



THE CIRCLE CHURCH NEWS

December 2021

North Madison Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
1271 Durham Road
Madison, CT 06443

Advent is a season of waiting. For us, living into our second Christmas season of pandemic time, waiting may not sound particularly enticing a pursuit, as holiday pursuits go. We are weary. Weariness and waiting are challenging companions.

When I am soul-weary, tired, and flattening out...if I am living without great intention, I want just to give up. When cold, damp, long nights of darkness greet me mid-way through the afternoon of a long day, I may think, "What's this all for?" When a diagnosis comes back unfavorably, a child is inconsolable or behaving unreasonably, my boss expects something impossible or unethical, a family member's life falls apart, aging or departed parents are no longer a consolation but a worry and a heart-ache, my best friend moves too far away, our beloved pet crosses the rainbow bridge, injustices and unfairness are visited upon us or a vulnerable person we love, there's just too much money left at the end of the month, we still can't be together the way we long to be with loved ones outside our "bubble," and the relationships in my home go sour or silent, I may think, "Seriously, God?! What's the point?"

And yet, isn't that exactly the point? Seriously. God.

Kindling the Advent lights is not about dispelling or denying the darkness. The darkness is, was, and will always be real and present and part of things in our concrete, carbon-based, photosynthetic- and food-chain-dependent, ape-descendent life experiences.

Kindling the tiny, tenacious flames of Advent is about training our focus. Not to turn away from darkness's very real presence, and all that it holds, but to claim light's tiny, tenacious power in the midst of darkness' pall. Advent, and the spiritual journey writ large is about cultivating the mystical wisdom of the human confession that when "a light shines in the darkness, the darkness does not, cannot, overcome it, understand it, or extinguish its presence's glow. This is just as true to the generational human experience as our concrete finitudes.

In fact, would the light even be visible without the landscape of context that darkness provides?

Few living things prefer to suffer. It is more normative that we seek to avoid it. But suffering and even death is an indelible component of life. To avoid our darkneses is to turn away from what mystics, and Jesus among them, show us to be wisdom and compassion's greatest vehicle to finding our soul's truest identities and home.

Jesus' own story is born of a lineage of brokenness (Rape, murder, misogyny, polyamory, ruthless warring, abuses of state power, terrible hardship and betrayal), and he thus calls himself, "Son of Humanity." He knows well, in his own DNA and family experience, the weight of being, living, and loving enfleshed as a human.

He is endlessly frustrated and tender with those he cultivates to come close to him. He weeps. He loves. He drinks and eats. He tastes and sweats, and surely has BO. He gets dust in his eyes and tears his fingernails back from time to time. He laughs at dumb jokes and gets misty-eyed unexpectedly from time to time at the sound of a beloved song or nostalgic cooking aroma. He loves the taste and feel of cool, fresh water when he is thirsty. He knows what it is to love and to hope. And to hurt.

And to wait.

Jesus is not an accidental messiah. He is not the only messianic figure to live in human history or imagination. He is the one who's life captured our hearts and imaginations. I think a big part of that--of what has made him so compelling for so many generations and cultures across human history--is that he shows us ourselves and our God in the midst of our messy human reality--hunger and satiety, longing and fulfillment, generosity and withholding, withholding and forgiveness, darkness and light. He walks and waits with us as we stumble forward trying to make it all make sense. He does not offer platitudes or easy answers. He invites us to lean into the mess, to keep listening, to keep loving, to keep going. Even in the midst of the darkness--of betrayal, poverty, illness, empire, persecution, and even unjust execution, that loving, tenacious, divine human light that Jesus shows us, does not go out. Somehow, in the midst of the darkness, the light still spreads.

Just wait...

With all my love and abundant Advent blessings,
Heather

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Sunday, December 5th during 10am worship,
North Madison Congregational Church presents

CA **CHRISTMAS** **C**AROL By Charles Dickens

a **One-Woman Performance**

by Great Britain native, **Jennifer Munro**, award-winning storyteller, actor, and author, who brings Scrooge, the Cratchits, and the Fezziwigs vibrantly to life in her dramatic, and thoroughly English, interpretation of Dickens' literary classic.

