EST. 1639

# First Church of Rowley

*...A voice of hope serving the community*

# DECEMBER




# STEEPLE NOTES



# Pastor's Corner

## A Season of Preparation

With Thanksgiving behind us, it's time to prepare! But prepare for what exactly?

The holiday frenzy brings unending suggestions. Have you prepared gifts for family and friends? How about menus for holiday meals? Have you prepared to send cards, decorate rooms, light walkways, set up yard inflatables, pack bags, get dressed up and ... whew. It's tiring just thinking about all the prep that's become expected... at least inside our own minds.

Well, here's some good news: all that prep is optional. Traditions get reinvented. If expectations are causing stress or depleting fun, it might be time to agree on some new ones. The holidays will be no less meaningful if a simpler approach leads to more resting and enjoyment of time spent together.

And there's more where that good news came from. The season of Advent, which began Nov. 29, is a season of preparation of a different type. In Advent, we prepare to receive what can't be earned, purchased, inflated, marinated or made one iota fancier in a spiffy outfit. We prepare to receive the redeeming, life-changing Love of God, who comes to us in the Earthiest, humblest form possible.

How then might we make that kind of preparation? Here are three ideas:

**Keep awake.** Watchfulness is a watchword of the Advent season. When and where Christ arrives might be mysterious, but we know we'll find Him when we attend to human needs (Matthew 25:34-40). So notice who's in need. Notice where you can embody God's love in someone's life. Notice also the grace that's being extended to you these days. Say yes to it. Pause to savor what you see, appreciate and become when you're most awake.

**Turn toward Jesus.** God's coming near signals it's time for renewal, and being renewed involves turning. Turn away from what's hampering your mind, heart and body. Turn away from habits of thought that leave you feeling worthless or superior. Turn toward the One who accepts you, lights up the Way of Life for you and calls you to Himself.

**Be awed.** Adults can sometimes get so jaded that they're almost immune to wonder, but you can get it back by heeding the ways of Advent. Let yourself marvel at what's so beautiful or true that it can't be reduced to a man-made formula. When wonder comes over you, when awe leaves you speechless, don't apologize. You're being prepared.

May the blessings of Advent and Christmas surround you & all your loved ones this season.

Your brother in Christ,
Rev. Jeff MacDonald
Designated Pastor, First Church of Rowley

# Pancake Breakfast

## The Purpose, The Team, and The Results

Each month, September through April, our church hosts a warm and welcoming pancake breakfast that has become a beloved tradition in our community. The smell of fresh pancakes, sizzling toppings, bacon, eggs and hot coffee fills the air as families, friends, and neighbors gather to share a delicious meal. Beyond the food, it's the sense of connection that makes these mornings so special—people linger at tables, swap stories, meet new faces, and experience fellowship in a relaxed, joyful setting.

This breakfast is not a fundraiser, but it serves a greater purpose: building community and extending hospitality to anyone who walks through our doors. It creates a space where everyone is fed—both physically and spiritually.

A heartfelt thank-you goes to the incredible team of volunteers who work diligently behind the scenes each month. Their planning, early mornings, and unwavering dedication make this gathering possible, and our church is deeply grateful for all they do.

**The team includes:**
Neil Butler
Stone Butler
Eric Fila
Noah McDonald
Ken Sanford
Jerry Schmidt
Nancy Schmidt

# Poinsettias

# Order Form

THE DEADLINE TO SUBMIT YOUR ORDER IS SUN DEC 13TH AND WILL BE DISPLAYED ON THE CHANCEL WALL ON SUNDAY DEC 20TH

Name: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Dedication (i,e. given in memory or in celebration of:) _____

_____

COLOR AND QUANTITY

PINK _____

RED _____

WHITE _____

$13.00 EACH

Checks madepayableto:

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF ROWLEY




First Congregational Church of Rowley
175 Main Street Rowley MA 01969
(978) 948 3993
firstchurchrowley@gmail.com
www.firstchurchrowley.org

