



The Epistle

December 2025

The season of Advent is upon us. The word *Advent* comes from the Latin *advenire*—"to come." Something is coming.

If you remember *West Side Story*, Tony sings with anticipation: "*Something's coming, don't know when, but it's soon...*" That longing captures the spirit of Advent—expectation mixed with impatience, hope mingled with restlessness.

Waiting is not something we do well. We live in a culture of immediacy: instant downloads, next-day shipping, quick fixes. Yet the church dares to begin its year not with celebration, but with anticipation.

Scripture speaks into this waiting:

Isaiah envisions peace among nations.

Paul urges us to wake from sleep.

Matthew warns us to be ready.

But here's the challenge: we don't like waiting, and we don't like preparing for what we cannot control. When life feels heavy, "just wait" sounds hollow. We grasp for relief, numb ourselves with distractions, chase shortcuts, and settle for substitutes. Paul's words sting: "*Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh.*"

Advent confronts our tendency toward impatience and instant gratification. It calls us instead to patient hope. When we rely on numbing agents or distractions, we mask the deeper struggles—powerlessness, despair, the life that should have been. Yet into this restless longing Paul reminds us: "*Salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near.*"

Something's coming. Peace is not a fantasy—it is God's promise. And we are witnesses that this promise has already begun. The Christ child is the sign, the beginning of fulfillment. God's peace arrives not through force or immediacy, but through vulnerability, incarnation, and love made flesh.

This is the joy of Advent: we are not waiting in vain. The candles we light are not mere symbols but declarations of hope. Each flame whispers: "*Something's coming.*" In Christ, God has already begun the work of peace.

The manger leads to the cross, and the cross to resurrection. We live in the "already and not yet"—already redeemed, not yet fully restored. That is good news worth celebrating.

So how do we prepare? Not by grasping at quick fixes, but by embodying Christ's light and love in daily life. Advent is not passive waiting—it is active hope. Like preparing for a child's birth or readying a home for guests, the anticipation itself shapes our welcome.

Friends, let us live as people who trust the promise: *The night is far gone. The day is near. Come, Lord Jesus.*

With faith and anticipation,

Pastor Russ

Upcoming Events



Sound Healing: Tuesday Dec. 9th at 6:30pm (Details on page 5)



Christmas Pageant: Sunday Dec. 21st at our 9:30 worship service

The children will present their Christmas pageant during our worship service on Sunday December 21st at 9:30 am. Please join us for a joyous event as the children tell the story of Jesus' birth.



Blue Christmas Service: Monday December 22nd at 6:00 pm

Our Blue Christmas Service is for those who find the holiday season a challenge and are looking for comfort and assurance.



Christmas Eve Worship Service: Wednesday Dec. 24th at 4:00 pm



Christmas Eve Worship Service: Wednesday Dec. 24th at 10:00 pm



Sunday Dec. 28th Worship Service

Pastor Russ Goliger's final worship service with us. Rev. Carol Steinbrecher will join us for the Completion of Call Service.



Prayer List



For our members, family and friends hospitalized, ill and in need of prayers, may God bless and watch over you:

Nancy W.	Steve C.
Jane L.	Bryan C.
Melissa C.	Peter R.
Mary D.	Ted G's brother
Eunice A.	Gloria H.
June and Brian C.	Eddie H.
Jan G.	Kieman
Keith D.	Brody
Tom M.	Family of Theresa D.
Paul (Denise's brother)	All those dealing with health concerns
Bob A.	
Lorna D.	

"Prayer List"

If you added somebody to the prayer list, please email Pastor Russ:



Bible Study

Tuesdays at 11:00 AM

Let's get together to study the readings for the upcoming Sunday service.

December 3

Isaiah 11:1-10
Romans 15:4-13
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Matthew 3: 1-12

December 9

Isaiah 35: 1-10
James 5:7-10
Psalm 146:5-10
Matthew 11:2-11

December 16

Isaiah 7:10-16
Romans I: 1-7
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Matthew I: 18-25

December 23

Isaiah 63:7-9
Hebrews 2:10-18
Psalm 148
Matthew 2:13-23

December 30

Isaiah 63:7-9
Hebrews 2:10-18
Psalm 148
Matthew 2:13-23



Office Hours

Monday—Thursday
Time: 9 am—noon



Pastor Russ's office hours:

Wednesdays 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

At The Vice

After hour meetings may be arranged upon request. For

Pastoral Care Emergencies, please contact Pastor Russ directly

at 774-764-1025.

Church School News



The children will present their Christmas pageant during our worship service on Sunday December 21st at 9:30 am. Please join us for a joyous event as the children tell the story of Jesus' birth.

Women's Fellowship



On Friday Nov. 28th, with a large collection of gathered and donated greens and craft supplies, Women's Fellowship made 42 Christmas door swags. They braved the cold on Saturday Nov. 29th, set up a display in front of the church, and sold them all!





