

KEEPING IN TOUCH!!
December 2023
MERRY CHRISTMAS!!

The First Community Church of Southborough

137 Southville Road

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The Reverend Paul D. Sanderson, D.Min., Ph.D. – Pastor

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NOTE!!

Our Sunday worship service begins at 11:00 a.m. Please stay for coffee, refreshments, and fellowship following the worship service.

Sunday, December 3 is Communion Sunday. All are welcome to share in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols will be held on Sunday, December 24, at 7:00 p.m.

The Pastor's Message

Greetings!

I ran across a cartoon the other day. A middle-aged man is sitting on the edge of a bed in what appears to be an exam room in an urgent care facility. The man, who has a worried look on his face, is speaking to a physician who has a clipboard in her hand and a stethoscope around her neck.

The man says, "Doctor, can you tell me how to avoid the anxiety, the depression, the shortness of breath, the high blood pressure, and the recurrent headaches I have been experiencing?"

The physician responds, "It would probably help if you would stop obsessing about the already serious effects of global warming, the spread of pandemics around the world, Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, the war in the Middle East, the dysfunction in our House of Representatives, the demonizing of immigrants and refugees, the possibility that Donald Trump will be reelected, the rise of right-wing fascism/populism in Argentina, Hungary, and the Netherlands, the rise in hate crime within our own country, increased incidents of antisemitism and Islamophobia, the toll of inflation on people who are struggling to make ends meet, and the mass murders of innocent people in schools, churches, synagogues, mosques, clubs, bowling alleys, restaurants, college campuses, and concerts."

I think the physician has a point! This little cartoon is a reminder of a layer of anxiety that we all carry with us into the Christmas season. Following Lewiston, we carry with us a sense of vulnerability, a sense of the fragility and the unpredictability of life, of our life, and the life of our loved ones. And yes, at the root of much of the resurrection of fascism and the hate-filled response to people who are different from us in any way, is fear.

I know it probably sounds a little simplistic, but I believe that the answer to our existential anxieties, to our growing realization of the mess we have made and are continuing to make of our planet, our world community, our own nation, is contained in the Spirit of Christmas. This is why, throughout this Advent season, we will be trying to ignite or tend the tenuous inner flame of faith, of healing in our worship. In keeping with our traditional Advent candle themes of Hope, Peace, Joy,

Love, and Light, I will be sharing my reflections on how "The Answer to Fear is Hope/Peace/Joy/Love and Light."

As Angelus Silesius (1624-1677) has said,

*Of what use Gabriel, your message to Marie,
Unless you now can bring the same message to me!"*

Please join us in worship and fellowship throughout this Advent Season and for our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols. If we can bring the Spirit of Christmas alive within us and in our little corner of the world, we may not be able to solve all the problems of the world, but at least we will not be adding to them.

Faithfully yours,

Reverend Paul Sanderson

"It is of more worth to God, his being brought forth spiritually in the individual virgin or good soul, than that he was born of Mary bodily. But this involves the notion of our being the only Son whom the Father has eternally begotten. When the Father begat all creatures, he was begetting me: I flowed out with all creatures while remaining in the Father." (Meister Eckhart)

LOOKING AHEAD . . .

Sunday, December 3 is the First Sunday of Advent. Advent is a time in the liturgical calendar that we set aside to prepare ourselves for the celebration and (hopefully) the experience of Christmas

The theme of the First Sunday of Advent is Hope.

The theme of the Second Sunday of Advent is Peace.

The theme of the Third Sunday of Advent is Joy.

The theme of the Fourth Sunday of Advent is Love

The theme of our Christmas Eve service is Light.

Growing in the Faith!

Tuesday afternoon Spiritual Study & Growth Group meets every Tuesday at 2:30 p.m.

We are presently concluding our study of the 13th century German mystic Meister Eckhart by reading Matthew Fox's comparison of Eckhart, Thich Naht Hanh, and C. G. Jung's teachings about God and the human soul. As we enter into the New Year, we will decide what/whom we will read next.

We have approximately ten people who attend regularly—and each contributes to our excellent discussions. If you have never attended one of our study groups, give us a try—we're not that bad!

December Mission

Our December Mission Offering supports The Salvation Army's many services to needy individuals and families. Those without pledge envelopes may place their offering in one of the white envelopes available in the pews and deposit it in the offering plate or you may mail your donation to the church. Checks should be made payable to First Community Church.

Welcome to Our New Members!

