

A WORD FROM OUR PASTOR

"Christmas is a time to say I love you ..."

"I don't need a lot for Christmas, there is just one thing I need ..."

"Last Christmas I gave you my heart ..."

"Chestnuts roasting on an open fire, jack frost nipping at your nose..."

"Hang all the mistletoe, I'm gonna get to know you better ..."

"Frosty the snow man, was a jolly happy soul ..."

"I'm dreaming of a white Christmas ..."

"Joy to the world, the Lord has come ..."

Which of these first lines of popular Christmas songs is about the Christian holiday called Christmas? If you picked the last one you are correct. The rest are just a small sample of the contemporary holiday known as Christmas.

What happen to the real Christmas? What happened to the story and celebration of Jesus' birth? Somehow we lost that part of the Christmas story. Santa, Rudolph and love songs about finding and losing love have become the standard themes for this time of the year. Our Christmas cards say Happy Holidays instead of Merry Christmas. We have ornaments and decorated trees as the symbols of the season, rather than nativity scenes.

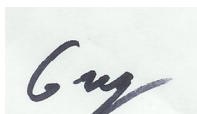
I hope that in the midst of this chaotic contemporary celebration of this holiday, which has nothing at all to do with the religious holiday on which it is based, you will make some time to remember the birth of Jesus. God gave Jesus to our world as a gift of love, grace and mercy not as a decoration to our lives. We shouldn't be ashamed to proclaim the wonder and glory of this act of salvation.

It would be a shame if all of our preparing and rushing around and shopping in preparation of celebrating the secular holiday kept us from experiencing the glory, the joy and the hope of the religious Christmas. As always I invite you to join us in church as we anticipate and celebrate the birth of Jesus into our lives.

On Christmas Eve we will hold identical services at 5 and 7 PM. The communion service will be at 11:00 PM. On Christmas Day we will worship at 10:00.

On behalf of my family; Sharon, Matthew, Jon, and the staff, Sue, John, Chip, and Tom, I wish you all a blessed and merry Christmas.

Peace



ADVENT & CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

December 6: *10—3 Christmas Fair & Festival of Trees
11 am , Noon, 1 pm Lunch With Santa*

December 7: *Advent 2, 10 am Worship including Welcoming New Members*

December 14: *Advent 3, 10 am Worship
3:30 pm & 4:30 pm Town Pageant (Unitarian Church) Hot chocolate and cookies
served in our Fellowship Hall following each performance
5:30'ish Tree Lighting & Carol Sing (On the Common)*

December 21: *Advent 4, 10 am Worship
2:30 pm Church Caroling (see below)*

December 24: *Christmas Eve
5 pm & 7 pm Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols
11 pm Candlelight Communion Service*

December 25: *Christmas Day, 10 am Worship*

TOWN PAGEANT—DECEMBER 14, 3:30 & 4:30

Harvard's annual Christmas Pageant will take place on Sunday, December 14, in the Unitarian Church sanctuary at 3:30 and 4:30 pm. The annual tree lighting will be at 5:30 pm, on the Common. Cocoa and cookies will be served, in our Fellowship Hall, following each performance.

HERE WE GO A CAROLING!

Sunday afternoon December 21, at 2:30. Come join us to bring Christmas cheer to some local households in town. We will meet at the church and carpool from there. Bring your enthusiasm, a smile, and perhaps wear a festive scarf or hat. This is an intergenerational activity with no expectation of virtuoso voices - all are welcome! If you have any questions, please contact Phyllis Clawson (978) 456-3304.

MISSIONS COMMITTEE

Christmas Fund

Because the needs of retired and low-income clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ are year-round, your contributions to the annual Christmas Fund Special Mission Offering, formerly known as Veterans of the Cross, work throughout the year and not just during the Christmas season.

The proceeds from the Christmas Fund are used to provide gifts to clergy and lay employees in all stages of their lives and ministries to and through the UCC. The availability of these funds is critical to the ability of the Board for Ministerial Assistance to help ensure a sustainable quality of life for those who ultimately receive the gifts.

Dollars given to the Christmas Fund go directly to those who serve or have served the church, in their moments of critical need. Currently, over 1,400 families have received either a one-time grant or are receiving continued assistance through your gifts to the Christmas Fund Offering. This special collection will be received on December 21. Envelopes will be provided.

Mission Family

We provided birthday gifts to Monica (age 6) and filled a diaper bag and gave baby clothes to welcome baby Anthony. Our Giving Tree also supports the family. In December we would like to provide a basket of healthy food and special holiday treats along with some decorations (kid friendly). Please look for more information in Sunday announcements or update emails.

Missions would love to have someone coordinating monthly food donations. This would include ingredients for a meal and some basic food supplies. If you could coordinate or need more information, please contact Marcia Conant (conants4@charter.net)

Loaves & Fishes

Thank you to everyone who took a turkey tag. We sent enough donations to provide 5 holiday meals. With Christmas just around the corner, the pantry will need donations for another holiday meal, but they also need to provide the usual food deliveries.

Giving Tree

There are still some tags left on the tree for both Loaves and Fishes and the Mission Family. Please stop by and take one (or more). Return the unwrapped gifts, with the tag attached, to the church office by December 14.

