First Church Messenger

The First Church was gathered in 1685 **December 2024**

A Message from Rev. Andy

Friends,

As many of you know, our 11 PM Christmas Eve service has long been a beloved tradition, bringing the beauty of midnight worship to our community. At one time in The First Church's history, it had the strongest attendance of all the Christmas Eve offerings. Yet, in recent years, attendance at this late hour has significantly declined: the number of congregants was about twice as many as the choir members! This attendance decline reflects new patterns in our lives and the world around us.

Ecclesiastes reminds us that "for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." With gratitude, we recognize that each season brings both memories and fresh beginnings. Our worship schedule has changed over the years, adapting as our community has grown and as our congregational needs have shifted.

We were among the few churches in New England that have kept this late night tradition alive for so long, and we honor the warmth and light it brought to each of us over the years. Although a bittersweet decision, it is one rooted in careful thought and heartfelt conversation over the past few years, among Ministers, Staff and the Music Ministry.

This season, we are excited to offer a revised Christmas Eve format as follows: a Family Service of Carols and Kiddos at 4 PM, and our formal Evening Service of Candlelight Lessons and Carols with the Chancel Choir at 8 PM (also livestreamed), allowing us two opportunities to gather with our loved ones in joyful anticipation of our Lord's birth.

Please take note of these schedule changes and be sure to tell your friends and loved ones.

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Andy

Christmas Cookies and Carols for a Cause

Sunday, December 15th

Following 10 am worship

Fellowship Hall

This year, you are invited to bring cookies to enjoy following the Christmas Pageant at the 10 am service on December 15th.

We'll enjoy the cookies (and hot chocolate) with our Sunday School students.

Afterwards, a team will gather the remaining cookies into gift baskets to share with local organizations in need of holiday cheer. Among them will be Family Promise, The Front Door Agency and The Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter.

Please bring your cookies to Fellowship Hall, and place on the designated tables.

First Church of Nashua
United Church of Christ
1 Concord St., Nashua, NH 03064

Sunday Worship: 8:15 & 10:00 AM
10:00 AM: Livestreamed

Rev. Dr. Andrew W. Armstrong, Sr. Minister
Rev. Nancy Haynes, Assoc. Minister
Joseph R. Olefirowicz, CAGO, Minister of Music
Dianne Smigliani, Business & Marketing Manager
Tasha Drew, Office Manager
Amanda Steere, Christian Formation Coordinator
Steve Buck, Sexton

Pastors Emeriti:
Rev. James S. Chaloner
Rev. Dr. Jeffrey C. Evans

Office Hours:
Monday-Thursday: 9am-noon & 1-4pm
Friday: 9am-noon

Telephone: 603-882-4861
Website: www.tfcucc.org

The Bulletin Board

All Boards meet on **Monday, December 2nd** at 7:00PM.

Baptism - Any adult wishing to be baptized or to have their child baptized is asked to call the church office to schedule an appointment with one of the pastors.

Bible, Friends and Coffee will resume on Monday, January 13th. This study meets on Mondays (except on holidays) at 9:30 AM in the Ladies' Parlor (Fellowship Hall).

Wednesday Morning Men's Study will resume on Wenesday, January 15th. This group meets at 8:30 AM in the Ladies' Parlor (fellowship Hall).

Hospitalizations - If you or a family member are hospitalized, please contact the church office.

Help Keep our Records Current. If you have a change of name, address, phone number or email address please let the church office know.

Membership - For information about becoming a member of First Church, please call the church office.

Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter- A group of volunteers meets **every Tuesday** at 4:00 PM. To volunteer contact Patti Mullin (508) 735-1551.

The Prayer Shawl Ministry is looking for new members. Contact Karen Bianchi or the church office for more information.

The First Church Thrift Shop hours are**: Thursdays, 10:00AM-2:00 PM, first Saturday of the month 10:00AM-2:00PM.** Leave donations - *clean and in good repair* - in the marked bin in the courtyard lobby. Contact Beth Bartlett or the church office with any questions.

