



THE GOOD NEWS *from the Belfry*



a Monthly Newsletter of the
**Higganum Congregational Church and
The First Congregational Church of Haddam**
United Church of Christ



in the year 2019th of our Lord
SEASON OF ADVENT



Higganum Congregational Church
First Congregational Church of Haddam
Returned mail to
P.O. Box 215
Haddam, CT 06438

Address Service Requested

Church websites: higganumchurch.org and haddamchurch.org

DECEMBER WORSHIP SERVICES – Sundays at 9:30 a.m. at Higganum Congregational Church
Christian Education and Child Care provided during most Sunday Worship Services

Dear FCCH and HCC Friends,

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year.”

-Edward Pola and George Wyle

The festivities listed by Pola and Wyle in the chart-topper first popularized by Andy Williams include jingle bells, toasted marshmallows, and mistletoe. Friends who “come to call” and “loved ones” near indeed can make Christmas the “hap-happiest season of all.”

Yet before all that the church calendar invites us to reflect, to pause, to long for another-better- world. The “wonderful” time of Christmas is preceded in our life together with the solemn, anticipatory season of Advent, and it can feel quite jarring to move into worship from the frenzy of (what my old retail boss and economists call) the “Christmas Selling Season” during these weeks.

I invite you this year to embrace fully this tension and to see it as a chance to consider the ‘already but not yet’ nature of the Gospel.

“Christ the Savior is born!” yes, but we pray and sing ***“O come, o come, Emmanuel.”***

“Good Christian friends rejoice,” and heartily so, yet the faithful also are on the lookout for the lonely and distressed.

Our Puritan ancestors banned Christmas in protest of the revels they associated with the holiday, sternly insisting, “They for whom all days are holy can have no holiday.”

We today can be just as committed in our own way to proclaim the best Good News if we focus on the true glory of the tale of the Christmas “long long ago,” when Mary exulted, ***“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant,”*** as she prophesied of God lifting up the oppressed and filling the hungry with good things (Luke 1).

Without rejecting the wonder of the season, we can multiply its blessings for all.

We can include other families’ children in our Black Friday and Cyber Monday shopping, and

can direct resources to organizations we care about on Giving Tuesday.

We can open ourselves to the “hopes and fears of all the years” as we light the Advent candles and pray for the coming of Christ’s Reign of Peace and Justice.

We can accompany those for whom this is a season of grief and memory, whether to a “Blue Christmas” Service or to the mall or party where our presence alongside might offer comfort.

One of my favorite Advent songs is “People Look East,” which includes the lyrics:

***Make your house fair as you are able,
Trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Guest, is on the way.***

Preparing our hearts as we do our houses, as “fair as [we] are able” readies us for the coming of Christ, the coming of Love, the coming of the Holy Guest who is the most ***“Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”*** (Isaiah 9:6).

***A blessed Advent and holy Christmas
to you and yours, Pastor Michelle***

CONTACT INFORMATION

Pastor’s office hours: *Mondays Noon-2pm,
Tuesdays 8am-Noon, Thursdays 10am-Noon*

Pastor Michelle also is available by
appointment: Cell: 860-597-4223
Email: mmadsenbibeau@gmail.com

INTERIM PROCESS CORNER

Many thanks to all who participated in last month’s Visioning Workshop. Notes from that gathering are available from the Office or at: <https://haddamcongregation.us6.list-manage.com/track/click?u=1731cac8aa&id=2fd8a78acb&e=3e2a5483f5>

Members of the Interim Pastor Search Committee will meet with Pastor Michelle early in December to conduct her scheduled review. Speak with Moderators Greg Shields or Kristin Battistoni for more information.

FROM THE DIACONATE

Prayer cards are now being utilized at both churches and are collected during the first hymn. We are welcoming new members to the Diaconate Committee for 2020 at either FCCH or HCC. See Sue or Terry for more information.

