

THE VOICE of *Second Church*

United Church of Christ
50 Park Street
Attleboro, MA 02703

December 2023



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visit our website**

www.attleborosecondchurch.org

COFFEE HOUSE & OPEN MIC
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2023, 6 TO 8 PM
CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24TH, 6 PM

Second Congregational Church of Attleboro, UCC
Reverend Dr, S. William Sencabaugh, Pastor
revdrwill@attleborosecondchurch.org – c: 860-861-5003
William A. MacPherson, PhD., Director of Music
Katrina Lay, Executive Director, Jack & Jill School – 508-222-1149
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BSA Charter Organization Representative, - c: 508-918-0123
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THE VOICE

We warmly welcome everyone to celebrate God’s love by joining in dynamic worship, creating genuine community, and serving all with justice and respect.

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

December 2023

Calendar	Jack & Jill	Did You Know?	Sacred Dance	Prayer Shawl	Christian Education	Birthdays	Music Notes	Women’s Fellowship	Christmas Flowers
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Pastor’s Message

It seems that we are barraged with Christmas commercials while being bombarded with holiday music earlier every year. We know that Christmas is important to the fourth quarter for retailers, which is important to the overall economy and financial well-being of our country. So...we kind of just go along with it. People don’t boycott in mass numbers the onslaught of Black Friday Sales. We may grumble that there are stores that make employees go in on Thanksgiving evening when they have barely enough time to digest their turkey meal and shake off the grogginess from another boring football game and much needed nap.

There is the ubiquitous hustle and bustle associated with the season. Often, we get lost in the details of parties and planning. Santa is everywhere!

I understand the drive to want to ‘keep Christ in Christmas.’ I have seen this sticker or magnet on cars, and I wonder if the goal of the campaign is to keep Christmas simple or to keep Christmas religious. “Keep Christ in Christmas” is probably brought to you from the good folks who also gave us, “Jesus is the Reason for the Season.” They are very catchy phrases that actually have a lot of meaning behind them.

If we are to keep Christ in Christmas, then we need to acknowledge all that the Christmas story tells us.

The story of Jesus’s birth is told in only two of the gospels, and they leave out an awful lot of detail. It is nearly impossible for us to read the gospel accounts without adding our own meaning. If we are able to put the birth story of Jesus in its first century context, then the story might change how we view the world.

The birth story of Jesus is an alternative way of seeing the world. Jesus was born poor, to immigrants fleeing for their lives. The ones to first hear about the birth—the shepherds—were the most marginalized of their society. The two women, Mary and Elizabeth, are addressed by angels and the Holy Spirit. Again, women were not particularly elevated in their patriarchal culture. If we understand the context of the birth of Jesus, then we will be absolutely moved to work for justice in this world.

Take away all the tinsel. Take away the stockings hung by the fireplace. Take away the *Yankee swaps* and the history of all our Christmases combined. If you strip the story down to its very essence—it is the story about an alternate vision of what the world could be. It is the story of a baby born who would one day teach us what love looked like if love could actually be made manifest.

This Christmas, if you truly want to keep Christ in Christmas, or you have a strong desire to realize Jesus as the reason for this season—I would encourage you to read the stories of Jesus’s birth in both Matthew and Luke’s gospels. Don’t read them together. Read one every day for a week, then switch to the other the next week.

Matthew and Luke weren’t in cahoots. It wasn’t a group project. Matthew wrote what he wanted his audience to hear. Luke wrote a different version of the story highlighting what he wanted his audience to hear. After reading them individually—can you understand the significance of each on their own?

When you understand these Christmas stories in their first century context, you will have no choice but to keep Christ in Christmas. The added meaning may surprise you and bring you even more Christmas joy!

Merry Christmas!
Reverend Dr. Will Sencabaugh

ADVENT BOOK STUDY CONTINUES... We will continue meeting on December 5 and 12 to discuss The First Christmas, by Borg and Crossan. We meet in the Conference Room from 6 to 7 pm. All are welcome!

COCOA HOUSE AND SING-ALONG!!! DECEMBER 9TH, 6 TO 8 PM: Last year the Second Saturday Coffee House/Open Mic became a Cocoa House and Sing-Along.

It was a lot of fun. We came together and sang Christmas songs and shared some wonderful fellowship. It's like caroling without going out door-to-door in the cold! Bill MacPherson played the piano and we were entertained with a fun impromptu Christmas Pageant. This year, there may be some different surprises.

If you would like to perform a song (probably just one song) or a reading/poem, please feel free. We want to make sure we have lots of time for caroling. This should be fun for all ages!

