Tableau on December 10th! Thank you to the Starrs for stepping in as Mary and Joseph, as well as Edie organizing the multitudes. Photos are posted on our Facebook Page and website. **NOTE:** There is no Church School on 12/24 and 12/31. Classes resume on January 7th.



Book Group

We will be reading *Bear Town* by Frederick Backman, author of *A Man Called Ove*. A small town, woods, and an old decrepit hockey rink offer up a new twist along with Backman's memorable characters inviting us in for a good read. The date of the discussion is January 24, 2018 at noon. There will be no meeting for December. Our group is growing – come join us!



United Church Women's Dinner

The UCW Dinner is to celebrate another successful Fair, Christmas and 3 Kings Day will be held at **Lena's Restaurant on Wednesday, January 3rd at 6:30 PM**. The meal cost is \$25. The restaurant is at the intersection of Route 5 and Pleasant Valley Road in South Windsor.



This event is open to all to celebrate the culmination of another busy and productive year. There is a minimum of 25 people required. Please come and join us for good food and fellowship.

There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board, as well as the menu. If you have any questions, please contact Linda Dalpe. We will be looking forward to seeing you there. Thank you to Linda for making the arrangements.

2018 Flower Chart

The 2018 Flower Chart has been posted. Individuals and families are welcome to sign up for flowers. Donors are responsible for ordering and arranging for flowers to be in church on Sunday. Donors may take their arrangements home following service or deliver them to one of our homebound members and friends.



A penguin "parable"

During storms, emperor penguins huddle for warmth, taking turns at the center and on the perimeter of the group. While incubating eggs, up to 6,000 male penguins have been observed clustering for shelter against the harsh Antarctic winter. Partially grown chicks gather in protective "crèches" (French for "cribs"); often surrounded by a colony of adults, these groupings ward off predators and cold.



In stormy times, humans also need supportive groups; we can't survive alone. A church family allows us to take turns giving and receiving care. Amid social upheaval, injustice, illness, natural disaster and any loss or crisis, God invites us to gather for protection and warmth. In the church community, we support and strengthen one another and are empowered to go out again into the less-sheltered world.

Music from Around the World - Kamilla Mammedova, Music Director

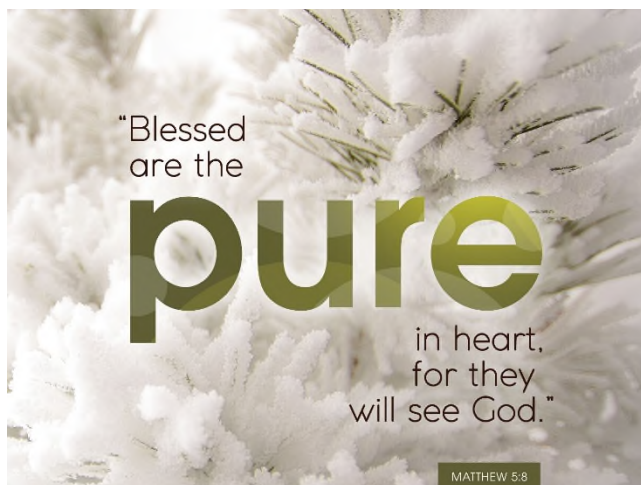
Starting in January, I'll be introducing a series of world-renowned compositions new to our Congregation written by well-known composers from Azerbaijan.

We will hear excerpts from works of composers of the country who represent the professional, classical music school of the twentieth century, and which connects East and West; where Middle Eastern and Western European musical cultures are combined in the beautiful masterpieces. I'll be introducing a new composer every month.



January is dedicated to the father of the classical professional composition school of Azerbaijan: Uzeyir Hajibeyov. He was the first professional classical composer in the East. His composition list includes: operas, ballets, theatrical comedies, symphonic suites for orchestra, the National Hymn of Azerbaijan and many, many more. His music is a synthesis of folk music and Mugham (a very complex art form which weds classical poetry and musical improvisation, Azerbaijani professional types of singing/composition, along with national instruments) and Western European technique of composition.

