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The Weekly Chronicle

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FROM PASTOR JOEL

Dear Friends in Christ,

Every year, in the middle of Advent, I write a letter reminding you that December is the month when more guests decide to go "church shopping" than any other. The second most likely time to meet newcomers in worship is whatever month Easter falls in. The pattern is obvious. For anyone baptized and raised in a Christian congregation, Christmas and Easter still feel magnetic. Both days still create a powerful "pull" that draws newcomers to the doors of local churches.

Most pastors have figured out that ridiculing "CEO's" - Christmas and Easter Only - is a losing strategy if hospitality is the gift we want to share with our newest neighbors. Over the years, I have come to see Christmas, Easter, and the beginning of the school year as gifts from God that the Holy Spirit still uses to draw Christians who have slipped out of the orbit of a local church to congregations that want to love them, nurture their faith, and invest their gifts in loving service.

As we get ready for the Sunday before Christmas and Christmas Eve, let me remind you that we all have important work to do. Preachers must prepare the best sermons we can create - messages of hope that are faithful to Scripture and meaningful to contemporary listeners. Musicians must also be faithful to their disciplines, investing the time and talents God has given to them to learn the pieces chosen as musical gifts of

love for God and neighbor alike. Ushers must "ush" for the glory of God. Acolytes, flower arrangers, communion preparers, and even those who copy and collate worship materials must do their holy work with passion, conviction, and joy.

Church growth gurus constantly claim that first-time guests already know, within ten minutes of walking through a church's front door, if they will return or not. First impressions are huge. And we make them only once. There are few second chances. But, remember, the biggest part of most first impressions is formed before the choir sings and the pastor preaches. In other words, most people know soon after finding a seat whether this church or that feels like a "good fit."

To me, that suggests that every person who has pledged to support Sudbury UMC by their "prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness" must also bring their A-Game to Christmas worship. When you see someone who might be a first-timer seated close to the pew where you typically sit, do your best to make him or her feel welcome. Do not ask, "Are you new?" Do not say, "I don't recognize you." Experiment with a greeting like this: "I've been trying to learn the names of all the people who sit near me in church and I wish I could remember yours." Wearing your name tag is also a good idea. Your name tag announces, "I am ready to be called by name. I am here to help you in whatever way I can."

A day or so after Thanksgiving, Wendy and I received a post card from Sudbury UMC. On one side, the definition of Christmas was written in old-fashioned Smith Corona type (that's a manual typewriter, for those who have always typed on a computer keyboard). On the other, a list of Advent and Christmas worship services invited new neighbors to come and check us out. Several of this month's first-time guests have mentioned receiving those post cards to me. If you got one, too, think of it as a reminder to join another Advent Conspiracy. Let's work together to make the holidays as inspirational and invitational as they can be when we're all "breathing the same air." That's what a conspiracy is! Face to face in our huddle, we all breathe the same Spirit!

And, by the way, let's remember to welcome our guests with optimism and hope because it is obvious that our conspiracy is working! Attendance and membership are up! And 2016, with 22 new members is, for the second year in a row, Sudbury UMC's growing-est year in this decade. Thanks, dear friends, for all you have done and for all you will do to reflect the light of Christ this weekend and next.

See you in church,

Pastor Joel

Prayer Concerns & Celebrations

Prayer Concerns on Sunday, December 11

- † Jen and Dave Helgeson request prayers for their aunt, Susie, who is 53 years old and has Down Syndrome and Alzheimer's. She was moved to a nursing home with dementia care in September. She has pneumonia, is not eating and is now receiving comfort care.
- † Jan Carvalho requests healing prayers for her younger sister, Jacquie Meyen, who has been hospitalized for several weeks, much of it in intensive care.

Prayer Celebrations on Sunday, December 11

- † The Bockwegs celebrate the fact that Abby was fortunate enough to have the best singers and organist around to serenade her with a rousing chorus of *Happy Birthday* during last Saturday's pageant practice! Abby turned 9 on Monday!
- † The Outreach Commission celebrates two recent Advent Conspiracy events:
 - 16 SUMCers including singers and musicians, Russ Doughty and Rob Hammerton, joined the residents at the Deaconess for our annual Christmas caroling on December 4th.
 - 16 SUMCers joined 27 residents at Musketaquid for the annual Christmas caroling and party. There was lots of singing, sharing of Christmas stories and eating of many goodies!