Experience this tale of heartbreak, redemption, and joy as Dickens intended it: on our bare chancel with just the power of the human voice to capture hearts and imaginations.

As he created the story, Dickens says he wept over, laughed over, and wept over it again – and you will, too.



There will be a free-will offering for Jenny's honorarium. Please note: with Communion, Prayers, Choir, and brief Intermission, this service will be slightly longer than usual (Plan for 90 minutes)



It is assumed that attendees will have been vaccinated.
Performance is suitable for adults and children 12+. Special Advent activities are planned for younger children during this presentation.

- Advent -



Welcome to Advent: Welcome to the season of waiting and of growing light, the four weeks of the Advent of Emmanuel, "God with Us." In these hopeful, expectant weeks of waiting in darkness to rekindle the lights of hope, how wonderful a gift it is to gather (either in person or through the wonders of technology) and watch what paths God's light will illuminate for our journey together in the unfolding days ahead. This year both Advent and Hanukkah, the Jewish tradition of the "Festival of Lights", began Sunday, November 28th.

Several of our families practice both traditions with the lighting of candles. This year Miles Dunn lit the first candle of the Menorah, and then Dina Dunn lit the first Advent candle while Miles reflected on this, the candle of Hope. As a different NMCC household lights our Advent candles each week during worship, we will reflect on that week's Advent theme--hope, love, joy, and peace as we journey toward Christmas. If you have made an Advent wreath, you may follow along at home in lighting your own wreath each week with us during worship.

In the twelve days of Christmas to follow Christmas Day, we will reflect on the light of the new year and the star of Epiphany. Please join us in person or in your homes via Zoom for each of these special worship services.

Longest Night Service – December 21 at 7:00 p.m.: Our annual Longest Night Service is held on the evening of the Winter Solstice, recognizing that, in what is generally considered a joyous time of the year, many of us experience sadness, melancholy and depression that is amplified in these days of long nights and shortened days. The cold and loneliness of winter, memories of lost or distant loved ones, worries and challenges in our lives and the lives of those about whom we care, are amplified this year, especially. The Longest Night service is a safe, healing, place to express and attend to sadness through meditation, readings, and gentle music in quiet candlelight.

The Longest Night tradition continues this year in both our sanctuary and via Zoom. Our time together will conclude with naming names and lighting candles for those we wish to remember. If at home, we invite you to have an unlit candle (or two) prepared in your space by your Zoom screen, with specific details to follow. This will be a moving and beautiful way of sharing our prayers with one another. You may leave your home prayer candles glowing in your worship space for as long as you like into the evening.

Christmas Eve - December 24 at 4 and 10 p.m.: Our Christmas Eve worship will, in keeping with all our worship services, be both in the Sanctuary and virtual. Our music team, ministry staff, pastor, and choir are preparing rich, touching, worship experiences to warm our hearts even at a social distance. This is a wonderful opportunity to share in worship with friends and family across the nation!

December 24 at 4:00 p.m.: The Children's Christmas Pageant will be the centerpiece of our Christmas Eve Family worship this year. Our children, families, and gentle beasts are preparing already for a beautiful retelling of Jesus' birth story amid Christmas carols and all the Christmas Eve magic. Please have a candle and a way to light it near your screen for our singing of Silent Night at the conclusion of the service if you're joining virtually.

December 24 at 10:00 p.m.: This beautiful Candlelight Carol Service of readings, reflections, carols, choral anthems by our amazing choir and other special music and our traditional candle-lit singing of "Silent Night" will warm your heart and set your soul at peace for your long winter's nap into the wonder of Christmas

morning. If joining us virtually, please have a candle and a way to light it near your screen for our singing of Silent Night at the conclusion of the service.



