

The Messenger

January 2018

The First Church of Monson, Congregational/UCC

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*This Month
at First Church*

Annual Reports are due in to the Church Office by **Friday, January 5**. Please email your report in Word or Publisher format to office@firstchurchmonson.org.

On **Sunday, January 7** following the worship service, the Stewardship team will lead an **All-church Budget Conversation** about the 2018 budget. Come and learn about what our boards and committees have planned for 2018. Get a preview of the 2018 Operating Budget before Annual Meeting. Ask any questions you have. Hope to see you there. Refreshments will be provided.

The **De-greening of the Sanctuary** is planned for **Monday, January 8** from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. Join us Monday evening to pack away the Christmas decorations. Any time you can give will be greatly appreciated. The de-greening of the Sanctuary generally goes more quickly than the greening.

**The Mission of the First Church of Monson is to praise God through prayer,
to share the Word and love of God by promoting fellowship in the community,
and to serve as stewards of God's creation –
all in a manner that glorifies God and emulates Christ.**



The **2018 Sanctuary Flower form** and sign-up sheet are available in the Fellowship Room. Please complete one form for each arrangement donated.

Winter Weather Cancellations: Watch local stations WFSB Channel 3, ABC 40, FOX 6, WWLP-TV 22 or go to www.wfsb.com, www.WWLP.com, or www.westernmassnews.com to see if worship services or church activities are canceled due to inclement weather.



The Outreach Committee will be collecting coats during the first weeks of January. The coats will go to the Springfield Rescue Mission. A collection box is set up in the Narthex. Thank you!

Reminder: **Annual Meeting** will be on Sunday, February 4, 2018. A light lunch will be provided. Child care will be available from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Messenger Mailing News



Starting in February 2018, the *Messenger* will no longer be sent to members and friends using bulk mailing. There will be four options available for continuing to receive the newsletter:

- pick up a print edition in church
- have a copy emailed to you
- read the edited version posted on the First Church website (firstchurchmonson.org)
- subscribe to receive a copy sent via first class mail (\$12.00/year)

The main reason for this change is our declining membership numbers. In order to send items by bulk mail, there must be at least 200 identical pieces. With the recent membership review conducted as per our by-laws, we fall well below that number.

You do not need to do anything if you are picking up a print copy of *the Messenger* in church or are reading the online version posted at firstchurchmonson.org. If you want to receive the *Messenger* by email or first class mailing, please complete one of the following:

For those requesting email

Please provide the Church Office with the following information:

Name/names _____

Email address _____

Please notify the Church Office if your email address changes.

For those requesting first class mailing

Please provide the Church Office with the following information:

Name/names _____

Address _____

Please pay by check (\$12.00) to First Church Monson with *Messenger* written on the memo line. Thank you.

Stewardship News



The Stewardship team would like to thank all of our members and friends who pledged for 2018. As this *Messenger* went to press, we had pledges from 68 families/individuals for a total of \$98,459. Of those pledgers, about 62% increased their pledges from last year. Thank you to all who have been so generous!

The Stewardship team and Church Council are working hard on the 2018 budget. We are expecting our total pledges for 2018 to be close to \$110,000, so we will continue to receive pledge commitments into the middle of January.

Thank you to Judy who has helped with thank you notes and the members of Church Council who have given their time to make follow-up phone calls. If you have any questions about pledging or about any stewardship topic, please see Crystal or Doug.

Sign-up to Host Fellowship



After each Sunday service, friends and members at the church meet in the Fellowship Room to catch up with each other and enjoy some coffee, tea or juice. Additional refreshments are offered when people sign-up to host fellowship and bring in something to share.

Please check the sign-up sheet in the Fellowship Room to see if there is a time that you might host fellowship. Some people choose to host alone while others work with someone to share the responsibility of bringing in a snack to share. Options in the past have included fruits like grapes, cheese and crackers, assorted vegetables or baked items such as cookies, brownies or quick breads. Check with any deacon if you want more information.

If you have never come to fellowship time, please do stop in and enjoy some food and fellowship.

