

## Pilgrim's Progress December 1, 2015 – Vol. 57 No. 10



Happy Advent and welcome to a new Liturgical Season! During Advent, we prepare the way for Christ's birth by focusing on themes like hope, peace, joy, and love. We light our Advent candles in our wreath each week to shine some light as our days get darker. Our candle lighting culminates on Christmas Eve, where we light the Christ Candle in the center of our wreath to symbolize the light and love of Jesus Christ breaking forth into the world. We also observe **Longest Night** (the Winter Solstice) during Advent—this year's service is **Monday December 21 at 7:30 PM.**

Advent calendars are also a wonderful way to observe this holy season. This year I'm pleased to share a wonderful **Advent calendar from Rev. Molly Phinney Baskette** (Senior Minister of First Church Somerville UCC.) Keep scrolling or keep turning pages and you'll see the calendar at the end of this edition of Pilgrim's Progress. It's my hope that we can find the space for reflection in the midst of the season's busyness, and Molly's calendar can help us on our way. Here's some of what she says to explain her calendar:

*"Advent and Christmas is a time ready-made for falling silent. Ironically, it's hard to do. Our hymns sing loudly about silence. Our prayers and poems pile up tons of words about silence. We make the merry-go-rounds of parties and concerts and nine extra everything's, and the volume goes to eleven.*

*But here is a gift: the ancient stream of Christianity called apophatic prayer. As opposed to kataphatic prayer, wordy prayer, it honors silence. It is a spiritual practice of discovering God by subtraction instead of addition (what our forebears called: the via negativa). Apophatic prayer says: it is pointless to seek God intellectually, because we can never really know or understand God. Only a practice of growing still and silent makes union with God possible.*

*Falling silent doesn't signal a permanent retreat from a world that needs our voices and action. It is a respectful engagement with that part of your God-given soul that demands a period of active rest and listening, in order to engage again more fully and from a more grounded place . . . that's the God I invite you to spend some time with this Advent and Christmas, every day, with this year's calendar. A God who doesn't need your carefully chosen words to connect with you, and know you, and love you. A God who knows you need to hush, meeting Her by subtraction instead of by addition."*

May we spend time encountering God in new ways this Advent season.  
May we spend time with the God who comes to us as a vulnerable baby.  
May we be silent and still, for we are loved by God more than we may ever know.

Grace and Peace,

*Lauren*



## THE ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SEASON AT PILGRIM CHURCH

<b>December 6</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>10:30 am</b>	<b>SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b> Service on the theme of Peace
<b>December 13</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>10:30 am</b>	<b>THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b> Service on the theme of Joy
<b>December 20</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>10:30 am</b>	<b>FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b> Service on the theme of Love with UCC Christmas Fund Special Offering
<b>December 21</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>7:30 pm</b>	<b>LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE</b>
<b>December 24</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>5:00-6:00 pm</b> <b>6:00-7:00 pm</b> <b>7:00-8:00 pm</b>	<b>CHRISTMAS EVE</b> Intergenerational Christmas Pageant Coffee hour with Christmas cookies Candlelight Communion Christmas Eve Service
<b>December 27</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>10:30 am</b>	<b>CAROL SING</b> Come sing your favorite carols and enjoy beautiful violin music! <b>No Sunday School</b>

## THROUGHOUT THE CHRISTMAS SEASON WE OFFER GIVING OPPORTUNITIES.

During the holiday times, we are often motivated to share with others. Pilgrim makes it easy by connecting you to groups and agencies that do good work in faithful and responsible ways.

