



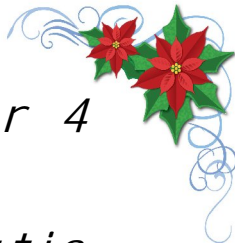
# The Messenger

Volume 21, Issue 4

December 2011/January 2012

First Congregational  
Church of Falmouth

*Sunday,  
December 4*



*Poinsettia  
Sunday*

*Brown bag lunch  
before the  
parade*



*Christmas  
Fair*

*Saturday,  
December 3*

*9am ~ 2pm*

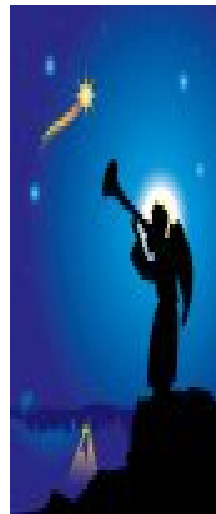
**CHOIR SUNDAY**

*December 11*

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*Christmas Season Services:*  
*Christmas Eve ~ December 24*  
*5:30 p.m. — Family service*  
*8:00 p.m. — Traditional service*  
*Christmas Day ~ December 25*  
*10:00 a.m. Morning service*  
*New Year's Day ~ January 1*  
*10:00 a.m. Morning service*  
*Epiphany Sunday ~ January 8*  
*Sacrament of Holy Communion*



**January dates of inter-  
est:**

- Wednesday, January 4—Women in Spirit & Service
- Sunday, January 15 — Recognition Sunday
- Friday, January 20 — Parents' Night Out
- Sunday, January 29 — Music with our Folk Group



## A Moment with Pastor Steve

Dear Friends,

On Thanksgiving Sunday, November 20, we ended our year. We closed the year by giving thanks for all the ways God has provided for us, as individuals, and as a congregation during our interim journey. We start our new year on Sunday, November 27. At least that is the case if **our primary pattern for time-keeping** over the year is determined by remembering the events of Jesus' life. This seems like the best way of tracking time of people who seek to follow One who came that "we may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10)! It provides a spiritual base and grounding for our whole year. I honor this approach to time by preaching on the Common Lectionary texts from Advent through Pentecost.

**November 27 begins the season of Advent.** Each of the Sundays of Advent focus on a different aspect of the ways that Jesus' birth brought renewal into our world. The first Sunday we focus on the renewal of **Hope, followed by Peace, Joy, and Love on the following Sundays.** These are essentially four "core values" for living as people of faith. As our families from the congregation lead us in the lighting of the candles in the Advent Wreath, we will "sing out" the focus of the day by singing a verse from the song *One Candle is Lit*. For the first Sunday we will sing:

**Come quickly, Lord Jesus, as dawn follows the night,  
Our hearts long to greet you, as roses the light,  
Salvation, draw near us our vision engage.  
One candle is lit for the hope of the age.**

With this type of spiritual grounding to our celebration of the Christmas season, we have more freedom in dealing with the pressures that the season can bring to bear upon us. We are free to give gifts to one another that reflect these four core values, perhaps through giving gifts of artistry and craftsmanship, or through gifts that support people's abilities to sustain themselves in impoverished circumstances. Many from our church have done this already by taking part in the **Alternative Gift Market**, especially in supporting the SERRV and Heifer International tables sponsored by our congregation.

We also have more freedom to acknowledge that the season is not about "happiness," as the commercial side of Christmas emphasizes. There is room to acknowledge that the Christmas season can contain the dimension of grief and sadness, as we remember friends and family who are no longer with us. This year, we are supporting the efforts of St. Barnabas Episcopal in offering a **Blue Christmas Worship Service** on Sunday, December 18, at 4:00 p.m. One of the most meaningful parts of this type of service is the lighting of the candles in memory of loved ones. Also, we are tentatively thinking about offering a workshop on "Coping with Grief during the Holidays" on Tuesday evening, December 13, at 7:00 p.m.

As we go through the days and weeks of Advent together, there is a spiritually-nourished joy that rises up in us, that comes to fruition at our **Christmas Eve Services at 5:30 and 8:00 p.m.** we all greatly look forward to those gatherings and our choirs and participants in the pageant help us to remember with joy the great story of Jesus' birth! Because Christmas Day is on a Sunday this year, we will also have a short, simple service on that day, emphasizing singing our hymns of joy. May you have a blessed Advent and Christmas Season!