During our worship service on Sunday, December 9, we will be welcoming the following members of our church family into full membership with our church:

Jim Duncan

Linda Duncan

Diane Hagan

Carole Jolie

We are excited about having these people, who are already an integral part of our fellowship, become full members! We already have a sense of what they bring to our community, and we hope to play an ever-deepening role in their own spiritual development in the years to come.

Stewardship Reminder!

Everyone is urged to return his/her/their Pledge Card as soon as possible so that the 2024 budgeting process can begin with a clear picture of what financial resources will be available to us. Also, *please* make sure your 2023 pledge is up to date as the end of the year approaches; just like in our homes, the church's bills just keep coming. Cards and envelopes are available in the narthex, from the Pastor, or from Jim Holmes, the Church Collector.

Announcement of worship service cancellations

Cancellations because of winter storms will be available on Television Channels 4, 5, and 7. The listing, both on your TV screen and on the stations' websites (www.wbztv.com, www.wcvb.com, and www.whdh.com), will be "First Community Church – Southborough". Depending on the track and timing of storms, the decision to cancel could be made either on Saturday evening or by 8:30 a.m. on Sunday morning. Note that church cancellations are often included in the "School Closings" list.

***If you hope to give birth to God on earth, remember—
conception takes place in the heart,
the womb of the eternal.***

Angelus Silesius

Birthdays in December

Nancy Hite	3 rd
Cheryl Holmes	19 th
Darcy Hilbert	20 th
Jesus	25 th

Anniversaries in December

Michael & Kristen Springer	16 th
Scott & Lynn Webster	23 rd
Michael & Dorothy Larson	24 th

Congratulations!!

Congratulations to our Pastor, who has accepted the invitation of the C. G. Jung Institute—New England to become Director of Training and a member of its Board of Directors beginning January 1.

Congratulations to Corey Sanderson who has accepted a call to become the settled Pastor of Second Congregational Church, UCC, in West Newton. Corey's first Sunday at his new pastorate was November 26,

Thank You!!

Thank you to all who helped to make our annual Pie Sale the unexpectedly great success it was! The Saturday before Thanksgiving was the first time in thirty years that it has rained on that day. In past years, it has snowed, it has been bitter cold, but it has never rained. However, thanks to Marge Coldwell and Pilgrim Church, we were able to use a portable booth-type tent which Jim Holmes and Dianne Simmons

set up in front of Mauro's Village Café—and it didn't rain as much as we feared it would. Thank you to Darlene Sanderson, the "Pastor's Pushy Wife" for "soliciting" pies and other baked goods, to Bob Farmer, Jim Holmes, and Dianne Simmons for being dedicated "hawkers," and to all of you who baked pies, breads, candies, etc. The total received was \$678—which may be a record!

Thank you to Cathy Ambler, who once again donated the two wreaths for the front door of the church, and to Rick Belejack, Alan Towne, Darlene Sanderson, Cheryl Holmes, David Crane, Lou Dundin, Cathy Ambler, and Sandy McKeen for decorating our sanctuary for Advent and Christmas!

Thank you to everyone who has been contributing to the United Parishes of Southborough Food Pantry, which is housed at Pilgrim Church. The food pantry presently serves approximately 75 families from Southborough who are food insecure. Thanks to our two representatives to the United Parishes of Southborough Lay Council, Jim Holmes and Dianne Simmons, and also to Darlene Sanderson and Cheryl Holmes, for organizing the "Food Item of the Week" program.

The Church in the World

A recent cartoon by Shannon Wheeler that appears in the Union of Concerned Scientists' 2024 Calendar shows a couple seated on the two ends of a couch in their living room staring at a large nuclear bomb with radioactive symbols stenciled on it. The wife says to her husband, "A second bomb will not make us safer."

Those of us who are disciples or followers of Jesus know this is true. More bombs will not make us safer. More guns will not make us safer. More power will not make us safer. Only a change in heart will make us safer. And this is what Jesus, whose birthday we celebrate this month, is trying to do—change our hearts.

The church needs to speak a clear voice for international arms control. The Union of Concerned Scientists tells us that “we need it in this present moment, even during—and perhaps especially because of—the war in Ukraine, with its heightened risk for conflict between nuclear-armed states.”

Jesus calls us to be good stewards of our planet, its animals, and also of each other. As Albert Schweitzer has said,

Late on the third day, at the very moment when, at sunset, we were making our way through a herd of hippopotamuses, there flashed upon my mind, unforeseen and unsought, the phrase, “Reverence for Life.”

Reverence for Life. For all life.