



# THE GOOD NEWS *from the Belfry*

a Monthly Newsletter of the

First Congregational Church of Haddam and  
the Higganum Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ



## DECEMBER

in the 2018<sup>th</sup> Year of our Lord

Peace Love JOY Peace Love JOY



Higganum Congregational Church  
First Congregational Church of Haddam  
*Returned mail to*  
23 Parsonage Rd.  
Higganum, CT 06441

Address Service Requested

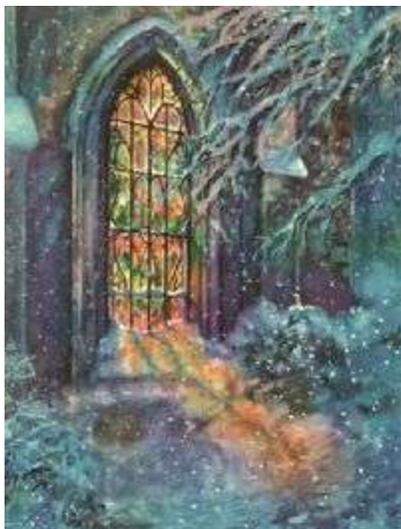
Church websites: [higganumchurch.org](http://higganumchurch.org) and [haddamchurch.org](http://haddamchurch.org)

**DECEMBER WORSHIP SERVICE – Sundays @ 9:30 am - FIRST CONG'L CHURCH HADDAM**

***Except Christmas Eve – Monday December 24<sup>th</sup> 7 pm – Higganum Cong'l Church***

Christian Education and Child Care provided during most Sunday Worship Service

## 'Heaven and Angels Sing'



**A**t the Christmas Eve church service, I sat with my two boisterous grandchildren, ages three and five. Their parents sat in front of the church to present a nativity reading titled

"Silent Night." They had warned the children to behave. I had warned the children to behave. With scrubbed angelic faces and Christmas wonder in their eyes, they looked like model children posing for a magazine holiday spread. I indulged myself in a few moments of pride.

Alec pinched Aubrey. I was grateful that the organ thundered into the first hymn just then, drowning out her yelp. I grabbed her hand before she could return the pinch. During the Lord's Prayer, Aubrey shredded the program I had given her to color on. The crayons had already rolled under the pew. I watched bits of paper fall on the carpet like snow. I would help her pick it up later, but for now the naughtiness I was allowing kept her occupied and her brother quietly admiring.

We were enjoying an uneasy truce when their parents stood to deliver the reading.

"Mommy!" Alec yelled.

She frowned, and he sat back in his seat.

"Silence," my son said to the congregation. "Think for a moment what that word means to you."

My daughter-in-law signed his words. Earlier that year, she began to use her new signing skills for the benefit of the few hearing-impaired members of our church.

Alec said a naughty word, thankfully too low for many to hear. I scowled at him, shaking my finger and my head. Aubrey grinned. Then she

proclaimed, every syllable enunciated perfectly, in a clear voice that carried to far corners of the sanctuary, "Alec is a potty mouth!"

Everyone stared. I was too stunned to speak. My son and his wife looked at each other. But instead of anger, I saw surprise.

My son set aside his script and told another story. He told about their daughter being born profoundly deaf. He talked about four years of hearing aids and speech therapy with no guarantee she would ever learn to speak plainly. He talked about the rugged faith that kept the family praying she would have a normal life.

He said Aubrey's outburst was an answer to prayer: the first perfectly enunciated sentence she had ever spoken.

From the back of the room, a lone voice sang the last line of a beloved Christmas Carol: Hark! The herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn king.

While the congregation sang four verses of the unscheduled hymn, my two little angels wiggled in their parents' arms, adding laughter and giggles to the joyful Christmas noise.

-- By Carol Stigger  
*HowStuffWorks.com*



**When:** Friday, December 7, 2018 @ 6:30 PM

**Where:** St. James Episcopal Church, 501 Killingworth Rd (Rt. 81), Higganum



## ADVENT SEASON WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Advent season is upon us. Please come join us with families reading advent liturgy and lighting candles, sing our favorite carols and spreading joy to those in need.

All services except Christmas Eve will be at First Congregational Church Haddam beginning at 9:30 am followed by fellowship hour.

Christmas Eve service will be held at Higganum Congregational Church beginning at 7 pm.

