

Sunday Worship In December

Theme:
Love



December 2
 1st Sunday in
 Advent
*God's Love for
 Us*
 Rev. Heike

December 9
 2nd Sunday in
 Advent
*Joseph: Love is
 About Relationships*
 Rev. Susan

December 16
 3rd Sunday in
 Advent
*John the Baptist -
 Tough Love*
 Rev. Susan

December 23
 4th Sunday in
 Advent
*Mary - Is Love
 Enough?*
 Rev. Susan

December 30
 Family Service
*Thoughts on Love
 at Christmas*
 Rev. Susan
 Rev. Heike
 Rev. Jamie

A Message from the Senior Minister - Rev. Susan Cartmell

A lot gets written about the meaning of this season but some of us forget that Christmas was not always this way.

1661-1687 - Christmas was banned in New England. For the first 60 years after the Pilgrims arrived Christmas was banned as a pagan symbol of idolatry.

1687- 1870 Quiet Christmas Observances. In 1680's colonists repealed the laws that forbade Christmas but merrymakers could be prosecuted for disturbing the peace on Christmas Day. People spent a quiet day at home. It was after the Civil War that folks discovered Christmas, as they needed a holiday to lift America's spirits.

1870 - 1945 - For the next 75 years Christmas was a 12-day holiday celebrated between December 25 when Jesus was born and January 6 when the Wise Men arrived to see the baby (Epiphany). For 12 days people enjoyed a break from farm chores, and enjoyed evenings of fiddle music and dancing, after they rolled up the rugs in the living room. Children might get a candy

cane or special treat. In Victorian times husbands received a tie in their stockings, but the main celebrations took place on the days following Christmas.

Advent used to be 4 weeks when people lit candles at church and prepared themselves spiritually for the miracle of Christ's birth. It was after World War II that Christmas became an economic boon to American businesses. That has had an effect on how we celebrate Christmas.

I don't have the answers to the Christmas conundrum we find ourselves in each year, but I think it is ironic that we run ourselves ragged celebrating the birth of the Prince of Peace.

Every Monday Carol Oberle offers yoga in the church at 7 p.m.. It is her gift to you this Advent. It is free. Treat yourself!

Peace - I mean it - peace,
 Susan

Sermons in December

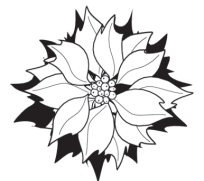
Our theme for December is Love.

We are hoping to really explore love from all angles- and not create a series of Hallmark moments, but keep the theme Biblically connected. We will start the series looking at God's love over time. Then we will examine the Christmas story with an eye for how Joseph and Mary demonstrated love for each other, and why that made such a difference for Jesus. We'll talk about how love can be demanding and what it means when love is hard. Finally we will consider the limits of love.

New Member Sunday

Are you wondering how to join the church? Please let one of the ministers know if you are interested in becoming a member of this community of faith. Each month we have luncheons for new families. Tell Rev. Susan if you would like to get on the list of invitees. We receive new members 4 times a year. The next opportunity for New Members is Sunday Jan. 27th.

CHRISTMAS FLOWER OFFERING ENVELOPES AVAILABLE NOW



We are collecting donations in memory of loved ones for the poinsettias that decorate the church at Christmas time. Christmas Flower Offering envelopes will be available in the church pews or the church office.

Please return envelopes to the office by December 14. After the Christmas Eve services, many of the plants will be given to people in our congregation who are sick, homebound or in need of a little extra attention.

The Christmas Pageant by Rev. Jamie Green

Preparations for our Christmas Pageant, our biggest event of the year, are now underway. I will be directing this year's pageant which features more than 100 costumed performers! Be sure to sign-up for a part in the pageant by December 9th.

Casting sheets are available here: <http://needhamucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/casting-sheet.pdf> or on the Christian Education Bulletin Board. We have lots of space for participants of all ages, from kids to adults. Pageant Rehearsals are on December 16 and 23. Each rehearsal includes lunch for the cast after church in Linden Hall at 11:30am and pageant practice from noon-2pm in the sanctuary.