## Choir Notes

The season of Joy, Peace, Hope and Love is upon us. I have a former student, now fifty and still a happy person. During this time of year when all around is dark and gloomy, she brightens up her day by putting extra lights on the tree. She makes an effort each day to be pleasant to each person that she meets, and she always has a smile. During this season which is often stressful for many families as well as for those who are alone, perhaps we each could make an effort to be a little nicer to each other, light another candle, say a gentle word, and offer a greeting of peace to all those that we meet. Then we may all truly experience the joy of the season.

As we come to the end of the year, the choirs will be very busy in December. Choir Sunday on December 11 will be a service of lessons and carols with many new Christmas songs mixed in with traditional congregational carol singing. The Children's Choir will sing for the 5:30 Christmas Eve service and the Senior Choir will provide music for the 8:00 service. There will be no Senior Choir rehearsal on December 22 or 29. Regular Thursday rehearsals will resume on January 4; 6:00 for Bell Choir and 7:00 for Senior Choir.

I wish for all of you a very happy and joyful Advent, Christmas and New Year holiday and good health in the coming year.

See ya in church, Howard



## Couples' Club

All couples in the church are invited to attend the meetings of the Couples' Club. Any member of the church is invited to attend for a program which interests them. Our next meeting will be on Friday, January 13, 6:00 p.m. Following our covered-dish dinner, Carol Chittenden, owner of Eight Cousins Bookstore—the last bookstore in Falmouth—will discuss “The Bookstore—Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.” Carol will also offer suggestions for books to read during our long frosty winter (or while on vacation in the sunny south). Sign up on the clipboard on the Opportunity Table to bring a salad, casserole, or dessert. Join us for a pleasant evening with your church family.



All members of the church are invited to attend the Book Discussion meetings whether it is once for discussion of a particular book, or on a regular basis. However, if you plan to attend, you should call the hostess at least three days before the meeting or sign up on the clipboard on the Opportunity Table. Meetings are held in the evening, usually on the second Tuesday of the month. Our next meeting will be Tuesday, January 10, 7:00-9:00 p.m. at the home of Bette West (508-457-9860). We will discuss *Dreams of Joy* by Lisa See.

## Women's Union

There will be no meeting of the Wednesday Morning Circle in December. Please plan to attend the Christmas Fair on December 3.

Our next business meeting will be Wednesday, January 11, 2012, at 11:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. Following the meeting, we will car pool to the Coonamessett Inn for lunch (separate checks). In late December there will be a sign up sheet on the Opportunity Table in the lobby of Fellowship Hall.

The Interfaith tea and program was another great success! There were over 150 attendees representing 16 churches plus one synagogue. Our thanks to Jo Ann Coleman and her committee and Marilyn Sanborn, program chairman, for arranging to have us entertained with “Colors in Song” by Stephanie Miele, Bob Schneider, and John Wall.

Our thanks also to Fran Mitchell for the lovely clothing she chose for our Salvation Army's “Dress-a-Doll” program. Thank you from Fran to those who so generously donated items for the Emerson House “Stocking Stuffer” program.

## In Memoriam

Phyllis G. Beers



# Church School Crier

## November to Remember

The Church School program enjoyed an excellent November and as we prepare as a church community to celebrate the birth of our Savior, we can't help but look back at the great month and to continue to give thanks.

The Youth Group kicked off its first annual "Year of Giving" project on November 20 at the Falmouth Service Center. The kids and their families joined with the community-at-large to help with the labor-intensive, yet joyful, task of organizing and preparing all the donated food and clothing items. It was an eye-opener to many of us who never completely appreciated the "middle men" who handle all the collected items before they are distributed to those in need.

Along those lines and peeking ahead, the Youth Group will meet on December 11 to discuss ways in which each individual can give back to the community on a deep, personal level. Kids help remind us every day that seemingly little acts of kindness are at the very core of any tight-knit community.

We who are involved in the daily management of the Church School want to thank the incredibly talented and dedicated volunteers who lead the weekly lessons in the school. The lessons are rich in spiritual lessons, but the teachers bring them alive and make them accessible to our children and, for that, we are all deeply grateful.

### *This just in...*

Turns out that the game of curling is easy to play. However, it is extremely difficult to play WELL! Dan Silver was fortunate enough to represent the Church School at the November 19 charity curling event and enjoyed his foray into the world of curling. The feeling of community involvement and camaraderie, all in the name of raising money for important charitable work, made the event an enormous success, actual game results notwithstanding!