	Guest Pulpit Supply	Advent Readers
Dec 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Rev Toni Smith	Williams Family
Dec 9 <sup>th</sup>	Rev Robert Henderson	Tupay Family
Dec 16 <sup>th</sup>	Rev Robert Henderson	
Dec 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Rev Meredith Jeffers	
Dec 24 <sup>th</sup>	Rev Meredith Jeffers	
Dec 30 <sup>th</sup>	Dr. Greg Shields	

*Child Care provided during  
Sunday Worship Service*



## SUNDAY HOSPITALITY SCHEDULE:

The Committees responsible for hosting the fellowship hour after Sunday worship service for the upcoming few months is as follows:

**December**  
(at FCCH)

**Christian Education and  
Pastoral Relations**

**January**  
(at HCC)

**Church Officers and  
Prayer Shawl**



To be sure there will be coffee and treats after each service, members of the assigned committees are asked to update the sign-up sheet in the normal places at each Church.



## SEASON'S GREETINGS FROM THE HCC TRUSTEES

Christmas will always be  
as long as we stand,  
Heart to Heart  
and  
Hand in Hand !

*Dr. Seuss*

Thank you to all who  
helped out with many projects  
throughout the year!

We send out many wishes for a  
very **Merry Christmas**,  
filled with health, happiness and the  
joy of the season!

Peace to all,  
the Trustees

*Submitted by Brian Thayer  
Chair, HCC Board of Trustees*



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## CHRISTMAS COOKIE WALK

*Don't have time to do your Holiday Baking?*

*LET US MAKE YOUR SEASON BRIGHT!*

**Saturday, December 15<sup>th</sup>**

**9 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

Our 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Cookie Walk has become a holiday destination in our part of God's Country over the past decade.

Come fill a box or two with homemade Christmas Cookies.

For this event to continue to be successful we need LOTS OF BAKERS AND LOTS OF COOKIES.

For questions / more information contact Pam Crum.




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## INTERIM SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE

We had the pleasure of having Rev. Virginia Childs preach with us on November 18<sup>th</sup>. We received great feedback from our Congregations and we conducted an interview following service.

Unfortunately, we learned the next day that she had accepted another interim position beginning December 1st. So, for now, we will continue to work with Mary Nelson, our CTUCC Conference Minister, to find more candidates and utilize our fantastic pulpit supply.

*Submitted by Sue Craffey  
Head Deacon, First Congregational Church  
Haddam*

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## 8TH YULETIDE QUILT SHOW

**Saturday, December 1, 2018**

**9:30 am to 3:30 pm.**

The FCCH Sanctuary will be decorated for Christmas. The beautiful art work of handmade quilts and quilted items will be on display. Be sure to get a ticket to vote for your favorite quilt.

The Fellowship Hall will also be decorated for the holidays. There you will find the quilt raffle, a baskets raffle, tables for vendors and tables from Higganum United Methodist Church and Higganum Congregational Church. The Haddam Café, in the north corner of the Fellowship Hall will host morning coffee with homemade doughnuts, and lunch of homemade soup, artisan bread, and homemade pies.

The proceeds from this event are used throughout the coming year for mission activities. This past year a portion of the proceeds was used for the Silver Lake Scholarships.

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Thank you to all those  
who committed  
themselves to our  
“Hope and a Future  
Together”



Pledges continue to come in  
As of Sunday, Nov 18th our pledge totals are:

FCCH - 14 pledges totaling \$24,623

HCC - 19 pledges totaling \$50,564

We are on our way and we hope to see many  
more pledges coming in soon

If you need a pledge card they are available in  
the narthex at HCC or contact Dawn or Bruce  
so that pledge information can be sent to you

Thank you once again,

*Dawn Alger & Bruce Kocsis  
FCCH/HCC Joint Stewardship Committee*

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## **JOINT CHRISTIAN OUTREACH ACTIVITIES**

### FALL SERRV SALE A ROUNDING SUCCESS

On two Sundays in November following service, HCC held a **SERRV** catalogue sale of fair trade items made around the world. A nonprofit started in 1949, **SERRV** empowers artisans to earn a fair living while helping to break the cycle of poverty.

We purchased lovely handcrafted baskets, pottery, jewelry and more. While supporting the artisans' hard work, we also supported the needs of our church and obtained gifts for others and ourselves.

Thank you all for helping to raise almost \$700.00 profit.


 The logo for SERRV, featuring the word "serrv" in a bold, lowercase, blue sans-serif font.

### HIGGANUM GETS LIT

The building on Route 154 formerly known as Tony's Package Store has been sold. In past years, the HCC Outreach Committee has decorated the then unoccupied building as part of the town-wide campaign to decorate the center of town for the holiday season.