Dates to Keep in Mind

- December 18: The Barn Sing, 4:00 p.m., Hawes Hall
- December 20: Deadline for the December 22 edition of The Chronicle
- December 21: Cancer and Caregiver Support Group
- December 21: The Blue Christmas Service, 7:00 p.m., Sanctuary
- December 24: The Christmas Pageant, 4:00 p.m.
- December 24: The Love Feast, 6:00 p.m.
- December 24: Christmas Eve Worship, 8:00 p.m.
- December 25: Christmas Sunday Worship, 9:30 a.m.

The Chronicle will not be published on December 29th.

The Barn Sing

Warm up your singing voice, bring your friends and family, and come to Hawes Hall for Christmas carols and holiday cheer on Sunday afternoon, December 18, at 4:00 p.m. We'll sing your favorite Christmas carols, holiday songs, and hymns and break for hot cocoa, treats, and crafts & games for younger kids and the Youth Group. Wear your favorite Christmas sweater, tie, socks, or other festive apparel! Please bring a nut-free snack, sweet or salty, to share, as you are able. Coffee and hot cocoa will be provided.

A Special Opportunity for Worship

Blue Christmas Service

Pastor Joel Guillemette and Pastor Tom O'Brien from Memorial Congregational Church will lead a special Christmas service on Wednesday, December 21, at 7:00 p.m. in our Sanctuary.

The Christmas season is not always easy. The parties, shopping, carols, and lights can be overwhelming in their abundance. It may also be a difficult time of year for those who have suffered a loss or struggle with sadness.

This service is intended to give space to anyone who would like to get away from the hustle of the Christmas season. We will seek God's peace in the midst of the chaos through story, song, candle-lighting, prayer and silence.

Everyone is welcome.

Christmas Worship Services

Christmas Eve Pageant,

Children, parents and grandparents, church members and community neighbors, young, old and in between, all find new surprises in the story of Jesus' birth when our children sing the carols we love, reenact the Gospel stories, and dance with joy during this exuberant and celebratory service.

Christmas Eve Lovefeast Service, 6:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve Lovefeast Service, 6:00 p.m.: This family-friendly service is becoming a beloved tradition at Sudbury UMC. Celebrate Christ's birth during an uplifting and joyous service that includes cookies and cider, familiar carols accompanied by a brass band, prayers, and an inspirational message from the Pastor. The service ends with everyone holding beautiful beeswax candles while singing "Joy to the World."

Christmas Eve Traditional Worship, 8:00 p.m.

Worshippers who attend the 8 o'clock service will sing holiday carols, hear Pastor Joel's sermon, "Be Careful What You Ask For," and celebrate Holy Communion. Special music is always a highlight of this traditional Christmas Eve observance. Finally, worshippers will light their individual candles while singing "Silent Night" in a darkened sanctuary.

Christmas Day, Sunday Morning at 9:30 a.m.

Christmas is on Sunday this year, and we welcome everyone to a Sunday morning celebration. We will sing, we will hear a sermon by the Rev. Dr. Samuel Wells, "God in Pajamas," and we will share Communion while celebrating the Incarnation.

CONNECT

Sudbury UMC's Cancer and Caregiver Support Prayer Group

Sudbury UMC's Cancer and Caregiver Support Prayer Group meets on the third Wednesday of every month. This month's meeting will take place on Wednesday,

December 21 at 6 p.m. in the O'Reilly Room at Sudbury UMC. Those who wish, may move across the hall to the Sanctuary to attend the Blue Christmas Service at 7 p.m.

Cancer patients, cancer survivors, and caregivers are all welcome, as the purpose of the group is to provide prayer and support to those who have had cancer touch their lives. Come and share your experiences and feelings in a safe, confidential, caring, non-hospital environment.

The SUMC Cancer and Caregiver Support Prayer Group is an initiative of the United Methodist Church and the SUMC Health Ministries Commission. The group is open to all faiths and communities surrounding Sudbury. For more information contact us at SUMC.MA.Cancer.Care.Group@gmail.com

Talk to a Stephen Minister

Stephen Ministers can provide a listening, supportive and confidential presence. Each Sunday after worship a Stephen Minister is available to listen and to pray with you. If you would like to have a Stephen Minister "walk" with you on a regular weekly, every other week basis, please contact Pastor Joel. No concern is too small to share with a Stephen Minister.

