



EDWARDS CHURCH

**An Open and Affirming Congregation of
The United Church of Christ
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Pastor: Rev. Dr. Deborah Clark
Ministers: All the People of Edwards Church

THE STEEPLE

December 2018

No. 11

Dear friends,

As we enter into the season of Advent, we enter a season of tradition. Traditions ground us in a rapidly changing world. They bring us together in a world that is increasingly isolating. They remind us of the meaning of Christmas in a time when shopping and stress can take over. At their best, they create space for new experiences to emerge, new opportunities rooted in the familiar.

At Edwards Church, recognizing that we don't need to add to the busyness, we focus our energies on a few special Advent and Christmas events that bring us together and highlight the meaning and joy of the Christmas story.

This year, some of our traditions continue as usual. The Lunch Bunch will hold its annual Lunch Bunch Christmas on December 19 at 12 noon. Whether or not you are a Lunch Bunch regular, we hope you will join us for this joyous event. We'll have turkey, stuffing, and all your favorite holiday dishes (that is, if you bring them). We will decorate Edwards Hall and have Christmas music in the background.

Another Edwards tradition is special music Sundays. This year we will have two: December 16 with music by On the Fence, and December 23 with choral music based on Old English carols. Our 9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service of lessons, carols, and poetry will also be an opportunity for lots of singing.

Other traditions this year will be opportunities for new experiences to emerge.

This year our Gifts that Give Fair will have a new twist. We were looking for ways to engage children and their families in this event. Dawn had the

idea of bringing in a Santa, and Karen Dolliver suggested an antique fire truck. The vision took shape, and this year we will invite folks of all ages to take pictures of themselves with Santa on an antique fire truck, as an alternative to long lines at the mall.

Another tradition that will have a new twist is our annual Christmas Eve Pageant. The Board of Christian Education realized that two of our most active families, including our interim director of Christian Education and two board members, would be away on December 24. We began to think creatively. We spoke with our youth, who leapt on board and have been working hard ever since.

The result—which you can read about in Dawn's articles—is a new kind of pageant: our own "Hollywood Studios" video production. Our youth are writing the script, based on our traditional pageant, our children are dressing up and creating the scenes during Sunday School, and we even have a casting call for dogs to enhance the manger scene. I understand there may be dancing as well! We are reaching out to children and youth who don't attend regularly to find ways for them to appear in the video.

On Christmas Eve, we will gather at our usual 5:00 p.m. time. There will be costumes for everyone. And there will be lots of opportunities for interaction as the story is told through the World Premiere of our Hollywood Studios video. Children and youth will see themselves on film. The story will come alive in a new way.

The first Christmas pageant is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, who wanted a way to teach the Christmas story to children. I am excited about our

new twist to an old tradition, because our children and our youth are engaging with the Christmas story in a deeper, creative way. As they write and produce, act and dance, they will experience the ancient story anew—and that’s what it’s all about.

I look forward to our traditional holiday celebrations, and I look forward to the new experiences emerging from our traditions.

Peace, Debbie

DECEMBER WORSHIP

December 2 Communion Sunday—First Sunday in Advent

Lighting the candle of hope
“O Come, Emmanuel”

December 9--Second Sunday in Advent

Lighting the candle of peace
“Making Way”

December 16—Third Sunday in Advent

Lighting the candle of joy
“A Prophet and an Angel Band”
Special music by On the Fence

December 23 Fourth Sunday in Advent

Lighting the Candle of Love
An “Old English Christmas,” with special choral music

December 24, Christmas Eve

- 5:00pm Holywood Studios World Premiere—
“The Christmas Story”
- 9:00pm Candlelight Service of Lessons, Carols and Poetry

December 30, A Celebration of Love; A Feast of Love!

An Intergenerational moving celebration of love, beginning in the sanctuary with a service that will include the marriage of Sarah MacLennan and Joe Griffis, then moving into the Susan P. Dickerman Hall for brunch!

MEN’S GROUP

Saturday, December 1, 8:00-10:00am

All men of the church (and your friends whatever their church background) are invited to gather for coffee and great conversation on the first Saturday of the month, in Susan P. Dickerman Hall.

BIBLE STUDY

Our Wednesday evening Bible Study group is continuing our study of the gospel according to Luke. We will meet on December 12 from 5:15-6:15 p.m. in the Jonathan House office building, with soup at 4:45. There will be no Bible Study on the week after Christmas.

