

# Congregational Connection

# JANUARY



## Pastor's Column

In the Weymouth News, on December 26, a picture was shown of an empty gym with the caption saying that by next week, this gym will be full. While many begin the new year with an intent on attaining physical fitness, I would like to suggest that the goal of strengthening our spiritual fitness will bring us a deeply, spiritually rich and blessed 2018.

Daily prayer and Bible reading work in terms of making us into more involved, engaged, and integrated Christians, helping us to better communicate with and align ourselves with God. They can help us remember what is most important, empowering us to get on with doing God's work in the world.

To that end, here are some resources I've compiled to consider as you work out those spiritual muscles for 2018.

### DAILY SCRIPTURE READING RESOURCES

For Daily Bible Reading, the New Revised Standard Version is by far the best interpretive version. Excellent study bibles are: Harper Collins Study Bible and the "The New Oxford Annotated Bible," NRSV version w/ Apocrypha, College Edition

You can follow the what most Protestant and Catholic churches schedule the church year around – the daily revised common lectionary. Here is one online site for this:

[https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu//](https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/)

Fresh From the Word 2017: The Bible for a Change (annual) (companion web site: <http://www.ibraglobal.org/>)

ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) has a Daily Bible Reading site available. This is a shorter reading with just the text, no commentary, and no option to e-mail. It doesn't say what translation of the Bible it comes from, but I appreciate its presence and simplicity. Luther Seminary also offers God Pause Devotions, which includes the scripture reading (NRSV) and brief commentary, and is available by e-mail.

Today's Daily Lectionary Reading from the PCUSA Book of Common Worship – This is only scripture, no commentary, so if you want to have more time to explore scripture and think of your own commentary, this is a good way to do it. There appears to be no e-mail/text option with this.

### DEVOTIONALS -- SOME GOOD ECUMENICAL OPTIONS:

The UCC (United Church of Christ) Daily Devotional – You can

read this online, and/or sign up for e-mail and text message updates. The devotional format includes a short on-page scripture followed by commentary from various and varied people.

[www.ucc.org/daily\\_devotional](http://www.ucc.org/daily_devotional)

Common Prayer by Shane Claiborne

(companion web site: <http://commonprayer.net/>)

Disciples.org offers occasional devotionals; be sure to check their Resources page regularly.

These Days is a print publication of the PCUSA that includes daily devotions. It does not appear to be available online, but for people who love print, it could be a great way to keep things fresh.

Daily Prayer App on iTunes, Google Play, or Amazon for \$2.99

The United Methodist Church has an entire site The Upper Room Daily Devotional Guide – It is available as a print, ebook, audiobook, the website, and you can sign up to have it e-mailed to you on a daily basis.

The Our Bible App - noting that "Our Bible App supports the belief that spirituality is a spectrum and that faith is a journey. At its core, the holy text was written to be inclusive of all of God's creation especially those on the margins. Our Bible App is bringing it back to the roots celebrating the diversity of God's creation with devotionals highlighting the inclusiveness of the text. .. Our goal is to untangle the binds that Christian colonizers have spread across the globe over hundreds of years...we hope to provide a tool that is needed to create healthy prayer and meditation habits." (<https://www.ourbibleapp.com/mission/>)

### TWO GREAT BOOKS FOR SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE ON ENCOUNTERING JESUS SCRIPTURALLY ARE:

Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith – Marcus Borg

The Jesus I Never Knew by Phillip Yancy along with a study guide and resource for personal devotion and notes.

The most important thing is for you to explore your options for daily scripture reading and prayer and experiment for a bit, find something that works, and make a habit out of it.

Happy New Year!

Blessings,

Rev. Gretchen



### **From the Desk of the Deacons**

It doesn't seem possible that Christmas has come and gone – but the good news is that the Christ child is finally here! We celebrated Advent by lighting the 4 Advent candles of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. We lit the Christ candle in celebration of the birth of the baby Jesus!

