

FRIENDLY MESSENGER

December 2023

First Congregational Church, 1070 Pleasant Street, Worcester, MA 01602
www.fcc-worcester.org · Office: 508-752-4635 · office@fcc-worcester.org
Office hours are Tuesday - Thursday from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm
Rev. John R. Jones · pastor@fcc-worcester.org



Sometimes in church we say things like, "Oh they only come on Christmas and Easter" as if that's a bad thing. Of course we would prefer if people were passionate about weekly attendance. But we can be very grateful for people who only come on Christmas and Easter. They help lend a sense that this celebration is special. In their very busy schedules, often with challenging family situations they take family time to share their presence with us. It's too bad that some have a sense that if they don't come often they shouldn't come at all. If they only knew how delighted we are to share a beautiful and Holy Night with them. Also we can learn from this. When our services are truly joyful and truly speak to the human longing for peace, joy, hope, and love, and when the services are tied to extravagant generosity and care for even strangers, then people come. In fact, people can't wait to come. Christ is born every day, and rises again every day. When we think about our standards and goals for worship excellence we would do well to think about Christmas and Easter services as our weekly standard.

These high holidays are when people experience an extraordinary sense of shared community and connectedness. What a goal it would be to make what is extra-ordinary, ordinary. Special music every week. A special sense of connection every week. Special family time every week. A special sense of hope, joy, love, and peace every week.

God has given us the gifts to make each week's service something that is the highlight of our week. It's a matter of calling our musical gifts out of the woodwork. Not hiding our decorative gifts under a bush. Seeing each Sabbath as an absolute time of renewal. Each week a restart, a revival.

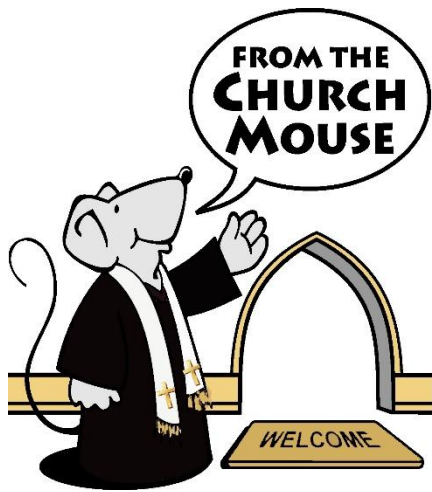
On another note: As a young man I walked from London to Bethlehem arriving on Christmas Eve. That night our pilgrimage groups read prayers for peace we had gathered as we walked and that were sent from around the world. Tourists and other pilgrims joined us in our peace prayer vigil. Together we read the prayers from around the world in many languages. We sang and lit candles. That pilgrimage and Christmas Peace Vigil has helped inspire a lifetime devoted to peacemaking.

That's the power of worship. So we're so grateful when anyone decides to join us in worship anytime.

Hope, joy, peace, love. So much love to share.

Pastor Jack





Hello everyone! This is the most exciting time of year! I love seeing all of the decorations going up, flowers coming in and beautiful lights illuminating the sanctuary. I can hardly wait for Christmas! I love waiting in the stable under the hay where no-one can see me cuz I wouldn't want to get caught! Celebrating the whole month of December is the absolute best! Seeing the Advent Wreath being lit - first HOPE, then PEACE, then JOY then, LOVE and ultimately, the CHRIST candle on Christmas Eve, all being lit and passages being read by different people in the congregation is so inspiring. The music at Christmastime is positively beautiful, too. Pastor Jack and Scott are planning some great services so be sure to be here. I wouldn't want you to miss out!

Christmas blessings,
Your friendly church mouse, Nick



MISSIONS PROJECT



Every year we sponsor children through the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children by obtaining the ages and gift requests of children in need. This year we are sponsoring 25 children. We put their information on tags and hang them on the Christmas tree in the sanctuary. If you would like to sponsor a child, you can choose a tag from the tree and let us know which tag you have taken. Of course, you can sponsor as many as you would like. We spend \$25 on each child. Please wrap your gifts and return them to the church so we can check off their names. Someone from MSPCC will come and pick them up. If you have any questions, please contact Ruth Nickerson or Sue Anderson.



Hats, Mittens & Scarves



It's that time of year again when the cold winds begin to blow and the pristine snow covers the earth. We want to make sure our neighborhood children are warm and dry. The best way to do that is to collect as many hats, mittens, gloves and scarves as we can for our trees that will be set up in the narthex and parlor of the church. Once they are all collected, they'll be delivered to the Tatnuck Magnet School for any children who need them. **Please help us to fill our trees and keep our children warm!**

JOIN US FOR ADVENT WORSHIP

Pastor Jack and Scott have some wonderful plans in store for us!

