



THE PARISHIONER

THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, WOODBRIDGE 1738-2017

An Open, Welcoming, and Affirming Church

Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m.

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Pastor's Column

Reverend Shepard Parsons

To be honest, Christmas is a hard time for me. There is the expectation that family will gather together during the holidays, but this has never really been easy. Moreover, I find it hard to find gifts that are meaningful and yet affordable. Taking our cue from our 19th century Victorian ancestors our culture wants to believe that tinsel, wrapping paper, caroling, feasting and angels will obscure from view those who are poor and homeless, those who are sick, hungry, lonely, and those living in despair.

The season reminds me of those times I've gone to see a movie after having read the book. The book usually is much better. The filmmakers have taken the story and shaped and changed it into a movie that will have the greatest appeal for the largest number of people in order to make the most money. The plot is not as complicated as the book so it will be easier to follow. The characters are flattened out. This way it takes less work to understand why the characters behave the way that they do.

In the book, the plot, at times a bit convoluted, takes me out of myself to see another perspective, another world. The characters are complex, multi-dimensional; you know, "you love to hate 'em and you hate to love 'em."

One of my favorite books tells the story of an unwed, very pregnant teenager and her boyfriend making their way to his family's old homestead. They are not the only ones on the road. The Roman emperor has decreed that everyone must return to their hometowns to be counted and taxed. Rome's occupation forces insure that everyone is signing up. When she goes into labor they can't find a place to stay so her firstborn, a son, enters the world in a barn surrounded by livestock. There must have been a midwife present because teenage boys know nothing about assisting a birth. Meanwhile, out in the countryside, a group of boys and men protect a flock of sheep owned by someone else. They are poorly paid and fearful of lions. Suddenly their hearts freeze with fear and then swell with joy as a light shines in the darkness and they hear the words of the Prophet: early this morning a child was born in Bethlehem. He is the deliverer, the liberator of your people. (They later ascribe this event to angels and I have no reason to doubt them.) They make their way to town to see for themselves. They find the newborn wrapped in a swaddling blanket and lying in a manger. Together, the new parents and these rough, hard-edged, shepherds gaze at the new babe in awe.

Time passes. The new family stays on in Bethlehem, probably with relatives. Then, in the middle of a dark night a distant family relative living in Jerusalem awakens the father: "Go! Get up and go quickly! The puppet government of Herod is looking for your son to kill him!" This mom, dad and their 2-year-old son pack only what they can carry and head for Egypt. They spend several years in that foreign land as political refugees, illegal immigrants.

What the movie fails to show is how God takes this cast of characters – as poor, and young, and fearful, and helpless as they are – and saves the world. . . including you and me. This Christmas read the STORY. Read it again and again and again. Think about it. Talk about it. Tell it. Imagine it. Revel in it. Take joy in it. Yes, there's always that old Christmas movie that we act out each year, but read the book. It might just change the way you think about the story that became Christmas.

In Hopeful Expectation of Christ's Coming Again,



Community Carol Sing

Get your green and red sweaters out of those moth balls, everyone! The most wonderful time of the year is upon us: (drum roll please...) The Community Carol Sing. On Sunday, December 10, at 3:00, we encourage you to bring your entire family, all of your friends and their entire families to the sanctuary to make a joyful noise. So bring everyone you know! There will be wonderful music and jingle bells for all. John Womer and his Chief Elf Molly will be leading us in song and celebration.

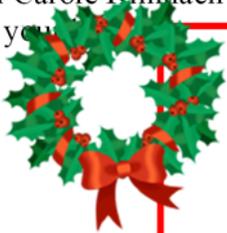


We will also be collecting new stuffed animals for Yale New Haven Children's Hospital Toy Closet as well.

Please join us in the Parish House directly after for a tea hosted by the Hospitality Committee. You won't want to miss one of the best church events of the year. Mark your calendars.

Carol Sing Reception

Keeping with tradition, we are having a Reception this year following the Community Carol Sing on December 10th and we need your help! We need bakers & sandwich makers to make the food that will get served. We need people to set out and serve the provided food and drink. We need people to set up the tables (immediately following coffee hour) that the food and drinks will be served on. And as always, we need help cleaning up after the reception. If you can help with any of these tasks, you have three ways to let us know you are available and how you would like to help. You can sign up in the Parish House during coffee hour, you can call Carole Kimmach at 203-387-3494, or you can email Bill More at wmore@att.net. Thank you in advance for your help.



