



# Spirit Newsletter

## From your Pastor

*Are you the One we've been expecting, or are we still waiting? (Ma. 11:3)*

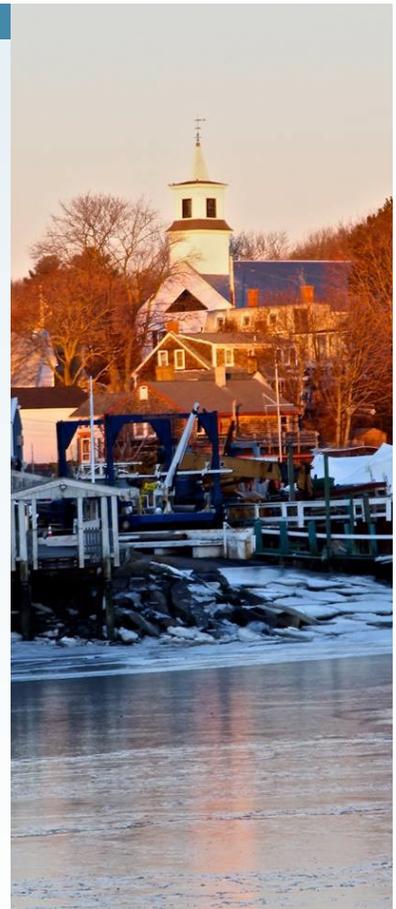
There are certainly times in our lives when we wonder, along with John the Baptist above, if life is really going the way it's supposed to go, if God really is at work in this broken world of ours, if God really is good and with us, if Jesus really is the One who was to come. John, the fellow who was appointed by God to prepare the way for the coming of this Jesus, actually gave voice to his questions from a prison cell. You'd think John might have known better, but if even he thought that he had possibly bet on the wrong horse, it at least gives us permission to wonder.

In response, Jesus told John's friends to go back to his cell and report the signs of God's grace that were in the air: the blind were beginning to see, the deaf were beginning to hear, the lame were beginning to walk, the lepers were experiencing cleansing, the dead were being raised, and the poor were learning that God is for them. These signs had been promised long ago as indicators of the presence of the reign of God (Isa. 35:1-6a), and now they were happening. New life and new hope were taking shape with the coming, the "advent" of Jesus. God's thirst quenching love, presence, and joy were becoming present in tangible ways

Of course, this never happens fast enough for us, nor without opposition from the Evil One, who keeps trying to knock us off the way of the Lord, as John himself was experiencing. Along with John, we live, it's important to remember, between two advents, between the first great Advent, the coming of the Son into the world, and the second great Advent, his coming again in power and glory. Living in this overlap of the ages, we celebrate the decisive victory of God over sin and death through the first coming of Jesus, and look for, work for, pray for, long for, and wait for, the full implementation of this victory throughout the world when he returns to restore all things to their proper order.

So may our faith and love in the present spring from this hope which is laid up for us in God's dimension of reality (Col. 1:3-5), trusting that the faithful God who keeps his promises will one day join heaven and earth, causing his kingdom to come fully on earth as it is in heaven, making all things gloriously and wonderfully and everlastingly new.

—Pastor Tim



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## Trustees



The trustees continue to meet monthly to monitor the finances and property of the church. We have just completed Stewardship month, and look forward to bringing our pledge cards to worship on December 6. Balancing income and expenses continues to be a challenge for us.

We are carefully monitoring the state of the property. There are a number of projects and repairs scheduled for the winter and spring months. In addition, we are working on getting an evaluation of the long term needs of our bell and steeple, so we are

not surprised with a major project in the future.

We have received a donated snow blower, so clearing the walks should be an easier task this year. But we will still need volunteer shovelers for snowy mornings (contact Craig Hammon).

If you have any concerns about the church property, please contact one of the Trustees.

