



EDWARDS CHURCH

**An Open and Affirming Congregation of
The United Church of Christ
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Framingham, MA 01701
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Pastor: Rev. Dr. Deborah Clark
Associate Pastor: Rev. Dr. Karen Nell Smith
Ministers: All the People of Edwards Church

THE STEEPLE

December 2019

No. 11

“Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

~ Mark 10:14-15

Dear friends,

I love Christmas pageants. I collect them, actually. The stories are poignant and tender, funny and chaotic. They bring the Christmas story to life in so many ways...taking an ancient and mysterious tale from 2000 years ago and making it present and real...breaking right into the here and now, the unpredictable, unexpected and unrehearsed moments of our own lives.

In Christmas pageants you never know what's going to happen. There's the pageant in Bronxville, NY, when the wise men decided to get really fancy and use real incense. They were very enthusiastic...so enthusiastic that the smoke detectors in the sanctuary went off and they were joined at the manger by the Bronxville fire department.

There's the story of the Innkeeper, seven-year-old Wally, who felt so badly for Joseph and Mary, he decided at the last minute not to turn them away but invited them in and gave them room at the Inn. A new twist in the story, but a very nice gesture!

Christmas pageants are so full of potential. Their purpose is to tell again the familiar story. Yet telling most often unfolds with a more contemporary twist. A five-year-old shepherd,

nervous about his big line, “and we found the child wrapped in swaddling clothes,” instead blurts out, “The baby was wrapped in wrinkled clothes.” A proud young man steps forward wearing a bathrobe and a paper crown, kneels at the manger announces, “We are the three wise men, and we are bringing gifts of gold, common sense and fur.” (Amen to that!)

During Advent, we'll prepare for this year's rendition of the Christmas Pageant. Each Sunday will have a special focus ~ Anticipating in Advent, Angels, Shepherds, Magi and Star. Along the way, photos of all the preparations will be pulled together to be shared on Christmas Eve at the 5:00 p.m. service when we create a spontaneous pageant in which all can participate in telling the Christmas story once more. We hope you'll join us for all the many ways we bring the Christmas story alive in the weeks ahead. Come to be part of our pageant and come to be part of its preparation because helping the children to tell this story from the past, with all that they bring to it from their present, becomes a vision of the future for all of us.

As we bring to life the participants of this ancient sacred story, we are making it real for our time and for our children, who are our future. And that's what really makes Christmas pageants so wonderful.

Blessings for Advent,
Karen Nell

DECEMBER WORSHIP

December 1, Communion—First Sunday in Advent

Lighting the candle of hope

Mark 1:1-8, “Preparing”

Rev. Dr. Karen Nell Smith preaching

December 8—Second Sunday in Advent

Lighting the candle of peace

“An Angel Whisper”

December 15—Third Sunday in Advent

10:00am, Lighting the candle of joy

Special choral music

“Among the Sheep”

5:30pm Seeds of Grace Worship

“What are we waiting for?”

December 22—Fourth Sunday in Advent

Lighting the Candle of Love

Special Music by On the Fence

“A Star-Filled Journey”

December 24—Christmas Eve

5:00pm Christmas Pageant—“No Room in the Stable”

9:00pm Candlelight Service of Lessons, Carols and Poetry

December 29—A Potluck Worship

Bring a left-over tasty treat from your holiday celebrations to share. Dress casually!

Matthew 2:13-23; “The Spider’s Web”

Rev. Dr. Karen Nell Smith preaching

MEN’S GROUP

Saturday, December 7, 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.

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 designate them either in honor of someone or in memory of someone. The order form will be in the Sunday bulletins on December 1 and 8. The poinsettias will be displayed on Sunday, December 22.

BIBLE STUDY

Our Wednesday evening Bible Study group is continuing our study of the Acts of the Apostles. We will meet on December 11 from 5:00-6:00 p.m., in the Jonathan House Office Building, with soup at 4:30. There will be no Bible Study on Christmas!

GIFTS THAT GIVE HOLIDAY FAIR

Saturday, December 7, 1:00-4:00pm in Edwards Hall

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.

You will be able to purchase gifts that help make the world a better place: fair trade chocolate and coffee, scarves to support A Place to Turn, handicrafts from around the world, socks for Worcester Fellowship, photo cards to support planting trees in Africa. This year we have several new tables: Metrowest Immigrant Solidarity Network, El Toque del Maestro church, and more.

Back by popular demand, 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. We will also have a children’s project table, with “green” projects that might be early Christmas presents!