Visit our website: www.tfcucc.org to view all the activities and events going on at The First Church.
If you would like to receive a notification that the newsletter has been posted, sign up at the bottom of the "newsletter" page.
If you wish to go paperless, please notify Tasha Drew at, tdrew@tfcucc.org to have your name removed from the mailing list.
Find us on Facebook at: https://www.facebook.com/tfc

St. Joseph Mobile Health Clinic at The First Church

We are fortunate to have the St. Joseph Mobile Clinic at The First Church. The RV van/Mobile Clinic will park in the lot near the thrift shop and the Nashua Community Music School from **10:00 AM-1:00 PM on the first Thursday of each month.**
The mobile clinic provides services in: Women's Health, Wellness Checkups, Vaccine Clinics (including Flu and Shingles), Smoking Cessation, Blood Pressure Screenings/Education, Nutrition Education and much more.

Pulpit Flowers

If you are interested in supplying flowers for the pulpit on a particular Sunday, please sign up in the Welcome Center or contact the office.

2024

12/02	Robert Freeman
12/02	Marjorie Sharp
12/03	Carol Butler
12/05	Ken Heider
12/06	Clif Banner
12/06	Amy Roe
12/07	Don Dillaby
12/08	Larry Carey
12/12	Margaret Zoerb
12/12	Earlene Davis
12/17	Ronald Parker
12/19	Richard Gillespie
12/20	Sandra Stone
12/20	Debbie Buzzell
12/22	Oliver Shank III
12/24	Sandy Angell
12/27	Sue Haas
12/29	Barbara Winton
12/31	Suzanne Boyd

JANUARY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:
MONDAY, DEC. 9TH

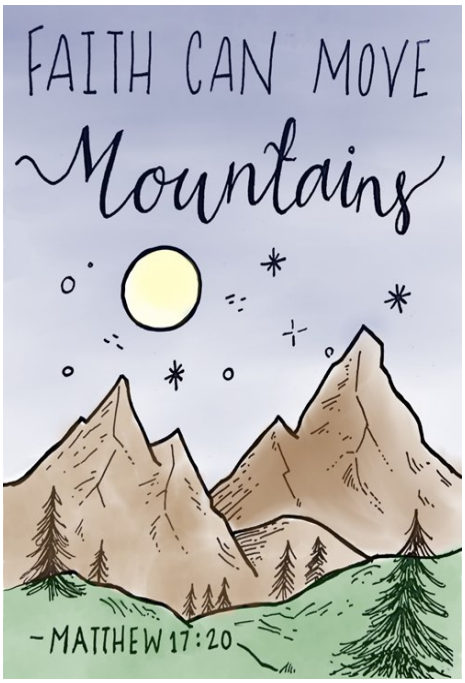
PLEASE SEND ITEMS TO TASHA DREW
tdrew@tfcucc.org

