

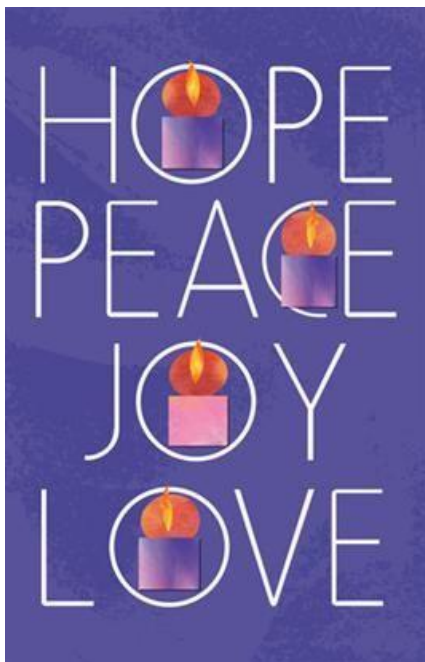
**THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
OF ELLSWORTH, MAINE  
FOUNDED 1812**



**December 2024 THE STEEPLE NEWSLETTER**

First Congregational Church, PO Box 12, 2 Church Street, Ellsworth, Maine 04605 207-667-8321  
ellsworthucc.org

*From Rev. Keith Bowie, Transitional Minister*



**IT IS ADVENT!** The writings of prophets, psalmists, and evangelists join the lighting of candles, singing of hymns, and prayers of the faithful in bold proclamation: **Awake! Our Lord Comes!**

Please join us at the First Congregational Church during Advent in December. For these four Sundays, we will eagerly anticipate the gift that is ours in Jesus Christ. On the first Sunday of Advent, we light the candle of **HOPE** (December 1), followed by the candle of **PEACE** (December 8), the candle of **JOY** (December 15), and the candle of **LOVE** (December 22). We will hold our traditional Christmas Eve candlelight service at 7:00 pm. We will be joined, again this year, by our friends David & Laura McIntyre, as they present (and invite us to sing along) beautiful Christmas songs and music. You do not want to miss this service!

In the meantime, we wait with expectant hope and anticipation. We wait with delight and gratitude, treasuring within the still and silent crevices of our hearts the hope that grows for the One whose grace sustains us. During this Advent season, we must not let the Christmas story be so familiar that we gloss over its enduring significance. Our hearts should not be so jaded by the chaos around us that we fail to embrace the message of the angel: "I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people; to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior..." When our delight is in the Lord Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8), then our joy can be anchored in something other than our immediate circumstances and the world around us. Let us thank God for Jesus!

That in all things God may be glorified,

*Keith*

**MASKING is OPTIONAL**  
in the church building.



Please maintain physical distance and respect the space of those who wish to continue to wear a mask.

## DECEMBER CHURCH MEETINGS

- Adult Forum** – Sundays, 8:15 a.m.  
**Busy Bodies** – Mondays, 10:30 a.m.  
**Choir** – Thursdays, 6 p.m.  
**Music** – TBA  
**Search Comm** – TBA  
**Deacons** – Sunday, Dec 8, 11:30 a.m.  
**Christian Ed** – Sunday, Dec 8, 11:30 a.m.  
**Trustees** – Thursday, Dec 19, 7 p.m.  
**Missions** – Sunday, Dec 29, 11:30 a.m.  
**Council** – NO DECEMBER MEETING

Our meetings are hybrid, in person AND Zoom, so that you may participate in the way you are comfortable. All FCC Zoom events (meetings and worship) use the same meeting number and password. Please contact the secretary in the church office (T-W-Th) for Zoom instructions.



## CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE 7 P.M.

Everyone is invited to attend the traditional Service of Lessons & Carols, where we hear familiar passages from Scripture and beloved carols. We will conclude with candle-lighting throughout the congregation as we sing “Silent night”.

The service will broadcast live through [WDEA](#) AM 1370, [Facebook](#), and [Zoom](#) to worship at home.

*Our deepest sympathies...*  
**to the family and friends of**

- **Helen Hodgkins, who died November 5, her service was on Sunday, November 17**
- **John Van Pelt, who died November 12**

## DECEMBER LECTIONARY READINGS

(YEAR C BEGINS)

### DEC 1 – ADVENT I

Jeremiah 33:14-16  
Psalm 25:1-10  
1 Thessalonians 3:9-13  
Luke 21:25-36

*Hope*

### DEC 8 – ADVENT II

Malachi 3:1-4  
Luke 1:68-79  
Philippians 1:3-11  
Luke 3:1-6

*Peace*

### DEC 15 – ADVENT III

Zephaniah 3:14-20  
Isaiah 12:2-6  
Philippians 4:4-7  
Luke 3:17-18

*Joy*

### DEC 22 – ADVENT IV

Micah 5:2-5a  
Luke 1:46b-55 OR Psalm 80:1-7  
Hebrews 10:5-10  
Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)

*Love*

### DEC 24 – CHRISTMAS EVE

Isaiah 62:6-12  
Psalm 97  
Titus 3:4-7  
Luke 2:(1-7,) 8-20



### DEC 25 – CHRISTMAS DAY

Isaiah 9:2-7  
Psalm 96  
Titus 2:11-14  
Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)



