

Good Sunday morning from a lightly snow-covered hill in Rockport....

FIRST! We will have church this morning at our regular time of 9:30! But, if you don't feel safe being out on the roads, stay home!!! See you next Sunday, January 2nd, if you can't join us this morning..... First priority – stay safe....

On this day after Christmas I'm thinking about uncertainty and assurance.... the uncertainty of the future and the assurance of our present moment. How do we live with uncertainty and assurance at the same time? How do we live into 2022 with hope and optimism while accepting the uncertainty of each day? It's an understatement to say these are hard questions as we face rising numbers of Covid cases yet again in our county, our country and around the world. We are unsettled, don't you think?

And in the midst of all the uncertainty of our times, I read early this morning of the death of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu in South Africa. He was ninety years old. I had the privilege of being in the same room with Archbishop Tutu about twelve years ago when he preached at the Festival of Homiletics in Atlanta. It was a room about the size of our sanctuary, and I sat in the front row as we heard his joyful giggle of life, his profound wisdom, and his stories of light and depth, joy and sorrow.... I can say without hesitation that I have never been in the presence of anyone who so reminded me of what it must have been like to be in the presence of Jesus. It was an experience I will never forget. May he rest in peace with all the saints in light....

Some words my dear friend Hilary sent me this week are finding resonance for me in my thoughts and questions about the unsettled future we all face. Hilary gave me permission to share her words with you. She wrote, "We are living in strange new times! There is a comfort in the continuous rising and setting of the sun, the phases of the moon, the regularity of seasons (if not of weather), the songs of birds and the familiarity of Christmas carols.... the daily rituals of coffee making and sipping.... our connections to each other and our meaning-making amidst plenty of uncertainty! Remember the prophesy of the Hopi elder – look around and see who is in the fast moving river with you.... and celebrate!"

Thank you, Hilary, for these wise words.... they give me hope and optimism in the midst of the uncertainty we face as we slide into 2022....

I'll copy below the bulletin for this morning's worship service. Later this afternoon I'll send via e-mail and Facebook the Christmas meditation I've titled "...registered..." that I'll deliver this morning in church.

With blessings and hope for peace and goodwill among you and yours and all the rest of us... Susan

**Federated Church in Thomaston
United Church of Christ United Methodist Church
All Are Welcome
Sunday, December 26, 2021**

Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet, Pastor Alice Billheimer, Organist/ Choir Director
Lector: Coretta Cooper

*Please be respectfully silent once our worship service has begun.
An asterisk (*) indicates where you are invited to stand.
Bold print indicates that the people speak these responses & prayers.*

GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude Shepherd's Christmas -- a medley of carols to celebrate the shepherds at the manger

Call to Worship

Pastor: Light of life, you came in flesh, born into human pain and joy.

People: Grant us faith, O Christ, to see your presence among us, so that all of creation may sing new songs of gladness and walk in the way of peace.

All: Let us worship God!

***Opening Hymn** "Oh Come All Ye Faithful" 234 Blue Hymnal

Lighting the Christ candle all the rest candle in Advent for love....

A Responsive Reading "Mary, Did You Know" (see insert)

A Moment of Silence

Special Music – By Ron Anderson

SERVICE OF THE WORD

Scripture Reading Luke 2:1-14

***Gloria Patri No. 70 Glory Be to the Father....**

Message

“...registered...”

**A Christmas Reflection for the Federated Church of Thomaston
Thomaston, Maine
Sunday, December 26, 2021
Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet
Scripture: Luke 2:1-14**

In those day a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you; you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

Luke 2:1-14

Pray with me. God of new life, all life, and life beyond this life, be among us in these moments of joyful celebration of the birth of Jesus, and the challenges we face in this time and place. Amen.

Joseph and Mary went to be registered, so the story goes...

The Emperor Augustus said all the world should be so.

But registered for what, we ask and want to know?

Joseph and Mary ponder it, too....

Registered for what, how many or few?

The story speaks of first registration, but registered for good?

If we think of it, we're registered.... or life says we should.