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

With Christmas coming, we will be collecting money towards the purchase of poinsettias. The price per plant is \$6.00 and you can dedicate them either in honor of someone or in memory of someone. There will be a form in the Sunday bulletin on December 2, 9, and 16. The poinsettias will be displayed in the sanctuary on Sunday, December 23.

GIFTS THAT GIVE HOLIDAY FAIR

Saturday, December 8, 1:00-4:00pm

Wondering what to get for your Aunt Flora who has everything? Tired of buying gifts that don’t seem to mean anything? Want to make a positive difference in the world? Want to give gifts that bring joy? Hoping to avoid long lines for Santa at the mall? Then come to the Gifts that Give Holiday Fair!

At the fair, you will be able to purchase gifts that help make the world a better place: a blanket for Church World Service; fair trade chocolate and coffee; cards for OUT Metrowest; handicrafts from artists around the world; bees for Heifer Project; scarves to support A Place to Turn; and more!

This year for the first time we have Santa on an antique fire truck. So bring your whole family and invite your neighbors. You can take pictures with Santa to your heart’s content. Donations to support the Neighbors’ Fund are appreciated.

Also new this year is a gourmet hot chocolate bar, to support a joint (with Plymouth) trip to Youth at General Synod.

Please be sure to join us for all or part of the afternoon!

PRESENTS FOR PATHWAYS

The Board of Wider Mission has once again decided to provide Christmas gifts to the residents of Pathways Family Shelter.

The gift tags will include name, size, and color choices for your selection. This is a wonderful

opportunity to help out Pathways and its residents and to strengthen our relationship with them.

Please select a tag from the Wider Missions bulletin board on Sundays, December 2 and 9. Purchase your gift and return it to the Narthex ON OR BEFORE Sunday, December 16. Please DO NOT WRAP the gifts. But Pathways would greatly appreciate gift boxes and spare wrapping paper.

OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE, HONOR, AND SUPPORT OUR CHURCH DURING ADVENT

Throughout the month of December, there will be numerous opportunities to purchase gifts, reach out to people in need, honor and memorialize loved ones, and support our church during the Advent season. These opportunities are covered in more detail in articles throughout this edition of the Steeple.

- Come to the Gifts That Give Holiday Fair on Saturday, December 8, from 1-4:00 pm (or after church on Sunday, December 9), and purchase gifts that help make the world a better place!
- Pull a tag for One Less Gift, and purchase a toy for a resident at Pathways Family Shelter. The tags are on a poster in the Education Building hall, and the gifts are due December 16.
- Give a poinsettia in memory or honor of a beloved friend by completing the form in the bulletin.
- Donate to the Christmas Fund, a UCC special collection for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund.

LUNCH BUNCH CHRISTMAS GATHERING

Wednesday, December 19 at noon in Edwards Hall

The Lunch Bunch invites you to a special Christmas luncheon, featuring turkey, stuffing, and all your favorite dishes. Fran and Debbie will provide turkey and stuffing; everyone is invited to bring a favorite holiday dish. Please sign up on the way to coffee hour or RSVP to the church office.

SEEDS OF GRACE

Sunday, Dec. 16 at 5:30pm in Sue Dickerman Hall

Join us for an informal, impromptu pageant led by Rev. Isaac Everett and members of the Seeds of Grace worship team.

MUSIC AT EDWARDS

As Thanksgiving passes us by, church musicians around the country get that giddy feeling that can only mean one thing. We'll soon be singing our favorite Advent and Christmas music in our sanctuaries. This year we will welcome Advent with a special setting of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" which sharp ears will recognize from last year. This will be followed by two settings of the Prepare Ye text on December 9. On the Fence will join us for two bluegrass choral pieces on December 16, and on Christmas Sunday, December 23, we will celebrate an English Christmas, featuring music and original carol texts spanning several centuries.

On a very grateful note, I wish to thank everyone who contributed to our fall concert. We collected \$1200 toward UCC Disaster Relief, which is already helping those who are suffering in California following the many weeks of fires in that part of our country. Your generosity immediately went to a good cause.