*Merry Christmas*

\* Lauren \* Lisa \* Dan \* Diane



## BOOK STUDY

**SAVE THE DATE FOR AN ADVENT BOOK STUDY:  
WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 9 AT 7 PM**

***WEARING GOD: CLOTHING, FIRE, AND OTHER  
OVERLOOKED WAYS OF MEETING GOD***  
(Lauren Winner)

At the beginning of Advent, let's gather at 7 PM in the sun room on Wednesday December 9 for an evening of good conversation and some light snacks as we explore *Wearing God* together. Lauren Winner is a scholar and Episcopal priest who's written about how we meet and experience God. "Chapters on God as clothing, laughter, flame, food, wine, and a laboring woman not only invite us to understand God in a new way, but each reveals God to be much closer and more intimate than we imagine, opening up the opportunity for experiencing and knowing God more deeply."<sup>1</sup>

As we wait for the Christ child to be born into our midst during the Season of Advent, let's take the time to consider the ways we experience and know God. And if God has felt distant or even absent in our lives, perhaps these new understandings and images of God will open up new meanings to help ground us in God. Hope to see you on December 9 for a meaningful and compelling book study.

*Lauren*

## MUSIC NOTES

I don't know about you, but I feel like we were just preparing for our Advent and Christmas worship. It is amazing to think of everything we've done since last year and now we are back in the season again. December always seems to be an extremely busy time, but I know I am looking forward to rehearsals with the choir and bells and more importantly, sharing in worship with all of you.

As musicians, much is asked of us during this time of year. And as we work our way through Advent, you'll hear our choir perform, see our bells ring and get the opportunity to hear from others who are guest musicians in our church. I hope you'll take the time to enjoy the true meaning of each music selection and be in the moment with the music that is shared.

Dan Schmidt

### PILGRIM JOYS AND CONCERNS

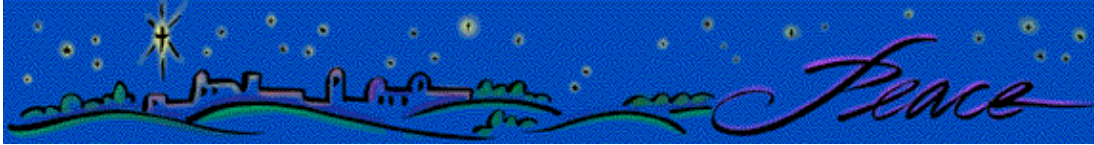
- Lesley Morrison asked for prayers for Kevin's mom, Jill, who is having surgery on Thursday and for Kevin as he recovers from a bad cold.
- Deborah Burger asked for prayers for a family friend, Heidi, who is in the ICU following seizures she experienced the day before Thanksgiving.
- Cynthia Murray asked for prayers for a family friend, Allen, as he is now at home recovering from a heart attack.
- Sylvia Ferrell-Jones asked for prayers for Suzanne and Kat's nephew, Nate, as his cancer has progressed and for Alex as he supports his cousin during this difficult time.

<sup>1</sup> Front cover of Lauren Winner, *Wearing God: Clothing, Laughter, Fire, and Other Overlooked Ways of Meeting God*.

## SAVE THE DATE: LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE



We offer a meditative service for winter solstice, on **Monday, December 21**, the longest night of the year. Christmas can be a time of great joy, but also can bring sadness for those who have experienced or are in the midst of loss, illness, or pain. Longest Night allows us to reflect on these myriad emotions with others in our quiet candlelit sanctuary. Extensive organ music and lovely hymns are performed, and readings and prayers spoke. All are welcome to join this restorative service.



## NEXT ALL CHURCH EDUCATION

We will be having our next all church education class on **Sunday, December 6 at 9:30 am**. Each class covers a different topic, so if you missed the first few--feel free to join us for the next one. The lesson will be: We Are A People of God's Extravagant Welcome.

The children will be with Lisa in the Sanctuary for the pageant rehearsal. After, we will head into the sanctuary together for Intergenerational Worship at 10:30, including Communion.

Hope to see you there!