—Fred Zwart & Craig Hammon

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*“And now, O Lord, I bring you the first fruits of the crop you have given me...”*  
*Deuteronomy 26:10*

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### Advent Happenings

- ◇ **Saturday Dec. 5,**  
7:30 a.m. Men’s  
Breakfast, Jud Reis  
guest speaker
- ◇ **Saturday Dec. 5,**  
5 p.m. “Caroling  
Around Town,” bring  
an appetizer to share  
afterwards
- ◇ **Sunday Dec. 6,**  
Pledge Card Sunday,  
bring card to place in  
basket together as a  
congregation

## Deacons

Thanks to all who have attended or hosted a Church Family Dinner for 8 (or less)! We have sponsored 3 since last spring and are looking forward to continuing this quarterly get together. Stay tuned for new dates for 2016. It’s a great chance to share a meal together with your church family in someone’s home.

This past summer we also enjoyed grilling together at our annual Family BBQ at three different locations. Thanks to those who opened their houses up for us to share food, fellowship and fun. Please join us next summer!

Our traditional potluck dinner and carol-sing will be on Sunday, Dec. 13 at 6 p.m. Please invite your friends and neighbors to join us this year.

—Susan Zwart & Steve Brown

## More Advent Happenings

- ◇ **Monday December 7th**, 4—6 p.m. Open Door with Carolyn Knowlton
- ◇ **Monday thru Friday December 7—11th**, PAX eRetreat “Advent: God With You,” register at [www.paxcenter.org](http://www.paxcenter.org)
- ◇ **Saturday December 12th**, 9:30 a.m., Ladies Christmas Brunch & Gift Swap at the Clark’s. Bring a dish to share, a gift to swap and friends for food, fellowship and fun!
- ◇ **Sunday December 13th**, 6 p.m. Potluck Dinner and Carol Sing in the large vestry. Bring a dish to share, a love for Christmas carols and friends for food, fellowship and fun!
- ◇ **Thursday Christmas Eve Services**: 5 p.m. Pageant & Candle Lighting, 9 p.m. Lessons, Carols, Communion & Candle Lighting
- ◇ **Sunday December 27th**, 2—5 p.m. Open Door with Lisa Clark (helpers needed!)

## Bellz Up

Please join the **NORTH SHORE RINGERS** and the *Paul Revere Ringers* for our biggest Advent season ever! Shown below is our schedule of appearances. Most events are open to the public, and most are also free!

### SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2015

**Participation in Sunday Worship.** The **Paul Revere Ringers** are participating in Sunday worship at FCCOE with the world premiere of Greg Naeger’s *Jesus, Our Friend in the Garden*, written in memory of Mr. & Mrs. Cecil and Elisabeth Harvey, parents of George Harvey. The service starts at 10:30 a.m.



**Gloucester Holiday Tree-Lighting Ceremony.** The **North Shore Ringers** are making their annual appearance at the Gloucester Holiday Tree-Lighting ceremony. The ceremony usually starts around 4:00. Come partake of free popcorn and hot chocolate. There may be other goodies!

### THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3

**Town of Essex Memorial Tree-Lighting Ceremony.** The **North Shore Ringers** are participating in the ceremony this year. Please join us as we remember residents of Essex who have passed. The ceremony starts at 6:30.

### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6

**The Greening of the Great House, Crane Castle, Ipswich.** Join the **North Shore Ringers** at this joyous event! Come and see Crane Castle decorated in great splendor for the season! The house will be open 12-4 p.m., and the North Shore Ringers will be performing 3:00-4:00. Walk the halls and private rooms (I wonder who did the bathroom fixtures)! While the event is open to the public, there is an admission charge. (\$5-15).

### THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10

**Massachusetts State Senator Bruce Tarr’s Annual Holiday Toy Drive.** Tune in to radio station North Shore 104.9 to listen to the **North Shore Ringers**, and donate to a great cause! The broadcast should start sometime around 1:30.

### CHRISTMAS EVE. THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24

4:00 **North Shore Ringers** participating in the *Christmas Pageant* service.

9:00 **Paul Revere Ringers** participating in the *Lessons and Carols* service.

### MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE NORTH SHORE RINGERS AND THE PAUL REVERE RINGERS

—Greg Naeger, Bell Choir Director

## Christian Ed

We are off and running in year 2 of our Sunday School program at 9:30. We continue to offer classes for all ages, nursery to adult. The youngest are being led in Godly Play for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year, the elementary kids are walking through different Bible stories with a focus upon practical application, the youth are learning the ways in which the whole biblical narrative points to Jesus Christ, and the adults are making their way through Genesis. Also, a brand new class has just begun at the Ziegenhals' home for college students, led by Rama.

All of these classes are open to newcomers – come one, come all, and enjoy time in the Word with your brothers and sisters in Christ!

The children and youth classes will be on hiatus from now until the beginning of January to make way for...Christmas Pageant rehearsals! That's right, Christmas Pageant rehearsals have begun! Iela Ziegenhals will be directing this year, and the more kids we have the merrier, so please bring your kids to the sanctuary at 9:30am if you'd like to participate! (College and Adult classes will still meet into December.)

Finally, during Sunday morning worship we have a Children's Church program for kids ages 3-9. This year, kids in Children's Church are learning about the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12), attitudes that characterize us as disciples of Jesus Christ and lead God's blessings. Each month, the kids are focusing upon one beatitude. They learn through bible stories that depict these beatitudes, often acting them out, and they enjoy a game and/or craft that relates to the beatitude as well. (For example, this past Sunday we had a marshmallow relay race where the kids used kitchen tongs to quickly carry their marshmallows to a bowl on the other side of the room. They did this carefully so that they would not squish the marshmallows. This helped them to learn about the Be-Attitude of meekness, which is strength under control.)

Thanks for your ongoing prayers and participation in the educational ministries at FCCOE!

If you have any questions, please contact: Jason Lawrenz or Diane Naeger, Co-chairs

## VBS

The snow of Everest has gone and now we are getting ready to go below ground. This summer, we will take you to **Cave Quest—Following Jesus the Light of the World**. “Gear up for an over-the-top underground adventure! Ground kids in the rock-solid foundation of God's love, a love that takes us through life's dark times.”

Join us as we meet new Bible Buddies; learn how God gives us HOPE, COURAGE, DIRECTION, LOVE AND POWER; while playing “Spelunker Sports & Games”, creating crafts and conducting experiments, digging deep into Bible stories, watching DVD stories each of us can relate to and eating at the Cavern Cafe. We'll learn fun songs and dances, meet new friends and re-connect with old friends, and have an exciting time below ground in **Cave Quest 2016!!** Mark your calendars and watch for more information to come. See you at Base Camp this July!

—Kathy Archer, VBS Director

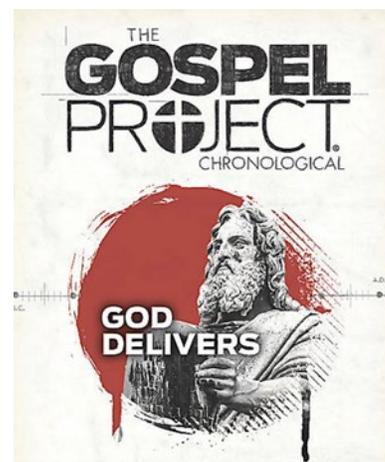


## Youth

### Sunday School

Every **Sunday morning from 9.30-10.15** in the youth pastor office/lounge upstairs in the church we have a great time of Bible and life discussion for middle/high school students.

At the start of this school year, we began working through the **Gospel Project: Chronological** – a time-sweep study of the entire Bible! The fall study has been going through *Genesis* – *looking at the beginning of God's story* and how God has promised to be a faithful and loving God to his people. During the winter, we will continue on in the next section, *God Delivers* – a study of the Exodus and God's presence among his people in the giving of the law. **A great study and discussion that is never too late to join into!**



*"It is the task of youth not to reshape the church, but rather to listen to the Word of God."*  
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

### Youth Group Nights

If you are like me, wanting to keep the discussion going and hang out more after Sunday morning, then join us later on **Sunday evenings from 6-8pm** for FCCOE Youth Group!