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE



A Service of Remembrance (Blue Christmas) is being held at St. James Church

on **Friday, December 6 at 6:30pm**. The community is invited to attend this service, which recognizes that not

everyone shares in the usual joyful celebration of the season. Some grieve the death of a spouse or a precious child. Others grieve the loss of a dear friend or a pet, a broken relationship of the loss of health or youth, while others struggle with unemployment or poverty. The service will include special prayers, candle lighting, scripture, and music. Prayer support for those who wish and a reception will follow the service. A reception will follow. Come see this beautiful old-fashioned little church!

WORKING GROUP UPDATES

At the October Joint Council Meeting, a Working Group Update 2nd Hour was set for **Sunday, December 15th**.

CAROLING CARAVAN

Following the morning worship and meeting on **Sunday, December 15th**, singers of all ages (children accompanied by a parent) are invited to join with members of our Choir and Confirmation class for a caroling party. We will work out carpools and carol in groups at the homes of members, so the more participants we have, the more seasonal cheer we can bring. To assist with our planning, please sign up at church if you know you will participate, and contact Pastor Michelle or Sue Craffey or Terry Smith of the Deacons with requests for a caroling visit. (Snow day TBD)

“UGLY” SWEATER SUNDAY

Has your favorite Christmas sweater been banned from family gatherings by a concerned spouse? Don't worry: no matter who you are, or where your sartorial tastes lie, you are welcome at HCC and FCCH.

All are encouraged to dress for worship with garish seasonal festivity on **Sunday, December 15th**. There may be prizes (Most Colorful? Jinglyst?), and there certainly will be a group photo.

JOIN US at FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF HADDAM

December 24, 2019 for **Christmas Eve Service**

7:30 – 8:00 musical interlude
and 8:00 candlelight service



WORSHIP SCHEDULE

December 2019 at HCC
January 2020 at FCCH
February 2020 at HCC



SUNDAY HOSPITALITY SCHEDULE

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

December 2019 HCC Trustees & Board of Finance
January 2020 FCCH Christian Service and Stewardship



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.

ADVENT BIBLE STUDY

Adult Bible Study meets Mondays at 10am at Lewis House (FCCH). We will continue with our Advent study of the scriptures in Handel's *Messiah*. Newcomers are welcome to join as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ! Speak with Pastor Michelle for more information. Please note: there are **no classes December 23 and 30**.

MUSIC COMMITTEE & CHOIR



The combined choir continues to provide music for Sunday and special services. We are happy that our attendance has been pretty good so far this fall. We're delighted that Dianne Hines has rejoined us following a long hiatus. We can always use more singers. The more we have, the better we can lift your spirits on Sunday mornings. Please consider joining us. We rehearse on Thursday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 PM at FCCH, then again at 8:45 AM on Sunday mornings to warm up before the service. I'm sure you will enjoy the camaraderie we have. Eric always seems to make singing fun.

In addition, we have some vacancies on the Music Committee that we will be looking to fill for 2020. You don't have to be a choir member to be on the Music Committee. Very little is required as time commitment.

John Anderson

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Prayer Shawl Ministry – Tuesday, December 3 at 9:30am at HCC

Joint Diaconate Meeting – Monday, December 9 at 7pm at HCC

HCC Board of Finance Meeting – Monday, December 16 at 7pm at HCC

Joint Church Council Meeting – Tuesday, December 17 at 7pm at HCC

Council meetings are open to all Church members, however only members of the Council may vote.

2020 ANNUAL MEETINGS

The 2020 Annual Meetings for the First Congregational Church of Haddam and the Higganum Congregational Church will be held on **January 26, 2020**. One meeting will be held in the FCCH Sanctuary and the other in the lower level Fellowship Hall. All Committee and Board reports are due to Church Office by **January 13, 2020**. Please send them to fcchaddam@gmail.com. This will ensure that the reports can be distributed one week before the meetings.