Rick Seaholm

Commissioned Minister of Music

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

December is a very busy month for the Faith Formation program! The Board of Christian Education is excited to announce our new format for this year's pageant! It is the world premiere of *Hollywood Studios' Video Christmas Pageant*, produced by the Edwards Church Youth Forum and directed by Rob Delossa with director of small actors, Ms. Myrna Phelps. Join us on Christmas Eve at 5:00pm to experience the first ever showing!

Producing a video Pageant means that **we need participation ahead of time!** We will be filming children and youth during church time on December 2, 9, 16, and 23, with a **special casting call for dogs** on December 9 from 1:00-3:00pm. Make sure your family, including your pet, is able to participate! All who are interested will be given a part to play! If you cannot make it to church, there are a few voice-over parts available which can be done in the comfort of your own home. Contact Dawn Sorensen with questions at dawnms00@hotmail.com.

On December 8, **SANTA** will make an appearance at the Holiday Gift Fair! **SANTA** and his fire-truck will be available from 1:00-3:00pm for

pictures. Photos will be taken with your own cell phone or camera, and are free. Donations for the Neighbors' Fund will be accepted. Don't forget your dollars for the **Gourmet Hot Chocolate Bar** fundraiser, put on by the youth of Edwards and Plymouth Churches. Proceeds from the Hot Chocolate Bar will go to support the youth trip this year to General Synod.

For adults and their little kitchen helpers, we will be hosting a **cookie swap** on December 15 from 6:00-8:00pm. Look for the sign-up sheet during coffee hour. Bake three dozen or six dozen cookies, package them up in bags of six cookies each, with the recipe attached, and then swap them with other folks so you go home with a variety of cookies for your holiday table.

Finally, throughout the month of December, the Faith Formation program will be putting out **Advent Devotionals** for faithful folks and families. We hope this will help you connect more deeply with the holiday season. Devotionals will be appropriate conversation starters for children and youth, and are useful for adults as well! Devotionals will be available on the Edwards Church Facebook page as well as by email. If you would like to sign up for emails, you can do so by clicking on the link in the Facebook post starting on December 1, or you can email dawnms00@hotmail.com.

Many blessings to you this season!
Dawn Sorensen, Interim Christian Education Director

STEEPLE ARTICLES

Articles for the January issue of the Steeple will be due early this month, **Thursday, December 13** at 9:00am. This is so that we can have it printed well in advance of Christmas. Please send all submissions to nicola@edwardschurch.org.

STEEPLE MAILING

The December Steeple mailing will not take place on its usual day as the office will be closed. Instead, it will be held on Thursday, December 20 at 10:30am.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR SEARCH UPDATE

On November 4, we commissioned our Associate Pastor Search Committee in worship. At the congregational meeting that followed, the

committee asked for input about the strengths and priorities of our church for the church profile we are putting together. Thank you to everyone who participated!

The committee continues to meet bi-weekly to put together that profile, which will be submitted through the United Church of Christ. Our hope is to begin searching for candidates by the beginning of 2019.

If you have any questions, please speak to any of our members: Cindy Sweeney (co-chair), Ruth Carney (co-chair), Noah Cichowlas (chaplain), Victoria Sorensen (recording secretary), Jeff Stewart-Morales (corresponding secretary), and Chris Leigh-Manuell (hospitality).

LITTLE WOODEN BANKS

We had two donations in November for \$15.28, giving us a total now of \$1189.24 in our Wooden Banks Fund. As you know this fund will be used for needs of our church which are not included in our annual budget. Please share with me or Fran Bogle any ideas you may have for putting this money to good use. See me if you would like to have one of our new little church banks. Contributions may be placed in the model wooden church on the table in the hallway between the sanctuary and the Susan Dickerman Hall. Many thanks to our faithful contributors. Say a little prayer with each penny you add to your bank. May you all have a very Merry Christmas and a new year full of all good things.

God bless you all.
Norma Hart

KERMIT'S KORNER

Gift Wrapping Can be Green

Are you a gift-bag re-user and saver? Ever used newspaper to wrap gifts? Grocery bags cut-up and decorated with stamps? Leftover cloth from a sewing project? There are so many ways to wrap gifts that don't leave your family with a pile of trash on Christmas morning.