Always a good time – great **food** prepared by our wonderful youth families (or Cape Ann pizza!), fun **games** (like ga-ga or Grog among many others), and ending with an inspiring time of **worship** – music, devotional thoughts from the Word, discussion and prayer. These times are great for anyone, no matter where they are on their journey of faith! Students who read this: come and bring your friends! To those of you who are thinking about church or want a place to connect with other students: come, hang out with us and ask questions!

### Deep Freeze!

Each winter, we spend a weekend together up in New Hampshire at **Camp Berea!** Their Camp is located on Newfound Lake and has a ton of fun activities to do during the weekend along with several sessions with great musicians and an inspiring speaker. We will be going this year the weekend of **February 12-14.**



Berea



### Mission and Service



Not only do we have a good time together, we also seek to work together to serve our community. Between helping out with the **Open Door** kitchen and helping at the **Food Project** farm, there are various opportunities for service work. In April, we will be partnering with the **Center for Student Missions** for a week of urban ministry in downtown **Boston.**

**April 17-21.** Plan on joining us for this incredible experience!

*And there's more...*

We have also had many other fun outings this year – zoo outing, laser tag, movie nights, to name a few! We are always looking for other fun events to go to and welcome any ideas and requests you may have! The best part of all is getting to spend time together. One thing our youth group is blessed to have is a team of awesome volunteer leaders who want to get to know the students! If you have ideas for the group or want to get one-on-one time with a leader let me know!

Calendar updates will be sent out via e-mail and if you'd like to join the youth group's list please email me: [andy.sutton318@gmail.com](mailto:andy.sutton318@gmail.com), and I will add you!

I look forward to the next few months with you all and I am praying that the Lord would be using our time as a group to draw us each closer to Him and to shine his light through us to our friends.

God bless you, Andy Sutton

## PAX

PAX continues to offer spiritual formation ministries for FCCOE. Theology is where we learn about God, or our objective knowledge of God. Spiritual formation is where we learn from God, or our experiential knowledge of God. The PAX offerings help you to connect with and deepen your relationship with God. There are a number of ongoing offerings to choose from that range from spending a day with God around a seasonal theme and guided reflection to seeing how Christian values unfold in the context of life.

There are two new PAX offerings this year. First, the movie series was added as a way to reach out and invite our neighbors into our FCCOE commu-

nity while enjoying discussion around Christian themes played out in real life. And then secondly, a monthly small group gathering called “The Way of Christian Prayer” will begin in January and continue for five months. Here we will pray with Scripture using different forms of prayer, and share how Scripture is intersecting with our lives and our longings and desires.

This Advent season don’t miss the At-Home eRetreat from Dec. 7th to the 11th entitled *God with You*. This retreat was written by Tim and is a wonderful way to help prepare your hearts for the coming of Christ. —Rama Ziegenhals



## Women's Corner

As the holiday season approaches, our thoughts turn first to an almost forgotten holiday. Thanksgiving is a wonderful time to count our blessings and give some thought to the events of the past year. For me, one of those events was our recent retreat. We, who were able to go, enjoyed the unusual format of events centered around the theme, “This is My Story.” We were blessed to have 2 different speakers. Lars Gren told us of his wife, Elisabeth, an outstanding woman of faith in the extremities of life in the jungle of Ecuador followed by a lifetime of sharing her remarkable faith in book form, radio, and speaking tours. We were blessed to “get to know her.”

Another speaker, Anh Vu Sawyer, presented to us, her story of growing up in the ear of the Vietnam war, her family’s remarkable escape from the country, her immigration to the U.S. and her ongoing contribution to her church and the current immigrants who are making their way to legal immigration. As well, she and her husband are involved in a unique ministry to the underprivileged women of the villages of remote regions of Vietnam. She donated her story in book form to our church library. It is titled *Song of Saigon* and I recommend it highly.