Terry Smith

UCC ANNUAL MEETING



The UCC annual meeting was held November 1-2, 2019 in Worcester, MA. More than 500 attendees from CT, MA and RI

overwhelmingly approved the new conference name Southern New England Conference of the UCC. Taking the theme of the weekend UNBOUND and bringing it home to Haddam is appropriate as our two congregations seek new ways to do church. Items of business included budget, staffing model, proportional giving (proposed way for the individual churches to support the conferences and their wider missions.) and foundational justice commitments. The latter included such items as accessible to all, promote environmental consciousness, to be open and affirming, eradicate racism and advance immigrant justice. These commitments were voted on and passed by the delegates.

The Keynote speaker Valerie Kaur is a Sikh, civil rights lawyer, educator, mother, dynamic and passionate. She sees Love as a public ethic to be used "in these days of division and brokenness". Valerie is the founder of the Revolutionary Love Project.

Worship, communion, music, informational tables, making new friends and talking with old ones rounded out the weekend.

Dick and Carol Matregrano, Delegates

CHRISTIAN OUTREACH



The 9th YULETIDE QUILT SHOW AND HOLIDAY BAZAAR will occur on **December 7 and December 8** this year. THANK YOU to everyone who is helping to make this

event a success. The proceeds of this event will be used throughout the year for mission activities in Haddam and around the world.

This past year this event has allowed us to fund the bread ministry which donated over \$2000 to the Haddam Fuel bank. Some of the money helped kids attend Silver Lake. We sent a donation to the Mosque in New Haven that was damaged by fire. We made gift donations to local and national charities. In addition, this event provides an opportunity for our congregations to work together on a project. Come see beautiful art and enjoy a yummy lunch!

We will be helping to make Christmas fun for several local families. There will be a gift tree in the Fellowship hall soon. During coffee hour, please take a tag and provide a gift for a Haddam child. The families benefitting from this project are known to Youth and Family Service.

Food Donations

We also continue to collect food items for the Haddam Food Pantry. Watch the Sunday bulletin for items to be collected. There is always a need for food-even in Haddam.

- *HCC & FCCH Christian Outreach*

REVERSE ADVENT BAGS

Advent is the time of year in which we reflect on the true meaning of Christmas. While we often think about what we want to get for Christmas, reverse advent bags give us an opportunity to remember the meaning of advent by giving to someone else. This year we will be making reverse advent bags that will be blessed on **Epiphany Sunday, January 5, 2020** at First Congregational Church of Haddam. See attached page for more info!

HK BACKPACK PROGRAM

The H-K Back program provides food for 29 families for the weekend. Our church collects specific items monthly, and cash and gift cards also are welcome. You can use an envelope in the pew and mark it as HK Backpack Program. Thank you so much for your support!

December- Canned Meats (e.g. Tuna, chicken and ham).

Learn more about the HK Backpack program at: <https://hkbackpackprogram.com/>

CHRISTMAS COOKIE WALK



Higganum Congregational Church will host their 13th Annual Christmas Cookie Walk on Saturday, **December**

14 from 9:00am – 1:00pm. The Cookie Walk is an opportunity to “*LET US DO YOUR HOLIDAY BAKING FOR YOU*” - a chance for you to fill a box or two with your choice of an abundance of fresh, homemade Christmas Cookies lovingly baked by our locally celebrated HCC members. As an added bonus, we also offer yummy homemade soups for sale by the quart. The selection of cookies and soups varies from year to year, and it is definitely worth the trip. Share the attached flier, and speak with Pam Crum to volunteer to help with this event!

CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERING

On Christmas Eve, we will have the opportunity to support The Christmas Fund of the United Church of Christ and/or the Haddam Fuel Bank. Loose offerings will be divided between these two worthy causes, and instructions will be provided for designating gifts.