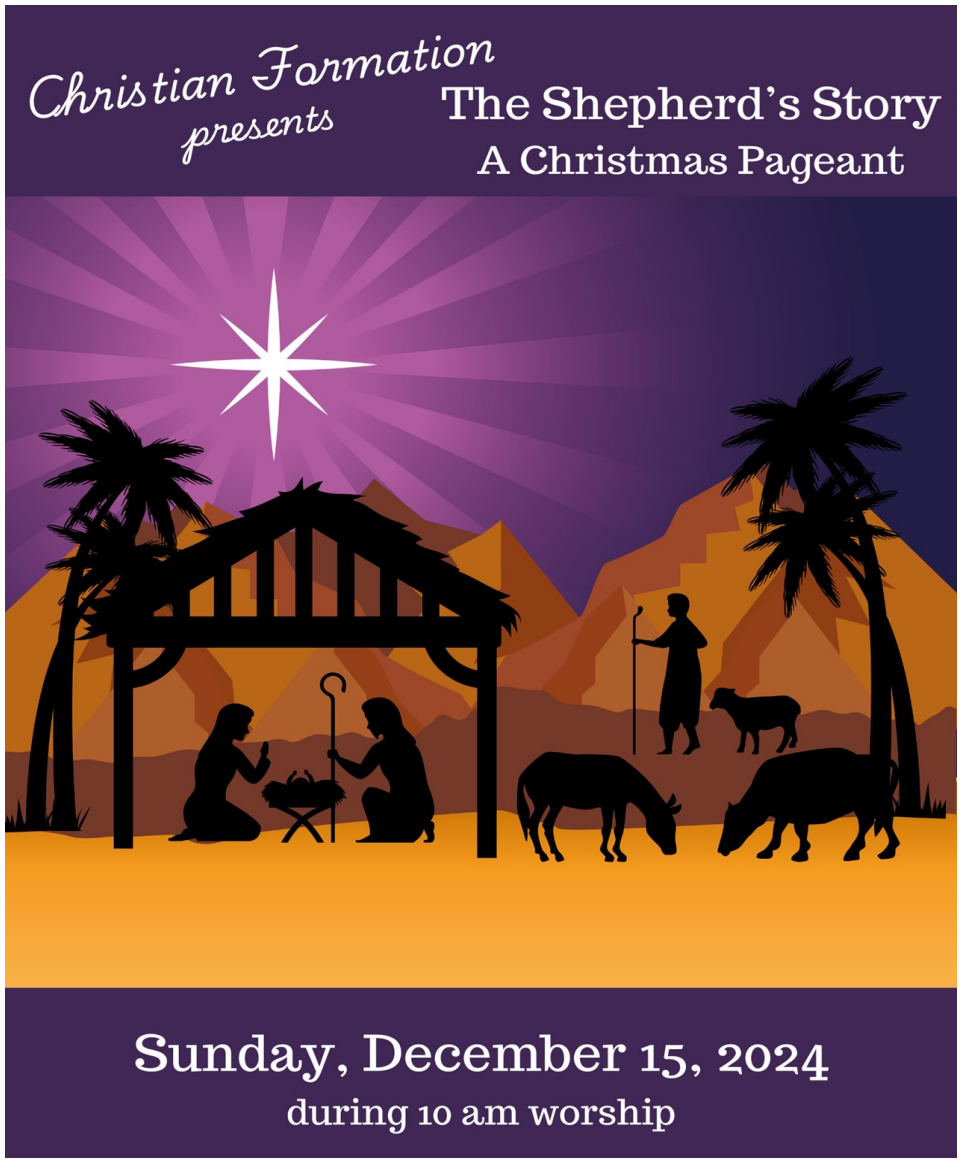
Christian Formation Corner

Christian Formation Updates

The past month in Sunday School have been a wonderful glimpse into just how energetic and engaging our program and the kids are! During our time together, we've had students learning about and honoring the veterans in our congregation. There was an exciting game of Bible Jeopardy that ended in a tie breaker. Our younger students have learned the story of Jonah and the whale and the tower of Babel. To hear their laughter and conversations through the halls is a reminder that there is nothing like the faith of a child.

Our students and teachers have been working hard to prepare a pageant Sunday, December 15th during Worship. They've been practicing their songs, lines and are excited to present it to you and have you participate as well. While there is no Sunday School on December 22nd and 29th – we will have the nursery open for the 10 am service for infants through grade 2 if it is needed.





Upcoming Christian Formation Dates

- Parents Night Out/In: Saturday, December 7th 5-8 pm. More information to follow.
- Christmas Pageant : Sunday, December 15th (During 10 am worship)
- NO Sunday School December 22nd & 29th (nursery care available)
- Sunday School resumes on January 5th.