### DEC 29 – 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26  
Psalm 148  
Colossians 3:12-17  
Luke 2:41-52

### DEC 31 – NEW YEAR'S EVE

Ecclesiastes 3:1-3  
Psalm 8  
Revelations 21:1-6a

# DEACONS

Matthew 25:31-46

- Dec 1 – Communion, Rev. Dr. David Henry
- Dec 8 – Rev. Keith Bowie
- Dec 15 – Rev. Cassandra McDonald
- Dec 22 – Rev. Keith Bowie
- Dec 24 – Christmas Eve, Rev. Keith Bowie
- Dec 29 – Rev. Keith Bowie

**December Deacon: Katharine Schrader**

From Rev. Paul Nickerson’s weekly newsletter:

### Why Advent is so important this year.

At the time of the birth of Jesus, it was a cruel world. The Roman Empire ruled with brutal force. The religious establishment turned its back on much of the population. Finding food and shelter was often a daily struggle and if you had an infirmity or were a widow, you lived on the edge. And into this difficult time came the Light of the World. Is it any wonder that so many people flocked to Jesus to hear the Good News that they mattered, that they were sons and daughters of God?

We come into Advent 2024 in the midst of lots of turmoil as well. Regardless of how you voted, we all have felt the weariness of nasty politics and more media coverage in more forms than any of us can handle. There are ongoing wars, global warming, continued racism, well you get the picture. We are all hurting and anxious about what the future holds.

We need to celebrate again the coming of the Son of God. And not just us church folk but so many beyond our congregation. Think of how many people in your community are struggling right now. Think of how many are lonely and isolated. Think of how many need an encouraging Word right now.

So, please think and pray about one person you know that you could invite this Advent. We all

need to hear the Story again, to sing the carols and light the candles and remember that the darkness could not stop the Light. We need Advent right now and so do so many who have never been to our churches. Invite someone, pick them up and walk in the door with them. Together, this Advent, we can let go of the fear, the anger, the hurt of this world and remember again Whose we are. The best gift you can give this Christmas season is an invitation to someone you know. ♦

## Prayer Calendar names

**As we attempt to pray for our entire church family over the course of a year, the Deacons ask that you please include these names in your daily prayers during December:**

- Gale & Bill Caddoo
- Lynn & Michael Hall
- Betty & Jim Kimbrell
- Elizabeth Palmer
- Marshall Smith
- Leita Zeugner & Bill Hodges
- Jennifer Allen
- Olivia Robidoux
- Pam & Rev. Keith Bowie
- Dylan Lacey
- Dan & Shirley Rhodes



## STEWARDSHIP

Here is where we are so far. We have 20 Promised Giving commitments. The total amount promised is \$31,354. If you haven't sent in your card yet, there is still time. Everyone's participation is critically important. Together we keep our Church alive and welcoming and serving our God in Jesus' name.

John Lacey

# BUSY BODIES

## CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2024 8:30 A.M. – 1 P.M.

Our fair will feature our popular Berry Bowls, crafts, jewelry, knitted and crocheted items, puzzles, books, baked goods, attic treasures, and more. Craft donations for the fair are appreciated and can be left at the church. Baked goods can be left on Friday afternoon December 6, from 12-3 o'clock or early Saturday morning.



If you have questions, please contact Louise Emerson (667-4414) or Sue Fuller (610-1626). We can't wait to see you at our Christmas Fair! Please bring your own shopping bag.



For over one hundred years, **THE CHRISTMAS FUND** has provided direct financial assistance to United Church of Christ ministers, church workers, and their families. Last year, over 1,800 congregations joined together to secure the physical, financial, and spiritual health of those engaged in the life of the Church. We thank you for your continued support!

Please show your continue gratitude for our active and retired UCC clergy who need our support by giving generously to the Christmas Fund this year. First Church will accept gifts to this fund the entire month of December. The purple Christmas Fund envelopes are in the pew racks.

## ELLSWORTH HOLIDAY PARADE DECEMBER 7

We will pull a float for the parade and hand out Candy Canes. The theme is Christmas in Toyland. We would love to have others help us with walking and handing out candy canes along the parade route. We will meet at the middle school parking lot at 3 p.m. to line up for the 4 p.m. event. It is another fun event that shows the community we are alive and still here. Please talk to Katharine Schrader, Bonnie Carter, or Sue Fuller.



- ♪ The McIntyres will sing during worship on Christmas Eve.
- ♪ The pipe organ was tuned and tweaked in the third week of November.

## More from Rev. Paul Nickerson: "The Two Greatest Assets Your Church Has"

I often hear churches talk about what they "don't have": not enough people, not enough money, etc. But I would like to focus on two great strengths every church has.

First, every church, large and small, has a core of dedicated leaders. I am so impressed with how much time, energy and faith leaders give to their churches, often over many decades. This is a great asset that should not be overlooked. Help those leaders use their gifts and talents and point them to the most important things God is calling you to do. We have inherited our church communities from generations of people who faithfully served and we have similarly dedicated people today. Don't underestimate this invaluable strength.

