



The Link



First Congregational Church of Stoughton, United Church of Christ
An Open and Affirming Congregation

December 2018

Our Vision

*We are called together to embrace God's transformation of our lives and our world
by becoming and serving as Christ's disciples.*



Dear Friends,

Last month I shared with you my plans for reducing my hours to $\frac{3}{4}$ time and my hopes to bring some creativity to the worship service on the Sunday that I am off each month. In November we were blessed to have Ann-Marie Illsley lead worship on the Sunday I was away. This month I will be off on December 30, and we are planning to have a Mission Sunday that day. With the help of the Worship and Music ministry team, the service will begin in the sanctuary with prayer, scripture, and a hymn. People will then move into Fellowship Hall for about 45 minutes to work on quilts that will be given to the families at the Evelyn House homeless shelter, which is practically in our back yard. There will be opportunities for you to work on the quilt design, sew, or tie knots on the quilt top. Men, please don't assume this a task only for women – there is a need in our community and everyone is invited to help meet it.

Mission Sunday could be a time for us to grow in our faith, and to show that we believe Jesus really meant it when he commanded us to love our neighbor. I am excited to know that we have an alternative to sitting in the pews on Sunday morning that will give us a hands-on opportunity to help our neighbors, who are mostly women and children – vulnerable people who were especially loved by Jesus. On December 30, we can take practical steps to ease their burdens just a bit.

I hope you will plan to be at church that day and to participate in this truly Christian work. It seems appropriate to begin this kind of service in the Christmas season as we show our gratitude for the One who came to make love a reality for all people. If you have ideas for future Mission Sundays please let me know.

With every blessing for a meaningful Advent and Christmas season,

Pastor Mary



Book of Life

Deaths:

Arthur John, whose memorial service was led by Pastor Mary at our church on November 2.

James Littlefield, son of late church member Marilyn Littlefield, whose graveside service was led by Pastor Mary at Evergreen Cemetery on November 3.



A huge thank you goes out to everyone who helped make the Church Fair a success. Thanks to all who organized, priced, sorted, cooked, cleaned up, and helped in so many ways, especially **Marcia Olson** for overseeing this important fundraiser. We thank **Gale Porter** for refinishing the table we often use during worship for Communion and altar displays – it looks brand new! We also thank **Bob Kuver** for his participation in the reciprocal financial review our church shared with the Woodridge Congregational Church in Cranston, RI. Bob reviewed that church's financial records and their Treasurer reviewed ours. This was performed at no cost to either church. We are very blessed!



Please submit any Sunday worship bulletin notices to the church office by **8:30 am on Tuesday**. Articles for the **January LINK** will be due by **December 17**. Contact the church office with any changes or additions to the church calendar.



Our next Project 275 conversation is on **Sunday, December 2**. In anticipation of our Annual Meeting in January, we would like to hear your ideas about possible changes to our church governance so it better fits the current size and resources of our congregation.

We will begin our discussion with prayer in the sanctuary at the end of worship and then move to the church hall for light refreshments and a 30-40 minute conversation.

Our best decisions are made when we make them together. Please plan on attending.

Come Fill Bags with Hope!



Help Spread Hope into the lives of women affected by human trafficking, addiction & homelessness.

WHAT: Bags are filled with items that let women affected by trafficking know that there is a better way, they are treasured & there is help. Filled bags are distributed to women who are living on the streets of Boston. Bags of Hope founder, Jasmine Grace will also be speaking about her own painful experience.

WHEN: **Sunday, March 24, 2019** | 6:00-8:00 pm

WHERE: First Congregational Church | 76 Pierce Street, Stoughton

HOW: Our confirmands will be distributing Bags of Hope tote bags on **Sunday, December 2** so we can start collecting items as a church-wide Advent mission project. Donations to fill the bags will also be accepted after Advent through Sunday, March 17 in the Giving Corner in the church lobby.

Cash donations are also welcome
(please contact Marcia Olson | 781-344-9547 | baglolo.olson@verizon.net)

Items needed are:

Toothpaste * Toothbrushes * hair brushes, elastics and hair clips * 12 oz. bottles of shampoo and conditioner * trail mix (snack packs) * women's socks * lip balm * deodorant * small packages of wipes * feminine products * nail polish * winter hats, scarves and gloves * \$5 Dunkin Donut gift cards * Notes of encouragement *

All items must be new, full-size and individually wrapped



Parking

With the Winter Weather Approaching Please Be Considerate Where You Park

Due to the limited number of spaces in our parking lot, we have signs that say, *"Reserved for Those Requiring Proximity Parking,"* and ask that you leave these for individuals who can only walk short distances. We ask all people who are physically able to consider parking in one of the spots in front of the park on Pierce Street. This frees up spots in the lot for those who really need to park closer to the entrance. Also, we ask you to remember not to park in any spot that has a "No Parking" sign, or in the Fire Lanes. Thank you for your cooperation.