Come visit the Transition Framingham "alternative wrapping" table at the Gifts that Give Holiday Fair on December 8 here at Edwards Church and get your purchases wrapped, or just share ideas for how to wrap presents without making trash. Or if you enjoy wrapping gifts with

no waste, sign up to help staff the table and share your skills. Transition Framingham will supply wrapping materials or you can bring your own favorite reused or recycled materials. Contact Mary Memmott (memmottm@gmail.com) if you'd like to volunteer with us at the fair.

A Call to Action

Back in October, several members of the Green Team attended the Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light Conference at Plymouth Church. The speakers on the importance of voting, the injustice of climate change, and who is hurt most by fossil fuel emissions (hint: it's not the wealthy), were particularly inspiring. You can now view each of their presentations online at www.mipandl.org. We encourage you to check it out and reflect for yourself on what faithful actions you can take to work against the injustice of climate change.

Mary Memmott for the Green Team

PARSONAGE RENOVATION UPDATE

If you come onto campus during the week, you may see lots of activity around our parsonage. Our contractor is making good progress and expects to have a beautiful, newly renovated house ready by the end of 2018. We are partnering with Jewish Family Services to provide housing to a family of Syrian refugees who have been in our country for eighteen months. They have four young children and are very excited to move in around the first of the year.

CHRISTMAS FUND

On December 23, we will be taking up a special collection: the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund. This fund—ongoing for 110 years—is one of four Special Mission Offerings received annually in the UCC. Your generous gifts enable the Pension Board's Ministerial Assistance program to provide help to individuals and families in need. This aid may go to a retired pastor, former youth leader, a Christian education director, church secretary, custodian or minister of music. These folks may be retired from their ministerial duties or serving today, but struggling in the difficult economic times. Gifts to the Christmas Fund help provide pension and health premium supplementation to low income retirees, or emergency grants to clergy families

in need and Christmas "thank you" gift checks to hundreds of annuitants. These funds are administered by the Pension Boards of the UCC. Please be as generous as your circumstances will allow. Thank You.



OPEN SPIRIT HIGHLIGHTS

Candlelight Restorative Yoga: The Kiss of Peace *Sunday, Dec. 9 at 4:30pm in Sue Dickerman Hall*

Enjoy all the benefits of restorative yoga in a nurturing and soothing environment. Rest in comfortable, well-supported positions that gently and passively open the body. Elicit the relaxation response and release layers of physical and mental stress. In this grounding practice, our breath can flow more deeply and we can shift out of fight/flight mode. We will allow ourselves time to simply be, to heal, to renew. You will learn to listen more carefully to your inner voice. This class is led by Katherine McClean. The cost is \$25. Space is limited and advance registration is required. Visit openspiritcenter.org or contact the office by December 6 to reserve your spot!

An Evening of Exploration under the Stars

*Tuesday, December 11 at 5:30pm,
Carol Getchell Nature Trail*

Bring a flashlight but be ready to turn it off! One Earth Collaborative and the Appalachian Mountain Club Outdoor RX will be co-sponsoring an outdoor exploration of the nighttime sky. This walk, open to all ages, takes the group alongside the Sudbury River and may uncover stars you've never seen before! Rabbi Katy Allen and walk leaders will ensure that walking conditions are safe. We will meet in the cul-de-sac on Little Farms Road in Framingham.