Christmas Poinsettias: : If you wish to order a poinsettia to be placed in the sanctuary during the Christmas holidays, please complete this form and place it in the offering plate, or send it to the church office (1271 Durham Road, Madison, CT 06443) by **Sunday, December 15, at the latest.** As we will not have the space this year for the "poinsettia tower" at the front of the Sanctuary, you may take your poinsettia home at the end of whichever service you attend Christmas Eve (or take it to a member who is homebound). **Please make your check payable to NMCC and write "poinsettia" in the memo portion of your check.**

SIZE	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Medium	\$12.50	_____	_____
Large (3 stems)	\$21.00	_____	_____

Given in:

_____ celebration of _____
 _____ honor of _____
 _____ memory of _____

Given by: _____
 (as you want it to appear in bulletin)

Phone: _____

Thank you so much for helping us to make a joyful prayer with our flowers. – The Worship Committee

- Children and Youth Ministries –



We have lots in the works, but are still in the planning stage! Stay Tuned for a CE Advent and Winter Season Update...

- Community Outreach and Fundraisers –



Ministry Resource Team: Ministry Resource Team: We featured the Columbus House holiday plans during worship November 28, identified a new leader for our Shoreline food pantry effort, the new NMCC Prison Ministry collected items for families of the incarcerated and we are close to formalizing our newest Ministry – Refugee Resettlement - as we prepare for our Afghan family as part of the Shoreline Interfaith Resettlement Project.



Columbus House

Columbus House – We will be collecting wrapped warm hats, gloves, scarves and socks (please no gifts for children this year as we’ve done previously). Please mark the gift as male or female and size, if applicable. We are also collecting \$10 Dunkin Donuts cards. Please drop them off in Fellowship Hall beginning December 10th or the bin at the top of the ramp. Contact Roberta Hanlon 203-500-8311 or robertahanlon@msn.com if

you have questions, Peter Meier (presents) 203-421-8377 or peterm190@yahoo.com or Scott Conover (gift cards) 203-453-1733 or scottconover56@gmail.com. Thank you! Roberta Hanlon, Columbus House Champion



Loaves & Fishes Ministry: We are working with a new Champion to finalize the proposal to lead this ministry forward, with an updated focus. During Worship November 21, the congregation was invited to collect the following donations to relaunch this ministry during Worship December 5th: tuna and mayo, pancake mix and syrup, and canned soup. In the

meantime, contact Roberta for any questions.



NMCC Prison Ministry – The first collection of this new ministry for Free Forever Prison Ministry wrapped up in November, supporting families of incarcerated people in New Haven. Look for details of our effort in December. Thank you for your continued support!! Nora and Gail, NMCC Prison Ministry Champions



Youth Continuum - considering other priorities and new ministries, we have determined we will not spend the funds had earmarked for this ministry in 2021.



Community Yoga: The current 2 series run through Monday, December 13 and Thursday, December 16. We are planning to continue the next Monday series will begin on December 20 and the Thursday series on December 23. Take some time out your holiday activities and enjoy the relaxing benefits of Yoga. You can join any time and try out your first class for free. Details on our web page. Questions or to register, contact Roberta Hanlon robertahanlon@msn.com or 203-500-8311.



Refugee Resettlement. We are so excited to welcome the Afghan refugee family. Within the coming days/weeks a family of 11, 2 parents and 9 children between the ages of 5-19, will be arriving. This is incredible and we were blessed with the task of helping this family because of all the support that our group has from the 5 congregations involved (Guilford: First Church Congregational, Christ Church, St. George and in Madison: Temple Beth Tikvah and NMCC) and

from the community. We are all set with household items to get them started. Once the family arrives, there may be more needs for clothing, books, toys, school supplies, etc., but we will keep everyone posted as this adventure unfolds. Thank you all for your incredible generosity! Janice Wolf



Annual Holiday Craft Fair: We will be holding our annual Holiday Craft Fair on December 4 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

There are still opportunities to volunteer! Please use [this SignUpGenius link](#) to sign up for:

1. How many dozens of cookies will you bake?
2. Volunteering for the Cookie Walk, Raffle, Runners (taking and delivering lunch orders for the crafters) and set up/take down.

And share the date with your friends and family to help promote the fair!