Members of the HCC Outreach Committee have been in touch with the new owner and are happy to report the owner of the new business is happy to have us decorate their store-front once again.

Look for the festive lights and snowflakes coming soon. And while in the center of town, slow down to admire all the decorations as part of the 2018 Higganum Gets Lit project.

### HAT & MITTEN TREE

As is our holiday tradition, once again, there will be a Hat and Mitten tree collection before Christmas. We will collect new winter hats, mittens and scarfs for young children and their moms. Our collective donation will go to the Hallie House in Middletown, a home for women and their children.

### HK YFS GIVING TREE

The Haddam-Killingworth Youth and Family Services has asked us to help make Christmas special for a local family by providing gifts for a their four children. Toys and clothes make up their Santa Wish List. There will be a tree in the Fellowship Hall at coffee hour with tickets hung. Take a ticket, buy the designated gift on the ticket and return it to the Giving Tree. The due date is to be announced, but expected to be mid-December. As in prior years, we ask you to do what you can to help this project be successful.

### BACKPACK MINISTRY

The HES Backpack Ministry has been the recipient of several donations in addition to donations by our members and friends from both congregations.

A food drive held at Haddam Elementary School HES provided food for the HK program as well as our Backpack Ministry. In addition, Jessica Condil, Haddam Social Services Director, donated a few cases of corn and green beans along with other miscellaneous items.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the generous donors.

### MAKING THANKSGIVING SPECIAL

On Sunday, November 18th, following morning services members of both congregations filled boxes that had been beautifully decorated by the Sunday School students and teachers for 15 families (of 4/5 people) from the Haddam / Higganum area. The decorated and filled boxes were delivered to Haddam Social Services and distributed on Monday and Tuesday, just in time for Thanksgiving.

THANK YOU to everyone who helped with this project.

In addition, Amazing Grace food pantry in Middletown, received 190 pounds of a variety of foods to help feed people in the Middletown area. Your generosity is appreciated now and at any time during the year.

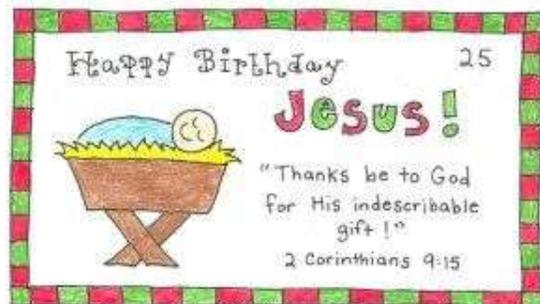
*Submitted by  
Carol Matregano and Virginia Evensen*

 <p>1 "God sent the angel Gabriel to a girl named Mary." Luke 1:26</p>	 <p>2 "The angel said to her, 'Don't be afraid, because God is very pleased with you.'" Luke 1:30</p>	 <p>3 "Listen! you will become pregnant and have a baby boy. You will name him Jesus." Luke 1:31</p>	 <p>4 "He will be great. People will call him the Son of the Most High God." Luke 1:32</p>
 <p>5 "Mary said, 'I am the Lord's servant. Let this thing you have said happen to me!'" Luke 1:38</p>	 <p>6 "Caesar sent out an order... that everyone's name must be put on a list." Luke 2:1</p>	 <p>7 "Everyone traveled to their hometowns to have their name put on the list." Luke 2:3</p>	 <p>8 "So Joseph went to the town of David because he was from the family of David. Joseph registered with Mary." Luke 2:4-5</p>
 <p>9 "While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have the baby. She gave birth to her first son." Luke 2:6-7</p>	 <p>10 "There were no rooms left in the inn. So she wrapped the baby with cloths and laid him in a box where animals are fed." Luke 2:7</p>	 <p>11 "That night, some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching their sheep." Luke 2:8</p>	 <p>12 "An angel of the Lord stood before them. The glory of the Lord was shining around them." Luke 2:9</p>
 <p>13 "The angel said to them, 'Don't be afraid, because I am bringing you some GOOD NEWS!'" Luke 2:10</p>	 <p>14 "Today your Savior was born in David's town. He is Christ, the Lord." Luke 2:11</p>	 <p>15 "This is how you will know him: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a feeding box." Luke 2:12</p>	 <p>16 "All the angels were praising God, saying, 'Give glory to God in heaven, and on earth let there be peace to the people who please God.'" Luke 2:13-14</p>