Christmas Pageant

Dress Rehearsal takes place on December 24 at 2pm followed by a snack break in Fellowship Hall. The Pageant begins at 4pm. Contact me at revjamie@needhamucc.org.

A special Thank You to the Needham Community Theatre for donating the spotlight we will use for the Pageant. Check out their website(www.needhamtheatre.org) for news on their December show - Seussical the Musical.

Energy & Safety Update



As a community of faith we are working hard to be good stewards of our energy consumption. As a church that believes in welcoming everyone, we want everyone to feel welcome in our building, but we also want everyone to feel safe too. You can make a big difference in keeping our building secure and helping our energy efficiency, too.

For energy conservation and safety, we have some new guidelines for our doors.

During the week please use 1 of 3 doors

1. Parking Lot Door for church business, and meetings
2. Noah's Ark Door for Pre-School
3. Center Door (Ground floor on Linden Ave.) for our After

School Program

On Sundays- all our doors will be open for worship, but we encourage you to use one of three doors.

1. Sanctuary Door
2. Parking Lot Door
3. Linden St. Ramp Door for handicapped access.

We have installed a new door bell for the Parking Lot door. In the evenings our doors will be locked at 5 p.m. but we encourage you to use the parking lot door and ring the bell. Someone will let you in. We are asking all committees to post someone at the door for 10 minutes. People who arrive late can use a cell phone to call in.

One more thing everyone can do to save energy in our building - Please be sure the doors are secure behind you when you leave the building. Lots of doors are open when folks leave because they are locked but not secure. You can help to make a difference. Thank you.

FOCUS

Focus is published monthly. Contributions from members and friends of the Church are invited. Please submit materials by e-mail to office@needhamucc.org.

January issue deadline:
Thursday December 20

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Rev. Dr. Paul Clayton,
Pastor Emeritus



Village Fair & Marketplace

VILLAGE FAIR A SUCCESS THANKS TO VOLUNTEER EFFORTS!

The Village Fair was a great success, thanks to many dedicated volunteers who gave generously of their time, talent and treasure. Special thanks to Chris Arren, Diana Conroy, Adele Change, Jennifer Haynes, Fabienne Madsen, The Garden Fence ladies, Jane Brand, Frank Arren, Rev. Heike, Rev. Susan, Rev. Jamie, Bobby DeRegis and the youth groups. More than \$10,000 was raised which will benefit all aspects of the church and its programs and activities. Thank you to all who volunteered, dined and shopped!

Youth Ministry News with Rev. Jamie Green, Youth Minister

Sunday, December 2

No meetings

Sunday, December 9

Christmas Party! Games, caroling, food, and more. Bring a white elephant/yankee swap gift (under \$5) and some Christmas cookies to share! (JH 5-6:30pm, SH 7-8:30pm)

Sunday, December 16

Junior High make Christmas cards and Senior High wrap gifts for the Elizabeth Stone House (JH 5-6:30pm, SH 7-8:30pm)

Tuesday, December 18

3pm- Meet at church to help bring gifts to Elizabeth Stone House

Sunday, December 23

All Youth and Family Christmas Caroling. Meet at church at 4pm.

Sunday, December 30

No meetings

Retreat information:

Senior High Winter Retreat: Jan 4-6 at Round Hearth, Stowe, in Vermont. Leave Needham Friday 3:30pm, arrive Stowe Friday evening. Meals and winter activities on Stow Mountain on Saturday (in addition to downhill and cross country skiing and snowboarding, we will offer: snowshoeing, snowman building, hanging out in the lodge by the fire playing card games and board games, having tons of fun!). Breakfast and worship and leave Stowe on Sunday morning to arrive in Needham by early evening. Total Cost: \$200.00 (plus \$39 for equipment rentals, plus \$39 for lessons). EXTENDED DEADLINE: Need \$50 deposit by Dec. 9th to reserve your spot.

