

THE TIMES NEWSLETTER

*A publication of the First Congregational Church
of Scarborough, Maine 04074*

DECEMBER 2019



MINISTER'S CORNER

Dear Friends:

If I were to ask you, "What is Christmas?" what would your answer be?

For some, Christmas is a gorgeously decorated tree in the living room, a welcoming wreath hanging on the front door, and stockings tacked up over the fireplace in anticipation of Santa's arrival.

For others, Christmas is attending joyful parties with family, friends and coworkers, drinking eggnog, and baking cookies cut in the shape of angels, elves and snowmen and sprinkled with red and green sugar.

For still others, Christmas is trips to stores and retail outlets and searching the Internet for the perfect gift for their loved ones, writing personal greetings on Christmas cards until their wrists ache and mailing them to people they love and care about, and wracking up a pile of debt that will barely be paid off in time to start all over again next Christmas.

And then there are those for whom Christmas is one of the most holy and spirit-filled times of the year—a time to celebrate the coming of a child the likes of whom had never been born before and has never been born since.

An unknown author wrote the following about a memorable experience that had happened:

The scene was crowded, busy, hectic, frantic, pressured. You guessed it: I was in the mall, and not happy about it at all. As I pressed on through the crushing throng of shoppers, I prayed to God that I would never ever again have to make another trip to the mall the week before Christmas.

Our three-year-old daughter Elizabeth was with me, and with the press of people all around us I decided it would be best if I rented one of those mall strollers so I could keep her close by me. I went to the information area and waited to pay my dollar and take a stroller. It was a long wait there, too: crowded, crowded, crowded.

As Elizabeth and I waited, more or less patiently, we heard a loud wailing. It went on and on. It was a shrill and panicked cry. We both looked around to see where it was coming from. Eventually my eyes focused on a child who was obviously lost and very frightened. My heart hurt for her. There she was: sobbing, screaming, terrified. The child didn't know where her parents were.

Friendly folks near the youngster bent down to speak to her. She cried all the harder. Someone tried to take her hand, but she fearfully jerked her hand away and cried harder still. One of the mall employees noticed what was going on and paged security. Another employee went to the child, tried to talk with her—got nowhere; tried to take her hand—got nowhere; and then began asking everyone and no one in particular this question: "Whose child is this? Whose child is this?"

MINISTER'S CORNER (Cont.)

Within moments the little girl's father appeared on the scene—just in the nick of time, for the poor child looked like she was about to completely fall apart. And then she recognized her daddy and rushed to him. Dad knelt to scoop his daughter in his arms and gave her a long, reassuring hug and a kiss on the neck. We knew then “whose child this was.” Both father and daughter had tears spilling down their cheeks.

In that wild scene at the mall—crowds of people, some interested in this child, others giving quick glances and rushing by, and others with absolutely no idea that anything out of the ordinary was happening—it struck me that the question of Christmas had just been lifted up. “Whose Child is this?” It's the question Mary and Joseph, and the shepherds and Wise Men had to ponder and resolve in their own minds. It's a question we're invited to ponder and come to grips with, as well.

Whose Child is this, born on that first Christmas?

This is the child who transformed all life and will transform our lives if we let Him.

Whose Child is this? This is God's child, God's only begotten Son: the child who lets us know that God cares in a powerful way; the child who reveals to us the things that are really important, things that matter, and things we can trust, now and forever; the child who declares God's wondrous presence, if only we stop long enough and quiet ourselves deeply enough to see and hear that presence.

Whose Child is this? This is our child, the child of our hopes and our dreams, the child of our most glorious imaginings, the child who can bring those things we want so much to this tumultuous world and to our troubled lives. This is the child who brings us peace that passes all human understanding, who leads us to meanings that go far beyond the external trappings of life, who redeems the pains and disappointments of our human existence.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

On Christmas Eve at 7 p.m. there will be a family-oriented Candlelight service featuring among other things lots of Christmas music, a Children's Message, and the singing of *Silent Night* by “candlelight.” We hope you will join us for a joyous time of celebrating the birth of Christ our Savior!



CAN I QUOTE YOU ON THAT?

Christmas waves a magic wand over this world, and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful.

Norman Vincent Peale

Those who do not have Christmas in their heart will not find it under a tree.

Roy L. Smith

On Christmas, God walked down the stairs of heaven with a baby in His arms.