## CHRISTMAS EVE PAGEANT – EXCITING NEWS!

We are very excited this year to premier our new Christmas Eve Pageant! Following the tradition we will hold our pageant on December 24 at the 5 pm service. This year's pageant will include a few new characters and lots of smiles as always. Rev. Lauren and I have worked hard to prepare a script that merges old and new traditions for our ever-changing congregation. The church school students and youth have started preparing and are looking forward to telling everyone the story of "The First Christmas".

If your students would like to participate, there is still time! Please send me an email with your students name and age to [education@pilgrimcongregational.org](mailto:education@pilgrimcongregational.org) and we will be happy to have them take part.

Rehearsals this year will be held **December 6 at 9:30 am and December 20 following worship.**

Thanks for your support!  
Lisa Hulbert



# Stewardship REPORT

"For surely I know the plans I have for you . . . to give you a future with hope."  
(Jeremiah 29:11)

As of 11/30/2015 the total amount pledged to Pilgrim Church is \$193,500.

This represents 91% of \$213,000 (our pledge target for 2016).

If you have not pledged yet, you can fill out the pledge form and place it in the Sunday offering, mail it to the church, or email your pledge total to Susan Carabbio at [s.carabbio@comcast.net](mailto:s.carabbio@comcast.net).

Your generosity is greatly appreciated.  
The Stewardship Committee



Save the date of **Sunday, December 13** for our annual Pilgrim Christmas Party. We look forward to seeing you at this traditional event filled with festivity, fellowship, and fun! The party will take place following worship.

Dear Pilgrim Members and Friends,

**Merry Christmas** season! Barbara and I are volunteering to gather member pictures for a Pilgrim Church Members and Friends board in the narthex.

So, here's where you come in: Please bring 1 (per household) 4 x 6" or 3 x 5" photograph of your family. We would very much like to have these by **December 21** so that we can display the board early in the new year. If you are planning to have a New Year Picture taken, just let us know so we can follow up with you after Christmas.

Many thanks, in advance, and best for the season,



Cynthia Murray and Barbara Munkres





### HONDURAN CRAFT SALE!

Take note! On **Sunday, December 6** we will be selling Honduran crafts during coffee hour. Please check them out. Perhaps you can find a holiday gift or two, and support a really wonderful cause. Thank you for your support.

### SAVE THE DATE: MITTEN TREE SUNDAY - DECEMBER 13

This has become an annual celebration for us! Please bring new mittens, hats, and scarves to be donated to East End House in Cambridge. During the service, you will place your items on one of the Christmas trees located in the front of the sanctuary. If you prefer to make a cash donation, you can write a check to Pilgrim with *East End House* noted in the memo line.



### GIVING TREE FOR SHRINERS

Once again, we'll be collecting gifts for the patients at Shriners Hospital. The tags are hanging on the tree in the Sun Room. Please attach the tag to your gift. We'd like to have the unwrapped gifts returned by **Sunday, December 20**. Thank you for your support!

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### VOLUNTEER SIGN UP INFORMATION

Thank you so much to all who have signed up to volunteer thus far! Now that the new year is almost here, we need to fill in those spots.

As you know, there is no "right way" to volunteer. Some of us prefer to do everything all on one day several times a year. They will sign up to greet, be a liturgist and host coffee hour on the same day. Others prefer to do one activity multiple times throughout the year (e.g., host Coffee Hour every other month). You decide what works best for you.

Sign-ups for Greeters, Liturgists and Coffee Hour Hosts are available [HERE](#). As a reminder, altar flower donations are being handled by contacting either Beth Kurth ([hughzhoney@gmail.com](mailto:hughzhoney@gmail.com)) or Diane Blair ([admin@pilgrimcongregational.org](mailto:admin@pilgrimcongregational.org)) directly.

Thank you for being such an important part of the Pilgrim Church community.

Worship and Music Committee and Vitality Committee





## Poinsettia ORDERS

Poinsettias will decorate the church on two Sundays, December 20 and December 27. They will be from Wilson Farms, and are always beautiful and full. We are lucky to be getting them for almost 25% below retail cost. If you wish to order a poinsettia plant, fill in the form below and send it to the church office by **MONDAY, DECEMBER 7** with a check made payable to Pilgrim Congregational Church. Poinsettias are **\$8.00** per plant for a 6 1/2" pot.