Yours musically, Kamilla



2017 Wreaths Across America

Saturday, December 16th First Church extended its hospitality to a group of approximately 75 people which consisted Boy Scouts and their families, members of American Legion Post #133 Abe E Miller and Unit #133 Abe E Miller (Auxiliary). This was our thank you for placing wreaths on the veterans' grave sites in Center Cemetery. First Congregational Church of South Windsor is honored to offer this hospitality.



I want to thank Sue Larsen and Marilyn Senger for their gracious assistance. This year we had more than double the guests from last year. As word spreads about our hospitality, we should expect groups from other cemeteries to partake of our offerings.

Judy , Liaison to Wreaths Across America

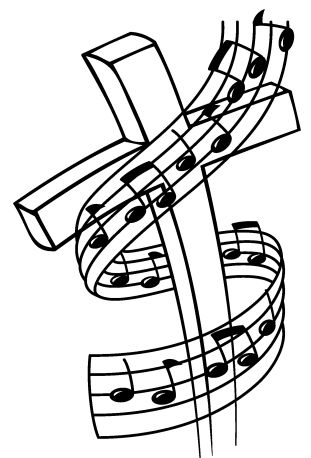
Music Committee News

-Jean

The chime group has a name - Church Chimers. Thanks to all of them for their participation in services on November 26 and December 10. Rehearsals for their next performance will resume in February 2018.

The sanctuary piano was tuned December 7. The organ is scheduled to be tuned December 15.

We are blessed to have had Debbie Vinick, harpist, joining worship on Sunday, December 17. Inga Smith will be our guest vocalist for the Candlelight Christmas Eve service December 24 at 11:00 p.m..



From Mary, Archivist

Next month we will continue exploring our various meeting houses and buildings. At this busy time of year and a full newsletter, I am limiting what I write. Along with the meeting houses we will be looking at the Wolcott Memorial Chapel and many of the memorial gifts that are housed here.

As we move into 2018 let us be thankful for those saints that toiled in this place over the years. Each and every one helped make this church what it is today. Their service of time, gifts, and talents continue to shape us. We have a rich heritage. The trust funds give us a large measure of financial stability while the traditions and practices have molded a loving place for us to worship.



Yes, we continue to grow and change as we plan for the future and carry out the message of God. That is as it should be.

Wishing a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2018 for each one of you.

Three Questions

There's a tale of a traveling priest who was confronted by a soldier in pre-revolutionary Russia. Rifle in hand, the soldier barked, "Who are you? Where are you going? Why are you going there?"

Instead of answering, the priest asked how much the soldier was paid — and offered double if the soldier would challenge him with those three questions each day as he passed by.

Those three important questions can guide us on our journey through the brand-new year ahead. For Christians, thankfully, the answers are clear:



- Who are you? "I'm a child of God!"
- Where are you going? "I'm going out into the world!"
- Why are you going there? "I'm going out of love for Jesus, who died for me!"

Place these questions and answers in a spot where you can see them each day. Then go forward confidently, knowing "whose" you are and what your purpose is.



SewIn4Servicemen Update



Sunday, Nov. 12, 2017 almost 85 quilts were dedicated. In attendance were members of South Windsor American Legion Post #133 Abe E. Miller and Unit #133 Abe E Miller along with 20 of the participants (both members and non-members of First Church). The quilts will be distributed to veterans after the holidays.

The **5th Annual Sewin4Servicemen** will be held on the 4th Saturday of January (Jan. 27). February (Feb. 24), March (Mar. 24) and April (Apr. 28). If you are interested, please join is in a worthwhile community service event and a day of good fellowship. Check the bulletin board in the Lower Hall for more information,

Judy, Project Chairperson

Church Family News



Thelma	Lorraine
Joyce and Wayne	Gloria
Bev	Shirley
Eddie	Vibert
Lee	Bruce
Cliff	Avis



Carol	12/21
Wyatt	12/22
Jade	12/23
Jean	12/25
Byron	12/26
Mary	01/04
Leilani	01/06
Chenoa	01/07
Chris	01/11
Jay	01/21
Jared	01/25
Lauren	01/27
Tracy	01/27
Brad	01/30
Jonathan	01/30
Aimee	01/31



Beverly & Ray 12/22



Send them a note today!

