

Opus Christi Works of Christ

St. James United Methodist Church
646 Daniel Webster Highway
Merrimack, NH 03054
Rev. Annie Baker-Streevy, Pastor
Robin House, Office Administrator

Contact Us:

Office phone: (603)424-7459
Email: stjamesmrmk@gmail.com
Stjames-umchurch.org
Facebook: St. James UMC
Prayer Request email: sjprayerchain@gmail.com

Building Christian Community Within and Beyond the Church



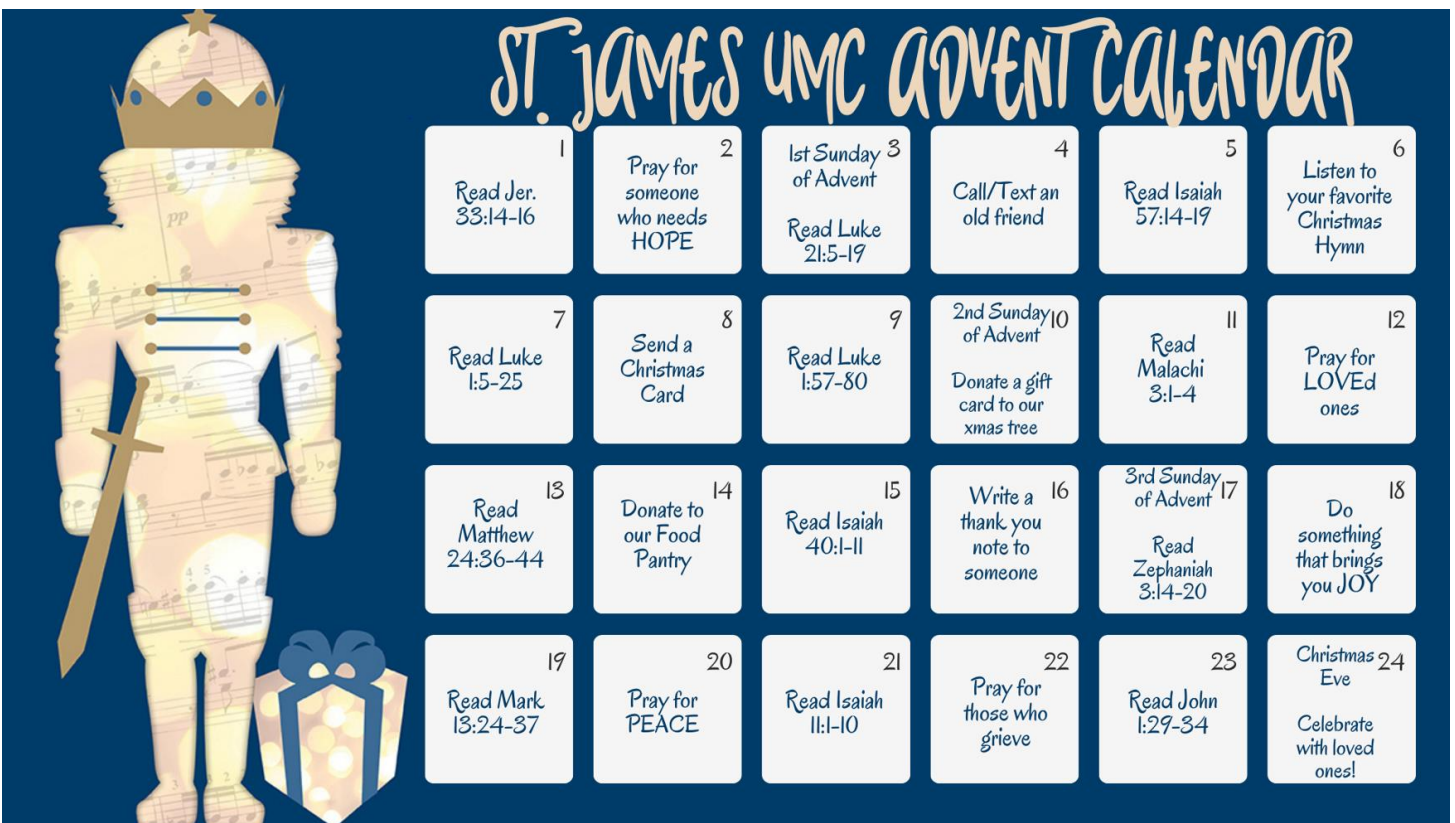
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Pastor's Message

