

# The Congregate Tidings

Volume 37 Issue 12

December 2023

## The Pastor's Piece

By Pastor Sue Davidson

Advent, if one could have a favorite season of the liturgical year, I would have to claim this one for me. That is not to say that the others, like Lent and Easter, are unimportant, but Advent is mine. When Lent and Easter come I would probably say that Lent and Easter are my favorites.

So, I have to ask myself, Why then is Advent so valuable for my own faith journey? Advent is a season of preparation for the birth of Christ and sets the stage for the future reign of Christ. Advent is a preparation for rather than a celebration of Christmas. The music of Advent in many churches is confined to hymns specifically written to carry the message of preparation. While many communities of faith use what is commonly referred to as Christmas Carols, they are not presented during worship until the celebration of Christmas begins. The true celebration of Christmas begins on Christmas Eve and continues for the next twelve days.

The Season of Advent begins on Sunday, December the 3<sup>rd</sup> and continues for four Sundays. The interesting thing for this calendar year is that the fourth Sunday is also Christmas Eve. There will be worship at 10am and a candlelight Christmas Eve Service at 7pm.

The theme for the season, Advent, and Christmas, will be "The Gift of Being Present." The season, while filled with preparation and anticipation, can also be filled with worry about finding the perfect Christmas gifts. Deep down we want people in our lives to know they are special and that we love them. But sometimes we overlook the greatest gift of all...our very presence. Through scripture we learn that our spiritual ancestors were also worried—often about survival in the midst of political occupation. The scriptural response is "the Holy Living One is with you." Like a shepherd who never leaves the flock, we are held close. This season we are all invited to be the gift of presence for our loved ones, for our communities, and for those who need it most.

Each week of Advent we will unwrap a gift with a focus for the day. These are not unfamiliar gifts as they are traditionally represented in the Advent wreath. The tradition of an Advent wreath began in Germany in 1839, created out of evergreens symbolizing everlasting life in the midst of winter. The wreath, being round, reminds us of God's unending love and the eternal life He makes possible. Four candles are placed within the wreath and a candle is lit each Sunday representing hope, peace, joy, and love. It is not uncommon for families to have an Advent wreath in the home and is an excellent way to remind ourselves of the importance of the season.

My prayer for the season is one penned by Matthew Kelly: *"God of hope, I look to you with an open heart and yearning spirit. During this Advent season, I will keep alert and awake, listening for your word and keeping to your precepts. My hope is in you."*

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## CHRISTMAS FAMILY NIGHT!!!

It's here! That time of year when we come together as a church family with our relatives and friends to do a little crafting, break bread together, and do a whole lot of singing while decorating the sanctuary Christmas tree!

**The fun begins at 4:00PM on Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>.** We will start in the vestry making festive decorations for the tree, move on to a potluck supper and share a cookie or two, and then into the sanctuary to sing carols and current Christmas tunes while decorating the tree!

**So what do you need to do?** If you are **crafty**, bring supplies for about a dozen ornaments for folks to make. But if this isn't your thing, **come** and we'll turn you into a crafter. We ask that you bring a **favorite dish** to share for the potluck supper and a **dozen cookies** that spark your sweet tooth. There you have it!

This gathering is for young and seasoned seniors. If you need a ride, let us know. **Hope to see you on December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 4:00PM in the church vestry!**

***This will get you charged up for Christmas!***

## “The View from My Window”

By Jennifer Perkins , Vaughan Administrator

Here we are in the month of December and the working life of Vaughan remains quite busy with the holiday season upon us.

