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# THE EPISTLE

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Volume 23 Issue 10

November 22, 2018

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Dear Members & Friends of First Church:

Life consists of a series of interruptions. One day you are doing just fine, then there's the phone call from the doctor after your yearly physical, there is that odd pain in the chest, or you turn on the evening news and some sudden atrocities like the Pittsburgh, PA or Thousand Oaks, CA shootings jar your world once again.



And what do we do at such moments? Most of us reach out or dig down for resources to deal with the crisis in an attempt to get life “back to normal,” in order to achieve homeostasis and balance.

Over the past few weeks, I have received several phone calls from people living in Fairport. They ask for money to turn their electricity back on or emergency rent assistance to keep from getting evicted from their apartments. Their lives have been disrupted because they live in a country that insures that the wealthiest 1% of society will keep getting wealthier while the safety net for the poorest people keeps shrinking. And so my life is interrupted by those whose needs far outweigh my own.

Interruptions not only take place in our personal lives, but they occur in the worship life of the Church as well. Advent and Christmas are the Church's seasons of interruption and disruption.

Emmanuel, God with us, is God's grand, gracious interruption. There are times when it is as if God disrupts, interrupts in order to make room in our lives, room for God to come among us. Advent points to such moments.

Advent also suggests that many of us yearn for a genuine disruption, for some divinely induced instability too. Many of us are caught in situations for which there is no humanly conceivable way out. Some people are enslaved to habits that are literally killing them. Others face some dilemma for which there is no answer, at least no answer that is immediate. We live in a world where the problems on the world stage are larger than our collective resources for addressing the problems. Does that mean we should give up?

And just as we get all settled in and accommodated to things as they are, just when we learn to face facts, to accept reality, to think that this world is as good as it gets, we are surprised by the intrusions of God. Somehow God interrupts our comfortable adjustment to the present and offers us a considerably disrupted future. Our notions of what can and what cannot be are turned upside down. This is Advent.

Christmas is a somewhat similar to Advent. Christmas says that our God not only cares about us but also comes to us. We don't have to get everything together on our own. God gives us spiritual resources. The birth of the Christ Child means that our God moves, intrudes, steps in, acts, creates, and recreates and then calls us to step out into the world and do the same.

A friend of mine says that the main difference between a living, true God and a dead, false god is that a dead, false god will never surprise you. So perhaps Advent and Christmas are yearly reminders to the Church that God is able to reach in and to surprise us.

Let us therefore enter the Advent and Christmas seasons with a prayer: Incarnate God, give us the grace to be prepared for the interruption of your grace among us, give us the courage to receive you when you intrude into our lives, and give us the wisdom to follow you into the future that only you can give. In the name of our Christ Child, we pray. Amen.

Have A Surprising Advent & An Intrusive Merry Christmas!  
*Pastor Greg Rupright*



## OVERCOMING DESPAIR

Christmas can be a difficult time for people who are hurting or grieving. In the 1860s, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow had reason to despair: America was at war with itself, his son was severely wounded in battle and his wife died in a fire. The first Christmas after his wife's death, Longfellow wrote, "How inexpressibly sad are all holidays."

Just three years later, on Christmas Day 1864, Longfellow penned a poem that later became the song "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." The lyrics move from despair to hope — and, thanks to Jesus, so can we...

*And in despair I bowed my head.  
 There is no peace on earth, I said!  
 For hate is strong, and mocks the song  
 of peace on earth, good will to men!*

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
 God is not dead, nor doth he sleep!  
 The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,  
 with peace on earth, good will to men!*



## SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS & MESSAGES

(bold font indicates key scripture text(s) for the Message)

### December 2nd

First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

**Jeremiah 33:14-16**; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36

*Intergenerational Message: “Play Fair!”*

### December 9th

Second Sunday of Advent

Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; **Luke 3:1-6**

*Message: “A Word in the Wilderness”*

### December 16th

Third Sunday of Advent

*Christmas Choral Concert*

*Presented by the Choir of First Congregational United Church of Christ  
Ms. Heather Watras, Director of Music Ministries & Mrs. Beatrice Benedict, Organist*

### December 23<sup>rd</sup>

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:46b-55; Hebrews 10:5-10; **Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)**

