



# CHURCH CHAPTERS

Celebrating 300 years of Faith in Action

December 2011

## The First Church of Christ in Mansfield

(Congregational)

United Church of Christ

**Sunday Worship**  
**10:15 am**

### Ministers

All the People of the Church

### Senior Pastor

Rev. Ann Plumley

### Minister of Faith Formation

Rev. Joseph Blotz

### Minister of Visitation

Eileen Stock

### Organist

Erik Haeger

### Music Director

Michael Silvestri

### Office Administrator

Wendy O'Connor

### Childcare Provider

Azhar Al Rukaibawi

### Church Office Hours

Monday-Friday: 9am-Noon

### Telephone

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www.myFCC.info

Like us on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/FCCMansfield

### From the Senior Pastor

Dearly Beloveds,

We're already past the first Sunday of Advent so there's a chance that you've noticed our Advent theme.... We're having a *green* Advent this year! I know; I know – Christmas colors are traditionally red and green; Advent colors are blue or purple, with a little bit of pink showing up in the third week. What's up with a green Advent, you ask?

One of our traditional Advent scripture texts is Isaiah 43.19:

*I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.*

And that's only *one* example of the creation-renewal texts for this season of preparation. All creation is waiting, being renewed with the birth of the Messiah; all of earth gets a new start!

What's true for creation is true for us, too. Jesus is a whole new thing in the history of humanity. God creates the universe and all that is within – the sun and the stars; the moon and the seasons; creepy-crawly critters and everything to eat. And humanity, of course – *Adam*. The word "Adam" is first used in the bible to denote all of humanity. Created from the earth, humankind returns to the earth and is bound to the earth throughout all of life. Adam is made from the earth, and it is from this "adamah" that Adam gets his name. This "earthly" aspect is a component of Adam's identity, and Adam's curse of estrangement from the earth seems to result in humankind's identity being divided – earthly yet separated from nature.

By the time of Jesus' birth, it's clear things are not going well. People are separated from the land, lacking the resources to grow sufficient food for survival. In informal theological terms, the birth of Jesus, who is sometimes referred to as the New Adam, is a cosmic re-boot of creation. In those times and in our times, we observe Advent best by considering changes that come from the promise of a new start.

This Advent in liturgy, hymnody and examination of our sacred texts we will attend to the greening of the earth that is part of the promise of the coming of Jesus. Each week we will sing that *All Earth is Waiting*.

Let us pray for green-peace and earth's renewal this Advent, and mark the days toward the birth of the New Adam by renewing our commitment to the earth from which we are made and to which we return. Look elsewhere in this issue of *Church Chapters* for ways you can prepare for Christmas in earth-friendly, renewing ways.

Blessings,

Ann

## **FROM THE MINISTER OF FAITH FORMATION**

Beloved of God,

We have entered the Season of Advent, that time of waiting and preparation when we anticipate the renewal of creation in the cry of a newborn child. In this time of longing and hope, the Board of Faith Formation and First Church Staff invite you to consider participation in one of the following Spiritual Growth opportunities...

### **First Hour: First Christmas**

Beginning Sunday, November 27 and running each Sunday through December 18 at 9am, First Hour will be reading and discussing Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan's *First Christmas: What the Gospels Really Teach about the birth of Jesus*. This text invites readers to explore the social, political, and theological contexts of the Gospel nativity narratives. Copies of the book are available in Fellowship Hall for \$6.

### **Vespers and Bible Study**

Take some time in the middle of the week to recenter and enter into deeper relationship with God as we gather for contemplative worship and Bible Study each Wednesday night with worship at 6:30pm and reflection on the weekly focus Scripture at 7pm. Kicking off on Wednesday, November 30, Vespers and Bible Study will continue through the winter and spring.