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

PRESENTS FOR PATHWAYS

The Wider Mission gift drive for residents of Pathways Family Shelter is underway. This year, we will be providing a pair of slippers and sneakers for each child, as well as a set of dishes (basic service for four) for each of the fourteen families to have when they move to more permanent housing. Walmart gift cards (\$10) are also appreciated. Pick up a gift tag from the Christmas bulletin board at coffee hour. Please return your unwrapped gift as soon as you are able (no later than Sunday, December 15). Extra gift wrap and boxes are also always appreciated. Thank you very much for your generous support!

LUNCH BUNCH CHRISTMAS GATHERING

Wednesday, December 18 at noon in Edwards Hall

Everyone is welcome to join us for a Christmas lunch, 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 RSVP to the church office.

SEEDS OF GRACE

*Sunday, December 15 at 5:00pm for a simple supper
5:30pm worship in Susan P. Dickerman Hall.*

The Seeds of Grace worship team will lead us in time of warm community and creative worship with the Advent theme, "What are we waiting for?" Come gather for a cup of soup and a time of sharing stories and song, conversation and prayer. We hope to see you there!

MUSIC AT EDWARDS CHURCH

The Most Wonderful Time

When I first came to Edwards, I admit I thought "I don't know about these Advent anthems..." simply because they are a collection of less familiar pieces at a time of the year when secular interests are completely consumed with full-on Christmas texts and tunes. But then I returned to "Prepare Ye" and "He Come from the Glory" a different year (as we will this December) and I thought "Oh, oh! I remember this one! I just love Edwards at Advent!" I promise you'll be on one side of that equation early in the month depending on whether you are newer or have been around several years. We are creatures of habit this time of year. Our two big days, though, create new memories as we focus on shepherd stories (December 15 with some Bach and some early American music) and the magi (December 22 with On the Fence). I wouldn't miss a day and hope you won't either!

Rick Seaholm
Commissioned Minister of Music

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

On December 1, a Christmas tree will grace Sue Dickerman Hall to usher in the Advent season. In addition to picking up your Christmas Wreath that Sunday, you are invited to bring an ornament to hang

on the tree ~ something that's meaningful to you or your family to share with the congregation during Advent this year. At the **Holiday Family Fun Night on Friday, December 6 at 6:00 p.m.**, the children will also be making ornaments for the tree. When you take your own ornament home on December 24, don't forget to take one made by the children, as their gift to you this Christmas!

Over the next four weeks, our Christian Explorers will be learning about Advent and all of the participants in the story of the Nativity ~ Angels, Shepherds, Magi, and even the animals that might have been in the stable when Mary and Joseph arrived and the baby Jesus was born. Together we will create a spontaneous pageant, "No Room in the Stable," on **Christmas Eve at 5:00 p.m.** in the sanctuary. Which animal would you like to be ~ a sheep, a cow, or maybe a mouse??

See you in church!
Karen Nell

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, Dec. 7, from 1-4:00 pm (or after church on Sunday, Dec. 8), and purchase gifts that help make the world a better place!
- Pull a "tag" for One Less Gift, and purchase a gift for a resident at Pathways Family Shelter. The tags are on a poster in the Education Building hall, and the gifts are due Dec. 15.
- Give a poinsettia in memory or honor of a beloved friend; sign up in the hallway of the Education Building or 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.

STEEPLE ARTICLES

In order to prepare for Christmas, *Steeple* articles will be due one week early this month, on Wednesday, December 11 at 9:00 a.m. Please email all submissions to nicola@edwardschurch.org.

LITTLE WOODEN BANKS

In November we had one donation to our fund for a total of \$9.00. I will report any expenditures to you. This fund is used for needs of our church which are not included in our annual budget. See me if you would like to have one of our new little church banks. Many thanks to our faithful contributors! Say a little prayer with each penny you add to your bank. Wishing you a wonderful Christmas and blessed New Year!

God bless you all,
Norma Hart

KERMIT'S KORNER

Last week I participated in a Climate Action Lobby Day at the State House organized by 350.org. Taking its name from the 350 parts per million of carbon in the atmosphere that is deemed a "safe" level (we are now over 400ppm), 350.org is an international, environmental organization addressing the climate crisis. We gathered in a conference room set aside for our use (coffee, fruit and pastries were a welcome surprise at 10:00 a.m.!) and were addressed by Senator Mark Pacheco, Democrat representing the 1st Bristol and Plymouth district and chair of the Global Warming and Climate Change Committee.