Second, and most importantly, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit. As a Coach, I have the great honor and privilege of witnessing how a dedicated group of people can do amazing things when listening to and following God's lead. We don't run human organizations; we lead a group of followers who are inspired and motivated by God's vision and Spirit. Mark Batterson said that when we in the church try to accomplish something, it can only happen when God is in the midst of it, then God has us right where God wants us.

The best efforts of your core leaders, energized by the Holy Spirit, is an unbeatable combination. Whatever your current church situation, you have two great assets to make a difference.

Go and build God's Kingdom. You and the Spirit can do this.

This week, don't talk about what you can't do, but what is possible with God's guidance!

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## CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS



We will decorate the Chancel with poinsettias for worship on Sunday, December 22. We will use our beautiful silk ones, but if you wish to buy a live plant, you can purchase your own or they will be purchased for you and displayed. **Live plants cost \$8.** Please fill out the form and make out your check to the church with "Poinsettia" in the memo line. Katharine Schrader will buy as many live plants as there is money for on December 20. You don't have to purchase a plant to list your loved ones' names in the bulletin. **Memorial and**

**honorary information and your plant orders need to be in the church office by Tuesday, December 17.**

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## CHRISTMAS POINSETTIA DESIGNATIONS 2024

I will bring my own plant.

I want to buy \_\_\_ plants through the church.

Your name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_




In Honor of (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of (please print) \_\_\_\_\_



# December 2024



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 <b>Advent I</b> <b>Purple</b> 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service & Communion Luncheon	2 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	3 6 pm Boy Scouts	4 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	5 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	6 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> Noon Fair set up	7 8:30 am- 1 pm <b>Christmas Fair</b>  3 pm Parade line-up
8 <b>Advent II</b> <b>Purple</b> 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Deacons 11:30 am Christian Ed	9 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	10 6 pm Boy Scouts	11 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	12 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir	13 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	14
15 <b>Advent III</b> <b>Pink</b> 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	16 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities 5:30 pm GS ldrs	17 6 pm Boy Scouts	18 1-4 pm Bowie office 2:30-4 pm Welcome Table take-out	19 9 am Bulletin deadline 4 pm Chess Club 6 pm Choir 7 pm Trustees	20 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	21
22 <b>Advent IV</b> <b>Purple</b> 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service	23 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	24 <b>CHRISTMAS EVE</b>  7 pm Service	25 <b>CHRISTMAS</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>  (No Welcome Table)	26 9 am Bulletin & Steeple deadlines	27 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	28
29 <b>White</b> 8:15 am Adult Forum 10 am Worship Service 11:30 am Missions	30 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> 10:30 am Busy Bodies activities	31	1 <b>NEW YEAR'S DAY 2025</b> <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b> (No Welcome Table)	2 9 am Bulletin Deadline 6 pm Choir	3 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	4



## ACADIA CHORAL SOCIETY WINTER CONCERT *Singing the Season of Light*

The concert will be presented twice:

- Friday, December 6, 7 p.m., at St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Ellsworth,
- Saturday, December 7, 4 p.m., at St. Saviour's Episcopal Church in Bar Harbor

The program will be replete with songs of holiday celebration including carols, Christmas, Chanukah, and Kwanzaa melodies, some familiar and some in contemporary arrangements. Solstice energies will also be included. Something for all of us as we gather together in praise and with generous spirits in this season. Tickets are \$20 per person or \$45 per family and are available at [acadiachoralsociety.org](http://acadiachoralsociety.org) or at the door.

## Sunday Worship Service 10 a.m.

**Church office hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

Rev. Keith Bowie, Transitional Minister  
Joyce B. Cornwell, Secretary  
Lynn Hall, Organist  
Nancy Sargent, Choir Director  
Sue Fuller, Moderator 610-1626  
Tom MacDonald, Vice Moderator  
Myrna Vallette, Clerk  
Ken Farkas, Treasurer  
Mike Fuller, Asst Treasurer  
Jennifer Ashmore, Bookkeeper

Sidney Emerson & Lynn Hall,  
Financial Secretaries  
Troy Tainter, Building Maintenance Director  
Katharine Schrader, Deacons 266-2541  
Ginny Davis, Missions  
Bonnie Carter, Music & Christian Education  
Council Members at Large:  
Joyce Johnston  
Rhyne Robidoux

The word “*Advent*” comes from the Latin word “*adventus*,” which means “*a coming, approach, arrival.*” When we expect guests to arrive at our homes, we turn the lights on; we anticipate their arrival and welcome them with joy. In Advent, we prepare our homes and churches as we joyfully anticipate Christ’s arrival, and the light also gets brighter as we near Christmas day, the day on which the *Light of the World* was born.



**First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ**

PO Box 12

Ellsworth, Maine 04605

207-667-8321 [office@ellsworthucc.org](mailto:office@ellsworthucc.org) [ellsworthucc.org](http://ellsworthucc.org)

[facebook.com/fccellsworth/](https://facebook.com/fccellsworth/)

Our street address is 2 Church Street, but that is not our mailing address. The Post Office no longer automatically gives us our mail with the street address. You must use the Post Office Box number.