



The Steeple

December 2020



FROM OUR PASTOR

The season we call Advent began on November 29. The main theme of this season is waiting, expecting, hoping. This waiting has a dual focus. We try to get in touch with what the Israelites were feeling before Jesus came. We also focus on the Second Coming of Jesus, which hasn't happened yet.

Well, that's what the church's liturgy is about, anyway. I don't know if it really connects with life as you live it today. I mean, let's face it: how many of us go around saying to ourselves, "I sure wish Jesus would come back soon!" Maybe a few of us? Even fewer spend any time wondering why it took so many centuries for God to send Jesus the first time, or why the world still seems so screwed up 2,000 years after he was here.

What are we waiting for, really? Right now many of us are waiting impatiently for an end to this doggone pandemic! We have heard the good news: scientists invented some vaccines for it. The bad news is: the vaccines won't be coming soon to where we live. Some time next year, I guess. Optimists say March, pessimists say October.

Are you waiting for Christmas to get here? You are, if you're a kid; but kids don't read the church newsletter. For grown-ups, the approach of Christmas means worrying about how we're going to afford the gifts, food, decorations, etc., that we usually spend money on in December, and wondering how we can make family celebrations happen if it's unsafe to gather.

Some of our Bible readings put us in touch with how eagerly the first Christians wanted Jesus to come back. But other parts of the New Testament are from a somewhat later time, when Christians were disappointed that Jesus was taking so long to show up.

Some of them decided they'd better settle in for the long haul, adjusting their expectations a bit and focusing on the here-and-now. So they shared advice on healthy family life. They got their congregations better organized, less chaotic. They cultivated the value of hard work. They de-emphasized spectacular gifts such as prophecy, speaking in tongues, and expelling demons. They didn't give up hoping for Jesus to come back, but they realized that life as they knew it might perhaps continue for several more generations.

We too have to adjust our expectations. We have to make the best of what we have now. We have to do what needs to be done today, instead of waiting for someone to come down from the sky and make it all better.

And those of us who make these adjustments may hear the benediction spoken by one Christian leader in Ephesians 3:20-21: "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."





WORSHIP UPDATE

The service will be live on Zoom. If you have any question or problems you can contact Mark Hudgik , call or text 413 474-0079.

**You are invited to the South Hadley Methodist Church
Sunday worship service at 10:00 a.m. on Zoom**

To join service go to the church web site www.thesteepelinthefalls.org

The worship service will be posted on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/TheSteepleInTheFalls/>



From Our Lay Leader - A Kind of Twilight Zone

How was your Thanksgiving? Strange, I imagine. Different, weird, not much like those of previous years. Our world seems to be hanging in a kind of Twilight Zone, waiting to emerge with all this behind us. But for now, we must live the reality we have.

Have you thought about what your Christmas might look like? I believe by the time we get deep into Advent, the restraints imposed on us will be even greater than they are now. This begs the question, how will we celebrate Christmas? I personally see this as an opportunity to dial back the unrealistic expectations we have come to live with as time has gone by. Since we are being forced to spend time together, we can do things like make cookies together, listen to (or make) Christmas music, or do whatever our particular family enjoys.

On Christmas day, will you be by yourself or with one or two others, and no parties? You might consider Mary and Joseph walked to Jerusalem alone and the night Christmas came to be, they, and probably a midwife were by themselves as the baby was born. There were no festive lights, no tree filled with ornaments, no cookies. Instead of lamenting the loss of our festivities, we can reflect on the way we have wedged Jesus out of Christmas replaced him with a spending orgy. Perhaps a more subdued Christmas is what we need. It wouldn't hurt any of us to calm down and reflect on the most incredible gift ever given.

Merry Christmas!

Mary Lou



The Spirit of Christmas



Our church is once again helping families have a merry Christmas by purchasing and wrapping gifts for the children. Last year we helped forty children have a happy Christmas. So far this year we will help put smiles on sixty-six children.

Thank you to all who are helping to make this happen. You are amazing.

NO BAKE-BAKE SALE

Thank you for your generosity. The UM Women received \$195 from the 'no-bake-bake-sale'. The money will be used to support our missions.

CELEBRATIONS & CONCERNS



PRAY FOR: Carol Brunelle, Carol Szulc, Eunice Mittler, Harry Thomas, Beth Dietz, Pauline Kiakis, Samantha Snopek, Adele Reynolds, Bev Pead & Family, Doug & Dee Brooksbank, Frank Hudgik, Dave Fanaras, Tom Deren, Tim O'Donnell, Vinnie Deitner, Darlene Dout, Stafford Bent, Tom O'Dea, Bob & Viola Mortimer, Colleen Mortimer



CASSEROLES

Seven casseroles were delivered in November to Kate's Kitchen. Casseroles will be delivered at 9:30 a.m. on December 28. If you need your casserole picked up call Ann 695-1212 and make arrangements for your casserole to be picked up curb side.