Missions Committee: *Judy Cavanaugh, Marcia Conant, Susan Buck, Andrea Dickson, Buddy Schmidt, David McDonell, Chip Hurd*

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Movie Night Discussion meets the first Monday of the month at 7:30 in the corner classroom. For December 1st, please watch the documentary *"Dark Days"*. Watch the chosen movie at your leisure and then join in on the monthly discussions. This multi-award winning documentary from Marc Singer is about a community of homeless people living in a train tunnel beneath Manhattan. The film depicts a way of life that is unimaginable to most of those who walk the streets above. In the pitch black of the tunnel, rats swarm through piles of garbage as high-speed trains leaving Penn Station tear through the darkness. For some of those who have gone underground, it has been home for as long as twenty-five years. The director abandoned life on the outside to spend all of his time in the tunnels, making it his home for two years. Surprisingly entertaining and deeply moving, "Dark Days" is an eye-opening experience that shatters the myths of homelessness with the strength and universality of the people the film represents.

Book Discussion Group: The Book Group will be taking a break in December. The next meeting will be on January 19th at Noon and 7:30 pm. Please read *The Shack* by William P. Young before the gathering. The book is about Mac, a grief-stricken father in mid-life about to have an extraordinary experience with God. His great sadness began four years ago on a weekend camping trip, when his 6-year-old daughter, Missy, was murdered. What he couldn't know then, but is about to learn, was God's purpose for Missy's death. Roger Mueller's clear, gentle voice characterizes Mac's family with high-spirited joy and laughter. His portrayal of Missy's animated excitement makes her especially believable. His polished performance of grief-stricken Mac brings tears. With empathy and sensitivity, Mueller captures the mysterious voices of those who have invited him to the now abandoned, yet transformed, cabin in the wilderness. This compelling fantasy explores themes of love, loss, and blame.

FLOWER COMMITTEE

The flower committee invites everyone to provide flowers for our worship service. You may provide flowers in memory of someone or to honor someone or a special occasion, or simply for the honor and glory of God. The signup sheet is outside of Greg's office. Please sign up as soon as possible as the dates can fill up fast.

Be sure to pick up a few poinsettias in our flower room at the Christmas Fair. 4" poinsettias will be \$6, 6" will be \$12 and 8" will be \$20. A lovely Christmas decoration!

You may again order poinsettias, in memory or honor of someone, to grace our sanctuary at Christmastime. Order forms will be in the bulletins starting in December.

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Paper Cups vs. Polystyrene Cups

Over the last several months, several people have approached me, as chair of the hospitality committee, regarding our use of polystyrene or "foam" cups at our church. The preference was for an eco-friendly option. Being environmentally minded myself I was more than happy to take on the switch. Here is what I found out.

Paper cups:

- Cost 5-10 times more than polystyrene. (~\$550/year minimum, with the better ones over \$1000/year)
- Are not as comfortable to hold as polystyrene
- Due to weight, cost far more to ship than polystyrene
- Use 2.5-3 times more energy to produce than polystyrene
- Even those that include post consumer recycled content have far more virgin paperboard than recycled content.
- Are not as environmentally friendly as we, and the paper cup industry, would like to believe.

Polystyrene cups:

- Cost ~\$130/year
- Composed of carbon and hydrogen
- Are more insulating and therefore more comfortable to hold than paper cups
- Are 90-95% air, weighing far less than paper cups, thus using far fewer fossil fuels in their manufacturing and shipping process. This would also mean lower shipping cost for the town to get the cups to the waste disposal site.
- Use less than 2.5-3 times less energy to produce.
- When incinerated in a modern trash incineration facility, produces only water vapor, CO₂ and a small amount of non-toxic ash. Harvard's trash is incinerated.

There has been some research indicating that polystyrene cups may leech styrene into the food or drink. Styrene can mimic the effects of estrogen in the body. Hot foods with a high fat content are more likely to do this. However, it should be noted that styrene is a common, naturally occurring substance in many foods including strawberries, cinnamon, beef, coffee beans, peanuts, wheat, oats and peaches to name a few.

In conclusion, I believe that with most of us using these cups one or two times a week we are not increasing our intake of styrene by any appreciable amount. I also believe that by using polystyrene cups we are already using the most environmentally responsible resource available to us.

My research is based on information found at dartcontainer.com/web/enviro.nsf and the American Chemistry Council as well as grinningplanet.com. The information on these websites cites numerous well-documented scientific studies. I would be happy to discuss this with anyone interested.

Sincerely,
Edie Hettinger

PRAYER LIST

Our prayers are with:

Buddy Schmidt and her family on the death of her husband, Norman Schmidt. A memorial was held in November.

Linda LaRocque (Larry Hettinger's sister)

Jim Wallace Victoria Smith Ubben

Chrissy Audibert Claire Watkins

Nancy Schmalz George Mayo

Dick Reed Richard Wells

xEdward Culverhouse Carol Shaw

Bill & Anita Tilley Davida Crabtree

Claire & Bob L'Heureaux Z Opalka

All those serving in the armed forces and their families

FROM THE OFFICE

Reserving Rooms

Please call the church office, (978) 456-8788 or email office@harvarducc.com when planning meetings, fundraisers, etc to be sure the space is available.

Bulletin Announcements

Weekly announcements to be included in the Sunday Bulletin are due no later than **Wednesday, noon**. They should be directed to the **Church Office at: (978)456-8788** or send your information via email to: **office@harvarducc.com**

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for the January 2009 issue of THE TALE is Friday, December 12 (Please not the early date).

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Fax: 978-456-9779



*No matter who you are or
where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.*

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2008

Celebrate Advent & Christmas with us
Please see the schedule on
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