

THE MOSAIC

Published monthly by
EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
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Pastoral Ponderings



“Happy Sweet December!” I learned that greeting from our Karen friends. In some parts of Myanmar, on November 30, Christians gather at church to sing, worship, play and dance. Groups sing carols door to door. At midnight everyone chants “Sweet December! Sweet December! Sweet December” to welcome the month of Jesus’ birth. Karen people in America have wished me “Happy Sweet December”. It seems similar to the tradition of Advent.

Many of our Advent/Christmas traditions originate in our homes or in our home cultures. Karen people celebrate Sweet December with all the people in one village and in the jungle when they are fleeing military action and in refugee camps and in the countries to which they have now relocated all over the world.

Our seasonal theme *Close to Home* may bring to mind memories of December gatherings with extended family at the grandparent’s house or the times when we were far away and the song *I’ll Be Home for Christmas* took on new meaning. Our traditions were disrupted last year. Many of them are being re-shaped this year as well. Perhaps it is worth reminding ourselves that people have celebrated Christmas in bombed-out churches and hospital rooms and prison cells as well as in great cathedrals and village churches, and we still are.

This is the season when we remember our story, the same story we tell every year, the story of the birth of a baby to some common folks in a hard time, people who had the courage to hope. Our story is shared by those who knew all about the anguish of endless waiting, the times when the light of hope was almost extinguished. Advent is not a sentimental, warm and fuzzy season but one that speaks to the reality of our world.

Let us draw close to our spiritual home. Join us for worship as we light the candles of hope, peace, joy and love. Listen to the voices of our young people each week they offer truth and laughter. Share the joy of live music, especially the familiar carols of Christmas and our choir, which we have desperately missed the last year.

I love the poem *The House of Christmas* by G. K. Chesterton which contains these lines:

*A Child in a foul stable,
Where the beasts feed and foam,
Only where He was homeless
Are you and I at home;*

Happy Sweet December,
Kathy





Advent and Christmas Worship

The Advent and Christmas scriptures are rich with home metaphors and imagery. John the Baptist prophesies about the One who is to come, but reminds us that we are still wandering far from God’s promised day; his message hits close to home, especially for those experiencing inequity and oppression. After receiving the angel’s news, Mary retreats to Elizabeth’s home, seeking refuge and safety. Christ is born in the midst of a journey home, in a crowded dwelling amidst livestock and shepherds alike. The Magi travel far from home to pay homage to Christ, and, having been warned in a dream, they avoid Herod by traveling home another way.

In these scriptures, home is both physical and metaphorical, something we seek and something we are called to build. Ultimately, God is our home and resting place. God draws near and makes a home on earth—sacred ground is all around us. This Advent, may we be comforted by the One who dwells intimately with us. May we expand safety and sanctuary for everyone wandering far from home. May we come home, wherever home is found—to live fully with joy, hope, and courage.

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|---|----------------|---|----------------|
| November 28 Homesick (Hope) Luke 21:25-36 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 | 10 a.m. | December 5 Laying the Foundation (Peace) Luke 1:57-80 Philippians 1:3-11 | 10 a.m. |
| December 12 A home for All (Joy) Luke 3:1-18 Zephaniah 3:14-20 | 10 a.m. | December 19 Seeking sanctuary (Love) Luke 1:39-55 Luke 1:46b-55 | 10 a.m. |
| December 24 Invited Home Luke 2:1-20 | 7 p.m. | December 26 Lessons and Carols Pajama Sunday | 10 a.m. |



ADVENT PHOTO-A-DAY

| ADVENT 1 | ADVENT 2 | ADVENT 3 | ADVENT 4 |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 11/28 - HOPE | 12/5 - PEACE | 12/12 - JOY | 12/19 - LOVE |
| 11/29 - HOME | 12/6 - FOUNDATION | 12/13 - PROCLAIM | 12/20 - SANCTUARY |
| 11/30 - AWAKE | 12/7 - TENDER | 12/14 - COURAGE | 12/21 - EMERGE |
| 12/1 - RESTORE | 12/8 - REMEMBER | 12/15 - BELONGING | 12/22 - FREEDOM |
| 12/2 - YEARN | 12/9 - FAITH | 12/16 - REJOICE | 12/23 - CHERISH |
| 12/3 - PROMISE | 12/10 - BLUEPRINT | 12/17 - ABUNDANT | 12/24 - EXTRAORDINARY |
| 12/4 - NOURISH | 12/11 - SUSTAIN | 12/18 - REST | 12/25 - GLORY |

#closetohome
#advent2021

Join the Photo-A-Day Challenge Share a photo or a poem or a song related to the word of the day. Find the daily post on the EBC Facebook page and put your contribution in the comments. Or share it to your own page and use the hashtags:
 #closetohome
 #ebcadvent2021



FOCUS Blue Christmas Service
Thursday, December 16
6:30 p.m.
First Church in Albany
110 N Pearl Street

The Advent and Christmas season is a wonderful time of year, and yet it is also a time accompanied with grief and sorrow for many. A Blue Christmas service is a time to name and honor our grief during this time. All are invited on Thursday, December 16th starting at 6:30pm for a time of worship, reflection, and fellowship.