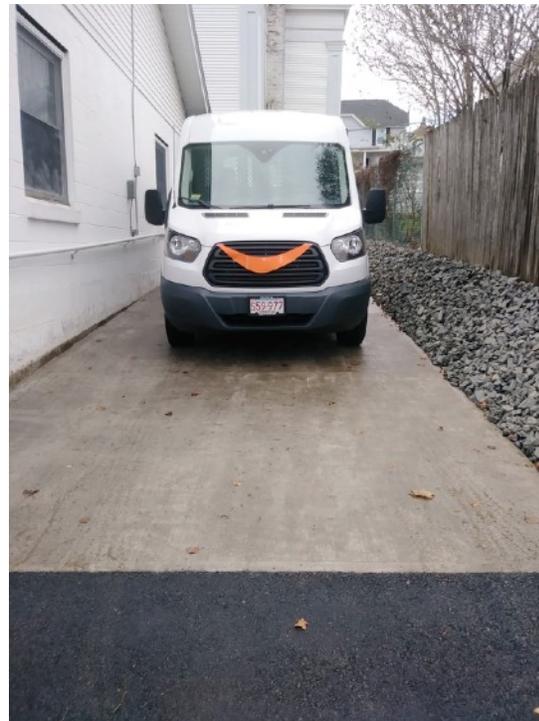
NEW RAMP TO BACKDOOR



The walkway/ramp to our back door is completed. It is handicap accessible. It is now easier to use - it is not as steep. And when it rains the water runs away from the building.

The Neighbors Helping Neighbors van is smiling because she loves the new ramp. It makes it easier to move the food from the van into the building.

Thank you, So. Hadley Methodist Church!



Christmas Word Scramble

Unscramble the letters to find words which have to do with Christmas. Some of the words have religious meanings, others are secular in nature.

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|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Groceos _____ | 11. Limesotte _____ |
| 2. Naclorig _____ | 12. Vaniyitt _____ |
| 3. Rats _____ | 13. Gotscink _____ |
| 4. Scunttshe _____ | 14. Virasou _____ |
| 5. Porduhl _____ | 15. Traweh _____ |
| 6. Naast _____ | 16. Gisehl _____ |
| 7. Skagceap _____ | 17. Wamsonn _____ |
| 8. Dressephh _____ | 18. Ejuss _____ |
| 9. Gramen _____ | 19. Stranneom _____ |
| 10. Galen _____ | 20. Scamsthir _____ |

Prayer inspired by Psalm 78:1-7

God of infinite love and care for the whole of your creation,
God of enduring faithfulness and wise guidance in tumultuous times,
We come to you with hearts opened and closed;
We seek to open our lives to the fullness of your love and guiding wisdom
Yet, we close ourselves in waves of fear and anxiety in these distressing days,
even as You promise *never* to fail us.
The world fails, but You do not.

On this day, we see, hear, taste, and smell your presence
in the brilliance of autumn leaves and the smells of dinner cooking,
in congregations gathered electronically and serving their communities.
You call us to be faithful in this moment –
to follow in your ways
to teach our children and their children
to inspire and support the present generation and all those to come.
You call us to learn from You daily and always,
witnessing that You are faithful
and want us to be faithful.
Help us to open ourselves to your call, to live in your Spirit
even in deeply troubling times,
especially in troubling times;
Give us hope that violence and injustice *can* be dismantled,
hope to love You and our neighbors with our whole selves,
hope to center our lives on You and your teachings
for our own sakes, for all who are oppressed and violated,
and for all who come after us!

God of infinite love and enduring faithfulness,
We give thanks to you,
And we pray for the light of your wisdom and the strength of your spirit
as we seek to love and follow you
in ways that are ancient
and yet shaped for this moment.

God, in your mercy, hear our prayer!
AMEN.

Mary Elizabeth Moore, Dean and Professor of Theology and Education, Boston University School of Theology, UMC deacon.



All are welcome! Join us for worship or join in one of our missions.

South Hadley Methodist Church
30 Carew Street
South Hadley MA 01075



Rev. Peter Milloy: 413-310-5027

Worship Sunday 10:00 a.m.

Church office: 413-532-0500

e-mail: churchoffice@thesteepleinthefalls.org

web site: www.thesteepleinthefalls.org

Dr. Heather Reichgott, Minister of Music

Ann Felsentreger, Secretary

Neighbors Helping Neighbors: 413-437-7593

The blessings of peace,
the beauty of hope,
the spirit of love,
the comfort of faith
*May this be your gifts
this Christmas season.*

QUOTEDIARY.COM



SOUTH HADLEY METHODIST CHURCH

30 Carew Street

South Hadley, Massachusetts 01075-2705

Return address service requested.