December 2024 Worship Schedule

Sunday, December 1
First Sunday of Advent
8:15 AM: Worship (Shaw Chapel)
10:00 AM: Worship, Livestream, Radio Broadcast
Sunday School & Nursery Care

Sunday, December 8
Second Sunday of Advent
8:15 AM: Worship (Shaw Chapel)
10:00 AM: Worship, Livestream, Radio Broadcast
Sunday School& Nursery Care

Sunday, December 15
Third Sunday of Advent
8:15 AM: Worship (Shaw Chapel)
10:00 AM: Worship, Christmas Pageant & Nursery Care
Livestream, Radio Broadcast

Sunday, December 22
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Christmas Sunday/ Christmas at First
9:00 AM: Worship
11:00 AM: Worship, Livestream, Radio Broadcast
No Sunday School
Childcare Care (infant-grade 2)
provided at both services

Tuesday, December 24
Christmas Eve
4:00 PM
Service for Families and Children of all Ages
8:00 PM
Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols, Livestream

Sunday, December 29
First Sunday after Christmas
10:00 AM: Worship, Livestream, Radio Broadcast
Childcare Care (infant-grade 2)

Family Promise Volunteers Needed

The First Church has happily supported the Family Promise Program since its inception 20+ years ago. Family Promise helps families who are homeless or about to be homeless. They provide a temporary home for those families which gives them a safe place to live while they work to set up permanent housing for their family. The program gives the families the gift of very affordable short term housing but also training and resources to be prepared to move into an affordable home.

The "First Church Cooks" prepare and serve dinner for Family Promise residents, two nights, in the third week of the month. This is an important outreach for First Church and a rewarding experience for volunteers. Recently, several volunteers left, due to health concerns, and we now need more help! Specifically, we need volunteers to prepare and drop off portions of the meal, like salad or vegetables for the main course.

We need volunteers to come to the program and help serve dinner. Servers are needed on the third Monday and Thursday of the month from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm at Family Promise .

Please reach out to Beth Raymond at 603-595-0053 if you might be interested in helping, in any way, or would like more information. Food can be cooked at home and dropped off. We would love to have you join us!

FamilyPromise
of Southern New Hampshire

Hunt Community Service

Services at the Hunt Community are conducted by Rev. Nancy, and are usually held on the second Friday of the month at 3:00pm.

Services include reading of scripture, sharing of concerns, prayer and communion. All members of the community and their friends are welcomed to join this time of worship and fellowship. The next service will be held on:

December 13

We look forward to seeing you there!

COME TO THE LIBRARY

The staff has spent time in the library sorting through material and"stuff", rearranging and discarding a dumpster full of items. The library now appears much less cluttered and much more inviting.

The next step is to sort through and cull the books. If you have library skills and are interested in this volunteer effort be in touch with Rev. Nancy.

Care Givers

This is a group who gathers, approximately once every 6-8 weeks, to support and offer tips for those caring for people with debilitating dementia, Parkinson's and other neurologic issues. It is a confidential group that listens and prays. Contact Rev. Nancy if you have questions or would like to join.

The Visitation Team is comprised of members of the congregation. They maintain contact through visits and calls to members who can no longer get to worship or who are experiencing illness or other hardship. The team is seeking new members. If you feel a calling to participate, please be in touch with Rev. Nancy

Throughout the year, we have several convenient options available to keep your giving up to date.

You can mail in your offering, set up automatic donations through your bank, give during worship, or set up automatic donations through the Church Office online from our website tfcucc.org/give/

Scan the QR Code to view online giving, and set it up today!

POINSETTIA ORDER

Help decorate the church for Christmas. Red and white poinsettias will be available to purchase for $14.00 per plant. Make checks payable to: The First Church with flowers in the memo line. Stop by the table in Fellowship Hall after church on Sundays, December 8th and December 15th or mail in the form with your payment to the church office, by December 16th, 2023. Forms are also available at the table in Fellowship Hall, on the church website (newsletter), or in the office.

Name of Donor _____ Telephone _____

HOW YOU WOULD LIKE YOUR DEDICATION TO APPEAR IN THE BULLETIN:

Please print clearly!!

In Honor of: _____

In Memory of: _____

Other Message: _____

Name, only, no message: _____

Red_____ White _____ Will Take_____ Will Leave For Shut-In_____ Amount Enclosed_____

CHRISTMAS FUND SPECIAL OFFERING

For over one hundred years, The Christmas Fund has provided direct financial assistance to United Church of Christ ministers, church workers, and their families. Last year, over 1,800 congregations joined together to secure the physical, financial, and spiritual health of those engaged in the life of the Church. Thank you to our community for your continued support!

