

Congregational Connection

JANUARY



Pastor's Column

Happy Blessed New Year! Know that whatever the new year brings, God will come with it, abounding in grace. The grace might shine like a star, or you might have to look for it, but our God is always abundantly present for you, for me, and for our world.

If you're like me, you might make, break, struggle, scratch it, and try again with New Year's resolutions. One resolution that ties us all together is the resolution we all share as church. Our overall mission as Christians is to grow within ourselves as disciples of Christ, and to grow disciples who change the world with God's love. Each of us embodies that differently, but the heart of discipleship is that we are students -- works in progress—of Jesus in his life and his ministry.

Trying to be a church without following Jesus is like trying to be an orchestra without playing music. Just ask our neighbors how much practicing they had to do for their remarkable Christmas concert they blessed us with in December. If you're going to be in the orchestra you have to practice.

We're spiritual disciples. "Discipline" is not punishment or uncomfortable rigor; it's simply being intentional. It means practicing. A spiritual practice is anything that focuses your awareness and intention on God. Prayer, meditation and reading the Bible are obvious examples. It's odd to me how many people claim to be Christians but refuse to pray or read the Bible. Maybe they feel it's irrelevant. (Like scales are irrelevant to musicians?) Maybe they feel they're not "good" at it. (So, they don't need to practice?) The more we practice, the more the Spirit encourages us and gives us what we need to face all the vicissitudes of life and living on this planet where so much calls for our attention and care.

If we're going to be the church, it's important that we be intentional about being in relationship with God. It's important for two reasons. One is for you: you miss out on the depth and glory and meaning of a life, and the riches of God's loving presence, if you're not paying attention. You may make it through life OK but you won't have the same depth of joy and love and trust and purpose that you will if you let God's grace be part of your life.

The second reason is for the church. Vital churches are ones interested in changing their lives and changing the world. They're seeking real meaning and purpose. And the way you do that is in a community of people who are intentional about meaning and purpose, intentional about being in relationship with God.

So, I invite you to be intentional about spiritual formation in the coming year. Find ways to place yourself in glow of God's grace. Any way will bring you spiritual strength: praying, reading the Bible, journaling, discipleship coaching, regular worship, whatever deepens your awareness and openness to God.

Unlike the kinds of New Year's Resolutions we usually make and then can't live up to, start small and build your way up. Don't beat yourself up, but don't undercommit either. If you haven't been able to set aside time for devotion each day, start with 5 minutes of intentional prayer and bible reading. Then when you feel steady with this new practice, try 10 minutes a day or perhaps 5 minutes in the morning and 5 minutes at night. Some of

you may have a daily practice that involves more time which is awesome. But some of you might be struggling to find a minute. Some of you do a lot of praying in your car or during daily chores or walks. Whatever you do, ask God through Christ to walk with you and strengthen your spiritual muscles and grow your practice. And let's encourage each other, continuing to build each other up in this grand new year of 2020.

Blessings, love and gratitude,
Gretchen



From the Desk of the Deacons

The December calendar was full of many events and celebrations done by or assisted by the Deacons.

December 1, the first Sunday in Advent, began our Advent season with Joan Callahan and Nancy Haley lighting the candle of Hope. We also had a beautiful baptism of Emma Feitelberg. She and the family received the traditional white rose and a Certificate of Baptism.

December 7th was the Third Annual Holiday Stroll. Many assisted the merchants with the Tre lighting and other activities held during this time in our church. An excellent time was held by one and all! People strolled in and visited the church sanctuary and lit a candle in prayer or took a picture with Santa and had some treats. Children made ornaments and enjoyed the festivities. Small booths were set up by the 400 Years Weymouth club and other booths that help to give awareness of Weymouth's activities. Our church was on display inside and out! It also gave people a warm place to come into on that chilly evening.

December 8th, the second Sunday in Advent, had Sue Nicastro, Darian Nicastro, and sons Sam and David lighting the candle of Peace. December 15th, the third Sunday of Advent, had Mike and Kerry Raily helped Conor light the candle of Joy. Rosey Mae and did an excellent job as a reader.

December 22nd, the fourth Sunday of Advent, had Karen Andrews and Kathy Mosher light the candle of Love.

December 24th, Christmas Eve., the Hogan Family along with Kerry Mortland lit the Christ candle.

On Christmas Eve, the church was decorated so beautifully with candles and poinsettias. It was wonderful to have the service so well attended. It was powerful to be in the circle of light with so many people who came to welcome the Christ child.

The Deacons wish to thank everyone who assisted us making the Advent season so special and spiritual.

