

FRIENDLY MESSENGER

First Congregational Church, 1070 Pleasant Street, Worcester, MA 01602
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A word from Rev. Jackson:

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Welcome to the season of Advent and the coming of Christmas. There is a lot we can learn about the Christmas narrative as it applies to Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds and the Angels. The Angels had a key role in the arrival of Jesus and the earthly response. First, consider Gabriel's message to Mary *"And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you. 'But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.' (Luke 1:28-30).* He then explains how Jesus's birth is going to occur. He concludes with verses: *For nothing will be impossible with God? Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:37-38).* Mary states that she is a servant of the Lord and she is open to his message. Our Advent season would be far more blessed and our faith would grow deeper if we listened to God's message to us and said yes to His plan. Mary said yes to both of these things and her life changed forever....for the better.

Consider Joseph. An angel came to Joseph in a dream and said: *"But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins'. (Matthew 1:20-21).* Joseph obviously listened to the angel and stayed with Mary. As a result his life changed forever as well. God accomplished miracles through him because he removed his fears and said yes to the angel's message.

Then, on Christmas Eve, the shepherds are visited by angels: *But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I will cause great joy for all the people.' 'When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.' 'The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told" (Luke 2:10, 15 & 20).* The shepherds heard the angel's message, removed their fears, acted upon it and went forth as witnesses of the greatest event in history.

These three visitations all have the common theme of fear being removed, the recipients responding "YES" in faith, and earth shattering blessings occurring when they act upon the message. This is their Christmas message to us: When the Holy Spirit prompts us, may we say yes in faith and act upon what God is calling us to do. May our fears be removed as we listen to the still, small voice within us. Then watch the blessings unfold in our lives when we respond like Joseph, Mary and the shepherds. I believe God has some wonderful blessings to reveal to us in the New Year of 2020. May each of us have a willing spirit and a heart that says "YES" to Jesus's leading us.

I pray that each of you will have a blessed and peaceful Advent and a Christmas filled with the joy of the Lord.

Because He Lives!
 Rev. Bob Jackson

FRIENDLY MESSENGER DEADLINE:

The due date for the January issue is Friday, December 27th. If your article(s) aren't in by that date, we'll be happy to include it (them) in our February 2020 issue. Thank you!

Prayer Requests

Hampton Bagdasarian requests prayers for June Kemp; Sue Cardin requests prayers for David Siam; Susan Anderson requests prayers for her daughter, Melanie; Sue Carrow requests prayers for her brother, Michael Curran; Connie MacInnes requests prayers for her niece Linda; The Deacons request prayers for Sis Prefontaine & Paul Scherdell; prayers for Melissa Castle as she is recovering from surgery; prayers for Sally Day; prayers for Jane Boggs; prayers for Marilyn Mildish

It's not too late to return your 2020 pledge cards. Please mail your pledge card to the office or place it in the Sunday offering plate. Thank you!

From Hospitality

Anyone wishing to bring in treats for Sunday Coffee Hour, please sign up in the Narthex or call the Office. Thank you!

As of Tuesday, November 26, 2019: December 8th and December 29th are available to host.

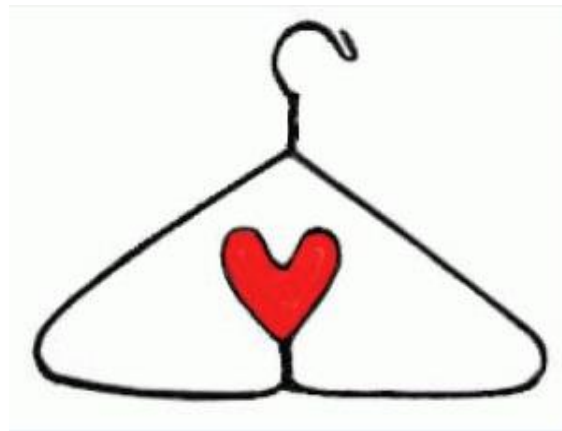
December Birthdays

05 Kenneth Sawyer
18 John Dalbeck
18 Kimberly Day
26 Marie Trzcinski
30 Jim Mirick

December Anniversaries

30 Rev. Bob & Carolyn Jackson

Concordia's Closet



You did it!

Thank you for stuffing the Explorer with clothes and accessories for the closet at Concordia Lutheran Church. The bags were under the seats, to the roof top and tight against the tailgate, your donations took up every inch.