TRIMMING BEE AND POT LUCK SUPPER

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2

2:00 p.m. Preparation and Wreath Making Begins
4:00 p.m. Children's Activities*
6:00 p.m. Potluck Supper
6:45 p.m. Lighting of the Tree on the Church Green
Singing of Christmas Carols

***We'll have activities from 4pm - dinner time.**
We will have crafts for all ages as well as cookies



Greens Greens Greens Greens!!!

Help is needed to transform our beautiful church for the Christmas season.

Fresh-cut evergreens are needed for the Trimming Bee.

Yew branches are especially needed for the Star. Blue spruce, pine, cedar and other evergreens are also needed. **Please no hemlock greens!!**

Please leave greens on the grass island in the parking lot in the rear of the Parish House during the week of November 26th. If you need help getting them here call Carole 203-389-2119.

Deacon's Caroling

The Deacons will be Carol Singing at Coachman's Square and The Willows on December 17. We will meet at the church at 2:15 pm and carpool to Coachman's Square first and Willows at 3:00 pm. If you would like to join us it would be wonderful. You can meet us at the church or catch up with us at the nursing homes.

Services for Christmas Week

Sunday, December 24 10:00 am

7:00 pm

Regular Worship

Christmas Eve Service





Christian Education

Morgan Nancy Aery
Director of Christian Education
morgannancyaery@gmail.com



Sunday School

Pageant Rehearsal will be on Sunday, December 10, during Sunday School. Parents, please allow us additional time after worship is over to prepare. We will need until 11:30 am to practice. Snacks will be provided for the kids while parents enjoy coffee hour.

The Pageant will be on Sunday, December 17, during the 10:00 am worship. Pageant participants will meet at 8:30 am in the Meetinghouse. If your child is interested in participating in the pageant, please contact Morgan by December 4 so that she can add additional parts to the script if necessary. Additional roles for children and youth who would prefer not to act include reading scripture, the Call to Worship, and other prayers.

If your child has a musical talent they would like to share on December 17, please let us know by December 4 so that we can plan with our organist and choir.



Holiday Schedule

Families are invited to worship together on Christmas Eve morning, as well as December 31st. Sunday School will resume on January 14th.

Nursery Care

Nursery Care is available in the Meetinghouse - through the choir room on the right side of the church building.

Youth Group

The Middle School Youth Group will gather together in the Meetinghouse for the Carol Sing on Sunday, December 10, at 3 pm.

We will enjoy the festive and participatory concert together before heading upstairs in the Parish House for a dinner and Christmas movie as well as a grab bag gift exchange.



Confirmation

The 7th-9th grade Confirmation Class will meet on Sunday, December 3, at 8:30 am in the Parish House.

Weekly Bible Study

Wednesday mornings from 10:00-11:00 a.m. the Deacons and the Rev. Shepard Parsons are holding a weekly morning Bible Study based on the Lectionary. We meet Wednesday mornings for fellowship and study. This is open to the community so bring your friends.

Here is a link to the lectionary: Revised Common Lectionary

<http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/calendar.php>

Look for the 2017-18 calendar and the Sunday forward Bible verses are what we discuss.



MUSIC NEWS

Senior Choir Rehearsal is on and Bell Choir on Mondays at 7:30 the choirs or just want to try it out will be meeting in the Choir Room.



Wednesdays, at 6:00 p.m. p.m. If you are interested in joining and see, join us for rehearsals. We



Church Council

December has arrived with all the joy and the stress of the Christmas season. At the same time we all remain aware of the tragic church shooting in Texas which is an event that concerns all faith based groups. There have been several informal discussions on what safety measures First Church needs to undertake ranging from learning as a congregation how to protect ourselves to the appropriateness of a police presence at our services. Carl Lindskog has contacted the Woodbridge Police Commissioner to see what steps could be taken and has inquired about the availability of a training video that would help us learn protective strategies.