# 25 Bible Verses to Countdown to CHRISTMAS Day!

 <p>17 "So the shepherds went quickly and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby." Luke 2:16-17</p>	 <p>18 "Then the shepherds went back to their sheep, praising God and thanking him for everything that they had seen &amp; heard." Luke 2:20</p>	 <p>19 "After Jesus was born, some wise men came from the east." Matthew 2:1</p>	 <p>20 "When the wise men saw the star, they were filled with joy." Matthew 2:10</p>
 <p>21 "They went to the house... and they bowed down and worshiped the child." Matthew 2:11</p>	 <p>22 "They gave him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." Matthew 2:11</p>	 <p>23 "A child will be born to us. God will give a son to us. His name will be... Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6</p>	 <p>24 "For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son. God gave his Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life." John 3:16</p>

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Happy Home Fairy



What's your  
**REINDEER** name?

Find your first initial & birth month to find your Reindeer Name!

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| A • Cinnamon-Bun  | N • Pointy-Taes  |
| B • Snowman       | O • Pudding      |
| C • Merry-Mary    | P • Shimmer      |
| D • McJingles     | Q • Eggnog       |
| E • Tinsel-Cheeks | R • Twinkle-Nose |
| F • Grinch        | S • Pickle-Pants |
| G • Jolly-Joseph  | T • Dorth-Paper  |
| H • Peppermint    | U • Cranberry    |
| I • Honey-Ham     | V • Snowflake    |
| J • Ginger-Snaps  | W • Mistletoe    |
| K • Turkey-Bell   | X • Frosty       |
| L • Dashing       | Y • Sugar-Plum   |
| M • Kringle       | Z • Cookie       |

- January • Pikelet  
February • Arctic Muffin  
March • Snicker Doodle  
April • Long Beard  
May • Bon Bon  
June • St. Candy Cane  
July • Von Pretzel  
August • Angry Elf  
September • McMittens  
October • Maple Jnr  
November • Razzle Dazzle  
December • Lord Crackle

www.acraftyliving.com



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## An Open Letter from the Higganum Congregational Church Moderator

Much has been happening over the past few months, and I wanted to bring members of the HCC Congregation, as well as the FCCH Congregation, up to date.

Shortly after the departure of Rev. Tomi Jacobs-Ziobro in August, a combined interim Search Committee was formed with members of both churches (Katie Pactor, Paul Lewis, Linda Hansen, Sue Craffey, Sabine Nyenhuis, Tracy Thompson, and Cherylann Hunt). After updating our Church Profile and consulting with Rev. Mary Nelson (our Conference Minister), the search process has begun. In the meantime, Sunday Worship has been led by 'supply Ministers', often familiar to members of the Congregation (such as Rev. Toni Smith and Rev. Meredith Jeffers). Supply Ministers have responsibilities for Sunday Worship, but don't provide Pastoral Care, or assist in planning or guidance such as for Christian Ed. At the same time, we are forming a Search Committee to identify a Settled Pastor. I expect that they will begin meeting in December. Our hope is that we will begin to review candidates this spring, and call a new settled Pastor during 2019.

Several of the Boards and Committees of both churches have been meeting regularly together during the past year, and others intermittently. The Deacons and the Music Committee meet as combined HCC/FCCH groups. The Church Councils have a monthly combined meeting, and continue to meet individually. The Board of Finance mostly meet independently, but occasionally meet together, as does the Outreach and Fundraising Committees. The Trustees of each Church meet independently. The Calendar on our website ([higganumchurch.org](http://higganumchurch.org)) is an up to date resource for when the various meetings occur. Remember that the Council Meetings are open to any member of the Congregation.

Clearly, our Bylaws don't reflect many of these changes. We have deferred rewriting or amending the Bylaws due to the often changing needs of working together with both Churches. We have agreed, however, that both congregations will meet together to vote on dismissing or calling/hiring any shared employee, including a Minister, Music Director, Administrative Assistant, or Director of Christian Ed.

Over the past few months the Deacons have reached out to members of the Congregation ('shepherding their flocks'), asking a number of questions about church participation and views about the future. The results of this feedback have recently been compiled, and will be shared so that further discussion may soon begin.