The Deacons look forward to the New Year as we continue carrying God's love and message to one and all!

Happy New Year – The Board of Deacons



Notes from the Music Director

21st ANNUAL LITTLE CHRISTMAS IN JACKSON SQUARE – We started with one choir and two soloists in 1999. It's evolved into a

townwide celebration with multiple choirs, including the Little Christmas in Jackson Square Great Choir.

The talents of approximately 50 musicians, dancers and audiovisual experts from local churches will be featured in our annual gift to the Christ Child. The concert starts at 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 5.

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

Our special guests this year will include the North River Brass Ensemble, Jacquelyn Mooney and Elizabeth Jaylyn, Peter Adams, Robert Caldeira Jr., and the South Shore Dance Academy.

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. 6! Through our music (and other) ministries we have been able to reach people we have never reached before: Hundreds of people at the the Jackson Square Holiday Stroll and Tree Lighting on Dec. 7; the Southeastern Philharmonic Orchestra Holiday Extravaganza on Dec. 8, and many new faces at the Christmas Pageant on Dec. 15, and the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on Dec. 24.

Remember: Although the Christmas season is coming to an end, the work of Christmas needs to continue all year long!

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Church School News

We have so many things to be thankful for in our Church School as we end one year and start the next year anew. The greatest of these is the new educational space dedicated to the children of the church. The money for this project was given many years ago to be used for the "Children of the Church". The donors wanted to insure a bright future for children in EWCC and we finally made that possible with the upgrade to the Fireside Room. Many hands helped with the hard work of getting it just right and it is in constant use by the children and youth of the church.

To make the best use of this new space we need teachers that devote their faith and their talents to the children and we are so thankful to be blessed by their love and care. We have other friends that help support our mission efforts with donations that helped us this year to purchase boxes for the Operation Christmas Child project, and many people that donated items, including 20 Beanie Babies, to fill 20 boxes. We received a donation from a local business that paid for the shipping fee that delivers these boxes to the needy children around the world. We lost supplies while renovating the room and we had a secret angel that donated money to replace those supplies so that we could continue teaching without skipping a beat. We recently placed hand painted stones around the community to uplift our neighbors with faithful and kind messages of hope. Another community project that we worked on was to pass out meals to the needy folks that came to Interfaith Social Services for a thanksgiving meal. We had some youth at the church that made winter hats, paid for with their own money and sold them at the Christmas Fair as a donation. We had a donation made to the youth by another quiet angel, so that they could go to Silverlake Summer Camp. A new friend of the church held a sale on her website and donated all the profits to our Youth that went to camp this past Summer.

We are so thankful and grateful for the very spirited children that continue to inspire us each week with their wisdom and inquisitive faith! We also thank our members, friends, family and community for their

continued support as we enter anew year being faithful to God's ways as we spread hope, love and light to our community and the world.

Epiphany-Shining Forth

Our new year starts off with the Season of Epiphany where we seek to find Jesus in our own lives. Preacher and theologian Peter Gomes once said "This is the most important season of the church's year because this is the season in which we come to see who Jesus is, where he is to be found and where we begin to understand what he is about."

In our Church School we will keep the Wisemen and the camels moving as they seek the Christ Child. We'll be making stars to hang and we will work on our candle wreaths and we'll read the stories about Herod and Anna and Simeon in the bible and we'll pray that we really find Jesus in our hearts.

Peter J.Gomes, Sermons: Biblical Wisdom for everyday Living(New York, William Morrow and Co., 1998) 30-31

Your Dir. Of Children's faith Formation, Kerry Mortland



Birthdays

January 8
January 9
January 28

Alanna McMillan
Julie Eliasson
Sarah Ritchie



In Our Prayers

Michael B
Jack
Sonia
Bette
Paul
Linda D
Brian & Crystal
Brooklyn
Dave
Linda K
Rob F
Judy
Pam
Weymouth Police & Fire
Worcester Firefighters
Firefighters everywhere
Weymouth Chief of Police
Joyful Voices of Inspiration
Volunteers walking for breast cancer

First Responders
Servicemen & women
Peace
Wendy
Ethan
Shirley
Brody
Braleigh
Don K
Shirley M
Earl & Janet
Tara's B-day
Gigi
Jason Menard's family
Mayor Hedlund
Jada
Kelly
Kristin
Angela
Michael F
Mary W
Mighty Quinn
Kathy
Joy M Alexis
Mary W
Karen
All Veterans
Julie
Lt. Jason Menard
Mark & Angela
Weymouth Police
First teen craft table
Great Christmas fair



From the Office

Please have your February submissions to me no later than January 20th. Thank you.