

**FEDERATED COMMUNITY CHURCH**  
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**PO Box 246**  
**Hampden, MA 01036**

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# *The Federated Courier*

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## *From the Pastor's Desk*

O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see Thee lie  
Above Thy deep and dreamless sleep, The silent stars go by  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth, The everlasting light  
The hopes and fears of all the years, Are met in Thee tonight  
Brooks and Redner, 1968

Greetings of Grace and Peace!

I love music, and I truly love Christmas songs and hymns. We normally start playing Christmas tunes in our home around Thanksgiving and continue well into January. They fill me with joy, hope, and happiness. Of course, almost any music can be helpful and healing. The notes and chords resonating within our bodies at the cellular level, causing cells to vibrate and let loose those germs, hurts, and wounds which are trying to hang on and find a home within us. The songs reconnect me with memories of Christmas past. I am amazed at how I remember so many of the words to the songs, even as I age, and memory is becoming more challenging.

As I played the song, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, I was struck by the last two lines in the first verse (see above). As you may have remembered last month, I spoke about being in a “*fog of gloom*.” While the writing of my blessings each day last month did help to lift me, I am still challenged as I listen to the daily news to be sustained. But then the words of hope that are expressed in the last two lines of the song spoke to me as I listened to the song. I had to look up all the lyrics so pay

attention to them. My hope is in the Lord, who came at Christmas and comes to me every day, over and over, offering me hope that shines amid my gloom. Christ's light is not only for today's new worries, but for all the hurts, fears, and more accumulated personally and as a society over the years. Christ is the answer! Following the ways Jesus modeled for us to live and die is how we bring God's kin-dom here on earth.

As I read the lyrics of the song, I was struck by the prayer of the last verse. (Of course, the word hymn is translated as a sung prayer, so the entire song is a prayer.) My spiritual practice this month will be to repeat, in word and/or song, the last verse of "*O Little Town of Bethlehem*," daily.

O Holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray  
Cast out our sin and enter in, Be born in us today  
We hear the Christmas angels, The great glad tidings tell  
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel

My prayer will be to cast out the sin, individually and collectively. So, I invite you to join me in this month's spiritual practice of repeating the last verse of this song daily as a prayer. But I challenge you to not only repeat it with words but to sing it. Don't worry about it being sounding good. God looks at our hearts, so if we sing it prayerfully, even off key, we will be blessed to find the true gift of Christmas living within.

In the Love and Light of Christ,

*Pastor Pat*



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## *From the Deacons' Bench*

Visits with Joyce (*this note was sent to us from Molly and Gill, good friends of Steve Libby's in Vermont*)

When we think about Joyce Stillman Libby and her rich and productive life, several visits we had with her come to mind and illustrate her interest in other people, their lives and past, and her remarkable ability to recall. In great detail, her own story.

Joyce was engaging and eager to be involved. So much so that while visiting a house Steve was building for friends in Huntington, she climbed a tall ladder with a bucket of soapy water and newspaper, and washed the newly hung windows. She had made promising progress by the time Steve saw her leaning and scrubbing from her perch many feet in the air! Steve urged Joyce to come down, carefully. Story has it that Joyce said "But look how much more sunshine you have inside. I'll get down in a minute. I'm almost finished!" Joyce wanted to contribute and like to work.

For many years Gill and I attended Hunter's Breakfast with Steve and Jane. It is a humble affair hosted by the town women of Starksboro. It is held in an iconic white clapboard building in the foothills of the Green Mountains above the town village. On a brisk October morning while Joyce was visiting Vermont, we all drove the hilly back roads to attend the town breakfast. I remember Joyce's delight when we parked the car and she realized we would be eating in what was once a one-room schoolhouse. She embarked on stories about the schools she attended as a child growing up in Michigan.

The Starksboro Hunter breakfast is an abundant spread of pancakes, local syrup, eggs toast and homemade jams, muffins and dark coffee. With toasters popping, bacon sizzling, and people chatting the room was alive with a cacophony of voices. Joyce lit up as we stepped inside, delighted with everything from steamed up windows to families assembled at long tables, and with us, warmly welcomed by those seated and others serving, Joyce immediately struck up a conversation with the man in suspenders sitting across from us.

Joyce experienced a different morning meal on another of her visits to Vermont; one Steve organized and appropriately named ‘Grannies Breakfast’. Gill’s mother Peg Barlow and my mother Jane McClaskey were staying with us the same weekend Joyce was overnighing with Steve and Jane. Steve thought a visit among the three grandmothers would be something special and valued by all. And it was. There was no lack of conversation around the table. Joyce enjoyed Peg who was equally famous for recollecting and retelling stories. My mother Jane, a listening sort, laughed and got a word in every once in a while. The threesome liked the food, but reminiscing was clearly the best part. It was a memorable morning for all.