This year's Christmas Fund theme is "The Glory of God shone around them…" from Luke 2:9, and The First Church will observe this offering on Sunday, December 22, 2024.

Receiving The Christmas Fund this year ensures more ministers, church workers, and their families receive the loving support of the Church in their moment of deepest need. If you would like to donate to the Christmas Fund online go to **https://pbucc.donorsupport.co/page/christmasfund2024**

WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

It's that time of year again when we have the Women's Association's Fan Favorite Christmas Potluck and Yankee Swap.

Come join us on **Monday, December 9th, at 6 PM** in the dining room as we enjoy our traditional evening of sharing good food, laughter and fellowship. Bring a dish to share (no need to sign up as to what you will bring…it's a true potluck!), a wrapped $10 gift (yay for Dollar Tree Store!!) and your sense of humor.

Who knows….maybe our little mascot Bellissima will join us again dressed in her Christmas finery!!

Sign up at the Welcome Center.

Stewardship

The Joy of Giving

"Tis the season for giving – and pledging! Thank you to those who have returned a pledge card indicating your financial giving for 2025. It is never too late to make a pledge but we are hoping to have all pledge cards back by the end of the month if you have not already done so.

Will your giving and service commitment for 2025 be one that grows Christ's church?

Christmas blessings to all! – Your Stewardship Committee

On Sunday, November 3rd The First Church welcomed 5 new members!

- Steve Davis
- Jake and Whitney Dodge
- Rev. Nancy Haynes
- Susan Smith

We are so glad that they have chosen The First Church as their spiritual home. If you happen to see any of them on a given Sunday be sure to stop and introduce yourself. What a gift to recieve as we discover the riches of God's grace in our fellowship and grow richer together with their presence and participation.

WELCOME!!

Craigville
Retreat Center
ON CAPE COD

COMING APRIL 2025!!

Maybe you aren't quite ready to think about Spring, but soon it will be time to get ready for our annual retreat!

Once again, we will be staying at the Craigville Retreat Center on Cape Cod. Save the dates: **April 25th-27th, 2025**

More details will follow regarding registration and cost starting in January.

For more information about the facility and the surrounding area visit: www.uccr.org/craigville

WHITE DOVE/SILVER DOVE PROGRAM 2024

Thank you to all who participated in the Thanksgiving Basket program.

Once again our families' needs were more than addressed and I express my gratitude for each one of them.

Now on to White Dove. Several of you have already stepped up and said you want to take part and I will be in touch shortly with your family assignments but there is still a need as we take on more families for Christmas than we do for Thanksgiving.

If you are interested in helping supply gift cards for either (1) - grocery stores for those families who will be receiving gifts from the Santa Fund for their children but not food or (2) - for both grocery store and gift cards to two retail stores so families may buy for their children (they are given a choice of 5 stores from which they make select two), please contact Carol Butler.

Once all the families are taken, she will contact you with the family assigned to you. **All gift cards need to be to Carol by December 6th.**

The gift cards will then be delivered to the agency on December 9th which will give the families time to shop.

College Seminar
Sunday January 26, 2023
11:30 AM
Save the date!

This is open to all High School sophomores and juniors and their parents. Craig Plummer will lead a seminar on Getting Started on Your College in the dining room.

Craig is a high school guidance counselor and professional consultant and he will offer this seminar at no cost to parents and students. The Christian Formation Board will provide lunch. Sign-up is a must.

Stay tuned for more information.

Notes from the Chancel

ADVENT AND CHRISTMASMUSIC ABOUND!

We have quite the roster of offerings this December, through our Advent and Christmas season.

All of December is quite the time for choirs in Music at First! – Every week, there will be something unique to experience, as our music brings us closer to the sacred, and to God's voice touching our hearts in this busy holiday season.