December 18: Diane Hammond

Advent Conspiracy: Love All

Thus far, we have talked about Worshipping Fully, Spending Less and Giving More. The fourth tenet of the Advent Conspiracy is to Love All! God gave us the perfect gift at Christmas - his presence through his only Son. God's Christmas list included everyone. And when God's people serve the poor in humble, generous ways, the story of Jesus is told again and again. The poor in our world will be touched by God through how we choose to celebrate Christmas. Expand your Christmas list this year to include those who really need your presence. We are the ones who have been given this extraordinary gift of life with God, and now we are called to enter this broken world and love differently. When we do, Christmas can still change the world!



- **Christmas Party at Pathways Family Shelter:** Celebrate Christmas on Saturday, December 17th (4:00-5:30 pm) with our friends at Pathways Family Shelter. We will host a party at the shelter (248 Edgell Rd. in Framingham). We will help the kids make Christmas cards and decorate cookies, share some tasty treats and the spirit of Christmas. Come meet our friends. There will be plenty of food. The more the merrier!!! Pathways has been a mission partner with SUMC for over a decade.
- **A Kinder, Gentler Flash Mob at Sudbury Farms:** On Sunday, December 18th (2:30 - 3:30 pm) we will gather outside the doors of Sudbury Farms Grocery Store (439 Boston Post Rd. Sudbury) and sing carols to folks going shopping. Last year, we had folks from other congregations and even some shoppers stop and join us. Dress festively, invite your friends...join the MOB! It's a BLAST!!!
- **Open Table Food Pantry:** On Monday, December 19 (4:30pm), come join fellow SUMC'ers to stock shelves, visit with clients, or be a personal shopper for a new friend. Patty Helsingius and John Iberg are the Head Pantriers! (The Coolidge School, 12 Bancroft St., Maynard)

Call or text Brad Stayton at 617-460-3816 if you have questions about how you can join the conspiracy to put Christ back in Christmas!

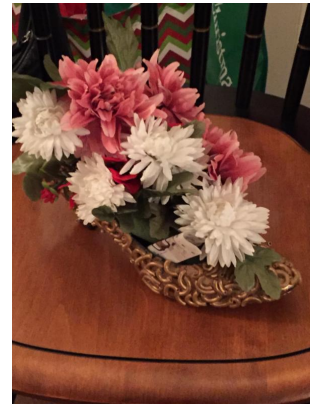
Were You There? The Women's Fellowship Gathered

Women's Fellowship at the Hosmer House

What a great time was had by all at the "Not So Silent Auction" at the Hosmer House in Sudbury on December 5, 2016. There was a lot of laughter and fellowship. After 24 years of having the auction, we have donated over \$33,000 to Scholarship Funds at Lincoln/Sudbury High School.

Thank you to all who attended and enjoyed bidding on the unknown.

Do You Recognize the Shoe??????



John Iberg's Report from Last Week's Advent Conspiracy

On Saturday, 27 guests and 14 SUMC members gathered to share presence on Saturday at Musketahquid Village to sing Christmas songs plus "Rudolph, the red-nose reindeer," a return engagement of a Rap version of "The Night Before Christmas" followed by remembrances, Christmas Trivia and many desserts filled the late afternoon. The time went by much too quickly. Chris Straub, the official SUMC dessert taster, said all was delicious and he's looking forward to next year.

On Sunday, 18 SUMC folk including the three most talented musicians - Kevin Murphy, Rob Hammerton and Russ Doughty, strolled the meeting areas of Sudbury Pines singing both Christmas Carols and popular favorites such as Frosty and Rudolf. The staff remembered prior year experiences and joined in the festive singing. One thing really worth noting was that a number staff members mentioned the "joy" that SUMC'ers brought with them.

Thanks to all for joining in the true spirit of Advent Conspiracy.



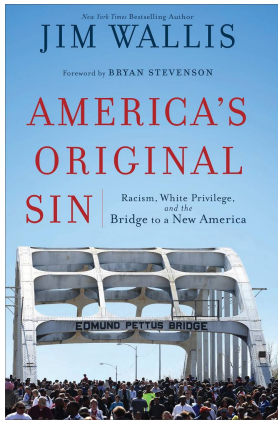
SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social Justice Book Groups

This year the Social Justice commission will lead book discussions on fiction and non-fiction literature dealing with critical social justice issues. Please join us as we hold our

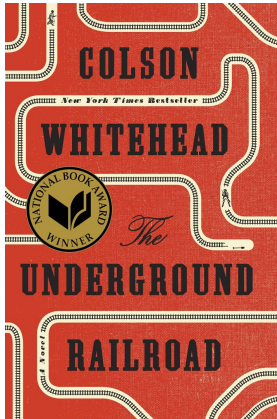
first book group meeting in January followed by another in February. We are also asking for book recommendations for future group discussions.

