



Epistle

SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Advent 2014

This past Sunday in my sermon I recounted a moment that took place during the Thanksgiving distribution South hosted for the community just a week ago. Nearly 1,400 families received frozen turkeys and “all the fixin’s” that day. Towards evening, as the line was slowing down, a young mother with two small children in tow emerged from the rear door of Barrett Hall. As she carried her turkey and box of other items, two teenagers stationed outside the door offered her a half gallon of milk as a final gift. The mother’s shoulders suddenly stiffened as she responded guardedly, asking: “What’s the date on the milk?” I thought to myself, “This is a good mother. She knows it’s easy to get out-of-date, sour stuff at pantries that aren’t always good at keeping up with perishable items. She’s got a heavy load and two little ones to care for. She doesn’t need spoiled food.” The teenager with the milk looked surprised but quickly opened the bag, looked in, and checked the date. She smiled and said: “December 9th!” The mother let out a sigh as her shoulders relaxed and her face softened. She took the milk from the hand of the teen saying, warmly, “Thank you.” She and her daughters then disappeared into the dark. I was left to ponder the moment.

I remembered times I witnessed my mother’s shoulders stiffening and heard the guarded response in her voice as she dealt with moments when she could barely feed her five children. Sometimes seeming-help turned out to be “spoiled milk” from people whose motives were not the best, or who were simply not paying attention. But I vividly remember those times when genuine help was given and we discovered that there were allies in this world. It didn’t matter so much how big or small the help was. What mattered was the sense of connection, of not being alone: the power of hope was embodied in such help. When that young mother’s shoulders relaxed and I heard her sigh of relief, I was reminded that God had been present all day nourishing many with something more than just fresh food.

We live in challenging times. There is too much poverty in our community, in our nation. Those in power in our country don’t seem to have the best motives, or are simply not paying attention, so substantive and creative changes are not being implemented. Can we be people of hope, anyway? I think of another young woman whose shoulders stiffened--at the puzzling words of the angel: “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” And Mary said “Yes” to the improbable task of giving birth to Jesus, who was coming to bring hope and transformation to this hungering world. Last week South said “Yes” to the improbable task of hosting an enormous community event. On that day our larger community came together offering food and moments of connection to those who often go unseen. It was a creative, stopgap measure to a deepening problem. It made clear that it’s possible for a community to come together and respond compassionately, imaginatively, to problems pressing in upon us. How can we enlarge on that? During Advent as we light candles and remember Jesus’ birth, may we sense hope at work within us, enabling us to say “Yes” to God and to the call to create a more whole community for ourselves, our children, our neighbors, and our nation.

EPISTLE

Published monthly at Pittsfield, Mass. in the interest of members and friends of South Congregational Church
Editor Priscilla Anthony
Business Manager Pam Garrett
Reporters Each of You
Features
Pastor Joel Huntington
Children/Youth Director Ann Roche
Moderator Mary Rentz
Parish Nurse Sue Kaufman
Food Pantry Mary Wheat
May Mattoon Alice Gallup
Ladies Benevolent Marge Demary
Men's Forum John Anthony
Production and Mailing Paula Haskell

The next *Epistle* deadline is January 4th at 11 a.m.

Please note change in regular schedule.

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

In memoriam:

Because I could not stop for death—
he kindly stopped for me—
the carriage held but just ourselves—
and Immortality....

~Emily Dickinson, c.1863

Lawrence L. Borden	Nov. 1
Elizabeth (Lisa) Stuart	Nov. 5
Karen M. Methven	Nov. 10
William J. McNutt	Nov. 14

New Address:

Donald Geer's address in Connecticut

17 Marshall Manor
101 Marshall Lane
Derby, CT 06418

CHRISTMAS

Whatever else be lost among the years
let us keep Christmas still a shining thing.
Whatever doubts assail us, or what fears,
let us hold close one day, remembering
its poignant meaning for the hearts of men.
Let us get back our childlike faith again.

Grace Noll Crowell



BMC DIABETES WALK – SEPT. 20, 2014

Sponsored by Roger's Team

It seems like a long time since that beautiful day in September to the first snow fall in November. The BMC Diabetes Walk on September 20 was well attended and very successful. Roger's Team raised \$3455; Diabetes Education raised \$844; and the Diabetes Awareness raised \$2000 from vendor's fees. The total contributed to the BMC Diabetes Patients Needs Fund this year was \$6299.