The service will be in-person only, and masks will be required. Please park in the parking lot off of Sheridan Ave and Chapel Street. The service will be held in the Stephen James Chapel. Please contact the office of The First Church in Albany if you have any questions: (518) 463-4449



The Thrive team’s selection for our December anti-racism movie is *The Hate U Give*. You may see the film in person in the sanctuary after worship on December 12. Or you may watch it at home on your own schedule. It is available for rent for \$4 here <https://youtu.be/NXy0H-EZR5s>

Discussion of the movie will take place on Zoom and in-person, beginning about 2:15. The film is rated PG-13 for strong language, drug material and some violent content.

A light lunch will be provided at socially-distanced tables in fellowship hall. **Please let us know you’re coming for lunch by e-mailing Jim Wilkerson or calling Dorothy in the church office 518-465-5161 by**

December 8.

The Hate U Give is based on a best-selling novel by Angie Thomas. It tells the story of Starr Carter, who lives in two worlds: the poor, black neighborhood where she resides and the mostly white prep school she attends. This uneasy balance is shattered when she witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood friend by a policeman. Facing pressures from all sides, Starr must find her voice and stand up for what’s right.

Join us on December 7th to learn from the plight, fight, and insight of Capital Region community members who are engaged in struggles around food and housing insecurity. In recent years, New York has passed transformative legislation to meet the needs of poor and marginalized communities relating to food and housing. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated the extent of these crises and thrown millions into poverty and precarity. We will gather virtually to hear testimony from directly impacted leaders, learn about ways communities are organizing in response, and build solidarity among the poor and dispossessed. Co-sponsors (list in formation): Labor-Religion Coalition of NYS, Capital Region Poor People’s Campaign, FOCUS Churches of Albany, Schenectady Community Ministries.



Trinity United Methodist Church is working with USCRI (US Committee on Refugees and Immigrants) to provide an apartment for a household of Afghan evacuees. Furnishings for the apartment are needed. If you have gently used goods on the following list to donate, they will be gratefully received. You may deliver them to the church at 235 Lark Street. Contact Pastor Becky Richards with any questions: 518-223-2917

Living Room:

Furnishings: Couch, Chair, TV Stand
6' x10 Area Rug

Dining Room:

Table and Chairs

Bedroom 1:

6 x 10 Rug
Dresser

Bathroom:

Rugs/ Bath Mat
Towels
Stopper/Plug
Shower Caddy

Bedroom 2:

3x5 Rug
Dresser



State Street Forum

December 16, 2021, 12 noon-1:00 pm
Advocating for Housing Justice

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are just beginning to be evident, especially when it comes to housing. An eviction moratorium has only postponed the eviction of tens of thousands of families who were unable to pay their rent due to job loss or other factors during the pandemic shutdown. The recovery of our economy is dependent on finding a solution to this impending crisis, but the solutions must be more than band-aids. Can churches and other faith communities be a part of the solution?

Our conversation will be informed by the insights of Ted Houghton, President of Gateway Housing (gatewayhousing.org), a newly-established not-for-profit organization that seeks to promote expansion of housing for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in New York City and across the state. We'll also hear from a minister whose congregation is directly involved with creating affordable housing in its community.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88622275411?pwd=VXgrNm9WeE1DV1BDaUEyckZ3dUtPQT09>

Meeting ID: 886 2227 5411

Passcode: 12210

Introducing Our New Paraments



Judy Henningson combined the heartfelt prayers of the congregation with her own labors to produce two new weavings for the sanctuary, just in time for Advent. The smaller one had its origins during Lent 2020. At that time, the congregation was writing prayers on ribbons which were to be added to an existing waterfall banner. The theme of that season and those prayers was *Roll Down, Justice*. Those ribbons were worked into an antependium for the front of the lectern called *Thy Will Be Done*.

The larger weaving may be used as a vertical banner or as a cloth on the communion table, in Advent and/or Lent. It began life as scraps of fabric and prayers. The prayers were those recorded on strips of cloth by members of the congregation as we worshipped over Zoom in September and October 2021, using the worship theme *Unraveled*. On almost every Sunday of the year, we ask that God's kingdom will come on earth as in heaven. Thus this weaving is entitled *On Earth as in Heaven*



The banner has stars in "heaven" which are reproduced on "earth" with the glass that was used in worship during Lent 2021. The pattern of the stars shows the big dipper (drinking gourd) in reminder of watching the movie *Harriet* and our extended discussions on the history of racism.

There were many prayers of thanks for blessings. There were prayers for courage and patience, prayers for environmental justice, social justice, prayers for an end to systemic racism, prayers for victims of war and violence and natural disasters. There were many, many, many prayers for each other. Judy prayed the prayers on the fabric strips as she worked them into the weaving. A more detailed explanation of the weavings may be found here <https://youtu.be/ntjwM40FNnA> at the 30 minute mark.