A donation of \$5 is always appreciated and if you would like to bring a Christmas dessert to share with the group that would be great. We will have coffee, cocoa, tea and water provided!

ONE PLUS ONE: On Saturday, December 2nd at 4:00 pm, Colin and Janet Blair will be graciously hosting our joy filled Christmas Pizza Party at their home located at 20 Orlando Lane in Attleboro. Bring your favorite beverage and **\$5 per person** for the pizza. Please let your 1&1 caller know whether you will contribute an appetizer **or** dessert item by **Wednesday, November 29**. An RSVP is expected. If you are not on our calling list and would like to be, please contact Colin Blair at (508) 226-5457, or e-mail colincb@aol.com

SERVICE NOTES

The Deacon of the month is Karen Slawson.

December 3

First Sunday of Advent

Scripture: Mark 13:24-37

Sermon: "Hurry Up and Wait"

December 10

Second Sunday of Advent

Scripture reading: Mark 1:1-8

Sermon: "Peace on Earth, Can it Be?"

December 17

Third Sunday of Advent

Scripture reading: John 1:6-8, 19-28

Sermon: "Who Wants to be a Prophet?"

December 24 (10 am Service)

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Scripture reading: 2 Sam. 7:1-11, 16

Sermon: "The Joy of Christmas"

December 24 (6 pm service)

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

A service of Carols and Readings

December 31

First Sunday after Christmas

Scripture: Luke 2:22-40

Sermon: "Tomorrow's a new year"

Women's Fellowship

Holiday Fair! Our fair was wonderful! Reverend Will and Ralph were wonderful greeters. We were lucky to have many enthusiastic members helping us get through this event. We would like to thank everybody that helped; you all did a terrific job! It was a heartwarming day of fellowship as we enjoyed seeing each another.

In December during **Coffee Hour**, we would love you to bring a special treat that your family enjoys making at Christmas; if it is possible to share the recipe, that would be wonderful! Please let Sandy know, call the church office or just surprise us! Sandy loves surprises! If you could help pour coffee, tea or hot chocolate, please let us know (Sandy 508-699-2738).

Women's Fellowship is **meeting** on **Wednesday December 6, 2023, at 6:30 pm** in Ladies Parlor. We will have the report on the fair; we were really blessed. We will also be picking dates for the May Breakfast and Yard Sale. It is that time of year again; we give gifts to Fred and Jack for all the hard work they do, we will be voting on this. Please come celebrate the blessing of this group.

*See you soon,
Sandy and Betsy*

Flower Committee



The Flower committee is busy getting ready for the coming Advent season. Poinsettias will be ordered again from

Evergreen Nursery in Seekonk. You will have a choice between red and white/cream flowers. Single plants will cost \$19.50, double plants - \$25.50 and triple plants - \$32.50.

Members of the Flower Committee will be in Fellowship hall after worship on December 3rd to take orders for plants. If you plan to order a plant / plants, the order will need to be placed by the 3rd of December, but can still be paid for on the 10th.

We look forward to taking your orders and to how beautiful the altar will be in our expression of Christmas love.

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

PSM will meet on Monday, December 18th at 2:00 in the Parlor. Shawls are a tremendous comfort to individuals experiencing a loss or other traumatic event in their lives. New members are always welcome. Contact me if you have questions. *Roberta Ferguson*

COMMUNION VISITATION TEAM

The Communion Visitation Team continues to visit folks who are unable to attend services. We are happy to come to your home for a time of fellowship, whether or not you wish to take communion. We will certainly wear masks and observe all precautions necessary. You may communicate with the Church Office. Cathy Giannetti, Ralph Giannetti, Karen Slawson, Marcia Weidner and Roberta Zarrella are part of the team.



2023 is coming to an end and we have much to be thankful for! We have a wonderful team of educators, we have a supportive board of directors, and the families are wonderful as well. After 75 years of preschool, I think it is safe to say that Jack and Jill's philosophy stands the test of time! With each year we are able to reflect and adapt to the ever changing needs of the children who attend.

Jack and Jill staff and students have been learning and laughing in the classrooms, the hallways and on the playground! Literacy month successfully wrapped up at the end of November. We certainly filled up our galaxy bulletin board! I love to see the different stories families read at home.

This December we are again partnering with Christmas Is For Kids to adopt 5 children in need during this holiday season. Each classroom has a wreath hanging with gift tags of wishes. Families will take tags and purchase items. I encourage families to involve their children in the shopping; this will help them to develop a love of helping their community. It is important for Jack and Jill to give back and it feels good to know that our school community is helping to make someone's holiday a little brighter!

