

December 2022

The Foreside Community Church United Church of Christ

Connecting to God

Nurturing Community

Discovering how our Lives Make a Difference

And let us consider how to stir up one anotherto love and good works.Hebrews 10:24

THE FORESIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH, UCC 340 Foreside Road Falmouth, Maine 04105-1428

Pastor: Choir Director: Organist/Accompanist: Office Manager: The Reverend Geoff Parker Trevor Lavenbein David Bartoletti Christina Sklarz

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Pastoral Notes

In the Bleak Midwinter

Holiness has come to live, right here, right now.

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan, earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone; snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow, in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Heaven cannot hold him, now earth sustain; heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign. In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there, cherubim and seraphim thronged the midnight air; but his mother only, in her maiden bliss, worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; if I were a wise one, I would do my part; yet what I can I give him: give my heart.

The poet Christina Rossetti wrote the poem we now sing as the carol, "In the Bleak Midwinter" in 1872. Still today, the text compares and connects more traditional notions of the holy and miraculous in the birth of Jesus with a world that is real, intimate, and can feel "unready." Its images invite us to see holiness breaking into our world not through a glossy vision of Christmas, but through our own real (and often, in this season, weary) lives.

I know that I often need this reminder, and so I will hope to share it with you: the power of Christ's incarnation is not in his arrival in the perfect host, with a well cleaned, stocked, and party-ready home, among peaceful and un-worried people... The miraculous news for this day and every other is that Christ has come to live in *us as we are, this very day, with all that has been done or un-done.*

I hope that the beauty of each verse of this carol rests with you, reminding you that hope can yet melt all that feels frozen, stuck, and solid in our world; that a drafty shed was a fit and worthy home for God, so you are even more so! I hope you remember that human compassion and connection brings a song more glorious than choirs of angels; and that the most precious gift you can give to God in this season is the openness and possibility of transformation within your own heart.

On behalf of the staff and leadership of our congregation, I want to thank you for the gift of your presence as we worship through this holy season, bringing just who you are... to behold and share again the good news for all people: God is with us, come to share our lives and call us to even greater life in Christ's love and peace. We wish you many blessings to you this Advent, a Merry Christmas season to come, and joy in the New Year.

I am fully vaccinated and am available for times to visit, sit, or pray together as you would like. If you would like to schedule a meeting, <u>you can do so</u> here, or by contacting me <u>by email.</u>

> Blessings of the Spirit to you, Pastor Geoff

On the road and missing a sermon? Want to go back and revisit any one sermon? Want to share a sermon with a friend or family member? Pastor Geoff's sermons in both written and audio form from May 2019 to the present can be viewed and/or heard on FCC's website at: <u>http://www.foresidechurch.org/index.php/</u> <u>category/sermons/</u>.

December 11: Christmas Pageant Sunday

Children and youth will join the congregation this Sunday morning for our annual Christmas pageant, which will be presented during the morning service.

December 18: (morning) Music Sunday Service

Our annual service of song, join us to partake in the music of the season. Children are encouraged to join us for the service. Sunday school will not be held.

<u>December 18: (afternoon) Caroling and Luminaries Family</u> <u>Church</u>

Join us at **3:45 p.m.** to make luminaries **and/or at 4:15 p.m.** for carols outside around the fire. Fellowship will provide sweet treats and drinks. Festive attire is encouraged, and all are welcome!

<u>December 24: Christmas Eve</u>

Services will be held in the sanctuary at: 4:00 p.m., 7:00 p.m., and 11:00 p.m.

December 25: Christmas Day

All are wished the warmest Christmas on this most special day.

There will be no services held.

An Advent Invitation

FCC member, The Reverend Chuck Erb, has volunteered to prepare a 10-12 minute "Devotion" for each of the eight combined days (Tuesdays and Thursdays) of December. Contact Rev Chuck and he will add you to his email list if you wish to offer your devotions in your own time frame. Call 844-8929 or email <u>cerserb@gmail.com</u>.

Again, participation and reflection on your own time during this Advent Season.

ADVENT 2022



worship in the sanctuary....

...and attendance on Sundays is open to all with the following prevention protocols in place:

- Masks are now optional, but feel free to wear as your comfort level dictates.
- We ask households to give each other good social distance.
- Windows will be opened enough to increase

ventilation.

• Worship will also be live-streamed for any who cannot - or do not feel comfortable - attending by going to:

https://www.youtube.com/ ForesideCommunityChurch Bulletins for each service, including words to that day's hymns are also posted at this website address.

