

Dear Friends,

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” - Philippians 4:4-7

What is the busiest time of the year? I suspect many of us have the same answer: Christmas! It seems like there is always more to do in the weeks leading up to the holiday. There is always another gift to buy or another event to attend. The streets become crowded with cars flocking to the mall. We travel to visit family or prepare our homes to receive guests ourselves. These things are wonderful, but they can also bring stress along with them. Christmas is a busy time.

The weeks before Christmas are the season of Advent for the church, and it brings us a different message. Advent is about slowing down and simply sitting in the presence of God. In church, we will be hearing readings like this passage from Philippians. Paul, the author, suggests a different way of living and thinking.

Paul calls us to live in a spirit of prayer and thanksgiving. God will guard our hearts and minds. We might even find

God bringing peace in the face of our most stressful moments all of this is a cause for joy! “Rejoice in the Lord always,” Paul writes. The word for “rejoice” in the original Greek of the New Testament is “chairō.” It suggests a calm happiness or well-being. This is the joy of the Lord.

Perhaps we should take the time to meditate on Paul’s words in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Take a moment to rest, even if it is only for a few minutes, to lift up a word of rejoicing and thanksgiving to God. For whom are you thankful during this season? Where have you seen God’s blessings? As we approach the celebration of our Savior’s birth, may we hold this gratitude in our hearts.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Bart

## Southwick Historical Corner

Happy Fall! As promised, let's take a look at the first minister of the Church of Christ in Southwick. Last time we discussed the gathering of the church with its first eight members.

On October 14<sup>th</sup> 1773 a service was held at the home of Isaac Gillet. He and several other members had joined the congregation increasing its membership size from the original eight. This same day they voted unanimously to call Mr. Abel Forward. On October 21<sup>st</sup> Mr. Abel Forward accepted the call. On this day the district (the designation of Southwick before it became a town) fasted and held multiple services throughout the day. It is noted in the history of our church that Reverend Forward lived on the corner where the public library was located in 1891. Shortly after the meetinghouse, the church, and the minster were all organized the southern third of the district of Southwick seceded to the Colony of Connecticut. This had a significant impact on the tax base that was supporting the church as it was organized. Deacon Isaac Gillet who was instrumental in the calling of Reverend Forward was now a located in a different colony!

After this succession the church had some financial struggles. Reverend Forward's salary was rarely paid in full and the Meetinghouse that held such promise as a gathering place for the district was now no longer located in the geographical center of the district. Adding to the struggles the district was already facing was the American Revolution that broke out in early 1775 throughout the Massachusetts Colony. Without going into the specifics of the American Revolution and its impact on the church I will sum up the details listed in the history text. Paper money was worthless due to inflation and silver money was hard to find. This is the quote in the history text: "Bad money drives out good money". This left very little in the way of payment for Reverend Forward... he accepted payment in the form of beef, pork, or grain. In 1775 a bushel of wheat was worth 6 whole shillings!

Reverend Abel Forward persevered through all of this turmoil and also grew the church membership from its original 8 to over 100 members! He was the minster of the Church of Southwick for 12 years. He passed away at the age of 37 due to an unknown illness. He is the only minister of the Southwick church that is buried at the Old Cemetery in Southwick. I found an interesting tidbit while doing research; as Reverend Forward grew ill he was no longer able to preach. His wife Dorothy Stiles Forward would take his place. This was quite uncommon at the time, particularly because women were not allowed to vote for deacons until 1860! As always, I welcome your thoughts.

~ Martha Johnson

### **A note from the Bell Choir**

#### **MARK YOUR CALENDAR & SAVE THE DATE**

Our Annual Holiday Bell Concert will be Sunday, January 8th, 2017 at 1:30 PM. There will be a free will donation asked, these monies help support the bell program. Thanks! See you all there! ~ Patti Wood

### **Nominating Committee**

The annual meeting is coming up in February. Some of our present committee members, that have been on for YEARS, are looking at changing committees or leaving a committee completely.

The church needs ALL OF US to pitch in, I have MANY open positions. Please come and see me to chat and place you on a committee that will suit you best.