On **December 1**, our Staff Singer Bass **JOSHUA L. GORE** will offer his talents supporting our Communion services at both 8:15 (chapel) and 10:00 (Sanctuary).

December 8, **DECIBELLS** is our featured choir in 10:00 worship.

On **December 15**, **FIRST FOLK**, the **STAFF SINGERS** and our annual **pageant offering** (through the **Christian Formation Ministry**) at the 10:00 worship service, bring us to the true *reason for the season*.

On **December 22**, the beloved **CHRISTMAS AT FIRST** will resound with the sounds of **Johann Sebastian Bach's Cantata 61**, *Nun Komm der Heiden Heiland*, our own **CHANCEL CHOIR**, **FIRST MUSIC CHAMBER STRINGS** and soloists during **9 and 11AM services**. (*See the separate listing for more info…)*

On **CHRISTMAS EVE December 24**, our new format **4PM Family Service of Kiddos and Carols** will feature ***CHRISTMAS KIDS!*** led by Eric Ruthenberg and our (new time as well) **8PM Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols** welcomes you with the sounds of our **CHANCEL CHOIR** supported by members of our **DECIBELLS**.

Even our final Sunday on **DECEMBER 29**, will offer our Staff Singer Soprano **JANET POISSON**, with guest organist **RICHARD BENEFIELD**. – Such a RICH offering of worship music for **MUSIC AT FIRST's** Advent and Christmas season!

CHRISTMAS AT FIRST
TO FEATURE
BACH CANTATA 61

On **Sunday December 22, at 9 and 11AM** - festival services in the Sanctuary, the CHANCEL CHOIR of The First Church of Nashua, is joined by soloists **Janet Poissson, soprano**, **Kyle Masterson, tenor** and **Joshua L. Gore, bass**, in an offering of the *Nun Komm der Heiden Heiland* Bach cantata (*Come Savior of the Nations*), accompanied by the **First Music Chamber Strings**. In addition to the Cantata, hymns for the Advent season, and select Prelude and Postlude music for orchestra underscore the morning. This festival service is one of the pinnacles of the **Music at First** ministry offerings annually, and is the perfect worship experience for members and friends of all ages!

Music & Choirs in Worship

Sunday, December 1
First Sunday of Advent
8:15 Joshua L. Gore, bass
10:00 Joshua L. Gore, bass

Sunday, December 8
Second Sunday of Advent
8:15 Organ
10:00 Decibells

Sunday, December 15
Third Sunday of Advent
8:15 Staff Singers
10:00 First Folk

Sunday, December 22
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Christmas at First
9:00 Chancel Choir
FM Chamber Strings
11:00 Chancel Choir
FM Chamber Strings

Wednesday, December 24
Christmas Eve
4:00 PM Christmas Kids
8:00 PM Chancel Choir

Sunday, December 29
First Sunday after Christmas
10:00 Janet Poisson, soprano
Richard Benefield, organ

FRIENDS OF FIRST MUSIC FUNDRAISING UPDATE

It is a pleasure to announce, that the **FRIENDS OF FIRST MUSIC** campaign to support the **FIRST MUSIC Concert Series**, surpassed a fundraising total of **$28,000 this season**.

This combination of individual and legacy giving to the Series from both the **Huber and Spade Trusts** has become a hallmark. Thus ensuring all of our concert programming remains **Free and Open to the Public**, as an outreach to our community and region.

Thank you to ALL those donors (for the first time: **95 donor units**!) who supported this ongoing ministry, now in its 17th season. *Kudos*!

OPEN DRESS REHEARSAL FOR CHRISTMAS AT FIRST

For those curious as to how our Music at First ministry works behind the scenes, or for those traveling for the Christmas holiday: we offer an opportunity to observe the final dress rehearsal for Christmas at First – on Saturday December 21st, at 11:00AM. – Entry through the Courtyard and into the Sanctuary through the link.

This gives a chance to see how our ministry works behind-the-scenes and experience how such a large music offering for Sunday worship is 'put together.' – If you cannot make Sunday, or want to see the before and after: join us!

