

# FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN MANSFIELD – December 2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
<b>3</b> 10:15am Worship	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 3:30pm Ministry of Caring	<b>6</b> 1pm Book Group 5pm QCRR Volunteer Meeting	<b>7</b> 7:00pm Choir	<b>8</b> 2pm First Church Friends	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b> 10:15am Worship Chime Choir Rehearsal	<b>11</b> 9am Sewing & Service 5:30pm Governance Board	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 1pm Book Group	<b>14</b> 7:00pm Choir	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b> 10:15am Worship 2 <sup>nd</sup> Hour Budget Discussion Chime Choir Rehearsal	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> 1pm Book Group	<b>21</b> 7:00pm Choir	<b>22</b> OFFICE CLOSED	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b> 10:15am Worship 7pm Christmas Eve Service with Carols & Candlelight  <span style="color: green; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Christmas Eve</span>	<span style="color: green; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Christmas Day</span>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> 7:00pm Choir	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>30</b> 10:15 Worship						

## FIRST CHURCH FAITH FORMATION

### "Circle the Light" Advent 2017

#### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3

We celebrate the First Sunday of Advent with our theme for the season, "Circle the Light" and by gathering around Christ's Welcome Table. This week, we bear witness to the Light shining at the Holy Family Shelter as we collect personal care items for their use. Paul Tanner leads the Worship Circle in creating an ornament he learned to make in his own Sunday School class. Following Worship we will move to Fellowship Hall to create Advent Wreaths to grace our homes as we prepare for Christmas.

The Advent readings from Isaiah are spoken to a community who were also longing for their lives to reflect God's ways of peace and justice. Conflict and unfairness are all around us. Unfortunately, they are often deep within us, too. This week, think about how you could bring more peace and justice into your life and/or into your community. Talk with a friend about what peace and justice look like to you, and really listen to what peace and justice look like to your friend.

A Prayer...

God of justice and peace, from the heavens you rain down mercy and kindness, that all on earth may stand in awe and wonder before your marvelous deeds. Raise our heads in expectation, that we may yearn for the coming day of the Lord and stand without blame before you. Amen.

#### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10

The Second Sunday of Advent, we encounter John the Baptist, crying out in the desert for repentance and forgiveness. This week, we bear witness to the Light shining at the No Freeze Project as we collect personal care items for their use. Worship Circle gathers with the theme, "Everlasting Love."

The Advent readings from Isaiah are spoken to a community who were also longing for their lives to reflect God's ways of peace and justice. "Longing" is a powerful word. It combines hunger, desire, hope, and craving. Longing can be painful. This week, think about for what the people around you might be longing for. Blog or journal about the longings you see.

A Prayer...

God of timeless grace, you fill us with joyful expectation. Make us ready for the message that prepares the way, that with uprightness of heart and holy joy we may eagerly await the kingdom of your Jesus Christ, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

#### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17

The readings for the Third Sunday of Advent continue with the words of John the Baptist. This week, we bear witness to the Light shining at the Windham Area Interfaith Ministries as we collect personal care items for their use. Worship Circle is led by Jessica Newman and Dawn Hoffman as they lead the children in baking and decorating Christmas cookies.

In Psalm 126 the psalmist recalls God's commanding presence with the people in the past and, by doing so, invokes hope for the future. Have you ever been so happy that you had to double-check to make sure you weren't dreaming? This week, do your best to remember a happy experience in as vivid detail as you can. Take a moment to think about it each day. At the end of the week, light a candle and thank God for the experience.

A Prayer...

God of hope, you call us home from the exile of selfish oppression to the freedom of justice, the balm of healing, and the joy of sharing. Make us strong to join you in your holy work, as friends of strangers and victims, companions of those whom others shun, and as the happiness of those whose hearts are broken. We make our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

The morning of the Fourth Sunday of Advent we recall God's saving story in throughout the Scriptures with a service of Lessons and Carols. This week, we bear witness to the Light shining at the Domestic Violence Shelter as we collect personal care items for their use.

We regather at 7pm for a candle-light service of Holy Communion as we celebrate the birth of Love in the Christ-Child, bearing witness to the Light shining at Natchaug Hospital as we collect personal care items for their use.

