



THE SPIRE

THE SECOND CHURCH IN NEWTON
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Sharing life's journey in Christian faith, love, and service.



60 Highland St. West Newton, MA • www.2ndchurch.org • (617) 244-2690

Calendar Highlights:

Worship and Church School each Sunday morning, 10 o'clock, followed by Coffee Hour

11/30 Thursday – Book Reading, “Dealing with the Apocalypse” by Jack Holder, 6:30 p.m.

12/10 Sunday – Sermon/Forum, “The Emerging Church” Matt Carricker of Agape Spiritual Community UCC, Waltham, 10 and 11:30 a.m.

12/17 Sunday – Service of Lessons and Carols, 10 a.m.

Christmas Lunch, Crafts and Verse, 11:15 a.m.

12/20 Wednesday – Blue Christmas Service at Dinner Church, 6:00 p.m.

12/24 Sunday – Bach Cantata, “Christmas Oratorio Part 1,” 10 a.m.

Christmas Eve Nativity Pageant, 5 p.m.

12/25 Monday – Christmas Day Holiday

12/31 Sunday – Agape Feast. 10 a.m.

Dinner Church is 6 p.m. each Wednesday in December, except not December 27.

The Search Committee meets most Wednesday evenings

Youth Group meets Sunday, December 3, 10, and 17 at 4 p.m.

Rev. Mark Seifried, Interim Minister

Barbara Cancellieri, Secretary

Andrus Madsen, Minister of Music

Mary Ayotte, Bookkeeper

Pat Bonnet and Alan Bubba Soho, Co-moderators

Susan Benes, Nursery School Director

Rev. Leah Rumsey, Director of Faith Formation

Molly Doris-Pierce, Youth Group and Sunday School Leader

Charlie and Henry Loftus and Victoria Joseph, Sunday Sextons

Frank Neal, Property Manager

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Next Spire Deadline: December 11, 10 a.m.

Next Spire Mailing: December 26, 9 a.m.

Love Incarnate

Reflections from Pastor Mark

The incarnation is a kind of vast joke whereby the Creator of the ends of the earth comes among us in diapers... Until we too have taken the idea of the God-man seriously enough to be scandalized by it, we have not taken it as seriously as it demands to be taken.

— Frederick Buechner, *Faces of Jesus*

If you look at the news with so many Christian pastors supporting politicians and other public figures who have numerous credible accusations against them for abhorrent sexual misconduct, there should be no surprise that Christianity is going to suffer more blowback than we have over the last two decades. This is on top of scores of evangelical pastors endorsing Candidate Trump and now supporting President Trump despite his long history of repugnant political rhetoric, immoral personal behavior, and unethical business practices. Mind you, I am not casting stones. I've got some things in my past that I am not proud of, but I have owned those things and not sought to distance myself from my own bad decisions or behaviors.

I'm talking about the evangelical pastors because it seems to me that we now have an opportunity as progressive Christians to differentiate ourselves from them. I'm not suggesting that we become more partisan in our support of self-avowed liberal politicians, because the fact is that there are enough of them who are in the same boat as conservatives who prey upon others without regard for consent. What I am suggesting is that we need to start acting like real disciples of Christ who demonstrate our affinity with marginalized people, whether they are living in poverty or are from a group of people who are different from the powerful ruling class of mostly white, heterosexual, and upwardly mobile folks.

It may seem ironic that most of our congregation fits into the latter classifications. That's the point. We think differently, so we need to act differently. Most of us realize that our privilege comes from our racial and social positions of birth. We have an opportunity to use that power to be in solidarity with and to support more vulnerable people.

This is what Jesus did. He was of both noble (King David) and dubious lineage (Tamar, an adulteress, and Rahab, a harlot). He used what power he had as a Jew to cross social barriers and lift others up, whether by healing them or by associating with them and inviting them to be his disciples, regardless of the breach in purity codes.

As we approach Christmas this month, we laud that Jesus is God's love incarnate (John 1:14, Philippians 2:5-11). Truth be told, progressive Christians worship Jesus differently this time of year with our Advent hymns and Christmas Carols exalting him as Lord God, heavenly king, etc. It seems to me that, in these days of divided politics, one of the best things we can do to differentiate ourselves from "those other Christians" and more generally, a great gift we can give the world is to work toward peace and reconciliation and to create opportunities to associate with others who are wholly different from the "powerful elite."

