



THE JOYBELL



of the
The Baptist Church of Grafton
An American Baptist Church
Rev. Dr. Frank Armstrong, Interim Pastor
(508) 839-4911 Church Office
www.thebaptistchurchofgrafton.org
David and Diane Libbey, Editors

December 2017-

A Family Centered Christmas

This year I want us to focus on families during our Christmas season. Already, by the time you receive this letter, we will have participated in the first of several activities planned to involve as many families as possible in a pot luck time of fellowship followed by the “Hanging of the Greens” and singing Christmas Hymns. (That happened on November 26)

On December 17 we will be sharing “Christmas Memories” during our morning service which will be stories given by three generations on their most memorable Christmas remembrance.

Each Sunday of Advent, I will be delivering a special message leading up to Christmas Sunday and our Christmas Eve candlelight service at 5:00 PM.

Now, I need to emphasize that when I talk about family, I mean that in Christ we are all family; male, female, children or no children, married, single or divorced. No one is left out!

Romans 8: 16-17 states: *“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”*

So, I would ask that you consider your place this Christmas Season as a part of the family of God as we move intentionally, together, toward that Glorious celebration of Christ’s Birth. Finally, please note that there are Advent booklets available on a table in the church with a devotional for each week to be used individually or with loved ones. And if you know anyone who needs a copy mailed, please let the church secretary know.

For a Family Centered Christmas, many rich Blessings, and Peace to all.

Pastor Frank

Pastoral Search Committee

The Pastoral Search Committee has nearly completed the Profile that will be submitted to American Baptist Churches and TABCOM. Generating our Profile has taken months – there are many sections that need to be prepared, and many of these are complex. At this time we're editing the final draft of the Profile; we intend to complete this work and submit it before January 1.

As we move to the next phase of our search effort, ABC will use our Profile to identify pastoral candidates for us to consider. This will launch the next phase of our work: reviewing the pastor profiles that ABC will send in response to our Profile.

We thank all of you for your continuing support of the PSC. Please keep it coming!

Christmas Nativity Display

On Sunday, December 3 from 1:00-5:00 PM, our church will host our annual Nativity Scene Display as part of "Grafton Celebrates the Holidays." For the past 10 years, our friends and families have brought in their nativity (crèche) sets, and we have set them up in the sanctuary to display for the community. Our visitors can walk through the display, viewing and reading about more than a hundred beautiful crèches. They'll listen to soft Christmas music, pick up an Advent Calendar for the children and just enjoy some quiet reflection on the "Reason for the Season", the birth of our Savior, Jesus.

This year we will also be hosting the Grafton Garden Club's Wreath Display. Members of the Garden Club, local businesses and gardeners will create wreaths to display in our Fellowship Hall. Come vote for your favorite! Upstairs this year we will be hosting the students of the Blackstone Valley String Quartet who will be playing a variety of music in the Sanctuary .

On the day of the display we will need all kinds of help. Immediately after church, we will be setting up the display shelves on top of the pews in the sanctuary. Manpower is needed to get the shelves out of the balcony and set up. Then we will need help covering the shelves and setting up the nativity sets. During the event, we'll need people to staff the display and to serve cookies and hot drinks in Russell Hall. Finally, at 5:00, we will need people to repack-age the nativities into their boxes and put away the shelving. Help us bring the true spirit of Christmas to our town on December 4!

Christmas Flowers for our Sanctuary

Every year our Sanctuary is decorated for Christmas Sunday with poinsettias. Following the Worship Service, many of these plants are delivered with our love and prayers to our Shut-ins. If you would like to participate this year you have three options.