First Church in keeping with our traditions has a full schedule of Advent events that are focused both on the celebration of the birth of Jesus and the joy of being with family and friends. So please join us as we pray, sing and celebrate the season as a congregation. We also have opportunities to share with members of the greater community through the annual Stocking Project, Caroling at Woodbridge's eldercare facilities on December 17 and of course the annual Community Carol Sing on December 10th. We will have opportunities to party with each other at the potluck that follows the Trimming Bee on December 2 and the reception that follows the Community Carol Sing. Look for details on these events throughout this issue of the *Parishioner* and come join in the festivities.

Looking forward to January, we have elections for some Lay leaders in the church at the January Congregational Meeting. Nominating Committee has been working to propose candidates for Treasurer, and to join Denise Rock on the Stewardship Committee. These positions are elected at the January Congregational meeting for terms that start immediately after the end of that meeting. If interested either in serving as Treasurer or on the Board of Stewardship, please contact a member of the Nominating Committee. Council has been working to name the two candidates Council needs to nominate to serve on the Nominating Committee, positions that are also elected at the January Congregational meeting. A third candidate for the Nominating Committee can be named at the meeting. If you are interested in serving on Nominating for a two-year term, please let me know.

As always, I am grateful for those who are serving First Church including the Deacon's for organizing our part in the Thanksgiving Turkey Drive sponsored by the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen and the stuffed toy drive for Yale New Haven Children's Hospital that will be linked this year with the Carol Sing, to Jinny Schneider and the Board of Christian Service for getting the Stocking Project organized, and John Womer along with his Chief Elf, Molly, for organizing the Carol Sing.

Bill More, Moderator

Stocking Project Underway!!!

The Christian Service Committee is organizing the Church Christmas stocking project, which will go to the families in the Valley Street neighborhood in nearby New Haven. These new items will be distributed by the District Manager of the Newhallville Substation to those most in need. She has suggested girls and boys clothing, toys, and books for a range of ages.

Bags grouped by age and gender are available in the Parish House for you to pick up and then shop. Suggested items are new outfits (pants and warm tops, pajamas, sleepsuits) and a toy or book for that age. Mittens and hats are welcome as well. If you cannot do a bag, feel free to put single or multiple items in the box which is next to the bag rack in the Parish House. Ages range from 2 to 14. If you cannot shop, you may contribute toward the project by a check made out to the church with the words "stocking project" in the memo section. Thanks so much; I am told the need is great.



The deadline for returning these items so Sergeant Renee

Dominguez can distribute them is Sunday, December 10, a firm date. They should be dropped off at the Parish House. If you have questions, call Jinny Schneider at 203-393-3721 or email at vrgnschneider@yahoo.com.

Christmas Poinsettias

Again this year we have an early due date for poinsettia orders, **Monday, December 4**. This is so that the poinsettias designated to go to shut-ins will be available to decorate the sanctuary for the Community Carol Sing and then delivered before the holiday. The poinsettias that people wish to take home will be the ones used to decorate the sanctuary on Christmas Eve.



MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Men's Fellowship will not be meeting in December but will be helping the congregation with all the Festivities we have planned for the month.



Columbus House Outreach Cooking Schedule 2017-2018

Once again we must thank all our committees for cooking and serving at Columbus House. This ministry of our church happens on the Sunday before the third Monday of every month. Henry Gates has been so generous in shopping every month so that all we have to do is cook on Sunday and serve on Monday! Each committee chairman will receive by email or snail mail instructions and directions approximately 10 days before they are to cook and serve. The following committees are scheduled for December Through August:

Monday, December 18	Music
Monday, January 15	Garden Ad Hoc
Monday, February 19	Hospitality
Monday, March 19	Troop 907 Boy Scouts
Monday, April 16	Church Council
Monday, May 14	Deacons
Monday, June 18	Trustees
Monday, July 16	Men's Fellowship
Monday, August 20	Open to Volunteers



Jesse Hubbard, Coordinator

Please Remember to get your final 2017 Pledge payments into the office by December 30,2017.

Parking

A reminder that there is no parking on the right hand side of the driveway of the church. Also Please refrain from blocking the pathway from Meetinghouse Lane, to our driveway in front of the church. Thank you.



Marking Life's Passages

The Parishioner

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NEXT PARISHIONER DEADLINE IS WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2017(a firm date)