Our classrooms continue to be bustling with energy each day! The children continue to enjoy the many experiences their teachers provide for them! The children have been truly enjoying our guest readers and our music enrichment each month. Children will be working on special "surprises" for their families. Our schedule and routine will stay the same as we focus on the theme of family and love during the holiday season. We will be conferencing with our 3 year old families on December 7th.

We are trying a new fundraiser with 5 Below in North Attleboro this month! From Friday, December 1st to Wednesday, December 6th, shoppers

who check out and turn in our flyer will help us earn 10% of their purchases. Flyers are available in print as well as via email. They are in the Narthex and the church office.

We are excited to be holding the Cupcake Charlie's fundraiser again! This fundraiser will start on 12/11 and all orders are due by 1/2. Packs of 6 cupcakes can be ordered for \$20.00 and you can even mix and match flavors. Order forms will be available in print or via email.

Please mark your calendars now for our open house on Saturday, January 27, 2024.

We are in the process of hiring an assistant teacher who will start in January. One of our teachers will be taking leave to care for an ill family member. We know that family comes first, and I can't think of a more appropriate opportunity to show this. If you know anyone with an early childhood background, please share my contact information with them.

As we approach the end of 2023 I would be remiss if I did not thank the teachers, families and volunteers who help make our preschool under the stairs a special place year after year. Thank you to the church community for your continued support of Jack and Jill School.

Wishing you peace and love this holiday season,

Katrina Lay, Executive Director

Music Notes

CHOIR SCHEDULES

Bell Choir and Adult Choir will rehearse at regular times on Thursdays, December 7th, 14th, and 21st. There will be no rehearsal on December 28th. Regular rehearsals will begin again on Thursday, January 4th.

Given the coincidence this year of Advent IV and Christmas Eve (both on the 24th), there are still some details to be worked out in terms of when the groups will participate in worship. We will finalize performance schedules by December 7th at the latest.

Happy 20th Anniversary to the Bell Choir!

This month the Handbell Choir celebrates the 20th anniversary of their

debut: the first Sunday of Advent, 2003, accompanying the "Hanging of the Greens."

I'll quote from my Annual Report of 2004, which provides some of the history of the choir's establishment:

[In Spring, 2003] we were well along in our fundraising for a handbell choir, but not quite to the goal. After my announcement to that effect at the 2003 Annual Meeting, several more donors came forward, and within a week's time the bells were fully subscribed. The early enthusiasm for this project has continued both in the group spirit of the bell choir and in the reception by the congregation.

The bells arrived last fall, and within just a few weeks a wonderful group of players —men and women of all ages and all levels of musical experience—had come together. It has been fun for all of us not only to learn the rudiments of bell playing but also, amazingly quickly, to make real music, progressing to some challenging pieces.

The cost of individual bells (4 octaves worth – 49 bells) was donated by many individuals in memory or in honor of friends and loved ones. The names of donors, honorees, and those memorialized are recorded on lists that hang outside the sanctuary in the stairway that leads to Fellowship Hall and on slips of paper sealed inside the handle of each bell. After that first year, further donations enabled the purchase of a fifth octave.

The "charter members" numbered 18 in the first year:

Bev Armstrong, Emily Ferguson, Roberta Ferguson, Cathy Giannetti, Ralph Giannetti, Herb Horne, Jack McKenna, Sheila McKenna, Linda O'Connor, Dale Osterberg, Franklin Powers, Rich Renoni, Tom Richards, David Saunders, Fred Saunders, Sandy Saunders, Ruth Shaver, and Mary Winn

Several have since passed away, but several are still members. Longevity awards go to Cathy Giannetti, Sheila and Jack McKenna, and Sandy and Fred Saunders, who have remained in the group over the entire 20 years!

*Bill MacPherson
Director of Music*

INTERGENERATIONAL SACRED DANCE

Sacred Dance practices will be held all Saturdays in December except on the 30th. We will be participating in worship on December 17th with the Adult Choir for *Ding Dong Merrily on High*. We will also be preparing for an Epiphany piece. If you would like to be a part of movement in worship, all ages are welcome to join the intergenerational sacred dancers. We gather at 9:00 am on Saturdays for about 45 minutes of stretching, learning new dances for worship, and a little bit of just "fun dance". If you or your child has any questions please let me know at (508) 409-7919 or de_saunders@hotmail.com.

Hanging of the Greens

Many thanks to all who participated in Hanging of the Greens and to the whole church family for being there to sing and support. We are grateful to continue this over 50-year tradition and especially blessed to bring it to worship on the day we celebrated the 275th birthday of Second Church.

