



December 2024



Happy to Be Here

Young people listen to some strange music these days. For example, my son likes this singer named, "Mod Sun". Odd name for sure, and his music's uniqueness rivals the oddness of his name. My son went to one of his concerts a while back and told me a story about him. Mod Sun was working hard to make it as a career musician, but for much of his younger days in music, he was an addict, and it began to seriously threaten his entire career. Then, finally, just as the addiction was about to take everything away from him, he pulled himself up and out of it (with the help of many) and never looked back. With clear eyes and a clear mind, he realized how close he came to losing it all and how thankful he now was to just be alive. He got a tattoo on his chest that reads "Happy to Be Here", because that's his new way of looking at life.

I'm not sure that I have too, too much in common with Mod Sun, but one thing I know is that I resonate with his tattoo's statement. I too am happy to be here. I'm happy to be in this place in my life. All things considered, life is very, very good. His feeling makes it easy to recognize and to celebrate all the things in life that are great. One such celebration happened just the other Sunday when we as a church family consolidated our common path by throwing an installation service party. It was a great celebration for sure!!! The warmth and positive energy were certainly palpable as we gathered as a church family along with guests from the Hillsboro Association of the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ. I was thrilled to see so many of my colleagues

in attendance with robes and stoles on! The service was very meaningful with beautiful music by Adam and the choir as well as special welcomes and readings by Selma, Peter, Bill, Barb, Pastor Carlos Jauhola-Straight and Rev. Shayna Appel. Thanks also to Nancy, Lauren, Sokhom, the ushers, the sound team and everyone else for helping to make it all happen. The sermon was fun to preach, and the overall theme of the service was hopeful and positive.

Also, I especially enjoyed the fellowship time after that I know so many of you worked hard at to make just right. The food was delicious, and the decorations were spot on. Special thanks to Pam and all the rest for doing this. And finally, I greatly appreciate the well wishes and the beautiful quilt gift (which is now hanging in my office) and the green stole that some anonymous person made for me. All in all, I think that we are all happy to be here, and I'm looking forward to all that God has in store for us as a church family in the times ahead. Advent and Christmas are our next celebrations and I'm sure that there will be many, many more celebrations to come!

Happily,
Pastor Chris

Church Window Newsletter Changes!
Coming in 2025...

FCC will soon be transitioning to an electronic format only for the Church Window Newsletter.
The monthly newsletter will be emailed out to the FCC community and will no longer be printed and mailed.

This change will take effect in early 2025. If you would like to continue to receive the Church Window Newsletter by regular postal mail, please reach out to Lauren Henderson in the church office and let her know as soon as possible.
Email her at LHenderson@FCCManchesterNH.org or call her at 603-625-5093 x100.

Annual Reports Due!
All Committee Chairs must submit their annual reports to FCC Bookkeeper, Nikki Brown by Friday, December 27th.
Please email your reports to:
NBrown@FCCManchesterNH.org



Senior Moments

With Rev. Barbara Papagian

Christmas is fast approaching and we are already making plans for events at the church. We will be having our special Advent Sundays with the lighting of the Advent candles. We will be having the Christmas Cantata with choir and orchestra. We will have a beautiful Christmas Eve service which is my favorite service of the year.

We will be making a change to our Blue Christmas Service. It will now be called a Respite Service and we will be having it following our regular church service on December 22nd. The service itself will still have some of the same elements. We will have one or two readings, Scripture Readings, Hymns, and candle lighting. It will still be a quiet and meaningful service where we will be remembering loved ones who have passed away.

I will be putting my tree up soon and decorating it with the ornaments I have bought in all the places I have travelled to throughout the years. I will also hang my plastic Rudolph ornament that I bought when I was 8 years old at the five and dime store. I told my boys that they better not throw Rudolph away after I die. I will know if they do that and I will punish them from on high. Rudolph is now 73 years old and cost 10 cents and is VERY valuable. :)

I have candles in my windows, but don't do much more decorating. It will be a quiet day with a few presents, a ham dinner, and time with my family. Maybe we will play a rousing game of Bananagrams!

