

December 2019 Newsletter

First Congregational Church
An Open and Affirming Church of the United Church of Christ
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Message from Rev. Heike

When someone we love comes to visit we are full of anticipation and prepare to receive our guest with joy. We may even clean the house, polish the silver, and prepare them their favorite meal.

So it is with Advent, the season set aside by the ancient Christian communities to prepare for the mystery we are celebrating at Christmas: the arrival of God with us, God incarnate.

The season of Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, which this year is on December 1, 2019. This is also the start of a new liturgical church year.

While our world's commercial ventures have already started to celebrate Christmas in mid October (it gets earlier and earlier every year!), the Season of Advent invites us to take things a bit slower as we journey toward Christmas. Advent is indeed a more solemn season of preparation and anticipation. This is the time when we prepare and ponder the great mystery that is coming into our hearts.

What can we do to prepare ourselves receiving God's greatest gift into our midst? Coming to church is always a good place to start. During the four Sundays of Advent we will sing the hymns of Advent, light the candles of Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy on our Advent wreath, and hear sermons that prepare us for the coming of Emmanuel, God with us. I have ordered a

devotional booklet for the days of Advent from the UCC you may read as your daily devotional for this quiet yet holy season. There are a number of concerts and worship services around town you are welcome to attend.

The days of Advent help us to make room for the joy and gift we receive at Christmas. If you are searching for peace, and hope, and love, look no further. God with us, Emmanuel, is coming!

Peace, Heike.



Advent Sermons to center around the message of the Prophet Isaiah!

The prescribed preaching texts for the season of Advent are filled with doom and gloom. And yes, while this season is a more quieter and thoughtful time of the year, I will focus the Advent sermons on the messages from the prophet and book of Isaiah which are filled with hope, and whose words have inspired some of the greatest classical music pieces (think Messiah by Handel). Here are the scripture readings:

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|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| December 1 | Isaiah 2: 1-5 | “The Hope of Advent” |
| December 8 | Isaiah 11:1-10 | “The Peace of Advent” |
| December 15 | Isaiah 35: 1-10 | “The Joy of Advent” |
| December 22 | Isaiah 7: 10-16 | “The Love of Advent” |

Charlotte Davis Circle Annual Christmas Party



All the women of the church, their family and friends are invited to our annual Christmas Party. It will be held on Wednesday evening, December 4th, at 6:30 pm. It is a covered dish supper ad Yankee Swap. Check your recipes for your favorite appetizer, main dish, side dish, salad or dessert to share. Be on the hunt for a \$ 10.00 item that will be the coveted prize at our Yankee Swap. There will be a sign up sheet on the communication table on our Community Hall. The Party is a lot of fun, and we hope that you can all make it. For questions, see or call Cheryl Panico at 781-231-5125 or Marilyn Panico at 781-233-1454.

Christmas Memory Page

Your loved one can be remembered on the Christmas memory page for a \$ 10.00 donation to the church. The donor and in memory names will be printed on an insert in the bulletins on December 22nd and December 24th. Envelopes for your donation will be on the table in our Community Hall. Checks should be made out to First Congregational Church of Saugus. All donations must be turned in by December 15th. Any questions, please see or call Marilyn Panico at 781-233-1454.



Christmas Tea, Carols, and Cookie Swap on December 22, 2019 at 3 pm

You are cordially invited to an afternoon of good tea, singing Christmas carols, listening to a Christmas story, and a cookie swap (just like a Yankee Swap only with a plate of cookies). Rebecca Harrold will accompany our caroling. Bring your favorite Christmas cookies for the swap. And how knows, you might end up with a new favorite cookie for the holidays.



From the Deacons

First, we would like to thank everyone that donated non-perishable goods for the Saugus Food Pantry on Thanksgiving Sunday. It is unfortunate that there are many people and families that have to depend on the food pantry, but I'm sure they are thankful for generous people such as yourselves.

We have been working with Rev. Werder, filling her in to all of our Christmas traditions, as well as incorporating some of her own.

We are coming into a busy season, but anticipating all the joys that surround the Christmas season. Christmas is a time for family but that also includes your church family. We hope people will take a break from shopping, decorating and all of the preparations that go along with the season and take time to join us for Sunday morning worship. Of course we will be lighting the Advent candles every week. If any of you would like to light an advent candle, speak to Rev. Werder, she would welcome a volunteer.