Diane Osborne.

Outreach & Missions

Outreach and Missions wants to thank our very generous congregation for the 2,236 personal care items donated for use by our area's newly arrived refugees! (And thank you to Jenny and Calvin for sorting and counting!)

As we head into Advent and set up our Christmas "giving" tree, we welcome your donation of gift cards to stores and supermarkets. These are highly useful for many people. We also invite you to help us to replenish the St. Vincent de Paul's "free store" in Attleboro. This facility was recently opened to the refugees currently living in Mansfield so they could access much-needed warm clothing for their families. As a result, the store needs clothing, particularly winter jackets for children, pants and leggings for girls and boys (especially ages 8-12), infants' clothing, and underwear--all sizes! Clothing does not have to be new--clean hand-me-downs are also useful. The store is open to all families in the area on the first Saturday of every month and is a much used and valuable community resource that is very grateful for our assistance.

Paula Foresman

Christian Education

Advent is upon us and there are many wonderful opportunities to be together this season. We hope you will join us as often as you are able!

All are welcome to join us for a Gathering Sunday the first Sunday of the month, December 2nd. For Littles and Elementary, Sunday School is held every week unless it is noted as a Gathering Sunday. Please note that there are worship boxes for all ages on the bookshelves in the back of the sanctuary if your child would like some quiet activities. The Conference Room is also available.

Toddlers through Pre-K age can be dropped off beginning at 9:45 in the Nursery for our Littles Program for stories, songs, and crafts that support building a foundation of their faith. As this age group is often toilet training, please let the teachers know what support they might need. Also, this class has a snack most weeks including fruit juice, water, goldfish, or an allergy free option. Please alert the teachers of any food allergies so that we can ensure we provide the right option. We are happy to add to our offerings to meet your child's dietary needs.

Teachers: Sue & Nicole

Elementary Age Students in Kindergarten and up are welcome to sit with their families for the first part of worship and will join their teachers in the Narthex when noted in the bulletin or announced. This year we will be exploring their questions about faith through skits, songs, crafts, and so much more. In the month of December, we will explore the meaning of the Season of Advent and what it means to make Christmas in our world today.

Teachers: Diane & Tina

Middle and High School Youth will be dismissed for classroom time during worship on the 2nd and 4th Sundays. On the 1st and 3rd Sundays they will participate in worship and meet with their teachers during Coffee Hour. They will be exploring the 'Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens', a series of personal stories that tackle the big question of what a 'good life' looks like (spoiler alert: the answer isn't being the most successful or having the most stuff).

Teachers: Tara & Andrew

FAMILY FELLOWSHIP

Lights at La Salette: On Sunday December 3rd, all are welcome to join us and bring friends and family! We will begin gathering about 4:45 by the pond side to share the wonder when all the lights turn on at 5pm. After we make our way around to see the lights, we will have S'mores supplies ready to share at the fire pits. If you have any questions or are trying to find our group that evening, please feel free to call or text (508) 409-7919.

Christmas Cookies & Crafting: On Sunday December 17th from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm we will gather in Fellowship Hall; all are welcome to join us and bring friends and family! We invite you to bring 2 dozen cookies to share and swap, no nuts please. We will have craft stations set up around the room and a gift wrapping corner in case you'd like to gift what you make. If you would like to volunteer at a craft station, help with hot cocoa, or love to wrap, please let me or Sue Janson know.

Christmas Coffee Hour: The Christian Education Committee and Sunday School will be hosting a special coffee hour on December 24th after the morning service. Please join us to continue our annual tradition sharing cupcakes and singing Happy Birthday to Jesus!

Diane Osborne,
Chair of Christian Education
de_saunders@hotmail.com
(508) 409-7919

Did You Know?

Our city common has always been a source of trouble almost since it was established. In 1744 John Sweet deeded an acre of land to the second precinct for the purpose of building a meeting house. Somewhat later additional parcels were added which brought the property size up to about two acres. The parish went ahead and built our first meeting house on the site. Most of the land was used for growing hay which was given to the sexton as part of his pay. Very soon however, the town inhabitants began cutting it for their own use. This started a fight between the parish and the town. The fight eventually ended up in the land court which ultimately resulted in a victory for the parish.

It seems that there is no hard evidence as to what exactly the parish owned, and the settlement of the case left hard feelings lingering on both sides.

Major David Holman had always crossed the property whenever he felt like it. One day the parish erected a fence that would help with security and improve the look of the meeting house. Well, Major Horton promptly cut a section down, which the parish promptly replaced. Major Horton again cut down a section so he could continue to use the path. Well, that did it. The parish took the Major to court. His defense was that for at least 130 years, the public had full access and why could they not continue to do so. The end result was that the parish was ordered to provide full access to the common.