From beginning to end, our number comes up more than a few.
When we're born we're registered, with a certificate, too!
It says we've been born at what time, date, and where...
And sometimes it shows our first foot prints, too!
We go off to school – to kindergarten or first grade,
And we're registered again – name and birth date.
Then comes high school and the certificate says,
“registered again,” this time with a diploma we've gained.
We're registered now for sure, isn't that all that's needed?
But no, wait, there's more!
Off to work or more schooling, to be registered, again and again!
Then there's marriage to remind us of new registrations galore.
Say your “I do's” and “I will's” and sign up for more!
How much more we say, how many registrations will there be?
You're not done yet, they say....
There's insurance for to register, and retirement plans, too,
Social Security and Medicare and the heirs to secure.
Then there's the last registration.... in this life anyway....
The one that links our first day to our last and secures our place
Next to Joseph and Mary and all past....
The registration that says you're part of this life and the next....
The one that promises the very best.
Teddy bears forever and all the rest....
The rest of the story, the rest of the night,
The rest of our lives is all in plain sight,
If only we remember and live in the now
And wait for tomorrow where all will be wow!
On this night we remember the birth of a holy child,
So let us remember to sign up and stand proud,
To register for true peace meek and mild
In this special place and all around the world,
With brothers and sisters of ever color, kind, and faith,
To wish all a good night and sweet rest in the fold
Of the human race and the family of Joseph and Mary behold!
Jesus was born long long ago.
He calls us to sign up and register for life, don't you know....

Life in the flesh and life in the spirit,
Life for yesterday, today and tomorrow for sure,
Life with a promise of registrations galore.
Registrations for what?
The life to share and adore,
The life that calls us to worship
And gratitude for much more,
More than we deserve or could ever preserve,
And all for the glory of the Creator we serve.
May the day bring us joy and each night give us rest.
May the new year bring goodness and light to our nests.
May the people say, "Amen! Good will to all the rest!"

***Hymn of Meditation** "Silent Night, Holy Night" 239 Blue Hymnal

RESPONDING IN FAITH

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns with God and Each Other

Pastoral Prayer & The Lord's Prayer.....

Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

Offertory Poinsettias (from a group of Christmas songs composed by Felix Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847) to give as gifts for his friends and family.

***Doxology No. 95 Blue Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow....**

***Prayer of Dedication**

***Closing Hymn** "Joy to the World" 246 Blue Hymnal

Benediction

Postlude "Christmas Morn" -- George Frederick Handel

**Revised Common Lectionary Readings for Sunday, January 2, 2022
Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm Psalm 147:12-20; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:10-18**

**But.... we will focus on the readings for New Year's Day, January 1, 2022
Ecclesiastes 3:1-13; Psalm 8; Revelation 21:1-6a; Matthew 25:31-46**

***“I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.”
~ Charles Dickens***

Prayer List -- Hold in your prayers all those affected by the corona virus and the families of those who have died from the virus.... And all those families affected by the use of addictive drugs and alcohol among their members.... And all those dealing with the ravages of cancer near and far.... And add a prayer for Tammy Whirty, a friend of Margie's, dealing with cancer challenges, and, from Jackie a request for prayers for Kyle Cloudier, continued prayers for Ursula recovering...and for "Cody," who doesn't live locally but needs prayers for guidance; Kristin Parker O'Neal, Jo Ann Parker's daughter, who has had brain surgery and is home now!; Enid, Ann Foster, Carol Moss, Fred Bagnall, Julie Pollitt, Zeke Bryant, Helmut Steger, John Flaherty, BJ Thomson & family of Mimi's Uncle Doug, Heather Van Buskirk, and for Tiffany, Lucy's granddaughter....
Please feel free to contact Susan by phone (207)322-1948 or by email freerangepastor@gmail.com to add or drop the names from the prayer list AND to let her know if you would like for her to stop by for a visit sometime. She's always glad to have a chat with you!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Saturday-1/1/22.....HAPPY NEW YEAR
Sunday-1/2/22.....9:30 am: Communion Service
Suggested Food Pantry Donation.....Canned Soups

Reminders for next Sunday, 1/2/22

Deacon for January, 2022: Corinne Ervin

Greeter/Usher: Dave Billheimer

Coffee

Host:

Lector:

Sumner Kinney

Flowers:

Collection Total for Sunday, December 19, 2021:

Pledges - \$ 874.00

Loose - \$ 237.00

Investment income - \$ 224.51 - Putnam

Total - \$1335.51

The 2021 weekly budgeted operating cost for the Church and parsonage is \$1623.00 per week.