Recalling with fond memories of Joyce Stillman Libby, December 1927-May 2022.

Lessons from Mom (things to remember)

\*Treat everyone like you would like to be treated and remembered.

\*Do not hold a grudge against someone, it will eat at you and waste time that is precious.

\*Keep in touch with your friends (remember the notes Mom would write)

\*Recall the “Serenity Prayer” and follow it as you live.

Peace and Love,

Bruce Libby





## *December Birthdays*

Birthday Greetings to the following members of our church who celebrate birthdays in December.



|                         |       |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Erin Lee                | 12/01 |
| Sandra Wild             | 12/03 |
| Stephanie Lemelin-Bliss | 12/03 |
| Malaysia Tessier        | 12/04 |
| John Germain            | 12/05 |
| Barbara Powers          | 12/08 |
| Elaine DeGray           | 12/14 |
| Shelley Sears           | 12/15 |
| Brenda Olesuk           | 12/15 |
| Sharon DeSanti          | 12/17 |
| Erin Obuchowski         | 12/25 |
| Florence Munroe         | 12/29 |
| Russell Streeter        | 12/30 |

## *Wedding Anniversaries*

|                           |       |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Brett & Alison Castellano | 12/10 |
|---------------------------|-------|

*Congratulations*

**Mary and Bob Howell** have been blessed with two new grandchildren this year - **Gwenevere Rose Buel**, born January 29, 2022 to Jenn (Howell) and Ryan Buel and **Jason Michael Hiersche** born August 25, 2022 to Nicky (Howell) and Brendan Hiersche.



## *Prayer Corner*



Bonnie  
Phyllis  
Evie Meacham  
Gail Banning  
Linda & Winnie  
Jeffrey  
Josh G & Family  
Fran Brown  
Lois Pixley  
Rollyn Hatch  
Kimberly Ayers  
Ruth  
Doreen  
Adam  
Nancy

Ellie G.  
Melinda  
Yvette  
Ann  
Sherry & Family  
Beverly  
Denise & family  
Naomi  
Barbara  
Jim  
Scott  
Ken  
Kenain  
John  
Frank

For those who are traveling  
For those affected by Hurricanes in Florida  
For victims & families of mass shootings  
For the people of Ukraine  
For those battling cancer  
For those struggling with addiction or mental illness  
For those who are shut-ins and those that are isolated  
For those that grieve the loss of loved ones  
For those who do not have access to COVID vaccines  
For first responders & health care workers  
For those impacted by weather disasters  
For the people Afghanistan  
For the people of Haiti  
For the people of Iran  
For the changing climate  
For our country  
For all world leaders  
For those traveling  
For shut-ins and those who are isolated  
For the homeless  
For Asian & Black people & all who are persecuted for simply being  
how God created them



### *From The Children's Study Home...*

Dear Joyce:

Thank you for your generous contribution to the Children's Study Home. Every year we count on contributors and community members to help us better serve our children and families. And, while we have been doing this for a long time- over 155 years, we could not do the work of helping children and families become stronger, healthier, and more resilient without you.

Our children and families struggle with various needs, including special education, mental health and behavioral health, and trauma, among others. Your contribution of school supplies will help our children and families while they are with us and help ensure they are better equipped to succeed going forward.

As a contributor, you are part of that meaningful legacy. I want to encourage you to stay connected with us; visit our website for upcoming event, news, and information at [www.studyhome.org](http://www.studyhome.org)

Sincerely,  
Dr. William A. Davila, Executive Director

### *From the Community Survival Center...*

Good Afternoon,

Since July of this year, your church has donated 366 lbs. of food for our Emergency Food Pantry. That is really generous of you and I am very grateful.

Wishing everyone a very happy Thanksgiving,

Mary Cassidy, Executive Director  
Community Survival Center



## *With a Grateful Heart*

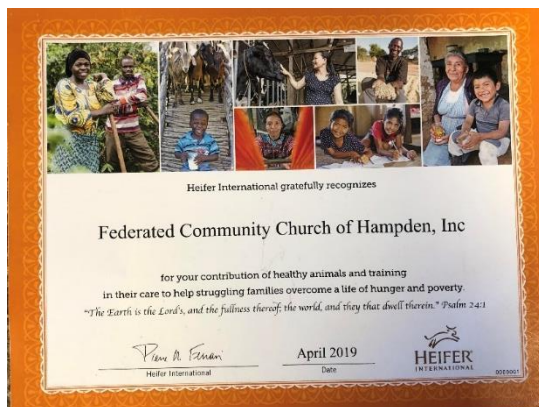
The Watson family sends a big thank you to so many in our congregation, for the beautiful acts of kindness shown to each of us in the last year in so many ways. Your support, kindness, love & friendship continue to make us ever grateful and feel the hands of God at work.

