



The Beacon

First Congregational Church of Millbury, United Church of Christ

Our Mission: To welcome and inspire ALL through faith, love,
and fellowship according to Christ's example.

Volume 32 Issue 12 • December 2020

Dear Friends,

“I can help the next person in line.” The cashier’s words were music to my ears. I had been standing in a long line at the drug store, hoping to finish with my shopping in time to get to the post office before it closed. During the few minutes I had spent waiting for my turn at the checkout, my frustration had been mounting. Like a lot of us, I don’t like to wait. Surveys show that we Americans are impatient people. After five minutes on hold on the telephone, or fifteen minutes in line, we get very antsy.

Surprisingly, when it comes to waiting, people don’t seem to mellow with age. The survey actually found that older folks are more impatient than younger people. Where you live doesn’t seem to make much difference either. City folks, residents of suburbs, and people in rural areas all report great irritation when waiting more than a few minutes in line or on hold. (*Springfield Republican*, May 29, 2006, p. B5)

For Christians, though, waiting can be a spiritual practice. Waiting can help us grow spiritually. In these days of December, Christians have a chance to practice the art of waiting. Advent is a season dedicated to waiting for the birth of Jesus. During Advent, we anticipate his coming. We are also mindful that he comes, not on our schedule, but on God’s schedule. Waiting does not have to be empty, wasted time. During the days of Advent we can find time to reflect and prepare for Jesus to be born in our hearts. The spare landscapes of late fall offer good images for waiting, as this poet describes:

Looking high into winter trees

I see the distant nests

Cradled in arms of branches.

Nests: round, full of warmth, softness in the welcoming center,

A circle of earth’s tiny goodness,

Flown from the far corners, patiently pieced together,

And hollowed into a home.

Nests: awaiting the treasure of life,

Simple, delicate dwelling places

From which song will eventually echo

And freedom of wings give flight.

Advent had been on my mind.

Prepare the nest of the heart.

Patch up the broken parts.

Place more softness in the center.

Sit and warm the home with prayer.

Give the Christ a dwelling place.



May Advent blessings be with you.

Pastor Elva



9th Dirk Enthoven
20th Amy Peterson
24th Karen O'Donnell

SNOW CANCELLATION

From Pastor Elva

If a Sunday worship service has to be cancelled because of inclement weather, notice will be put on the answering machine message you hear when you call the church.

Cancellation notice will be posted on WCVB TV Channel 5.



Remember our shut-ins with a note or a card.....

Mr. Jay Stockwell
110 Hartness Road
Sutton, MA 01590

Chris Rudge
8 Carlstrom Lane
Millbury, Ma 01527

Bill Crandell
Care One at Millbury
312 Millbury Ave
Millbury, Ma 01527



Prayers & Concerns

- † Our Community
- † Our Country
- † Our World
- † All Military Men and Women
- † All First Responders
- † Our Church and our Ministry in Millbury and beyond
- † Ron Stead's sister in law Kathie Stead
- † Roberta, Sue Witter's sister in law.
- † Pastor Elva's son
- † Health care workers and essential workers, providing care and support for those with COVID 19.



Deacons Fund

On Communion Sunday at First Church, the first Sunday of the month, the Deacons take a special offering for the Deacons Fund, which is a fund to provide assistance to members in need. Envelopes marked DEACONS FUND are in your bulletin. Donations may also be made using the envelope any other Sunday.

Thank you for your generosity.

White Gift Service on December 13th

Our Church will be providing gifts for 5 children at Elmwood St. School who are in need. We will also be providing Goretto gift cards to the Millbury Senior Center for those in need that visit the center. The children's wishes will be listed on tags and there will be tags for Goretto gift cards hanging on the Christmas Tree at the back of the sanctuary. Please choose a tag for a gift you would like to provide and wrap in white tissue paper and write child's number on gift and attach tag and bring to it to White Gift service. I will deliver all gifts to Elmwood St School. There will be a basket for the Goretto gift cards and Jeri will deliver those to the senior center. Thank you in advance for your continued support and generosity of the white gift service.



From Pastor Elva: Please Sign Up for Christmas Eve In - Person Worship

As I write this, most of the leaves are off the trees. It's a cloudy day, with that particular chill that comes in November, along with the fragrance of fallen leaves. It gives me a somber feeling, but it's not a sad time. I'm looking forward to walking through Advent with you, and celebrating Jesus' birth at our Christmas Eve service.

All over our country, at this time the numbers of COVID 19 infections are rising. Hospital admissions are rising too, and expected to increase. We hear good news about a vaccine, but it's unlikely to be widely available for months.

In many ways, this year will be different from previous years. That includes our celebration of Christmas Eve. At this time the Deacons and I are planning to hold an in person service at our traditional time of 4:00 PM. Depending on COVID numbers in our area, we may have to change that plan if state public health authorities advise against any in person gatherings.

We are making some changes to the seating arrangements in our sanctuary to allow for 6 feet of separation between individuals and groups, as well as provide space for folks who want to worship as a family. In order to plan for the service, we are asking people who want to attend to inform us ahead of time.

We need everyone to sign up so that we can be sure we do not exceed the state's maximum capacity guidelines for houses of worship.

For those who feel more comfortable worshipping at home, I will also be recording a Christmas Eve service and posting it in on our YouTube channel.

If people come to the service on Christmas Eve after we have reached our maximum capacity, they will be invited to join us in the parking lot after the service. At that time, holding LED candles, we will form a circle and sing "Silent Night."

As a pastor, I feel very strange to be limiting the number of people at a worship service. But under these circumstances, I believe this is the best way to provide a safe worship experience. **If you want to attend the in person service, please sign up at your earliest convenience, on the sheet at the back of the sanctuary, or by calling Jeri Stead at (508)865-5371, and telling her how many will be in your group.**

Please keep us in your prayers as we navigate these strange and difficult times. As we prepare to welcome the Christ child, may God's light, the light that no darkness can dispel, illumine our way.

Pastor Elva

News from Our Denomination: UCC Churches help wipe out \$26 million in Medical Debt

More than 100 United Church of Christ congregations across southern New England have helped raise enough money to erase a total of \$26.2 million in medical debt for thousands of families across the Northeast, and more than 12,000 first responders and medical workers nationwide. The churches in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, along with four church associations, and more than 100 households raised more than \$200,000. That money went to the New York -based nonprofit RIP Medical Debt, which bought debt in August from collection agencies for pennies on the dollar. That debt will now be forgiven. The families that had their debt forgiven make less than two times the federal poverty level, are financially burdened, and have out-of-pocket expenses that are 5% or more of their annual income, or have debts worth more than their assets.

About \$8.4 million in medical debt for 7,175 households in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont will be wiped out. In addition, another \$17.8 million in debt for 12,144 health care workers and first responders across the U.S. will be erased. All will receive letters telling them that their medical debt has been forgiven.

(from the Associated Press)

**First Congregational Church
of Millbury, UCC
148 West Main Street
Millbury, MA 01527**

Address Correction Requested

The Beacon
December



Worship and Church School: 10:00 a.m.
Church Phone: 508-865-9737
Email: Millbury1stChurch@gmail.com
Web: <http://millburyfirstchurch.com>



**Resolve to
make a
difference
in someone's life!**



To add an event, please
email
Millbury1stchurch@gmail.com

Remember to check us out
on Facebook. See all the
photos. It's a great way to
introduce your friends to our
Friendly Church on the Hill.

The Beacon

Deadline for January
newsletter is
December 20th. The BEACON
is distributed by email or first
class mail. It can also be
downloaded from the church
website. Copies are available at
the back of the sanctuary.

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2020