Sound Healing Experience with Margie Breault

Tuesday December 9th at 6:30 pm in Fellowship Hall

Prism of Brilliance

At Prism of Brilliance, I guide people back into alignment, with their energy, their body, and the natural rhythms of life. Everything I offer is rooted in Natural Law. Not as a concept, but as a lived way of being. You are not separate from nature.

You *are* nature, and when you move in rhythm with that truth, things begin to shift. Through energy work, intuitive coaching, sound, and embodied practice, I help you get underneath the surface. This work isn't about quick fixes or spiritual performance. It's about integrating tools in a way that actually supports your nervous system, your relationships, your voice, and your real life. My work blends ancient wisdom with modern understanding. It's grounded in the science of energy, the intelligence of the body, and the deep knowing that everything is connected, within you, and around you. At Prism of Brilliance, I hold space for people to access their own clarity, power, and flow.

There is a limited number of spots so please sign up early!!

Contact Karen Brighenti at karenbrig08@gmail.com or 508-331-0896 to sign up.

This experience is open to ages from Middle School and beyond!!

You can either lay down or sit in a chair. If you will be laying down you will need to bring something to lay on, a yoga mat or blanket, and whatever you need to make yourself comfortable.



The Christian Outreach Committee is kicking off our annual Giving Tree project and this year we have decided to partner with the local non-profit agency LUK to bring Christmas cheer to those in need. LUK's mission is to challenge and inspire youth, adults and families to realize their unique potential through community-based prevention, intervention, education, and support services.

You can grant a wish this holiday season! For families already stretching budgets to pay for rent, heat, and groceries, providing a holiday gift is not always possible. LUK collaborates with community organizations throughout north central Massachusetts to provide the youth they serve with gifts that they may not otherwise receive.

Starting November 23rd, there will be a giving tree in the Narthex with tags representing the wishes of some of those local children. We ask that you consider taking a tag and supplying either a toy or clothing item (size provided) for that child.

We are asking that all **purchases be made and dropped off at the church under the giving tree by Sunday December 14, 2025**, to allow for delivery ahead of Christmas. Please do not wrap the presents but do attach the tag to the gift so that we can ensure the correct items go to the correct children.

Thank you for your kindness and generosity,

The Christian Outreach Committee

You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us. - 2 Corinthians 9:11

FROM THE HISTORY ROOM



Bits and Pieces:

The appraisal of the church bell has not yet been received. The information was sent on October 25th, and the check has been cashed. We are getting there! If you check out eBay you will find several for sale from \$19,000 to \$24,000. Two of them were dated in the 1860s. Ours is clearly dated 1843 and an existing receipt shows that we paid \$200.00 to a Quincy salvage company in 1941. This was a replacement for the bell that was damaged beyond repair in the fire of 1940. This appraisal is for insurance purposes. Keep your fingers crossed! BTW two of the eBay bells have been there for at least a year, so maybe they may be a bit pricey.

The existing information (or lack thereof) on the 87 Main Street parsonage shows that we apparently never owned the property but must have rented it for several years, before building a new one circa 1900 on Leominster Street. Richard Miller has done extensive research for us and finds no evidence of us having purchased the property.

The parsonage of our first Pastor, Elisha Marsh, was located on Lot 8 overlooking Meetinghouse Pond, according to Heywood's History. That would place it going down the hill from the Common toward West Princeton Road on the left side (beyond MacAloney's house) or across the street where the Zephir family now resides. An old postcard, in the possession of the History Room, shows a pear tree with a distant view of Meetinghouse Pond and the mountain. I know little about pear trees, but I do know that fruit trees usually need some TLC to survive and bear fruit. It appears to be in the same area of Academy Hill Road that Lot 8 would have been. We are getting closer!

Don't forget, during this Advent Season, to view the wall on the right at the side door where a display of Holy Family interpretations are hung. The crewel piece, by Myrtle Walker was given to the church by the Walker family upon her death in 2024. The other two are on loan by me, as the crochet one by Dolly Rhoades (my mom) and the hooked one by myself usually adorn my condo wall. Enjoy!

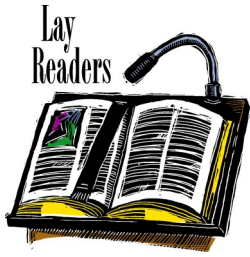
Deenie Burgess, Historian

The Advent workshop was held on November 23rd. The Sanctuary was decorated, a Christmas tree placed in the side entrance, children learned to play the chimes, and crafts filled Covenant Hall. A great time was had by all!



DECORATE
the Church





What is a Lay Reader?

