

Deacon's Corner & more…

By Helen Goss – Diaconate Chair

The shadows lengthen and the darkness grows as December advances and the season of Advent builds. This is a time of great anticipation as we await the birth of Jesus Christ. I pray it is a joyous time for many – full of surprises and gathering with loved ones. However, as we wade into the darkness, I am also well aware that for some December brings great sadness as a year ends and one reflects on those we have lost, feelings that have been hurt, and friendships that have been broken. This would be the humanness built into each of us by a God who loves us, guides us, and calls us to do better.

We welcomed back **Pastor Sue Davidson** to start off Advent on **November 29th** with our series, *Carols for the Coming Christ.* She always brings such infectious energy with her that we know we will start off the season on the right foot! As an added bonus, we should have some children who will get to experience the wonder of Sue! I sure hope that basket of treasures appears, and that the children will once again come up front to spread their excitement as Christmas approaches.

On **December 6th** we will share a **special communion** with one another as part of our Advent program. The sanctuary will be fully adorned in seasonal décor as we appreciate our time together. Following worship, we will gather for our **Christmas Family Palooza** in the Fellowship Hall with a potluck lunch, fabulous sweets, ornament crafting, and then into the sanctuary to decorate the tree. It will be so much fun with Muriel Magg at the piano, as we sing our way into the holiday with cheer! Please plan to join us.

We will share in worship once again with **Pastor Sue on December 13th** before she departs for warmer climates and a family Christmas gathering that was never possible before. Even though retired, she has not experienced a Christmas out of the pulpit in 25 years. Now there's a true and faithful servant! We are happy she has this chance to be with her family to celebrate this wonderful time of year! She and her family will remain in our hearts and prayers.

We will celebrate **Christmas Sunday on December 20th** and have our traditional **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** on the **24th**. You are most welcome to come and share in this magical season at First Church. Just like children waiting for Christmas morning, I hope you wait with great anticipation of what is to come.

Each week will add new meaning to the story as the music and songs keep building toward the mystical birth of a baby born to save the world. May we come to expect the unexpected in this glorious time of year, and may we come with great hope and joy in our hearts as we gather in our faith community.

May you know love this Christmas!



JOY TO THE WORLD

By Muriel Magg - Music Team Chair

No Christmas carol list would be complete without the exuberant celebration song, “Joy to the World.” How many times have you sung “Joy to the World” at Christmas and thought how wonderfully it matched the feeling of the season of Christmas with the joy of the birth of Jesus? So, if you’re like me, you love the song. You love how it is one of the easier carols to sing. You love how you can belt it out and let the joy show in your voice. But did you know Isaac Watts (1674-1748), born in England, was a cleric and one of the greatest English hymn writers ever, never intended “Joy to the World” to be a song and certainly not a Christmas song? In its original form, it had nothing to do with Christmas. Though the triumphant words of “Joy to the World” exemplify the Christmas feeling, you will see nothing about shepherds, a manger, wise men, angels, or any other character or element that we normally associate with the Christmas story.

The familiar words by Isaac Watts are based on the second half of Psalm 98, and first published in 1719, in Watts’ collection, The Psalms of David. Watts wrote the words of “Joy to the World” not describing a past event (the birth of Jesus) but rather looking forward to a future event (His Second Coming!). And that’s precisely what the song is about. It speaks of Jesus’ final coming to earth when “the Savior reigns” and when “He rules the world with truth and Grace.” Watts longed for that glorious final day when the “nations (will) prove the glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love.” The survival of “Joy to the World” for over 300 years indicates something that Isaac thought was so powerful, even if none of us have yet witnessed what he describes.

Watts never knew that the poem he wrote became one of his most famous hymns when more than a century later in 1839, a Boston composer and music educator Lowell Mason, discovered his poem, set it to music and published a musical setting for “Joy to the World” in which he credited himself and Isaac Watts. A revised version of this hymn sung to the tune Mason named ANTIOCH can be found on page #132 in our New Century Hymnal. Although not intended as a Christmas song, it is a hymn filled with great hope, joy, and anticipation. In that sense, it is a perfect Christmas hymn!

As you hear and sing this beloved hymn this Christmas season, think about the words, that indeed, the birth of Jesus and the return of Jesus are “good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS TO ALL!





The Staff of First Church and Vaughan Community Service would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a new year filled with good hope, peace, and much joy.

Blessings of peace and love: Laurie, Muriel, Jennifer, Denise, Heather, Mackenzie, Stephanie, Natalie, Lynn, Haylie, Kali, Samantha, Molly, Abbe, Becca, Mark, Marino, Skyla, Sarah, Alexis, and Taylor.

Poinsettias!!!

If you would like to purchase one in memory (person is deceased) or in honor (person is living) 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 13th.

You are invited!

Jump into the holiday season and join us for a

Christmas Family Palooza

on December 6th

following Worship!



The fun begins at 11:30ish with a

kid friendly potluck,

delicious holiday treats

and ornament crafting!

After our bellies are full, we will join in singing favorite holiday songs while we trim the Christmas tree!

This gathering is for *EVERYONE* and ends in time to travel home in the light!

Please come and share in some holiday joy!



Vaughan Learning Center

By Heather Ouellette, Director

It's getting colder! It's always sad when the bikes get put away for the season, but the kids cannot wait to play in the snow!

As we gear up for the holidays, we are so thankful for the families and children at Vaughan and the Church for all the support we receive. In a few weeks, we will have our "Giving Tree" in the office. This tree holds tags with items the teachers are hoping to get for their classroom. If you are interested in helping out, come stop by and take tags to purchase the item. We would appreciate receiving them back wrapped and tagged. You can also reach out to Natalie or Heather for more information.