Advent Faith Practices



SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

<p>Instead of focusing on material things this Advent, focus on faith! This advent faith practices calendar rotates through three types of practices: prayer [P] service [S] and spiritual practice [SP] Make this calendar work for you and your family by adapting it to suit your needs. If you are unable to complete one of the practices on a specific day, just skip over it and pick it up on the next day. Visit https://www.facebook.com/TraciMarieSmithAuthor during December for more ideas and daily inspiration.</p>							<p>1. [SP] Waiting. Practice waiting today by taking a few extra moments to rest between activities today.</p>
<p>2. [S] Who in your community is in special need of a note, call, or visit? Make an effort to check up on that person.</p>	<p>3. [P] Today's prayer word is HOPE. What does it mean to have hope? Draw a picture of something hopeful or pray for a hope you have.</p>	<p>4. [SP] Silence. How long can you sit in silence? Try one minute, two minutes or even five minutes!</p>	<p>5. [S] Write a note of appreciation to someone in a helping or serving profession to tell them how much you value their work.</p>	<p>6. [P] Hope, continued. Today, light one candle for hope.</p>	<p>7. [SP] Imagination. Look at the clouds or the grass or snow outside. What do you see there?</p>	<p>8.[S] Donate food or other needed items to an organization that serves those in need.</p>	
<p>9. [P] Peace. What gives you peace? Thank God for peaceful things.</p>	<p>10.[SP] Gratitude Practice gratitude today by listing the things for which you are thankful.</p>	<p>11.[S] Make a special effort to offer a smile or kind gesture (such as opening the door) for a stranger today.</p>	<p>12.[P] Peace, continued. Light two candles today. One for hope and one for peace.</p>	<p>13.[SP] Play! Play a game together as a family. Did you know play can be a spiritual practice? It can!</p>	<p>14. [S] Pick up trash around your neighborhood or other public place.</p>	<p>15. [P] Pray for others today. Who do you know who needs an extra word of prayer to God? Write their name down.</p>	
<p>16. [SP] Beauty. Take a walk outside and notice three beautiful things.</p>	<p>17. [S] Do something kind for a neighbor. Shovel their walk, leave a plant, or write a kind note.</p>	<p>18.[P] Today's prayer word is joy. What brings you joy? Draw a picture of it or say a prayer.</p>	<p>19. [SP] Listening. It is a spiritual discipline to listen well. Ask someone in your family three questions. Listen closely to their answer.</p>	<p>20.[S] Compliment a stranger today.</p>	<p>21.[P] Joy, continued. Light three candles. One for hope, one for peace, and one for joy.</p>	<p>22. [SP] Hospitality. Invite someone to come to your house today.</p>	
<p>23. [S] Give a gift to someone who really needs it today.</p>	<p>24. [P] Love. Today's prayer word is love. Draw a picture of someone you love.</p>	<p>25. [P] Love, continued. Light four candles today. One for hope, one for peace, one for joy, and one for love.</p>	<p>This calendar brought to you by Traci Smith, author of <i>Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home</i>. It's a book full of simple and easy to implement faith practices for your family. Find it on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, or at Chalice Press!</p>				



Schedule of Advent and Christmas Worship Services

December 2 at 10 AM: First Sunday of Advent

December 9 at 10 AM: Second Sunday of Advent

December 16 at 10 AM: Third Sunday of Advent

December 23 at 10 AM: Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24 at 7 PM: Traditional Candlelight Carols with Communion

December 30 at 10 AM: First Sunday after Christmas-Mission Sunday



What's Happening This Month?

Faith & Fellowship Opportunities

- December 2 (Sun): Join us in the fire place room from 4-7 pm as the Green Garden Earth School hosts a showing of the documentary, **SEED, The Untold Story**. Bring a healthy snack to share. The movie will be followed by informal conversation. For more information, contact Lindsey Medeiros.