If you included your friends and neighbors, please extend our thanks and remind them that May 5th will be here sooner than they think, and we will do it all over again.

Special thanks to Ann, Connie, Ruth, Sue, Sharon, John and Norman who sorted and bagged everything in time for delivery.

It took 4 people 10 minutes to unload the car at Concordia.

Again, thank you for a job well done!

Minutes of Meetings

The Council would like to remind all members that minutes of Council and Board meetings are posted on the bulletin board opposite the Tower Door entrance.

Tatnuck Magnet School



Save the Date! Tatnuck Magnet School Christmas Concert

On Thursday, **December 19th**, at **1:00 p.m.** in **Fellowship Hall**, the Tatnuck Magnet School will be performing their annual Christmas Concert. All are welcome to attend and be a part of this wonderful celebration of the Holiday with joyful singing by the children and piano music.

From the Church Mouse,

Greetings everyone and happy Advent. Advent is a time when we reflect on welcoming the baby Jesus to earth. We can all enjoy the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season, the lights, the music and the times we spend with family and friends, but don't forget about Jesus. Even this little mouse likes to reflect on the Christmas story and the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. I wish I could have been there that night in the stable. Can you imagine what it must have been like? Do you think anyone besides Mary and Joseph had any idea what was in store for the world? Wow! I would have loved to hear the angels singing that night. Can you tell I'm excited about Christmas? What I am not excited about is the colder weather that is coming. Guess I will have to find a warm place to stay. So once again I say, I will see you all in church and hear all the sounds of the season, but you won't see me. After all, I am a church mouse and I wouldn't want to scare anyone. Merry Christmas to all my church families. I have five of them now and that is extra special. Wishing you all Christmas blessings and peace on earth. Your faithful church mouse, Nick aka Nicholas Mouse!

OUR ANNUAL HAT AND MITTEN DRIVE



Each year we collect new hats, mittens, gloves and scarves for the children at Tatnuck Magnet School. It is one way that we can be of help here in the Tatnuck neighborhood. Principal Erin Dobson expressed it this way, telling us, "Yes, please! The hats and mittens are a Godsend to our students who are in need. We really appreciate the thoughtfulness of your community." There will be trees in the narthex where you can place your donations. We will be collecting until December 15. Thank you for your generosity and for keeping the children warm.

MSPCC CHRISTMAS TAGS

Once again the Missions Committee will be sponsoring a giving tree with tags for you to select. The tags represent children ages newborn to 2 1/2 years old. The suggested value of gifts is up to \$25.00. Please return your wrapped gifts to church by Sunday, December 8. A representative from the MSPCC (Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) will be speaking at our Fellowship meeting on Tuesday, December 10th. If you would like to learn more about their mission and programs, you are welcome to come and attend that meeting. If you have any questions, please contact a member of the Missions Committee, either Ruth Nickerson, chairperson at 508-799-5314 or Sue Anderson at 774-253-0715.

Blessings - The Missions Committee

The MACUCC is now the SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE

On November 1-2, the United Church of Christ here in New England met at the DCU in Worcester. More than 800 delegates and attendees from MA, RI and CT joined together for worship, workshops and a keynote address by Valarie Kaur, founder of the Revolutionary Love Project. The weekend was titled, UNBOUND, John 11:32-44. There was much business to attend to because three of the historic New England conferences voted to join together as one, one in faith, one in purpose, one united in Jesus Christ. All agreed that letting go is a hard thing to do. There have been many dedicated people who have spent the last few years working on the organizational work of things like budgets, policies and procedures. As a result, as members of the new Southern New England Conference, we will begin a new faith journey with our sisters and brothers in Christ from Rhode Island and Connecticut.

A Thank you note from Jane Boggs:

I wanted to do this operation myself and not be so utterly dependent as before.

Well, almost. George did a whole lot of things, but that didn't really count, I thought, for that was only usual. So George drove me to that hospital at least seven times for pre-operation visits which were required, but also for "pre" runs, including office, etc., etc. Today, I look at the lovely flowers, the happy "dancing" balloons, the great cards. I think too of the seemingly endless visits. And I look at the stack of books Betty Dalbeck gave me, all of which I took with me. All about "Tea for Two" in wonderful places. How did she know I loved Maine so? I thought people over 80 weren't that sharp anymore! (surprise-surprise Jane!)

So, anyway, I am truly astounded! Words seem so inadequate to say "Thank you". I want so much to say that and I say "Thank you" at least 3 million times!