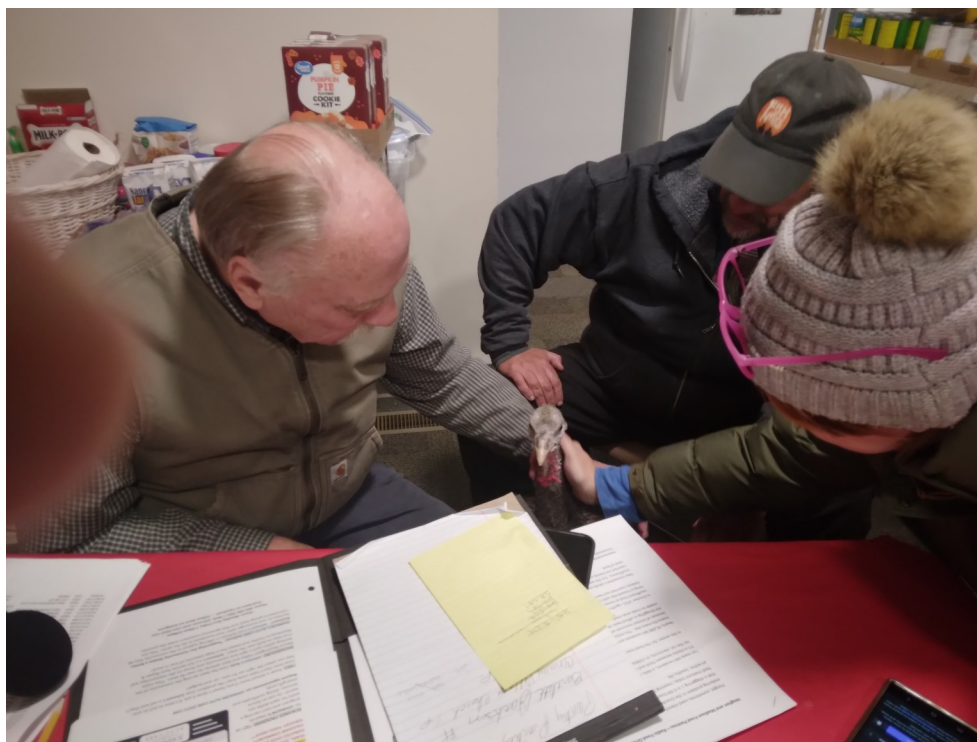
**The 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual MWV Radio Fund Drive** set an all-time record this year for money raised to be distributed among 5 local food pantries (Conway FP, Madison FP, Freedom FP, Bartlett/Jackson FP and Vaughan FP). We set a lofty goal of \$31,000.00 to be collected in 12 hours; we not only met it, we exceeded it! Our local radio station is deeply committed to this endeavor and we look forward to year 23! Also, a sincere thank you goes out to the many people who donate quietly and steadfastly to the Vaughan Food Pantry throughout the year with monthly contributions. **Thank you.**

Vaughan Community Service supplied the Conway Legion with 52 frozen turkeys for their annual Thanksgiving Dinner. Those unable to attend receive dinners from volunteers who deliver to people’s homes. Vaughan also supplied the Conway Recreation Department with 25 frozen birds for their annual Turkey Trot.

Another yearly event will take place on Saturday December 9<sup>th</sup> with the “**Cram the Cruiser**” **Food Drive** sponsored by the Conway Police Department. This year the event will take place at Market Basket from 9:00AM to 2:00PM. Food collection and money donations will be divided between the Conway Village Church Food Pantry and the Vaughan Food Pantry. Again, another fun event to assist with, and raise awareness about, the serious matter of food insecurity many families experience here in the Mount Washington Valley and beyond.

As we see 2023 in the rearview mirror, let’s look forward to 2024 with optimism and opportunity!

Warmly, Jennifer



Pictured above is George Cleveland, Clay Groves and his tukey named Turkey.



## LOVE CAME DOWN AT CHRISTMAS SINGING THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS



By Muriel Magg - Music Team Chair

Christina Rossetti was known for her deeply spiritual writings and was considered one of the Victorian era's greatest and most influential poets along with Alfred Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning. Several of her poems have been set to music, with the most familiar to some of us being "Love Came Down at Christmas" sung to a traditional Irish melody "Garton." These sweet lyrics appear in over 61 hymnals.

Born in London, England, to Italian parents, Christina was the youngest member of a remarkable family of artists, writers and poets who inherited many of her artistic tendencies from her father. Christina received her earliest education from her mother, who had been trained as a governess and was committed to cultivating intellectual excellence in her family. Christina lived with her mother virtually all of her life and never married.