SEED: The Untold Story (PG) follows passionate seed keepers protecting our 12,000 year-old food legacy. In the last century, 94% of our seed varieties have disappeared. As chemical companies control the majority of our seeds, farmers, scientists, lawyers, and indigenous seed keepers fight a David and Goliath battle to defend the future of our food. In a harrowing and heartening story, these reluctant heroes rekindle a lost connection to our most treasured resource and revive a culture connected to seeds. Written by Collective Eye Films.

- December 6 (Thu): Please join Pastor Mary in the Fireplace Room at 11:45am for **Lunch with the Pastor**. Bring a brown bag lunch and she will provide beverages and dessert. This is a nice way to share what's going on in our lives. Bring a friend! All are welcome.
- December 9 (Sun): **Special Needs Bible Club** presents their annual retelling of the Christmas story at 4 pm in the sanctuary. Join us for this joyous Christmas pageant and light refreshments. For more information contact Bonnie Bittner or Dottie Rother.
- December 9 (Sun): **Christmas with the Back Bay Ringers** hand bell concert from 7-8:30 pm. Over the last 15 years the Back Bay Ringers have been serenading Boston area audiences with their annual Christmas concert series, becoming a yearly holiday tradition for many music lovers. This year's iteration is highlighted by popular favorites including selections from Vince Guaraldi's score to A Charlie Brown Christmas and a new transcription of Barbra Streisand's Jingle Bells arranged exclusively for the Back Bay Ringers. Join Back Bay Ringers for a special holiday treat! Tickets are \$20 (\$15 for students and seniors). To purchase your tickets and get more information, visit their [Facebook page](#). Tickets are also available on their website <http://www.backbayringers.org/>
- December 17 (Mon): **Women's Fellowship** will celebrate Christmas in the Fireplace Room from 3:30-5:00 pm. For more information contact Janet Clough at 781-344-3860 or cloughjr@verizon.net.
- December 29 (Sat): "**The Breakfast Club**," a group of faithful ladies and gents, meets on the last Saturday of every month at 9am at Bickford's Restaurant, Oak Street, Brockton. All are welcome. If you have any questions or need a ride, contact Bob Kuver at 781-341-2751.



Opportunities to Serve

- December 17 (Mon): **Friendly Service** meets from 10am to 2pm to work on community and worldwide service projects such as quilts for local homeless shelters, school kits for Church World Service, and mending kits for Seafarer's Friend. You can even bring projects to work on at home if you are unable to make our monthly gathering. Many hands make light work. Please contact Janet Clough at 781-344-3860 for more information.
- December 19 (Wed): **Mainspring House**: Every other month UCC Stoughton provides dinner for Brockton's homeless shelter. There are lots of ways to help. We need 2-3 volunteers to serve dinner from 3:30-6pm – it's a great way for a family or group of friends to serve together. Make a casserole – it can be made ahead, frozen and dropped off to the church the Sunday before it's our night to serve, or make a monetary donation to defray the cost of salad and dessert. We are so grateful to all who faithfully volunteer to make meals or serve every time we ask – living out Jesus' most basic tenet – "Whatever you do for the least of these you do unto me." Please sign up after coffee hour on Sunday or contact Charlene Smith (CJTS107@comcast.net | 781-254-5910).
- **Prayer Shawl Ministry**: Our group meets every Wednesday at 10am to knit prayer shawls for those who need to feel God's loving care wrapped around them. We also work on knit goods for the church fair. Please join us.
- **Coffee Hour Hosts**: We all enjoy visiting with friends over a snack and a cup of coffee after worship. Please consider taking a turn hosting a coffee hour and sign up on the volunteer board to cover a Sunday.



Opportunities to

- **Bags of Hope Advent Project**: On Sunday, March 24 the confirmation class will be sponsoring a **Bags of Hope** event to highlight the problem of human trafficking, addiction and homelessness and to help spread hope into the lives of women and girls affected by this scourge. As a special Advent mission project, we will be handing out Bags of Hope tote bags on the first Sunday of Advent on **December 2** and asking that each household fill the bag with one item a day throughout Advent that are most needed by these women who are living on the streets of Boston. This will go a long way toward kickstarting our collection drive in advance of the March 24 event. See more details elsewhere in this issue.
- **Food Pantry Tuesday Café Christmas Love Gifts**: The Tuesday Café, a joint ministry of our church and the First United Methodist Church at the Ilse Marks Food Pantry, is once again providing children with Christmas gifts. What a wonderful way to show our love for them. If you would like to participate, please contact Susan Hill or Bonnie Bittner to get the name and age of a child. Each gift should be around \$20. Bring your unwrapped gifts to church by Sunday, **December 2**. It does feel so much better to give than receive!