Please don't think that you have nothing to offer, or that you are too busy, as we ALL have something to offer, and we are ALL quite busy! The committees meet just once a month (with coffee and goodies) and do NOT meet during the summer months. I have openings on ALL committees, can't wait to chat with you!

~ Patti Wood, Nominating Committee

P.S. There should be 2 more on this committee!

### **Holiday Cookie Sale**

WANTED: Cookies, tons of home-made cookies. Bakers warm up your ovens! Plain cookies, decorated cookies, cookies with and without nuts, plus a limited supply of gluten-free cookies. Mark your calendar, our annual Cookie Sale is scheduled for Saturday, December 10.

### **Fundraising Calendar of Events**

February - Dinner with the Orson's

March - Corned beef dinner with Patty & Roxanne

April, May, June - All Open, need ideas and volunteers

Remember these fundraising events are a vital part of our church income. Please support them, attend them (bring a friend, or if the event doesn't interest you, spread the word to friends and family!

~ Patti P. Wood

# DECEMBER 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Office Open 9-1 <b>Midweek Service</b> 6:30 PM	2 Office Open 9-1 Henrietta's Open OA Mtg. 6-7 PM AA Mtg. 7:30 PM	3 <i>Holly Bazaar</i> 8:30-3:00 PM
4 <b>Communion Service 10 AM</b> Coffee Hour 11 AM Advent Workshop	5 Office Open 9-1	6 Office Open 9-1 Bells Rehearsal 6:30 PM Boy Scouts Mtg. 6:30-8 PM	7 Office Open 9-1 Cub Scouts 6:30-7:30 PM Voice Rehearsal 7 PM	8 Office Open 9-1 <b>Midweek Service</b> 6:30 PM All Church 8 PM (Music Committee)	9 Office Open 9-1 Henrietta's Open OA Mtg. 6-7 PM AA Mtg. 7:30 PM	10 <i>Cookie Sale</i> 8:30-11:30 AM Girl Scouts Holiday Gathering 12-3 PM OA Potluck 5-8 PM
11 <b>Worship Service 10 AM</b> Youth Group 10:15 Coffee Hour 11 AM OA Mtg. 3:30 PM	12 Office Open 9-1	13 Office Open 9-1 Bells Rehearsal 6:30 PM Boy Scouts Mtg. 6:30-8 PM	14 Office Open 9-1 Cub Scouts 6:30-7:30 PM Voice Rehearsal 7 PM	15 Office Open 9-1 <b>Midweek Service</b> 6:30 PM	16 Office Open 9-1 Henrietta's Open OA Mtg. 6-7 PM AA Mtg. 7:30 PM	17 Henrietta's Open
18 <b>Worship Service &amp; Pageant 10 AM</b> Coffee Hour 11 AM OA Mtg. 3:30 PM	19 Office Open 9-1	20 Office Open 9-1 <b>American Inn 6:30</b> Bells Rehearsal 6:30 PM Boy Scouts Mtg. 6:30-8 PM	21 Office Open 9-1 Cub Scouts 6:30-7:30 PM Voice Rehearsal 7 PM	22 Office Open 9-1 Fair Share 11 AM <b>Midweek Service</b> 6:30 PM	23 Office Open 9-1 Henrietta's Open OA Mtg. 6-7 PM AA Mtg. 7:30 PM	24 <i>Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 10 PM</i>
25 <b>Christmas Day Worship Service 10 AM</b> Coffee Hour 11 AM OA Mtg. 3:30 PM	26 Office CLOSED	27 Office CLOSED	28 Office Open 9-1	29 Office Open 9-1 <b>Midweek Service</b> 6:30 PM	30 Office Open 9-1 OA Mtg. 6-7 PM AA Mtg. 7:30 PM	31 <i>New Year's Eve</i>

**Poinsettias \$10 each**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of

\_\_\_\_\_

How many \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

If you prefer to purchase your own poinsettia, check below to use this form for memorial information and submit to the church office by Dec. 19 to have it printed in the bulletin. If bringing your own flowers, please place them in the church sanctuary by Dec. 23.

I will purchase my own flowers and bring to church.

I will pick up my flowers after the Christmas Eve service on December 24th.

I will pick up my flowers on December 25th.



## Stewardship News

As your financial counselor would say, "Let's do a review of 2016 finances to see where we stand, and project that to your 2017 budget."

