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December 27, 2020 – The First Sunday After Christmas

“As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” (Colossians 3:12)

Blessings, Everyone!

Keeping in Touch With Our Church Family

Concerns:

We hold in prayer:

- 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 hungry or 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
- The New Year! Let’s hope that it’s better than 2020!

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
- Cathy Ambler, a new Friend of the Church, for providing the two beautiful Christmas wreaths that adorn our front doors
- David Crane, whom we have forgiven for abandoning us and moving, taking Barbara with him, to some place west of Worcester, for posting the weekly reflections and audio worship services on our website, and also for cleaning up what I send to him: adjusting the volume for the spoken and the recorded music parts, taking out extraneous noise from when I change the way my Iphone is pointing, and removing sections where music suddenly interrupts what I am saying because I pressed the wrong button on my

Bose remote control. I will be trying to include my recording of our worship service with this email from now on, but if you really want to hear a good recording of it, go to our website and, thanks to Dave, hear it as it was intended to be heard.

- Corey Sanderson, a true Friend of the Church and a longtime member of our family, for teaching me how to voice record our worship service on my iPhone
- Mark Mazelli, a recent Friend of the Church, for patiently, non-condescendingly helping me work through the mechanics of recording our Christmas Eve service, specifically how to move a voice recording from my iPhone to a download, and then from a download to a document to inclusion as an email attachment. (Although I did sense traces of a tendency to talk slower to me, carefully enunciating every syllable when he was explaining how things worked.)
- Bob L'Heureux for creatively designing, printing, and then mailing our beautiful church Christmas card. Bob's selection of the dove for the card seemed especially *apropos* this year!
- Those who have already turned in their 2021 pledges to the General Fund, and those Friends of the Church who have either already sent or pledged a special gift to support us financially in the year to come
- Darlene Sanderson for providing us with several pictures of last year's Christmas Eve service—**provided as an attachment to this missive** (I hope!)

COVID-19 and Sunday Worship as the Gathered Church

OK. I get it. I know that all of you are getting tired of these pandemic restrictions. Darlene and I are, also. It was sad that our church family was not to be able to be together at our Christmas Eve candlelight service, and it was painful for Darlene and me to celebrate Christmas both together and alone; we would have loved to see Miles tear the wrapping paper off his presents—and then be more interested in playing with the wrapping paper than the new toy. (I tried to tell Darlene that you actually don't have to give a seven-month-old child much for his first Christmas, just boxes with wrapping paper, but she refused to listen to reason—hence the UHaul truck that we had to rent for a trip from Foxborough to Marlborough.)

However, this COVID-19 thing is still serious. At the risk of being a “downer,” I would like to remind you of why this particular coronavirus is a matter of concern. According to *The New England Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 382, No. e60, 2020, COVID-19 has been found to cause blood clots, both large and small, that can travel to the brain and cause a stroke. Strokes have occurred in COVID-19 patients of all ages—and, in fact, physicians have reported that some adults under age 50 have presented to the hospital with a stroke as their first complication from COVID-19, while their respiratory symptoms were mild.

I'm sure that every single person who suffered a stroke from this coronavirus infection thought it would not happen to them. But it did. Are you so impatient that you are willing to risk this for yourself? Are you so impatient to return to worship that you would run the risk of having one of our parishioners afflicted with a stroke? C'mon, man!

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:

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Salvation Army, our designated mission outreach recipient, this month. Even though we can't individually provide the services that so many people need both in general and especially during this difficult time, we can support the organizations that do.

Audio Weekly Worship Service

We are offering a weekly worship service that is posted on the home page of our church website: www.firstcommunitychurch.com; it is 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 on our website in the sermon section.

Quote/Thought of the Day

"You know that every evil is founded in self-love, and that self-love is a cloud that takes away the light of reason, which reason holds in itself the light of faith, and one is not lost without the other." Saint Catherine of Sienna

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.

"Impatience is the unformed energy of fear looking for a place to manifest."

Dennis Merritt Jones

Dennis Merritt Jones has been involved in the human potential movement and the field of spirituality as a teacher, mentor, author of many books, and speaker for more than thirty years. He founded the Center for Spiritual Living in Simi Valley, California.

Attention-Grabbling Church Signs

*We Are Praying
And Listening
To the Scientists*

Taken From (Apparently Unedited) Church Sunday Morning Bulletins

"During the absence of our Rector, we enjoyed the rare privilege of hearing a good sermon when our old friend, The Reverend J. F. Stubbs, supplied our pulpit."

Interesting “Facts”

In 336 A.D., the first known celebration of Christmas on (what we now know as) December 25 took place in Rome.

In 1818, “Silent Night” (“Stille Nacht”) was publicly performed for the first time during the Christmas Midnight Mass at the Church of St. Nikolaus in Obendorf, Austria.

On Christmas Eve Day in 1865, several veterans of the Confederate Army formed a private social club in Pulaski, Tennessee that was the original version of the Ku Klux Klan.