The Deacons wish to thank all who took part in lighting each of these candles and participated in the weekly readings. Also, Nancy Haley wishes to thank everyone who purchased the beautiful poinsettias of red, white and pink that adorned our altar on Christmas Eve. They truly were a beautiful sight to behold.

This Christmas Eve service which was done for the first time at 5:00 p.m. – allowed many more families both young and old to attend. As we were standing around in the darkened sanctuary illuminated by candles and singing Christmas carols we felt the warmth and peace of the holy night.

Many thanks to all who attended worship to celebrate the birth of the Christ child. As we look forward to the New Year, we want to wish everyone a year filled with peace, hope and love. May we keep the spirit and light of the Christ child alive within each of us this coming year.

Happy New Year from the Deacons, Nancy Haley, Bettyanne Lang, Tara Haley, Donna Eliasson, Cheryl McMillan and Ray Matusiewicz. The window work continues at our contractor's shop in Hampden. The selling of our stock to fund the bulk of the project turned to be more time consuming than we had expected. In addition, the shop itself received several more contracts than it would have normally expected and thus their work was slower than usual. This is still a work in progress, but they will return in shape for another 110 years of providing inspiration and beauty for us all.

Your Trustees

Bob Criswell, Curtis Ellett, Norm Fulton, John Holman, Tom Kosonen, Kathy Mosher, Tom Ritchie



### Notes from the Music Director

19th ANNUAL LITTLE CHRISTMAS IN JACKSON SQUARE – You've probably heard "Christmas in Boston" on the radio. Now come hear it live with local singer-songwriter (and Mayor Bob Hedlund pal) Jim Melody, who will be featured in the 19th annual A Little Christmas in Jackson Square at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 7.

The talents of approximately 30 musicians, dancers and audiovisual experts from local churches will be featured in our annual gift to the Christ Child.

In addition to the traditional and non-traditional anthems and a sing-along, the concert will feature the choral musicians of Immaculate Conception Parish and the and our own adult and youth choirs.

Our special guests are trumpeter Tim Maiuri and violinist/fiddler Sheila Muldoon Kinch, and vocalist Jerry McDonough. Dancers from the South Shore Dance Academy will offer a spectacular interpretation of seasonal music, and the North River Brass Ensemble will also perform along with members of the Southeastern Philharmonic Orchestra.

We are inviting the entire community to celebrate. YOU MUST BE THERE EARLY TO GET A GOOD SEAT! All proceeds from the offering will benefit the Weymouth Food Pantry.

THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS --- We all should be so grateful for the Advent season just past and the Christmas season that continues through Jan. 7! Through our music (and other) ministries we have been able to reach people we have never reached before: the Jackson Square Tree Lighting and Carol Sing on Nov. 25; the Southeastern Philharmonic Orchestra Holiday Extravaganza on Dec. 2, the Christmas Pageant on Dec. 17, the Townwide Blue Christmas Service on Dec. 14, and the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on Dec. 24, the Christmas Carol service on Dec. 31.

On Jan. 7 we will debut a new arrangement of Howard Thurman's "The Work of Christmas," which urges us to continue our giving and invitation long after the decorations are put away.

MUSIC AT SANCTUARY HALL – We've got just the thing to chase the winter blues away: a gospel choir concert! The Joyful Voices of Inspiration Gospel Choir will be joining us for a special Sunday afternoon concert at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 25. Admission will be \$10 for adults, \$5 for those 62 and older and students with ID, and \$25 per family.

Then, on Saturday, March 10, the Lindsays will return for a pre-St. Patrick's Day program that always includes some musical surprises. We'll have more about this in next month's newsletter.