The Christmas hymn "Love Came Down at Christmas" is a sincere, simple, beautiful, heartfelt hymn based on the poem by Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), that focuses on the greatest gift ever given to the world, Jesus Christ. Through its simple words and repetition, we are reminded that at its very core, Christmas is a love story between God and humanity. If you count the word "lovely," "Love" is mentioned 12 times in three short verses of "Love Came Down at Christmas." The hymn is modeled after the scripture it is based on - 1 John 4:7-11.

The first verse lays out the image of the extravagant love of God being showered down upon us at Christmas, heralded by stars and angels.

The second verse moves into our response to this great love - WORSHIP. We gather to worship and praise God for this gift of love in our lives. Worship is not something we do for one hour once a week; worship can be a way of life, always praising God, always listening for God's word, and being called to respond in action.

Verse three is our response to the extravagant love that came down at Christmas. LOVE is the sign that we offer to others to show that Christ has come. When people see us giving of ourselves, sacrificing, extravagantly loving others, that's when they see God, and that's when they see what LOVE looks like.

God's greatest demonstration of love for each of us did, in fact, come down at Christmas in the form of his infant son. Love was born for each of us in a stable, and now it is for each of us to take God's light and love into the world and share it with others. Seasons come and go, but the simple gifts of love we give are the gifts that last a lifetime!

WE ARE THE SIGN THAT POINTS THE WAY TO THE LOVE THAT CAME DOWN AT CHRISTMAS.

**May you be blessed with the love and peace that is Christmas!**



*Love Came Down at Christmas*



## DEACON'S CORNER ...

By Helen Goss

***READY??? SET??? GO!!!!!!!!!!!!!! And the Christmas rush begins!***

Isn't this how most of us feel? We all start making lists of things we need to get done, whether it be shopping, gatherings to prepare for, events to attend, cookies to bake, meals to serve, practices to make, altars to decorate, messages to give, cards and packages to mail, and the list goes on and on!

During this Advent season, I ask that you take time to reflect on this past year to remember the good, the bad, and yes, even the ugly. This all becomes part of our faith journey and is how we grow and learn for the future. There will be joys and sorrows and from both you will have grown as a person. There will be accomplishments and things still on the to-do list, but that just tells us God isn't finished with us yet. I pray for each of you that the joys outweigh the ugly times and that love and forgiveness are what fill your heart.







In my reflections, what stands out is that we have come through a year of church without a settled pastor. God truly has blessed us with the talents of many lay leaders and Pastor Sue's never ending energy. Although we will miss Pastor Sue, she has taught us well for the path forward and there will be a plan in place for 2024. Change can be difficult if we make it so, but if we choose to make it hopeful, great things can happen. May we ring out the old with Gratitude and ring in the new with Hope!

Pastor Sue's theme for Advent is "The Gift of Being Present" while incorporating the coming of the light. Although most of our traditions will be observed, there will be some visual changes in our entry way and sanctuary each Sunday as we observe Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. There will be wonderful music played, sung by the choir, and rung by the handbell players. The church family will truly be making a joyful noise!

**We will have our regular worship at 10:00AM on December 24<sup>th</sup>, with a Candlelight Service at 7:00PM that evening. We hope you will plan to be a part of both and look forward to seeing you during this Advent Season!**

***MERRY CHRISTMAS, ONE AND ALL!!!***

December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>26 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>	<p>27 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop</p>	<p>28 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:30pm - 4:30pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:30pm - 5:30pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>1 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>3 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS 6:00pm Christmas Family Night</p> 	<p>4 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop</p>	<p>5 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p> 	<p>6</p>	<p>7 9:30am - 2:30pm WIC Program 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:30pm - 4:30pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:30pm - 5:30pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>8 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>9</p>
<p>10 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 11:30am Caroling</p> 	<p>11 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop</p>	<p>12 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>13 6:30pm - 10:30pm Faith Fellowship</p> 	<p>14 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:30pm - 4:30pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:30pm - 5:30pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>15 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 5:00pm - 7:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-ADULTS</p>	<p>16</p>
<p>17 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Church Council meeting 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm REVOLVING CLOSET-TEENS</p>	<p>18 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 6:30pm - 8:00pm Crafty Hands Workshop</p>	<p>19 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm Trustees meeting 5:00pm Diacomate meeting</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:30pm - 4:30pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:30pm - 5:30pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>22 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>23</p>
<p>24 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 7:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service</p> 	<p>25 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p> 	<p>26 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>27 6:30pm - 10:30pm Faith Fellowship</p>	<p>28 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:30pm - 4:30pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:30pm - 5:30pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>29 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>30</p>
<p>31 10:00am Worship Celebration 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship</p>	<p>1 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>2 12:00pm - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4 1:00pm - 2:45pm Food Pantry Open 3:30pm - 4:30pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:30pm - 5:30pm Bell Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>5 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting</p>	<p>6</p>