Paul Scherer

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Christmas is not a day or a season, but a condition of heart and mind. If we love our neighbor as ourselves; if in our riches we are poor in spirit and in our poverty we are rich in grace; if our charity boasts not about itself but suffers long and is kind; if, when we encounter people hungry and we do not wait for someone else to help but feed them ourselves; if each day begins in opportunity to love our neighbors and ends with the achievement of loving them in a large or small way, then every day is Christ's day, and Christmas is always near.

James Wallingford (adapted)

TIME OUT FOR PRAYER



Lord our God,
Let not our hearts be busy inns,
That have no room for thee,
But cradles for the Living Christ
And His nativity.

Still driven by a thousand cares
The pilgrims come and go;
The hurried caravans press on;
The inns are crowded so!

Here are the rich and busy ones,
With things that must be sold;
No room for simple things within
This hostelry of gold.

Yet hunger dwells within these walls,
These shining walls so bright,
And blindness groping here and there
Without a ray of light.

Oh, lest we starve, and lest we die,
In our futility,
Come Holy Child, within and share
Our hospitality.

Let not our hearts be busy inns,
That have no room for thee,
But cradles for the Living Christ
And His nativity.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

MUSICALLY SPEAKING:

What makes music great?

I've spent my evening researching the greatest Christmas Hymns of all time. Most people who have spent time in church can guess the songs which have appeared on list after list. Silent Night, Joy to the World, the First Nowell, Hark, the Herald Angels' Sing, We Three Kings, What Child is This, It Came Upon a Midnight Clear, O Holy Night, Away in a Manger.....and many more.

These lists did not surprise me. But I started to wonder why. Why are these the most loved songs? Because they stood the test of time? Because of beautiful melodies? Because of touching lyrics? Why do we treasure these carols?

To answer this question, we first need to understand the six elements of a song; Melody, Tempo/Rhythm, Harmony, Texture (what instruments or voices are used,) Lyrics, and Genre (for this research our genre was Christmas Carol.) First, let's decide which elements we do not need or can be found within other elements; rhythm can be found in melody so for this conversation we can remove rhythm from the list, and harmony is the use of alternative notes to support the melody, so again, we can remove it from the list for this exercise. Our genre is Christmas Carol and our texture is voice and accompaniment, so again, both can be eliminated. We are left with melody and lyrics.

Even if you do not consider yourself a good singer, I bet you can hum the melody of each of the songs from these lists. Take a moment, right where you are, and hum Silent Night. I'll bet you were able to do that easily. This confirms that melody is a key ingredient for memorable music. Often, we are presented with a "new" hymn on a Sunday morning, but as soon as we hear the tune, we recognize it from another hymn with which we are familiar. The melody instantly helps us sing the new song with understanding.

Which brings us to the second element of music that I believe makes a song memorable; lyrics. Imagine the lyrics of Hark, the Herald Angels Sing when sung to an alternative tune. It would be novel and initially interesting, but would it replace the original version in my heart, probably not.

Music must touch us aesthetically (melody) and emotionally (lyrics.) I hope you take a moment this Advent season to enjoy your favorite music and appreciate both the melody and lyrics. Allow the music to touch both your head and your heart.

Sincerely,
Bethany Kirkpatrick, Director of Music

SINGERS & STRINGERS

Singers and Stringers will be providing the "Special Music" at the December 29th Church Service. We have one practice session remaining on December 11, Wednesday starting at 6:30 pm.



It is not too late to join us with your voice and/or your stringed instrument. You don't need a lot of singing experience. Our goal is to have fun with the music!

Hope to see you at practice!! Call, email, or see us at church with any ????'s.

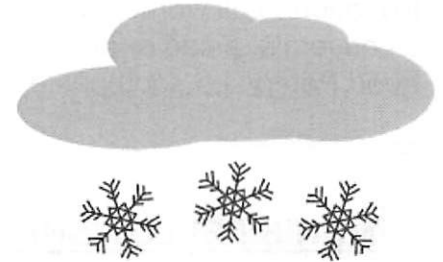
Brenda and Ray Birkner Grabirk94@gmail.com 207-650-4514 Brenda 207-650-5180 Ray

OUR CHURCH'S INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

If there was a significant storm on Saturday night or it is storming on Sunday morning, make sure you check to see if the service has been cancelled. The First Congregational Church of Scarborough is now registered with WCSH and WGME TV, and a cancellation notice will run on both of those stations by 7 a.m. You can also call the office at 883-2342 to find out if the parking lot has been plowed and safe to walk on and the church building is accessible.

Pastor Gagnon will either be in the office or leave a message on the answering machine by 7:30 a.m. if the service has been cancelled. If the answering machine message hasn't been changed, it means there will be a service of some kind (although it may be an abbreviated one). Please use discretion in deciding whether to come to church in bad weather. You can contact Pastor Gagnon if you have any questions about this policy.