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

Featuring
ANDOVER ORGAN COMPANY's
Opus 79 from 1976
in the SHAW MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Join us this season for *continued*

FRIDAYS at FIRST

Janet HUNT

- renown Boston organist -

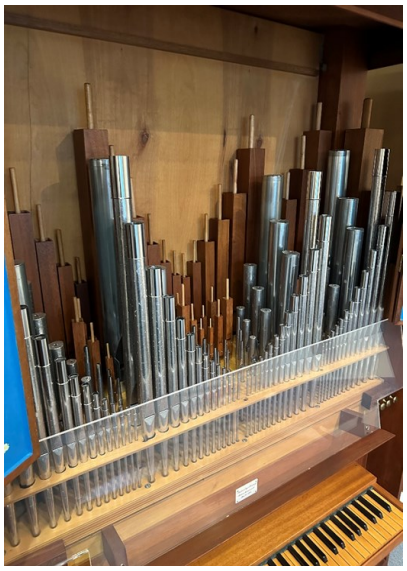
An Advent themed 30-minute contemplative organ recital on our charming Greene Memorial 3-stop chamber pipe organ starting at 12:15PM. - FREE ADMISSION.

DECEMBER 13, 2024

ENTRY through the rear

COURTYARD

TURN LEFT on the GROUND FLOOR



FIRST MUSIC
FM
CONCERT SERIES 2024 – 25 SEASON

SEASON XVII
Bach to Broadway and Beyond
BRINGING the JOY of MUSIC to the GATE CITY

4th ADVENT WORSHIP SERVICES

CHRISTMAS at FIRST

CHANCEL CHOIR OF THE FIRST CHURCH
FIRST MUSIC CHAMBER STRINGS
POISSON • MASTERSON • GORE • OLEFIROWICZ

SUNDAY
DEC 22

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
ALL ARE WELCOME
9 & 11 AM

THE FIRST CHURCH
1 CONCORD STREET • NASHUA, NH
FIRST-MUSIC.ORG • 603.882.4861

DECEMBER 2024

WEEKLY EVENTS

Sunday Worship

SUN DEC. 1, 8, 15: 8:15 am – Worship, Shaw Chapel
SUN DEC. 1, 8, 15, 29: 10:00 am- Worship, Livestream & Radio Broadcast, Sunday School, Childcare
SUN DEC. 22: CHRISTMAS at FIRST
9:00 am – Worship, Childcare
11:00 am – Worship, Livestream & Radio Broadcast, Childcare

Choirs

SUN DEC. 1, 8, 15: 9:15 am – Christmas Kids
SUN DEC. 22: 10:15 am – Christmas Kids
WED DEC. 4, 11, 18: 6:45 pm – Chancel Choir
SAT DEC. 7: 10:00 am – Chancel Choir Rehearsal
SAT DEC. 21: 11:00 am – Chancel Choir Rehearsal
THU DEC. 5, 12: 6:45 pm – Decibells

Other

THU DEC. 5, 12, 19: 10:00 am – Thrift Shop
SAT DEC. 7, 28: 11:00a m - Sisters in Sobriety, Dining Room
SAT DEC. 14, 21: 11:00 am - Sisters in Sobriety, Nauss Hall
MON DEC. 16 : 7:00 pm – Orchestra Rehearsal, Sanctuary