Alliance of Baptists

Alliance of Baptists Confronts Racism, Christian Zionism

Emmanuel’s anti-racism efforts are happening within the context of our participation in the Thrive for Racial Justice Project of the Alliance of Baptists. On its website, the Alliance describes itself as “...a faith community knit together by our love for one another and God, combining progressive inquiry, contemplative prayer, and prophetic action to bring about justice and healing in a changing world.”

In line with its anti-racism activities, the Alliance is working to oppose the influence of Christian Zionism on United States’ policy toward Israel. The Alliance has adopted a statement that says in part, “U.S. Christian Zionists have been the driving force of the increased oppression of the Palestinian people in the past 10 years....Theologically, [Christian Zionism] argues that God is dependent upon modern-day Israel’s expansion in order to usher in the “end times....Politically, Christian Zionism galvanizes Christian support to pressure the U.S. government...to endorse Israel’s military occupation, racist policies, and increasing oppression of the Palestinian people...”

The statement concludes, “We commit to challenge this theology, as a particularly pervasive manifestation of a death-dealing theology and instead we commit anew today to a theology of liberation, love, and justice for all people. We commit to challenge U.S. public policy that is grounded in Christian Zionism and instead will promote U.S. public policy grounded in the true gospel of liberation that ends the occupation and builds a just society for both Israelis and Palestinians.”

For more information about the Alliance of Baptists, visit its website at <https://allianceofbaptists.org/>

The full text of the statement Confronting Christian Zionism is at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/10WSdqYXkRd0RNH7Qwl13bjLTycxpKoEX/view>.



Calling All Bakers, Candy Makers, and Cookie Frosters

This year, “if the good Lord’s willin’ an’ the creek don’t rise,” or more importantly, if COVID-19 stays in check, we will be celebrating Christmas both in the sanctuary and on Zoom. On the Sunday before Christmas (Dec. 19), we will be having our Christmas Reception in the Fellowship Hall after the service. And for that we need your help.

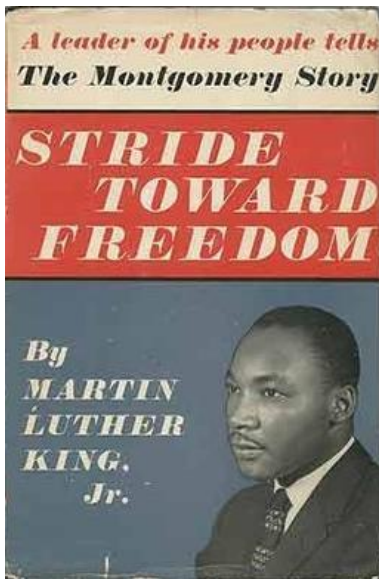
If you are a baker, a candy maker, or a cookie froster, please volunteer to contribute some of your goodies to our Reception.

If you can do that, please contact Edith by email or call her at 518-482-6612. We’ll give you more details when you call.



Remember the Food Pantry... *bar soap*





EBC Thrive Project and FOCUS Churches Book Study
Stride Toward Freedom
Wednesdays in January 2022
7:00-8:30 p.m.

Please join us for a four-part conversation on *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*, Martin Luther King's classic account of the first successful large-scale act of nonviolent resistance in America: the Montgomery bus boycott. A young Dr. King wrote *Stride Toward Freedom* just 2 years after the successful completion of the boycott. In his memoir about the event, he tells the stories that informed his radical political thinking before, during, and after the boycott—from first witnessing economic injustice as a teenager and watching his parents experience discrimination to his decision to begin working with the NAACP. Throughout, he reflects on how his Christian faith inspired and sustained his activism, and how his activism shaped his faith.

Structured conversation will be facilitated by Joe Paparone, who is the Lead Organizer for the Labor-Religion Coalition and a long-time friend of FOCUS.

- January 5 – the context of Montgomery and integration in 1955
- January 12 – nonviolence and social change
- January 19 – the role of faith communities
- January 26 – King's development between Montgomery and the Poor People's Campaign

Books may be purchased through the Open Door Bookstore in Schenectady. (opendoor-bookstore.com) or may be available through your local library.

We'll meet on Zoom, Wednesday evenings in January, from 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Advance Registration required. [Click here](#)

Happy Birthday...
December

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Kathy Moore | 8 th |
| Paw Mary Wah | 9 th |
| Brian Hughes | 12 th |
| Matthew Lahut | 12 th |
| Dwight Smith | 12 th |
| Tom Lahut | 14 th |
| Chri Hay Ler Htoo | 16 th |
| Tammy Skinner | 18 th |
| Ashton Smith | 18 th |
| Molly Wilkerson | 20 th |
| Johnson Din | 24 th |
| Mushel Din | 26 th |
| John Ketcham | 28 th |



December 18:
deadline for January
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December 30:
Annual Reports are due.

If your birthday is not published in our monthly listing, please notify Dorothy at 465-5161.

winter begins
December 21

Emmanuel Baptist Church
275 State St.
Albany, NY 12210