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is a Special Mission Offering that congregations of our denomination have been supporting for over 100 years. The offering is administered through the United Church Board for Ministerial

Assistance, the charitable arm of the Pension Boards. Funds provide direct financial support to those who serve the church and are facing financial difficulties; active and retired clergy, lay employees, and their surviving spouses are provided supplemental income, emergency grants, and/or Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks. To learn more about how these funds are being used, view the video 2019 Christmas Fund: A Light Shines in the Darkness at: <https://youtu.be/jAxeYWa3Oio>

HADDAM FUEL BANK

The Haddam Emergency Fuel Bank is a local program designed to assist those in meeting their heating needs when all other sources of aid have been exhausted. The fuel bank runs year-round and is awarded as a one-time grant per individual or household.

SUNDAY SCHOOL HELPERS

We continue to invite older youth and adults to speak with Christian Education Director Amy Harlow regarding being part of a rotation of assistants for our weekly Sunday School classes.

NURSERY ATTENDANT

FCCH and HCC are seeking a Nursery Care attendant to provide care to infants to children of 4 years during worship services on Sundays from 9:15am to 11am. Please view the Job Posting for details (attached), and forward to qualified individuals.

Our Staff

Pastor Michelle Madsen-Bibeau – mmadsenbibeau@gmail.com
 Nicole Dumpson, Administrative Assistant – fcchaddam@gmail.com
 Amy Harlow, CE/Faith Formation Dir. – amyharlow.ucc@gmail.com
 Church Office 860-345-4304

Nicole Dumpson – Belfry Editor
BelfryEditor@gmail.com

Church Office Hours
 Tuesdays and Thursdays
 from 8 - 12:00pm

Please send your announcements to be included in the next edition of the newsletter to BelfryEditor@gmail.com by the 20th of each month.

HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

The Church Office will be closed on Christmas Eve, December 24th. An update on any other changes in office hours will be sent out in the weekly email.

LOOKING AHEAD



Our Sunday worship will return to the First Congregational Church of Haddam in January.

DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS



- | | | |
|----|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 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 | Cecilia Chadwick Pulaski | |
| 21 | Lindamae Peck | |
| 23 | Gavin Chase Starr | |
| 28 | Joshua Bobbish | |
| 29 | Dani Paradis | |
| 30 | Callie Elizabeth Starr | |

We apologize for any errors during our office transition! Please contact the Editor with omissions or corrections.

MEMBER'S CORNER

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



Advent and Christmas Schedule

Sunday, December 1st

First Sunday of Advent: HOPE

Communion Service

Higganum Congregational Church at 9:30am

Sunday, December 8th

Second Sunday of Advent: PEACE

Higganum Congregational Church at 9:30am

Sunday, December 15th

Third Sunday of Advent: JOY

Higganum Congregational Church at 9:30am

Caroling Caravan after Worship

Sunday, December 22nd

Fourth Sunday of Advent: LOVE

Higganum Congregational Church at 9:30am

Tuesday, December 24th

Christmas Eve

First Congregational Church

7:30-8pm Music

8pm Candlelight Service

Sunday, December 29th

Christmas Sunday

Higganum Congregational Church at 9:30am



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF HADDAM
905 SAYBROOK ROAD, HADDAM

Yuletide Quilt Show & Holiday Bazaar

December 7 9:30 am - 3:30 pm

December 8 noon - 3:30 pm

Admission to Quilts: \$6
Free Admission to Bazaar

**QUILTS FOR SALE ~ VENDORS
HOMEMADE LUNCH ~ HOLIDAY CRAFTS
RAFFLE BASKETS ~ QUILT RAFFLE**



Don't have time to do your Holiday Baking?
Let us help make your Season Bright!

Higganum Congregational Church

Proudly Announces Our
13th Annual

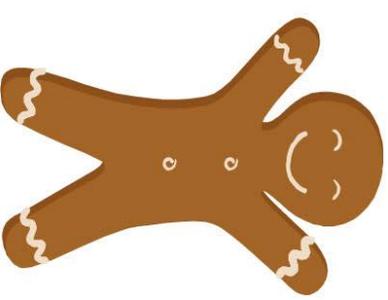
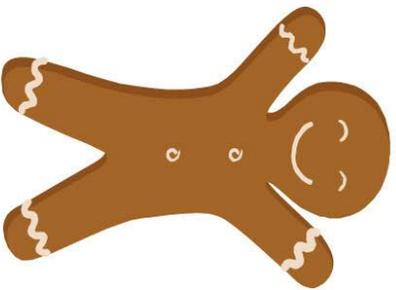
Christmas Cookie Walk

Parsonage Road

Higganum, Connecticut

Saturday, December 14, 2019

9:00 am - 1:00 pm



Come fill a box or two with homemade Christmas Cookies for
only \$8.00 a pound!