### *Red Sox Swap*

Okay, in truth, the December 11 Youth Group will include a "Yankee Swap," so I will not quibble with the questionable naming of this fun event any further. However, the kids will be treated to the gift that keeps on giving with this group, the pleasure of each others' company. What an enjoyable collection of young kids! There will be yummy treats as well.

### *Christmas is coming!*

Which means, of course, that the kids involved in the teen program all the way down through the youngest school-aged children will be involved in the Christmas Pageant during the early service on Christmas Eve. With all due respect to Charlie Brown, the true meaning of Christmas is understood through this performance marking the miracle of the birth of Jesus.

ANY child who would like to participate in the service that evening in any one of the many, many capacities that feature both "out front" and "behind-the-scenes" opportunities are encouraged to contact Dan Silver at [dksilver@comcast.net](mailto:dksilver@comcast.net) in the next few weeks. Every child who wants to participate will be given a role in which he/she is comfortable.

### *Keep doing what you're doing!*

The Teen Program continues to meet every Sunday (when Church School is in session) in the teen room. Many issues are discussed, of course, but the theme that we keep coming back to is that our teens are doing an excellent job of managing their decisions in their lives. Nobody is perfect, of course, but we should all be very proud of the way in which the teenagers associated with First Congregational Church comport themselves in a commendable manner, and they are truly reaping the rewards of lives well-lived. Congratulations to them and their parents!

## *Year-end financial matters...*

With the end of the calendar year, comes the necessity to take care of many financial matters. We hope this information will help you in your year-end financial obligations to the church.

For those requesting pledge envelopes for 2012, we hope they will be available by the third week in December in Fellowship Hall. Each box will have a label on the interior of the flap detailing your pledge for 2012. For those persons NOT requesting envelopes, a letter will be provided which will contain the detail of your 2012 pledge. We ask that you check these labels carefully and report ANY ERRORS to the church office. While we try our best, it is always possible an entry error might have occurred and we need accurate numbers for the budget, so don't be bashful about pointing out inaccuracies.

The last day for accepting 2011 pledge payments will be Friday, December 30, 2011, by NOON. A deposit will be made that afternoon. Any payment received after that time will be held until 2012 and credited on your 2012 pledge statement as a "Previous year's pledge payment." If you have any questions about the balance due on your 2011 pledge, please call the church office at 508-548-3700. Office hours are 9-12 and 1-4, Monday through Friday. (We would encourage you to wait until after December 3, as Martha is always very busy the week before the Christmas Fair and is often unable to answer the phone or promptly return messages.)

Pledge statements for 2011 will be prepared as soon after January 1, 2012, as humanly possible, usually by the second or third week in January. Pledge statements are made available in Fellowship Hall and remain available until April 15, at which time they are destroyed. If you need your statement for tax purposes, you may pick them up in the hall or call the office and request that it be mailed to you. **Pledge statements are not automatically mailed out;** we discovered years ago that the majority of our parishioners do not need them and, at 44 cents each, it's a huge cost to mail them.



## *New procedure for altar-table flowers...*

On January 1, 2012, a new procedure for providing flowers for our Sunday altar-table will go into affect. This change has been necessitated by the shifting of responsibilities to the church office rather than a committee of volunteers as well as several occasions when flowers were forgotten to be ordered or miscommunication with florists occurred. The church has contracted with Allen's House of Flowers to provide flowers every Sunday at a cost of \$40 each Sunday. The size of the bouquets will reflect a retail price of \$50-60, with the church being given a price consideration. The church will pay Allen's and donors will reimburse the church. As openings occur in the schedule, they will be advertised in the Sunday bulletin on a first-come-first-served basis. Also, if someone wishes to give flowers on a specific date and the altar-table flowers are already committed for that date, flowers can always be placed in the narthex at the entrance to the sanctuary and acknowledgement made in the bulletin.

Martha will call previous year's donors approximately one month prior to establish if they wish to donate the flowers again. If the donors wish to continue, all they need to do is send a check to the church for \$40. Personal acknowledgements will continue in the bulletins as donors wish. Donors will also be able to specify color schemes/flower types for their flowers. They may also request larger arrangements if they wish to pay more than the standard price.

