



The Parish Scope

Volume 58 , Issue 11

December 2011 & January 2012

**The Congregational
Church of Naugatuck
Division Street
Naugatuck, CT
06770**

FROM YOUR SENIOR PASTOR

There are a lot of things that say Christmas to me: beautiful twinkling lights, the taste of hot mulled cider or of a favorite Christmas cookie, the smell of fresh pine, the ringing of a Salvation Army bell, the images of ceramic, plastic or wood sages, shepherds and animals awaiting the arrival of a baby to enter their hay filled manger. But there is nothing that says Christmas to me as much as music. During those December weeks my soul breathes in Christmas music the way my lungs breathe in air. And I am constantly looking for new pieces to add to my Christmas repertoire. Some of this years favorites have included "Do You Here What I Hear?" of the Glee Christmas album, "We Three Kings" by Pentatonix, "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" by Vocal Point, and Kristen Grave's version of "O Holy Night". To me, what makes for a good Christmas song is just that it sounds like Christmas to me.

One of my other new favorite Christmas songs is a piece by one of the Christian Contemporary artists that I'm really developing an affinity for – Francesca Battistelli. I wanted to share with you of the lyrics of this song.

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Hold on now, I gotta take a deep breath
I don't know what to say when I look in your eyes
You made the world before I was born
Here I am holding You in my arms tonight

Noel, Noel, Jesus our Emmanuel

You're here
I'm holding You so near
I'm staring into the face of my Savior
King and Creator

You could've left us on our own
But You're here

Special points of interest:

- * Special Services of
Worship in December
- * Ecumenical Toy Sale
- * Christmas Caroling
- * WCF
- * PF
- * Covenantal Coordinator's
Report
- * NEON Dinner, Christmas
Day Dinner

Don't know how long I'm gonna have You for
But I'll be watching when You change the world
Look at Your hands, they're still so small
Someday You're gonna stretch them out and save us all

Noel, Noel, God with us Emmanuel

You're here, I'm holding You so near ooh oh
I'm staring into the face of my Savior
King and Creator
You could've left us on our own
But you're here, you're here

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Someday I'm gonna look back on this
The night that God became a baby boy
Someday You're gonna go home again,
But You leave your spirit and flood the world with joy

You'll be here, I'm holding You so near
I'm staring into the face of my Savior, King and Creator
You could've left me on my own, but you're here... You're here
Hallelujah, You're here
Hallelujah, You're here.

While in some cases it is a familiar tune or lyrics which say Christmas to me, in this case it is the power of the message. "You could've left me on my own, but You're here... You're here." To me, that's the summation of the entire Christmas message. The God of the Universe present in the tenderness of an infant. God was present as the baby Jesus was held in Mary's arms. But God is just as present each time we welcome the baby Jesus into our hearts.

I'm not sure what it is that says Christmas to you. But whatever it may be, I hope it points to the same message as the song I have shared. God is here! God is here!

Gordon

Special Services of Worship in December

Tuesday, December 6th @ 7:00 p.m. – Mid-Advent Service of Centering – This meditative service will provide a mid-season "deep breath" and centering in the meaning of the Advent. The service will include communion and an opportunity for individual anointing and blessing.

Sunday, December 11th @ 8:30 & 10:15 a.m. – Advent Service of Lessons and Carols – Utilizing scripture and song, our Chancel Choir will tell the story of the prophecies of the Messiah and their fulfillment in the birth of Christ.

Sunday, December 18th @ 8:30 and 10:15 a.m. – Christmas Pageant- Experience the nativity story told by the children of our church through a combination of live drama and digital photography.

Sunday, December 18th @ 7:00 p.m. - Longest Night Service – This service is particularly designed for those who may find themselves grieving or missing loved ones during the holiday season. It includes a time of lighting candles for those we hold in our prayers.

Saturday, December 24th @ 5:30 – Family Christmas Eve Service – Our Family Service will include music by our chancel choir and string ensemble, a children's message by Marji Hughes, and a Christmas Meditation by Fredd Ward. Of course, there also will be plenty of carols to sing and the story of a very special birth.

Saturday, December 24th @ 11:00 p.m. – Sacramental Christmas Eve Service – Our Sacramental Service will include a musical selection by our Chancel Choir, Tim Phillips leading us in our traditional singing of *The Peace of Christmas Morning*, a Christmas Meditation by Gordon Rankin, and the celebration of the sacrament of communion.

Sunday, December 25th @ 10:15 a.m.- Christmas Celebration of Song and Story – This more informal service will include hymns, sing and some inspirational stories of the season. *Note there will be no 8:30 a.m. service.*

Lenten Devotional

We are planning to prepare our own Lenten devotional again this year. I am starting to solicit potential authors. However I am also willing to have someone step up and say, "I'd like to do that". Authors are asked to prepare two devotions each. Each devotion would include a scripture reference, a reflection (a paragraph or two), and a one or two sentence prayer. I will provide the scriptures for authors to work in Mid January. All devotions will need to be turned in by Monday, February 6th.

Please let me know if you would like to help.

Lenten devotional will be available to the congregation in both digital and print format no later than Sunday, February 19th.

Gordon

FROM YOUR CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR

*the people who sat in darkness, have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death
light has dawned. Matthew 4:16*

Matthew's retelling of Isaiah 9:2 is arguably the most recognizable of the verses we read as prophecies of the birth of Jesus.