## *Missions*

Need a Christmas, birthday or other holiday gift for that special someone in your life? How about the gift that keeps on giving? As part of the missions committee, I recently purchased from the HEIFER INTERNATIONAL project a two-year commitment to purchase chickens for the people of Rwanda, Africa. This is an amazing program that teaches them how to raise the chickens and benefit from the eggs and then they pass it on to the next family in need.

The opportunity arose to have a \$25 a month donation matched, so I stepped out in faith and signed up for a two-year commitment. If anyone would like to sign up for a specific month, please make the \$25 check out to me.

THANK YOU for making a difference!  
Janet Modlish



We did it in the past; we can do it again!

## *Wish List Tree*

It's December and time for the wish list tree for four children in foster care. Two children are from Maryanne's Kids and two are from The Children's Study Home.



All gifts are due back at church by Monday, December 12th, unwrapped and with the tag taken from the tree. There will be a sign- up sheet with each child's name and their wishes listed. When you select one or two please, sign up with your name next to the correct wish on list.

Thank you in advance for your continued generosity!

Many Blessings to you and your families during this holiday season!

Joyce and the Missions Team

## *You're Invited- Wreaths Across America*



Please join us on Saturday December 17th at 10:00 AM at the Agawam Veteran's Cemetery for the national "Wreaths Across America" event. It is an honor to place the wreaths at each grave, say their name and to thank them for their service.

Let me know if you will be able to join us again this year - Janet Libby 413-626-5833 or [jslibby@charter.net](mailto:jslibby@charter.net). If you cannot attend and would like to purchase wreaths, go to their website [wreathsasscrossamerica.com](http://wreathsasscrossamerica.com) or contact me.

Janet Libby

## *Blue Christmas Worship Service*

A service of quiet, reflection, and silence will be held on Tuesday, December 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM. Naming the areas of worry, stress, and grief in our life make room with in. During the service we will invite Jesus to come into those broken and weary space within us and bring us comfort. All are welcome.

## *Kids' Ministry Corner*



Since November is our church's *stewardship* month, we used the stories of Zacchaeus and Jesus healing 10 lepers to explore the importance of giving thanks to God for his blessings, and acting in generosity. The children quickly grasped the "wrongness" of tax collectors taking money for themselves, and only one of the 10 healed lepers returning to thank Jesus. They enjoyed acting out the stories and imagining how the characters felt, and why they did what they did.

They especially enjoyed presenting the story of Zacchaeus in mime, and in singing "Zacchaeus Was a Wee Little Man" during Worship on November 13th, and have asked if they can "do that again"!

With the start of Advent, they have enthusiastically begun exploring the Nativity story (their versions are delightful!). We have started preparing for **December 18, our annual *Children's Christmas Program***

*Please come and support the children as they retell our favorite story, sing the familiar carols, and share the hope, joy, love, and peace of this holy season!*

Linda Hornig,  
CYFF Coordinator/Lead Teacher

## *New Year's Eve Pot Luck*

The Missions Committee is putting on a Pot Luck Dinner and a White Elephant/Yankee Swap on New Year's Eve, Sat - 12/31.



The event starts at 5:30 PM with a short worship service followed by a Pot Luck dinner and Yankee Gift Swap. (The gifts do not need to be new: bring something you no longer want or something you received for Christmas but have not need for.) You will be home well before midnight.

## *Stewardship Pledge Cards*

Please remember to send your Stewardship Pledge cards in by Sunday, December 11th. We are striving to put our budget together before our December 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, to help us have a clear picture of how we will move forward. If you have misplaced your card, additional cards are available in the church pews.

**I am the Church, You are the Church,  
We are the Church TOGETHER!**

Please take note of the **Blue Christmas service** on December 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM. We have had many deaths over the last two years, approximately 25. Come and share the grief it has taken upon our church family and support one another, especially those who have lost members of their immediate family.

**Christmas Eve** Worship will not be the same without you and it is not fun to share the Good News when YOU are not here to share in it. Please come and support the church.

Since **Christmas** falls on a Sunday this year, we will have our regular **Sunday worship service** at 10:00 AM. the service will be filled with the singing of our Christmas songs, come I hope you will join us as we make a *Joyful Noise* unto the Lord.

## Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

We need your input!

It's hard to believe that it was five years ago when our church family was asked to decide if we would like to support a full or part-time minister. Pastor Pat's current full-time appointment ends on June 30, 2023. If we want to have another minister appointed from the Methodist Foundation, we will need to notify them as soon as possible. We will be discussing our options at our Church Meeting on December 18, 2022 at the end of our church service. (About 11:00)

We are thankful to the Methodist Foundation for their \$53,000.00 support of Pastor Pat's salary. Our current pledge drive has begun and we will have a better idea as to our projected income for next year by the time of this church meeting. When we planned last year's budget, we knew there was a budget deficit of \$51,000. We are fortunate that several of our former church members had made gifts to the church – some are “designated fund” where the donor has said what the money could be used for and other monies were given with no restrictions.

Another factor affecting our future income is the fact that in the past five years 51 funerals have been held for friends and members of our church.

Please make every effort to attend this **All Church Meeting** on December 18, 2022. We need your input. Do you want a full or part-time minister? If you have questions -please call, text or email Janet Libby. 1- 413-626-5833 or [JSLIBBY@CHARTER.NET](mailto:JSLIBBY@CHARTER.NET)



*December 3<sup>rd</sup>*

**FREE**



**Pancake Breakfast with Santa**

*Serving Breakfast 8:00 -10:00 AM*

*and*

**Free Ornament Making Craft**

**(for children)**

**9:00 AM**

We will have a free Christmas tree ornament making class for children. Thank you to Rose Sullivan for her donation of time & supplies for the craft. The children can take their Christmas ornament home to put on their tree.

See Jack Germain to volunteer with the breakfast.



Thank you to all who help in the **WinterFest**.  
What a wonderful day to meet so many  
community members. There were many new ideas  
for Christmas giving and a church full of great  
bakers! We couldn't have done it without YOU!

# *Poinsettias for Christmas*



The Flower Committee is taking orders for poinsettias to decorate our sanctuary for Christmas.

Poinsettias are \$8.00 each and your order **MUST BE RECEIVED** by **December 15<sup>th</sup>**.

Please make checks payable to Federated Community Church and leave your order and money at the church office, or mail to Regina Germain, 43 Pinewood Rd, Hampden, MA 01036.

I wish to give my poinsettia with the following message: (to be included in the church bulletin).

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_  
Poinsettia plant(s).

- ( ) I will pick up my poinsettia.  
( ) Please give my poinsettia to a shut-in.



December 2022



| Sunday   | Monday   | Tuesday  | Wednesday   | Thursday | Friday           | Saturday   |
|--|--|--|---|----------|------------------|--|
|  |  |  |   | 1        | 2                | 3<br>8:00 AM Santa<br>Breakfast<br>9:00 AM<br>Ornament<br>Making |
| 4<br>10:00 AM<br>Worship   | 5<br>10:30 AM Line<br>Dancing<br>6:00 PM "Wild<br>Mercy" Study | 6<br>6:00 PM Bells<br>6:00 PM AA   | 7<br>10:30 AM Bible<br>Study  | 8        | 9<br>7:30 PM AA  | 10<br>8:00 AM Men's<br>Breakfast                                 |
| 11<br>10:00 AM<br>Worship  | 12<br>10:30 AM Line<br>Dancing                                 | 13<br>6:00 PM Bells<br>6:00 PM AA<br>7:00 PM Finance                       | 14<br>10:30 AM Bible<br>Study<br>12:15 PM Missions<br>1:00 PM Knit,<br>Stitch, Pray | 15       | 16<br>7:30 PM AA | 17<br>10:00 AM<br>Wreaths<br>Across<br>America                   |
| 18 10:00 AM<br>Worship &<br>Children's Christmas<br>Program<br>Followed by All Church<br>Meeting | 19<br>10:30 AM Line<br>Dancing<br>6:00 PM "Wild<br>Mercy"      | 20<br>6:00 PM Bells<br>6:00 PM AA<br>5:30 PM Blue Christmas<br>7:00 PM BOD | 21<br>10:30 AM Bible<br>Study<br>12:30 PM<br>Worship/Lunch                          | 22       | 23<br>7:30 PM AA | 24<br>Christmas Eve  |
| 25<br>10:00 AM<br>Worship<br><i>Merry<br/>Christmases</i>  | 26<br>10:30 AM Line<br>Dancing                                 | 27<br>6:00 PM Bells<br>6:00 PM AA  | 28<br>10:30 AM Bible<br>Study   | 29       | 30<br>7:30 PM AA | 31<br>5:30 PM<br>New Year's Eve<br>Potluck                       |