- **Food Pantry:** Each month on Communion Sunday we collect non-perishable food items to share with our neighbors who are facing challenging circumstances and food insecurity at the Ilse Marks Food Pantry. As we come to the Lord's Table, let us share our blessings with others.
- **Mitten Tree:** Area neighbors will have a warmer winter when we fill the branches of our Mitten Tree in the church hall with hats, mittens, gloves, and scarves. We will be collecting items throughout November and December when they will be distributed to **Evelyn House** and the **Ilse Marks Food Pantry** before Christmas. Please consider adding an item or two to the Mitten Tree. Thanks for your generosity to our neighbors.
- **Bottles and Cans:** Please donate your clean, redeemable bottles and cans from your holiday events and parties. They can be left in the drop-off box at the bottom of the stairs just before the church office. Monetary donations are always gratefully accepted and the money collected is used for various church ministries and operational needs. Contact Maurine Upton for more information.
- **Needy Persons Fund:** Every Communion Sunday we invite you to make a special donation to this fund through which we are able to offer assistance to individuals in need. Please put your donation in the white offering envelopes found in the pews, which unless marked otherwise, will be placed in the Needy Persons' Fund. Through your generosity, we are able to help many people. *Thank you!* If you are experiencing difficult financial circumstances and could use some help through our Needy Persons' Fund, please speak to Pastor Mary in confidence.
- **Altar Flowers:** Help to enhance our worship services by donating altar flowers in memory of a loved one or to commemorate a particular milestone. Each arrangement costs \$30. Checks can be made payable to the First Congregational Church of Stoughton with "altar flowers" in the memo line. Include a note stating for whom and on what date you would like to dedicate the flowers. You can drop it in the offering plate, mail it to the church office, or contact Janet Clough at 781-344-3860.
- **Memorial Gifts:** In the event of a loved one's passing, please consider having memorial gifts directed to the church. Donations may be made to the Memorial Fund or the general operating budget. These contributions will help us live out our mandate to bring Christ's love to the world. Thank you!



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS FLOWERS

It is time to think about decorating our altar for the Advent season. Would you like to have a poinsettia dedicated to someone special? If you wish to donate a plant in memory, honor, or celebration of a loved one, please drop a note in the collection plate or mail your information to the church office indicating your dedication. In order to have your memorial appear in the Christmas bulletin, your donation must be received no later than **Sunday, December 9**. In order to purchase good quality plants that will last, a suggested donation is \$10.00, but all donations will be accepted. After the Christmas Services, if you have purchased a plant, you are welcome to take it home with you. Members of the Caring Committee will deliver the remaining plants to our sick and housebound. If you have any questions, please contact Janet Clough at 781-344-3860 or cloughjr@verizon.net.



How to Find Out if Church is Cancelled

Once in a very great while, inclement weather or other circumstances may force us to cancel church activities. Safety and common sense should guide your decision about coming to church during inclement weather. If we make the decision to cancel church, we will announce it in the following ways:

- 1) *Church Office phone message:* call 781-344-2371 and listen to the recorded message;
- 2) *Facebook/Church website:* check out the church's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/firstcongregationalchurchofStoughton; OR go to our church website, www.uccstoughton.org.
- 3) *Email:* we will send out a Constant Contact email to everyone on our mailing list.



The Christmas Fund

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund, sponsored by the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, supports and honors those clergy who have served, and are serving, this beloved church by providing pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retirees, emergency assistance to the families of clergy and lay employees and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to hundreds of annuitants. The Christmas Fund provides a lifeline of hope to many lower-income active and retired clergy and lay employees in the United Church of Christ. Gifts from the Christmas Fund have made a critical difference in the lives of people living literally on the edge. Through your continuing faithfulness, we will be able to provide the same level of care and compassion as has been our tradition for more than a century. We will be receiving this offering on **Sunday, December 23.**



AT HOME, IN NURSING HOMES, AND ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES
For those who wish to send greetings, the following list is included:

Jennifer Alholm
156 Dean Street
South Easton, MA 02375

Wayne Alholm
149 Homeland Drive
Whitman, MA 02382
(781) 523-1640

Doris Bamberg
Copley at Stoughton Nursing Care Center
380 Sumner Street
Stoughton, MA 02072
(781) 341-2300