On the Christian calendar, Advent is the beginning of a new church year. Many members and friends helped get the new year off to a great start at First Church. May God bless everyone who

- prepared, served and attended the Music Committee's Christmas dinner,
- helped with the greening of the Sanctuary,
- donated poinsettias to be given to the homebound, and
- helped "behind the scenes" in quiet ways.



Christmas Dinner

Fifty-three guests attended the annual Christmas dinner sponsored by the Music Committee on December 2nd. A German-themed meal was enjoyed by all. Joyce of Palmer won the "Basket of Christmas Cheer" raffle prize. Afterwards The Happy Five Oompah Band, funded by the Monson Cultural Council, played German tunes as well as Christmas carols. Thanks to the following people who helped greet, seat, serve and clean-up: Dan and Judie; Pastor Rob; Janice; Judy; Sandy; Carol; Mary; John; Jim; and Mike. At the end of the day the dinner earned \$1,075. Thanks also to those not mentioned who donated their time, food and money—and also to the many people who helped beautify the Sanctuary in time for the event!

Hearts Willing Club
January 24, 2018 at 7 p.m.



Program - Make Hand-crafted Greeting Cards
Bring a refreshment to share

The Outreach Committee we would like to thank everyone for their contributions to the mitten tree. A family of 4 in town lost their home, their pets and all of their belongings to a fire on December 16. They were able to come and choose hats, gloves and scarves from our tree two days later. The congregation also provided them with a \$200 gift card to Wal-Mart so they could get coats and boots which were an immediate need. The family was very grateful.

The Outreach Committee sent \$1500 to the Monson Emergency Fuel Fund and \$1000 to the Monson Open Pantry on behalf of the congregation at the end of December. We also purchased \$500 worth of gift cards to CVS and Walgreens to be distributed to teenagers for Christmas by the Springfield Rescue Mission.

Thank you for your continued support. Best wishes to all for a blessed new year!

LENTEN MEDITATION BOOKLET 2018

Each year First Church puts together a Lenten Meditation Booklet to help you with your devotions during Lent. We need your help and your insights to make the book a reality. See Suzanne after church from January 7 to 29 - or she may see you - to sign up for one of the forty-one dates. You will receive a scripture reading that you can interpret, analyze, or discuss as you wish. Poetry, a relevant anecdote, or even some artwork is appropriate.

All responses are due by **Sunday, February 4**, so that the booklet can be typed and printed for the Sunday before Lent. Ash Wednesday is on February 14. (Responses can be emailed to office@firstchurchmonson.org, but Suzanne will retype anything handed to her.)

Treasurer's Treehouse

The Treasurer's Treehouse is dedicated to informing the congregation of the First Church of Monson about the Church's financial condition in a lighthearted yet clear-cut manner.

Last month I discussed our income and how the church is responsible for managing our income and expenses through various funds. This month I would like to go into more detail about the fund that we use to manage our monthly income and expenses. This fund represents the yearly operating expenses and is called the General Operating Fund or GOF....how clever.

Every penny of the money owned by the First Church is allocated to one fund or another. With the exception of the GOF, the balance in all funds rolls over from year to year. The GOF, however, starts the year with zero dollars and, if all of the boards and committees stick to their budgets and our steeple doesn't fall down, we should end the year at zero dollars. In other words, the amount of pledges, donations, fund raising and such should equal the total expenses for the year. If they don't...well, more about that at the end.

The chart above shows the budgeted expenses for 2017. In order for us to support the operations at First Church (salaries, building costs, etc.) we need to raise almost \$175,000 every year. Most of our expenses are fixed, like electricity, heat, etc. So if we come up short, the only place left to cut is salaries and, as we are searching for a new pastor, this is not what we want to do.

I said that there would be more about the GOF and the end of the year. The goal is to either hit the budget, as we have done the last 2 years, or to come in under budget, which is something I have never seen in the 10 years I've belonged to First Church. Well, this year it looks like we might end the year several thousand dollars under budget. This truly qualifies as a miracle! And come February, at the annual meeting, we have to decide what to do with the excess. We can roll it over, or stash it away for future years, or a little to both. There will be more about this come January. In the meantime, please enjoy this wonderful season with all your heart and soul!!