Quite simply, we have a chance to acknowledge God's love incarnate in the people with whom we associate and in the flesh and blood of others who have fewer advantages, because of their lineage, than we might. As we prepare to welcome God's love anew this Advent and Christmas, may we embody the beauty, truth, and love of Christina Rossetti's poem, "Love Came Down at Christmas":

Continued)

*Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love Divine,
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and Angels gave the sign.*

*Worship we the Godhead,
Love Incarnate, Love Divine,
Worship we our Jesus,
But wherewith for sacred sign?*

*Love shall be our token,
Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.*

Pastor Mark Seifried
MarkSeifried@icloud.com

Listening to Your Body, Following your Heart

with Linda Marks, MSM

January 7, 11:30 a.m. and February 10, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

When your body speaks (knot in the stomach, heavy heart, lump in throat) what is it trying to say? This workshop will provide an opportunity to tune inwards to listen to your body and translate body sensations, emotional feelings and deeper thoughts into important messages to guide your life and well-being. Using meditation and experiential exercises from Emotional-Kinesthetic Psychotherapy (EKP), participants will learn about the importance of emotional safety and experience the power of the heart.

On January 7 at 11:30 a.m., we will do an introductory workshop that will include some concepts, meditations and experiential exercises. On February 10 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., we will create a safe environment to explore the healing applications of this work

Linda Marks, MSM, developed Emotional-Kinesthetic Psychotherapy (EKP) in the 1980's and has taught and practiced it with individuals, couples, families and groups for 33 years. Linda is the author of *Living With Vision* and *Healing the War Between the Genders*, and is also a professional singer/songwriter with five albums. She holds degrees from Yale and MIT, and has taught nationally and internationally.

Advent/Christmas Services

Special Advent and Christmas Services

November 26 – Pre-Advent Intergenerational Service – we will go through some rituals such as lighting Advent candles and discuss the various themes that prevail throughout Advent in church so kids understand that there is a difference between the way the church prepares for Christmas and the way the wider culture does. This will be a kid-friendly service with various places young people can participate in big and small ways.

December 17 – Advent Lessons and Carols – we will offer a service of song and contemplation as we prepare our hearts and minds for Christmas and to receive the Christ-child into our hearts. Worship will have a similar tone to the 10:00 PM Christmas Eve services we have had in the past. The Christmas lunch follows at 11:15 a.m. along with crafts and concoctions for all ages. (See next page.)

December 20 - Blue Christmas Service – During our weekly Dinner Church service and meal, we will share scripture and stories about the difficulties some people have with our culture's Christmas celebrations. We will acknowledge that God's way is peace and healing for all people – even those who are grieving, depressed, or experiencing some sort of loss. This will be a good opportunity for those who are struggling to find support among the beloved community.

December 24 – 10:00 AM - Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, A Christmas Cantata with chorus and orchestra. (More information follows.)

December 24 – 5:00 PM - Christmas Pageant and Carols, a great service for kids and the congregation to “pick up” a part in the pageant which will be interactive. Invite your neighbors and family for this lively worship experience!

December 31 – 10:00 AM, An Agape Feast, we will close out 2017 and share the Epiphany story of the Magi visiting the Christ-child. Andrus will offer special music for season. Pastor Mark will lead a reverse offering with a gift for everyone in attendance, and a prayer that you can “live” the year to come. Please come in casual dress and feel free to invite friends to this “Brunch Church.”

Please consult the list of food items below to bring.

- Salad: if your last name ends in A through E
- Entrée: if your last name ends in F through L
- Side dish: if your last name ends in M through S
- Dessert or pastry: if your last name ends in T through Z

Invite friends, neighbors, and family to join you for these Holiday Events!



What ? No BAZAAR ? How Bizarre !

Instead: on Sunday, Dec. 17 after the Service of Lessons and Carols,
please join the congregation and bring a friend for
Lunch, Crafts, Coffee, Conversation and Concoctions!

This year we are combining our efforts with the hospitality team, under the guidance of Andrew Gluck, to create a traditional Christmas Celebration by offering Lunch, singing, hearing a story or two, cookie decoration for Kids, and creating ornaments and evergreen decorations for your home. There will be a short recital and an opportunity to purchase a few unusual gifts. Your creative side will enjoy the card-making station and/or decorate oranges with cloves for your holiday table. The event is particularly enjoyable and designed for Children of all ages, - including the child in your heart.

All you need to bring is a good appetite, your holiday mood, children (not mandatory) precious Sunday afternoon time, and good will towards all. The gathering will follow the luncheon in the same location and we expect to be mostly done by 2:00 pm.

With joy and hopes to see you at this year's Christmas Lunch, Craft, Conversation, Celebration.

Lissa Gilbert and Dorothea Mautner (your No - Bazaar 2017 - Team)

From Dr. Andrus Madsen: Worship Service – December 24, 10 a.m.

This year we are sharing the cantata on Christmas Eve Morning, which makes it perfect to do a Christmas work, so we are doing Part I of the *Christmas Oratorio* by Johann Sebastian Bach.

The work centers on the Luke account of Jesus' birth which is sung, using recitative, the way speech is delivered in opera. The work adds commentary on the Luke text with various arias and choruses.