### **Worship Circle**

The Children's Worship Circle joins with the whole congregation in celebrating a "Green Advent." We will dig into the words of the Prophet Isaiah, the Psalmist, and the community of Luke and explore the rich images they offer of the mountains and valleys, rivers and stars awaiting the re-creation of the world in the Christ who ushers in God's Reign of justice, peace, and compassion. There will be no Worship Circle December 25 as the whole congregation will celebrate Christmas morning together in the sanctuary.

### **Youth Group**

In keeping with our green theme and our congregation's commitment to sustainability, the youth will come together Wednesday, December 21 to think and talk about "Stuff." 5:30-7pm.

Blessings to you, beloved ones, as together we long for the birth of Light and Love!

In peace,  
Joe

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## **COMPILATION OF GREEN TIPS December, 2011**

### **WEEK 1: SPEND, SPEND, SPEND OR SERVE, SERVE, SERVE**

During this Advent season, if it's feasible, why not consider giving a gift of your service or paying for the service of a professional to aid a friend or relative. In these tough economic times for so many, offering or performing these

services to a friend or relative is all the more valued. Every thing from baby sitting to snow plowing; plumbing to health care or an occasional visit – they all count. It's service, rather than more stuff.

### **WEEK 2: GIFTS YOU MAKE**

Some of the most precious, meaningful and memorable gifts we have given or received are ones that were "home-made." Prime examples in this church include such items as Eve E's prayer shawls, Donna C's quilts, Suzanne B's or Jo-Ann R's food preparations, to name just a few. If you have a creative skill, share the fruits of your labors of love as a Christmas, birthday or everyday gift for a friend or relative.

### **WEEK 3: TURN OUT THE LIGHTS**

We're not talking here about the exit lights in the church. On 24/7, they are LED, draw next to no electric power and will probably last at least 70,000 hours. The Christmas Tree lights are also LED.

In spite of the signs reminding us to turn out all unneeded lights in Fellowship Hall or the Sanctuary, we have become negligent. Let's turn on only those lights needed and turn them off as soon as they are no longer needed. At home, turn off the lights when you leave a room. Make it a habit.

### **WEEK 4: LET US RESOLVE**

Over the past few years, just about all of us have probably changed some of the hardware, appliances and our own behaviors to cut waste, cost and abuse of the planet in the past few years – all with good intentions. What we need now is to check on how faithful we have been to those changed BEHAVIORS. On a Christmas list for the planet, ourselves and future generations, let us make a list of all the behaviors that we could adopt or re-enforce as better stewards of God's creation in 2012.

Keep the list throughout the coming year. When one behavior has become habitual, check it off and move to another item on your list. When Advent rolls around next year, let's count the number of leaves we have turned over – those changes, old and new, we have made and kept. Then be truly proud of the advances we have made.

### **DECEMBER CALENDAR**

Wednesday, December 7, 3:00 p.m. in FH - Justice and Peace Ministry Meeting

### **JUSTICE AND PEACE MINISTRY NEWS**

Monday, December 12, 7:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Meetinghouse, 46 Spring Hill Road, Storrs: (Free Admission) Watch "JOYEUX NOEL," the true story of what took place Christmas Eve, 1914 on a World War I battlefield. The film is a stranger-than-fiction event that changed the lives of soldiers from France, Germany and England.

## STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE

### Too Good To Be True Giving

*"By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn will break upon us."  
Luke 1:78*

These words come from the amazing poem known as the Benedictus, the blessing of Zechariah on his surprising gift-son, John (the Baptist). Zechariah is one of those minor characters in the birth narratives of Jesus, often lost in the shuffle of shepherds and magi that populate our Christmas pageants. Yet Zechariah gives us a great gift for Advent: the gift of the skeptic.

When an angel told Zechariah that his middle-aged wife Elizabeth would have a baby, he didn't believe it. All his life this man had been faithfully serving God; clearly he was a sincere believer. He held onto his faith through the years of their infertility and who knows how many other problems in their lives. But when an angel promises something "too good to be true," the skeptic in Zechariah comes out and he rejects the God he has relied on when things have been truly bad.