The purpose of the Diabetes Needs Fund is to cover the costs of urgent diabetes expenses and diabetic education for patients with financial need.

We thank you for your contributions and encouragement. Sara Adams, Pat Nixon, Bing Honig and Nancy deForest, plus my nephew, Dan Grant, his wife Susanne and daughter Lucy Marie walked with the Team. I especially thank Bing and Pat for their help in requesting matching funds from General Electric, and Sara Adams for collecting contributions from the Lyons Clubs in the area. **Thanks to all.**

Audra Kinner,
Captain of Roger's Team

GOOD ADVICE

- * When everything's coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.
- * Birthdays are good for you. The more you have, the longer you live.
- * Some mistakes are too much fun to make only once.
- * We could learn a lot from crayons. Some are sharp, some are pretty and some are dull. Some have weird names and all are different colors, but they all have to live in the same box.
- * A truly happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery on a detour.

And Most importantly

*Save the earth..... It's the only planet with chocolate!

SISTER KATHRYN FLANAGAN'S COMMENTS
Sunday, November 16, 2014

Good Morning,

It is such a pleasure to be present with you. I would like to thank Rev. Joel and the members of the Mission Board for inviting me to share in this service honoring John Moore. I am most grateful.

Being singled out to receive praise and thanks is, I am sure, very uncomfortable for John. From my perspective he is at ease when getting things done without a lot of fanfare – not unlike the foster father of Jesus, Joseph, whom we call the hidden saint because so very little is known about him. Joseph fulfilled his role without any notoriety.

Back in the early 90's, I came to know John through a mutual desire to reach out to those in need in our city. St. Joseph's Kitchen was the vehicle. As we all know, God leaves nothing to chance. When St. Joseph's Kitchen was considering a new location and director, John provided the leadership that made the move from St. Joseph's High School to South Congregational Church seamless. John became God's instrument and he, with the help of Rev. Joel and the wonderful people of South Congregational Church, continue to provide a safe, loving environment where God's people can come together to "break bread" and share companionship in joyful spirit.

John, this day is all about you and many people will share their thoughts of you. However, I would like to speak to you as well, not only in my name but also in the name of the needy who have been the guests at St. Joseph's Kitchen here at South Congregational Church.

For over twenty years, John, you have dedicated yourself unselfishly and untiringly to the ministry of St. Joseph's Kitchen. Truly, you have been a "man for others." Like Joseph, you have been the "just man, hidden in so many ways." What is right, what is fair, what is just – these are some of your hallmarks – marks of great character. Because of your strong belief that you are your brother's and sister's keeper, you have touched the lives of many; blessed them with your Christ-like caring and, thereby, given them hope in a new tomorrow.

Twice, a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize, Don Helder Camara, Archbishop of Olinda in East Brazil and a passionate warrior of social justice, once remarked, "It is worth any sacrifice, however great or costly, to see eyes that were listless, light up again; to see someone smile who seemed to have forgotten how to smile; to see trust reborn in someone who no longer believed in anything or Anyone." In your ministry at St. Joseph's Kitchen, John, you have enabled others to make that sacrifice each week. You have provided opportunities to lift spirits, to express concern, to find acceptance and to provide spiritual and bodily nourishment. Yes, for you also, it has been worth any sacrifice.

How fitting are the words of St. Paul in his letter to the Philippians, Ch. 4, Ver. 6 – 9 "God's desire is that we bear fruit in our lives; that we be honorable, true, just and pure, bringing beauty and grace into the world." John, truly you have exemplified God's desire and have shown others what it means to be about God's work.

Thank you, John for your dedication, your example, your witness to truth. May God grasp you in his loving kindness and bless you a hundredfold.

Worship Lectionary for December

Sunday, December 7 – Second Sunday of Advent

Lighting of the Candle of Peace
Sharing in the Sacrament of Communion
Communion Meditation: Rev. Huntington

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalm 85

2 Peter 3:8-15

Mark 1:1-8

At 7 p.m. Inward Journeys:
Exploring Pathways of the
Holy



Tonight we will share in a time of meditation, sing contemporary songs and hymns, hear musical reflections from Linda Worster, and explore personal dimensions of the Annunciation: What if an angel of God appeared to us and called us into new life? What if God is calling to us today? How would we respond? Come, explore the realms of God with us in words, music, and silence.