I wish for all of you a very Merry Christmas!
Rev. Barbara Papagian



Senior Citizen's Fellowship Christmas Luncheon Tuesday, December 10th!

Held at the Grand at Bedford Village Inn in the Charolais Function Room located at 2 Olde Bedford Way in Bedford, NH
(see photo below)

Social Time is 11:00 AM to Noon and Lunch is served at Noon.

Entertainment will be our own Adam Peithmann providing a Christmas Sing-a-long!



The Charolais Room is located at The Grand (the grey buildings) which is behind and to the right of the original yellow BVI buildings.



December Worship Schedule

Sunday, December 1st 10:00 AM

First Sunday of Advent

Sunday Friends

Sacrament of Communion

Sunday, December 8th 10:00 AM

Second Sunday of Advent

Sunday Friends

Adam the Elf Christmas Party following Worship

Sunday, December 15th 10:00 AM

Third Sunday of Advent

Guest Preacher, Rev. Stephen Cushing

Sunday Friends

Christmas Cantata at 2:00 PM

Sunday, December 22nd 10:00 AM

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Sunday Friends

Sunday, December 22nd 11:30 AM

Respite Worship Service

(held in the chapel following the 10 am service)

Tuesday, December 24th 7:00 PM

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Join with your friends and neighbors as we joyfully await the coming of our Savior and celebrate his birth.

A traditional Candlelight service with special music by the Chancel Choir.

Sunday, December 29th 10:00 AM

First Sunday after Christmas

December Committee Meetings

- Sunday, December 1 at 11:15AM—Deacons
- Monday, December 2 at 9:30AM—Sr. Fellowship
- Tuesday, December 3 at 6:30PM—Membership
- Monday, December 9 at 6PM—Stewardship
- Tuesday, December 10 at 6PM—Church Council
- Monday, December 16 at 6:30PM—Church Trustees
- TBA: Outreach Not meeting in Dec: ONA

Salvation Army Christmas Toy Shop

Please check the church office window and upcoming editions of the Sunday News for opportunities to volunteer for this annual event!



News from the HOME TEAM!

Hands on Mission for Everyone



Our FCC volunteers make a difference to those we serve! Most people who give of their time to volunteer also feel the reward of serving those in need. Working together with a

common interest strengthens our relationships with each other. We would love you to consider giving a small amount of your time for any of these activities.

As we hit the colder winter months the HOME team has lots of volunteer opportunities planned, please consider giving your time to one or more of them.

Sign-up sheets for all these opportunities will be posted on the church office window and notices featured in the "Church Window" and the "Friday Link". If you have questions about any of these opportunities or would like to sign up, contact Liz Verity by email liz-v@comcast.net or call or text to 603-494-6785.

We Serve Dinner at the Adult Emergency Shelter 3 times in December!

Tuesday 12/10; Wednesday 12/18; and Friday 12/27



This will be a busy month at the Food Pantry! ...

December date & time TBD

We sort donations and stock shelves and help wherever needed—just 2 hours of your time to help the food insecure in Manchester.

Family Fun Night at the FIT Family Shelter

Tuesday, Dec. 5th 6-7 pm

This month we will be making simple holiday crafts with the kids ... It's great fun!



ENA Morning Conversation Café

Join us on Thursday, December 12th ...

10:45 am - 12:00 pm

This is a popular volunteer opportunity enjoyed by volunteers and students alike. We provide conversation, connection, laughter and encouragement to help the students practice their new language.



Children's Ministry News December 2024



In December we will meet on 12/1, 12/8, 12/15, and 12/22.

This year, our Sunday Friends (Sunday School) theme is **Serving God, Serving Our Community**. Each week we will talk about what it means to serve God and those around us as well as actively serving. Children of all ages are welcome to meet in the rec room during service.