- You may make a \$6 donation for a poinsettia. These poinsettias will be given to a shut-in.
- You may purchase a poinsettia for \$6 to take home after the service on Christmas Sunday.
- You may bring in your own plant. Please have your tagged plant in the Sanctuary by noon on Saturday December 16. **Please be sure that your name is clearly written on the plant so you can take it home after Church Christmas Sunday.**

Any contribution may be designated **In Memory of** or **In honor/Appreciation of** a loved one. Please fill out the form found in the regular Sunday bulletins or contact the church office at 508-839-4911. Our Christmas Sunday bulletin will include a list of those for whom a plant has been given. So please don't delay and miss your chance to participate. If you have any questions please contact Janice King, Donna Nichols at the Church Office [508-839-4911] or speak with Patti Reichle.

The deadline for ordering flowers – and turning in the form – is Sunday, December 10.

A big thank you to Gloria and John Renaud for the donation of poinsettias to decorate our Sanctuary during the Advent Season. These were placed around our altar during the special service of carols by the children of the church family.

Christmas Eve Service

We will be celebrating the birth of our Savior **December 24** at our **Family Worship Service**. Please plan to join us for this service of prayer, Bible readings, music and candle light at **5 pm**. This is a wonderful way to start your family celebration. This is a magical night of wonder and joy. It twinkles with candles and the smell of the Christmas tree. It is the night of our Savior's birth – what better place to celebrate but in our own church sanctuary. Enjoy the quiet, the beauty of the flowers, the sound of Christmas music while once again experiencing the age old story shared in song and verse.

The Diaconate Report

Unity prayer for the month of December

We pray our new pastor will focus on the Word of God and walk in the fear of the Lord—rather than fear of man—as s/he prepares his messages. We pray that s/he will seek to please God rather than men and pursue holiness rather than the praise of men. May we, the body of Christ rightly handle the Word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

May our new pastor be courageous in the pulpit in proclaiming Christ and confident in the

use of the Word of God. Ask God to help him preach with insight, transparency, and humility. May we, the congregation, present ourselves mature in Christ. (Colossians 1:28)

We pray that our new pastor will be a “Great Commission man”—committed to personal evangelism and the equipping of the saints to seek the lost. Pray that s/he will have a heart to develop a thriving missions program in our church. “And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’” (Romans 10:15)

Amen

The Christian Education Committee

Advent Calendars will be distributed to all children both young and young at heart during coffee hour on December 3 and will be available on the clock table throughout the Advent Season. This year we will also have an Advent Devotional Booklet for each family. These daily readings will help to bring the Christmas Season alive.

Our “Giving Tree” is in place for The Advent Season. Thank you to the Engvall Family for their annual gift of our Giving Tree and to the set-up crew for delivering and setting up the tree.

- This year the **tree will be the collection site** for hats, scarves, mittens and gloves in **adult sizes** to be given to the homeless served by the Worcester Fellowship Program. A special need this time of year due to the cold weather is chap stick to help protect lips.
- **Christmas Giving for Grafton Food Bank** The number of people who are in need of help this Christmas Season grows and grows. This year we are going to concentrate on **food donations** to the Food Bank. Please bring in your donations to be placed beneath our Giving Tree. **Gift certificates** for Stop and Shop or stores like Wal-Mart are always appreciated by those struggling to make ends meet.
- There will not be a Christmas Pageant this year. Instead there will be a service of sharing of Christmas memories and carols.
- Even though we have almost no teens the Worcester Fellowship lunch making project will go on under the direction of Elaine Hewey and Susanne Fleming. We would also like to thank Paula Ustin for her continued donations toward the lunch supplies..

Bible Sunday was a success both inside and outside of the Church. A table was set up outside with free bibles given to both members of the Church and passer-bys. It was suggested that it be repeated on Creche Sunday when there are many guests coming into our Sanctuary.

Long Range Planning Committee

Chair Meredith Christian reported to the Board of Directors that the committee is working on nominations for the 2018 elections and the bi-annual review of the By-laws. If one of the

committee members approaches you about serving, please prayerfully consider the request.

Mission Committee

Equal Exchange Program will not be renewed for 2018. The few remaining supplies will be sold during the month of December.

Love Gift Offerings: Donations for the 2nd half of 2017 will be sent to ABCUSA. The money has been counted and we are awaiting the return of our Love Gift treasurer finish the process.

