



Pastor's Corner

Rev. Jo Shelnut, Interim Pastor

A GIFT FOR THE HOLIDAZE

Remember how the day after Thanksgiving used to be the signal to start the mad, mad dash to Christmas? And have you noticed that now, when you go into a store to buy material for that intricately handmade Halloween costume (or grabbing something quick and chintzy off the rack), you can also buy your Thanksgiving tablecloth, plates and decorations *and* your Christmas cards, wrapping paper and stockings?

And I'm talking September, during back-to-school shopping. If your car is big enough and you are strong enough, you can roll it all into one huge seasonal, holiday blob. How special!

Well not really. Nothing unfolds in its due season, with real attention and anticipation and grace. For those of us who have one foot in that mushed-together world and the other in the rhythmic unfolding of the seasons and the church year, there is a great early holy days gift: **ADVENT**

What a gift Advent is to us. This season calls us to be introspective, to be prayerful, mindful of our true selves and mindful of others. At this season, more than any other, that is a gift. It gives us one hour a week to step aside into quiet meditation and preparation. One hour to let go of lists and obligations and let our minds stop spinning and bodies stop running.

We light the Advent candles, we focus on the unfolding story, we become watchful and prepare ourselves for the priceless gift to come. If we take this one practice home with us, gathering one time each day to light the Advent

candles, some of that glow, that anticipation may move even deeper into our hearts and minds.

But what can we bring into that other world of which we are all part?

First, realize that much of it is joyful and uplifting. It's not all good "in here" and bad "out there." People need to enjoy the events and get-togethers. But we all know that so much of what comes along with our celebrations is detrimental to our mental, physical and spiritual well-being.

Here is my list of ways to let Advent help us thru the craziness. See what works for you.

Let consumerism and technology help you

- If there is Christmas stuff for sale in September, buy it then and don't go back till New Year's. You'll miss long lines, angry shoppers and loud annoying Christmas songs.

- Shop on line. You can still buy locally and ethically — and save gas and lower your carbon footprint! And, again, no canned music.

- Unplug the TV (seriously) for most of November and December. Rent or Roku and Hulu movies to watch when and what you want.

The bonus is you and your family won't be bombarded with hours of advertising.

Meditate in Public

- In that long check-out line, breathe deeply. Silently repeat a prayer or poem. Earplugs can block out all the noise, but it works without too. You just discovered an extra 20 minutes for yourself.

- Take mini-cell phone breaks. Turn off the ringer while waiting in line.

Looking Ahead to Christmas

We have the costumes! We have the set! We have the script! SO -- YES! We will be having a **CHRISTMAS PAGEANT** once again this year!

We will share the joy and hope of the Christmas story with a *communitywide and multigenerational pageant*. The story will be told by narrators and shown by the actors. A few parts have one or two lines to speak themselves. Solos, duets and instrumental music are woven in — depending on the participants. Both congregation and cast get to sing songs of the season. There will be parts for young children, younger and older teens and younger and older adults.

What we know for sure: It will take place at 10 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 18. There will be two or three rehearsals to prepare. There will be a costume fitting and run-thru the day before, Saturday, Dec. 17.

We will need many hands to help: healthy snacks for rehearsals, organizing costumes, keeping watch over cast members while others rehearse. What we don't know yet: date/time of rehearsals. Possibly on Sunday afternoons — we'll let you know soon.

Ponder - being a part of the Christmas Pageant

Fear not - to attend and bring family, friends and neighbors

Herald - the news to community members. Invite their families to participate.

When Advent is over and Christmas is here, we will celebrate with two services. The Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be on Saturday, Dec. 24, at 7 p.m. The following morning, Christmas Day, we will hold a simple and joyful worship service at the usual 10 a.m. time. We will sing carols and hear readings and greet Christmas together. You are welcome to come casually or festively attired for this service.

From Christian Education and Music Directors and Pastor Jo

- Find yourself in a traffic jam or at a really long light? This is more found time. Look at the pretty red and green lights — how festive! Turn off the radio, put in a CD (or listen to silence). Use this gift of time to count your blessings. Wow — that light was too short!

