

FRIENDLY MESSENGER

December 2020

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. Blessings on each of you during this season of Advent.

Celebrating Christmas in 2020 is a whole new experience for us. One of the side effects of the pandemic is that it causes us to slow down and reflect on what is truly important about the Advent and Christmas seasons. The decorations will come and go, but the true spirit of the season is what will carry us through the advent of God coming to earth through His only son, Jesus, change our lives and/or our outlook? These are just a couple of the questions we should be asking from now until Christmas Day and beyond. The advent of Jesus's birth made a big difference in the life of John the Baptist. Consider the words Zacharias spoke about his future son, John, in Luke 1:76-79. "And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins." The coming of Jesus gives us, as Christians, a clear path out of darkness and sin for our entire lives. This is the main reason that we rejoice! All the symbols of the season point to the heart of Christmas which is the birth of Christ. The tree reminds us that He is the creator of the tree, that is, the tree of life. The wreath teaches us that God's love for us is eternal. The candles are a reminder that Jesus is the light of the world shining in the darkness. The candy cane takes the shape of a shepherd's crook, representing the humble shepherds who were the first to worship the newborn Christ. We follow the star that points to Jesus as the one true way. The angels sing out the good news that Jesus is born. Finally, we reflect on the manger, the symbol of His birth that would bring salvation to the world.

This may be a difficult year to put up decorations. We may not have that "Christmas spirit" as much as usual. Perhaps for a while, we should try to tune out the bad news. Maybe we should sit with our cup of Christmas cheer, reflect on our nativity scene, and think, pray, and meditate on the one who saved us and loves us the most, Jesus.

Then after and throughout these days of Advent, let us gather safely in church and in our homes, and remember the true meaning of this holy season. Let us thank Him for the good things that have happened in 2020. Then, just maybe, away from the noise and distractions, the spirit of Christmas will come to us and fill our souls.

See you in church.

Because He Lives...so do we!

Rev. Bob Jackson

Stewardship

Our sincere thanks to all who have returned their pledge cards. We know it isn't easy during these trying times but your support is very important in keeping our church running smoothly. Whatever you are able to give is most welcome and appreciated, so please return your pledge cards as soon as possible. You can place them in the offering plate or mail them to the office.

Thank you and God bless you,
The Stewardship Committee



Fellowship has been meeting downstairs in the hall at 10:00 am on Tuesday mornings where we wear our face masks and practice social distancing. We are planning three meetings in December before we take a break for the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

On December 1st, we will have a craft day. Everything will be supplied to make a seasonal decoration.

On December 8th, we will watch a movie entitled, I Can Only Imagine. Dennis Quaid and Trace Adkins star in this inspiring true story behind the hit song of the same title. It is an uplifting, music-filled movie that beautifully illustrates the power of forgiveness and God's love. The 2018 movie runs 110 minutes. We will provide the popcorn!

On December 15th, we would like to celebrate the season with a potluck gathering. We welcome you to join us for any of our meetings if you feel comfortable.

Blessings to each of you in this joyous Christmas season.



December has arrived. We welcome in the Advent season as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We can only imagine the arduous journey that Mary and Joseph had as they traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem. I am envious of all of the animals that were near the manger that blessed night when the Son of God was born. I may only be a lowly church mouse, but I wish I had been there to experience such a miracle. Can you imagine if you had been there that night? Our church has been pretty quiet because of the pandemic, but it is good to see the Christmas tree and decorations around the sanctuary. If you look in the tree, you might see me and my friend, Joe, the shepherd. He seeks out the baby Jesus each year. It will be a different Christmas this year. There will be fewer voices of

people coming to worship. I will miss the singing of the carols and the choir. But nothing can dampen the story of the birth that is in our hearts. We know the story and we will continue to share it with those around us. Nothing can put out the light that shone in Bethlehem on that special night. Jesus is alive and we celebrate his birth by raising our voices like the angels saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men and women with whom He is pleased." Luke 2:14

Merry Christmas to my church family. I am so glad to be among you. Wishing you all peace and love in 2021.

Your faithful church mouse,
Nickolas

Nominating Committee

We have a great group of volunteers in our church however, in planning for the new year, we are in need of a Clerk and a Deacon Chairperson. If this is something you are interested in, please speak with Matt Ahaesy. Your help is very important and greatly appreciated.



PASTORAL



SEARCH COMMITTEE

Greetings,

First, I hope all is well and I wish each of you and your families a happy, healthy and safe holiday season. Now, on to business.

At the church council meeting held on Nov 22,2020 a motion was made for the formation of a pastoral search committee with a maximum number of members being 5 for the purpose of finding a new minister, due to the retirement of Rev. Bob Jackson in the fall of 2021. After discussion the vote was in the affirmative. We are currently looking for volunteer members to sit on this committee. Their work will most likely start in January 2021. If you are interested or have any questions, please feel free to contact me in church or by phone at 978-868-5480. I will be happy to speak with you.

Stay safe,

Matt Ahaesy



Hampton Bagdasarian requests prayers for June Kemp; Sue Cardin requests prayers for David Siam; Connie MacInnes requests prayers for her niece, Linda; The Deacons request prayers for Paul Scherdell; prayers for Sally Day; prayers for Marilyn Mildish; prayers for Melanie Anderson.



December

05 Ken Sawyer
18 John Dalbeck
18 Kimberly Day

26 Marie Trzcinski
28 Jim Mirick

January

08 Jenna Johnston
10 Jackson McGrail
13 Melanie Anderson

13 Connor Hill Johnston
25 John Hakkila



December

30 Rev. Bob & Carolyn Jackson

January

15 Phillip & Lorna Cardin

Board of Trustees Window Project



We are happy to share that we are continuing our project to refurbish and paint the church windows. They are 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 \$1,725 with \$3,275 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.



Another Way to Help Build Our Window Fund



Many thanks for your Window Fund deposits in our Teddy Bear Bank in the narthex. It's adding up! We'll have it there every Sunday, so please continue with your contributions and before we know it, our windows will look beautiful!

Give the Children of MSPCC a Very Special Holiday



Every year for quite some time we have been donating Christmas gifts to the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. In the past we have picked up names, ages and gift requests from them, made tags and hung them on our Christmas tree, collected the gifts and either delivered them or had them picked up.

Due to the pandemic this year, the MSPCC has requested gift cards instead of gifts. We know how much fun we usually have buying for the little ones, imagining the smiles we bring to their faces. Would you please help us again this year by donating money instead? We will purchase the gift cards, put them in gift boxes, and present them to the MSPCC who will distribute them to the parents. Although we usually spend about \$25 on each gift, any amount you are able to give will be greatly appreciated. You can put your donation in an enveloped marked "MSPCC" in the collection plate on Sunday, mail it to the church, drop it off at the office or give it to the Missions Committee...Ruth Nickerson or Sue Anderson.

We can still put smiles on these families faces and warm our hearts as well as theirs!

Thank you and God bless!

Sue & Ruth

May Peace be your gift at Christmas, and your blessing all year through!



Order your Poinsettias for Christmas!

Our Sanctuary will be decorated with Poinsettias on Sunday, December 20th. If you would like to help with our holiday beautification, please indicate on the form below.

Return the form to the office with your check or cash by December 15th.

I would like to give _____ poinsettias at \$9.00 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:

Due to the pandemic, we are unable to deliver plants to those who are ill or shut-in. However, feel free to pick an extra one up for yourself, a close neighbor or a friend.

Pick up _____ plants after the Christmas Eve service

* Recognition will be in the January issue of the Friendly Messenger