Junior High Winter Retreat: March 1-3 at Cody Outdoor Center in New Hampshire. Leave Needham Friday afternoon, arrive Cody Friday evening. Meals, programming and small groups on Saturday, along with

TUBING at King Pine Mountain. Breakfast, Worship and leave Cody on Sunday to arrive in Needham by mid-afternoon. Total Cost: \$150.00. EXTENDED DEADLINE: Need \$50 deposit by Dec 9th to reserve your spot!

Giving Tree:

There are still ornaments left on the giving tree, representing moms and children from the Elizabeth Stone House, a domestic abuse shelter in Boston. Each ornament will have information about each person's wish list, sizes and preferences. Please take an ornament, purchase 2-3 gifts, and drop off at the church by December 16th. All presents must be new and unwrapped.



Giving Tree - 2012

Christian Education News

Sunday School Calendar

Sun, December 2: Crib/toddler, Pre-K, and 9-12th grade classes at 10am. K-8 meet in chapel at 10am and then join family for communion.

Sun, December 9: Crib/toddler, Pre-K, and 9-12th grade classes at 10am. 7-8th meet in chapel to set up Bible Village. K-6 start in sanctuary, then to chapel, then to workshops: K-1 Games, 2-3 Science, 4-6 Theater.

Sun, December 16: Crib/toddler, Pre-K, and 9-12th grade classes at 10am. 7-8th meet in chapel to set up Bible Village. K-6 start in sanctuary, then to chapel, then to workshops: K-1 Science, 2-3 Theater, 4-6 Games

Sun, December 23: Crib/toddler, Pre-K, and 9-12th grade classes at 10am. 7-8th meet in chapel to set up Bible Village. K-6 start in sanctuary, then to chapel, then to workshops: K-1 Theater, 2-3 Games, 4-6 Science.



Advent Workshop

Sun, Dec 2, 2-4pm

Create edible winter creatures, sandart masterpieces, Christmas cards, advent wreaths and unique ornaments. Enjoy caroling and cookies, too! Admission: \$5/family. A pizza dinner will be offered after the Advent Workshop and before the Christmas Concert. If you would like to stay for pizza, please RSVP to Rev. Jamie at 781-444-2510 or revjamie@needhamucc.org.

Book Corner

The church has a great selection of children's books available to check out, located downstairs in the book corner. Stop by and pick up some wonderful Christmas books to read at home! We will also be selling these books in the church bookstore located next to the Chapel.

Church Group News and Special Events

FROM THE DEACONS

The Deacons would like to invite the Congregation to attend dinner at the church on the first Tuesday of every month (next is December 4th) in support of the families who pick up their Baby Basics supplies on that night. This is a great way to show support for the community, and the Baby Basics families really enjoy the companionship!

In November the Deacons provided support for John Allen to take the final steps in his ordination process. We reviewed John's Call to Ministry paper and held a group discussion with him on Skype to discuss his ideas. John continues to impress us with all with his intelligence and humanity, and we enjoyed the opportunity to talk with him again.

Friendly Society News

Friendly Society will host its **All Church Women's Christmas Luncheon on Wednesday, December 12, 2012, at noon in Linden Hall.** Tickets may be purchased during coffee hour on Sundays, December 2 and 10 or from Jean Andrews (444-2779). Tickets are \$10 each and need to be purchased before December 11. Following the luncheon, Friendly chimers, under the direction of Bobby DeRegis, will play and Soomi Lee Lowry will perform works by Bach, Mozart and Chopin. Friendly members will also have an opportunity to sing Christmas carols prior to her performance. All are invited to join in for this festive afternoon. Questions? Call Doris Cook (781-444-5591).



