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U.S. postage
PAID
Springfield,
MA
Permit no
2702**

The Federated Courier

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Volume 77 1

January 2024

From the Pastor's Desk

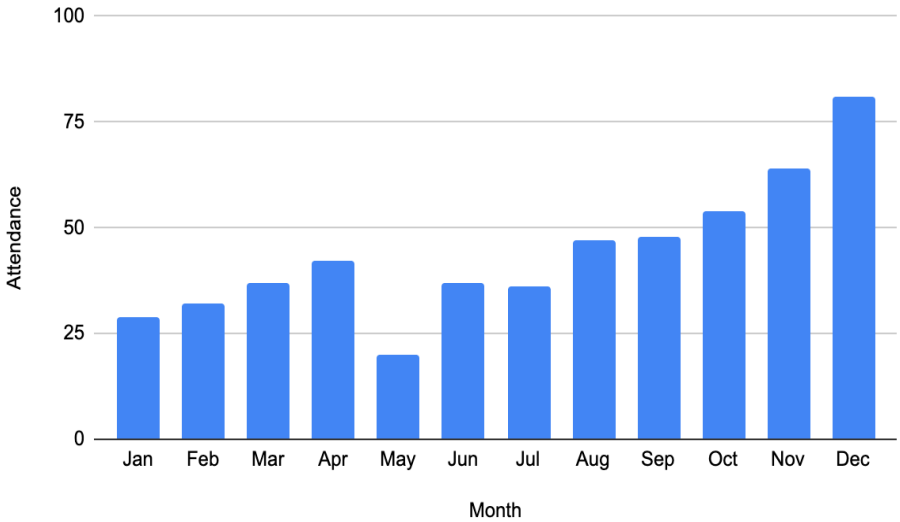
New Beginning

Kwan Kim

It's a brand-new year! About 40 years ago, many sci-fi cartoons depicted the year 2024 as the year when aliens would invade Earth and the United Space troops would fight with the aliens with space battleships. We haven't met any aggressive aliens yet, and we still drive gas cars on the road. Honestly, I am not curious about if aliens would visit us. My passion is always to have Jesus Christ in us.

In the last six months, we've experienced wonderful things. Ministries were revitalized. More volunteers got involved. New ministry teams were formed. A new CE teacher was hired. Sunday attendance has been increased. Starting with the 30s in July, the attendance has increased continuously, and we worshipped with over a hundred people on Christmas Eve Sunday! It's all God's amazing grace upon us. (Chart 1)

Attendance vs. Month

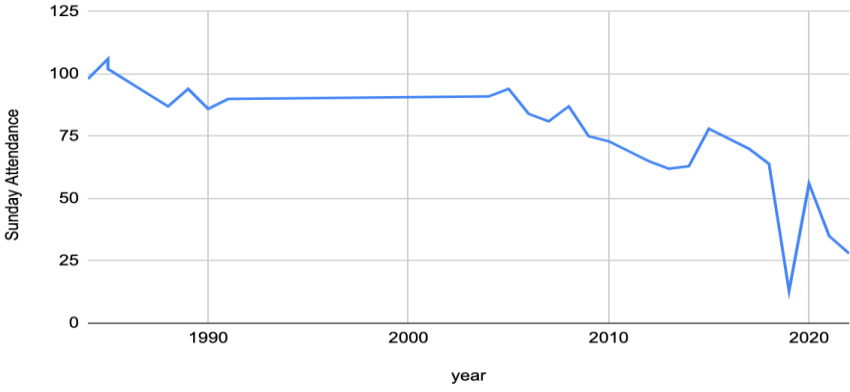


(Chart 1) Monthly Sunday Attendance in 2023

However, in order to hold new wine, we should prepare new wineskins. (Luke 5:38) In the last 38 years, our Sunday average attendance has decreased from 106 (1985) to 28 (2022). And it's never beyond a hundred except in 1985 (106) and 1986 (102). Since then, the Christian culture has changed, and our church is not the only Protestant church in town anymore. Moreover, from 1987 to 2018 (for 31 years), our average attendance was in the window of "60 to 90." It means our current attendance touch the roof of the window. I believe we are now at a very critical point in which we may go through the roof or fall down to where we were.