Those parishioners who have their "favorite florist" may still have their flowers done by that florist, but the donor will have to order the flowers themselves and made arrangements for the flowers to be delivered, as many of the florists do not have a key to the church. If you have questions about the new procedure, please don't hesitate to call Martha at 508-548-3700.





## Stewardship

As the sights, sounds, and smells of Thanksgiving fade, and are replaced by those of the Christmas Season, we reflect on our many blessings and are reminded that it is better to give than to receive. And you, as a congregation, did just that in our pledge drive for 2012. Our Pledge Sunday

Luncheon was packed with people enjoying tasty food items, submitting their pledges, and still buzzing over Levi Adams' stirring Stewardship message on Sunday, October 23. Over 130 people participated in the luncheon on a day of threatening severe weather and the 71 pledges received that day was a very good total. They started off our drive with a bang! Thank you all!

While we have received the majority of next year's pledges by this time, our stewardship obligations are not yet complete, as we continue to lag behind a bit on payments of our 2011 pledges. There are only a few weeks left to fulfill our 2011 obligations. It's still a little early to speculate what our financial status will be as we enter the

new year, but we expect that our 2012 pledge total is not going to completely put us on the black side of the ledger, so be sure to complete your current pledge!

As we try to attract top-notch candidates for our ministerial opening, we know they want a church that is not only carried, vibrant, and vital, but also one with a sound financial base. We may have been here for more than 300 years, but what will it look like in another 10 years? A prospective minister will have concerns over the trend in our finances over the last few years. How we address those concerns may be a key to our future.

The Stewardship Committee, in keeping with our desire to be good stewards of the church as a whole, will work with numerous other groups in 2012 to attempt to increase our membership (a key component), attract younger families, have a viable spending plan and alternatives, make efficient use of church property, and continue our outreach and community involvement. We are only six people, but are committed to the future of our church with all our heart and soul. Please come along on the journey with us. May your Christmas season be blessed.

See you in church!

## Christian Outreach

The Falmouth Service Center will have its Annual Gift Distribution from December 20 through December 22. New, unwrapped toys can be dropped off at our December 11 Sunday church service. The following items are especially needed: \$15 gift certificates for teens (gas cards, CVS, TJ Maxx, The 99...), sports items, arts & crafts kits for ages 8-12, items for older teens (DVD's video games, boxed book sets, watches, movie passes), educational toys for toddlers; games & puzzles for the family, new books for all ages, wrapping paper, tape, ribbons, bows. Gift cards can be placed in the offering plate. Boxes for toys will be in the narthex.

Help is needed for the Children's Clothing Project on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. Please contact Anne Dyer or Jan Goodell if you are interested.

Disbursements for November were to Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Cape Cod Human Services, Child & Family Services, Fairwinds, Gosnold, and Upper Cape Chaplaincy.

## Year-to-date Pledge Collection ~ 10/31/11

83.3% of the year completed

	Pledged	Received	Percent
Operating	\$235,049.00	\$188,535.15	80.62%
Outreach	\$ 33,247.00	\$ 27,318.50	82.92%

## Annual Reports

Deadline for submission of annual reports from Boards and Committees of the church, staff, and standing social committees will be Friday, January 6. Early submissions are ALWAYS appreciated. Reports can be emailed to [info@firstcongfalmouth.org](mailto:info@firstcongfalmouth.org) or brought in to the church office. If you have a question about whether or not you are to submit a report, feel free to contact Martha at 508-548-3700.

## *Church Council*

After some opening remarks and a prayer, our interim Minister, Steve Alspach, went on to present his report. He began by recalling some of the different avenues used to bring our church into a growing experience of God's love such as the U2charist service, the Jazz Sunday service, and Environmental Sunday. The "Inspirational Breather" program on Tuesday mornings and evenings has had about 25 participants of whom 12 are regulars. In addition, Pastor Steve has been visiting older members of the church as well as those in nursing care facilities and the hospital. Looking ahead, he reviewed the Sundays of December, with the first Sunday in Advent having occurred on November 27.

Next the Council gave its attention to the Treasurer's report. John Caspole informed us that, with 83% of the year passed, 81% of the pledged amount has been paid; 80% of payroll and expenses has been met, and the year-to-date deficit has been decreased by \$4,926.00. In short, October was a good month.