Find Out About the Guatemala Partnership On-Line

Would you like to learn about our 25-year relationship with a village in Guatemala? Would you like to take part in this relationship? Would you like to keep up with news from and about Santa María Tzejá? Would you like to write to your partner family, or would you like to start a correspondence with a family in our partner village? Would you like to travel with a Church delegation to Guatemala and Santa María Tzejá? Would you like to find out what such a trip would be like? Do you have questions about this Guatemala Partnership? Do you have opinions you would like to share?

If so, please visit the Church's website: <http://needhamucc.org>. From the main page, click on the "Serve" link, and then on "Guatemala Partnership". Here you will find a brief description of the Partnership, as well as links to "trip reports" with detailed accounts of recent Church delegation trips to Guatemala and Santa María Tzejá. Learn more at <http://www.guatemalapartners.org>.

org, an interactive site that lets you experience our partner village, ask questions, make comments, learn about how you can participate, and contact us.

Gifts as Large as the Meaning of Christmas

As you consider the challenge of gift-giving during the holiday season, look beyond traditional gifts and consider an 'alternative gift'. Making a donation to a worthy cause to honor your loved one, family member, or friend can be very satisfying!

Consider making a donation to the Guatemala Partnership to provide support to the village of Santa María Tzejá. For over 25 years our church has been in partnership with this Mayan village where the people have long suffered injustice and oppression.

- Through your gift, large or small, the people of this village will fulfill their dreams of helping future generations make a difference in the world.

- You will receive a decorative card describing this gift to 'wrap' for your friend or family member.

This gift may be handy to give to your favorite teacher as well!

- Find out more at Coffee Hour during December or contact

sarahlibbey@comcast.net.

Write Your Partner-Family Letter Early

In our culture, the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays define the season of family. We subdue the daily chaos and travel great distances to spend time with relatives. Did you ever wonder if your partner family in Guatemala identifies with a season where family comes above all else? Might ask them!

And... mindful of how navigating through this season of family requires thoughtful planning, please parcel out just a bit of time to get your letter written and submitted by Jan. 1, 2013 if you write in English. You'll never hear "it's too soon!". Options for turning in your letter are:

1. Email: davebjohnson@verizon.net
2. Web site www.guatemalapartners.org (yes, you can type it right in there!)
3. Guatemala mail box at church office

Have a terrific "family" season!
Dave Johnson, Guatemala Partnership Committee

Adult Education by Rev. Heike Werder, Assoc. Minister

Yoga and Meditation – Monday evenings 7 to 8:15 pm in Fellowship Hall

Looking to de-stress for the holidays? We can help! Join us for a peaceful evening of yoga and meditation to help calmly transition into the Holiday season on Mondays – December 3, 10, and 17, 2012, at 7pm in Fellowship Hall. Bring your yoga mat.



Archaeology in the Land of the Bible – Sunday, December 9 and 16 at 11:30 am in Library

What exactly is biblical archaeology? Can it be used to prove the Bible is true? How are objects and ruins excavated? What are some of the most important discoveries found? Did events like the Exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan actually happen, and what can archaeology tell us about them? For almost 200 years archaeologists have been digging in Israel, Palestine, and Jordan, producing amazing discoveries and an immense amount of scholarly literature on the subject of the Bible.

Nate Ramsayer, biblical scholar and archaeologist, spent this past summer excavating the Philistine site of Tell es-Safi (biblical Gath, from where the giant Goliath is said to have come) in the Shephelah region in southern Israel, and he is ready to lead us through an introduction of the excavation process, how artifacts and sites are dated, the differences between good and poor archaeological methods, and how understanding material culture informs our modern perspective of biblical events.

Join us to learn about fascinating discoveries from the land of the Bible! Lunch will be served.

Church Group News and Special Events

Environmental Ministry News

DREAMING OF A GREEN CHRISTMAS



- Use LED lights for house and tree lighting – LED (Light-Emitting Diode) holiday lights use up to 95 percent less energy than larger, traditional holiday bulbs and can last up to 100,000 hours when used indoors.