America's Original Sin by Jim Wallis - Monday, January 23rd 7:00 pm



As people of faith, how do we move beyond racial categories to become unified in the "body of Christ"? How do we restructure a justice system that is intrinsically biased against African Americans and Latinos? How do we welcome and treat "the stranger" in our land? This book raises these and other important issues that we look forward to discussing in January.

The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead - Monday, February 20th 7:00 pm



As the 2016 National Book Award winner for fiction, the Underground Railroad chronicles a young slave's experiences as she travels north to freedom. Critics agree that "The Underground Railroad is at once a kinetic adventure tale of one woman's ferocious will to escape the horrors of bondage and a shattering, powerful meditation on the history we all share."

Where

Book Groups will meet at 22 Summer St, Sudbury, home of Moira and Leon Lataille. Should you have any questions, feel free to call Moira at 978.443.2568.

Christmas List Note: Books are the perfect gift!

Three copies of America's Original Sin are available in the Church Office. Please make check out to SUMC for \$12.00.

LEARN

Church School

It has been absolutely wonderful to see so many children and families in church during Advent! With Pageant Practices, Wednesday Soup Suppers, Advent Conspiracy outings, and Sunday mornings, there are so many ways to participate. Church School classrooms grow into communities during this time of year, as our church family spends much of this season together. Taking part in our Advent programming is a great way for new and familiar faces to learn together and to make connections. Whether this is your family's 1st or 24th Christmas at SUMC, there is always room in our Inn, and something new to

discover. We're moving closer to Christmas, but there is still plenty of Advent programming left to join in on!

This Sunday, December 18th, children and youth will continue to learn about the stories of Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus. Come and explore! Church School will take place with regular age/grade groupings and locations: 3-5 year olds in preschool room 4 in the Sunny Hill wing. 1st-2nd grade, 3rd-5th and 6th-8th in their classrooms below the sanctuary. After worship, please pick up your children in their classrooms to ensure that everyone makes it back to their families safely. See you in church!

Youth

We are excited for the Youth Christmas Party, hosted by the Simon's at 53 Pine St, Sudbury on December 18 from 6:30-8:30pm! We are so thankful for the Simons for hosting and cannot wait for delicious food, games, fellowship, and White Elephant gift exchange. Hoping your Advent season is full of joy!

Blessings,

Anthony

ADULT EDUCATION

The Upper Room

The Upper Room booklets are available in the narthex. Help yourself to a free copy for your daily devotional readings. Or access it online by clicking here:

<http://devotional.upperroom.org/>

Thursday Bible Study Welcomes Newcomers

Sudbury UMC's Thursday Bible study group welcomes new participants. Meetings take place at 10:00 a.m. on Thursdays at the Panera Bread located at 21 Andrew Avenue in Wayland's Town Center, just two miles from Sudbury UMC! Each week's focus text is next Sunday's preaching passage. Remember to bring your Bible and a few bucks for something warm to sip.

We will look ahead to the passages being preached during worship on:

- December 18: Matthew 1:18-25
- December 24: Luke 2:1-20
- December 25: John 1:1-14

Health Ministries

What is Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)?

As winter approaches and the days get shorter, many people suffer with a form of depression called seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Although SAD isn't totally

understood, it is a real illness with real symptoms that vary in frequency and intensity. Symptoms can include:

- Sleep Problems - Desire to oversleep, disturbed sleep or difficulty staying awake
- Lethargy - A feeling of fatigue and inability to carry out normal routines
- Overeating - Craving sugary or starchy foods
- Social Problems - Irritability and desire to avoid social situations
- Anxiety - Tension and inability to tolerate stress
- Loss of Libido - Decreased interest in sex or physical contact
- Mood Changes - Extremes in mood and/or short periods of hypomania

One of the most effective treatments is light exposure. For mild symptoms, spending time outside and a good brisk walk may be enough. For more severe symptoms a light treatment called phototherapy may be helpful as it suppresses the brain's secretion of melatonin. People who think they may have SAD or any mental health issue should discuss their symptoms with a mental health professional.