In 1872 a gentleman named Amos Starkey opened a plumbing business on the common. The parish tried to get rid of the business, but Amos stood his ground. Finally, at a parish meeting on August 21, 1872, the parish informed Mr. Starkey that if he did not stop his trespassing the parish would take him to court. At that point Amos threw in the towel and vacated the property. That fall a new fence was erected to protect the property once and for all.

In 1825 the parish built a new meeting house which we know as the white church and stood where fellowship hall is today. The graves were moved to what is now The Kirkyard, and the common was sold to the town.

Ted Moxham



December Birthdays

1	Chris Brown Enoch Osborne Mary Valentine	22	Janice Fitzpatrick John Lepper Alex Robinson
2	Brittney Cassidy	23	Caroline Griffin Debbie Spatcher
3	Phil Cotsalas	24	Ruth Baker Mariah Ramsay Carolyn Werdin
4	Lilliana Mernin	25	Pete Cotsalas
7	Zachary Withers	26	Jayden Pine Larry Valentine
9	Max Lancaster	28	Camryn Janson Mike Touloumtzis
10	Carissa Johnstone Brenda Wall	29	Ellie O'Leary
11	Julie Withers		
15	Nate O'Connor		
18	Nick Macomber		
19	Calvin Turcotte		
20	Brenda Alsfeld Nancy Tariot		

A decorative border at the top of the poster featuring green pine branches, white snow, and red and gold ornaments.

Oure Pleasure Singers
present
Lessons & Carols
Saturday, December 2nd 7:00PM

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
50 PARK STREET, ATTLEBORO

NO TICKETS REQUIRED. A FREE WILL OFFERING WILL BE COLLECTED AT THE DOOR.

A row of seven white snowflake icons on a black background.

Lessons & Carols, followed by Cider & Cookies. What better way to spend a Saturday evening in Advent? The lessons tell the Christmas story, as traditionally celebrated at King's College, Cambridge. Familiar carols will be sung by Oure Pleasure, accompanied by all who want to raise their joyful voices. Oh come, all ye faithful!

D E C E M B E R 2 0 2 3

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						2 9:00 AM Intergenerational Sacred Dance Rehearsal 4:00 PM One Plus One Christmas Party - Blairs 7:00 PM Oure Pleasure Lessons & Carols
3 <i>First Sunday of Advent - Hope</i> 10:00 AM Worship /Communion Gathering Sunday 5:00 PM Family Fellowship Lights at La Salette	4 5:00 PM Altera Board Meeting	5 6:00 PM Advent Book Study	6 6:30 PM Cub Scout Den Meetings 6:30 PM Women's Fellowship Meeting	7 6:30 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:30 PM Adult Choir Rehearsal	8	9 9:00 AM Intergenerational Sacred Dance Rehearsal 6:00 PM Coffee House & Open Mic
10 <i>Second Sunday of Advent - Peace</i> 10:00 AM Worship Sunday School 11:15 AM Christian Education Committee Meeting 1:00 PM Taft Party	11	12 6:00 PM Advent Book Study	13 10:00 AM Communion Visitation Meeting 6:30 PM Cub Scout Den Meetings	14 5:00 PM Board of Deacons Virtual Meeting 6:30 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:30 PM Adult Choir Rehearsal	15	16 9:00 AM Intergenerational Sacred Dance Rehearsal 12:00 PM Bozzi Party
17 <i>Third Sunday of Advent - Joy</i> 10:00 AM Worship Sunday School 11:15 AM Church Council Meeting 2:00 PM Family Fellowship Cookies & Crafts	18 2:00 PM Prayer Shawl Ministry 3:00 PM Food Pantry Distribution 7:00 PM Facilities Committee Meeting	19 7:00 PM Administration Committee Meeting	20 Cub Scout Holiday Party	21 6:30 PM Bell Choir Rehearsal 7:30 PM Adult Choir Rehearsal	22	23 9:00 AM Intergenerational Sacred Dance Rehearsal
24 <i>Fourth Sunday of Advent - Love</i> 10:00 AM Worship Sunday School <i>Christmas Eve</i> Service at 6:00 PM	25 <i>Christmas Day</i> Office is closed	26 January Voice Deadline	27 6:30 PM Cub Scout Den Meetings 7:00 PM PFLAG Meeting - Cancelled	28	29	30
31 10:00 AM Worship Gathering Sunday <i>New Year's Eve</i>						