Gloria	Wayne & Joyce
Manchester Manor	Arbors at Hopbrook
385 W. Center St. Room 3013	403 W Center Street; Apt. 316
Manchester, CT 06040	Manchester, CT 06040
Lorraine	Bev
1693 John Fitch Blvd	58 Pleasant Valley Road
South Windsor, CT 06074	South Windsor, CT 06074

Lunch Bunch



The lunch bunch meets September to June on the third Thursday of the month at 11:30 a.m. This month they will meet on **January 18th**. Founded as a gathering for retired men, it is open to anyone who wants to visit over a brown bag lunch.

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for the February newsletter is **Thursday, January 16th**. It will be printed on January 24th.

Worship Service and Event Cancellations

If the weather is bad, you can check for cancellation notices of our events including Sunday morning worship service and church school by watching WFSB TV (CBS, channel 3) or listening to WTIC (1080 AM). Notices are also posted on both the websites for WFSB news and the WTIC Storm Center. Generally, a decision to cancel worship will be made on Sunday morning around 7am. Every effort will be made to update the church answering machine, too.



Food Ingathering

On the second Sunday of the month (**January 14th**) we collect items for a food pantry. Suggested items for January are toiletries (antiperspirant, shampoo conditioner, shaving cream, disposable razors, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, floss, chap stick, hand sanitizer) and paper goods (napkins, facial tissue, paper toweling, toilet tissue, sandwich/snack bags, etc.). These donations are appreciated greatly.



Special Guest

On January 28th, we will be welcoming Rabbi Jeff Glickman from Temple Beth Hillel. He will be spending time with us in the sanctuary and then with the children in their class. The Church School students will be receiving a copy of his book, *Have You Heard? A Child's Introduction to the Ten Commandments*.

January 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 New Year's day	2 7:00pm NA	3 10:00 am Creative Hands 2:00pm Photo Archive Team 6:30 p.m. UCW Dinner @ Lena's	4 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal	5	6
7 9:15am Choir Warmup 10:00am Worship & Church School 11:00am Coffee hour 2:00pm Private Party- Archambault	8	9 7:00pm NA	10 10:00 am Creative Hands 2:00pm Photo Archive Team	11 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal	12	13
14 9:15am Choir Warmup 10:00am Worship & Church School 11:00am Coffee hour	15 M L King Day	16 7:00pm NA	17 10:00 am Creative Hands 2:00pm Photo Archive Team	18 11:00am Lunch Bunch 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal	19	20
21 9:15am Choir Warmup 10:00am Worship w/ Soares Baptism & Church School 11:00am Coffee hour 2:00pm Private Party- Archambault	22	23 7:00pm NA	24 10:00 am Creative Hands Noon Book Group 2:00pm Photo Archive Team	25 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal	26	27 10am SewIn4 Servicemen
28 9:15am Choir Warmup 10:00am Worship & Church School w/ Rabbi Gilckman. 11:00am Annual Meeting	29 7:00pm 4-H Camp Board of Directors	30 7:00pm NA	31 10:00 am Creative Hands 2:00pm Photo Archive Team	Office Hours , unless otherwise noted Rev. Nina Barlow Schmid – Drop In Office Hours are: Wednesdays from 9:30am to 12:30 pm, other times by appointment Claudia Steele, Administrative Assistant – Tuesday through Thursday 9:00am to 2:00 p.m. and Friday 9:00 a.m. - Noon		
	Administrative Assistant Vacation					

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Staff:

Minister: Rev. Nina Barlow Schmid
Organist: Kamilla Mammedova
Administrative Assistant: Claudia Steele
Sexton: Amanda McNulty



SAVE THE DATE

Creative Hands 01/03, 01/10, 01/17, 01/24, 01/31
Annual Reports Due..... 01/7
Choir Rehearsals..... 01/04, 01/11, 01/18, 01/25
Newsletter Article Deadline 01/16
Lunch Bunch 01/18
Book Group 01/24
Annual Meeting 01/28

TO:



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