Advent is my most favorite time of year. There is something magical, holy, special, sacred in the air as we anticipate the coming of Christ. The word "advent" literally means "coming" and we wait with hope, love, joy, and peace for the promise of God's kingdom to break into our world through the birth of Christ. This year, I invite you to celebrate Advent using the Advent Calendar below, which I created for our congregation. Each day there is a simple invitation to spend time with God through Scripture, prayer, acts of kindness, and more. I pray that this Advent Season we draw closer to God and to each other as we wait for Christ's birth.

Pastor Annie



ST. JAMES UMC ADVENT CALENDAR

1 Read Jer. 33:14-16	2 Pray for someone who needs HOPE	3 1st Sunday of Advent Read Luke 21:5-19	4 Call/Text an old friend	5 Read Isaiah 57:14-19	6 Listen to your favorite Christmas Hymn
7 Read Luke 1:5-25	8 Send a Christmas Card	9 Read Luke 1:57-80	10 2nd Sunday of Advent Donate a gift card to our xmas tree	11 Read Malachi 3:1-4	12 Pray for LOVED ones
13 Read Matthew 24:36-44	14 Donate to our Food Pantry	15 Read Isaiah 40:1-11	16 Write a thank you note to someone	17 3rd Sunday of Advent Read Zephaniah 3:14-20	18 Do something that brings you JOY
19 Read Mark 13:24-37	20 Pray for PEACE	21 Read Isaiah 11:1-10	22 Pray for those who grieve	23 Read John 1:29-34	24 Christmas Eve Celebrate with loved ones!

WORSHIP

Outreach Team Giving Tree

Submitted by Chris Kiss

From November 26-December 17, the Outreach team will collect gift cards (\$25 each) to stores such as Target and Walmart to be given to the food pantry clients to help them buy gifts for their families. You can bring them to church and hang them on the tree in the Sanctuary.



GIVING TREE



**Come
Decorate for
Christmas**

Decorating the Sanctuary
Saturday, December 2 from 9 am to noon.

Church work days are a great way to give a helping hand and enjoy spending time with your friends from church. Come help decorate the Sanctuary for Advent and Christmas.



Ugly Sweater Day

Share your joy by wearing your ugly sweaters to church on Sunday, December 17!



Blue Christmas Thursday, December 21 at 7:00 pm.
A service of light and hope for those who struggle during the holiday season.

Christmas Eve Two services on Sunday December 24
9:30 am Family Christmas Eve service during our normal Sunday morning worship time
9:00 pm Traditional candlelight Christmas Eve service

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



Advent Book Study: *The Gift of the Nutcracker* by Matt Rawle

Four Wednesdays during Advent – November 29, December 6, 13 and 20 at 7 pm via Zoom.

"The Nutcracker" is a delightful and whimsical Christmas classic that children and adults look forward to every year. First performed in 1892, the music, dance, and story of this classic hold a special place in our cultural Christmas celebrations. In *The Gift of the Nutcracker*, Matt Rawle, author of *The Redemption of Scrooge*, explores the story to help us understand God's greatest gift of the Christ child, and the kingdom Christ came to establish. Books are available in the church office for \$15. Contact the church office or sign up on the bulletin board in the office hallway so we can send you the Zoom invitation for the discussion.

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Bible Quiz

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Elizabeth, an older relative of Mary the mother of Jesus, was miraculously pregnant at the same time as Mary. What was the name of Elizabeth's husband?

- A. Aaron
- B. Zechariah
- C. Joseph
- D. Simeon

Answer: B (See Luke 1:5, 39-41.)

OUTREACH



Food Pantry News

Submitted by Julie and Olivia Gage

The number of families that the Merrimack Community Food Pantry serves continues to rise. About 10-15 new families per month have been coming to us for assistance. We distributed 80 Thanksgiving baskets on November 17.