MONTHLY EVENTS

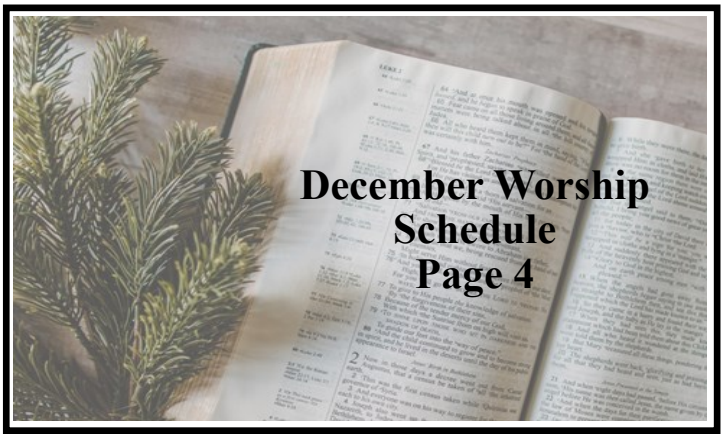
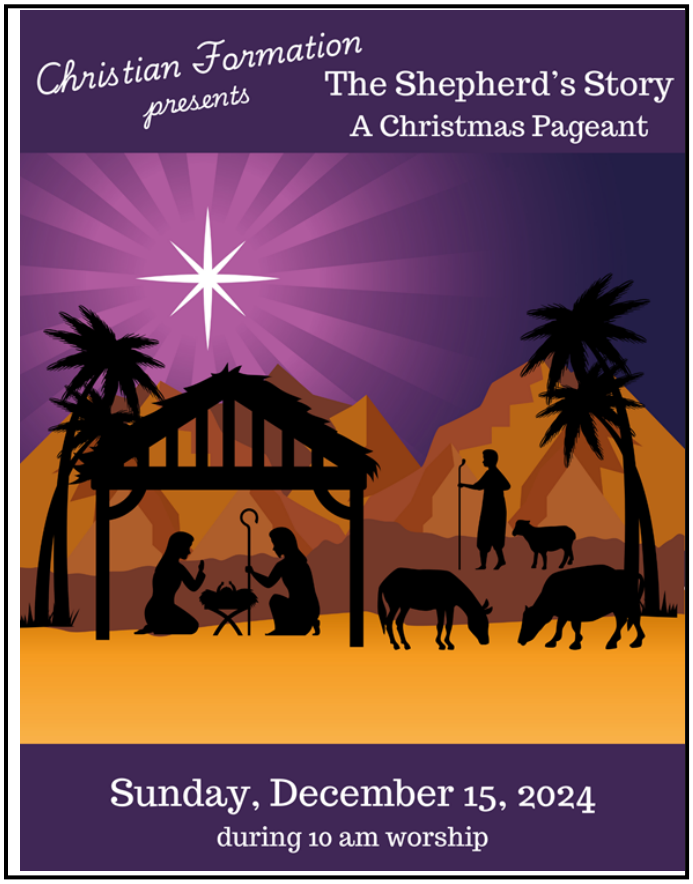
MON DEC. 2: 7:00 pm –All Boards
TUE DEC. 3, 10, 17, 31: 4:00 pm –First Church at Nashua Soup Kitchen & Shelter
WED DEC. 4: 11:45 am BNI, dining room
SAT DEC. 7: 10:00am – Thrift Shop
TUE DEC. 10: 2:00pm - Visitation Meeting room 15
TUE DEC. 10: 7:00pm - Thank You Project, room 10
THU DEC. 12: 6:30pm Quilt Guild, dining room
FRI DEC. 13: 3:00pm – Hunt Service
SAT DEC. 14: 10:00am – DAR, Ladies Parlor
WED DEC. 18: 10:30am - Nashua Area Inter-faith Council Board, room 15
THU DEC. 19: 12:00pm – Chamber of Commerce, dining room

SPECIAL EVENTS

THU DEC. 5: 10:00.am – St. Joseph's Mobile Health Clinic
MON DEC. 9: 6:00 pm—Women's Assoc. Potluck/ Swap, dining room
SUN DEC. 22: 9:00 & 11:00 am – Christmas at First
TUE DEC. 24: CHRISTMAS EVE
4:00 pm – Family Service
8:00 pm – Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols
WED DEC. 25 : OFFICE CLOSED
THU DEC. 26: OFFICE CLOSED
SUN DEC. 29: 10:00a m Worship, no chapel service
WED JAN. 1: OFFICE CLOSED

First Church, United Church of Christ
1 Concord Street
Nashua NH 03064-2303

Published monthly September through June at Nashua, NH by the First Church, UCC.
December 2024 issue

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Nashua NH
Permit No. 365

Return Service Requested