The people to whom Isaiah was speaking, were living through a time of economic upheaval and governmental crises and personal distress. It must have been extremely difficult for them to believe Isaiah's words. I am certain many dismissed them without even a second thought.

Yet, there were some who did see - maybe not in the brilliance of a great shining beacon, but the slight brightening of the sky in the pre-dawn hours. Some found that the darkness was slowly being dispelled - albeit not as quickly or necessarily in the manner they would have preferred.

Matthew purposely chose to add this prophecy to the story of Jesus' birth - life was much the same for the people of Israel at that time as for Isaiah's. And their reaction was much the same. Yet, there were some (such as Anna, Simeon, the magi for example) who did see ...

Advent is here. Many of our lives feel similar to those of Isaiah and Matthew's times. We hear this passage once again. Do we dismiss the message without a second thought? We will soon celebrate the birth of our savior. Will we notice the brightening of the sky? Can we believe in the coming dawn?

Marji

You are invited to attend
A Mid-Advent Service of Centering

*A meditative prayer service
to provide a mid-season "deep breath"
and centering in the meaning of the Advent.*

Tuesday, December 6, 2010

7:00 p.m.

Congregational Church of Naugatuck

The Ecumenical Toy Sale

The new, un-wrapped Toys are due Sunday, December 11th. Help is needed with the sale which happens on the following dates:

Sunday, December 11, at 12noon - list the toys that we donate; and set-up

The Sale

Monday, December 12, at 6pm-8pm

Tuesday, December 13, at 1pm-3pm and 6pm-8pm (and cleanup)

Help out and share your Christmas Spirit in a very special way.

**JUST HEAR THOSE SLEIGH BELLS
RINGING....**

Join us on Sunday, December 18th at 1 pm to spread a little Holiday Cheer to our homebound members! We will meet at the church to depart by 1 pm for caroling! All ages welcome and Santa Hats and Reindeer Ears are also in order! This is a really fun time and our homebound members and friends really enjoy our company and voices! Call Peggy for more information

Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 18

8:30am & 10:15am

worship

Join our children as they

tell the stories

of Christmas

PF is hosting

ALUMNI Night

On

Saturday, December 17

6-9pm in the Parish House.

All PFers from the last 10 years (2001-2011) are invited to join in the fun and fellowship with old friends and new!

For more information speak with any current PF member or Marji Hughes.

Adults and teens are invited to **volunteer** in **Church School** this winter with 3 year olds through Grade 6. Power Xpress **leaders and helpers are needed January through April** for 3 weeks in each time period listed, in the Experience Station of your choice. Story, Art, Games, Music/Movement, Science, Kitchen, Video --- you choose where you feel comfortable!

January 15-Feb 5 – *The Four Friends*

February 12-March 4 -- *Who is Jesus?*

March 11-April 1 – *Easter: Go and Tell*

For more information or to volunteer for any Christian Education or Youth opportunity, please call Marji Hughes 203-729-3037

Or email marjih@congonaug.org.

FRIDAYS

once a month

Adult supper and discussion

December 2

6:15pm supper provided

7pm dessert and discussion

Next supper date: January 20

Contact Marji Hughes 203-729-3037 to sign up or if you have any questions

Childcare provided if requested in advance

Inclement Weather

In cases of inclement winter weather on Sundays, please turn to WTNH (Channel 8) or WFSB (Channel 3) for closure information. You may also check their web sites wtnh.com or wfsb.com. (Please understand both sites only allow limited options to report closure.) We also try to change the "worship service times" message on the church answering machine to reflect any cancellation of worship services or church school.

2nd Annual Christmas Eve Luminaries

It was a beautiful sight to see so many blessings and remembrances' as we enter the church to begin our celebrations and we'd would like to continue with this tradition.

Luminary bags will be for sale every Sunday after the 10:15 service for \$5.00.

If you have any questions please contact Jennifer Dupont @ (203) 592-4208 or jchoogie1@aol.com

December 2011 – January 2012 Church School Calendar

December

- 4** – Communion Sunday -- Children ages 3 through grade 6 begin in the Auditorium at 10:15am and head to classes following “Jr” Worship.
7th and 8th grade worship with their parents in the Sanctuary
ADVENT LUNCHEON and WORKSHOP
- 11** -- Children ages 3 through grade 8 begin in the Auditorium at 10:15am and head to classes following “Jr” Worship.
- 18** – Christmas PAGEANT both 8:30am and 10:15am worship services
- 25** -- Christmas Day – Family Worship 10:15am.

January

- 1** – New Year’s Day – Family Worship 10:15am
- 8** – Epiphany Sunday – Family Worship 10:15am
- 15** -- Children ages 3 through grade 8 begin in the Auditorium at 10:15am and head to classes following “Jr” Worship.
- 22** -- Children ages 3 through grade 8 begin in the Auditorium at 10:15am and head to classes following “Jr” Worship.
- 29** -- Children ages 3 through grade 8 begin in the Auditorium at 10:15am and head to classes following “Jr” Worship.

Questions? Call Marji Hughes 203-729-3037 or email marjih@congonaug.org.

MEMBERSHIP GIVING UPDATE (through October 31st):

Budgeted: \$135,000.00

Pledges received: \$104,560.00

Actual Membership Giving for the month of October: \$8,544.00

Actual Membership Giving year to date: \$94,312.00