On a different note, our ladies holiday brunch will be here before we know it. It will be held on Dec. 12th at 9:30 a.m. at Lisa Clark’s home. This will be a lovely change from meeting at the church and we hope to see you there. The event is potluck brunch followed by a Yankee swap. We always have a great time, so again, welcome to all! I trust the holidays will bring you great joy as we celebrate our reasons to be thankful and our appreciation for the greatest gift ever given to us. —Caroline Craig

## MOPS

First of all, I want to say how immensely grateful I am for all of the support MOPS has received since we started back in September. Thank you to Rama for leading the moms in open, fruitful discussions. Thank you to Jo Zubricki and Joan Houghton for heading up childcare. Thank you to all of the volunteers who have cared for the little ones (Kea, Anna, Pam, Beth, Autumn, any others I've missed!). Thank you to all of you who have prayed and spread the word and asked about how things are going. God's provision and faithfulness and enduring goodness have been so evident in this ministry, and I am so grateful!

Since our first meeting back in September, our numbers have been steadily growing. It is so exciting to meet other moms of young children and to know that we are meeting a deeply felt need for mothers on the north shore. In our last meeting, we had 16 moms from Essex, Gloucester, Magnolia, Hamilton, Beverly, Rowley, and Georgetown. We have a great mix of moms from our church, other churches, the seminary, and the surrounding community. We have been able to fellowship over coffee, snacks, games, crafting, and honest discussions about our children, what friendship looks like in this season of life, our marriages, our hopes for our families and our communities. It has been so life-giving and rich, and I am excited to see how the time we spend together grows us each individually and extends into our families and our communities for our good and for God's glory. It is especially exciting to see how this ministry will continue to welcome moms from outside of the church community into relationships with believers and ultimately with Jesus. Please pray for opportunities and open hearts to share the love of Christ in word and deed, with every mom (and child!) we encounter.

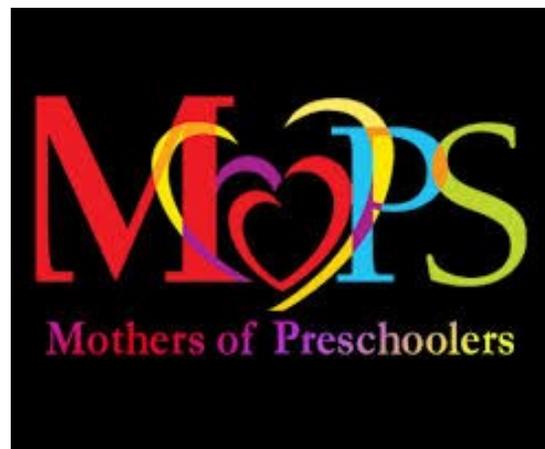
Looking forward, we have an urgent need for more childcare volunteers. With the growing number of mothers also comes a growing number of children. Our last meeting saw 28 kids including six 6 months and under! In order for a mother to relax, she has to know there is a place for her children to be well taken care of. Up to this point, all of our childcare has been provided by volunteers, which has been a HUGE blessing to our mothers (and really, the only way the ministry can be sustained). Our prayer is that God would continue to raise up volunteers to care for the growing number of children and their mothers, and by extension, their families and communities. Please pray with us that God will continue to meet our needs of this growing ministry.

MOPS meets on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month, 9:30-11:00am.

If you would like to volunteer, if you have any questions, or if you would like more information, please grab me at church or email me at [essexmops@gmail.com](mailto:essexmops@gmail.com).

Thank you again for all of your prayers and support!

—Robin Lawrenz, MOPS Coordinator



## Family Promise

Family Promise North Shore Boston is wrapping up calendar year 2015. We at FCCOE have hosted families 4 times this year. We've provided meals, shelter and hospitality and enjoyed the company of several different families over the course of the last 12 months. Our dates are set for next year and we can always use more volunteers. Please ask how you can get involved.

—Susan Zwart

### Upcoming Dates for 2016

- ◆ March 27— April 3
- ◆ May 29 — June 5
- ◆ September 25 — October 2
- ◆ November 27 — December 4



## Open Door

We serve the Open Door quarterly and monthly to satisfy a 30+ yr. tradition and to learn how to prepare, serve & clean as a team.