A lay reader participates in Sunday church services by leading prayers and reading scriptures. Reading is an act of devotion, an opportunity to strengthen relationships and develop new friendships. Readers are given the opportunity to look over the text prior to Sunday if there is a need for clarification to correctly announce the scripture, for example (2 Timothy 4:6-8,16-18) or help with pronunciation (Selah). Reading at a lectern builds confidence for public speaking.

Many thanks to the following readers during the past year. If you read and your name is not listed we had many substitutions, illness and the unexpected. Please know you are appreciated.

Karen Brighenti, Bobbie DiBattista, Deenie Burgess, Leslie Collar, Brett Duncan, LeeAnn Gikis, Ted Guilford, Candi Hitchcock, Carol McGee, Kathy Miller, Nell Naideth, Anne Ring, Lisa Roberts, Sandi Thibodeau, David Witman, and Karen Wrigley

We would love to have more people participate as lay readers. Please talk with one of the deacons if you are interested or want to learn more.

With gratitude,
The Diaconate

Warmth of Outreach

As Christmas approaches and the New Year begins the Outreach Committee is offering another way of GIVING to our local community. Starting in January there will be a Christmas tree where you can hang mittens and hats that will be given to children at the elementary school and others in our community. For those that knit we welcome your handy work, but store-bought items are more than welcome.

In addition to the tree inside our church we are going to have a free-standing wooden tree to the right of our driveway where some of the mittens will be taken from the tree inside and put in Ziplock bags to be clipped to the wooden tree for anyone who passes buy to take. Our wish is that as people walk by our church, they will feel free to take a pair to help keep their hands and heads toasty.

“If every person offered just one act of kindness every day,
We could change the world.”



Candles That Tell a Story



Lighting its candles each Sunday is a treasured tradition during the four weeks of Advent.

Depending on denomination, churches use different color combinations for the candles. Some place four blue candles around the wreath with a white one in the center, while others use all white. Many light purple candles on the first two Sundays, pink on the third, purple again on the fourth, and then a large white candle on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Each part of the wreath carries symbolic meaning:

- **The wreath:** Its circular shape represents the everlasting love of God, having no beginning or end. The green symbolizes eternal life.
- **The four candles:** Mark the four weeks of Advent. One tradition says that each candle also represents 1,000 years, totaling 4,000 years from Adam and Eve to Christ's birth.
- **Purple candles:** in ancient times, was expensive and was considered the color of royalty and kings. On Christmas, Christ is proclaimed King of Kings. Purple also symbolizes humility and penitence. The first purple candle represents Hope; the second, Peace; and the final purple candle, Love.
- **Blue candles:** Blue is another color often used as a symbol of royalty. Some churches use blue candles to symbolize the night sky and the anticipation of the announcement of Christ's birth. Blue also symbolizes the beginning of a new creation as in the waters of Genesis 1.
- **The pink candle:** Lit on the third Sunday, it represents Joy and marks the halfway point of Advent.

The white candle: The large white candle in the center is the Christ candle. Its light symbolizes Christ the Savior — “the light of the world.”

The beauty and brightness from the glow of all five candles is a reminder that Christ's life was the light for all earth's people — “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 1:5, NRSV).

The Advent wreath is more than just greenery and candles—it's a symbol of watchfulness and growing joy as Christmas draws near.

The Outreach Committee led a food drive for the Westminster Community Food Pantry. The children carried the food and placed it on the altar.



The First Congregational Church
of Westminster
United Church of Christ
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The Epistle
December 2025
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Don't Miss the

DEADLINE!

December 20, 2025

**For January
Submissions**



The Season of

Advent

READING PLAN

<i>Hope</i>	<i>Joy</i>
◊ Day 1: Jeremiah 29:10-14	◊ Day 13: Philippians 4:4-9
◊ Day 2: Romans 15:8-13	◊ Day 14: Psalm 16
◊ Day 3: 1 Peter 1:3-12	◊ Day 15: James 1:2-18
◊ Day 4: Hebrews 10:19-39	◊ Day 16: Psalm 30
◊ Day 5: Psalm 33	◊ Day 17: Luke 2:8-20
◊ Day 6: Titus 2:11- 3:8	◊ Day 18: John 15:1-11
<i>Peace</i>	<i>Love</i>
◊ Day 7: Isaiah 9:1-7	◊ Day 19: Micah 7:18-20
◊ Day 8: John 14:1-7, 25-31	◊ Day 20: Romans 8:31-39
◊ Day 9: John 16:25-33	◊ Day 21: John 3:16-21
◊ Day 10: Romans 5:1-11	◊ Day 22: 1 John 4:7-21
◊ Day 11: Ephesians 2:11-22	◊ Day 23: Philippians 2:1-11
◊ Day 12: Colossians 3:1-17	◊ Day 24: 2 Thessalonians 2:13 - 3:5
	◊ Day 25: Ephesians 2:1-10

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