## Vaughan Learning Center

By Heather Ouellette, Director



**Vaughan Learning Center** has been buzzing with Thanksgiving excitement and many turkey crafts.

We are switching gears for even more excitement as it's almost Christmas. Every year the teachers write items on ornaments that they wish they could have for their classroom. These ornaments are on a tree in Heather's Office for people to take the tag, buy the item, wrap it, and return it with the tag. Items range from a vacuum to craft items.

The kids with their teachers will open the presents during their holiday parties.

**If your interested in purchasing an item, please stop by the Center.**

## A HOPEFUL FUTURE

I would like to thank everyone who participated in the discussion on "Our Future With Hope." There were many thoughtful comments at the service on November 12<sup>th</sup>, as well as those who sent emails because they could not attend. I truly appreciate the feedback from the congregation as to the direction we should take when Pastor Sue leaves at the end of December. I want to thank Jennifer Perkins for taking notes as they will help to guide us in the future.

Overwhelmingly, the congregation believed we should continue to have services each Sunday. I believe a comment I received in an email summed up the feeling of the congregation. "I strongly believe closing our doors even just one Sunday would be a huge mistake. It could send the message that we aren't a faithful church, that newcomers are not welcome, and we don't support our church."

How long it takes to find a settled Pastor is anyone's guess, but I can assure you the Search Committee is working hard on it. In the meantime, **seven people** volunteered to lead Sunday services. We are thankful for this outpouring of support. It will significantly help in providing worship each Sunday.

The congregation was also open to having a "hymn sing" on occasion. The change in the style of service might be refreshing and fun.

Let me say it was a wonderful experience getting so much thoughtful feedback. We are diligently looking for another Bridge Pastor who will guide the congregation through Easter. I ask the congregation to pray for "Our Future With Hope."

Thank you so much!  
Karen Umberger, Moderator

## Mission Committee

The Mission Committee is selling items in the Mary Lancaster Room for the Scholarship Fund which will help students going to a College or Trade School. Make sure to check the items out on Sunday after Church. See pictures below.



### *Poinsettias!!!*

If you would like to purchase one in memory or in honor of someone for Christmas, please provide the following information along with payment of \$10.00. (Checks payable to First Church of Christ.) These can be taken home after the Candlelight Service on December 24th for your enjoyment or for delivery to a loved one.

Given by: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory or Honor of: (circle one)

\_\_\_\_\_

Your request and payment can be placed in the Collection Plate on Sunday, dropped off at the church office, or mailed to the church at PO Box 401, North Conway, NH 03860.

**DEADLINE TO ORDER IS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17TH.**






**DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES**

- 12-07 Douglas and Lisa Gibson
- 12-18 Steve and Denise Woodcock
- 12-19 Sue and Tom Davidson
- 12-26 Don and Laurel Ekberg
- 12-29 Jim and Karen Umberger



- 12-04 Carl Lindblade
- 12-04 Russell Seybold
- 12-05 Elizabeth George-Hussey
- 12-06 Mary Lou Waite
- 12-10 Hope Nusbaum
- 12-12 David Shedd
- 12-14 Gerry Tilton
- 12-14 Lee Coffield
- 12-15 Vinnie Furtado
- 12-18 Ken Nusbaum
- 12-19 Arthur DeRosa
- 12-19 Glenna Tibbetts
- 12-19 Jodie Neal
- 12-20 Carol Stoneman
- 12-21 Conner Furtado
- 12-28 Brenda Roberts
- 12-28 Steve Cameron
- 12-31 Cynthia Briggs