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A Further Invitation for Advent

We will gather weekly during Advent to share our reflections on the *Richard Rohr Daily Meditations*, which are emailed from the **Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC)** each day. Whether you are a regular reader of these or have never read them before, you are welcome.

The first meeting will be on **Friday, December 2 at 10:00 a.m**. Pastor Geoff has offered his office (upstairs next to sanctuary side door) for our meeting place that day because all other spaces will be filled with people preparing for the Christmas Fair. Each of our Advent meetings will begin with a brief silent meditation, followed by discussion. **We will meet for an hour.** Our focus for the discussion each time will be on what each of us brings from reading the daily meditations during the prior week, including what especially resonated, what was challenging, and what questions the readings raised. You can sign up to receive the daily meditations on the CAC website (cac.org). There is no charge for these.

The meeting day and time may change going forward. The group which meets on December 2 will decide which weekday morning and at what time the next three meetings will occur. Preferences from interested people, who cannot be there on Friday will be considered also. Please contact Joan Murray at <u>murray.joanb@gmail.com</u> or at 781-540-4503 before December 2 with your meeting day and time preferences if you are interested and cannot join us on Friday. After December 2 you can contact Joan to learn the dates and time of the next three meetings. Finally, feel free to contact Joan with your questions on any date!



UPDATES, REPORT OUTS, AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Have Yourself a Very Green Christmas! (Greetings from the "Green Team!")

greenery are made entirely from plastic. (If you do use artificial, continue to use for as many years as possible.)

After the holidays, set up your tree in the yard as shelter for birds; hang pinecones covered with peanut butter for bird food. Most towns offer tree pick-up for chipping or composting.

Wreaths ~ Save the ribbons and decorations for next year's wreath or for decorating around the house. Consider disassembling wreaths by removing the wire, composting the greenery and returning the metal frame to wreathmakers.

Gift Wrapping Re-use Re-use Re-use! ~ Avoid purchasing wrap that has foil, glitter, is highly colored or shiny (many papers contain plastics); the inexpensive papers are so thin they cannot be re-used and contain toxic inks. Instead, use kraft wrapping paper; there are many with festive colors using non-toxic ink. Use plain kraft paper and add your own designs with an ink stamper, crayons or colored markers. Decorate packages with origami shapes folded from old wrapping paper. Make re-usable fabric bags from leftover fabric scraps -- or buy them from your favorite Church Christmas Fair! For ribbons, use raffia or paper ribbons with water-soluble dyes, yarn, or colorful string. If you have a woodworker in your house, wood strips from a planer can be made into pretty curly bows. Consider wrapping in beeswax storage sheets - wrapping paper and a gift in one!



Remember the "Non-Stuff" Gifts! ~ Give the gift of foods, tickets to a concert or show, bird seed to fill the backyard feeder, a generous donation to your loved one's favorite nonprofit organization. Thank you for caring for Mother Earth during the Holidays!

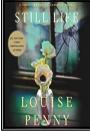
FCC Book Club Updates ~

Ten of us had a wonderful discussion of our Novem-Christmas Trees ~ Choose Real! Artificial trees and ber book pick The Last Green Valley by Mark Sullivan via Zoom. It is always so meaningful to hear everyone's thoughtful and wide-ranging insights.

> The next book will be Still Life by Louise Penny. We will talk about that on Wednesday December 14 at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom link. Zoom appears to work well especially now that it is dark so early, and bad weather is sure to follow! Note that this will be the second week of December instead of the third. The Zoom link will be provided in the weekly updates.

> If you wish to read ahead, the January book will be <u>Return of the Native</u> by Thomas Hardy. Happy holidays to all! Summaries follow: FMI: mimihinkel@gmail.com

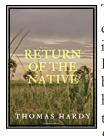
Still Life by Louise Penny - December 14



The discovery of a dead body in the woods on Thanksgiving Weekend brings Chief Inspector Armand Gamache and his colleagues from the Surete du Quebec to a small village in the Eastern Townships. Gamache cannot understand why anyone would want to deliberately kill well-loved artist Jane Neal, especially any of the resi-

dents of Three Pines - a place so free from crime it doesn't even have its own police force.

<u>Return of the Native</u> by Thomas Hardy - January 18



Tempestuous Eustacia Vye passes her days dreaming of passionate love and the escape it may bring from the small community of Egdon Heath. Hearing that Clym Yeobright is to return from Paris, she sets her heart on marrying him, believing that through him she can leave rural life and find fulfillment elsewhere. But she is to be

disappointed, for Clym has dreams of his own, and they have little in common with Eustacia's. Their unhappy marriage causes havoc in the lives of those close to them, in particular Damon Wildeve, Eustacia's former lover, Clym's mother and his cousin Thomasin. The Return of the Native illustrates the tragic potential of romantic illusion and how its protagonists fail to recognize their opportunities to control their own destinies.