The First Sunday in Advent

December 3, 2023



Hope

Please join us at **10:00 a.m.** as we begin to prepare to celebrate the miracle of Christ's birth, lighting the candle of Hope.

Our Hope is in the coming of our Lord

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." ~ Romans 15:13

The Second Sunday in Advent

December 10, 2023



Peace

Please join us at **10:00 a.m.** as we continue preparing to celebrate the miracle of Christ's birth, lighting the candle of Peace.

"A voice cries out in the desert, prepare the way of the Lord!" ~ Matthew 3:3

The Third Sunday in Advent

December 17, 2023



Joy

Please join us at **10:00 a.m.** as we continue preparing to celebrate the miracle of Christ's birth, lighting the candle of Joy.

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: Rejoice!" ~ Philippians 4:4

The Fourth Sunday in Advent

December 24, 2023



Love

Fourth Sunday in Advent
Please join us for worship at **10:00 a.m.** for morning worship, as we light the candle of Love.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." ~ Isaiah 9:6

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

December 24, 2023

7:00 p.m.



Christ

Join us for a beautiful Christmas Eve Service with candles, candle lighting, some very special music, and the Service of Lessons & Carols.

"When they saw the star, they were filled with joy." ~ Matthew 2:10

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE

10:00 a.m.



"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

~ Luke 2:11

ZOOM OR YOUTUBE



Our Sunday services will be available via Zoom and afterwards on YouTube! If you are at home and would like to join us virtually on Sunday mornings at 10 am, you can do so by following this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83102423294?pwd=RjhHZGNDZDJyODNHWFVfabnRVZ2Vldz09>



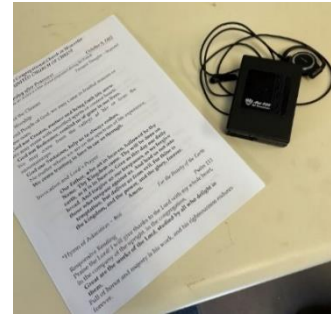
You can also find our latest services here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDQmijukLaC24hwdyayupdg> or by searching "First Church, Worcester" in YouTube.



Accessibility Items Available for Worship!

Did you know that we now offer large print bulletins? That's right! They are available in the narthex as you enter the sanctuary. We also have hearing assistance devices that make hearing what is said at the pulpit much easier! They are also in a basket on the table in the narthex.



Hospitality

Please join us in the parlor for coffee and goodies every Sunday after worship. If you are able to host a coffee hour, there is a sign-up sheet on the table. If you bring the goodies, at this time of year, we provide the coffee, tea, hot chocolate, hot cider and paper goods. You don't even have to bake, store-bought is A-OK. It doesn't have to be fancy either. Fruit is always good and so are crackers and cheese. Also, two or more people can sign up together.

Hope to see you there and maybe adding your name to the sign-up sheet!



"Any time we practice hospitality we follow in the steps of our lavishly hospitable God."



Carpet Fund

Our sincere thanks for your continued contributions to our Teddy Bear Bank in the narthex before the service and in the parlor following it. You make him so happy!

"The Act of Giving Changes Us, Making Us More Like Our Generous Creator."

God is the ultimate giver who gave the most precious gift, His son Jesus.



Youth Outreach

As part of our renewal, Pastor Jack has succeeded in starting our youth group back up! This just goes to show you that we can do anything we put our minds to. Their first project was to sell Thanksgiving pies at Coffee Hour after church. It was a team effort, guided and aided by Pastor Jack. Lending a helping hand were Shelly, Norman and Sue. Joey did a terrific job peeling apples and mixing pumpkin pie ingredients and Pastor Jack did an amazing job putting everything together, baking the pies and getting them over to the church in one piece. Thanks goes out to Shelly for all of her help and for taking these great pictures. Khloe and Joey sold them ALL at Coffee hour. They even let us sample them before buying, so you KNOW they were delicious!

If you know any teens in the community who are looking for something fun and exciting to do, advise them to join this newly formed group. I promise they'll love it!



May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ~ Romans 15:13

WINTER CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

Come and join us on **WEDNESDAYS at 10:00 am** for some great fellowship and fun!



Our lunch at Charlie's Restaurant in Spencer was a nice gathering with good food and even better conversation. Our **B I N G O** day on **November 29th** promises to be lots of fun. Why not join us?

On **December 6th** we have an **Advent Program** planned.



Join us at Val's on Wednesday, **December 13th** at 12 noon for The **Holden Senior Center's Annual Holiday Luncheon**. They're having a buffet style lunch with music provided by Rusty Guertin. I heard that Santa Claus will be stopping by! The cost is \$15 a person. This is a limited seating event, so you must sign up early. If you would like to join us, please speak with Connie

MacInnis. Also let them know of any dietary restrictions you may have and they'll try their best to accommodate you.

