

The Messenger

First Congregational Church

34 Center Street

Fairhaven, MA 02719-2931



Let It Snow...Let It Snow...Let It Snow

12/24

(Or....how to know if church is cancelled)

It's that time of year again ! While we hope we will not have to cancel any Sunday church services this winter, we need to be prepared. You may wonder how we decide if a service should be cancelled. Our first consideration is the safety of everyone. We weigh things like amount of snow, whether streets have been plowed, ice that can make driving and walking treacherous, and how low the temperature has gone.

There are four ways to find out if church or a church activity has been cancelled on a particular day: (1) If you are on the church's email list you will get an email as soon as we decide to cancel; (2) The cancellation will be posted on the home page of our website (www.firstcongfairhaven.com); (3) There will be a message announcing the cancellation on the church's voice mail (508-993-3368); (4) The cancellation will be on the church's Facebook page (wwwfacebook.com/firstcongfairhaven).

Please remember that, even if church is not cancelled, consider your safety first—we would rather miss you on one Sunday than have you injured.



The Messenger

Volume 72 No. 5

First Congregational Church Fairhaven, Massachusetts

December 2024

First Congregational Church of Fairhaven

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Fairhaven, MA

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Pastor

Rev. Bette McClure

508-951-1792

Administrative Assistant

Barbara Bishop

Music Director

David Touchette

Pianist

John Rondeau

Office Hours:

Tues thru Thurs

10:00 am—1:00 pm



"Our mission is to provide opportunities to experience God's presence and in humble and caring ways to use all of our resources to welcome, love, challenge, and equip each other for Christ's ministry in our community and the world."



Ecumenical Blue Christmas Service

Sunday, December 15th

6:00 p.m. – in our sanctuary

For those who have experienced loss, or who are feeling stressed by life and events in the world, Christmas can be a bittersweet time of year. While all the media tout the joy of the season and decorations glow on dark nights, many of us feel an ache in our hearts during this season. For some of us there will be an empty chair at the table this year for the first time; others of us may be dealing with health or financial woes or maybe we just find Christmas a somewhat lonely time, filled with many memories but few people.

What sometimes can help is the time and space to just “be” with whatever it is we are dealing with; to feel the feelings but to know that we are not alone. An awareness and reminder of God's presence and God's hope can help us make our way through the holiday season.

So we invite you to join us for this meditative service where we will hear scripture, pray for healing and wholeness, listen to music and light candles to brighten the night. By doing so we can acknowledge that God's Word comes to shine light into our darkness. This year we will again be offering this service with our friends in faith from Trinity Lutheran Church and St. Joseph Parish. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to reach out to others who might be in need and invite them to join you for the service. Everyone is welcome.

Dear Ones

Soon it will be Christmas. We know that because we can see the telltale signs all around us – the ads on television, the displays in stores, the Christmas music already being played, the gift lists being made, etc., etc., etc.



The sign of Christmas approaching that I relish the most is the lights. On the first night of Advent I will joyfully place a candle in each window of the parsonage. We do the same here in the sanctuary of our church. And as I ride around town my heart soars as I gaze at home after home with some sort of lights displayed to celebrate the season.

In John's gospel we read the familiar and reassuring words - *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life! and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.*

Each of you, my friends, carries the light of Christ within you. This Christmas season let that light shine brightly in a troubled world. Carry that light with love that everyone you meet might sense the joy and hope and promise in that light.

As the poet Jan Richardson expresses, each of you is a blessed light bearer.

Blessed are you who bear the light

by Jan Richardson (janrichardson.com)

Blessed are you who bear the light in unbearable times,
who testify to its endurance amid the unendurable,
who bear witness to its persistence when everything seems in shadow and grief.

Blessed are you in whom the light lives,
in whom the brightness blazes—
your heart a chapel, an altar where in the deepest night can be seen
the fire that shines forth in you in unaccountable faith,
in stubborn hope, in love that illumines every broken thing it finds.