What I find especially pertinent to today, the commentary in the part of the oratorio we will perform focuses on the mystery that the Lord of all would choose to be born into utter poverty, and what that tells us about earthly power, as well as our relationship with poverty. The opening chorus, with trumpets, timpani, flutes, oboes, and strings, is perhaps the most joyful thing Bach ever wrote, and you won't want to miss it.

This Sunday you will also want to come early to hear the prelude which will be a rather grand baroque overture with trumpets timpani and strings.

Christmas Eve Nativity Pageant – 5 p.m.

The Family Service and Christmas Pageant is December 24 at 5:00 pm. We offer a “pick up” pageant, meaning that there are no rehearsals. A few students from the congregation will have assigned roles, but all kids who come are invited to participate in the presentation!



A Reading with Jack Holder

*The world has supposedly ended. There is pain, anguish, and a loss of direction.
What do we do next? Magic.*

Please join us Thursday, November 30th for a reading of Jack Holder's first book, "Dealing with the Apocalypse." Presented as a collection of fantasy short stories, the book asks not how we prevent tragedy, but rather how we respond to them. Jack will be performing a reading and then discussing how religion impacts his work, hope in the face of despair, and advice on how to be a writer.

Jack Holder is a graduate student in Boston University's School of Theology, studying Church and the Arts. A graduate of Saint Anselm College, his books include "Dealing with the Apocalypse," "Demon Riders," has been featured in the collection "Monsters and Other Scary ****," from Wannabe Press, and the upcoming Borinquen anthology for relief efforts in Puerto Rico.

Where: Fellowship Hall, Second Church

When: 6:30-7:30 p.m.



Dinner Church Wednesdays at 6 o'clock

If you haven't checked out Dinner Church, now is the time!
This lively informal service happens every Wednesday at 6:00 pm.
It features communion, a collaborative sermon we build together,
and a full vegetarian dinner. Write Leah with questions.
Leahrumsey@g.harvard.edu

Christmas Card Collection

We will be collecting unused Christmas cards and envelopes for inmates at the Middlesex County House of Correction, Billerica to give to their family members and friends. Look for the decorated box in Fellowship Hall. Deadline is December 3, when a trip will be made to Billerica to deliver the cards.

A Message from the Board of Mission and Advocacy about Holiday Giving

City Mission Boston - The 2017 Christmas Shop – Share the Joy of the Season!

City Mission's principle of Engagement is strongly felt in our annual Christmas Shop. Each year, we partner with local churches, businesses, and individuals who give gifts of time, talent, and treasure to families and children in need in the Boston area. We believe that all of God's children deserve respect, love, and a gift to call their own this Christmas season. Through your help and support, the Christmas Shop brings hope and joy to those most in need during the holiday season.

How You Can Help – Donate Gifts

We provide gifts for people of all different ages, from young to old. While some of us like to joke about getting socks in our stockings, even these seemingly small items can make a world of difference in someone's Christmas. We accept a range of gifts, including:

- Winter coats, sweaters and sweatshirts
- Hats, mittens, gloves, and scarves
- Socks and underwear
- Blankets and backpacks
- Toys, books, and games for all ages
- Gift cards from Target, Walgreens, Marshalls, CVS, etc.

We only accept NEW gifts. Why? A new gift sends a message of dignity and worth. Many people experiencing or on the verge of homelessness must make do with hand-me-downs from strangers. The Christmas season is a time for generosity, and we believe this generosity must extend to all of God's children.

Shepherding the Light

For 116 years, the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a tangible expression of God's love and light in the world. One of the four Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ, the Christmas Fund provides UCC congregations and members an opportunity to reach out in kindheartedness to those who have faithfully shepherded our Church and who now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs.

In 2016, UCC congregations and members generously contributed \$1,562,260 to the Offering. This enabled the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, the charitable arm of the Pension Boards, to provide, on behalf of the whole Church, Supplementation of Small Annuities, Retiree Health Premium Supplementation, Emergency Grants, and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to individuals and families in need.

The theme of the 2017 Christmas Fund Offering is Shepherding the Light, and our goal is to raise \$1.7 million to help support these ministries of light and love. The recipients of these gifts have faithfully served the church and now, in their time of need, we can be the church to them. We invite and encourage you to shepherd God's light and support this year's appeal.

On behalf of the hundreds of clergy and lay employees and their families whose lives were touched by your support of last year's Christmas Fund Offering, The Pension Boards, UCC offers their sincere thanks for your generosity!

The Second Church in Newton
60 Highland Street,
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The Second Church in Newton is an inclusive community of curious and creative spiritual seekers, committed to learning, teaching, social justice and embodying a progressive practice of Christianity through loving kindness, engagement and joyful worship.