For our youngest guests, who may not be ready for Sunday Friends, they are welcome to play in our cradle roll room downstairs. We hope to see your smiling faces each week. Please spread the word to family and friends to join us!

If you are interested in helping lead a Sunday Friends session, please reach out to Kelda York, Children's Ministry Coord. at KYork@fccmanchesternh.org or find Kelda during coffee hour! We'd love to have you at Sunday Friends!

Women's Connection News December 2024

Annual WC College Cookie Mailing/Swap!

Saturday, December 7th from 9-12 in the parlor



PARENTS! If you have a college student in your life, please reach out to Lauren in the office with their name and address before Friday, December 6th! Email her at LHenderson@FCCManchesterNH.org. Sign up on the office window to make cookies and to join us on 12/7!

Events Scheduled for the 2025 church year:

- ◆ January - Bingo on Zoom.
- ◆ February 15 - Annual Valentine's Day Breakfast - (looking for ideas for the program).
- ◆ March - Palace Theatre - "Escape to Margaritaville".
- ◆ March and April - Volunteering at Missy's Closet. Free Prom Dresses and Suits for Teens.
- ◆ April 12 - Breakfast at Longmeadow Church.
- ◆ May 31 - Mystery Ride!

News From FCC Outreach December 2024



2024 Angel Tree Update!

The Angel Tree will remain in the Fellowship Hall for just two more weeks: Nov. 24 and Dec. 1. We have several tags remaining, but would especially like to have the 8 tags specified for children's gifts taken and filled as soon as possible. The Outreach Committee is grateful to everyone who has taken tags! Gifts can be brought in (wrapped or in gift bags) with the tag labels anytime. **The deadline for bringing gifts is Sunday, December 8th.**

MORE OUTREACH NEWS...

- ⇒ The FCC Food Closet has seen an uptick in visitors in the past month. Your donations of soups in November is gratefully appreciated! Looking ahead to **December**, we are collecting **canned fruits and canned vegetables**. Please bring donations to the labeled box in the hallway behind the sanctuary.
- ⇒ We welcome volunteers to assist with the Food Closet by serving our visitors twice per week on Mondays from 9-12 and Thursdays from 12-3 PM at FCC. We will provide instructions and the bags are already filled to distribute. Please sign up on the office window, and thank you for considering this use of your time.
- ⇒ Coming on Dec. 15: Steve Cushing from the Seafarer's Mission in Boston will be preaching at FCC. Always inspirational, we look forward to his message in this busy season.
- ⇒ FYI: Other projects we are coordinating in December include Holiday Baskets for 3 different elementary schools in Manchester for Thanksgiving and Christmas, 5 families in need per school as recommended by school social workers. Hand made mittens and hats are included in the baskets as well as grocery store gift cards. Thank you, JoAnn Ward for coordinating these baskets and also all the crafters who provide hats and mittens!

Service of Installation for Rev. Christopher Stevens November 17, 2024!



Respite Service Sunday, December 22nd following the 10 am Worship Service



Christmas can be a time for many who are in need of reassurance and comfort.

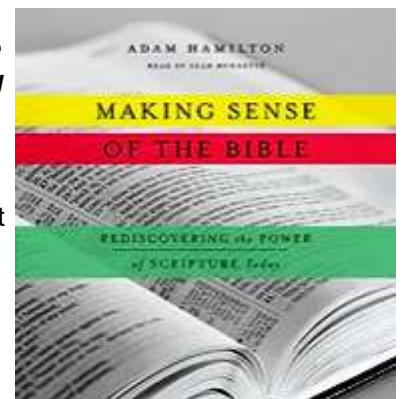
Perhaps you are grieving over the loss of a loved one, or are struggling with illness, or have experienced the loss of a job. You wonder how you will get through the holidays.