(Chart 2)

Sunday Attendance vs. year



(Chart 2) Yearly Sunday Average Attendance from 1984 to 2022

Therefore, **I would like to invite you to the vision meeting at 1 pm on February 4th (Sun)**. It is to share the vision for the future and prepare for the next step. The meeting will be festive and meaningful and last about 2 hours. Lunch will be provided for those who join the meeting. Come and see! Come and share your heart! I hope and pray that our God will pour out His blessing upon us as we dream together for Christ and His glory.

Pastor Kwan's Vacation

Please note that Pastor Kwan will be on vacation from January 24th- February 3rd. If you need Pastoral care during this time, please contact Deacon Penny Dibble at 970-531-1829.

From the Deacons' Bench

As I reflect on this past year, I remember some moments in my life which were unbelievably low, and some moments of surprising joy. I believe God was and is forever here through all of them.

When it comes to faith in God, it seems to me that either the highs or lows of life can be trickier, varying from person to person or from one phase of life to the next. Sometimes, when life is good, we tend to become complacent in our faith. It's easier to take for granted that there's a good God in Heaven when relishing time spent with loved ones, fulfilling work, security, and peace.

But when things go wrong, when we aim for goodness and stability but find chaos and suffering, we may question the nature of our relationship with God. We ask "Why Lord? Why is life so hard to sort out? Why do these terrible things happen?" The answer is in the Bible: Some horrible event took place concerning an apple – or maybe a date or a fig or something, we don't really know the fruit-but at any rate the wisdom within the text rings true. Our world is fallen and our best attempts to make the most of it can't amount to anything truly satisfying until the Lord fully takes the reins over it.

In low times, I've found two things helpful to my faith. The first is to realize that better and more afflicted Christians than myself have thought similar questions to my own. The 22nd Psalm begins "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer, and by night I find no rest". So, these are not necessarily the sinful thoughts of a misdirected spiritual crisis. If anything, they come up so often in the Bible that they seem to be the right attitude, so long as we are patient and do not turn from God. The second thing I find helpful is immediate gratitude for what mercies and blessings do break through in difficult times by the will

of God. Personally, I think of- among other things- the counsel of Pastor Pat, the encouraging leadership of Pastor Kwan, and the dependable weekly sessions of fellowship and rumination I found in our Wednesday Bible study.

As for the high times in life, the challenge is forgetfulness. A faith of desperation can start to fizzle out when we feel in control and back in a contented routine. What's important here is that gratitude to God is much better than self-congratulation. We need to recognize God's working through others too.

Human beings so easily get fatigued, irritated, confused, or overwhelmed. The individual pulling himself up by his bootstraps will constantly be flouted by his failings and his limitations. The secular humanist is vulnerable to cynicism, because of how often other people disappoint or aren't what we expect of them.

But God is eternal, all- knowing, and just. To congratulate Him in our small moments of fulfillment or relief taps into something reliably inexhaustible. We must find joy in continually praising God for all He provides, and His goodness will be multiplied in us and through us.

Justin Fontaine, Deacon





January Birthdays



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

Gail Banning	01/03
Richard Ritz	01/03
Albert Jones	01/06
Geraldine Spear	01/06
Lisa Wyman	01/10
Steven Safford	01/13
Madison Regnier	01/13
Marilyn Connor	01/18
Dennis Connor	01/18
Nicholas Hummel	01/19
Susan Quill	01/20
John Panek	01/20
Joan Harris	01/24
Richard Nelson	01/24
Richard Taylor	01/27
Paul Willoughby	01/30
Rosemary DiSimoni	01/31

Wedding Anniversaries

Carmel & Richard Grant 01/19

Congratulations



Prayer Corner



Phyllis
Gail Banning
Lois Pixley
Dennis Connor
Andrew
Carl
Earl
Rory
Joanna
Connie
Ellen
Karen
Peter

Jacob
Howard
Ryan
David
Mary Beth
Susan
Chantel
Beverly Barrett
Greg
Ellie
Pete
John