Plus

Homemade Soups by the Quart





JOIN US FOR
CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

We hope your holiday is filled with the gifts of hope, love, joy,
and peace.

Join Higganum Congregational Church &
First Congregational Church of Haddam for Christmas Eve
Worship

Tuesday, December 24th at 7:30pm

7:30pm–8:00pm musical interlude and 8:00pm candlelight service

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF HADDAM
905 Saybrook Road, Haddam, CT 06438



Reverse Advent Bag

What is a reverse advent bag?

Advent is the time of year in which we reflect on the true meaning of Christmas. While we often think about what we want to get for Christmas, reverse advent bags give us an opportunity to remember the meaning of advent by giving to someone else. Every day (or week) as you put items into the bag, you can remember your blessings and help someone who is in need. **The bags will be blessed on Epiphany Sunday, January 5, 2020 at First Congregational Church of Haddam.**

What are some suggested items to put into the bag?

Shampoo (men's and women's)	warm gloves (men's and women's)
Conditioner (men's and women's)	scarves (men's and women's)
Deodorant (men's and women's)	warm hats (men's and women's)
Toothpaste	feminine products
Toothbrush	soap/ body wash
Mouthwash	shower gel (men's and women's)
Razor (men's and women's)	nonperishable food that can be heated/cooked in a microwave
Socks (men's and women's)	travel size or hotel size toiletries
Snacks	underwear (men's and women's)
Warm coats – can be used if in good shape	

Where will these items go?

While there are many places that need these items and **we will find a place for everything donated**, we are focusing this year on three places

1. Schwarz Residence at Middlesex YMCA (62 single rooms for men – weekly or longer)
2. Eddy Shelter, Middletown- Emergency homeless shelter for men and women.
3. St Vincent DePaul, Middletown Provides food, shelter and services for poor and homeless individuals

When and where should I return this bag? **By January 5, 2020**

1. Any Sunday in December to Higganum Congregational Church from 9:00 -11am
2. Christmas Eve 7-8 pm or January 5 to First Cong. Church of Haddam from 9:00-11am
3. Church office at First Congregational Church of Haddam, Tuesday & Thursday 8-noon
4. **OR you** can take it to one of the above locations or any place that needs these items

Thank you , First Congregational Church of Haddam - 905 Saybrook Rd. Haddam
Higganum Congregational Church - 23 Parsonage Rd, Higganum
(Church Office at 905 Saybrook Rd 860-345-2742 / 860 345-4304)

SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES 10-27-2019

A special joint (HCC and FCCH) congregational meeting was held following morning worship on October 27, 2019.

The order of business:

1. Presentation of the new Joint Mission and Vision Statements for the transitional ministry of both churches

MISSION: Seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit, the FCCH and HCC congregations are exploring shared ministry and mission.

VISION: During this transition period, the leadership and membership of the congregations are engaging in multiple opportunities for faith development, joint programs, respectful listening, and problem-solving around barriers to partnership.

This process may or may not result in the decision to formally join together. With the help of God, both congregations will experience revitalization through spiritual growth, new friendships and building ministry skills.

These Mission and Vision commitments will be reviewed and updated every three months.

2. Presentation of membership list for each congregation

The meeting was called to order by Terry Smith, Clerk, at 10:35am with 24 HCC members present and 18 FCCH members. Since HCC Moderator, Greg Shields was absent, Terry Smith moved and Alexa Flora seconded a motion to appoint Terry Smith as Acting HCC Moderator. This motion was unanimously passed.