*Message: “On the Threshold of Christmas – Promises Kept!”*

### December 24<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Eve

5:00 P.M. Christmas Eve Pageant Service

*“Christmas Star” Pageant presented by the Sunday School*

*Directed by Pastor Greg Rupright*

11:00 PM – A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols with Holy Communion

Genesis 22:15-18; Isaiah 11:1-3a, 4a, 6-9; Luke 1:26-25, 38; Luke 2:1, 3-7;

Luke 2:8-16; Matthew 2:1-12; John 1:1-14

### December 30<sup>th</sup>

First Sunday after Christmas

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; **Luke 2:41-52**

*Message: “Growing in Wisdom”*

# CHURCH NEWS

## OUR ANNUAL FINANCIAL MEETING

The meeting will be held on Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, immediately following the worship service. The budget for 2019 will be discussed and voted on. Please plan on attending.



Annual Financial Meeting

## HELP NEEDED! ADVENT DINNER CRAFT



As in years past, we often have an activity or program for our church to enjoy prior to the **Advent Dinner at 5:30 P.M. in our Fellowship Hall**. We would again this year like to offer several **Advent Holiday Craft Stations** for everyone to come and make in our **Upstairs Fellowship Hall at 4:30 P.M.**

If you would be willing to prepare a craft to share, please contact Amy Pasley at 585-330-2712 or [AmyB1997@rochester.rr.com](mailto:AmyB1997@rochester.rr.com). The craft should only take about 10 minutes or so to complete. We are looking for 2-3 volunteers. The cost of the craft material can be reimbursed to you.

\*Parents of High School Students.... We'd love to have our youth involved in some way – please let us know if any are interested and available!

## ADVENT DINNER



The Advent Dinner hosted by the Board of Deacons will be held on Sunday, December 2, 2018 at 5:30 PM in Fellowship Hall. A sign up sheet is posted in Fellowship Hall. Remember to bring your own plates and silverware. Beverages, cups, napkins and dessert will be provided by the Deacons.



Advent Potluck Dinner

The Deacons welcome volunteers to assist with Advent Dinner set up tasks following the 9:30 AM service. Anyone wishing to add baked goods to the dessert menu are welcome to do so. If you have any questions please contact Dave Mosher, 381-6961, or any deacon. We look forward to seeing you on December 2.





## LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES

If you or your family would like to share in the lighting of the Advent Candles of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, please sign-up on Advent Candle Lighting Sign-Up List on the rolling sign-up board in the Fellowship Hall. Thank you.

## CHRISTMAS EVE READERS ARE NEEDED

Christmas Eve Readers are needed for the 11:00 P.M. Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols. Please sign-up to be a Reader on the rolling sign-up board in the Fellowship Hall. Thank you.



## A SERVICE FOR HEALING & WHOLENESS

There will be a Service for Healing & Wholeness in the Snow Room on Sunday, December 30th at 10:45 A.M.

All are welcome!

## GRIEFSHARE SUPPORT GROUP

During the Fall of 2018 & Winter of 2019, we will offer another GriefShare Support Group that will be open to both our church members and the general public and will meet at 7:30 P.M. on the following Thursday evenings:

December 6<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>

January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>.



GriefShare is a network of thousands of grief recovery support groups meeting around the world. GriefShare is a faith-centered program with direction and purpose. With GriefShare you will learn how to walk the journey of grief and be supported on the way. It is a support group where people who have lost loved ones and friends can find healing and hope. GriefShare covers various aspects of going through the grieving process over a period of 13 sessions.

Pastor Greg Rupright & Diana Smith will be among some of the co-facilitators for this group. We are looking for other co-facilitators. If you wish to participate in the GriefShare Group either as a participant or a facilitator, please sign up on the GriefShare Participant or Facilitator's Sign-Up List posted on the Fellowship Hall Board. Thank you.

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

## MORNING BIBLE STUDY GROUPS

The 11:00 A.M. Wednesday Morning and Sunday Morning Bible Study groups are continuing to read *The Good Book: Reading the Bible With Mind and Heart* by Peter J. Gomes and studying scripture pertaining to various chapter topics.