Victor DeRubeis, Director of Music

781-974-3503

vderubeis@yahoo.com



### Church School News

It started with the voice of a child telling the tale of the visit of an angel to Mary and the Christmas Pageant grew into the telling of the birth of the Christ child. There were angels bringing their message to Mary, a frightened young woman, we had shepherds and sheep following the star to find the baby who is God's son, we had wise men bringing gifts to the newborn King (Queen) and we must remember Mary & Joseph for having such great faith that they would undertake an arduous journey into unknown territory believing in God's message as they journeyed. This is where we experienced the wonder and promise of Jesus that we prepared ourselves for in Advent. We hope that this brought you Joy, peace, Hope and Love!

The church families were invited to bring in their Nativity scenes and place them on the windows in the Sanctuary on Pageant Sunday. Rev. Gretchen and the congregation blessed them during the service and we all got to share again in the beauty and wonder of the Christmas Story by viewing these many sweet scenes that are beloved by the children! Thank you and bless you for sharing all the precious figurines and stables.

### Epiphany Concert, Sunday January 7th at 3:00

Again this year our Church School children will be participating in the "Little Christmas in Jackson Square" Concert on January 7th. The children will be singing Christmas Bells, which they sang at the Pageant. We hope to see all of our students participate if they are able. There will be an afternoon practice on Jan. 6th. All children will be given the words and an MP3 to practice at home. This is a community wide celebration of Epiphany so invite all of your friends and family to come and experience the joy of song and music.

Church School Supt., Kerry Mortland Seek Joy!



### Stewardship

Thank you to all our members and friends who were able to make a commitment of a pledge to assist with our Church's mission. We do so much work in our community and beyond, and that is only possible because of the dedication of our church family.

We are all Stewards of God and our actions every day reflect this. We are on a Journey to Generosity together to do God's work. As spoken in the gospel of Luke "Give and it will be given to you." Jesus gave freely without hesitation in order to pass along the word of God and to teach us how to share these guiding words with everyone we meet.

Can we ask that if you have not already, please consider making a pledge so that we can move forward into 2018 sharing the word of God with others around us and inviting them into our blessed home of prayer and celebration. Because of you and your commitment, we will have new stained glass windows to relish for many years to come. Our building is maintained so that we can open our doors to community groups for meetings, day care needs and we can host many events throughout the year for the public to enjoy. Your pledge and commitment to God will provide inspiring long term results.

Bless you all for being part of the EWCC family,

The Stewardship Committee  
Tara Haley, Cheryl McMillan, Kerry Mortland, Martha Webber and Colleen Whitham



### Soup/Sandwich/Scripture

Soup and Scripture will meet Tuesday, January 16, 2018. The reading is Psalm 139: 1-18.



### GILLETTE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

PATRIOTS PLAYOFFS- Volunteers needed the weekend of 1/13 - 1/14 and hopefully 1/21. Anyone interested in volunteering to work a concession stand during the playoffs, please call Donna # 7810-767-8162 or [donnae77@comcast.net](mailto:donnae77@comcast.net)



### Upcoming Pastoral and Preacher Coverage

Jan. 7, 2018 – Pastor Gretchen  
Jan. 14, 2018 – Rev. Donna Villeumier  
Jan. 21, 2018 – Pastor Gretchen  
Jan. 28, 2018 – Pastor Gretchen



### Birthdays

Alanna McMillan January 8  
Julie Eliasson January 9  
Sarah Ritchie January 28



### In Our Prayers

Dave	Kelly Cassier
Cheryl Thornton	Shirley
Michael F.	Angela
Bette	Wendy
Chris and Dick	Mark and Anita
Ben	Eileen Hennessey
Michael R.	Jim Beulins
Dick Ward	Brenda M.
Ritchie	Michael B.
Boston Herald Family	Michael D.
Chickie	First Responders
Servicemen and women	Tom Arthur
Lynn Tenney	Victims of fire

Peace  
Papa Gelo  
Frank and Debbie

Doreen  
Kelly



### Notes from the Office

Please have your February newsletter submissions to me by January 20th.  
Thank you!  
-Sara