At the end of the year there is usually money left over in the Deacons Fund, so keeping with tradition we donate to local charities. We have decided to make a donation to some Saugus schools that we have forged relationships with. We will purchase gift cards and the schools distribute them to families in need. We will also be making a donation to Healthy Students, Healthy Saugus. Again, your generosity is making a difference in someone else's life.

Again, we hope to see all of you on Sunday mornings. And of course Dec. 24th at 4:00 for our Christmas Eve service.

We wish all of you a Joyful and Peaceful Christmas season.

From Your Deacons,

Barbara Davis

John Gilmore

Terri Leander

Susan Dunn

Mike Mascovitz

Community Outreach News!



Angel Tree Donations

Our church is once again thinking of teenagers who often get left out in the generous gift giving during the holidays. We hope to pass on gift cards to teens to places they might like and that their parents might not take them to.

Gift cards in any amounts to places like Old Navy, Dunkin Donuts, the movie theater, Barnes and Noble, Forever 21, H&M, Aeropostale, McDonalds, Burger King, etc...are very much welcomed.

How it works is you purchase a gift card (or you can make a donation and I can pick one up for you) and drop it off at the church office by December 15th or give them to me in church. At that point after all gift cards are collected, I will give them to the Saugus Fire Department to distribute. They take care of getting the cards to the teenagers.

If you want to make a donation but not spend more than you would like to, we also are collecting money from smaller donations to pool together to get cards as well.

If you have any questions at all or would like some more ideas, please feel free to call me, Terri Leander. My number is 781-584-2415. Or you can ask Marilyn Panico at 781-233-1454.

Please keep hats, gloves/mittens, scarves for children of all ages and for adult women coming in through December 15th. They will be distributed through the Saugus Fire Department for Christmas as well.

Thank You all for your generosity and all the wonderful contributions you make to help create God's Kingdom Come right here in our home town!

Yours in Christ,

Terri Leander

Community Activities for the Month of December 2019

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| December 2, 2019 | 5:45 p.m. | Trustee |
| December 4, 2019 | 6:30 p.m. | Charlotte Davis Circle Christmas Party |
| December 8, 2019 | 11:30 a.m. | Church Council |
| December 11, 2019 | 5:30 p.m. | Deacons |
| December 22, 2019 | 3:00 p.m. | Christmas Tea Party with Cookie swap and Caroling |
| December 24, 2019 | 4:00 p.m. | Christmas Candlelight Service; A service of Lessons and Carols |

News from the Search Committee

The Search Committee is “plugging” along. We are in the process of conducting Community Interview to answer the question “Who is our neighbor?” This question helps us determined what the needs of our community are and might help us to engage in some new and meaningful future ministries for our church.



We also received our survey report back. To share the results of the survey, we would like to invite to a community meeting after church on January 12, 2020 right after church. Lunch will be provided.

And one more: I could not help myself! Merry Christmas to you all! Peace, Rev. Heike



Sharing the Goodness!

A few people have asked me for the recipe of the Pumpkin Butter Pasta I made for the Community Dinner on November 2, 2019. Here it is!

Make pumpkin butter first!

Bake a sugar pumpkin or use canned pumpkin – makes about 3 to 4 cups

Add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of apple cider, 2-3 teaspoons of pumpkin pie spice, 1 TB apple cider vinegar, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt, little pepper, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of maple syrup. Put in blender and make a smooth puree.

Cook for about an hour in a non-stick pot on low to make it a little thicker. Done!

Pumpkin Butter Pasta

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoon Butter
- 2 Shallots, finely chopped
- about $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon Salt
- about $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon Freshly Ground Black Pepper
- 1 cup Vegetable Broth
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of heavy cream (can be more)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup Canned Pumpkin or your pumpkin butter
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon Ground Nutmeg (if you use canned pumpkin)
- 9 ounces Fresh Pasta or any pasta
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh Parsley (optional)

Instructions

1. Cook your pasta.
2. Melt the butter in a skillet over medium heat. Once melted, add the shallots and season with salt and pepper. Sauté the shallots until they reach a light brown color, stirring frequently.
3. Stir in the vegetable broth, cream, pumpkin butter, parmesan, and nutmeg. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a simmer, then add the pasta. Stir to coat the pasta in the sauce. Simmer the pasta in the sauce for two minutes.
4. Add parmesan and parsley over the pasta and serve.