### Bible Study

#### December 2<sup>nd</sup> & December 4<sup>th</sup>\*

Read *The Good Book* – Chapter 9: “The Bible and the Good Life,” pp. 175-197. Please read the following scriptures: Psalm 20:7-8; Psalm 146; Isaiah 30:15; Micah 7:5-7; John 14:18.

*\*Please note that the Wednesday Bible Study Group will meet on Tuesday, December 4<sup>th</sup> so that those who would like to attend the Interfaith Bible Study at the Jewish Community Center, located at 1200 Edgewood Avenue, Rochester, NY, may do so.*

#### December 9<sup>th</sup> & December 12<sup>th</sup>

Read *The Good Book* – Chapter 9: “The Bible and the Good Life,” pp. 197 (starting at the bottom of the page with subtitle “*Can I Feel Good About Myself?*”) – 210. Please read the following scriptures: Job 11:18-19; Psalm 27:13-14; Psalm 43:5; Zechariah 9:12; Mark 11:22-25; Romans 8:18-21; 1 Peter 1:3-4; 2:9-10

*The Wednesday & Sunday Morning Bible Study groups will take a short recess for the remainder of December and will resume again on Sunday, January 6<sup>th</sup> & Wednesday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019.*

WE MEET IN THE SNOW ROOM & ALL ARE WELCOME!



## INTERFAITH BIBLE STUDY

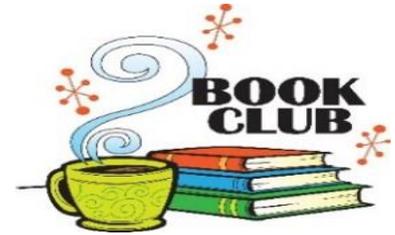
In this year’s **Interfaith Bible Study Series**, Christian and Jewish presenters tackle tough questions about pressing social justice issues, from poverty and the environment to LGBTQ rights and criminal justice reform.

The topic for **Wednesday, December 5<sup>th</sup>** is “**Immigration: Welcoming the Stranger.**” The speakers will be Prof. Joseph Kelly, Emeritus, Nazareth College & Rabbi Alan Katz, Temple Sinai. All sessions, including time for Q & A, take place **from 12-1 P.M. at the Louis S. Wolk Jewish Community Center of Greater Rochester, located at 1200 Edgewood Avenue, Rochester, NY.**

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

**BOOK CLUB 2018-2019**

Below is the complete schedule for the upcoming year. We meet from **1:00-2:30** on the last Monday of the month. **We will not meet in December.** (\*Note: In May we will meet on the 3rd, not the last, Monday, due to the Memorial Day holiday.)



Date:	Book Title	Author	Presenter
Nov 26	The Yellow Envelope: One Gift, Three Rules, and A Life-Changing Journey Around the World	Kim Dinan	Nan Notar
Dec	<b>No Book Club -- Merry Christmas</b>		
Jan 28	Madison Park: A Place of Hope	Eric L. Motley	Paula Pentoney
Feb 25	Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine	Gail Honeyman	Nancy Keith
Mar 25	Mrs. Lincoln's Dressmaker	Jennifer Chiaverini	Nancy Midgley
Apr 29	The Whole Town's Talking	Fannie Flagg	Jane Graham
May 20	The Sweetness of Forgetting	Kristin Harmel	Irene Utter
June 24	Planning meeting for 2019-2020		



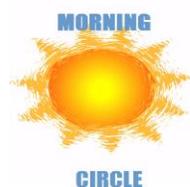
**CIRCLE NEWS**

**EVENING CIRCLE**

Evening Circle is having their annual Christmas meeting Monday, December 10 at 7:00 PM. It is at Georgetown Commons Community Center again this year. Just bring yourself, a friend or neighbor, and your favorite Christmas story, poem, or card to share with the group. Something that meant a lot to you. We will be taking a donation for a worthy cause TBD. Guests are always welcome!

**MORNING CIRCLE**

The Morning Circle will have a Christmas party/lunch in Fellowship Hall on December 11 at 10:30. Bring your lunch and, instead of a gift to exchange, bring food items for the Food Shelf. If you are not on Muriel's party list, please call her at 377-9177 to sign up.