UPDATES, REPORT OUTS, AND UPCOMING EVENTS (cont.)

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, February 11 – 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

The Governing Board is excited to invite you to "*Why Church*?", a whole congregation conversation exploring our Foreside Community Church's future work especially designed to bring together a rich cross-section of our congregation and to include everyone who wants to participate. Whether you have been a part of our church for decades, or just joined us recently, you are invited. A full invitation with details will go out in the new year. Please plan to attend and share in this important conversation!

> A message from Casco Bay Bells FMI Dana Humphreys @ sdhhumphreys@aol.com / 860-202-7737)



Have you ever wanted to play handbells?

Handbells are not just for church! They are fun to play, a great opportunity to learn a new way to play music, and a wonderful social activity with other folks!

The Foreside Community Church in Falmouth has a free beginner handbell class that meets Thursdays from 9 to 10 am. The ability to read music makes it easier to learn, but is not required; there are other techniques for learning the notes.

If you're interested in giving handbells a try or have other questions, DM me and I will get you connected with the program!

The January Steeplenotes deadline is Friday December 16, 2022

December Birthday Greetings

Sagittarius ~ This fire sign knows no bounds. Represented by the archer, Sagittarians are always on a quest for knowledge. The last fire sign of the zodiac, Sagittarius launches its many pursuits like blazing arrows, chasing after geographical, intellectual, and spiritual adventures.

> Eric Lacombe - 1 Priscilla Simm - 4 Lucas Rodas - 5 William Rodas - 5 Stan Reed - 14 Colleen Hutchinson - 7 John Bischof - 17 John Goodrich - 17 orn ~ Capricorn is climbin,

Capricorn ~ Capricorn is climbing the mountain straight to the top and knows that patience, perseverance, and dedication is the only way to scale. Capricorns are skilled at navigating both the material and emotional realms.

Mary Ryder - 27 Carol Ward - 29 Mark Munson - 30 Marian Albee - 30 UPDATES, REPORT OUTS, AND UPCOMING EVENTS (cont.)

The Men's Breakfast...

Will be gathering on Saturday, December 10 @ 8:30 a.m.

at the church

An enjoyable repast and lively discussions are always on the menu!

FMI John Bischof jegbischof@gmail.com or 781-2391

LADIES (members and/or friends) ~ The monthly Women's (Continental) Breakfast will be taking a break in December. Stay tuned for the date of the next gathering to be scheduled in January of 2023. (FMI Deborah Gray.)

The 2022 Christmas Angels Took Flight...

... to another successful conclusion, all 65 youth received sponsors, stay tune for wrap-up details.





(pictured above) A small group of dependable outside space "ministers" showed up to rake leaves - The parking lot looks much better now! And Lopez Landscape services, who were working next door, took the last big pile of leaves that we couldn't fit into Neils' trailer.....and wouldn't accept payment because we were a church! Thank you Senor Lopez! And a bigger "thank you" to the members and supporting volunteers of the Stewardship Ministry.



Another "shout out" is due the "Tornado Team." A group of dedicated church members who took a good half of a day to clean the church kitchen in preparation of the soon to follow annual "cooking of the chili" event which proceeds the annual Christmas Fair. Thank you Jill Fox, Deborah Gray, Lois Myers, Polly Burke, and Debbie Reifsnyder. Please remember that this level of deep clean is not part of the contract for the church's cleaning service, not without additional charge. Let's all try to be mindful when we use the kitchen and its appliances, tools, and supplies.

(Sorry no picture, shy ladies...)

COMMUNITY EVENTS



Join us for an Evening of Peace in this Christmas Season Sunday, December 18th @ 7:00PM

"The Longest Night"

A Cantata of Hope and Healing A beautiful service of music, scripture & readings Presented by ecumenical musicians and clergy from local churches and members of our communities.

> at Tuttle Road Community Church 52 Tuttle Road Cumberland, Me 829-3766 info@tuttleroadchurch.org

All participants will be COVID tested prior to event.

Meditations taken from "Blue Christmas" by Todd Outcalt (with permission)

AND BEFORE YOU GO...

