

The First Community Church of Southborough
137 Southville Road
Southborough, Massachusetts 01772-1937
The Reverend Paul D. Sanderson, D.Min., Ph.D. – Pastor
www.firstcommunitychurch.com
Church: (508) 485-2607
Pastor: (508) 543-7160
Email: paulsandersonphd@gmail.com

December 6, 2020 – The Second Sunday of Advent

“Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, if he’s not born in thee, thy soul is still forlorn.” Angelus Silesius (12th century mystic)

Blessings, Everyone!

Keeping in Touch With Our Church Family

Concerns:

We hold in prayer:

- Skip Willman and his family on the passing of Skip’s mother, Ida (Foskett) Willman on December 1, 2020 at the age of 100. Skip and Sharon’s address is 43 Technology Drive, Unit 218 Bedford, New Hampshire 03110
- Our country. We stand in need of prayer for healing and a new, more inclusive, more enlightened vision of who we are, and the patience and dedication to make this a reality for all people.
- Our world. We stand in need of a vision of world community, a world where people care about each other and where we know deep down that we are all in this together.
- Nature. Our environment. The world in which we live. Our little planet is in need of healing and tender-loving care.
- Those who are food insecure in our own country and even in our own state
- Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, our President-Elect and Vice President-Elect, and their new administration

Thank you to:

- Jim Holmes – for faithfully ringing the church bell at 11:00 a.m. every Sunday morning to remind our neighbors and the world that we are still here, and for sending us pictures of the church and church grounds so we remember what they look like
- all those who have been faithful in their yearly pledges to the General Fund
- the new members of our church family who are supporting us financially in ways that are helping us survive this difficult time

Sunday Worship as the Gathered Church

We know that everyone would like to worship together this blessed Advent season and, especially, to meet in our beautifully decorated sanctuary for our deeply meaningful candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve.

Unfortunately, we can't. We are going through a time like no other in the history of our church, in our nation, and around the world—at least in our lifetimes. This has been and continues to be a challenging time for all of us.

We need to remember that it's not about us—or, at least, it's not all about us. The prophet Jeremiah (29:7) advised his people in exile,

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

“In its welfare you will find your welfare.” We all need to think of the welfare of the “city,” the state, the country, and the world, and we need to both pray and act on its behalf. In the welfare of the world and our nation, in the well-fare of our brothers and sisters, lies our own welfare. We need to remember that we are all in this together.

In-person worship in sanctuaries is problematic. It is proven that this is one of the types of gatherings that is most likely to spread the coronavirus.

- In an enclosed room over a length of time, airborne viral particles can reach every corner. This means that 6' or even 12' physical distancing will not prevent the spread.
- Speaking, praying out loud, and singing propel the virus farther than just breathing.
- Using masks limits, but does not prevent, the transmission of the coronavirus.
- In a church sanctuary and bathroom, common surfaces abound.
- We know that people can be carriers of the virus without experiencing any symptoms.

There is much we still don't know about this virus, including the long-term effects it has on those who have been infected, whether or not they were symptomatic. We know it affects the lungs, the brain, and also the heart, e.g., Eduardo Rodriguez, the Red Sox pitcher, who came down with myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart, from his bout with COVID-19. The more we learn about the effects of this disease, the more diligent we should become about making sure we do not transmit this virus to others, especially the elderly, those who are especially vulnerable for various reasons/conditions, and the young. This is no time to give in to pandemic fatigue and become careless, even when our carelessness is cleverly rationalized. It leads to a lot of deaths. Finally, as Dianne Simmons, our resident nurse can attest, a casual attitude toward transmission puts an enormous strain on our health care system *and those who work within it.*

We as a church continue to move forward toward resuming gatherings with an abundance of care and an abundance of caution. However, we need to remember that we are still the church, and we never “closed down.” We are constantly seeking new ways to move forward, to keep in touch, and to reach out to each other. We ask for your patience, your financial support, and your prayers as we continue our journey through this wilderness within which we have found ourselves.