# MISSIONS

## CHRISTMAS DONATIONS

One of the first signs of the holiday season is our Hillside Christmas Tree in Fellowship Hall. Hillside works with families who have special needs as a result of behaviorally challenged children and teens. The holidays are especially stressful for these youth, many of whom have been temporarily or permanently separated from their families. Our congregation helps to provide these children with some Christmas cheer through our Hillside Christmas Tree.



On Sunday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, the tree will be unveiled in Fellowship Hall. It will be covered with ornaments made by members of the church, led by Jill O'Connor. Attached to each ornament will be a tag with the name of a Hillside youth and an item from their wish list. Please take a tag and ornament to fulfill a request. Remember to write your name and phone number on the sign-up sheets near the tree.

**Gifts must be returned by Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup>. Please do not wrap the gift, but do provide wrapping paper and a bow.**



### Shop 'til You Drop & Dining for RAIHN

Tuesday, November 27, 2018  
5:00 PM - 9:00 PM

(\*\*Shopping at One World Goods begins at 6 PM)  
Pittsford Plaza - Monroe Avenue

Proceeds will benefit RAIHN (Rochester Area Interfaith Hospitality Network)  
*Keeping Families Together...Getting Families Home - for Good.*  
[www.raihn.org](http://www.raihn.org)

#### Benucci's Italian Ristorante, Wine Bar and Pizzeria

Benucci's is passionate about Italian food, bursting with flavors from all regions of Italy. Enjoy a meal at the Italian Wine Bar or relax in the warm and inviting dining room.

**Mention that you are dining for RAIHN** when you arrive and Benucci's will donate 20% of your check (excluding tip and tax).

Reservations suggested: 264-1300

#### One World Goods

One World Goods is a fair trade gift store that sells quality handcrafted items, apparel, jewelry and coffee from around the world. Your purchase provides vital income for our global neighbors as well as a donation to RAIHN.

**Please join us for an evening of dining and shopping!**  
QUESTIONS? Please call RAIHN @ 585-506-9050

# OUR CHURCH FAMILY

## SYMPATHY & CONDOLENCES

The members of First Congregational United Church of Christ, Fairport, NY, extend their heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the family and friends of Suzanne Boland, who entered eternal life on October 24, 2018. Rest eternal grant Suzanne, O God; may light perpetual shine upon her. Amen.

Sympathy cards may be mailed to: Richard Boland  
889 Strong Road  
Victor, NY 14564



The members of First Congregational United Church of Christ, Fairport, NY, extend their heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the family and friends of Shirley Sumner, who entered eternal life on November 3, 2018. Rest eternal grant Shirley, O God; may light perpetual shine upon her. Amen.

## LIGHT THE NIGHT



Thank you to David and Janice Coon for lighting the night through the month of November in honor of Julia Coon.

Thank you to Dave and Pat Mosher for keeping the steeple lights burning bright during the month of December in memory of loved ones.



## REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

Charlotte Jackson, Fairport Baptist Home  
Gerry Hammond  
Mary Lou Woodhouse



**Next "Epistle" Deadline is**  
(The "Third Thursday")  
**December 20, 2018**



Frequently our church will take photos or videos of members, including children and youth, involved in church related activities. These photos and videos may be used in church-produced publications, on our website or on social media including but not limited to Facebook. If you do not wish to have photos or videos of yourself or your child used, please see Vicki Sherry in the church office to sign an exclusion form.

The Epistle is printed once a month  
by the First Congregational United  
Church of Christ, 26 East Church St.  
Fairport, New York, 14450

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E-mail: vsherry.ucc@gmail.com  
Webpage: fairportucc.org

Church Service Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

Church Office Hours: 9:00-3:30  
Monday through Friday (Monday-Thursday in July and August)

Rev. Gregory J. Rupright, Pastor  
Rev. Dr. John N. Cedarleaf, Pastor Emeritus  
Administrative Assistant: Vicki Sherry  
Church Moderator: Steve Smith  
Organist: Beatrice Benedict  
Director of Music Ministries: Heather Watras  
Business Administrator: Sue Brooks  
Wedding Coordinator: Betty Shamblen  
Sunday School Teacher: Yaliza Frank



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First Congregational United Church of Christ  
26 East Church Street  
Fairport, NY, 14450