Senator Pacheco told us that what we were trying to achieve that day was the promise of a definite date when the Senate would vote on bold action to address the climate crisis. In January 2019, eighty-one legislators, from both parties had signed a "New Year's Resolution" to support a variety of climate solutions, including setting a goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. It was now November and time was running out. He was prepared to use a procedural measure to bring a climate bill to the floor if need be, but was hoping that wouldn't be necessary.

Each of us had a folder with a map of the State House, plus talking points that might help us when we got to our legislators' offices; in my case that was Senate President Karen Spilka and

Representative Jack Lewis. After talking with our legislators or their aides, and leaving with them materials related to the need for bold action on climate now, we went to the Senate Gallery. We might have had to stay there for quite a while, but word came that Senator Pacheco had managed to secure a promise from Senate President Karen Spilka that bold climate action would be voted on by January 31, 2020. Back in the conference room, Senator Pacheco credited our presence in the State House with his success in finally getting the promise of a date. It didn't seem like much to us, but Senator Pacheco was satisfied that the day's goal had been achieved.

So we went home earlier than expected, but proud that our participation had helped move things along.

Jenny Allen for the Green Team

CHRISTMAS FUND

On December 22 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, 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.

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

5 Heather and James Gray

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

2 Laura Ann Grenier
Brandon Jones
5 Jonathan David Grenier
9 Pat Hancock
Sandra Garvin
10 Peggie (Roy) Hendrickson
Patricia (Roy) Grenier
11 Laura Beck
Jean Burr
Shelly Cichowlas
13 Tyler Gagen
Marge McGraw
14 Phillip Dolliver, Jr.
Lillian Snitko
Owen Bullock
23 Matthew White
24 Emmanuel Kalamu
25 Patrick Musika
Kim Wronski
26 Joan Goddard
27 Courtenay Barton
Kelvin Phelps
28 Quinn Barton
29 Timothy Furman
Maryann McKuin
31 Owen Gray

COMING UP AT OPEN SPIRIT

Honoring the Dark;

Trusting the Promise of Light

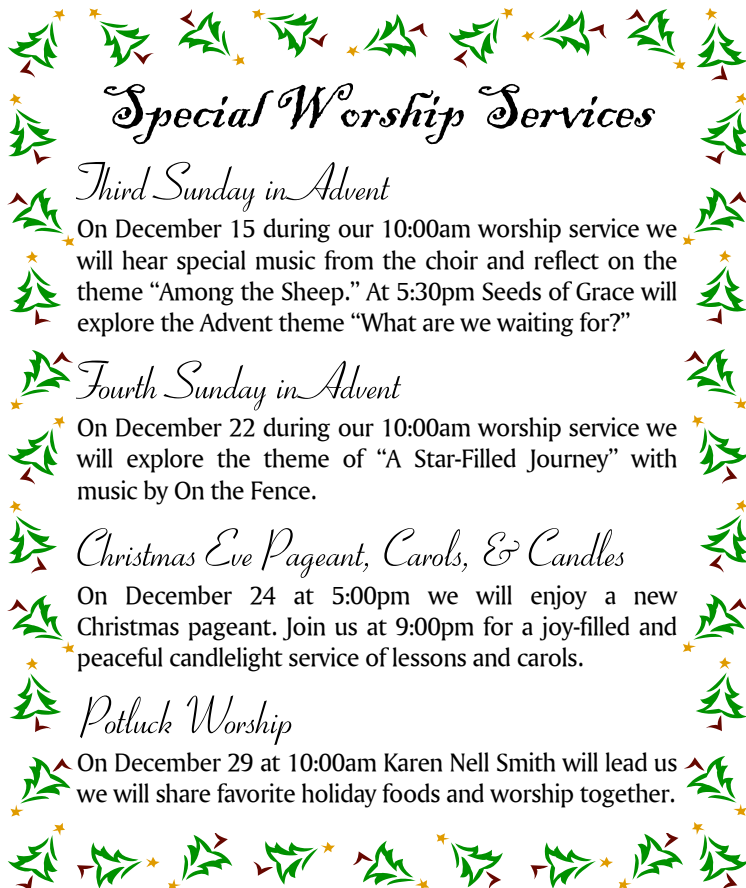
Friday, Dec. 20 at 7:30 pm in Edwards Hall

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

Join us around 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.

Led by Debbie Clark. There is no charge for this event; donations to support Open Spirit are appreciated.

Edwards Church UCC
39 Edwards St
Framingham, MA 01701-3433



Special Worship Services

Third Sunday in Advent

On December 15 during our 10:00am worship service we will hear special music from the choir and reflect on the theme "Among the Sheep." At 5:30pm Seeds of Grace will explore the Advent theme "What are we waiting for?"