I/We would like to order \_\_\_\_\_ poinsettia(s) for the Christmas services.

Enclosed is my/our check in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print)

Optional: "In memory of

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”

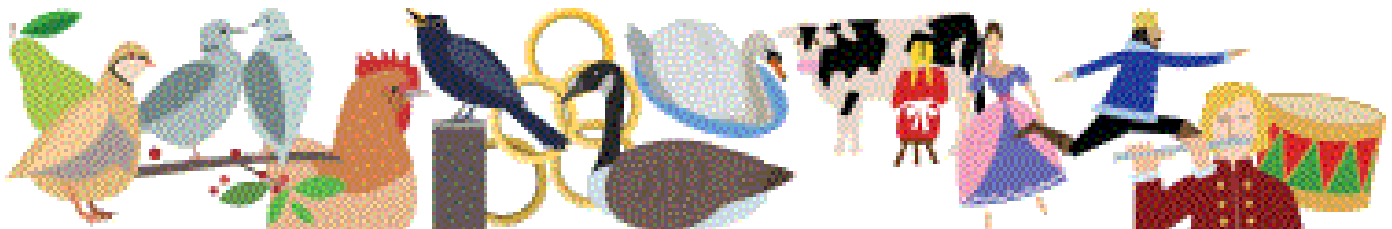
“In celebration of, In honor of, etc. (Please circle one)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”

Please check one:

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like my plant(s) to be delivered to a homebound friend by the Care Committee (to be delivered sometime that week after the service on the 20<sup>th</sup>).

\_\_\_\_\_ I will take my plant(s).



## Interfaith Prayer Vigil for U.N. Climate Conference

Monday, December 7, 7:30-8:30 PM

Sacred Heart Parish Center 21 Follen Rd., Lexington

From Nov. 30 to December 11, hundreds of world leaders will meet at the Paris Climate Summit with an urgent mission: Finalize an international commitment to combat climate change. Some see this as a last chance to prevent the worst consequences of climate disruption. So far, reaching agreement has been too difficult... under pressure, politicians have overlooked our shared responsibility to protect our children and our most vulnerable global neighbors, and to ensure survival for all life on earth.

We will gather during the stressful last week of negotiations to pray for:

- Courage and wisdom for our world leaders to take bold steps to address climate change.
- A strong treaty to emerge out of the climate summit.
- Communities affected by climate disruption, including the growing number of climate refugees.
- The ecological conversion of ourselves and others.

For further information, contact Fran Ludwig [fludwig12@yahoo.com](mailto:fludwig12@yahoo.com)  
(781-861-7231) #Pray4cop21



**PARIS2015**  
UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE  
COP21·CMP11

A reminder that the church office will be closed Thursday, December 25 through Monday, January 4, 2016. Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year to all!

To access the calendar for Pilgrim Church, please click [here](#). Thank you.



### DEADLINE FOR PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

Please note that the deadline for the January issue of Pilgrim's Progress will be **December 21**. Thank you!