In Christian Love,
Jane Boggs

Laundry Love



The machines were humming last month thanks again to your generosity. \$60 in cash was donated along with 5 large jugs of detergent. Also 2 jumbo boxes of Band-Aids for the first aid zip-lock kits and 56 personal size toiletries, from bar soap to deodorant. Every item will find its way to help someone. Your donations each month are truly appreciated in this unique ministry.

Our next collection Sunday is on December 8th, for delivery that week. Place donations UNDER the Bubble Tub in the Narthex and please give cash to Linda Ann.

The Christmas Fund

Provides direct financial assistance to retired and active United Church of Christ authorized ministers and lay employees and their surviving spouses, including pension and health premium supplementation, emergency assistance, and Christmas thank-you checks. A ministry of the Pension Boards, the offering is received annually at Christmas time. Please give generously!

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED
SUPPORT!**

Fellowship News

We have several activities planned for the month of December. We meet on Tuesdays at 10:00 am in the church parlor with coffee and goodies followed by a program or activity. Everyone is welcome, so please join us if you are able. We look forward to seeing you there.

Dec. 3 An Advent program with Carissa Rodriguez

Dec 10 A representative from the MSPCC will be here to talk a little about what they do. They will also be picking up the gifts we have purchased for the children whose names are on the tags. We also made mugs of candy to give to the parents.

Dec 15 Advent Sunday. Hospitality will host coffee hour.

Dec 17 We will fill cookie tins for our shut-ins and staff. Please bring a dozen or so of your best homemade cookies. We will also have an easy Christmas craft project to do.

Dec 22 Fellowship hosting Coffee Hour.

Dec 24 No meeting today. Christmas Eve. Candlelight church service at 7:00 pm.

Dec 25 Merry Christmas! Celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Dec 31 No meeting today. New Year's Eve. Welcome 2020.

There will be no meetings in January. We will meet again on February 4, 2020. See you in the New Year.

Save the Dates!!!

Sunday, December 22, 10:00 a.m. ~ Christmas Sunday. Come and see the beautiful poinsettias, our church decorations, and experience beautiful Christmas music from our choir, organ, and special music.

Tuesday, December 24, 7:00 p.m. ~ Christmas Eve. Join us as we celebrate Christmas Eve with a traditional Festival of Lessons and Carols. The service will close with candlelight, as we sing Silent Night with family and friends.

Sunday, December 29, 10:00 a.m. ~ New Year's Sunday

Sunday, January 5, 10:00 a.m. ~ Epiphany Sunday





Order Your Poinsettias for Christmas 2019

Our Sanctuary will be decorated with Poinsettias on Christmas Sunday, December 22nd. If you'd like to order flowers in memory of a loved one, to honor someone, or just like to help with our holiday beautification, please indicate your preference on the form. Return the form to the office, or place in the offering plate (in an envelope), with your check or cash by **Tuesday, December 17th.**

I would like to give _____ poinsettias at \$10.00 each.*

____ In memory of _____

____ In honor of _____

____ In celebration of the season!

My name** _____

My phone and/or email contact ** _____

My post-Christmas distribution preference - I will:

Leave ____ plants for a person who is ill or shut-in

Pick up ____ plants after the Christmas Eve service

* Recognitions will be in the Sunday Bulletin

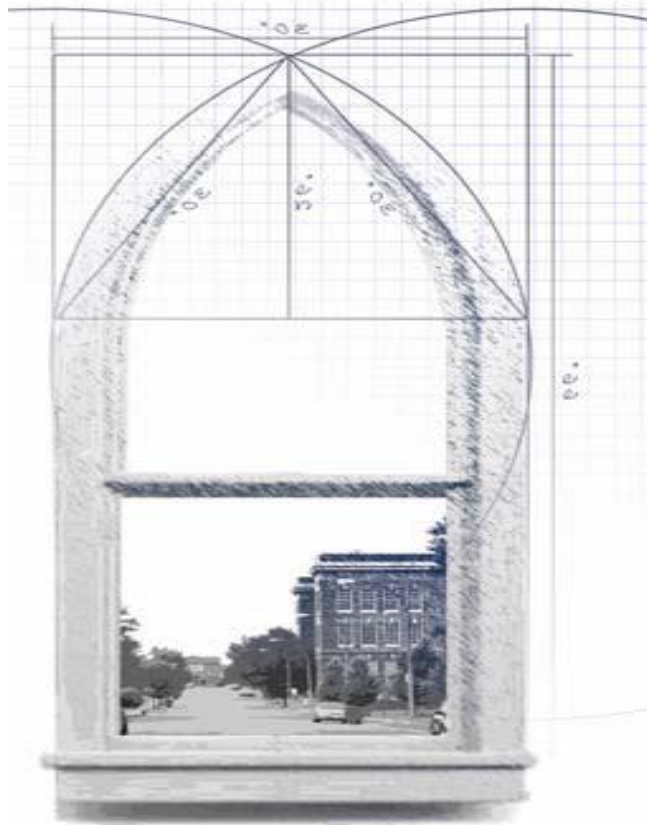
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Board of Trustees Restarts Window Project