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NEED A LIFT?

Our church has a "ride ministry" to help members who are unable to drive to Sunday services, the grocery store, medical appointments and such. If you need a ride or are interested in becoming a volunteer driver for this ministry, please contact Pastor Gagnon or Elaine Sederlund, our Administrative Assistant, at the Church Office: 883-2342 for more information.

CLEANING SUPPLIES DRIVE CLEANS UP!

The Food Pantry is happy to report that we have filled over 120 bags with laundry soap, dish soap, hand soap, dish cloths, dish towels, pot scrubbers and miscellaneous kitchen items. We received a large donation from the FCC Women's Fellowship along with generous donations from church members. Blue Point Church, Saint Nicholas Church, and the Pied Piper Nursery school filled another 50 bags for us. One summer resident shipped 6 bottles of laundry detergent via Amazon's free shipping policy! We also received \$100 donation from Walmart. Many other friends of the Food Pantry have contributed as well. Project Grace donated gift cards and printed greeting cards for us. And thanks to the Sunday school youth and children for assembling the bags. Many hands lighten the load! It is wonderful to see all the filled bags ready to go, filled with love and blessings. Each bag also contains a greeting card with a note about the donors. Thank you all so very much for making this a huge success! Bless you and Merry Christmas Liane and Len Giambalvo



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP MONTHLY MEETING

December 17, 2019 at 6:00pm in the Ladies' Parlor
Program: Potluck Dinner and Post-Fair Discussion

Invitation to all women of FCC: Come join us at Women's Fellowship this month, Bring a friend and a casserole, salad or dessert! This month we are accepting donations of SMALL TOILETIES for the Food Pantry, i.e. toothpaste, soap, deodorant).

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP MONTHLY MEETING

December 14th, Saturday at 8:30a.m.
In the Parish Hall—Ladies Parlor

All men of the church are welcome to join us for our monthly get together.
We meet the second Saturday of the month for fellowship, coffee and munchies.
Contact Dan Davidson with any questions at: danprpro@gwi.net or 767-4682



We thank and recognize the members of our Men's Fellowship Group for the contributions they have made this fall to our church, including, but not limited to:

Training sessions in the AED and CPR
Kitchen improvements—installing a “new /used” dishwasher
Inspecting the ovens
Parsonage repairs and improvements
Fundraisers: 3rd Annual Moe's Barbecue Dinner - \$1,000+
Christmas Fair: Hot Dog Lunch and Coffee and coffeecakes

MINISTRY MEETINGS

Ministry of Christian Outreach & Stewardship:

December 8th, Sun., 11:00 meet in the Annex.

Ministry of Members, Friends & Church Life:

December 15th, Sun., 11:00 am meet in the Ladies' Parlor.

Min. of Governing & Finance:

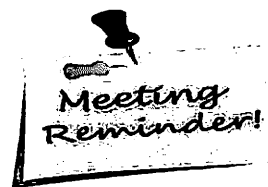
December 16th, Mon., 7:00 pm meet in the Annex.

Ministry of Worship & Spiritual Care:

December 22nd, Sun., 11:00 am meet in the Ladies' Parlor.

Church Council:

January 7th, Tues., 6:30 pm meet in the Ladies' Parlor.





ORDER A POINSETTIA PLANT FOR CHRISTMAS

TO HELP US TO ADORN OUR CHURCH

This is a long-standing tradition here as a way to remember and honor our loved ones as well as celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. We are again offering, from Fiddleheads in Cape Elizabeth, one size plant in red for **\$30.00**. This is a medium size 7 ½ inch pot with 2 plants. To order a plant, please fill out the form below and **bring it or mail it to the Church Office** (161 Black Point Rd.) with your payment enclosed.

Checks payable to: **First Congregational. Church of Scarborough**

Please do not place it in the offering plate. Orders will be taken until **Monday, December 9th**.

If you prefer, you may purchase your own plant. Please be sure to put your name on it and fill out the form below as well, indicating that you will be providing your own plant. Please leave your plant in the Church Office or the Vestry, with your name on it by Friday, Dec. 20th.

A list of dedications will be in the bulletins on Sunday, Dec. 22nd, and Christmas Eve.

of plants _____

Dedication: Circle one - in memory of / in honor of

Given by: _____

Phone no. _____ Amount enclosed: _____

Providing your own plant: _____ **Deadline: Monday, Dec. 9, 2019**