Seafarers Friend Mission Project: The collection box for Seafarers is in place to receive donations on the Mission table in RFH. Thank you to everyone who donates to this worthy cause.

Property Committee

The Property Committee has been busy working and reports the following:

- Energy audit has been received on the Parsonage. Cost to the Church to have them complete the insulation and other items will be \$518. Committee voted to have the work done as it will save money on heating this winter.
- Energy audit will be done on the Church building next week and will be reported on at the next meeting and at the Board of Directors' meeting.
- Parsonage update – Church needs to consider if it is going to update for a settled minister or update to be sold. Here are some considerations:
 - Both bathrooms need updating/refurbishing. They need to be gutted to the studs, insulated, new sheetrock, paint and fixtures.
 - Floors in both kitchen and laundry room need to be replaced.
 - Carpeting in the hall and on the stairs needs to be replaced along with stair railing that needs to be brought up to code.
 - Garage doors need to be replaced with insulated doors; door openers will increase the cost due to the low garage ceilings.
 - Kitchen cabinets need to be updated.
 - Cost estimates are being prepared.
 - Tenants will move out by the end of February.
- Barry will check with Steve Reichle about the snow blower's readiness for the winter.
- Lower entry hall rug needs to be replaced as it can no longer be cleaned and is now stained. Prices will be gathered. No one is sure what is under the rug.
- Sanctuary carpet needs to be cleaned along with the Narthex and the Social Hall as this has not been done in several years. M&J was suggested as a possible cleaning company.

Annual All Church Fair

Our Fair has come and gone. It was a wonderful day with lots of family, friends and towns-people joining us for the day. It was a day of fellowship, renewed acquaintances, pies, pies and more pies. We had a steady stream of people coming through the doors to purchase pies and other wonderful baked goods, Drawffle tickets, jewelry, attic treasures, crafts, books, and cookies to decorate.

We continued our expanded Attic Treasures this year and with some wonderful donations were able to provide ample choices for our buyers. We were blessed with another colorful quilt donated by Paula Moore, lots of wonderful gift certificates, four amazing mobiles, a Christmas wall hanging, and a ride in a 1930's Model A Ford for the Drawffle Table among other great items. Our kitchen crew outdid themselves with coffee and scones followed by, soups, sandwiches, mac and cheese with the best apple crisp for dessert.

At the close of the day, our coffers were \$5,900 richer. Sunday morning the Boutique opened for the first of several Sundays of gift purchasing opportunities with jams, jellies and gifts of all sorts. As of this writing the total for the Fair and the Boutique is over \$6,554.

We would like to thank all the people who worked so hard for so many months and weeks to make this happen. It is truly an all-church effort – without all of us it would not work. For the crews who turned apples into pies and crisps, the money counters, the table coordinators, the book sellers, the cookie bakers, knitters, crochet needle wielders, crafters, bakers of all sorts, the set up crew and the clean-up and those who came to buy and to eat – we say a big Thank You.

We have a fair wrap-up meeting scheduled for Wednesday, **December 6 at 7 pm**. This is for all the chairs of the various tables to come together and brainstorm ideas for next year's fair. If you have any suggestions about making our fair better please let Janice King or Diane Libbey know! Mark your calendar now – **November 3, 2018** is our next year's date.

Important Dates in December

3	Sunday	~	10:00 am First Sunday in Advent Worship Service to God's Glory, Sunday School classes for our children and youth. Sandwich preparation for Worcester Fellowship lunches.
		~	11:30am Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
		~	1:00pm-5:00pm Creche Display for Grafton Celebrates the Holidays
4	Monday	~	Long Range Planning with Meredith Christian