Contact us if you have questions:

- Crafter Tables - Christine Hopkins, christeyo@aol.com
- Cookie Walk - Linda Young, lindaluy@comcast.net
- Karen's Cafe - Melissa Blundon/Meredith Young, pmlundon@aol.com, meredith.young2013@gmail.com
- Posters - Roberta Hanlon, robertahanlon@msn.com
- Setup - Tom Lauher, thomaslauher@sbcglobal.net

Looking forward to seeing you all there!!!

- Get Involved / Stay Connected –



There are many ways to be involved in NMCC's vibrant community—serving in a missional outreach ministry, mentoring and teaching our children, joining in musicmaking or worship planning, helping out around the church building, singing in the choir, sharing the gifts God has given you, learning new skills from others, enjoying the fellowship of working on projects together. Visit our [Get Involved](#) page for opportunities at northmadisoncc.org.



Congregational Meeting: There will be a meeting for Members of North Madison Congregational Church on Sunday, December 12, following worship. The purpose of the meeting is to approve the church's 2022 budget, and conduct any other business that comes before the group.



NMCC Family Christmas Caroling: Yes! Our Church is planning on Christmas Caroling again this year! We do not yet have a definite date, but we will send out an email with the details as soon as we can. We will meet at Church and drive our cars to member's homes and sing on their lawn, wearing our masks, and hopefully bring some joy to their Holiday season. Watch for an email soon with the details about this Family Fellowship event.



Let's Get Productive With Habits of Mind: We all have habits! Some of them we would consider to be "good" habits; exercising regularly or eating healthy food or attending worship at NMCC every Sunday might fall into that category. Other habits – biting our nails, regularly staying up way too late binging on Netflix – might be considered "bad" habits. Most of the things we think of as habits are behaviors that we can choose to apply or work to extinguish.

But there is another kind of habit that some of us at NMCC have been exploring: the Productive Habits of Mind.

These sixteen habits, identified and developed by internationally known experts Bena Kallick and Art Costa, represent mental behaviors that help us to solve problems and answer the larger question, "What do you do when you don't know what to do?" Here at NMCC we began working on the Productive Habits of Mind with our confirmation class, the Journey group, almost a year ago. The idea from the beginning was that eventually the Journeymen and their mentors would help teach the full congregation about how the Habits of Mind could help us be more productive in our work together. Early in the new year our Journeymen will be presenting to the congregation the Habits of Mind they have been practicing.

Meanwhile, in October we introduced a group of church leaders to the Habits of Mind during our fall leadership retreat. At that retreat we reached consensus on four habits that could become norms for our work as boards and committees of the church. We agreed that we will always:

- Listen with Understanding and Empathy
- Think and Communicate with Clarity and Precision
- Think Flexibly
- Think Interdependently.

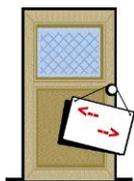
Moving forward we will be exploring ways that these and other habits of mind can enhance our work together as a congregation. Stay tuned!



Ushers Wanted: If you're interested in being an usher during Sunday Worship, please contact Calvin or Nora price at wildwood9@msn.com.



File Cabinets Wanted: Do you have a file cabinet that's looking for a new home? The music department is looking for a few for music storage. If you can help, please contact the office, office@northmadisoncc.org, 203-421-3241.



Main Sanctuary Doors: Please note, as we do each year, in order to keep the church clean and warm, we will be keeping the sanctuary doors locked during the cold winter months. Please use the Fellowship Hall or Narthex entrances. Thanks!

Ongoing Ways to Stay Connected

Please let us know if you need help connecting with virtual ministries—we can walk you through logging onto Zoom, Facebook, etc.—we want you to be able to participate!

Please contact the office and we'll have a deacon call you to help.

Wednesday Evening Vespers Prayer: Join us **Wednesdays at 9:00 p.m.** on Facebook. If you don't have Facebook you can view them later on our [Church Website](#).

Wednesday Bible Study: Join Pastor Heather for bible study on **Wednesdays at 4:00 p.m.** The week's passages and Zoom Link to join can be found in the Friday all church email. Absolutely no previous scripture knowledge is required.