For World Peace
For victims & families of mass shootings
For the people of Palestine & Israel
For those affected by hurricanes
For the people of Ukraine
For those traveling
For those affected by floods and fires
For those battling cancer
For those struggling with addiction or mental illness
For those that grieve the loss of loved ones
For first responders & health care workers
For the people Afghanistan, Iran, Haiti, Russia & Middle East
For those impacted by weather disasters
For the changing climate
For our country
For all world leaders
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



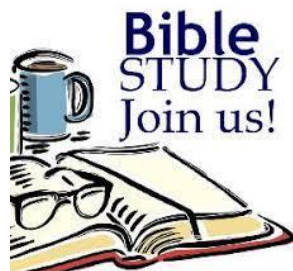
*Sympathy to family & friends of
Evelyn Meacham
who passed away on January 2nd.*

Wednesday Bible Study Beginning *January 17th*

Bible study will be hosted by Deacons Bobby Schofield and Justin Fontaine in Libby Hall on Wednesdays at 10:30AM. Each week we will watch a 30-minutes video lecture by Professor Burt Ehrman of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill about a section of the New Testament. The first four lectures will be about the gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John.

Professor Ehrman explores the Bible from a historical perspective, taking into careful consideration the cultural norms, language, and world events of the time period to come to a deeper understanding of what the Biblical texts are telling us. Each lecture concludes with two to three discussion questions for the group, followed by open conversation about the Biblical material.

The lectures run chronologically but each lecture may also be appreciated independently, so feel free to join us as your availability permits. Attendees are encouraged to read the discussed sections of the Bible, but may come view the lectures and participate in discussion without having done so beforehand.



Our Bible study is run in a spirit of fellowship, where all are welcome regardless of background or level of familiarity with the Bible. We hope to see you there!

Happy Birthday Joan




Please join the Harris family on January 21st, 2024 to celebrate Joan Harris' 90th birthday, with Jan 28th as backup for inclement weather. It will be following church service in Libby Hall. Light lunch will be served.

Thank You!

A big Thank You to all who donated gifts to our Giving Tree this Christmas!



January 2024

Sunday	Monday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p> 	<p>2</p> <p>Happy New Year!</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>7</p> <p>10:00 AM Worship</p>	<p>8</p> <p>10:30 AM Line Dancing</p> <p>6:30 PM By-Laws Meeting</p>	<p>9</p> <p>10:00 AM Line Dancing</p> <p>6:00 PM AA</p> <p>6:00 PM Bells</p> <p>7:00 PM Finance</p>	<p>10</p> <p>10:30 AM Bible Study</p> <p>1:00 PM Knit, Stitch, Pray</p>	<p>11</p> <p>7:30 PM AA</p>	<p>12</p> <p>8:00 Men's Breakfast</p>
<p>13</p> <p>10:00 AM Worship</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Martin Luther King Jr. Day</p> <p>10:30 AM Line Dancing</p>	<p>15</p> <p>10:00 AM Line Dancing</p> <p>6:00 PM AA</p> <p>6:00 PM Bells</p> <p>7:00 PM BOD</p>	<p>16</p> <p>10:30 AM Bible Study</p> <p>1:00 PM Knit, Stitch, Pray</p>	<p>17</p> <p>7:30 PM AA</p>	<p>18</p>
<p>19</p> <p>10:00 AM Worship</p>	<p>20</p> <p>10:30 AM Line Dancing</p>	<p>21</p> <p>10:00 AM Line Dancing</p> <p>6:00 PM Bells</p> <p>6:00 PM AA</p>	<p>22</p> <p>10:30 AM Bible Study</p> <p>1:00 PM Knit, Stitch, Pray</p>	<p>23</p> <p>7:30 PM AA</p>	<p>24</p>
<p>25</p> <p>10:00 AM Worship</p>	<p>26</p> <p>11:00 AM Joan Harris Birthday Celebration</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p> <p>8:00 AM Men's Breakfast</p>
<p>31</p> <p>10:00 AM Worship</p>	<p>32</p>	<p>33</p>	<p>34</p>	<p>35</p>	<p>36</p> 