



FRANKLIN FEDERATED CHURCH

Connections

DECEMBER 2016

In this issue

Missions	1, 3, 6
Minister's Message	2
Announcements	2, 5, 7
Student Minister	3
Stephen Ministry	4
Church Council Corner	4
Volunteer Schedule	4
Scripture Matters	5
Caring Ministry	6
Holiday Concert	7
Birthdays and Anniversaries	7
Welcome Ministry	8

MISSIONS

Rummage Sale supports FISH



The Missions Team was very excited when the Rummage Sale team, led by Lesa Rogers, decided to support FISH of Franklin, and donate a portion of this year's proceeds to this wonderful local community organization.

FISH is an organization of volunteers who provide free transportation to medical appointments for Franklin residents. Many are aware that our own Dottie Goddard began the local chapter of this organization over 43 years ago.

Lesa, Dottie, Clare Ames (a member of the Steering Committee) and I met with Barbara Steele, the President of FISH, and Ann Saunders, a member of the Steering committee on November 14th at

the church. Lesa presented Barbara with a check for \$481.90 (above).

We learned that FISH has between 50 to 60 clients, ranging in age from 18 to 99, all living in Franklin. Over 400 rides were given this year to doctor appointments, locally and to Dana Farber in Milford, Milford Hospital, Norwood Hospital and as far away as Boston. There are over 60 volunteers, including drivers and telephone support, who help coordinate drivers and clients.

Our own Sandy Hunter is also a member of the Steering Committee and Marilyn Sutcliffe is a driver. We are very proud to be associated with this very worthwhile organization and thank the Rummage Sale team for their wonderful donation!

— Deb Stiffler



FFC Staff

Minister	Charley Eastman
Music Director	Julie Gorman
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*A Welcoming and Affirming congregation
 affiliated with the United Church of Christ
 and American Baptist Churches, USA*



MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Nobody knows like God knows

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

— JOHN 1:1-5 (NRSV)

"I'll have a blue Christmas without you..."

Nestled into the joyful and exuberant songs of Christmas there is this gem of melancholy that we often hear but don't necessarily process. Of course we know that not everyone is celebrating during the holidays. Some people don't share our traditions or our values and that's fine. But sometimes people would desperately love to celebrate Christmas but simply cannot because of how poorly they feel.

Sometimes it's because someone's actively engaged in an illness or a disease. Sometimes it's because a relationship recently disintegrated.

Sometimes it's because someone who made the holidays so special is no longer with us.

Whatever the reason it's important to remember the suffering character of our God in the person of Jesus Christ. I've mentioned in the past that sometimes Jesus is depicted in paintings as a little old man wrapped in the manger. The theology behind such depictions is that he knows from the moment he arrives, since he is from the Godhead, exactly what he is here for. And the Christianity is not unique in affirming God's presence among us, the incarnation of Jesus is fully human and

fully divine can be very helpful in a very personal sense during the holidays.

Sometimes when folks are not feeling well someone will say to them, "I know exactly how you feel," or maybe, "I know what you're going through." Though the words are meant to convey a spirit of camaraderie, they can often backfire. In truth we never really know what it feels like to be a particular person and to lose another particular person. The circumstances are so unique because they hinge on two unique individuals.

But in the theology of incarnation we have an opportunity to pray for people and to remind them that God walks with them through it all and that God is available to them if they will only turn to God for solace. The key to offering such advice is to understand that a) prayer is not a one-size-fits-all experience and b) everyone is on their own timetable of grief. For some the simple act of prayer opens a pathway to the Holy Spirit that feels like an anointing every time. For others, they need to hear the prayers from someone else in order for them to resonate. Still others simply haven't prayed that much and haven't yet put in the amount of time it takes to make prayer really special. Remember, prayer is a practice: the more you do it, the better you get, and the more you feel the healing impact.

When someone you know is not feeling the spirit of Christmas hold them in prayer and do your best to remind them of their God who walks with them and who knows their pain better than anyone else ever could.