Sunday, December 14 – Third Sunday of Advent

Lighting of the Candle of Joy

Sermon: Rev. Huntington

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Psalm 126

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Luke 1: 46-55

Sunday, December 21 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Lighting of the Candle of Love

Living Nativity with our children and youth

Sermon: Rev. Huntington

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Psalm 89

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

Wednesday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

Candlelight Worship

At 7 p.m. Preludes with guest musicians

and a carol sing

At 7:30 p.m. Candlelight Service with carols, a brief meditation by Rev. Huntington, lighting of the Christ

Candle, and the sharing of the light of Christ with us all

Isaiah 9:2-7

Psalm 96

Luke 2:1-20



Sunday, December 28 –
Worship in the Parlor

December Lectionary continued

Isaiah 61:10-62:3 Galatians 4: 4-7
Psalm 148 Luke 2:22-40

FOOD PANTRY

Thank you to God who provided a beautiful, warm day to distributed 1385 turkeys and their fixings to families who would otherwise not have had a turkey dinner. Thank you to all who contributed time, turkeys and money to purchase the birds, ranging from the \$2 gift to the \$5000, and every amount in between.

Everything went well, even the large Crescent Creamery truck, which was parked on the side of the kitchen with 1400 1/2 gallon bottles of milk. Cindy, Jenna and Marissa distributed them. All went well.

Sherri and Kathryn did a fantastic job cooking 1200 hot dogs donated from SOLDIER ON, while BMC, under the direction of Sue, distributed cider and water to people waiting in line. Some waited for over 1 and 1/2 hours. (The line was all the way to South Street and around the corner to the front of the church). Joey, Tim L., Woody and Kevin kept the people safe and the traffic moving.

Inside Pat R. took care of all the deliveries on Church Street while Darlene continually brought in supplies. Lynn, Margaret, Dot W. and Mary R. made sure everyone had bread and rolls, while Letitia distributed the butter. Liz greeted our guests at the door while Robin checked them in and Sato and Bill kept the boxes and bags well supplied. Robin's family gave out the turkeys, a very cold job, after Sam brought them in. Jean handed out mashed potatoes.

Mary Ellen was in charge of volunteers while Art, Will, Rose, Lucy, Paula and Jack helped in many different areas.

Paula assisted with all the financial details as did Pat P. while also answering hundreds of telephone calls. On Monday Dot, Pat H., Ruth A., Jeannine, Elaine and Joyce served as secretaries, answering the many calls.

The pies were a huge success. Thank you to those who baked them. Merrilyn and Gretchen did a superb job of distributing them among the people.

Thank you to Joel and South Church for allowing such an event to take place and giving us such warm and kind help. Joel helped in many, many ways and we are all very grateful.

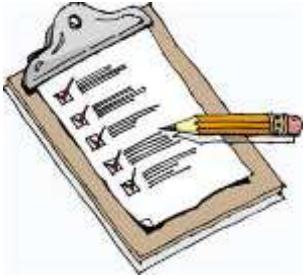
Now to Christmas! The Pantry is asking for laundry detergent, and we are once again making a gift of toiletry bags, thanks to Ladies Benevolent.

Thank you all!

Mary Wheat

MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

A Thanksgiving snow harkened the coming season of surprises - Advent. That blanket of deep, white snow was all-encompassing, like God's love revealed in the birth of the Christ child. As Christians, we are called upon to share God's love day in and day out.



The Thanksgiving food distribution to 1400 Pittsfield families was an example of our community sharing. The organization by the thirteen churches and agencies known as the "Thanksgiving Angels" was seamless. Personal needs, such as help with the food boxes or rides to cars or apartments, were anticipated. From the youngest to the oldest volunteer, welcoming smiles and amazing energy were in constant evidence. People waiting in line greeted each other with good humor and thanked the volunteers over and over. Former students and teachers, long lost friends and classmates were reunited, and memories and recipes were shared back forth between volunteers and guests. Many of our elected officials, including the Mayor, participated. All of this happened on a surprisingly warm, sunny, late autumn day.

As wonderful as the distribution was, the back story is that so many Pittsfield neighbors, families and children are living on the edge where sufficient food isn't a given. The fragile balance between rent, heat, food and clothing shifts when winter winds blow.