5	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15pm AA Reflections Group
		~	7:30pm Bible Study with Meredith Christian
6	Wednesday	~	7:00pm Fair Committee Wrap Up with Janice King
7	Thursday	~	9:30am Prayer Time in the parlor
9	Saturday	~	9:00am-3:00pm Quilt Class with Paula Moore
10	Sunday	~	10:00am Second Sunday in Advent Worship Service to God's Glory, Sunday School classes for our youth. Coffee Fellowship following Worship.
		~	11:30am Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
11	Monday	~	Mission Committee with Garfield Atchue
12	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15pm AA Reflections Group
14	Thursday	~	9:30am Prayer Time in the parlor
			7:00pm Property Committee with Barry Keith
17	Sunday	~	10:00am Third Sunday in Advent Christmas Memories and Carols Worship Service to God's Glory, Sunday School classes for our children and youth. Coffee Fellowship following Worship. Equal Exchange
		~	11:30am Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
18	Monday	~	7:00pm Board of Directors with Bert Engvall
19	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15pm AA Reflections Group
		~	7:30pm Bible Study with Meredith Christian
20			3:00pm Crescent Manor
21	Thursday	~	9:30am Prayer Time in the parlor
24	Sunday	~	10:00am Fourth Sunday in Advent Christmas Eve Worship Service to God's Glory, Sunday School classes for our children and youth. Coffee Fellowship following Worship. ***Undie Sunday
			11:30am Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
			5:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
25	Monday		Christmas Day
26	Tuesday		5:15-6:15pm AA Reflections Group
28	Thursday		9:30am Prayer Time in the parlor
31	Sunday		10:00am New Year's Eve Worship Service to God's Glory, Sunday School classes for our children and youth. Coffee Fellowship following Worship.

- **Worship Service to God's Glory, 10:00am**, with Childcare and Sunday School Classes for children in Nursery through High School. Church Family Fellowship Time with refreshments following the Worship Service.:
- **Deacons of the Month for December** : Patti Reichle and Barry Keith
- **Tellers for the Month of December** Engvall and Deans families
- Church Office Hours are Monday – Friday 9:00 am–11:30 am.
- Call the Church office for the Pastor's hours.

Kitchen Committee Report

Congratulations to our hard working kitchen committee on another delicious dinner! Our pasta and meatball dinner was a success with people enjoying the meal, the dessert buffet and the fellowship around the table. The total for the dinner and the additional sale of food the next day totaled \$398. The next dinner will be held on January 20 and will be a feast of Shepherd's Pie. Sign-up sheets are already available on the clock table in Russell Hall.

Annual Report Reminder!!

- ✚ **Annual Reports (except Financial) are due as soon as possible but no later than January 2, 2018.**
- ✚ **Financial Annual Reports are due Sunday, January 7, 2018.**

The Church Secretary asks that Committee reports be given to her in both hard copy and electronically wherever possible. The Annual Report Booklets will be available on the Sunday before the Annual Meeting which is January 21 (snow date January 28).

Financial Update

As of the end of October the church's financial picture is good. The Annual All Church Fair was a great success with over \$6,500 raised. A big thank you to the all the people who organized and worked on the fair, the dinners, and other fund-raising events as well as to those who supported those events.

The Stewardship Campaign is underway with the finance committee encouraging all of us to help provide the financial resources we will need to support the church next year and continue growing our ministries and missions. If you would like to catch up on giving for this current year, now is the time! Thank you to all who are ahead or keeping current in their pledging. If anyone has questions about what it means to make a pledge to the church, please do not hesitate to speak with David Libbey, Cyndy Engvall, Chris Hoffman, or Bert Engvall.

2018 Stewardship Campaign - Please read carefully!

The Stewardship theme is, "Look to the future". The future of our church depends, in part, on attracting an energetic, highly qualified pastor. To attract such a pastor requires financial support of that pastor. So, please don't just pledge what you gave in 2017. Give careful consideration to the future of this church, and pledge an amount that will help contribute towards a bright future.