Annual operating expenses for our church through October 2016 amounted to \$121,414 or an average of \$2824 per week. Sharing these expenses equally among the stewardship pledging units (82 in 2016) would amount to \$34.44 each per week. Now compare that with the actual stewardship receipts through October of \$79,761 or an average of \$22.62 each per week. Thus an increase of only \$11.82 a week from each stewardship unit, or 43 new members each pledging an average of \$22.62 per week, would fully cover 2016 expenses to date. Think of it; we wouldn't need any fund-raisers, we wouldn't need to borrow from our dwindling reserve funds and we would remain a viable non-profit Congregational Church.

So what are the prospects for 2017? Our annual budget is not yet finalized and won't be approved until the February All-Church meeting. Stewardship pledges for 2017 are being received and to date total \$44,986. Thankfully, pledges are a noble and honorable commitment and almost all members achieve or exceed their pledges. However, pledges received for 2017 closely track those made for 2016 so the prospect of another budget shortfall is looming for 2017.

### **Library News.....**

Joyce Arnold has graciously stepped back in to take care of the library until a replacement Librarian is chosen, Thank you Joyce!

She tells me there are many new Christian novels there to read, please check them out.

She has been working hard at reorganizing the books and video, please stop by! The library is open during the week 9-1 PM.

Don't hesitate to ask Joyce any questions when you see her during coffee hour. She loves the library and wants us to use it.

Thank you! ~ Patti Wood

For anyone who is alone, or knows someone who will be alone on Christmas Day. Legends of the Lake is hosting a FREE dinner from 11AM-2PM Christmas Day. What a wonderful gesture!

### **Happy Birthday!**

December 14

Valerie Eastwood

### **All Church Committee Meeting**

**November 10, 2016**

The meeting was called to order at 7:55 PM by Moderator David Breton. Pastor Bart began the meeting with a prayer. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the last meeting, October 13, 2016. Approval was unanimous.

**Pastor Bart** The Bible Study will begin November 27, 2016. The first session will be a showing of the movie, "A Christmas Carol". The George C. Scott version will be used. The study will last four weeks. He thanked everyone for the prayers for Valerie.

**Pastoral Relations** Roxanne Cook reported 4 members present. Talked about the Bible Study and the Prayer List updates. They discussed Pastor Bart's upcoming 3 month sabbatical. The time he will be gone is June, July and August of 2017. They also

discussed substitutes for this period of time.

**Christian Education** Ashley Greco stated 4 members present. She advised that 96 people attended the spaghetti supper. Blossoming Acres donated the pumpkins. They need 150 boxes of stuffing, 150 reusable bags and 150 bags of fresh rolls. The Christmas pageant will be Dec. 11th. They will have a level funded budget for 2017.

**Mission-Outreach** Patty Banasik reported 3 members present. They have adopted 7 families and 2 pending to help with their holidays. They will have the mitten tree again. They will also be asking for gift cards to various places.

**Treasurer** Ted Orson has received some pledges for 2017. Stewardship Sunday will be announced this week. We are in a deficit situation of about \$6,000. Pledges need to be increased.

**Building & Grounds** Dan Warriner reported 4 members present. The shutters have been painted. There has been work on the sidewalk to the Veteran's Memorial. Ted's Property will complete gutter cleaning this month. There has been requests for a master key and the office currently has one. Their 2017 budget will be level funded. They received a bill from the town for \$40 for the town's 2017 building inspection. The sign out front needs fixing.

**Memorial Gifts** Karen Brzesinski advised that this committee will pay for the shutters. New Bibles that correspond with the readings from the pulpit was also discussed.

**Board of Deacons** Florence Pitoniak reported 3 members present. The subscription for the "Upper Room" has been cut in half due to usage. Their budget will be level funded. They made their schedule for deacon of the month for the coming year. Acolytes are needed for the Christmas Eve service, need to be of an age to handle a candle/fire. They also discussed the use of a Big Y card for the deacons to be used to purchase the bread and grape juice for Communion. They also discussed having a mission statement for the bulletin.

A motion was made and seconded to forgo the Executive Meeting. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM  
Respectfully Submitted,  
Eleanor Bates, Clerk pro tem