I wish you a peaceful and fulfilling Christmas season,

— Pastor Charley Eastman

Holiday Service Times Join us for Christmas Eve services, Saturday, December 24th at 5 p.m. (Family Pageant), and/or at 11 p.m. (Lessons & Carols). Reminder: there is **no service on Christmas Day**. Service on New Year's Day, Sunday, January 1st, 2017, will take place at our regular 10 a.m. time.

MISSIONS

Love colors everything: faith through gratitude

"We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." — 1 THESSALONIANS 1:2-3

This Christmas Eve we will once again collect an offering for the retired ministers and missionaries of the ABC and UCC.

The offering provides financial support for retired missionaries and ministers who may be facing financial hardships in retirement. Many of today's retirees served when salaries were much less than

they are today.

The offering also provides a yearly thank you gift to all retired missionaries, ministers, or their surviving spouses. I know many who received such a gift and truly appreciated it.

"Love. Everything begins with Love." The Missions Team hopes you will color joyfully outside the lines this Christmas Eve as you



God's Love Colors Everything

remember those who served the church with everything they had. Thank you and Merry Christmas!

— Nancy Ross

STUDENT MINISTER

Sund-Lussier family shares happy news

I wanted to let you all know that we went to court on Friday, November 18th and finalized Quashawn's adoption! All the paperwork is done and as the judge said, "It's irrevocable!" He is now legally a permanent member of our family and his new name is Quashawn Walter Sund-Lussier!

It's been almost two years since Q first came to live with us and, while not something we talked about a lot, the uncertainty of his legal status caused some sleepless nights. We celebrated all weekend and as a special present to celebrate his adoption, Q officially adopted a kitten. He has named him Birdie and he has brought a whole new level of chaos to the household.

It was a great start to our Thanksgiving week and the holiday season overall. We wish you all a Merry Christmas and hope to visit soon.

Much love,

Sarah, Gail, Jacob and Quashawn Sund-Lussier



STEPHEN MINISTRY

Winter blues and holiday blahs

The days are dark and the temperature is dropping. Getting out to be with friends gets even more difficult when the snowflakes start to fall. The holidays are a time of great joy for some and a time of profound sadness for others. Cold weather is a time for participating in winter sports, but a time to “hunker down” and “hibernate” for others.

If you love the cold weather and the holidays, take the time to enjoy them. For those who dread getting up each morning and find yourself wishing that people



would just stop telling you to have a Merry Christmas, please reach out to someone who can help you get through these next few months. Call a friend or family member, call Charley, or call a mental health professional to help you get through these months and find the joy that will come in the spring time.

Don't try to “tough it out” all by yourself. Friends, family member, church friends, and your pastor are there for you, but you need to ask them.

— Marilyn Sutcliffe, Stephen Ministry Leader

Quick Updates from Church Council Because of the change to a January to December Fiscal Year there will be an annual meeting in February 2017. Based on the pledges received, Council is developing a budget for 2017.

» Thank you to all who supported the Christmas Concert and the great publicity that brought additional attendees. Thank you to the Youth Group for the reception that followed the Concert. It was a “crush”

and the food was devoured and enjoyed by all.

» If you have been asked to be part of a Ministry or team for 2017, please say yes. It is a great way to meet people and to get to know them in different ways, make new friends and have an adventure. All kinds of wonderful surprises occur as a volunteer. Sometimes you discover new interests or strengths.

» The Council wishes everyone a happy and safe Christmas.