Our Mission Board is planning two events where your support will make a difference - a "gifts for teens" tree in December and a January 16th dinner for the Council of Congregations Emergency Fuel Fund with entertainment by David Grover, Linda Worster and Puggy Demary.

Under Mary Wheat's steady leadership, our ecumenical Food Pantry provides almost 500 families with staples each week. Volunteers are needed for many tasks, including assisting with the distributions on Wednesday and Thursday mornings.

On Wednesday afternoons, ecumenical teams dish up hot meals for St. Joseph's Kitchen at South

Church. John Moore, who brought this ministry to South twenty years ago, is retiring at the end of December. We are now seeking several people to fill John's shoes. If you answer the call, you may find surprising rewards.

This is also the season that we seek new members for the boards and committees that guide the church and keep it functioning. If you are now serving, we thank you. If you would like to get more active, please tell us - call the Church Office or talk with Nominating Committee members (Pat Hill, Pam Garrett, Nancy deForest, Bing Honig, Heather Garner) or Joel or me. Each year our members share surprising gifts.

Plan to join us in worship or fellowship or service as Advent unfolds. May you discover unexpected surprises that lift your spirit and give you strength for the coming year.

Mary Rentz

MISSION MINUTES

The Mission Board will be setting up the Christmas Giving Tree in the Parlor for the month of December. This year the tags on the tree will have suggested gifts for teens from our Christian Center families. If all gifts could be in by December 21st, we will deliver them for Christmas.



Thank you for your generous and caring ways that help others. Your kindness will make a special Christmas for some special teens!

Merry Christmas Jean Robertson

The Mission Board would like to express our gratitude to the members and friends at South Church who have contributed so generously to the language project this year. Since March the coffee hour proceeds the third Sunday each month are designated and go to Carol Kresge in Laos for her work there. This year you have given a total of \$1188.87! Missions will have a Christmas card for everyone to sign that will be sent to Carol this month. Your blessings will be as welcome as your dollars. South Church is a blessing to so many, here in our own community and around the world.

May your Christmas be filled with peace and Joy.
Sue Kaufman

MAY MATTOON

Once again, the brilliance of table settings catch your eye, put a smile on your face, and “oh so pretty” explanations as each member entered the room. Pumpkins, colored leaves, scarecrows, owl napkins, and ceramic turkey candleholders set the scene for our meeting on November 2nd.

It was noted at the business meeting that May Mattoon had donated \$25 to the Sunday School Fund in memory of Jeanne Sheely. Later in the month, May Mattoon provided a lovely reception following the memorial service for Larry Borden.

Mary Wheat noted that more than 500 families are now seeking help from the Food Pantry. She added that donations of any kind would be greatly appreciated; especially toilet tissue, bath soap, dish detergent, and washing machine soap. She further explained that the washing machine soap could not be purchased with food stamps. Also, needed were toilet articles such as toothpaste, deodorant, and shampoo.

Many cookies, pies, and other sweets were baked by members for the food table at the Harvest Fair, all of which were sold out. Good job, bakers!

Also noted was the beautiful display of American flags flying in Park Square to honor our Veterans as well as those presently serving in our armed forces. They have given us the most precious gift of all – freedom.

Hostesses for this meeting were Mary Rentz, Ruth Campbell, and Sara Adams. They provided homemade pumpkin pies with whipped cream – and you already know they were delicious.

Our next meeting is December 8th, a Monday evening at 6 p.m.- a potluck supper. Don’t forget your place setting. It

will be the annual Mattoon Christmas Party. For those who care to participate, a Yankee Swap of Christmas gifts will be held. Hostesses for this meeting are Mary Rentz, Marge Demary, and Sharon Mercier. On December 14th, the Christmas Cookie Sale will take place in the Parlor.

Keep warm!

Alice Gallup



Come Join Us- Ladies Benevolent

The Ladies Benevolent Society gave a check to Mary Wheat for \$500 so she could purchase some much needed items for the Food Pantry. The Western Mass Food Bank has cut back on the amount of food they have been sending so the supply of food is low but the demand is HIGH.

We have made cloth bags to hold toiletries that were received from local dentist offices and others, to hand out to food pantry people for Christmas.

Bob and Pat Hill and I have been scouting out other Craft Fairs to get new ideas for our Craft Fair next year. We are always thinking of things we can do to make our Fair a success. I saw some things that were interesting. I would like to ask, for those of you who drink wine, to save your wine corks for me. I saw an interesting object that would be fun to make. Don’t worry, I won’t tell where they came from.