How Faith Communities Can Respond

During the darkest nights of the winter, many faith traditions celebrate religious holidays. With SAD, as with all chronic mental illnesses and normal holiday stress, our faith communities can be intentional about finding ways to encourage a healthy winter holiday season that focuses on our faith, our families and our friends.

Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ who will become the "light of the world." The eight-day Jewish celebration of Hanukkah is known as the Festival of Light. It reminds people of the miracle that re-kindled the Temple menorah light at a time of darkness and despair.

People living with SAD do not need to remain in the dark. SAD is a real and common disorder that can be effectively treated.

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
on those who lived in a land of deep shadow a light has shone. -Isaiah 9:2*

Mental Health Ministries: www.MentalHealthMinistries.net

GIVE

Close the Gap - Support "Pave the Way +"

On November 20, Sudbury UMC's financial leaders launched "Pave the Way +" to close a \$100,000 gap between the \$2.5 million pledged for this year's renovations and a 4% overage that emerged when unexpected but necessary improvements were discovered. Can you help by making a first-time pledge to PTW+ or by making a supplemental pledge? Please use one of the cards in the pew racks to indicate your level of support by this coming Sunday, December 11.

A Note from the Staff Parish Relations Committee

With Christmas approaching, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee invites you to contribute to a special gift for Sudbury UMC's staff. This is a wonderful opportunity for our congregation to recognize this special group. Kindly make your check payable to SUMC and write Staff Christmas Gift on the memo line. Then place your gift in the offering. Thanks for your generosity.

Volunteer

It's that time of the year... December services, those important days that we celebrate together. It's time to take extra care in recording the services!

Kevin reports that important elements of our system are now back in their regular places and are ready to make new recordings. If you have done this before, welcome back! If you have never used our gear to help with SUMC audio projects, this would be a good time to get involved and learn a new task or two. SUMC teenagers are encouraged to consider "learning the ropes", as well.

Let Kevin Murphy know if you'd like to help! kevin@sudbury-umc.org

SUNNY HILL PRESCHOOL

Sunny Hill Preschool is considering opening an additional 2.9 program after the December break. The drop-off program would run on Monday and Wednesday mornings from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. There will be no more than 10 children to two teachers in the class. If you are interested or would like more information and your child is age eligible during the first few months of 2017 please contact us! 978-443-2627 director@sunnyhillpreschool.org or office@sunnyhillpreschool.org.



Plan Ahead

Lenten Booklet for 2017: Making All Things New

As we announced in last week's edition of The Chronicle, there will be a Lenten Booklet in 2017. Although we will not need as many writers as in the past, we still need your help. The theme is Making All Things New. We plan to take meaningful devotions from the past--perhaps one from each booklet--and add them to those you write today. Nancy Sweeney has begun working on the booklet already and would welcome NEW devotions anytime from NOW until mid-January. At that time Patty Helsingius and Ann Hamilton will take over to complete the booklet and have it ready by the last week in February.

Please let Nancy know if you are willing to write a devotion, even if you don't plan to write until after the holidays. Here are some simple instructions. Send a devotion to Nancy at nsweeneyj@aol.com. Try to limit your devotion to one page. Type in 12 point type, use Times New Roman, if possible. The heading should contain a scripture to go with the devotion on the left, title in the middle, and date on the right. We will add the date and, if necessary, a scripture reference.

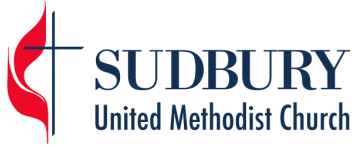
Nancy would love to receive your devotion early. You can e-mail Nancy if you have any questions. If you are new, samples of past booklets are in the office for you to look at. New devotion writers are always welcome. Thanks for considering this opportunity to share with our faith community.

Save the Date

Martin Luther King Celebrations

It's never too early to mark your calendars for the Annual MLK Celebrations held around the state on Monday Jan. 16th 2017 including the annual MLK Breakfast held at the Boston Conference Center and the MLK Breakfast held at the Crowne Plaza in Natick. Stay tuned for details in upcoming editions of The Chronicle. Questions? Contact Moira Lataille@verizon.net.





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Sudbury United Methodist Church | alexandra@sudbury-umc.org | www.sudbury-umc.org