Make a list - check it twice

- List one: the things you want to do every year and never find time for. Pick one or two and put them on your calendar.
- List two: the things you “have” to do every year that you don't like. Find a way to eliminate one or two. Substitute something from list one.
- List three: What Christmas giving feels right to you? Mark two dates on your calendar when Christmas is long over on which to give time or money to that same person or organization again.

Love Thy Neighbor

- Your house is overrun and the relatives are driving you crazy. Give everyone a break. Take a plate of goodies to a household of just one or two. Not everyone's house is overrun with family and friends. You'll enjoy the quiet, your neighbor will enjoy the company and the family will survive without you for an hour.
- Remember leaving little bags of gifts and treats on people's door knobs, ringing the bell and running away? Let your children or grandchildren ring and run — you drive the getaway car. Giving without getting back will fill the empty places of your hearts.

Here is my wish for us this season:
That we will practice Advent together.
That we will hear the voices of mystery and prophecy above the din. That we will find balance between our outward and inward lives. That we will come to Christmastide prepared for joy.

Blessed Advent to you and to your household.

*With you on the journey,
Pastor Jo*

Parish Council

Kay Jorgensen

As I thought about the reports in this newsletter two sayings came to mind: "Many hands make light work" and "Put your hands to work and give your hearts to God." I think both apply to our church community and the contributions that volunteers and donors make on behalf of the church and Tunbridge communities – and beyond.

In November the Parish Council will review and approve the 2017 draft budget, which will then be mailed with the annual canvass letter. With the computer purchased last year and its QuickBooks program Treasurer Townsend Swayze and Administrative Assistant Hoyt Bingham are able to keep track of expenses and revenues and make year-to-year comparisons, which is a help in budgeting and analysis throughout the year.

At the recommendation of the Pastor Search Committee the Parish Council voted to extend the Rev. Jo Shelnut's contract as Interim Pastor for three months – and she accepted. We are pleased that she will be with us through May. The Search Committee's report on this page relates what members will be doing in the next several months as they work on the church profile before advertising the pastor position.

The Council will use some of the memorial funds donated in Arlene Stockwell's name to get a new PA system and speakers for the church sanctuary. We have had too many glitches and it is difficult to hear in the back – as Arlene often noted.

A donor has offered to pay for a new Parish House front walk and steps to replace the deteriorating concrete. Council members opted for steps and railings of pressure treated wood. We hope that work will be done soon.

After two years of fundraising, we plan to paint the Congregational Church building next year. Thanks to recent Anything Apple proceeds and donations we have now raised more

than \$12,500. This amount, plus any additional fundraising, will reduce the need to use endowment funds, since our budget cannot cover such a big project. A Just Desserts evening is scheduled Feb. 11. If that event can repeat this year's success we will have about \$15,000 in hand when we contract with a painter.

Pastor Search Committee

The Pastor Search Committee continues its work on The Tunbridge Church profile. Church history timeline boards have been displayed along the back wall of the church since September. They show 90 years of church history. (We have more, going back to 1760.) The timeline debuted at the July search kickoff pizza party.

All of the colored timeline notes are "history" written by church members and friends. Please use the pads of paper in the back of the church to add additional dates, facts and stories about your relationship with the church. They will be typed and added to the appropriate boards.

The committee is now compiling information for the church profile. Some of it relates to church governance, mission, membership and finances. But a great deal must come from the church community.

As Pastor Jo wrote in the last newsletter, "What do we offer our members, friends and visitors? What are the things we do well, which areas need improvement? Are there things the church is not doing at all? What do you see as our unique strengths and gifts, and what are the challenges?"

We Search Committee members are actively seeking such information in meetings and talks with individuals and small groups. In addition, a letter about the pastor search and membership was recently mailed to people who are members or church attendees, those who used to be members or attendees, and others we consider friends of the

church. That mailing included a survey about expectations for a new minister.

A questionnaire was sent to community groups that have a relationship with the church because they use our facilities (including Making Change, Tunbridge Library, fair directors, farmers market, Neighbors Helping Neighbors) or the church/group supports the other.