Walter Bamberg
2330 Central St.
Stoughton, MA 02072

Amanda Cushing
103 Benson Road
Stoughton MA 02072

Fred Dimond
382 Prospect St.
Stoughton, MA 02072

Clifford and Amy Fowler
The Arbors
2121 Central Street
Room 219
Stoughton, MA 02072

Maizie John
Bridges by Epoch
140 University Ave.
Westwood, MA 02090

Betty Lambert
19 Rose Street Unit #4
Stoughton, MA
(781) 436-3416

Rev. Jean Lenk
229 Old Plymouth Road
Sagamore Beach, MA. 02562

Dorothy Dawe
The Arbors
2121 Central Street
Apt 112
Stoughton, MA 02072
(781) 344-8367

Muriel Rowland
92 Cedar Hill Dr. Apt. 202
Windsor, VT 05089

Ruth Scrivens
18 Daly Dr.
Stoughton, MA 02072

James Williamson
Hellenic Nursing and Rehab Center
601 Sherman Street
Canton, MA 02021

DECEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>25 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen 3:00 PM Special Needs Bible Club</p>	<p>26 3:30 PM Women's Fellowship 7:00 PM Rel Addiction</p>	<p>27 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline</p>	<p>28 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl</p>	<p>29 6:00 AM BRC-FR 7:00 PM AA 8:00 PM BRC</p>	<p>30 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group</p>	<p>1 6:00 AM Boston Renewal Church 11:00 AM AA</p>
<p>2 COMMUNION FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT 10:00 AM Faith4Life Class 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 11:00 AM Healing Prayers 11:00 AM Project 275 Meeting 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen 4:00 PM Green Earth Garden School</p>	<p>3 7:00 PM Rel Addiction</p>	<p>4 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline 6:30 PM Cub Scouts</p>	<p>5 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl 11:45 AM Missions/Outreach 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>6 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:30 AM Caring Committee 11:45 AM Lunch with the Pastor 7:00 PM AA 8:00 PM BRC</p>	<p>7 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group 4:30 PM Girl Scout Troop 81007</p>	<p>8 11:00 AM AA</p>
<p>9 SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 11:30 AM Worship & Music 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 2:45 PM Special Needs Bible Club 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen 4:00 PM Special Needs Bible Club/Christmas Pageant 7:00 PM Back Bay Ringers hand bell concert</p>	<p>10 7:00 PM Rel Addiction</p>	<p>11 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline 7:00 PM Church Council</p>	<p>12 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl</p>	<p>13 6:00 AM BRC-FR 7:00 PM AA 8:00 PM BRC</p>	<p>14 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group</p>	<p>15 11:00 AM AA</p>
<p>16 THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen</p>	<p>17 LINK Deadline 10:00 AM Friendly Service 3:30 PM Women's Fellowship 7:00 PM Rel Addiction</p>	<p>18 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline 6:30 PM Cub Scouts</p>	<p>19 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl 3:00 PM Mainspring House 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>20 6:00 AM BRC-FR 7:00 PM AA 8:00 PM BRC</p>	<p>21 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group</p>	<p>22 11:00 AM AA</p>
<p>23 FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen</p>	<p>24 CHRISTMAS EVE 7:00 PM Christmas Eve Service 7:00 PM Rel Addiction</p>	<p>25 CHRISTMAS 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline</p>	<p>26 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl</p>	<p>27 6:00 AM BRC-FR 7:00 PM AA 8:00 PM BRC</p>	<p>28 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group</p>	<p>29 9:00 AM Faithful Gents-(Bickfords) 11:00 AM AA</p>
<p>30 10:00 AM Worship 11:00 AM Coffee Hour 1:00 PM BRC-Sanctuary/2ClassRm 3:00 PM BRC-FH/Kitchen</p>	<p>31 NEW YEARS EVE 7:00 PM Rel Addiction</p>	<p>1 NEW YEARS DAY 6:00 AM BRC-FR 8:30 AM N&N Deadline</p>	<p>2 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:00 AM Prayer Shawl 11:45 AM Missions/Outreach 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>3 6:00 AM BRC-FR 10:30 AM Caring Committee 11:45 AM Lunch with the Pastor 7:00 PM AA 8:00 PM BRC</p>	<p>4 6:00 AM BRC-FR 9:30 AM 12 Step Group 4:30 PM Girl Scout Troop 81007</p>	<p>5 6:00 AM Boston Renewal Church 11:00 AM AA</p>