SOOO you can see that we are always busy even though our group has dwindled considerably. Not too late for you to come and join us.

Marge Demary

LORD & TAILOR NEWS

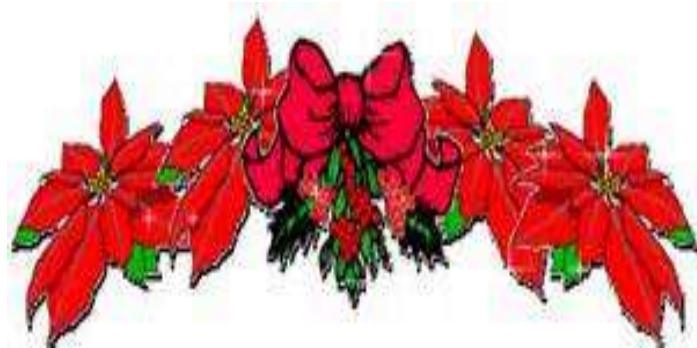
It is hard to imagine that our shop is beginning its 6th year. We have grown a lot, thanks to the generous donations from all, and to the work of our hardy volunteers.

We had a very good day at the Harvest Fair, making \$750 by the end of the day. This month we are able to give the church \$1200, for a total of \$6900 for the year so far.

As you read this, we will have been open (weather permitting) on Black Friday for the first time. We wanted to try it and see what happens. Thanks to all who help by working and donating.

A Happy and Blessed Christmas to you all!

Nancy deForest
and Audra Kinner



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

I/We wish to order _____ Christmas Poinsettia plants
White _____ Red _____
at \$15.00 per plant.

And/or

I wish to give a cash gift of \$15.00

IN MEMORY OF:

Please submit with payment to: Mary Wheat
23 Ivy Lane
Pittsfield, MA 01201

I/We wish to pick up our plant(s) following

Sunday Service on December 21

Christmas Eve service

(If you sign up to take your poinsettia with you after service, please remember to do so, as we had many left over last year.)

I/We will leave our plant(s) to be delivered to our homebound or hospitalized members.

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS

PHONE

December 2014

South Congregational Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Yarn Spinners 7 pm	2 Spiritual Support Group 10 am Men's Forum 12 noon	3 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am UCC Clergy 12 noon St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm	4 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am Called to Care 1 pm Qi Gong 5:30 pm	5 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm AA 6:15 pm	6 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm
7 Advent Worship with Communion 10 am Women's Book Club 11:30 am Mission Board serves meal at Cathedral 2 pm Inward Journeys 7 pm	8 May Mattoon Christmas Party & Pot Luck Dinner 6 pm	9 Spiritual Support Group 10 am Men's Forum 12 noon <i>Diaconate</i> 7 pm	10 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm <i>Trustees 6 pm</i>	11 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Ladies Benevolent 9:30 am Chancel Choir 7 pm	12 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4 pm AA 6:15 pm	13 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm
14 Advent Worship 10 am May Mattoon Christmas Cookie Sale Membership Class 11:30 am	15 Yarn Spinners 7 pm	16 Spiritual Support Group 10 am Men's Forum 12 noon <i>Mission Board</i> 7 pm	17 Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am Berkshire Place 10:45 am Nominating Committee noon St. Joe's Dinner 5 pm	18 Food Pantry 7:30-11 am Ladies Benevolent/Lisa Stuart Remembrance 9:30 am Chancel Choir 7 pm	19 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4pm AA 6:15 pm	20 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm Pittsfield Squares 7 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm
21 Advent Worship Living Nativity with our Church School 10 am <i>Coffee Hour Collections for the Language Project</i>	22 Yarn Spinners 7 pm	23	24 Christmas Eve Food Pantry 7:30 – 11 am Carol Sing 7 pm Candlelight Service 7:30 pm	25 Christmas Day	26 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4pm AA 6:15 pm	27 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm
28 Worship in the Parlor 10 am	29 Yarn Spinners 7 pm	30	31 New Year's Eve NA Dance 7 – 12	JAN 1 New Year's Day	JAN 2 Lord & Tailor 10 am-4pm AA 6:15 pm	JAN 3 AA 10:15 am Lord & Tailor 12-4 pm Al-Anon 7:30 pm

Please Note: Deadline for January Epistle is Sunday, January 4 at 11 a.m.