If you are looking for comfort and healing at this time when joy fills the air around you, we welcome you to join us at our service of respite (formerly the Blue Christmas Service) Sunday, December 22, 2024 at 11:30AM in the chapel. It will be led by Rev. Barbara, Rev. Chris, and the Parish Care Team.

Rev. Stevens Announces 6-session Bible/ Book Study

Held 10:00 AM in the parlor on 10/24, 11/7, 11/21,
12/5, 12/19, 1/02.

Making Sense of the Bible, Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today by Adam Hamilton



(5 books available first come first serve)

If anyone cannot afford a book, please contact Rev. Stevens. Reading assignment in preparation for the

first class: please read introduction and pages 1-20, and bring Bible to class. Reach out with questions via email cstevens@FCCManchesterNH.org.

Please note that Rev. Stevens will be offering future sessions of this same study at different times/modes (zoom) to accommodate different schedules.

Open & Affirming Committee December 2024 News and Reflections

"I hope we're here to respond to the challenge to be good neighbors and to ask ourselves what that means."

Thoughts offered by a Book Discussion Participant



Twenty-five people joined in November's *Conversation and Book Discussion*, based on Kevin Nye's, ***Grace Can Lead Us Home, A Christian Call to End Homelessness***. The theme of **how we are called to respond** was the through-line of the conversation. We were joined and led by Pastor Chris, Covenant Partner Randy VanDeventer, and FCC Friend and Choir Member, Pat Long. Each of the leaders shared many thoughts and concerns. A few highlights are included here...



Pastor Chris shared his personal practice of walking in our neighborhood and interacting with the unhoused. He emphasized, "I hope we can be part of the solution. I feel like the biggest way we can help in this struggle is to humanize them."

Pat Long shared his years-long efforts on behalf of the homeless and talked about one of his hopes - that a public restroom will come to fruition in Manchester. He shared ongoing political and societal challenges to find resources, adequate housing, mental health support, and the need to act in ways that help this population feel heard and seen. He challenged us to avoid using derogatory terms, such as "vagrants," but instead, remember how many of the homeless have been evicted due to rising rents. Among his many points, he reminded us to engage with our homeless brothers and sisters with kindness and respect.

Randy challenged us to confront the fears, hatred, and discomfort that we carry, and consider our society's failure to provide affordable housing and good-paying jobs.

He said, "We know how to solve the problem. We don't quite have a handle on how to prevent homelessness, but we do know how to respond to make it go to virtually zero. And that is low or no-barrier housing. Obviously, details are more difficult, but we know that it works."

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Manchester

All are Welcome and Wanted

www.fccmanchesternh.org

Overall, participants seemed ready to build on current FCC efforts for those in need. Many in the group showed definite interest in learning effective ways to engage with the unhoused. Pat talked about the Engagement Center on 39 Beech Street. Randy suggested, "The next time we pass someone on the sidewalk, say hello and good morning. Learn their names." Pat and Chris shared important news of a Faith-Based Coalition of clergy that Pastor Chris and FCC have been hosting for several months. The clergy are working on ways to coordinate and collaborate. They announced a training for Homeless Support that was held on November 16 at the United Methodist Church on Valley Street. As of the *Window* publication date, we know that several FCC folks planned to attend.

As Ellie Stetson shared, "There was a lot to digest." Participants agreed that we'll continue to work together in our faith community



and seek ways to collaborate with other churches to support and make a difference. Toward the end of the discussion, Liz Verity pointed out that "We don't often hear the success stories." Noel Villiard shared the good news of a young man he's known for years that now has an apartment. Two of our FCC members shared their personal, courageous struggles with homelessness, how hard it was, and talked about their journeys to the security of having safe homes.

Author Kevin Nye wrote that Jesus "*went around to people suffering from scarcity – of health, of acceptance, of power, of understanding – and replaced it with a gift of abundance,*" p. 161.

Members of the Open and Affirming Committee humbly ask, "How can we do the same?"