Prayer List

Please pray for those dealing with illness, surgery or recovery, especially:  
**Bob Borchers; Evelyn Porter; Sandy and Greg George; Linda Hyde; Patty Bean; Audrey Vorperian; Laura Jean Beeler and Angie Terry, Jennifer Terry's sister-in-law.**

Remember those in our extended care facilities.  
*At Merriman House:*  
**Liz George-Hussey; Cynthia and Conrad (Connie) Briggs and Marilyn Elliott**

*At Mineral Springs:*  
**David Tilton**

**Please call the church office with prayer concerns if you wish names to be listed in the next *Congregate Tidings*.**

**Scriptures for December are from the Revised Common Lectionary, Year B**

**First Sunday in Advent**

December 3 – Being Present with Hope  
First Reading – Psalm 80  
Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 1:4-7  
Gospel Reading – Mark 13: 24-37

**Second Sunday in Advent**

December 10 – Being Present with Peace  
First Reading - Isaiah 40: 1-11  
Second Reading - 2 Peter 3: 8-15a  
Gospel Reading - Mark 1: 1-8

**Third Sunday in Advent**

December 17 – Being Present with Joy  
First Reading - Isaiah 61: 1-4; 10 and  
Psalm 126: 1-3  
Gospel Reading Luke 1: 41-55

**Fourth Sunday in Advent**

December 24 – Being Present with Love  
First Reading — 2 Samuel 7: 8-9a  
Second Reading — Psalm 89: 1-4  
Gospel Reading Luke 1: 26-31

**Christmas Eve**

Christmas Eve – Being Present with  
Light  
First Reading – Isaiah 9:2  
Gospel Reading - Luke 2: 8-12

**New Year’s Eve**

December 31- Being Present with Assur-  
ance  
First Reading - Isaiah 62: 2-3  
Second Reading - Galatians 4: 4-6  
Gospel Reading - — Luke 2: 25-32



# Christmas Word Search

G Q C E L V E S Z L I G H T S  
 D C Z L F J S R V N U L B Z B  
 C E L E B R A T E W M J E Y F  
 Q F D C W G N R E I N D E E R  
 P F Z E H J T G C O O K I E S  
 G R A N C R A I R I W B I H C  
 O M E M N O I U K S F V A Z A  
 R I I S I N R S N D O H J D N  
 N M M S E L E A T E C Q B W D  
 A G Z D T N Y C T M J C P R Y  
 M I I I U L T T W I A B T E C  
 E V H N Z W E S S Q O S B A A  
 N I E N A Q Q T F T P N J T N  
 T N G E P Q I C O P Y Z S H E  
 D G A R J W D E Q E Y P E B S

Decorations  
 Celebrate  
 Lights  
 Giving

Candy Canes  
 Ornament  
 Presents  
 Dinner

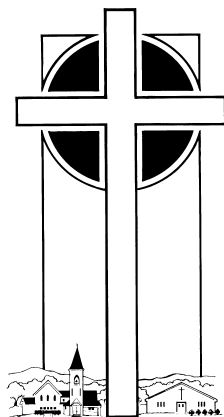
Christmas  
 Reindeer  
 Family  
 Wreath

Mistletoe  
 Cookies  
 Elves  
 Santa



*The Congregate Tidings*  
First Church of Christ, Congregational  
United Church of Christ  
PO Box 401  
N Conway, NH 03860-0401

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:

## Christmas Eve Day Services



**December 24th at  
10:00am Sunday  
Worship Service.**

**December 24th at  
7:00pm our  
Traditional  
Family Candlelight  
Christmas Eve  
Service.**

## CHURCH & VAUGHAN STAFF

Pastor: Sue Davidson  
Church Administrator/Editor: Denise Leighton  
Organist: Floyd W. Corson  
Associate Organist: Muriel Magg  
Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir Director:  
Anne W. Polak  
Vaughan Administrator: Jennifer Perkins  
Vaughan Learning Center Director:  
Heather Ouellette  
Church Sexton: Mark Schiller

**Worship Service at 10 A.M.  
Church Office (603)356-2324  
Fax Number (603)356-2106  
E-mail address:  
churchoffice@firstchurchnc.com  
\*Website: www.firstchurchnc.com  
Facebook: www.facebook.com/firstchurchncnh**

**\*Please note our newly refreshed website!**