If you would like to help us keep our shelves stocked, we are running low on oatmeal, canned peas, jelly/jam/preserves, and condiments such as mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard, relish and pickles.

Holiday Closures for Food Pantry and Clothes Closet

The Merrimack Community Food Pantry and Clothes Closet will be closed December 26 and January 2 in observance of Christmas and New Year's Day.

FELLOWSHIP

Monthly Breakfast



The St. James United Methodist Men (UMM) would love to have you join them for breakfast on the first Saturday of every month. RSVP to George Fisher at fishergf@comcast.net so he knows how many people to expect.

Date: Saturday, December 2

Time: 8:00 am

Place: Mary Ann's Diner, 1 Craftsman Lane, Amherst



Carols and Cookies

Carols Cookies & Claus

Sunday, December 10, 2023 from 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Please join us for an afternoon of singing followed by refreshments in Fellowship Hall and a special visitor from the North Pole. Kids young and old have your picture taken with Santa!
Admission is free.
Contributions to the refreshment table are welcome.

Breakfast with Santa



Breakfast with Santa

Saturday, December 16, 2023 from 9:00 – 11:00 am

Enjoy some delicious pancakes, sausage, juice and coffee. Bring your cameras and take pictures of your children visiting with Santa.
Admission costs \$10 for adults, \$8 for children, free for children under 5 years old.
Volunteers needed. See Brenda DuLong if you would like to help.

Heaven Sent Meals Fundraiser

Submitted by Linda Wilson



Heaven Sent Meals is a great way to stock your freezers for those nights when you don't feel like cooking. Here's how it works: First we need people to sign up to make meals. Meals should serve 2-3 people. Pans will be available in the church office. Meals must be delivered to church no later than January 28. Then they will be available for others to purchase for \$12 each. Linda Wilson will have sign-up sheets in Fellowship Hall after church on the following dates:

Dates: Sign up to make meals after church on December 3, 10, 24 and 31.
Sign up to purchase meals on January 7, 14 and 21.
Pick-up meals on January 28.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

LET'S TALK

"Let's Talk" -

Online conversations for older adults.



**Conversations bringing people together
and reducing social isolation.**

Talk, listen, enjoy community.

**These weekly online meetings are a great way to make new
friends while talking about your day, your plans, your
interests, or anything you want!**

These talks occur on the:

1st and 3rd Thursdays - 12pm to 1pm

2nd and 4th Thursdays - 9am to 10am



Log online here for both ZOOM meetings

Video link: <https://tinyurl.com/LetsTalkNH>

Dial in for audio: 1-312-626-6799





Tickets cost \$14 for adults, \$12 for seniors, and \$8 for students and can be purchased through the MCA website www.merrimackconcer.org, or at the door.

December 2023



New England Conference
The United Methodist Church

Connected is a publication of the New England Conference of The United Methodist Church. This monthly insert is designed put Conference news directly into the hands of our local church members.

Find more at www.neumc.org.

Conference welcomes 6 new EarthKeepers

The [Global Ministries EarthKeepers](#) training program equips U.S.-based United Methodists to launch and grow environmental projects in their communities.

In November, six members from the New England Conference were commissioned as EarthKeepers after having completed the training. Below are the NEAC's newest EarthKeepers. The Conference now has a total of 14.

Rev. Bumshik Min,
Suncook UMC, Suncook, NH
Charles (Chuck) Beltz,
Calvary UMC, Middletown RI
Rev. Kathleen Decker-Szakas,
Cape Elizabeth (ME) UMC
Grace Pugh Hubbard,
NEAC Climate Coordinator
Sharon Saunders,
Pleasant Street UMC, Waterville, ME
Bonnie-jean Rowe,
Beacon of Hope UMC, Framingham, MA

The Nov. 14 commissioning service was live streamed at www.facebook.com/GlobalMinistries. You can watch the recording there.

Hubbard writes more about her fellow EarthKeepers in her November blog. Find that on our website: www.neumc.org/blogs



Vision Forward Team seeks feedback

How are you valued, empowered, and equipped by the people who lead the New England Annual Conference: your bishop, district superintendents, pastors and additional resource leaders?