This summary addresses just part of the rich, thought-provoking, and faith-based discussion. The Book Discussion *Conversation* is available in audio and video formats, if you're interested. Please contact Carol Soucy or Lauren Henderson if you'd like to access it.

The Open and Affirming Committee will not meet in December.

Blessings for Advent and Merry Christmas!

Jeanine Finefrock, Jeffrey Frye, Karen Hawver, Justin May, John and Kathy Rowe, and Carol Soucy, Chair

THIS MONTH AT FCC

ACTIVITIES, DATES AND TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. PLEASE REFER TO THE PRINTED CALENDARS BY THE OFFICE OR GO TO WWW.FCCMANCHESTERNH.ORG

DECEMBER

Sunday, December 1st—First Sunday of Advent

10:00 AM Worship Service, Sunday Friends & Sacrament of Communion

11:15 AM Deacons' Meeting

Monday, December 2nd

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

9:30 AM Senior Fellowship Board Meeting

11:00 AM Local Church Homeless Initiatives Meeting

5:30 PM *Special Olympics Young Athletes*

Tuesday, December 3rd

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

10:00 AM Staff Meeting

6:30 PM Membership Committee Meeting on Zoom

Wednesday, December 4th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

7:00 PM Chancel Choir

Thursday, December 5th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

10:00 AM Bible Study

6:00 PM *FIT Family Center Activity Night*

Friday, December 6th

No Church Activities Scheduled

Saturday, December 7th

9:00 AM Women's Connection Annual College Cookie Swap/Mailing (parlor)

Sunday, December 8th—Second Sunday of Advent

10:00 AM Worship Service & Sunday Friends

11:15 AM Adam the Elf Christmas Party (rec room)

Monday, December 9th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

5:30 PM *Special Olympics Young Athletes*

6:00 PM Stewardship Committee Meeting

Tuesday, December 10th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

12:00 PM *Senior Fellowship Christmas Luncheon (at Bedford Village Inn)*

4:30 PM *FIT Kitchen Volunteer Evening*

6:00 PM Church Council Meeting

Wednesday, December 11th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

7:00 PM Chancel Choir

Thursday, December 12th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

11:00 AM ENA Morning Conversation Café

Friday, December 13th

No Church Activities Scheduled

Saturday, December 14th

9:00 AM Christmas Cantata Dress Rehearsal w/Orchestra

Sunday, December 15th—Third Sunday of Advent

Rev. Stephen Cushing, Guest Preacher

10:00 AM Worship Service & Sunday Friends

2:00 PM Christmas Cantata

Monday, December 16th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

5:30 PM *Special Olympics Young Athletes*

6:30 PM Church Trustees' Meeting

Tuesday, December 17th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

10:00 AM Staff Meeting

Wednesday, December 18th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

4:30 PM *FIT/New Horizons Kitchen Volunteer Evening*

Thursday, December 19th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

10:00 AM Bible Study

Friday, December 20th

No Church Activities Scheduled

Saturday, December 21st

No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, December 22nd—Fourth Sunday of Advent

10:00 AM Worship Service & Sunday Friends

11:30 AM Respite Worship Service

Monday, December 23rd

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

Tuesday, December 24th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

7:00 PM Christmas Eve Worship Service

Wednesday, December 25th

Church Office Closed for Christmas Holiday

Thursday, December 26th

Church Office Closed for Christmas Holiday

Friday, December 27th

4:30 PM *FIT Kitchen Volunteer Evening*

Saturday, December 28th

No Church Activities Scheduled

Sunday, December 29th

10:00 AM Worship Service

Monday, December 30th

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

Tuesday, December 31st

9:00 AM "Morning Watch Prayers" on Facebook

10:00 AM Staff Meeting

Please note the FCC Food Pantry is currently open to the public Monday from 9 am to 12 noon & Thursday 12 noon to 3 pm.

HELP US KEEP THE CHURCH CALENDAR CURRENT!