Here is what is needed to ensure that the mission of this church continues to be strong and effective next year and into the future:

- **Operating Expenses**
 - *Total anticipated Operating Expenses for 2018: About \$110,000*
 - *This is about \$2,100 needed each week to keep the church's doors open.*
 - *Pledge Goal: \$64,000:* Pledging is the greatest source of income (58%) towards Operating Expenses.
 - *This pledging area needs the greatest support.*
- **Planned Missions:**
 - *Pledge Goal: \$3,000*
 - Planned Missions raises contributions so our church can support local, regional, national and international missions giving throughout the year.
- **Building Fund:**
 - *Pledge Goal: \$2,000*
 - The Building Fund accumulates money to help pay for repairs and upgrades to the church and parsonage.
- **Savings Fund:**
 - *Pledge Goal: \$2,000*
 - The Savings Fund replaces monies from the church's Endowment funds that have been used to pay for major projects such as the church roof that was installed in 2003.
 - The Savings Fund is used to "pay ourselves back" for the money we borrowed from ourselves to finance these major projects.

If you have never pledged before, it is easy! Here's some basic info about pledging:

- A pledge is what a person intends to give to the church during the year.
- Pledges make budget planning easier.
- A person is free to designate which area(s) s/he wants to make a pledge to.
- A pledge is *not* a legally-binding contract.
- Pledge amounts and designations can be changed during the year if a person's/family's financial situation changes.
- Pledge amounts are held in the strictest confidence by the Finance Committee.
- Questions? Contact any member of the Finance Committee: Bert Engvall, Chris Hoffman, David Libbey, or Cyndy Engvall.

I have faith that the members and friends of this church realize how blessed our church is, and are willing to continue to support it to the best of their abilities in order to ensure that its future will continue to be bright. *I trust that every giver supports this church because s/he strongly believes in the importance of its ministry, and, wherever possible, will try to increase her or his support of it. Continuation of this ministry depends on all of us working together to meet next year's financial needs.*

For convenience, a pledge form is included in this issue of the "Joybell" for those who would like to make a pledge for this year and have not yet done so. It is our goal to complete the Stewardship Campaign by Christmas, so it will be helpful for you to hand in a pledge form soon.

The Finance Committee treats all pledges confidentially.

Bert Engvall
Stewardship Chair

Baptist Church of Grafton

Planned Giving for 2018

During 2018 I/We plan to give the following amounts:

Fund	Amount	How Often (please circle)
Operating Expenses	_____	per week per month one time amount
Planned Missions	_____	per week per month one time amount
Building Fund	_____	per week per month one time amount
Savings Fund	_____	per week per month one time amount

I understand that this Planned Giving is an indication of my intention to make this contribution to The Baptist Church of Grafton, and that this is *not* a legally binding contract.

Name (Please print): _____

To return this form:

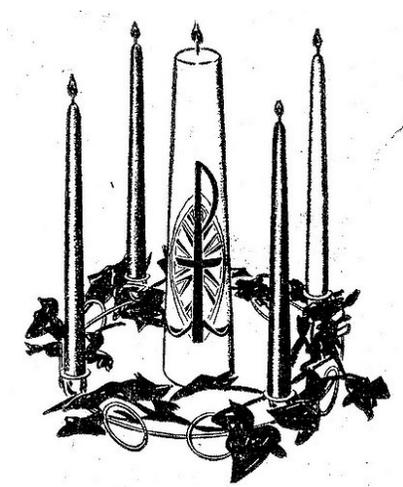
Please fold, then staple or tape this form closed. Bring it to church and put it in the offering plate. **Or hand it** to Bert Engvall, Chris Hoffman, David Libbey, or Cyndy Engvall. If you choose to put it in the

offering plate, the offering counters will *not* open your form. It will be placed, unopened, in the Finance Committee mailbox at church.

Or mail to:

Baptist Church of Grafton
PO Box 304
Grafton, MA 01519

Attn: Pledge



Join us every Sunday in Advent for the lighting of our Advent Wreath and on Christmas Eve for the lighting of the Christ Candle during our Family Christmas Service of Expectation and Joy~
December 24 at 5 PM
Spread the joy!
Invite a friend to worship with us on December 24. ~