This Christmas let us be about giving to the world in ways that are too good to be true. Let the skeptics see that love is more powerful than anyone expects it to be. Let us, in the image of God, give of ourselves in life-transforming ways beyond presents under the tree, just like Zechariah and Elizabeth and John. Nothing about God is ever too good to be true! Merry Christmas.

*Rochelle A. Stackhouse is the Senior Minister of The Church of the Redeemer, United Church of Christ, New Haven Connecticut.*

**December 2011**



*This resource is a free service and is made possible by your gifts to Our Church's Wider Mission.*

### HOLIDAY OUTREACH FROM BOARD OF MISSION

WAIM FOR KIDS ONLY is a chance for children 5-11 to shop for a gift for Mom and Dad. To participate, put new or gently used items (unwrapped) in the box in Fellowship Hall. Items are especially needed for Dads. Due by December 11.



WAIM GIFTS FOR TEENS provides gift vouchers for teens 13-17 who qualify for the program. To participate, make a check and send to WAIM or a check to FCC, noting gifts for teens. Due by Dec. 11.

ADOPT-A-FAMILY provides gifts and a holiday meal for a needy family. We will sponsor families referred by WAIM and the town of Mansfield. Info regarding gift requests will hang on a tree in Fellowship Hall in December. Gifts should be wrapped and are due by December 15.

Diane Wright

## SEWING & SERVICE

We have completed more than half of the school kits and still need about 15 more of the 150-200 page notebooks to complete the rest. For layettes, we have been sewing gowns, shirts and the diapers made of T-shirts which help make the required 6 per kit along with purchased (expensive) ones. The health kits are started but about 30 large toothed combs are needed. Your help with providing the contents of these CWS kits is greatly appreciated!

If you are interested, we also have a pattern for a baby sweater you could knit (or learn to knit by joining Carol Drescher's knitting group). Another possible opportunity for service is filling "Ditty Bags" for seafarers from other countries who become stranded in Boston Harbor over Christmas. We could make the bags if anyone wishes to collect such things as toiletries, gloves, games or other items to fill them. All these donations can be left on or near the first door on the right in fellowship hall.

Thanks so much!

Adelaide, Carol, Donna and Eve

### NO FREEZE HOSPITALITY NEEDS OUR HELP!

They have some 50% more guests this year than at this time last year. They are especially in need of:

- \* Twin sheets, blankets, pillows & vinyl pillow case covers
- \* Towels and face clothes
- \* Socks & underwear (men's & women's)
- \* Toothbrushes & toothpaste

No Freeze Hospitality Center (Adult Center)  
1110 Main Street – P.O. Box 46  
Willimantic, CT 06226  
Telephone: (860) 450-1346

Website: [www.nofreeze.org/](http://www.nofreeze.org/)  
E-Mail: [windham.nofreeze@gmail.com](mailto:windham.nofreeze@gmail.com)

### A MESSAGE FROM THE SHIRSHAC FAMILY

Dear Church Family,

I would like to express my many thanks and gratitude for all the prayers, kind words, visits at the hospital both clerical and sister friends and for the meals which have been sustaining us through this recovery period. Recovery would be far more difficult without it.

May the love and light of our creator shine blessings upon you.

Thank you ~ Ellen, Randy and Mike Shirshac

## Permanent Church Sign

Tired of looking at the temporary sandwich board sign announcing events in front of the church? Would you like to see an architecturally appropriate sign in its place? Well now is your chance to be part of the team that will work toward permanent signage. Jo-Anne Roberts has agreed to be part of the group of folks interested in working on the sign project. She needs your help. Please call her at 860-423-2149

***Do you have talents to share with your First Church Family?  
Do you want to try something new?***

**Please consider First Church committee membership!**

**Join with a friend!....**Most committees meet once a month on or "on-call" and sponsor activities throughout the year. Available terms range from 1-3 years and will begin in February 2012. Here are vacancies to consider:

- **Board of Faith Formation:** 3-4 vacancies
- **Board of Mission:** 3 vacancies
- **Nominating Committee:** 3-4 vacancies
- **Stewardship Committee:** 3 vacancies

In addition, it is anticipated that the Church Clerk position will be vacant and we are seeking Ushers, Alternate Delegates to the UCC (including youth delegates) and members of the Justice and Peace Steering Committee.