With the angel's announcement to Mary in the gospel of Luke, we catch a vision of how completely lives can be changed by "the power of the Most High." Sometimes life can be completely changed in a moment. When everything is up in the air, it's good to have people around who can help us stay grounded. This week, phone someone who has been by your side in a time of change. What do you want to tell her or him?

A Prayer...

O God of Elizabeth and Mary, you visited your servants with news of the world's redemption in the coming of Jesus. Make our hearts leap with joy, and fill our mouths with songs of praise, that we may announce glad tidings of peace, and welcome the Christ in our midst. Amen.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31**

We welcome the New Year as we gather to reflect on what has past and ask God's blessings upon what will be.

Simeon and Anna may be like the older relatives with whom we are sharing Christmas. They are loved by us and show us the many ways to worship God, and love the people around us. They help us recognize God at work. The joy of Anna and Simeon is our own as we, too, welcome the birth of the Christ. This week, talk about how Jesus is a gift for us. Imagine the size of God's love that inspired such a gift. How might this gift inspire us to now be in the world?

A Prayer...

God of glory, your splendor shines from a manger in Bethlehem, where the Light of the world is humbly born into the darkness of human night. Open our eyes to Christ's presence in the shadows of our world, so that we, like him, may become beacons of your justice, and defenders of all for whom there is no room. Amen.

Peace to you, Beloved of God.

Joe

## **A LITTLE ABOUT OUR LOCAL HABITAT FOR HUMANITY...**

Although many affiliates have paid staff, we have a completely volunteer organization. Four members on our current board are from First Church: Bill Briggs, Susan Hewes Libby Scott and Diane Wright. First Church members are very active in supplying on-site lunches for our volunteer workers.

We raise all our own funds as well as supporting Habitat International. We have built 11 new homes in Willimantic as well as 2 rehab projects. We are currently working on our 12th new home on Ivanhill St. in Willimantic. A total of 14 families put into homes. If you would like to learn more about Habitat for Humanity please visit our website at:

<http://www.windhamhabitat.org/>

Ivanhill Street, Willimantic



## **OUR CHRISTMAS OFFERING**

**Our Christmas Offering this year will benefit The Windham Region No Freeze Project, Inc.** is a not-for-profit agency dedicated to the survival of homeless adults who are in the Windham Region. We provide safe temporary shelter; we strive to address unmet needs including food, clothing, hygiene, case management, emergency and transport funding; we facilitate regional community and social service agency collaboration to these ends. Organizers of the No Freeze Center want to provide a clean, safe and warm alternative. The Windham Region No Freeze Hospitality Center is a Community Coalition founded in 2003 by individuals dedicated to making sure no one is left out in the cold. Our goal is to provide basic overnight shelter from cold weather for homeless persons over the age of 18 from November 15th through April of each year. No one is turned away; all we ask is that our guests respect the volunteers and each other.

## **THANK YOU FROM EASTERN CONNECTICUT GREEN ACTION**

On behalf of Eastern Connecticut Green Action, I want to express my gratitude to First Church for the generosity that the use of space represents. That generosity meant that ECGA could use both the sanctuary and Fellowship Hall for a Take Note! Concert on November 19th. As a consequence, the proceeds from the event exceeded our most optimistic estimates. Thanks to First Church and Take Note!, ECGA has sufficient funds to meet their expenses for the coming year.

Lois Happe

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

**Winter is almost here!** Should there be inclement weather, please be sure to check Channel 3 (WFSB) for church service cancellation, event cancellations or office closing.

The office will be closed when Schools in Mansfield are cancelled. Meetings will also be cancelled unless specific arrangements are made by that group. In the event the office is closed during the week due to bad weather, Wendy will still be checking messages and e-mails.

## FIRST CHURCH INFORMATION YOU NEED

- We are a **Tuna Church!** This means you are invited to put a can of tuna fish into the net bag in Fellowship Hall every once in a while. We're committed to providing 30 cans of tuna each month to our local food banks, so add a can of tuna to your shopping list. Your help is greatly appreciated! Please look for dolphin-safe tuna. It is better for all God's creatures! Also, please be aware when purchasing tuna that Greenpeace indicates that Chicken of the Sea brand uses destructive fishing practices. We are also collecting canned fruit.
- **Care Cards:** Each week we suggest several people or groups who might be strengthened with notes of caring prayer and love. Stationery is provided. We invite you to take a quick minute during fellowship time to write a note, put the recipient's name on the envelope and leave it on the table to be mailed Monday morning. Thank you for this demonstration of our connectedness and love!
- **Reminder:** if you need to reach Pastor Ann or Pastor Joe for an emergency, please call their cell phones: **Ann - 781-223-4914 and Joe - 608-354-3686.** Emails and texts are also another quick way to get in touch with them. They check office messages on days they are at church and irregularly on other days.