The Vision Forward Team, commissioned in 2020 by the Annual Conference, wants to know more about the effectiveness of our Annual Conference resources.

Together we have put together a brief survey that we believe will give all the churches an opportunity to provide feedback about your experiences.

The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete, but it will offer us invaluable insight into the needs of



our local churches. Please take the time to complete and return it.

Use the QR code to access the survey. Thank you in advance for your willingness to make our churches stronger.



In Christ, The Vision Forward Team



FIND LOTS MORE NEWS AND INFO ON OUR WEBSITE
www.neumc.org

Conference staff changes

Two staffers to retire

Bishop Peggy A. Johnson and Treasurer Clare J. Chapman announce that two New England Conference staff members have made the decision to retire.



Administrative Assistant Debbie Cannella and Controller Randy Van Deventer will complete their work with the Conference as of Dec. 31, 2023.

"We in New England owe a debt of love and gratitude to Debbie and Randy for their legacy of faithful service to the New England Annual Conference," said Bishop Johnson. "They have gone beyond the call of duty many times in order to carry out their ministry of administration for the church. We wish them every blessing in retirement."

Debbie has worked for the Conference since December 2006. She's held two roles during her tenure: her current position of administrative assistant in the Finance De-

partment and accounts receivable specialist.

Randy Van Deventer, who serves as Controller, began his work with the Conference amid the COVID shutdown in March 2020.

Seacoast District welcomes administrator

The New England Conference is pleased to announce that Fleurette Montes has joined the Conference staff as District Administrator. She will provide leadership and support to the Seacoast District, reporting to District Superintendent Wanda Santos-Perez.

Montes began her new role on Nov. 8, 2023. She works from the district office in Falmouth, MA. She takes over for Wanda Winnicki, who was assisting the district on a temporary basis.



"I am excited that Fleurette Montes has joined our Conference staff," said Seacoast District Superintendent Wanda Santos-

Pérez. "Fleurette brings great energy and experience with technology that will be assets to our district and the entire Conference."

Montes comes to the Conference from work at the Brockton (MA) Neighborhood Health Center, where she served as Senior Administrative Supervisor for four years until 2021, before becoming Telehealth Project Manager. Montes has a BA from Atlantic Union College. She lives in New Bedford, MA.

Arruda named Disaster Response Coordinator

Pastor David Arruda has been named the New England Conference Disaster Response Coordinator. Pastor Arruda, who serves Open Table of Christ in Providence, RI, and Faith Fellowship in Mansfield, MA, had been filling the role on an interim basis.



Bishop Johnson's Advent video series available

Bishop Peggy A. Johnson has created a series of three short reflections on the greenery of the Christmas season.

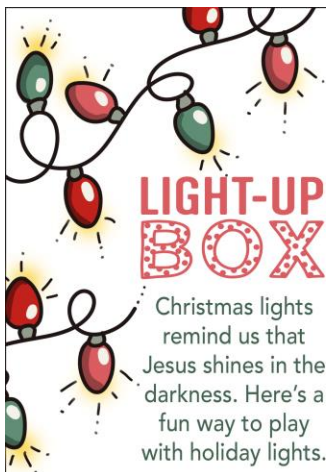
The videos are available to view or download from the website: www.neumc.org/news



Christmas greenery
An Advent series from
Bishop Peggy A. Johnson

Let's Connect

Do you have a story to share? A feature idea? A question to ask? Contact Beth DiCocco, Conference Director of Communications, at communicate@neumc.org or (978) 682-8055 ext. 150



LIGHT-UP BOX

Christmas lights remind us that Jesus shines in the darkness. Here's a fun way to play with holiday lights.