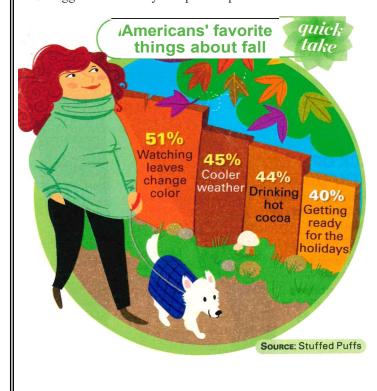
(The following article was taken from the November 14, 2022 edition of "Woman's World")

Found: Surprising health **Key to total health**

New research shows your spirituality doesn't just make you happier, it makes you *healthier* Here, easy ways to reap even more benefits

s you gather around your table this Thanksgiving, the antioxidant-rich green beans and sweet potatoes aren't the only things boosting your health-savoring the *spirituality* behind your feast is also adding healthy years to your life, suggests a new Harvard study published in *JAMA*. The researchers found that \$ spirituality-the way we find meaning and purpose in life, be it through religion, gratitude or our connection to nature-is a powerful healer. Says study co-author Tracy Balboni, M.D., senior physician at the Dana Farber/Brigham and Women's Cancer Center at Harvard Medical School, "Our1:eview of over 20 years of research

- g shows that spirituality is closely linked with better health and greater longevity," adding that when our spiritual
- ; needs are attended to, especially when facing serious illness, we tend to make better medical decisions.
-] ness, we tend to make better medical decisions. Just read on for simple, inspiring ways to get an even
- J bigger boost from your spiritual practices.



To reduce pain: Try 'active' prayer

Prayer is the number-one alternative therapy in the U.S.: Some 61% of us pray to ease pain. But the *type* of prayer is key, says Harvard psychologist Samantha Meints, Ph.D. ".Active prayer ('God, help me endure this') rather than passive prayer ('God, take this pain away') helps us cope much better with pain. The former gives us a sense of control that leads to better health." In another study, Catholics and nonreligious people were given painful stimuli while undergoing a brain scan. They then viewed an image of the Virgin Mary. The Catholics felt less pain and had more activity in the brain's memory center than the nonreligious group, notes Meints. "This suggests religiosity takes us back to a time when we felt comforted, easing pain in the present."

To slash blood pressure: Tap ritual

Attending faith services doesn't just make your heart feel good, it literally makes it healthier, says Harold G. Koenig, M.D., director of the Duke University Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health. In a study he led, participants age 65 and older who attended a service once a week and prayed or read the Bible daily were 40% less likely to develop hypertension than those who attended services less than once a week and rarely prayed. "From listening to the sermon to gathering as a group, there's a wide range of factors that reduce stress and deliver health benefits," says Dr. Koenig. And it isn't just group worship that improves health: Private rituals, like loving-kindness meditation, also dial down high blood pressure.

To ward off diabetes: Savor awe

There's a reason 95% of Americans say spending time outdoors is one of the most rewarding activities they engage in: Nature offers the world's first "cathedrals." Indeed, the awe we experience in nature is a result of feel- ing connected to something higher. And that awe is a potent antidote: In a recent study published in the journal *Environmental Research*, British researchers found that spending time in green spaces significantly reduced the risk of developing diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure. In the end, all spiritual experiences inspire a deep sense of hope, notes Dr. Koenig. That such a pro- found sensation can ward off disease itself is yet another reason to rejoice this holiday season. :-.

11/14/22 | First for women | 3 5

Dece	December 202	r 2022		Be sure to check the calendar at Foreside Community Church's website <u>ww.foresidechurch.org</u> for any updates or changes.	check the calendar at Foreside Community Church <u>ww.foresidechurch.org</u> for any updates or changes.	 Church's website changes.
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 9 a.m. Bells of Casco Bay	2 10:00 a.m. Rohr Medita- tion (see pg. 7 for details) 5:00 p.m. <i>Fair Preview!</i> (see pg. 4 for details)	3 8:30 a.m. kick off Fair Time! (see pg. 4 for details)
4 9:30 hybrid service & Communion Sunday	Ś	6 9 a.m. Tues Study Group 12 p.m. Prayer Shawl Knitters 6:15 p.m. Choir Rehearsal 6:45 p.m. AA Meeting 7:15 p.m. Bell Rehearsal	F	8 9 a.m. Bells of Casco Bay	G	10 8:30 a.m. Men's Monthly Breakfast (see pg. 7 for details)
11 9:30 hybrid service & Christmas Pageant	12	 13 9 a.m. Tues Study Group 12 p.m. Prayer Shawl Knitters 6:15 p.m. Choir Rehearsal 6:45 p.m. AA Meeting 7:15 p.m. Bell Rehearsal 	14 4:00 p.m. FCC Book Club (see pg. 5 for details)	15 9 a.m. Bells of Casco Bay	16 Deadline for January <i>Steeplenotes</i> material into office	51
18 9:30 hybrid service & Music Sunday 3:45/4:15 p.m. Luminaries & Carols	19 6:00 p.m. Stewardship Mnthly Mtg 7:00 p.m. Governing Brd Mnthly Mtg	20 9 a.m. Tues Study Group No Knitting 6:15 p.m. Choir Rehearsal 6:45 p.m. AA Meeting 7:15 p.m. Bell Rehearsal	21	22 9 a.m. Bells of Casco Bay	23	24 Christmas Services @ 4:00 p.m. / 7:00 p.m. & 11:00 p.m.
	26	27 The church office v through and	29 ffice will be closed from Monday, December 26 and including Monday, January 2, 2023.	29 Iday, December 26 Iuary 2, 2023.	30	31