Of course, our plans are always subject to change but that doesn't happen very often.



If you have some news, an article, or an announcement that you would like to put in the newsletter, please leave it in the office with Shelly, give it to Sue Anderson or email her at deegram@charter.net



We would like to keep Hampton Bagdasarian in our prayers as he is having trouble with one of his eyes; Connie MacInnes requests prayers for her niece Linda and friend Marie Samuelson who is very ill; Judy Mitchell requests prayers for her granddaughter, Ellanora; Sue & Norman Anderson request prayers for their daughter, Melanie Anderson, Sue's brother, Danny Waskevich, and their friend, Roger Waite. Dawn & Matt Ahaesy request prayers for Dawn's dad, Francis Lajoie and also for Gina Ahaesy; The Deacons request prayers for Betty Dalbeck who is in hospice, Dolores Trzcinski, Jeanne Fassett, Paul Scherdell, and Joyce & Armand Thienel. Our prayers are also with Normairis Rivera's son, Joey. Kristin Olson requests prayers for Mitch Bourque. Prayers also continue for MaryKay McGrail as she recovers from cancer and for Erika Vecsey, who is also battling cancer. In addition, we request that prayers continue for Doug Perkins. Greg Waters and Cindy MacLaurin request prayers for Cindy's mother, whose cancer has returned in her other lung.

If you would like to add a prayer concern or update our list, please email the church office at office@fcc-worcester.org or call the office at 508-752-4635.

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." ~ Isaiah 41:10

Stewardship

Our Stewardship Committee would like to shout out a big Thank You to all who have returned their pledges. If you haven't returned yours yet, please get them to us as quickly as possible. If you don't get envelopes but would like to, please let Shelly in the office know. These are available even if you don't pledge but would like envelopes to use as you are able.



Carty Cupboard

The First Sunday of Every Month



Thank you so much for so many Carty Cupboard donations. In November, we donated 15 more bags of groceries! **Thanks a million!** Donating non-perishable items, personal care items and/or baby items are always welcome. **Thank you for the difference you make in so many lives!**



Deacons Fund

On the first Sunday of every month, we take up a collection that is used to provide one-time, emergency assistance to a neighbor in need. Blue envelopes are included in your bulletin for this offering. Your contributions are greatly appreciated! **Thank you and God bless!**



We Gratefully Acknowledge Your Gifts

We know that we request a lot on the first Sunday of the month however, your contributions whenever you are able to give them, are greatly appreciated.



December
01 Carlo DiBonaventura 05 Kenneth Sawyer 11 Sienna Rucinski
16 Barbara Chad 18 John Dalbeck 26 Marie Trzcinski 28 Jim Mirick
29 Lynn Kapinos 29 Rev. Natalie Maynard

January
10 Jackson McGrail 02 Rev. Jack Jones 13 Melanie Anderson 25 John Hakkila



December
08 Deb & Ken Holmes

January
23 Phillip & Lorna Cardin



Order your Poinsettias for Christmas!

Our Sanctuary will be decorated with Poinsettias on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. If you'd like to order flowers in memory of a loved one, to honor someone, or would 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 **Sunday, 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 e-mail contact** _____

My post-Christmas distribution preference:

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

Pick up _____ plants after the Christmas Eve or Christmas Day service

* Recognition will be in the Sunday Bulletin

****Please Print**



Sunday

03 10:00 am First Day of Advent ~ **HOPE** FCC Worship Service Communion Sunday
With Gluten Free Communion and Grape Juice
Carty Cupboard Collection
Deacons Fund Collection

Wednesday

06 10:00 am Fellowship ~ Advent Program

Sunday

10 10:00 am Second Sunday of Advent ~ **PEACE** FCC Worship Service
11:30 am Trustees Meeting

Wednesday

13 11:30 am Fellowship ~ Lunch & Music at Val's - Meet in church parking lot

Sunday

17 10:00 am Third Sunday of Advent ~ **JOY** FCC Worship Service
11:30 am Deacons Meeting

Wednesday

20 10:00 am Fellowship

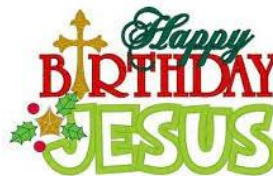
Sunday

24 10:00 am Fourth Sunday of Advent ~ **LOVE** FCC Worship Service
7:00 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service - Lighting of the Christ Candle along with the Advent Candles



Monday Christmas Day

25 10:00 am FCC Worship Service



Sunday



31 10:00 am Worship Service [New Year's Eve](#)