That brings me to the BIG question: Where are we in the process to discern whether or when our two churches will merge. It seems increasingly clear to me, that over the past **three years**, since we voted as a Congregation to share an Interim Minister (Rev. Doug Clark) in the fall of 2015 and form a combined Search Committee for a Settled Shared Pastor, that the benefits to both Churches far outweigh the drawbacks. I believe that we have pursued a cautious and deliberative path in working together. Some believe it has been too slow a process, while others feel things are changing too quickly. Most agree that the Music and combined Worship has added significantly to their weekly worship experience. Sharing much of the Deacon and Hospitality responsibilities has helped those very dedicated volunteers. Sharing costs of the Minister, Music Director, Administrative Assistant and Director of Christian Education has taken pressure off of fundraising and allowed a more balanced budget. Although there are no plans for a vote to merge the Congregations, that seems to me to be inevitable. There is sentiment to first call a settled Pastor before moving forward on merging. Without doubt, the greatest challenge in becoming one Congregation would be to combine our assets (particularly property and endowments). As our Congregation ages, and pledging decreases, finding both financial and human economies, by eliminating unnecessary duplication of resources, will become essential.

As you can see, although there are several challenges, there is much for us to be thankful for during this holiday season. Members of both Congregations have enriched their lives and made new friends during the past three years working together. Please join me in praying for a resolution which will benefit everyone in our Congregations and our Community, so that we can focus on our shared commitment to sharing and living God's message.

Thank you and God Bless,  
Greg Shields

## MEMBER'S CORNER

The following 'shout outs' have been submitted for your reading pleasure.

A big Thank You and Shout out to all those who worked the fall clean-up events at FCCH and HCC on Saturday November 10<sup>th</sup>.

The grounds and Churches look great!

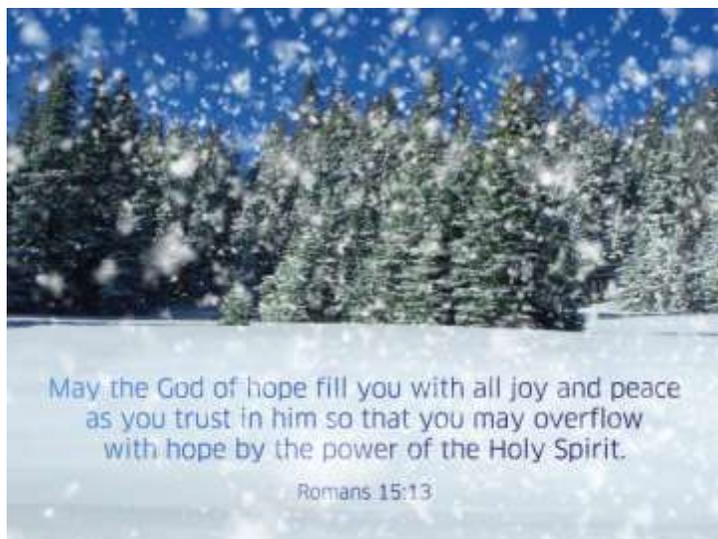
Do you have a special message to share with your Church family? If so, send it in for the Members' Corner!



## COUNCIL MEETINGS

The next meeting of the HCC Church Council will be **Tuesday, December 18<sup>th</sup>** beginning at 7 p.m.

Council meetings are open to all Church members, however only members of the Council shall have a vote as provided in our Bylaws.



## DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS

Congratulations and best wishes for many more

Happy Birthday to:

- |    |                          |                   |
|----|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 3  | Alan Hansen              | Tracy Thompson    |
| 4  | Barbara Fernandez        | Sue Craffey       |
| 5  | Peter Aduskevich         | Ryan Andrew Starr |
| 6  | Jen Lee                  | Andrew Chadwick   |
| 9  | Timothy Hansen           |                   |
| 13 | Jordan Dole              |                   |
| 14 | Gail Hollenbeck          |                   |
| 15 | Deb Duval                |                   |
| 17 | Kyle Buracchi            |                   |
| 18 | Alan Chadwick            |                   |
|    | Ashley (Grenman) Araujo  |                   |
| 19 | Cecelia Chadwick Pulaski |                   |
| 21 | Lindamae Peck            |                   |
| 23 | Gavin Chase Starr        |                   |
| 28 | Joshua Bobbish           |                   |
| 29 | Dani Paradis             |                   |
| 30 | Callie Elizabeth Starr   |                   |
| 31 | Carol Smith              |                   |



## Our Staff

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	Tim Matregrano, Sexton
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Church Office Hours  
Tuesdays and Thursdays  
from 2 - 6:30 pm

Please send your announcements to be included in the next edition of the newsletter to [HCCBelfryEditor@gmail.com](mailto:HCCBelfryEditor@gmail.com) by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month.