— Maridee Kirwin

Volunteers for December Sunday Services

	DEC. 4TH	11TH	18TH	24TH (5 P.M.)	24TH (11 P.M.)
GREETERS	Nancy Ross Judy Palmer	Laura Anderson Maridee Kirwin	Dottie Diskin Maridee Kirwin	Paulina Teng	Katherin Weir (hand out candles)
USHERS	Maridee Kirwin	Deb Stiffler Brenda Simoncini	Stephanie Potts	Stephanie Potts	Marilyn Sutcliffe
CANDLE LIGHTERS	Brenda Simoncini	Dottie Diskin Beth Fisk	Janice H., Lesa R. Charlotte Colella	Poirier Family	Volunteers asked for at service
DEACON	Tom Pfeifle	Karen Leenhouts	Deb Bergstrom	Bonnie Sousa	Tom Pfeifle
COUNTER	Amanda Jackson	Susy Affleck-Childs	Allen Sawyer	John Wagner	John Wagner
CHECKER	Annette Thompson	Chris Brown	Roger Bailey	Annette Thompson	Annette Thompson
LITURGIST	Phoebe Eastman	Stephanie Potts	Maridee Kirwin	Jake Houlihan	Marilyn Sutcliffe

SCRIPTURE MATTERS

A welcome reminder on how not to welcome

"I have written something to the church but Diotrephes who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority." — 3 JOHN 9 (NRSV)

It may look like I've misattributed the above quote by forgetting to include either the verse or the chapter. However, we are in a book so short it has no chapters, only verses, so it reads: the Third book of John, verse nine.

This short epistle is actually distinctive for naming a rabble-rouser in the church, one Diotrephes. I'd love to tell you all about Diotrephes, where he came from, how he came to understand what he understood about receiving guests, why he was less welcoming than some others in the congregation; unfortunately, we've got none of the backstory. It seems the most famous thing about Diotrephes is his disagreement with the author of Third John.

But while it tells us little of the actual situation they found themselves in, it certainly gives us some strong corrective for how we might comport ourselves in churches and in our life of faith. See, Diotrephes has an idea that he's right about something, something that would be taught by one of the "brothers." Who are they?

Because we haven't identified the "brothers," reading this short letter and hearing that the "brothers" are also "strangers" may sound confusing. But "the brothers" are actually itinerant preachers of the nascent Christian faith, some local to the church and some sent from farther away (those are the "strangers.") Regardless of where

they are from, the author of Third John has sanctioned them to visit the church that Gaius is a part of.

But what about us? We don't structure our churches that way, we have no hierarchy that sends us itinerant preachers to bring us the word from some "mother ship." So who are we supposed to welcome? I guess the answer for us is easier...and harder.

Everybody.

We are supposed to welcome everybody. And we are definitely not supposed to pull a Diotrephes and assume we know it all, acting full of self-concern and not providing a proper welcome to others.

Remember these two words that go really well together: "Christian" and "Community." We are not supposed to figure this out on our own. We need the wider community of our church and then the wider communities of our denominations to test our theological assumptions out. Otherwise, we operate in a vacuum, assuming our way is the right way. No church should operate like that. We need networks of other people who don't look or sound like us to help us figure out what God wants from us and to understand God's world and God's scriptures better.

Don't rely on me for the whole story. And don't rely on yourselves exclusively. Get connected with other Christians, and other interpreters of scripture, as often as you can. Our part is not the only truth; the truth is in the sum of our parts, and we are one part of many.

— Pastor Charley Eastman

Save the Date for a Christmas Meal

A Christmas Luncheon will follow worship on December 18th in the dining room. All are welcome! Look for a sign-up sheet in the parlor to contribute your culinary creations.

CARING MINISTRY

Christmas Gifts: What are they? How do we give and receive them?

Every year there are people who are so organized that they have planned, found and/or ordered Christmas gifts well before Christmas. Some of us wait until the last minute unsure as to what to give—or even if we can give—because of time, money or other limitations. For parents, there is both the desire to make Christmas memorable for our children and the reality of circumstances. Some families have the ability to offer gifts while others need and seek assistance to provide food and gifts for themselves and their children. There are years when for many there are few or no presents.