Christmas blessings,

Bette

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

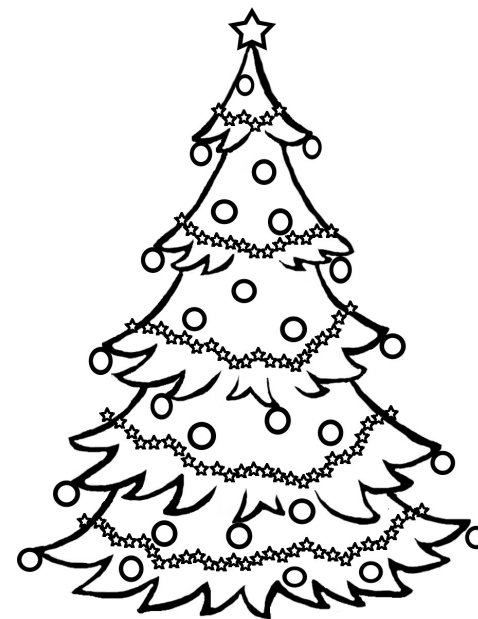
Christmas Fund / Veterans of the Cross

Special Offering to be taken December 15th

For all the sacrifices that clergy and lay church workers have made in our congregations, over 100 years ago the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ created the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund, to help support them in retirement and during times of emergent need.

The Christmas Fund provides supplementation of small pension payments for retired clergy who often served small congregations throughout their careers. It provides supplementation of health premium costs, to help ensure their wellness throughout their lives.

The fund also provides emergency grants Christmas "Thank You" gift checks for retirees and those facing unforeseen financial hardship.



Poinsettia Orders

Once again we will be decorating our sanctuary with poinsettias for Christmas Eve. While we don't have all the details yet we will be offering red poinsettias only. The price will be available by December 10th and orders must be placed by December 15th. A sign-up sheet will be placed in the William St. lobby or you can call/email the church with your order. Watch The Scoop for details!



Parking Reminder

Please remember to NOT park in the Euro Store parking when you visit the church during December.

The store is open for the holiday shopping season and its customers need the spaces!

Save the Date

Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 26th, 2025

Each year in January we review our financial reports for the previous year and develop and vote on a budget for the new year. This requires a vote of the congregation with a quorum of 30 members required to pass the budget. This year, as our by-laws dictate, we will also be receiving reports from the various church committees and electing officers for 2025.

We will meet to accomplish this task following our worship service on Sunday, January 26th, 2025. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this important meeting.

Holiday Concert

The Shepherd Center for the Performing Arts will present Jordan Paiva's "Christmas Time is Here" concert on December 8th at 2:00 p.m., in our sanctuary.

Tickets are \$20 and may be purchased at the door or online at:

<https://theshepherdcenter.ticketspice.com/jordan-paivas-christmas-time-is-here>

Offering Envelopes

New weekly offering envelopes will be distributed in late December for the 2025 giving year. You will find them on the table by the main door of the sanctuary.

If you have not had your own offering envelopes in the past but would like to have them, please contact the office.



Year-End Giving

Checks for charitable contributions must be delivered to the church or mailed with a postmark on or before December 31st in order to claim a charitable deduction for 2024.

Statements of Giving will be mailed in January to everyone who has made trackable contributions to the church office.

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

Tuesday, December 24th

6:00 p.m.

Our Christmas Eve service is always a treasured time for many people. Join us as we celebrate the birth of the Christ Child with music, scripture, readings and prayer. Our sanctuary is especially beautiful at night and it takes on a holy aura for many of us. Please note that the service is at **6:00 PM**. We hope that many of you will make this service a special part of your Christmas celebrations.



Advent Worship Series

WORDS FOR THE BEGINNING

Once again we are using resources from A Sanctified Art to craft our worship during Advent. According to the creators of the resource: "Advent is a season of endings and beginnings. As the calendar year comes to a close, a new church year begins. Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving; and yet, the world as we know it spins madly on. In many ways, pregnant Mary was surrounded by endings—large and small, personal and political. But Mary proclaimed hope in a God who was and is making all things new. Christ's birth offered a beautiful new beginning for shepherds and Magi alike—all the while, King Herod tried to bring Christ's story to an end. When we ourselves navigate seasons filled with endings and beginnings, we need reminders. We need words that can feel like steady ground, like a path for our feet to find as we step forward into the unknown."