# Advent and Christmas 2015: Hush

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p><b>29 First Sunday in Advent: HOPE</b> Sing, pray or chant this apophatic mantra: God is hope, God is not hope, God is not not hope.</p>	<p><b>30</b> Subtract one thing from your day. Use the extra time to be quiet with God.</p>	<p><b>1</b> Turn off the news today. You can do this! Make your world intentionally small, smaller, infinitesimal: a first-trimester baby.</p>	<p><b>2</b> Today, pray by humming, low and deep, for at least 3 minutes.</p>	<p><b>3</b> Listen today. Really LISTEN, without judgment, or crafting your next response. Be curious, and listen beyond the words.</p>	<p><b>4 Sabbath time:</b> Leave ALL the screens off today. Without tv, smartphone, tablet, what does God say to you in the quiet night?</p>	<p><b>5</b> Go to a pet store. Hold a creature. "You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves."</p>
<p><b>6 Second Sunday in Advent: PEACE/Hanukkah</b> Sing, pray or chant this apophatic mantra: God is peace, God is not peace, God is not not peace.</p>	<p><b>7</b> Read I Kings 19:11-12. Have you been listening for the wrong God?</p>	<p><b>8</b> Put tape over your mouth. Who has silenced you in your life? Who have you silenced? What power is there in keeping mum, in speaking up?</p>	<p><b>9</b> Subtract two things from your day. Use the extra time to serve a fellow human.</p>	<p><b>10</b> Wear several layers of your softest clothes today, a buffer against a sometimes harsh world.</p>	<p><b>11</b> Spin an actual, or virtual, globe. Let your hand come to rest on a random spot. Wonder about it, then bless it deeply.</p>	<p><b>12</b> Sneak into someone else's church. Kneel and pray, in silence, at the altar. Look for signs that God is near. Pray for the next person whose bottom will sit there.</p>
<p><b>13 Third Sunday in Advent: JOY</b> Sing, pray or chant this apophatic mantra: God is joy, God is not joy, God is not not joy.</p>	<p><b>14</b> Silence someone who is speaking hate (in virtual or physical space) with the gentlest possible words.</p>	<p><b>15</b> Print an adult coloring page off the web. Set an intention with God. Then lose yourself in coloring, inside or outside the lines.</p>	<p><b>16</b> Wake up Wake up in the middle of the night. Creep quietly to the holiest place in your house. Read I Samuel 3. Listen.</p>	<p><b>17</b> Subtract three things from your day. Now let yourself be drawn by the stronger pull of what you really love (or who loves you).</p>	<p><b>18</b> Swaddle yourself as soon as you're off duty today. Be the baby, close to birth.</p>	<p><b>19</b> Go to a public library, preferably in a low-income area. Watch the people, in stealth, and pray for them. This too is church.</p>
<p><b>20 Fourth Sunday in Advent: LOVE</b> Sing pray or chant this apophatic mantra: God is love, God is not love, God is not not love. Now send a beloved a secret message: in sign language, morse code, or a made-up language.</p>	<p><b>21</b> Sing yourself (or your beloved, kids or roomies) to sleep with lullabies tonight.</p>	<p><b>22</b> Make eye contact with a homeless person, or a stranger. Exchange a wordless glance that says: I see your full humanity.</p>	<p><b>23</b> Before you speak today, ask yourself: are these words kind, necessary and true? Would I say them with Jesus in the room?</p>	<p><b>24 Christmas Eve</b> Remake an old lullaby with God words (e.g. Twinkle Twinkle Little God). Sing it all day long. Teach it to a child.</p>	<p><b>25 Christmas Day</b> Sing carols at the top of your lungs. Now go piano, piano, pianissimo. It is enough. You are enough. You have enough.</p>	
<p><b>27</b> Make your home a silent retreat today, and your home-mates with you. Without screens and speaking, what do you hear?</p>	<p><b>28</b> Imagine your soul is a baby that won't stop crying. Hush, shush, rock and sing for as long as it takes to quiet her.</p>	<p><b>29</b> Take a break from your smartphone today. Leave it off, and at home. With every urge to check it, breathe deep and reach out for Jesus.</p>	<p><b>30</b> Cook and eat dinner in candlelight and silence tonight, with someone you love. What can you learn about each other without speaking?</p>	<p><b>31</b> Pray a doodle prayer—draw people instead of writing names, and surround them with lines suggesting light, and other symbols.</p>	<p><b>1</b> Walk a labyrinth today, if you have one nearby, or walk an imaginary one in living room or yard. You are a new creation.</p>	



CHRISTMAS