If you are interested in joining a committee or if you have questions, please contact Jo-Ann Wunschel at: [joneshell@sbcglobal.net](mailto:joneshell@sbcglobal.net).

## **GIFTS, GOODS AND TALENTS AUCTION HUGE SUCCESS**

Thanks to everyone for your generous contributions to our Annual Fundraiser. This year's event has brought in \$4765 to date. We would never be able to make this so successful without everyone doing their part selling tickets, contributing and helping to set-up, clean up and make and serve the food.

This year we had 100 people for dinner and then we all enjoyed the silent and live auction event. We hope this year's format worked for you. It was our attempt to make the evening run more smoothly and finish at a reasonable time. Your feedback on the evening would be helpful. If you have constructive suggestions please let me know.

Again, a huge thank you to all!

Donna Clauson



**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup>**

10:00am – 2:00 pm Bread Baking Lessons

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup>**

2:30 pm Church Friends at The Bansal's

**CHRISTMAS EVE, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup>**

7:00 pm Family Christmas Eve Service

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 6<sup>TH</sup>**

5:30 pm - Epiphany Festival: Simple soup supper concludes in candlelight surrounding the communion table, remembering our baptisms and singing our songs of light.

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 13<sup>TH</sup>: 6:00 PM**

**6:00 pm** - Emma and Steve Lane share stories of sweat and Spirit from their summer mission trip to Oaxaca, Mexico. Come be fed, inspired and uplifted by the good work that is being accomplished with your support and prayers!

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 29<sup>TH</sup>**

Annual Meeting following Worship

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!**

### **DECEMBER**

1 <sup>ST</sup>	AVA LITTLE SUSAN HEWES KATHLEEN WARD ELENA GERVINO
2 <sup>ND</sup>	BOB O'CONNELL
3 <sup>RD</sup>	FREDERICK MASTERTON
6 <sup>TH</sup>	AMY ELIAS ANWAR KHAZAI
7 <sup>TH</sup>	ADELAIDE CORCORAN
8 <sup>TH</sup>	WALEED KHAZAI
12 <sup>TH</sup>	EILEEN STOCK JOHN CLAUSON JOE CLAUSON
13 <sup>TH</sup>	ELIZABETH ROSE
16 <sup>TH</sup>	PAULINE HAYES
23 <sup>RD</sup>	BILL DECYK
27 <sup>TH</sup>	DONNA CLAUSON
28 <sup>TH</sup>	KAITLYN MORGAVIO
31 <sup>ST</sup>	REBECCA HAEGER SKYANNE ROBITAILLE



# 11 LESSONS LEARNED FROM MISSION:1

Resource: <http://www.ucc.org/feed-your-spirit/your-life-better/11-lessons-learned-from-mission1/>

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Here is collection of words from just a few of our churches and members across the UCC, paired with inspiring quotes about giving and receiving.

## LESSON 1:

Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle.  
~ Philo of Alexandria ~

"In my younger days, my first real job was working at a furlough house for women coming out of prison. I learned, then, never to judge another. To be open-minded and fair to everyone."  
~ Diane Frederick ~

## LESSON 2:

At the point where hope would otherwise become hopelessness, it becomes faith.  
~ Robert Brault ~

"The faith of people who are living on the edge – day to day – is stronger than most of us who don't have to be concerned about where the next meal or bed is coming from."  
~ Pat C. Whiting ~

## LESSON 3:

When you carry out acts of kindness . . . it is as though something inside your body responds and says, yes, this is how I ought to feel.  
~ Rabbi Harold Kushner ~

"Our local food bank was getting empty so we raised awareness in the paper, at city council, at the Chamber of Commerce, through posters, and word of mouth. The response was amazing!"  
~ Jeannette Solimine ~