This Advent series is filled with blessings, with the scriptures and reminders we need to hear again and again as we begin a new season. These reminders root us in the fundamental truths of our faith. Many of them are life lessons we teach to children—lessons that adults continue to learn and relearn. They may resemble the blessings we impart to loved ones during special ceremonies like weddings, graduations, or baptisms. And so, we invite you to move through this Advent season as if you are entering a sacred new chapter, holding fast to the reminders that will bolster you for the journey ahead."

Advent 1 – 12/1 –	"You are a Blessing"
Advent 2 – 12/8 –	"We Can't Go Alone"
Advent 3 – 12/15 –	"Do the Good that is Yours to Do"
Advent 4 – 12/22 –	"Hope is Worth the Risk"
Christmas Eve –	"Love Knows Your Name"



Prayer List

Please keep the following in your prayers:

Those on our on-going prayer list: Bruce, Steve, John, Sandy, Ron, Bev, Aurora, Bill, Peter, Marty, Laurie, Mike, Mark, Andy, Sandy, Laurie, Janet, Jude, Leslie, Russ, Dan, Jay, Sherry and those who are in our hearts

Please consider sending a Christmas card to:

- Tara Ferland - 114 Oakdale Street, New Bedford, Ma 02740
- Sandy and Matty Orr – 330 Main St., Apt. 302D, Fairhaven, MA 02719
- Peter Sowden – 297 Converse Rd, Marion, MA 02738



Thanks!

Many thanks to everyone who helps out in so many ways to further the mission and ministry of our church!

- ♦ To the **Action For Christ Committee and helpers** who held a food drive and prepared and distributed 16 Thanksgiving food baskets to those in need.
- ♦ To **everyone who donated food** for the Thanksgiving baskets and for the Food Pantry, those who contributed gifts for our **Holiday Hope, Adopt-a-Family** outreach –this year we added a second family and still ran out of tags!
- ♦ To **all the volunteers who work so hard at Heavenly Treasures** to make it not only a financial boon to the church, but even more importantly, a ministry to its customers
- ♦ To **those who help maintain our buildings** by mowing lawns, tending the flower garden, replacing lightbulbs, fixing broken doors etc., etc., etc.,
- ♦ To **those who enhance our worship services** by decorating the worship space each week and for holidays, serving as lay readers, recording the service, singing in the choir, greeting worshippers
- ♦ To **those who steadfastly count** the Sunday and other offerings
- ♦ To **those who do things no one else sees** by quietly reaching out with a card, a kindness, words of support and so many other ways.



Action for Christ News

Old Time Holiday Fair

Our biggest fundraiser is quickly approaching... just 17 days away! It's always a fun way to meet friends while helping the church. The Chance Auction could use donated gift certificates, and the Craft and Jewelry tables can always use extra items.

Our Lobster Luncheon has been donated in part by Jesse DeSousa, of The Cove Surf and Turf restaurant, with all proceeds going to the church. To make this luncheon run smoothly, we'll need a couple more hands in the kitchen. So, if you give an hour or two on Saturday between 11:00 and 1:00, it would be greatly appreciated. Check out the sign-up sheet in the Williams Street entrances or call/email Donna Perry.



Mitten Tree

The Mitten tree will shortly be up and ready for donations of hats, gloves, mittens, scarves, socks and hand warmers. Donations can be made until December 22, after which the items will be taken to Sister Rose's and Gifts to Give.

Holiday Hope

Action for Christ would like to say "Thank you" to all who participated in our Holiday Hope Project. You have truly brightened the holidays for two families. Gifts are due back on Sunday, December 8, wrapped and tagged with the original tag. The gifts will be delivered on Tuesday, to Child and Family Service, who are the people who spearhead this mission.

Food Drive & Thanksgiving Baskets

Thank you to all who made donations to the food drive! Your generosity has filled 16 "Thanksgiving Baskets" for our neighbor-in-need. Here is a shout out to all who helped make deliveries.