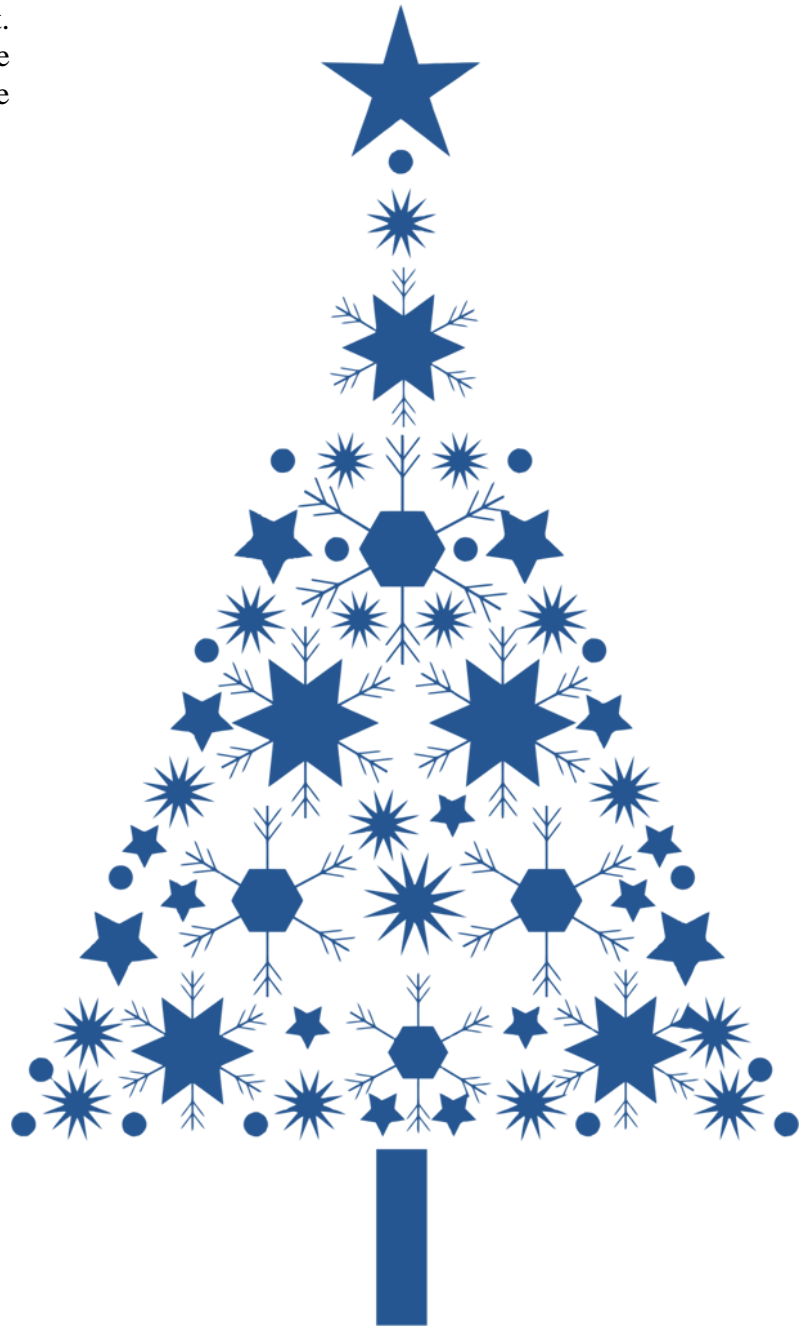
Honoring the Dark; Trusting the Promise of Light

Friday, Dec. 21 at 7:30pm in Sue Dickerman Hall

In this holiday season, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and isolated, especially if you are grieving. Whatever is going on in your life, it is easy to become overwhelmed with busyness and forget to honor the natural rhythms of your body and our earth.

Join us on the longest night of the year for an hour of gentle yoga, deep relaxation, and guided meditation. We will draw inspiration from a variety of spiritual traditions as we honor the wide range of emotions that are stirred this time of year, and as we point to the promise of the return of light and hope.

This program is sponsored by Open Spirit. Debbie Clark will be the leader. There is no charge for this event; donations to support Open Spirit are appreciated.



Edwards Church UCC
39 Edwards St
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Special Worship Services

Third Sunday in Advent

On December 16 during our 10:00 am worship service we will light the candle of joy. On the Fence will offer special bluegrass music including an anthem with the choir.

Fourth Sunday in Advent

On December 23 during our 10:00 am worship service we will light the candle of love. The choir will offer special music inspired by an "Old English Christmas."

Christmas Eve Pageant, Carols, & Candles

On December 24 at 5:00pm we will enjoy the world premiere of our new video pageant. Join us at 9:00 pm for a beautiful candlelight service of lessons and carols that is both joy-filled and peaceful.

Wedding & Brunch

On December 30 at 10:00am we will celebrate the marriage of Sarah MacLennan and Joe Griffis followed by brunch.



Lunch Bunch

Christmas Gathering

Wednesday, December 19 at noon
in Edwards Hall

Please join us for a special festive Christmas Lunch Bunch! All are welcome. This is a great opportunity to relax and chat with your church friends during the busy Christmas season; catch up with an old pal or meet someone new.

Debbie and Fran will provide turkey and stuffing. Everyone is invited to bring a favorite holiday dish.

Sign up on the way to coffee hour or contact the church office to reserve your spot.