Daily Lectionary Readings for December 2022

Thurs., Dec. 1 Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 Isaiah 4:2-6 Acts 1:12-17, 21-26

Fri., Dec. 2 Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 Isaiah 30:19-26 Acts 13:16-25

Sat., Dec. 3 Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 Isaiah 40:1-11 John 1:19-28

Sun., Dec. 4 Isaiah 11:1-10 Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 Romans 15:4-13 Matthew 3:1-12

Mon., Dec. 5 Psalm 21 Isaiah 24:1-16a 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Tues., Dec. 6 Psalm 21 Isaiah 41:14-20 Romans 15:14-21

Wed., Dec. 7 Psalm 21 Genesis 15:1-18 Matthew 12:33-37

Thurs., Dec. 8 Psalm 146:5-10 Ruth 1:6-18 2 Peter 3:1-10

Fri., Dec. 9 Psalm 146:5-10 Ruth 4:13-17 2 Peter 3:11-18

Sat., Dec. 10 Psalm 146:5-10 1 Samuel 2:1-8 Luke 3:1-18

Sun., Dec. 11 Isaiah 35:1-10 Psalm 146:5-10 or Luke 1:46b-55 James 5:7-10 Matthew 11:2-11

Mon., Dec. 12 Psalm 42 I Isaiah 29:17-24 Acts 5:12-16

Tues., Dec. 13 Psalm 42 Ezekiel 47:1-12 Jude 17-25

Wed., Dec. 14 Psalm 42 Zechariah 8:1-17 Matthew 8:14-17, 28-34

Thurs., Dec. 15 Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 2 Samuel 7:1-17 Galatians 3:23-29

Fri., Dec. 16 Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 2 Samuel 7:18-22 Galatians 4:1-7

Sat., Dec. 17 Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 2 Samuel 7:23-29 John 3:31-36

Sun., Dec. 18 Isaiah 7:10-16 Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 Romans 1:1-7 Matthew 1:18-25

Mon., Dec. 19 1 Samuel 2:1-10 Genesis 17:15-22 Galatians 4:8-20

Tues., Dec. 20 1 Samuel 2:1-10 Genesis 21:1-21 Galatians 4:21-5:1

Wed., Dec. 21 1 Samuel 2:1-10 Genesis 37:2-11 Matthew 1:1-17

Thurs., Dec. 22 Luke 1:46b-55 Isaiah 33:17-22 Revelation 22:6-7, 18-20 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Fri., Dec. 23 Luke 1:46b-55 2 Samuel 7:18, 23-29 Galatians 3:6-14

Sat., Dec. 24 Isaiah 9:2-7 Psalm 96 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]

Sun., Dec. 25 Isaiah 52:7-10 Psalm 98 Hebrews 1:1-4 [5-12] John 1:1-14

Mon., Dec. 26 Psalm 148 Wisdom 4:7-15 Acts 7:59-8:8

Tues., Dec. 27 Psalm 148 Proverbs 8:22-31 1 John 5:1-12

Wed., Dec. 28 Psalm 148 Isaiah 49:13-23 Matthew 18:1-14

Thurs., Dec. 29 Psalm 20 Jeremiah 31:15-22 Luke 19:41-44

Fri., Dec. 30 Psalm 20 Isaiah 26:1-9

Sat., Dec. 31 Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 Psalm 8 Revelation 21:1-6a Matthew 25:31-46



A Newsletter of

The Foreside Community Church, UCC

<u>General Office Hours:</u> Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

or unless otherwise posted

Office: 207-781-5880 E-mail: info@foresidechurch.org Web: www.foresidechurch.org

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