Birthdays in December

Gilbert Joe Dec. 2
Nancy Hite Dec. 3
Betty Tebbetts Dec. 12
Tanner Willman Dec. 13
Bayley Willman Dec. 18
Darcy Hilbert Dec. 20
Stacey Willman Dec. 21
Dick Varney Dec. 24
Justin Elias Dec. 27

Anniversaries in December

Michael & Kristen (Sanderson) Springer Dec. 16
Scott & Lynn (Lees) Webster Dec. 23
Michael & Dorothy Larson Dec. 24

Missions:

Our mission outreach for the month of November is the Salvation Army. Our church has been supporting this mission for decades, and Bud and Martha Hubley spent many years running the Salvation Army soup kitchen in downtown Framingham. Every December, all members of our church family who donate to the Salvation Army through our church's special offering will have their names appear on a Christmas card that we send to everyone. This card takes the place of sending out individual Christmas cards to people in our church family, and the money that would have gone to the purchase of cards and postage provide goods and services for people in need. **If you would like your name to appear on the card, please send your donation to the church Collector, Jim Holmes, by December 20.**

Jesus said, "I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat." (Mt. 25:35)

Mission Thank-you

We recently received the following letter from The American Himalayan Foundation.

Dear Members of First Community Church,

Thank you for your thoughtful gift of \$210 to the American Himalayan Foundation to Stop Girl Trafficking.

As schools remain closed, girls in villages across Nepal are in peril, their futures shadowed by the twin specters of COVID and hunger. Traffickers now prey on poor families made even more desperate by the shutdown—promising a better life for a daughter, or at least one less mouth to feed.

But your kindness brings hope to this precarious time. You help Dr. Aruna Uprety and her team keep track of the SGT girls to keep them safe, keep their spirits up and studies going with distanced tutoring. They also coordinate food distributions for those most in need.

Thank you again for making it possible for us to offer relief now and a brighter prospect for the future: changing and saving the lives of vulnerable girls. We join them in gratitude to you.

*Sincerely,
Erica Stone—President*

Audio Weekly Worship Service

We are offering a weekly worship service that can be accessed via a link on the home page of our church website: www.firstcommunitychurch.com; there is also a link in the audio section of the sermon section. Each service is listed by date. The reflection/homily is the reflection that is sent to those on our expanded church contact list, a list that is comprised of church members, members of our larger church family, and friends of the church who have asked to be put on our contact list. The pastor's reflection is also accessible in printed form (PDF) from the Sermons page of our website.

Quote/Thought of the Day

“When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace.”
Jimi Hendrix

A Second Quote/Thought of the Day

We all need to experience/access/practice patience if we are to reverse the upward trend of this coronavirus pandemic and return life and our economy to not only normal but also healthy.

*I can't go on.
You must go on.
I'll go on.*

This quote is from *The Unnamable*, the third novel in a trilogy by Samuel Beckett. Beckett (4/13/1906 – 12/22/1989) was a somewhat intense Irish playwright, novelist, poet, and winner of the 1969 Nobel Prize in literature. He wrote in English and French. His most famous work is probably *Waiting for Godot*. A common theme for Beckett is the search for the authentic self within the tragic realm of human suffering.

Attention-Grabbling Church Signs

*Too Cold to Keep Changing Signs
Basically: Sin—Bad; Jesus—Good
Details Inside*

Taken From (Apparently Unedited) Church Sunday Morning Bulletins

“For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.”

Interesting Thoughts or “Facts”

Last week we looked at the problem of food insecurity and actual hunger in our country and even in our own state. This moved several of you to let me know that you have found ways to reach out to those in need during the Thanksgiving season. We need to remember that, even in times when all of us are struggling in various ways, many of us still share our time and resources with those in tremendous need.

However, good things are happening! The World Food Program, a United Nations agency, was recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts to combat a surge in global hunger caused or exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, which has swept around the world with devastating effect.

In many nations, particularly those at war, the combination of conflict and the pandemic has sharply increased the number of people who are not only food insecure but are actually on the brink of starvation. Since this past March, when the pandemic hit, the World Food Program reports that the number of people experiencing life-threatening levels of food insecurity doubled to 250 million. When I read this, it struck me that even before this pandemic, some 125 million people in our world were already in danger of starvation! The World Food Program, established in 1961 following a proposal by President Eisenhower, last year provided assistance to nearly 100 million people in 88 countries. One of the program's key messages is that, in most cases, hunger is the result of human action rather than nature's whims. I like this. Though I find it sad.

Unfortunately, the outgoing administration cut our funding to this program and the World Health Organization, complaining that we were contributing more than our “fair share.” As Christians, what would this mean—our fair share?!