## ADVENT SHOPPING LIST

During the season of Advent, we worship with the theme, "Circle the Light." Over the course of the next four weeks, we will be recognizing the Light of Christ being born in places within our community, specifically the Holy Family Shelter, the Windham Area No Freeze Project, the Windham Area Interfaith Ministries, and Natchaug Hospital. And we will be supporting the Light we find there by donating items these organizations use as the support people in crisis. Please consider bringing some of the items below with you as part of your worship each Sunday as we Circle the Light in our congregation and beyond.

### Holy Family - Windham No Freeze – WAIM

Socks (white preference)  
Men's boxer shorts all sizes  
Women's briefs – all size  
Disposable diapers and wipes  
Women's hygiene products (pads, tampons)  
Razor blades  
Shaving Cream  
Individually packaged toothbrushes  
Deodorant

## Natchaug Hospital

Journals with inspirational quotes  
Drawing Pencils  
Legos (small kits)  
Small sports balls (soft)  
Card Games (Uno, Playing Cards, etc.)  
Stamps and stamp pads  
Drawing Books/Sketch Pads (no spirals)  
Art Supplies: crayons, colored pencils, markers  
(individual packs)  
Hats & Gloves (range of sizes and colors)  
How to Books: Drawing and Arts & Crafts  
Craft Paper, Large Rolls

## WAYS TO GREEN YOUR HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

SOURCE: earthshare.org

We spend billions celebrating Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, New Year's Eve, and other annual, seasonal holidays. Here's how you can buy locally, save some time, and give some love back to the planet during the holidays.

**Grow and bake from scratch.** [Start an all-season garden in your yard.](#) Produce like sweet potatoes, rhubarb, and pumpkins are in season from late-fall to early-winter in most of the country. Check out these [organic pumpkin pie](#) and [rhubarb pie](#) recipes. They're tasty, healthy, and fun for the whole family to prep and bake.

**Shop at a winter farmer's market.** The growing popularity of winter farmer's markets means that much of your holiday meal can be found locally and in season. Buying locally not only puts money back into your region's economy, but it also reduces your carbon footprint because the food doesn't have as far to travel. Use [the USDA's national farmer's market directory](#) to find a market near you.

**Look at labels.** If you're shopping at a regular grocery store, look for stickers and signage that tell you where your produce is from - and if it's organic - before you buy.

**Decorate with deliberation.** Make garlands and wreaths from leftover construction paper, wild berries, fruits and nuts. Craft homemade centerpieces from boughs, pinecones, and holly gathered in your yard or a local park. Brighten up doors and hallways with holiday greeting cards from previous years (a great reason to save them!). Trade decorations with friends or family to add a "new" flair to your home without having to buy new products. For lighting, use unscented candles -- have you checked out soy wax candles? -- and high-efficiency LED lights.

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!

## DECEMBER

12/01 AVA LITTLE  
SUSAN HEWES

12/03 FRED MASTERTON

12/06 ANNE SALMAN

12/08 WALEED SALMAN

12/12 JOHN CLAUSON  
JOE CLAUSON

12/16 CHRISTINE DIMOCK  
WILLIAM EVANS

12/27 DONNA CLAUSON

12/31 REBECCA HAEGER  
SKYANNE ROBITAILLE

**THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN MANSFIELD (UCC)  
(CONGREGATIONAL)**

**Ministers**

All the People of the Church

**Pastors**

Rev. Ann Plumley & Rev. Joseph Blotz

**Music Director**

Cathie Rowe

**Organist**

Erik Haeger

**Office Administrator**

Wendy O'Connor

**Childcare Provider**

Emely Salman

**Church Office Hours**

Tuesday - Friday, 9am-1pm – Closed Mondays

Tel.: (860) 423-9008

E-mail : [firstchurchmansfield@snet.net](mailto:firstchurchmansfield@snet.net)

Website: [www.myFCC.info](http://www.myFCC.info)

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