Quarterly opportunity; there is a very devoted group who has been helping to prepare the meal of American chop suey for a very long time. Then there are those who step up when we need fill-ins. We can always use more people to cook. We usually need 9 (9x13) pans of chop suey and 3-4 cakes of any flavor. If cooking is not your specialty there are simple donations of milk, bread, butter, coffee, and salad bar items you can provide. These items can be brought to the church on Sunday before we serve. I always have to go shopping the day of service to pick up anything we may still need, therefore donations of cash help out in this way. And don't forget you can volunteer to help serve from 4 p.m.—6 p.m. Our last opportunity to serve for 2015 is Dec. 7th!

Our church has been serving dinner at the Open Door for about 30+ years. Our meal is one of their favorites. Our church is truly blessed to have a congregation that is so caring and generous. I want to say thank you to all the wonderful people who have helped to keep this mission going. —Carolyn Knowlton

Monthly opportunity; I have committed our FCCOE committees and various small groups to serve the last Sunday of every month for another year! I know we can meet the challenge and it's a wonderful way to serve together as a team! We meet at 2pm to prepare, serve, and clean-up after our meal and finish by 5pm. The Missions committee has generously given us \$ for the Open Door to cover the cost of the menu we prepare and I occasionally ask the kids during Service Sunday to help me with a dessert (which is always enjoyed by the diners! ).

**Our 2016 schedule is** : Jan. 31, Feb. 29, Mar. 31, Apr. 30, May 31, June 30, July 31, Aug.31, Sept.30, Oct. 31, Nov. 30 and Dec. 25. Please consider getting your group or committee together to serve on one of these days and let me know. I really appreciate the support and help I have received over the past years. It is a pleasure cooking and serving with all of you and helping our neighbors in need! Kenn, the manager loves knowing he can count on us once a month, so many thanks to all! —Lisa Clark

## Do You Know...?

**Kea Hufford** (questions asked by Shelly Ross)

1. **Where did you grow up?** Anchorage, Alaska
2. **How many siblings?** I'm the second oldest of 5, with 3 brothers and one sister.
3. **College? Major? Favorite classes?** I studied music education at University of Alaska Anchorage.
4. **Current work?** Good question. :) I had come to Massachusetts to help Lars Gren care for his wife Elisabeth, and I've been seeking God's leading for what to do next with this chapter having come to an end with Elisabeth's home going in June.
5. **Passions, hobbies, interests?** I taught piano for 13 years before coming to Massachusetts, and still enjoy playing piano and composing/arranging music. Also, I love languages- though thus far I've only dabbled in them, and don't speak any foreign language fluently.
6. **Favorite quote?** Movie? Song? This quote from C.S. Lewis' "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" has been so powerful to me as I've been growing in trusting the Lord even when- especially when- His actions don't match my expectations:  

"Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy. "Safe?" said Mr. Beaver. "...Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King I tell you."
8. **When did you start attending FCCOE?** The fall of 2014
9. **Favorite thing about FCCOE?** I'm so grateful to the Lord for how the church family here has made it so easy to truly become involved, rather than just being an outsider looking in.



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## Church Fair

### Holiday Church Fair 2015

Thanks to all those who helped to make this another successful fair with a total of approximately \$4400.

I'm sure you're asking yourself what you can do to help me do this again in 2016! I have the answer! Save those glass pie plates you no longer need for the bake table. Save your White Elephant items, think of more crafts you can make throughout the year and save interesting containers for greenery arrangements.

Most importantly, I need someone who will help me with the fair. Someone who can brainstorm with me and someone who is able to help with small "stuff" before the fair. I also need someone to be "in charge" of the craft table and bake sale table. If you can help in any way please contact me

—Pam Prichard 978-546-1099

First Congregational Church  
of Essex

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*“Receiving and extending  
the hospitality of Jesus  
as we connect  
with God,  
one another,  
and our community.”*

## More from Your Pastor

### Small Group Opportunities in the New Year

Leaders are currently being trained to offer an eight-week series, *Gospel in Life: Grace Changes Everything*, beginning in late January. This series explores how the good news of the arrival and presence of Jesus is lived out in all of life—first in your heart, then in your community, and then out into the world. It will help us all, we believe, put arms and legs on the vision of our church which calls us to extend the hospitality of Jesus that we have received. So, stay tuned! If you are interested in learning more, please contact Pastor Tim.

First Congregational  
Church of Essex

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