What you need:

- A strand of Christmas lights
- A large clear plastic container and lid
- Green tissue paper
- Colorful beads



What you do:

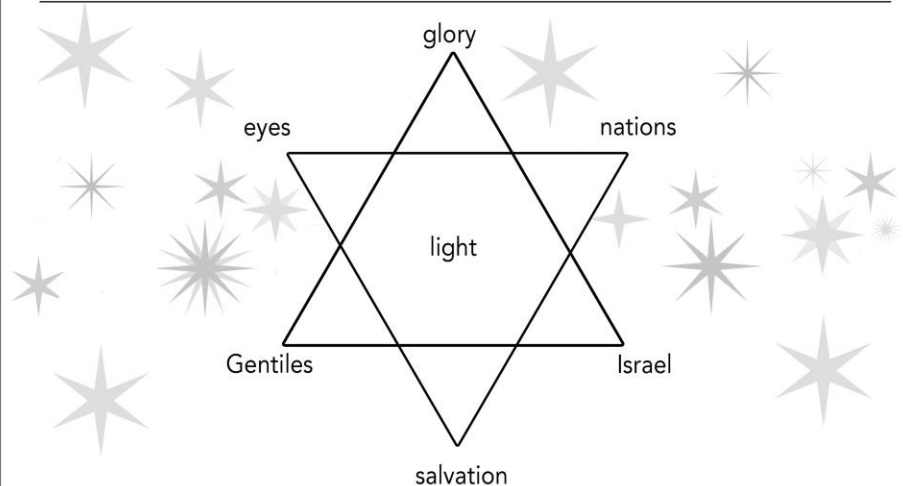
1. Plug in the lights and place them in the container.
 2. Put on the lid. (If the lid isn't transparent, flip the box over.)
 3. Play with your light box, using these ideas as starters:
 - Cut tissue paper into triangles and arrange them in a tree shape. Decorate the tree with colorful beads.
 - Use the light box for tracing. Place a picture on it, with a clean sheet of paper on top. Then trace the drawing.
 - Use magnet tiles to build designs atop the light box.
- Try building a 3-D Christmas tree!



SIMEON'S SIGHT

When Joseph and Mary brought baby Jesus to the temple, they heard a special prophecy from Simeon.

Directions: Using the star key, write the words in the correct spaces to complete Luke 2:30-32, NIV.



"For my _____ have seen your _____, which you have prepared in the sight of all _____: a _____ for revelation to the _____, and the _____ of your people _____."

Luke 2:30-32, NIV

Answers: eyes, salvation, nations, light, Gentiles, glory, Israel



December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26 9:30am Worship 5:30pm NH Table Tennis Club	27	28 8:00am Fit & Strong 9:00am Clothes Closet 9:30am Food Pantry 6:30pm Trustees Meeting	29 7:00pm Advent Book Study	30 8:00am Fit & Strong	1 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	2 8:00am Monthly Breakfast 9:00am Church Decorating Day
3 Advent 9:30am Worship 5:30pm NH Table Tennis Club	4	5 8:00am Fit & Strong 9:00am Clothes Closet 9:30am Food Pantry 7:00pm Finance Committee Meeting	6 7:00pm Advent Book Study	7 8:00am Fit & Strong	8 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	9
10 9:30am Worship 2:00pm Caroling, Cookies & Claus 5:30pm NH Table Tennis Club	11	12 8:00am Fit & Strong 9:00am Clothes Closet 9:30am Food Pantry 7:00pm Church Council Meeting	13 7:00pm Advent Book Study	14 8:00am Fit & Strong	15 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	16 9:00am Breakfast with Santa
17 9:30am Wear your ugly sweater to church 9:30am Worship 5:30pm NH Table Tennis Club	18	19 8:00am Fit & Strong 9:00am Clothes Closet 9:30am Food Pantry & Holiday Shoppe 7:00pm SPRC Meeting	20 7:00pm Advent Book Study	21 8:00am Fit & Strong 1:00pm Dress sewing group 7:00pm Blue Christmas Service	22 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	23
24 Christmas Eve 9:30am Family Christmas Eve Worship Service 5:30pm NH Table Tennis Club 9:00pm Candlelight Worship Service	25 Christmas Day	26 9:00am Clothes Closet closed for holiday 9:30am Food Pantry closed for holiday	27	28	29 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	30
31 9:30am Worship 5:30pm NH Table Tennis Club	1	2 8:00am Fit & Strong 9:00am Clothes Closet 9:30am Food Pantry 7:00pm Finance Committee Meeting	3	4 8:00am Fit & Strong	5 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	6 8:00am Monthly Breakfast