# HAPPY Birthday

112/4 Robert Mulkern
12/4 Judy Robillard
12/5 Neil Butler
12/14 Pam Sanford
12/16 Elizabeth Butler
12/21 Karen Merry
12/25 Rhonda Ward
12/30 Matthew Blouin

# Steeple Notes Entry Schedule

| | |
|---|---|
| **January** | Compassionate Care Network |
| **February** | Community Outreach Committee |
| **March** | Worship and Education Committee |
| **April** | Finance Committee |
| **May** | Music Committee |
| **June/July** | The Thrift Shop & Pastoral Relations Committee |
| **August/September** | Getting to Know Us, Golf Tournament and Flower Committee |
| **October** | Old Tyme Country Fair |
| **November** | Community Dinner Team |
| **December** | Pancake Breakfast Team |

***Welcoming additional entries!***

*please submit all entries by the 20th of the preceding month to firstchurchrowley@gmail.com*



# Events

**GETTING TO KNOW US**
WEDNESDAYS 10A - 12P

**GUITAR LESSONS**
WEDNESDAYS 5-6PM

**PANCAKE BREAKFAST**
SATURDAY DEC 12TH 8A-9:30A

**BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE**
SUN DEC 20TH 6PM

**CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE**
THURSDAY DEC 24TH 7:00 PM

# Community Giving

**GIVING TREE**
UNTIL DEC 13TH 2026
Donations for 10 children and food pantry items!

**CHRISTMAS FUND**
UNTIL DEC 27TH 2026
Donations to support our neighbors through UCC

**HATS, SCARVES, GLOVES/MITTENS**
UNTIL JAN 13TH 2027
Donations for Emmanus House

# GETTING TO KNOW US

CORINTHIAN ROOM
WEDNESDAYS
9:30A-11:30A

ALL ARE WELCOME





# GUITAR LESSONS

EVERETT ROOM
WEDNESDAYS
5:00PM - 6:00PM

ADULTS ONLY

FIRST CHURCH OF ROWLEY

# PANCAKE BREAKFAST

**SATURDAY DEC 12TH**

**8:00 AM – 9:30 AM**

$10 PER PERSON

CHILDREN UNDER 12 ARE FREE!

**175 MAIN ST ROWLEY MA 01969**



# Blue Christmas

## The Longest Night

Hosted by Community Conversations
in collaboration with First Church of Rowley



**First Church of Rowley**
175 Main Street
Rowley, MA

Dec 20

6 PM

Follow Community Conversations for updates

**A Christmas service for those who are carrying grief or are just feeling weary...**

"When others rejoice, rejoice with them;
when they grieve, do not let them grieve alone."
— Inspired by Romans 12:15

# First Congregational Church of Rowley

INVITES YOU TO JOIN US ON
CHRISTMAS EVE FOR A CANDLELIGHT
SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

DECEMBER 24 AT 7:00 PM

175 MAIN STREETROWLEY MA 01969
ACCESSIBLE FACILITY

ALL AGES WELCOME



# GIVING TREE

We are sponsoring 10 children from Pine Grove Elementary School as well as the Food Pantry this year! Tags for the items needed will be on the Christmas Tree located in Fellowship Hall. Please return your donation wrapped with the tag on it by December 13th.


"THE
GREATEST
OF THESE...
LOVE..."
THE CHRISTMAS FUND
Donate to The Christmas Fund
Your care and compassion will make a tangible difference in the lives of our ministers, church workers, and their families in need.
Donate Online Here!
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
www.christmasfund.org
The Pension Boards
United Church of Christ, Inc.



# HATS, SCARVES GLOVES/MITTENS

***DONATIONS NEEDED FOR EMANNUS HOUSE***

PLEASE PLACE YOUR DONATIONS ON THE WREATHS LOCATED ON THE CHANCEL WALL IN THE SANCTUARY BY JANUARY 17TH 2027