Fourth Sunday in Advent

On December 22 during our 10:00am worship service we will explore the theme of "A Star-Filled Journey" with music by On the Fence.

Christmas Eve Pageant, Carols, & Candles

On December 24 at 5:00pm we will enjoy a new Christmas pageant. Join us at 9:00pm for a joy-filled and peaceful candlelight service of lessons and carols.

Potluck Worship

On December 29 at 10:00am Karen Nell Smith will lead us we will share favorite holiday foods and worship together.



Lunch Bunch

Christmas Gathering

Wednesday, December 18 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.

EDWARDS CHURCH ACTIVITIES

December 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Advent 1 9:00am Adult Bible Study 10:00am Intergen. Worship 11:00am Coffee Hour 2:00pm Journey of the Spirit	2 9:30am Chairobics 10:30am Strength Without a Gym 7:30pm Guided Meditation 7:30pm Board of Trustees	3 9:00am Qi Gong / Tai Chi 10:00am Gentle Yoga 1:00pm Nursing Home Services 5:30pm Hatha Yoga 7:30pm Interfaith Book Group	4 9:30am Chairobics 12:00pm Lunch Bunch 1:15pm Prayer Shawl Knitters 6:00pm Veterans Yoga 7:15pm Diaconate	5 9:00am Qi Gong / Tai Chi 6:00pm Cancer Support Group 6:00pm Kripalu Yoga 7:00pm Board of Finance 7:15pm Choir Rehearsal 7:30pm AA Meeting	6 9:30am Chairobics 6:00pm Family Fun Night	7 8:00am Men's Group 9:00am Chair/Mat Yoga 1:00pm Gifts that Give Fair 
8 Advent 2 9:00am Adult Bible Study 10:00am Worship 10:15am Sunday School 11:00am Coffee Hour 2:30pm Yoga for FPS Teachers	9 9:30am Chairobics 10:30am Strength Without a Gym 7:00pm Wider Mission 7:30pm Guided Meditation	10 9:00am Qi Gong / Tai Chi 10:00am Gentle Yoga 11:15am Steering Committee 5:30pm Hatha Yoga 7:00pm Buddhist Meditation	11 9:00am Steeple Articles Due 9:30am Chairobics 4:30pm Soup and Bible Study 6:00pm Veterans Yoga	12 9:00am Qi Gong / Tai Chi 6:00pm Cancer Support Group 6:00pm Kripalu Yoga 7:15pm Choir Rehearsal 7:30pm AA Meeting	13 9:30am Chairobics 7:00pm Y12SR	14 9:00am Chair/Mat Yoga
15 Advent 3 9:00am Adult Bible Study 10:00am Worship 10:15am Sunday School 11:00am Coffee Hour 5:30pm Seeds of Grace	16 9:30am Chairobics 10:30am Strength Without a Gym 7:30pm Guided Meditation	17 9:00am Qi Gong / Tai Chi 10:00am Gentle Yoga 5:30pm Hatha Yoga	18 9:30am Chairobics 12:00pm Christmas Lunch Bunch 6:00pm Veterans Yoga	19 9:00am Qi Gong / Tai Chi 6:00pm Cancer Support Group 6:00pm Kripalu Yoga 7:15pm Choir Rehearsal 7:30pm AA Meeting	20 9:30am Chairobics 7:30pm Solstice Yoga	21
22 Advent 4 (Christmas Fund) 9:00am Adult Bible Study 10:00am Worship 10:15am Sunday School 11:00am Coffee Hour 4:30pm Common Ground	23 9:30am Chairobics 10:30am Strength Without a Gym 7:30pm Guided Meditation	24 Christmas Eve 9:00am Qi Gong / Tai Chi 10:00am Gentle Yoga 5:00pm Christmas Pageant 5:30pm Cookies & Punch 9:00pm Candlelight Service	25 Christmas Day 	26 OFFICE CLOSED 6:00pm Cancer Support Group 7:30pm AA Meeting	27 9:30am Chairobics	28
29 10:00am Potluck Worship 11:00am Coffee Hour	30 9:30am Chairobics 10:30am Strength Without a Gym 7:30pm Guided Meditation	31 New Year's Eve 9:00am Qi Gong / Tai Chi 10:00am Gentle Yoga 5:30pm Hatha Yoga 		Nicola will be away January 3-8	Debbie will be away January 16 through February 1. If you have a pastoral emergency during this time, please contact the Rev. Dr. Karen Nell Smith at 508-331-3081	