Merry Christmas!

Mission Committee

By Karen Umberger, Chair

During the month of December, a special offering is made to support The Christmas Fund.

This year the Christmas Fund donation will be collected on December 20th.

The Fund provides vital assistance to our UCC community including; emergency assistance for active and retired clergy, lay employees, as well as a Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December for retirees in need and their families.

These gifts of love demonstrate our appreciation for those who have faithfully served and now find themselves in times of need.

Too often we forget that many in our valley are not as fortunate as we are. To help a less fortunate family, the Mission Committee has created a “Giving Tree.” The Giving Tree will assist a family with Christmas gifts for their four children (two boys and two girls). Our Giving Tree is located in the Fellowship Hall and is decorated with Gingerbread men. Each ornament has a gift defined on the back.

We ask, if you can, to take a Gingerbread man and purchase the gift identified on the back. Please return the gift and the tag to church by Dec 6th. We plan to wrap the gifts on Dec 6th during the Christmas Family Palooza.

We thank you for your generosity and may you have a wonderful Christmas!

LECTIONARY READINGS

DECEMBER 5, 2026

Second Sunday of Advent
Communion Sunday
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
New Testament: 2 Peter 3:8-15a
Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

DECEMBER 13, 2026

Third Sunday of Advent
Hebrew Bible: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55
New Testament: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28

DECEMBER 20, 2026

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Hebrew Bible: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Gospel: Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
New Testament: Romans 16:25-27
Gospel: Luke 1;26-38

DECEMBER 24, 2026

Christmas Eve
Hebrew Bible: Isaiah 62:6-12
Psalm 97
New Testament: Titus 3:4-7
Gospel: Luke 2:(1-7), 8-20

DECEMBER 27, 2026

First Sunday after Christmas Day
Hebrew Bible: Isaiah 61:10-62:3
Psalm 148
New Testament: Galatians 4:4-7
Gospel: Luke 2:22-40



December 2026



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 10:00am Worship Celebration/Advent Begins 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship  First Sunday of Advent	30 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	1 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	2	3 9:30am - 2:30pm WIC Program 12:00pm - 2:15pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 4:00pm - 5:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal	4 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	5
6 Second Sunday in Advent Communion Sunday 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 11:30am - 12:30pm Christmas Family Pal 2:00pm - 5:00pm Revolving Closet-Teens 	7 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	8 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	9 9:00am - 11:00am Senior Non-Food Pantry	10 12:00pm - 2:15pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	11 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 4:00pm - 6:00pm Revolving Closet Christmas Giveaway	12
13 Third Sunday of Advent 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship  Third Sunday of Advent	14 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	15 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open 4:00pm Trustees meeting 5:00pm Diaconate meeting	16	17 12:00pm - 2:15pm Food Pantry Open 3:00pm - 4:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	18 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	19
20 Fourth Sunday of Advent 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship 2:00pm - 5:00pm Revolving Closet-Teens  Fourth Sunday of Advent	21 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	22 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	23	24 7:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Servic  Christmas Eve SERVICE	25 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 	26
27 First Sunday after Christmas Day 11:00am Coffee Hour After Worship	28 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting	29 11:30am - 1:45pm Food Pantry Open	30	31 12:00pm - 2:15pm Food Pantry Open	1 12:00pm - 1:00pm AA meeting 	2



12-04 Russell Seybold
12-04 Carl Lindblade
12-06 Mary Lou Waite
12-10 Hope Nusbaum
12-14 Lee Coffield
12-15 Vinnie Furtado
12-18 Ken Nusbaum
12-19 Glenna Tibbetts
12-19 Geraldine Neal
12-20 Carol Stoneman
12-28 Steve Cameron



12-07 Lisa & Douglas Gibson
12-18 Stephen & Denise Woodcock
12-19 Sue & Tom Davidson
12-26 Donald & Laurel Ekberg
12-29 James & Karen Umberger



Please pray for those dealing with illness, surgery, or recovery:
Evelyn Porter, Harry & Deb Smith, Jeff and Lois Ward, Mark Schiller, Mike James, Frances Richardson, Lee Coffield, and Pastor Sue Davidson.

Remember those in our extended care facilities.
Mountain View: **Jean Smykla**

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



Roster Update

Omitted in error:
Sandra George
PO Box 2137
Conway, NH 03818-2137
Cell: (603)520-8754
Email: Sandyman910@aol.com

Reminder to all Boards and Committees

Your 2027 proposed Budgets need to be sent to Denise at the Church Office no later than Monday, January 11, 2027.

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

TO

Come join us for our Candlelight Service on December 24th at 7:00pm.

There will be music, singing, stories told,
and much celebration as we await the
birth of Jesus Christ.
Come and be part of this night when
the Light of the world glimmers
with Hope!



CHURCH & VAUGHAN STAFF

Church Administrator/Editor: Denise Leighton
Music Director: Laurie Turley
Vaughan Administrator: Jennifer Perkins
Vaughan Learning Center Director:
Heather Ouellette
Church Sexton: Mark Schiller

Worship Service at 10am
Church Office (603)356-2324
Denise Ext. #1
Fax Number (603)356-2106
Vaughan Food Pantry (603)602-1801
Vaughan Learning Center (603)356-5213
E-mail:churchoffice@firstchurchnc.com
Church Website: www.firstchurchnc.com
FB: www.facebook.com/firstchurchncnh
YT: https://firstchurchnc.com/service-videos/