Please let us know if your committee will be meeting in the coming weeks/months. We would like to keep everyone informed! We publish meeting dates on our website and in our newsletters. Email Lauren at LHenderson@fccmanchesternh.org

Christmas Poinsettias Order Form

We invite you to order Poinsettias as a memorial or in honor of someone special. The flowers will be displayed for Christmas Eve Worship Services and may be taken home with you following the 7PM service. The plants cost \$18.00 each, in your choice of red or white.

Please return this form with payment to the church office no later than Sunday, December 1st!

In Memory Of: _____
OR/AND

In Honor Of: _____

Donor: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Preferred Color: _____ RED _____ WHITE

⇒ Payment of \$18.00 per plant must accompany this order by Sunday, December 1st!

⇒ Plants may be picked up after the 7 PM Christmas Eve service.

Adam the Elf Christmas Party! Sunday, December 8th

On Sunday, December 8th, "Adam the Elf" will be here for FCC's annual Christmas party! The event follows the worship service and will have Christmas decorations, carol singing, jingle bell ringing, coffee, cookies, and good ole' Christmas fun! The event is free and open to all ages. Please invite your friends, family and anyone looking for some holiday cheer!



STEWARDSHIP WRAP UP!

As the 2025 campaign comes to a close, we would like to thank all of you for your continuous generosity and support of our Church and its missions. In addition to thanking the committee, we would like to thank this year's Stewardship Moment speakers: Kori Karamanoogian and her son Brandon of the Special Olympics Young Athletes; Tom Irving; Karen Kersting, Executive Director of the Upreach Therapeutic Equestrian Center; and Pam LeBlanc.

Stewardship is more than just the monetary pledges...it's also about the time and volunteer work that all of you do.

Special THANKS to all FCC Volunteers!

If you have not yet responded to this year's appeal, please send your pledge form in to the office at your earliest convenience—thank you!

In appreciation, The Stewardship Committee
Dan & Cheryl McKenney (Chairs), Tom Irving, Kathy Payne,
Vicki Tinsley, Liz Verity, Anita Wolcott

Tune into the Morning Watch Prayers on Facebook!

Each Monday thru Thursday morning at 9:00 am. Hosted by Rev. Barbara Papagian and Peter Perich. This short time of prayer and reflection can be found on our Facebook page: www.Facebook.com/FCCManchester

Inclement Weather and Church Office Hours:

FCC Church policy is that when Manchester schools are closed or open late due to inclement weather, the Church office follows the same schedule.

**Worship Service
cancellations are
posted on
WMUR.com.**

The Deadline for the January Church Window Newsletter is Friday, December 20th!

Please submit your articles & pictures to Lauren Henderson at LHenderson@FCCManchesterNH.org





First Congregational Church
508 Union Street
Manchester, NH 03104-4890

Non-Profit Organ.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Manchester, NH
Permit No. 6230

*Time Dated Material -
Please Deliver Immediately!*

Rev. Christopher Stevens
Senior Pastor
Rev. Barbara Papagian
Associate Pastor



**The December
2024 Church
Window**

Our monthly newsletter
(603) 625-5093
www.fccmanchesternh.org

**Sunday Worship
10:00 AM**

*In-person with livestream
option available on our
Facebook page*

The Church Office Hours

M—F from 9AM to 3PM
Please note that the office
is closed on major holidays.

Join us for our
Christmas Eve
Candlelight Worship
Service



Tuesday,
December 24th
at 7PM.



First Congregational Church
Manchester, New Hampshire presents

Hope!

A Christmas Cantata Featuring the FCC Chancel
Choir, Community Singers, and Orchestra.

Joy to the World! Hope is born!

join us!

Sunday, December 15 at 2 pm
Free and Open to all

Freewill Offering to Support
the Union Leader Santa Fund

508 Union Street / Manchester, NH | www.fccmanchesternh.org | (603) 625-5093



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