## LESSON 4:

If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one.  
~ Mother Teresa ~

"When we serve at Volunteer Ministries, I always like to pour the drinks and hand them out. It lets me be face-to-face with everyone, look them in the eyes. It has been the best experience for me because it isn't just food and the giving/receiving is going in both directions." ~ Tonya Barnette ~

## LESSON 5:

I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.  
~ (1 Corinthians 9.23) ~

"We take so much for granted. A woman with two teenage boys taught me that when I pushed a cart with two weeks of emergency groceries to her car the week before Thanksgiving. To me, it was only groceries. To her, it was as if God's blessings had been poured out upon her and was more than she could ever have imagined...She hugged me and I cried."  
~ Jim Brehler~

## LESSON 6:

Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.  
~ (2 Corinthians 8:2) ~

"Even when my partner and I were homeless it seemed like we were always able to give...no matter how 'poor' you are, you are never 'poor' enough to not give back and that God provides what is needed to you, not what you think you need."  
~ Ashley Dwyer ~

## LESSON 7:

God, how manifold are your works! We look to you to give us our food in due season; when you give it to us, we gather it up, when you open your hands, we are filled with good things.  
~ (Psalm 104, adapted) ~

"I am amazed at the gardens grown by people who won't use the produce but give it instead to the food pantry. One man gave his 50 pounds of squash and 100 pounds of beets."  
~ Susan Graham DeCoster ~

## LESSON 8:

Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive.  
~ (Matthew 21:22) ~

"To come to a pantry takes an incredible amount of courage. Receiving (and asking) is just as much of a spiritual journey as giving."  
~ Laura Dunaway ~

## LESSON 9:

Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?  
~ (Matthew 25:37) ~

"I've learned that our guests have much more in common with me than I could have imagined. They have a need for love, laughter and a time for talking. I have learned what grace and thankfulness really mean."  
~ Don Immeku ~

## LESSON 10:

Lord, to those who hunger, give bread. And to those who have bread, give the hunger for justice."  
~ Latin American prayer ~

"People are seeking to be filled in more ways than one."  
~ Kim Stillmock Dexter ~

## LESSON 11:

There are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.  
~ Mahatma Gandhi ~

"The need is profound."  
~ Joseph Parker ~



# FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN MANSFIELD – DECEMBER 2011



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				<b>1</b>  6:45PM Chime Choir 7:30PM Vocal Choir	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>  9AM First Hour – First Christmas 10:15AM Worship 11:30AM Knit for the Needy 4-6PM Confirmation & Adult Reconfirmation	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>  10:30AM Prayer Group 1-2:30PM Book Group 3PM Just Peace & Ministry Mtg 4:30PM Community Peace Vigil	<b>8</b>  6:45PM Chime Choir 7:30PM Vocal Choir	<b>9</b>  2:30PM Church Friends at the Bansal's	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b>  9AM First Hour - First Christmas 10:15AM Worship	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>  10:30AM Prayer Group 1-2:30PM Book Group 4:30PM Community Peace Vigil	<b>15</b>  6:45PM Chime Choir 7:30PM Vocal Choir	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>18</b>  9AM First Hour - First Christmas 10:15AM Worship 12:30PM Hawkins Family Party	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>  10:30AM Prayer Group 1-2:30PM Book Group 4:30PM Community Peace Vigil 5:30PM Youth Group 6:30pm Vespers/Bible Study	<b>22</b>  6:45PM Chime Choir 7:30PM Vocal Choir	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>  7PM Family Christmas Eve Service
<b>25</b>  10:15AM Worship Jolly Jammie Worship – Carols & Stories  <b>CHRISTMAS DAY!</b>	<b>26</b>  Office Closed	<b>27</b>  9:30AM Prayer Quilts	<b>28</b>  10:30AM Prayer Group 4:30PM Community Peace Vigil 6:30pm Vespers/Bible Study	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>