After November the committee will share general information about congregational life that we have gathered for the profile. The draft profile will also be available so that we can receive additional input before we produce a finished profile ready for potential pastor candidates, probably in February. We then expect information about the position to be widely dispersed thanks to the various denominations, internet and print advertising.

The Search Committee will propose some bylaws changes for the Parish Council to bring before church members in January. One will give the Pastor Search Committee the duty of recommending a pastor candidate directly to church members. Current bylaws say the search committee recommends a candidate to the Parish Council which can consider additional people for the position.

We welcome comments, concerns and suggestions as we proceed with the pastor search. Please contact any of us.

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Outreach Committee

Nancy Chapman

Volunteers will pack and distribute Thanksgiving bags (sugar-free for diabetics) for local seniors on Nov. 19. Last year 52 bags with home-baked treats, fruit, cheese, crackers, candy and nuts were delivered. Cookies and individually wrapped food items are requested.

On Dec. 16, groups from the church will sing carols at local homes. The next day Christmas boxes will be packed for Food Shelf families. Money donations to help pay for the extras that go in the boxes are welcome.

The Outreach Committee sponsored four Super Senior Luncheons honoring our older Tunbridge citizens and church friends during 2016. Ten of the attendees are over 90 years old. The last luncheon on Oct. 29 had a Halloween theme and featured fall favorites of stew, pumpkin bread and apple crisp.

Usually more than 30 seniors attend each luncheon as well as six to eight workers. Most of this year's lunches were held in the Town Hall to better accommodate the number of participants. And very positive responses have been received.

Thanks to Lisa Amodeo, Sue Barnaby, Shirley Boles, Nancy Chapman, Mary Fisk, Joanne and Denise Goodnow, Elaine Howe, Kay Jorgensen, Dawna Neron, Margaret Rogers and Judy Tucker who have helped with these events.

The 5K Fun Run/Walk, held Oct. 8 under the able leadership of Margaret Rogers, netted the Tunbridge Community Food Shelf \$1,310. Our sincere thanks to all who participated in the event, all the sponsors who provided either monetary support or prizes and the many volunteers who helped make this a success.

A new twist is being planned for the annual decorating of the church for the Advent season. Instead of having the event on a Friday evening, the Outreach Committee has chosen Sunday, Dec. 4,

following the church service, to invite anyone who wishes to stay, or come, to help decorate the church and set up the crèche figures on the Parish House lawn.

After decorating, all are invited to the Parish House for a time of fellowship featuring hearty soup, bread and desserts. Anyone with questions about the decorating needs should contact Lisa Amodeo, 889-3245. Please call Nancy Chapman, 889-5542, if you can provide food for the fellowship.



Youth Choir members Isabella Amodeo, Olivia Swayze, Margot Frost and Rose Terami, from left, provided all of the music for the Oct. 23 service, accompanied by organist Judie Lewis.

November/December Events

Special Events:

Nov. 6, All Saints Sunday, Communion, Stewardship Sunday Potluck

Nov. 13, Parish Council meeting

Nov. 19, packing Thanksgiving Bags

Nov. 20, Parish Council meeting

Dec. 4, Communion. After the service, decorating the church and fellowship in the Parish House

Dec. 16, Christmas Caroling at homes

Dec. 17, packing Christmas Boxes

Dec. 24, Christmas Eve Service, 7 p.m.

Dec. 25, Christmas Day Service, 10

Regular Events:

Sunday Service: 10 a.m. returns to the Congregation Church in Tunbridge Village.

Making Change: Wednesdays, Parish House, 5:30 p.m.

Community Food Shelf: Fridays, Parish House, 4-6 p.m.

News and Notes

Church members and Interim Pastor Jo Shelnett will be on stage at several upcoming seasonal programs. Rob Howe and Kate Caldwell will be in the Nov. 15 Handel Society of Dartmouth College "Songs of Hope" Concert at the Hopkins Center. Information is at www.handelsociety.org and Facebook.

Rob and Kate will be going on the society's Dec. 7-20 European tour to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. Some of the music that will be performed at the concert will be sung on the tour.