Is the story of Christmas a nice myth or the basis of our faith? Do you and I consider the journey of Mary and Joseph and what it is like to go to a place where we are unknown and have no friends, family or colleagues? Most women in the United States give birth in

a hospital, some with a midwife and fewer en route to the hospital or in unusual circumstances. What must it be like to deliver a child in a stable, in the bush, in a refugee camp, in a besieged city, in a prison, as you flee genocide or as a homeless person? Few of us have had to wrestle with any of these experiences. Often we give via the Giving Tree or other charitable effort and think we have shared our gifts. We have, but is there more for us?

It seems to me that the gift of Christmas is the awareness of the world, that people need each other, although some prefer not to interact with others, AND an opportunity to be with ourselves and consider our faith. How often do we give the gift of time? Do you or I stop and savor the moment? Do we take time to read the Bible, to consider who we are and whether we are expanding our beliefs or accepting them as rote?

What does Christmas mean to you? Is it frenzy? Is it too much to do in too little time? Is it listening to music you love, reading a story to your children, thanking someone for making a difference or telling someone you love them? Is it sitting in the car for a minute or three and listening to the end of a song, discussion or game? Is it taking a walk or walking the dog and noticing the sun rise or set?

Do you listen to your heart? Do you think of the anticipation Mary and Joseph felt as the delivery date drew near or their fear and awe as the shepherds, angels and wise men appeared to them. Do you give yourself and the people you love time to be and to discern? If not, consider Mary, Joseph and Jesus as they fled Bethlehem and stopped for dates and food in Egypt. Give yourself the gift of Christmas, the gift of hope, of faith, of love and most of all yourself.

— Maridee Kirwin



CWS Hygiene Kits Collected Missions' fall collection for CWS's hygiene kits is over. Thank you for 32 kits! We will have a spring collection and are setting a goal of 100 kits this year. That is 68 more kits. If you are out shopping, please consider picking up some of the items and put away until March or April. For a list of kit contents, please refer to the October issue of *Connections* or talk to a member of the Missions team.

— Deb Stiffler



Holiday Concert team thanks sponsors and guests

Thanks to all who joined us at our annual Holiday Concert featuring the New England Ringers. We rang in the Advent Season with great music, great support from our community, and plenty of holiday cheer!

Thank you to all of our generous sponsors for making our 2016 Christmas concert a wonderful success! — *Colleen Hughes-Paterno*

PLATINUM SPONSORS

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December Birthdays

- 2 Bob Clapp
Greg Flynn
- 4 Sarah Danielson
- 5 Carrie Oakley
- 7 Katherine Vetrano
Janice Van Hyning
- 8 Lauren Ballinger
- 9 Darrell Oakley
Allen Sawyer
- 13 Elizabeth Newton
- 14 Peggy Maxwell
- 17 Samantha Goulet
- 22 Sara Lewis
- 23 Lyn Pickhover
Deb Stiffler
- 27 Dave Sveden
- 28 Mireille Eastman
- 29 Brenda Sampson
- 30 Matthew Biagi
- 31 John Vetrano
Alison Wallace
Evan Wallace

December Anniversaries

- 30 Cheryl & John Wallace

Email greg@covalentdesign.com and office@franklinfederated.org to see your anniversary and birthday dates in Connections.

Office Hours Pastor Charley Eastman is available Sunday to Thursday, with days off on Friday and Saturday.

WELCOME MINISTRY

Celebrating recent Connect Group moments



The most recent session of Connect Groups ended December 1st. Special thanks to all group leaders for hosting, organizing, and fostering good times and fellowship, and thanks to participants who provided the community and connections that will help to spark the upcoming semester. Registration for the next semester of Connect Groups begins on January 29th and continues

until February 15th. Connect Groups begin meeting again the week of February 27th. — Jane Sveden

Groups pictured above: (1) Adventures in Beer; (2) All Movies, All the Time; (3) 'Appy Hour & Party Games; (4) It's Scrabble Time; (5) Pinterest Party; (6) Walking Talking Book Group. Not pictured: Knot Together.