Moving on, the Council heard from John Honey, chair of the Board of Deacons, of the plan on which the Deacons have been working to strengthen and improve pastoral care in our church as we seek to "more intentionally live out the commandment to 'love one another.' (John 13:14)" The plan arises out of the recognition that, given the size of the constituencies of our church, the senior minister cannot meet all of the needs of the group while at the same time leading and developing programs in the church and reaching out to gain new members. Working with Pastor Steve, the Deacons have created a neighborhood plan. Dividing the town into four sections which in turn are divided into several neighborhoods, the plan anticipates a coordinator for each section who would in turn be working with a leader in each of his neighborhood, to gather them together to know each other, and to become aware of their needs. It is the intent of this plan that neighborhood leaders would keep area coordinators informed and that they in turn would keep the plan supervisors informed. Although not yet ready for implementation, initial approaches have identified three possible section leaders and four or five persons in each neighborhood as possible leaders. The plan elicited good discussion and a favorable response.

Reports from the several committees and boards were presented. The Music Committee confirmed that the Occidental College Chorus would present a concert on May 22. We learned from the Outreach Committee report that our Confirmation Class's presentation of Heifer Project at the Alternative Gift Fair was very successful. The Women's Union tea was also a very successful affair with 16 churches and our local synagogue represented at it. The Deacons, in addition to work on the Neighborhood Plan, are investigating the possibility of a worship service on Saturdays. Among the considerations of the Christian Education Committee were two items of concern. The first was scheduling of a fire drill to acquaint students with their exits. The second was reminding parents of children that, in an emergency, they should go to the fenced-in area at the rear of Fellowship Hall to find their children.

H. Alfred Allenby, Editor

## *Deacons*

The Christmas season is upon us. We welcomed it this past Sunday with our traditional Thanksgiving service. Our thanks go to Evelyn Johnson for her leadership in this service and to all the member of the congregation who played the key roles. We look forward to our Christmas Fair on December 3 and the other activities of the season including lighting of the green, caroling at Nobska Light, the Christmas Parade, and our Christmas Eve services. Enjoy the season and have a Merry Christmas.

We are very grateful to our Junior Deacons and other members of our youth group. Their food drive resulted in a donation of two and a half shopping cars of food for the Service Center's Thanksgiving meals.

John Honey

## *Carol of the Epiphany*

Words by John Bell

I sought him dressed in finest clothes,  
where money talks and status grows;  
but power and wealth he never chose:  
it seemed he lived in poverty.

I sought him in the safest place,  
remote from crime or cheap disgrace;  
but safety never knew his face:  
it seemed he lived in jeopardy.

Then, in the streets, we heard the word  
which seemed, for all the world, absurd:  
that those who could no gifts afford  
were entertaining Christ the Lord.

And so, distinct from all we'd planned,  
among the poorest of the land,  
we did what few might understand:  
we touched God in a baby's hand.

## *Online Messenger Supplement*

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### *Church Calendar:*

Our Church Calendar, for our online readers, is now on our website where it is always up-to-date. [Click here](#) to access the calendar.

First Congregational Church of Falmouth  
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Falmouth, MA 02540  
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*Everyone is Welcome!*

### *The Messenger*

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The First Congregational Church  
of Falmouth, UCC  
68 Main Street  
Falmouth, MA 02540  
(508) 548-3700  
(508) 548-3714 (fax)

### *Sunday Schedule*

10:00 a.m.  
Worship Service  
and Church School

### *Our Staff*

#### **Minister**

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**Director of Christian Education**  
Lisa McGillicuddy  
cedirector@firstcongfalmouth.org

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**Director of Music**  
Howard Whitmore  
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#### **Organist**

Pat Crews  
organist@firstcongfalmouth.org

#### **Sexton**

Rick Hendricks

### *Elected Officials of the Church*

**Moderator**—Tom Ryan  
**Clerk**—Marilou Whitmore  
**Treasurer**—John Caspole

#### **Board/Committee**

##### **Chairmen...**

**Trustees**—Walter Slaboden  
**Deacons**—John Honey  
**Christian Education**—  
Joe Jarjoura  
**Christian Outreach**—  
Sue Anttila/Carol Lyons  
**Music**—Gail Petersen  
**Stewardship**—Bob Johnson  
**Nominating**—Tom Haynes  
**Reception**—Marge Rugen

*WE'RE ON THE WEB!*  
[WWW.FIRSTCONGFALMOUTH.ORG](http://WWW.FIRSTCONGFALMOUTH.ORG)