The meeting Call was read along with the Transitional Mission and Vision Statement.

1. FCCH: Motion made and seconded to accept the Mission and Vision statements as presented – Steve Bull/John Anderson.

HCC: Motion made and seconded to accept the Mission and Vision statements as presented - Judy Hodgson/Paul Lewis.

Discussion: 1) Plan is to work on the process; determine how plans can evolve. 2) Why is the three month review in the statement – this is included to note progress in the process. 3) This statement is documenting what is currently being done

Vote (verbal):

FCCH: unanimous approval

HCC: unanimous approval

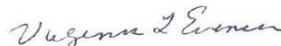
2. The current HCC and FCCH membership lists were distributed to the HCC and FCCH members in attendance. They were asked to review it and notify the Deacons or Clerks if there are changes to be made.

Motion made and seconded to adjourn meeting at 10:45am - Steve Bull/Bruce Ricker. Approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by:

Terry R. Smith, Clerk HCC

Virginia L. Evensen, Clerk FCCH



Joint 2020 Church Sunday Hospitality Schedule

<u>Month</u>	<u>Host Church</u>	<u>Organization(s) Responsible</u>
January	FCCH	FCCH Christian Service and Stewardship
February	HCC	HCC Diaconate
March	FCCH	FCCH Christian Education and Prudential
April	HCC	HCC/FCCH Combined Music
May	FCCH	FCCH Diaconate
June	HCC	HCC Outreach
July	FCCH	Informal – Self Serve
August 2, 9, 16	FCCH	Informal – Self Serve
August 23, 30	FCCH	Informal – Self Serve
September	HCC	HCC Church Officers and Prayer Shawl
October	FCCH	FCCH/HCC Combined Music
November	HCC	HCC Trustees and Board of Finance
December	FCCH	FCCH TBD???

First Congregational Church of Haddam (FCCH)
905 Saybrook Road
Haddam, CT 06438

Higganum Congregational Church (HCC)
23 Parsonage Road
Higganum, CT 06441

JOB DESCRIPTION

POSITION TITLE: Nursery Care Worker **DATE:** October 14, 2019

REPORTS TO: **SUPERVISES/MANAGES:** N/A

- Christian Education Director
- Pastor (secondary) **ADVOCATE:** Moderator of HCC or FCCH

JOB SUMMARY

Responsible for the child care for infants- age 4 during worship services on Sunday am from 9:15-11am

KEY JOB TASKS

- Greet Parents and children and make them feel comfortable.
- Take attendance on sheet provided and confirm pick up person.
- Provide care for infants- age 4 during worship service.
- Engage children in age appropriate play and crafts.
- Follow Church Policies regarding Church Safe Conduct policy.
- Report any damaged or broken equipment so as to maintain a safe environment for children and staff.
- Notify Christian Education Director If supplies are needed for the Nursery Care room.

REQUIRED COMPETENCIES

- Ability to interact with students, parents, church staff, and church members.
- Demonstrated written and verbal communication skills.
- Maintain a positive caring attitude while caring for the children .
- Ability to comply with Church Safe Conduct policy (includes clean criminal background check).

WORK ENVIRONMENT and COMPENSATION

- This a part-time position. Compensation is at a negotiated hourly rate, which must be approved by the Business Committee with input from the Minister; current rate is \$10-\$12/hour depending on experience.
- The number of hours worked averages 8 hours per month.
- Church will provide a safe clean working environment.
- As this is a position compensated on an hourly basis, the Church will not pay for time off due to vacation, illness, or other reason. If the employee is unable to meet any of his/her job tasks, as noted above, for any reason, he/she must notify the Christian Education Director and the Minister as soon as the employee is aware.
- Either party may terminate the paid relationship in writing with 30 days' notice.

TO APPLY

- Send cover letter and resume to Amy Harlow Christian Education Director amyharlow.ucc@gmail.com
Include "NURSERY CARE SEARCH" in subject line. Please, no calls.