Olivia Swayze returns to Northern Stage in White River Junction for its production of "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens. Olivia, an eighth grader at The Sharon Academy, will perform in half the shows as one of the Pickwick children. The play will run from Nov. 16 and Dec. 24. To learn Olivia's show dates please contact her mother, Dawna Neron, at d.neron@myfairpoint.net

Pastor Jo's concerts are with Bell Canto at Lebanon Methodist Church, Dec. 10, 7:30 p.m. and Dec. 11 at 3 p.m. and in a trio at the Freelance Family Singers concert at Woodstock Congregational Church, Dec. 3, 7 p.m. and Dec. 4 at 3 p.m.

Please sign up on the pink sheet on the vestibule table if you would like to provide flowers any Sunday in the coming months or a wreath for the church and Parish House doors.

Anne and Merritt Comstock's children, Laura, Taffy and Timothy, and their spouses, attended the Oct. 23 church service which was followed by a

fellowship celebration of Anne's life that the family hosted at the Town Hall. Two memorial donations were recently received in honor of Anne who died Sept. 15.

A special offering plate is in the church vestibule for donations to Church World Service for Hurricane Matthew relief. In October the church supported a collection of toiletries, clothing and other items for residents of the Vermont Veterans Home.

The Community Food Shelf is open on Fridays from 4-6 p.m. at the Parish House. The U.S. Department of Commerce recently reported that Vermont has the country's highest grocery bills – last year's per capita spending on food and beverages was \$4,196, which makes this church-sponsored program important for the community. The Food Shelf is also again sponsoring the backpack project with the Tunbridge School. Donations may be sent to treasurer Euclid Farnham, 26 The Crossroad, Tunbridge, VT 05077.

Thanks

The Funeral Fellowship Committee is an important part of church outreach. Members, who are responsible for organizing fellowship during a particular month, are Sue Barnaby, Shirley Boles, Nancy Chapman, Elaine Howe, Mary Fisk, Margaret Rogers and Vivian Smith. In recent months they provided Town Hall fellowship for the families and friends of Arlene Stockwell, Lyn Baldwin, Jonathan Wolfe and Dale Howe. Thanks to the bakers and others who support the committee's funeral fellowships.

The annual Festival of Worship service on the Fair Sunday featured music that ranged from reflective songs to hand-clapping gospels. Pastor Jo Shelnett gave the readings, lesson and prayers.

Thanks to the 18 choir members; the Shugarmakers with Connie Button,

Cory Unger, Norm Labrecque and David Indenbaum who played gathering music and two numbers; David Ainsworth, Isabella Amodeo, Bunchie Angell, Bob Crino, Eve Ermer, Larry Owen, Bruce Post, Marlene Reed and Janet Zug who were soloists or leaders; flutist Nan Frost; accompanist Dale Post; and choir director/organist Judie Lewis who directed the music.

Anything Apple on Oct. 8 raised \$2,200 for the church painting fund. The Fundraising Committee appreciates the support of everyone in the church and community who provided apple pies and other treats and who came for lunch, dessert or takeout. The silent auction was also a success thanks to generous bidders and donors of item and services.

The Anything Apple volunteers who planned, set up, worked in the kitchen and at food and auction tables and cleaned up include Sue Cain, Kate Caldwell, Nancy Chapman, Pam Dietz, Mary Fisk, Elaine Howe, Nancy Howe, Rob Howe, Kay Jorgensen, Linda Lazaroff, Joyce Miller, Dawna Neron and Margaret Rogers.

Additional thanks to Mary Fisk, who has kept the Parish House kitchen tidy this year by taking care of weekly trash removal and recycling, and Rob Howe, who made the large grapevine wreath on the front wall of the sanctuary.

Happy Birthday

NOVEMBER

- 05 – Nancy Howe
- 06 - Gordon Mitchenson
- 21 – Eleanor Frost
- 22 – Sebastian Fraser
- 23 – Elaine Anthony

DECEMBER

- 12 – Felicity Swayze
- 23 – Bob Rogers
- 27 – Mary Fisk