Sunday In-Person & Virtual Worship: Sunday worship in the Sanctuary and live streamed at 10:00 a.m. on Sundays on Zoom and Facebook. Dress warmly, as the windows will be open following Covid Protocol. The Zoom link can be found in the Friday all church email. The service is posted afterwards on Facebook, [YouTube](#) and our [Church Website](#). If you have problems logging into worship, please contact: Carol Luckenbach 203-530-9903 for tech support.

- In the Community -

Silver Lake:

JOIN US FOR

Christmas AT THE LAKE

overnight retreat
DEC. 10-12
7-8TH GRADES
\$125 per person

family day
DEC. 4, 10AM-4PM
\$50/\$40 TIERED PRICING
per person


SILVER
LAKE
Conference Center

www.silverlakecc.org/campsessions

- In the News & Noteworthy -



NMCC and Members in the News: We often spot an article in the local paper, *Patch* or in other news outlets, and have been posting them on our bulletin board and our Facebook page. We'd like to expand the coverage and add a feature about this type of news in the monthly newsletter. Please send or drop off the news articles you find to the office at office@northmadisoncc.org and we'll be sure to include them.

Eileen McCann was interviewed for an article about our annual **Harvest Dinner** which was published in the November 4 edition of *The Source*. You can read the article [here](#).

Office, Board and Committee Contacts:

Senior Minister: Rev. Dr. Heather Arcovitch	203-421-3241
Office: Jackie Fix, Office Manager; Rhonda Spencer, Bookkeeper	203-421-3241
Minister of Music: Linda Juliani	860-399-0210
Choir Director: Bill Clemmons	203-421-3484
Minister of Faith Formation & Youth Ministry: Sue Timony-Hall	203-843-6206
Property Manager: Tom Lauher	203-530-7467
Circle Nursery School: Kathy Niejadlik	203-421-0997

OFFICERS

Executive Committee Chair, Jim Farrales	203-421-9323
Executive Committee Vice Chair, Tom Lauher	203-530-7467
Board of Deacons Members*:	See Below
Clerk, Eileen McCann	203-623-9155
Assistant Clerk, Kate Davis	203-421-5848
Treasurer, TBD	
Assistant Treasurer, Calvin Price	203-245-8566
Financial Secretary Receipts/Disbursements, Susan O'Connor	203-457-1559
Asst. Financial Secretary, Receipts/Disbursements, Calvin Price	203-245-8566

*Peter Haff, 203-415-2773; Melissa Blundon, 203-421-4465; Carol Anne Bachhuber 203-747-4840; Dawn Barber, 203-457-1868; Peter Meier, 203-421-8377; Sally Lottick, 570-510-8934

BOARDS/COMMITTEES/TEAMS

Board of Christian Ed Chair, Erica McMillian	203-895-2611
Board of Deacons, TBD	
Board of Finance, TBD	
Circle Nursery School, Meredith Young	203-410-4487
Communications Team Leader, Roberta Hanlon	203-500-8311
Cong. Life Ministry Team Co-Chair, Ken Nichols	860-346-2000
Co-Chair, Jim Farrales	203-421-9323
Generosity Team, Jim Farrales	203-421-9323
Hospitality Chair, Christine Farrales	203-421-9323
Human Resources Chair, Jim Farrales	203-421-9323
Ministry Resource Team Leader, Roberta Hanlon	203-500-8311
Music Chair, Carol Luckenbach	203-530-9903
Pastoral Relations Contact, Carol Luckenbach	203-530-9903
Property & Planning Chair, Tom Lauher	203-530-7467
Quiet Ministry Chair, Linda Young	203 645-7582

Make a Gift on our Website! It's easy! Have a special occasion for which you'd like to thank God? Want an easy way to make your weekly offering? Like to establish a monthly automatic donation as a sustaining member? Visit www.NorthMadisonCC.org, click "Online Giving" at the top of the page, and just follow the instructions! Or TEXT "Donation" to **833-948-2188**. Or, just scan here with your phone. Thank you for your love and support of NMCC and our ministries.