We are happy to share that we are restarting the project to refurbish and paint the church windows. It has been a few years since we attempted to raise funds to paint our windows. Our church windows are still in great need of repair and painting.

Would you consider making a donation to this worthy cause? The estimated cost is \$5,000. We have raised about \$1,000 with \$4,000 to go. With your help and God's provision, we can paint and restore our windows for the future. Thank you for your help in the past....we appreciate your help for the future.





FCC Worcester Calendar

December 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 First Sunday of Advent 10:00am Worship 10:30am Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor 2:00pm Iglesia De Dios La Ultima 6:30pm AA Meeting-Hall	2 10:00am Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor 7:00pm AA Meeting-Parlor	3 10:00am Fellowship-Advent Program with Carissa Rodriguez 7:00pm Iglesia De Dios La Ultima	4 7:00pm Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor	5 6:30pm AA Meeting-Hall 7:00pm Choir	6 7:00pm Iglesia De Dios La Ultima 9:00pm Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor	7 10:00am New Hope SDA-sanctuary & parlor 12:00pm Church of God-Hall
8 Second Sunday of Advent 10:00am Worship 10:30am Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor 11:30am Trustees Meeting 2:00pm Iglesia De Dios La Ultima 6:30pm AA Meeting-Hall	9 10:00am Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor 6:30pm Neighborhood Watch Mtg-Parlor 7:00pm AA Meeting-Hall	10 10:00am Fellowship-Speaker; MSPCC; deadline for scarves, hats & mittens 7:00pm Iglesia De Dios La Ultima	11 7:00pm Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor	12 6:30pm AA Meeting-Hall 7:00pm Choir	13 5:00pm Girl Scouts-Hall 7:00pm Iglesia De Dios La Ultima 9:00pm Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor	14 10:00am New Hope SDA-sanctuary & parlor 12:00pm Church of God-Hall
15 Third Sunday of Advent 10:00am Worship 10:30am Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor 11:00am Advent Luncheon 11:30am Deacons meeting 2:00pm Iglesia De Dios La Ultima 6:30pm AA Meeting-Hall	16 10:00am Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor 7:00pm AA Meeting-Hall	17 POINSETTIA'S ORDER FORM DUE 7:30am Boy Scouts (Hall) 10:00am Fellowship-Cookie Trays & Christmas Crafts 7:00pm Iglesia De Dios La Ultima	18 7:00pm Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor	19 12:30pm Tatnuck Magnet School Holiday Concert 6:30pm AA Meeting-Hall 7:00pm Choir	20 7:00pm Iglesia De Dios La Ultima 9:00pm Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor	21 10:00am New Hope SDA-sanctuary & parlor 12:00pm Church of God-Hall
22 Fourth Sunday of Advent 10:00am Worship - Christmas Sunday 10:30am Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor 11:30am Church Council Meeting 2:00pm Iglesia De Dios La Ultima 6:30pm AA Meeting-Hall	23 First day of Chanukah 10:00am Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor 7:00pm AA Meeting-Hall	24 Christmas Eve 10:00am No Fellowship 7:00pm Iglesia De Dios La Ultima 7:00pm Christmas Eve Service	25 Christmas Day 9:00am Office Closed 7:00pm Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor	26 6:30pm AA Meeting-Hall	27 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 5:00pm Girl Scouts-Hall 7:00pm Iglesia De Dios La Ultima 9:00pm Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor	28 10:00am New Hope SDA-sanctuary & parlor 12:00pm Church of God-Hall
29 10:00am Worship - New Year's Sunday 10:30am Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor 2:00pm Iglesia De Dios La Ultima 6:30pm AA Meeting-Hall	30 10:00am Resurrection Ministries-3rd floor 7:00pm AA Meeting-Hall	31 New Year's Eve 10:00am No Fellowship 7:00pm Iglesia De Dios La Ultima				