- For cushioning in your packages, use old newspaper, scrap paper or other paper items you had

planned to recycle. If you have a paper shredder, you can shred scrap paper and save that for when you send gifts through the mail.

- Choose gifts that use less packaging. Too many products these days use excessive packaging in the name of marketing. During the holidays, many people are turning to gift certificates as one of the least wasteful gift-giving options.

- Christmas trees are often unsustainably

harvested. When you think about it, it seems silly to grow trees for the sole purpose of cutting them down, using them for a month and then trashing them. You can buy a mini, potted tree that you can keep in your home for several years and look forward to decorating with a handful of quality, sentimental ornaments. When it gets too big, plant it outside and start again! A wonderful option is a Dwarf Alberta Spruce, which you can place in a large Terra Cotta pot. It maxes out at around 6 feet, so you won't have to worry about it taking over your home.

- Save bows and wrapping paper when opening your gifts and reuse them for others! It is a sound money saving strategy and you may also be saving a tree.

- Use your china or stoneware dishes when entertaining and stay away from plastic dishes and utensils. Also, consider using cloth napkins instead of paper.

- After receiving your new phone for Christmas, please donate your old one! We have a box by the coat rack designated for old cell phones which we donate to Cellphones for Soldiers.

The next Environmental Ministry Team meeting is Dec 4 at 7:15. We are always looking for new members!



1154 Great Plain Avenue
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Men's Breakfast, Sunday December 16 "Exploring our relationship to Jesus"


The Men's Breakfast brings men of all ages and persuasions together once a month before worship in honest and lively discussion touching our faith and our lives in today's complex world. This year we are trying to reflect on the sermon themes. We get together in the Library on the third Sunday of the month and enjoy breakfast fare provided by volunteers. We have always welcomed men of all ages and can always accommodate those with scheduling challenges. Arrive at 8:15 AM for fellowship and breakfast or by 9:00 AM for the discussion.

On December 16, we will discuss our relationship to Jesus. Join us!

Contact Keith McClelland (kmmlkm@rcn.com) for more information.

Fair Trade Coffee and Chocolate for Sale at Coffee Hour

Rev. Heike will continue to sell Fair Trade coffee and chocolate after worship services in December.



Why would you want to buy Fair Trade products? 1 - To support small-scale farmers, 2 - to help them support their families, help them stay on their land, and care for the environment. As members of democratically run co-operatives, these farmers gain control of their own livelihoods, while also making strides together on organic agriculture and quality control practices. In addition, Fair Trade premiums put more money into farming communities, allowing them to make investments in education, health programs and social services - one tasty cup or delicious piece of chocolate at a time. Go to www.equalexchange.coop/impact to find out more about Fair Trade.

address

stamp

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF
NEEDHAM
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
1154 Great Plain Avenue
Needham, Massachusetts 02492-2202

Christmas

at the Congregational Church of Needham



CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Sunday December 2 at 5 p.m., The Sanctuary

Dr. Robert DeRegis, Dir. of Music, conducts the Saint-Saens Christmas Oratorio with choir, soloists, harp and strings. Local soloists include, Carolyn MacGregor, Kate Scott, Maggie Furtak, Nate Ramsayer, Crosby Goshgarian & Brandon Milardo. Anthems and Carols of the season. Free will donation.



BLUE CHRISTMAS - HEALING SERVICE

Thursday December 20 at 7 p.m., The Chapel

Are you feeling lonely or blue this Christmas? Candle lighting and healing prayers led by Rev. Susan.

Come - Bring a friend of any faith, or none at all.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT AND CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Monday December 24 at 4 p.m. & 9 p.m.,
The Sanctuary

At 4pm, the church Christmas Pageant, with 100 costumed performers act out the Christmas story. Enjoy the procession of camels, donkey, rooster, shepherds and angels. The service culminates with Silent Night, sung by candlelight.

At 9pm, the church's candlelight service features lessons and carols of the season.

Both services are open to the public. Please visit www.needhamucc.org or call 781-444-2510 for more information.